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A Chance for Dialogical Journalism? Social Web Practices and Handling of User Comments at Deutsche Welle

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The value of online user comments is a much-debated issue. In journalism, the newly arising possibility for readers and viewers to easily and instantaneously share their views on journalistic output was welcomed at first. Compared to the conventional letter to the editor it represented a democratized form of audience feedback. News organizations increased their presence in the social web and gained more and more experience with user comments. Over time, however, discontent towards the quality of online user comments seemed to grow. But what is the responsibility of journalism in this respect? How do news organizations use the social web? How do they handle online user comments? To what extent do they tap the dialogical potential of the social web for facilitating exchange and understanding between different viewpoints? This study pursues these questions by investigating the case of Germany's international public service broadcaster Deutsche Welle with its explicit dialogical mandate. It provides an in-depth examination of a transition period in which the news organization is grappling with its self-conception as a serious news provider in the casual social web environment, in which social media editors struggle for recognition from their established colleagues, and in which "stepping back and letting the discussion unfold on its own" serves as a strategy to avoid censorship accusations from users. Based on a specially developed analytical grid the study offers a democracy-theoretical evaluation of the user comments and their handling by *Deutsche Welle*.

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Drefs

Ines Drefs

A Chance for Dialogical Journalism?

Social Web Practices and Handling of User Comments at Deutsche Welle

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7

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Edited by Martin Emmer, Christian Katzenbach, Christian Pentzold, Christina Schumann, Monika Taddicken, & Martin Welker

Volume 7

Ines Drefs

A Chance for Dialogical Journalism?

Social Web Practices and Handling of User Comments at Deutsche Welle

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List of abbreviations

ARD	Arbeitsgemeinschaft der öffentlich-rechtlichen Rundfunkanstalten der Bundesrepublik Deutschland
API	Application Programming Interface
EBU	European Broadcasting Union
Df	Degrees of freedom
MMDR	Multimedia Direction Regions
MMDG	Multimedia Direction Global
DW	Deutsche Welle
P	Proposition
PSB	Public Service Broadcasting
REIS	RechteInformationsSystem
RQ	Research Question
TV	Television
UGC	User-generated content
WWW	World Wide Web

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To HJK

Acknowledgement

In October 2015 I completed my first multi-day hiking tour: I hiked the W-trek in Chile's Torres del Paine National Park. To me, this hike is a perfect allegory for my PhD project. Getting to the starting point of the hike was already challenging. It required taking a plane, a bus, and a ferry. Once I got there, however, I was full of excitement of the time to come, but also a bit worried about how it would be like and if I would manage. An unfortunate incident at the very beginning of the hike left me questioning whether it would still make sense to continue the hike at all. Due to a leak in my tent both my sleeping mat and my sleeping bag were soaking wet and I was overtired and freezing. Luckily, there was a "refugio" where I was allowed to dry my stuff in front of a campfire. So, even though I lost some time, this made me ready to go. In the following days I experienced spectacular, unfamiliar landscapes with new views behind every turn and mountain. Still, it was always strenuous and I always felt immense pressure to reach today's destination. Towards the end, the winds became strong and my energy-level decreased. The wiry Bavarian mountaineer couple who was always faster and who kept sharing its unsolicited wisdom of how to best tackle the next part of the track did not exactly help to boost my energy. I had to gather all my willpower to keep pushing. When I reached the last stop before the supposed highlight of the hike – seeing the mountain range of the Torres del Paine – I was not sure at all if I was going to make it. My travel mate, my cousin Andi, who had already been a constant source of support and encouragement until here, told me: "I see no reason why you should not be able to make it." He was right: I had not come all the way not to see the Torres del Paine. So, I did get up in the middle of the night and I climbed this steepest and hardest part of the trek, at times even on a devious route with not so small stones rolling towards me. And in the end, I got rewarded: I got to see the Torres del Paine on a clear morning, glowing red in the light of the rising sun. I want to thank all those "Andis" who were my support throughout this PhD journey and without whom I would not have seen the light of dawn.

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accepted me to the Graduate School Media and Communication (GMaC) and who reminded me of my strengths as my senior colleague in the MeCoDEM project.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Research interest

> Now we can have a two-way conversation, a dialogue between writer and reader. But the comments have become, let's just say, self-selecting – the anonymously abusive and the bigoted increasingly staking it out as their own, leading anyone else to flee. Such is the level of abuse that many [...] have simply given up reading, let alone engaging with, reader comments. (Jones, 2016)

> The debate over `trolling´, a very small and specific subset of online communities who write provocative and offensive posts specifically to elicit reaction, has spilled over into a general sideswipe against comments. It's one that's misplaced. (Ball, 2012)

Both of the quotes above stem from journalists. They even stem from journalists working for the same publication: *The Guardian*. These two quotes illustrate an ongoing point of contention within contemporary journalism, boiling down to the question whether online user comments are a curse or a blessing.

In many ways, the online user comment certainly represents advancement from the conventional letter to the editor. Letters to the editor usually needed to be crafted by hand or typewriter, sent by post, and they had to stand up to editors' scrutiny before publication. Compared to that, the possibility to comment online allows audience members to express their views on the content and the quality of journalistic output more easily, immediately, and on par with the editors. In this sense, the possibility to comment online represents a democratized form of audience feedback. At first glance, this development is something that journalism outlets who understand their profession as a fourth pillar of democracy can nothing but only embrace and support. Indeed, offering commenting opportunities on websites and social web accounts has become common practice in journalism in the digital age. Over time, however, discontent towards the quality of online user comments seemed to have grown among journalists. In the ensuing debate, the two *Guardian* journalists quoted above represent the opposing views. Jones (2016) highlights the intimidating effect of aggressive online

comments which leads him to conclude that online debate "can [..] poison the very bloodstream of democracy" while Ball (2012) stresses the resourcefulness of many comments and argues that "journalism would be impoverished [without] readers being able to challenge writers".

This contention among journalists at the practical level resides in the broader context of digitalization and the democratizing potential ascribed to digitalization. According to Jenkins (2008) the emergence of the digital web is accompanied by a changing cultural logic of media production and consumption. Key element of this changing logic is the possibility to create and exchange content in unprecedented scope. Publishing content has become generally feasible without much effort and, hence, is no longer limited to media professionals. As Neuberger (2011) puts it, the internet has removed the "technical eye of a needle"[1] (p. 66) that the printing press and broadcasting used to represent. This bears an emancipatory potential compared to the traditional role assigned to the disperse audience as recipients of information while mass media were the senders of information. According to Siapera (2012), the dissolution of these roles leads to a dialogization of communication flows: "There are now multiple sources of contents, communicating with each other, and engaged in what appears to be a dialogue rather than the one-sided monologue that was typical of the mass media era" (p. 55). Within this context, the emergence of social network sites, blogs, and wikis has been hailed as "a new technical infrastructure that further democratizes publishing and participation" (p. 95) and that nurtures "hope for a more participatory, and hence more democratic, model of politics" (p. 95).

These digitalization developments entail significant changes for the journalistic profession because they make it inevitable for journalists to open up towards "the people formerly known as audience" (Rosen, 2006) in one way or another. User comments reach journalists via the social web as media organizations have started creating their own professional social web accounts. With their output both published and socially contextualized in a social web environment, journalists are exposed to an unprecedented visibility of comments, suggestions, and critique. What is more, feedback no longer reaches them from disperse audience members, but from users who are able to relate to one another.

1 Translated from German. Original: "technisches Nadelöhr"

This dialogical structure seems indeed predestined for a more direct, more democratic form of exchange on journalistic content. Nevertheless, journalists like Jones (2016) are skeptical and have come to the conclusion that user comments are toxic to democracy. This discrepancy between the frequently invoked dialogical potential of the social web and the trolling reality bemoaned by many journalists begs for an in-depth examination. What serves as a promising focus of such an examination is an aspect that is often overlooked in journalists' debate over the value of user comments: the responsibility of journalism itself. Exploring journalism's role in tapping the dialogical potential inherent to the social web seems especially relevant against the background of the media's role as enablers of democracy in normative theory (McQuail, 2005, p. 163). Fundamental questions linked to exploring this role include: How is journalism being practiced under social web conditions? What kind of journalistic social web output constitutes the basis for user comments? How do journalists understand their job in connection to user comments?

Against this backdrop, this study concentrates on two major fields of interest: journalistic social web usage and its democratic relevance. Of particular interest in this context are social web activities of media outlets that officially proclaim a dialogical mission. One of these outlets is Germany's international public service broadcaster *Deutsche Welle* (DW) which serves as a case study in this examination.

1.2 Research objectives

This study on journalistic social web usage and its democratic relevance pursues specific research objectives. First of all, it aims to deliver a comprehensive picture of social web usage in professional journalistic contexts that brings to light challenges and complexities from the individual editor's level to the more strategical organizational level. Much of the research on how journalism deals with the changes brought about by digitalization has focused on participatory features offered on news websites (e.g. Domingo et al., 2008; Hermida & Thurman, 2008; Jakobs, 2014; Picone & Raeijmaekers, 2013; Reich, 2011; Robinson, 2010). Now that some journalism organizations have begun to close down the comments sections on their websites arguing that the social web has become the main arena for discussion (Ellis, 2015) it becomes ever more important to extend

the research that has been conducted so far on journalism in the social web (e.g. Gulyas, 2016; Hedman & Djerf-Pierre, 2013; Hille & Bakker, 2013; Lilienthal, Weichert, Reineck, Sehl, & Worm, 2014; Loosen, Schmidt, Heise, Reimer, & Scheler, 2013; Stroud, Scacco, Muddiman, & Curry, 2015) Unlike their own websites, social web platforms are not entirely under media organizations' control. They follow specific logics (van Dijck & Poell, 2014) that journalistic actors who enter the social web environment have to adhere to. When it comes to journalism in the social web, need for research exists especially in relation to the work of so-called "social media editors" (Machill, Beiler, & Krüger, 2014), a role newly introduced to journalistic newsrooms as part of enabling audience participation (Loosen et al., 2013). Hence, while examining journalistic social web usage, one major objective of this study is to shed light on social media editors' work practices and embeddedness within the broader newsroom.

Beyond that, the study aims to concretize dialogical and democracy-related expectations towards communication in the digital web. An assessment of journalism's role in tapping dialogical or democratic potentials requires precise definitions of how the corresponding user communication and journalism practice is supposed to look like. Only then does it become possible to judge user comments and journalistic handling of user comments beyond sweeping statements such as "the trolls [are] trampling over our entire political discourse" (Jones, 2016) or "journalists still haven't got the point of public engagement" (POLIS, 2012).

Finally, the study seeks to offer a solid assessment of the extent to which Germany's international broadcaster *Deutsche Welle* lives up to its dialogical mandate in the social web. Ever since 2004, the *Deutsche Welle* Act stipulates that *Deutsche Welle* should aim at "promoting understanding and the exchange of ideas among different cultures and peoples" (Deutsche Welle, 2004, p. 8). The broadcaster's capacity to fullfil this role has been framed as a unique field of expertise that legitimizes its continued existence as a publicly funded promoter of media freedom in an age of increasingly free international news flows (Niepalla, 2008). Given that the technical structure of the social web is considered conducive to dialogue and that DW is running professional social web accounts, one would assume that the broadcaster makes use of this structure to fulfill this mandate. It is one objective of this study to shed light on this issue.

1.3 Methodological proceeding

In order to accomplish these research objectives, a case study integrating quantitative and qualitative methods is carried out. The case study consists of multiple individual sub-cases that share a similar context. The sub-cases under study are the English service, the German service, and the Russian service of *Deutsche Welle.*

As part of this multiple case study, journalistic social web usage at DW and its democratic relevance are examined based on two models of analysis. Journalistic social web usage at DW is examined based on an adapted version of Schmidt's (2011b) model of analysis for practices of social web usage. The model differentiates practices of identity management, information management, and relationship management. The operationalization of these three central components is informed by theoretical concepts from the realm of journalism studies and eventually results in 20 indicators for characterizing journalistic social web practices.

For the examination of democratic relevance of journalistic social web usage at DW an analytical grid is developed that distinguishes three modes of democratically relevant communication (discourse, dialogue, and everyday talk) as well as related journalistic role concepts (discourse advocate, dialogical mediator, and objective observer). For the operationalization of these communication modes and related journalistic role concepts Brosda's (2008a) hands-on suggestions for discursive journalism practice serve as a main point of departure. The operationalization eventually leads to eight pairs of indicators for assessing social web communication with regard to democratic relevance.

These indicators guide the empirical examination, but they do not determine the scope of discovery conclusively. Yet unknown aspects can come to the fore in the course of the examination as a quantitative method of data collection is complemented with qualitative methods. Content analysis is used as the quantitative method in order to systematically examine journalistic social web output and reactive user comments on the *Facebook* and *YouTube* accounts of DW English, DW German and DW Russian. Semi-structured expert interviews serve as a qualitative method to access the knowledge of DW editors who take care of the selected language services' social web accounts, DW editors who oversee social web activity at the selected language services, and DW staff holding strategic positions that shape social web usage across the entire news organization.

Another qualitative method used as part of this case study is document analysis which serves to grasp how social web usage is officially stipulated in DW's Social Web Guidelines and netiquette policies.

Initially, the data collected by means of these three methods is evaluated per method and per sub-case. Afterwards, it is reviewed in combination with the data from the other data sources in order to identify coherence or contrasts across cases. The findings acquired through this multi-method approach are reported in the form of a narrative that follows the structure of the study's models of analysis and synthesizes information from the individual cases into a cross-case analysis.

1.4 Structure of the study

The study consists of two major parts: Part A (Chapters 1 to 6) covers the theory and the analytical framework; Part B (Chapters 7 to 9) delivers the results and their interpretation.

After this introduction, Part A continues with Chapter 2 which focuses on international broadcasting as the journalism context chosen to serve as a case study for this examination. The chapter details *Deutsche Welle*'s specific profile in relation to three central functions generally ascribed to international broadcasting. Then, Chapter 2 delineates three journalism concepts which agents from different theoretical points of view consider democratically relevant. These journalism concepts are linked to three communication modes. In combination they provide the basis for an analytical grid to assess journalistic social web practice with regard to democratic standards. Chapter 3 explains how public sphere forms under social web conditions, thus clarifying to what extent this contains democratic potential as well as significant changes for the journalistic profession. It moreover establishes a basis for analyzing journalistic social web usage by detailing specifics of professional social web usage und a concrete model of analysis. The chapter also considers modern-day journalism's role in fostering democratically relevant communication in a social web environment. On the basis of the theoretical and empirical insights gained throughout Chapters 2 to 4, the research interest is specified in Chapter 5 in the form of two research questions and four propositions with regard to the outcome of this study. Afterwards, Chapter 6 details the study's multiple-case design. At the end of Part A, Chapter 6 describes the study's analytical framework and

methodological design. Besides pinning down the models of analysis, it lays out the sources of evidence and specifies how exactly the content analysis, the expert interviews, and the document analysis are conducted.

Part B, which delivers the results and offers interpretations of the results, starts off with Chapter 7 addressing journalistic social web usage. Chapter 7 presents results on journalistic social web practices of identity management, information management, and relationship management before it provides a condensed answer to the first research question and an overall interpretation of the results based on theoretical concepts identified in Part A. Thereafter, Chapter 8 turns to democratic relevance of journalistic social web usage and presents results on the democratic relevance of user commentary as well as on journalistic handling of user comments. Chapter 8 concludes by providing a condensed answer to the second research question and by interpreting the results based on theoretical concepts reviewed in Part A. Finally, the conclusion and discussion in Chapter 9 summarize theoretical and practical implications of the findings. After reflecting on the study's methodology, this final chapter concludes with suggestions for future research.

PART A: THEORY AND ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

2 Dialogue as a mandate: German international broadcasting

In order to explore the role of journalism in tapping the democratic potential of the social web's dialogical structure it seems natural to have a look at media organizations that proclaim a dialogical mission. The international broadcaster *Deutsche Welle* (DW) does exactly that and is chosen to serve as a case study for this examination. International broadcasting in general has experienced a dialogical turn after the end of Cold War. In the specific case of DW dialogue is even stipulated in its legal mandate, the *Deutsche Welle* Act. While international broadcasting is quite a particular journalistic venture with functions that are often tension-filled when it comes to editorial independence, DW does make a relevant case study. It is the aim of this chapter is to illustrate why. First of all, Section 2.1 starts off by providing a basic understanding of DW's profile as an international broadcaster. It explains how the media organization is constituted within Germany's public service media landscape, how it is funded, and what its main output channels are. Afterwards, Section 2.2 reviews three central functions of international broadcasting with regard to DW: The public service function, the political self-representation function, and eventually the dialogical function. Each function reveals a certain tension that is picked up later in the empirical part of the study (see Section 5.2) to inform propositions on journalistic social web usage and on handling user comments in the social web.

2.1 Profile of *Deutsche Welle*

Deutsche Welle, *BBC World Service*, *Voice of Indonesia* – all of these media organizations are examples of international broadcasting, an activity that almost every

country in the world engages in (Köhler, 1988, p. 11). Even though broadcasters such as *CNN* or *Sky News* operate internationally, too, the term "international broadcasting" is usually reserved for non-commercial government-supported or government-operated broadcasters targeting audiences world-wide (Youmans & Powers, 2012, p. 2150). What needs to be considered proceeding from this understanding is how exactly international broadcasting is politically constituted in a certain context: The spectrum ranges from international broadcasting that is organized as part of public service offers by democratic societies to international broadcasting that is designed to serve the propaganda purposes of authoritarian regimes (Feilcke, 2011; Zöllner, 2002). According to Kleinsteuber (2004b), *Deutsche Welle* belongs to the former: "DW is a broadcasting station designed according to public service criteria [...] which provides audiences of the world with journalistic information transmitted from within Germany."[2] (p. 6) At the time of the inquiry the broadcaster produces content in 30 languages (Deutsche Welle, 2013).

Deutsche Welle is a member of the *ARD*[3] consortium of public broadcasters in Germany. Thus, it belongs to the public service part of Germany's dual broadcasting system. However, unlike all other German public service broadcasting (PSB) stations which are primarily financed by a license fee, DW receives an annual subsidy and financial support directly from the Federal Government budget. Hence, the broadcaster's compulsory four-year task plan depends on the budgeting specified in the Federal Government's medium-term financial plan (Braun, 2003; *Deutsche Welle*, 2004).

DW's working basis rests on a federal law known as "*Deutsche Welle* Act" (Deutsche Welle, 2004). The broadcaster's goals, to which we will come back in the subsequent Section 2.2, are summarized in the act as follows:

> The offerings of *Deutsche Welle* are intended to convey the image of Germany as a cultural state in the European tradition and as a free and democratic constitutional state. They should provide a forum in Europe and on other continents for German (and other) points of view on important topics, primarily in the areas of politics, culture, and economics, with the aim of promoting understanding and the exchange of ideas among different cultures and peoples. In so doing, *Deutsche Welle* shall, in particular, promote the German language (p. 8)

2 Translated from German. Original: "Die DW ist ein nach öffentlich-rechtlichen Kriterien [...] gestalteter Sender, der aus Deutschland heraus Publika der Welt mit publizistischen Informationen bedient."

3 Short for "Arbeitsgemeinschaft der öffentlich-rechtlichen Rundfunkanstalten der Bundesrepublik Deutschland"

The act moreover stipulates adherence to journalistic standards such as truthfulness and factuality as well as the separation of comments from news as basic principles of DW's programs. At the same time, it prohibits one-sided support of political associations or any other communities of interest (p. 10). Compliance with these basic principles is monitored by a broadcasting board ("Rundfunkrat") that is supposed to represent the interest of the general public in Germany. It consists of members appointed by the German Bundestag, the Bundesrat, and the Federal Government as well as representatives of several socially relevant groups and organizations (p. 30–31).

In the past, the stipulations of the *Deutsche Welle* Act have repeatedly been subject for discussion against the backdrop of changing societal circumstances (Braun, 2003). This was, for example, the case in the run-up to the act's latest amendment, which took effect on Dec 15, 2004. The amendment established, among other things, a statutory basis for DW's online activities by stipulating that "*Deutsche Welle* shall offer radio and television broadcasts and telemedia[4] to foreign listeners and viewers abroad" (Deutsche Welle, 2004, p. 7). This accentuation of the World Wide Web (WWW) as one pillar of DW's portfolio accounted for the significant development of digitalization at the time. In practice, though, digitalization had already been embraced earlier by the broadcaster: Already in 1997 *Deutsche Welle* had been present in the WWW with a website. According to Kleinsteuber (2007), DW had started these initial online activities without much planning: "This happened [...] rather playfully and incrementally, in the absence of strategic interests on the part of the institution's top management."[5] (p. 7) Although DW's online activities became more systematic after an online program committee was founded in 2000, they still took place in a "legal vacuum" (Kleinsteuber, 2002a, p. 367). A report by Groebel (2000), which had been commissioned to serve as a reference for a legal reorientation of the broadcaster, concludes that DW did use the Internet to a relatively high degree as a distribution channel for its conventional television (TV) and radio programs, but it failed to exploit the Internet's specific potential:

4 German legal term for internet services

5 Translated from German. Original: " Das geschah [...] eher spielerisch und inkremental, ohne strategisches Interesse aus der Spitze des Hauses."

> So far, *Deutsche Welle* has left a central possibility of using the Internet out of consideration: The Internet as a communal space. [...] A forum should be created which allows an exchange of information, opinions, and interests of participants from all over the world. (p. 69)

It comes as no surprise that in the run-up to the amendment of the *Deutsche Welle* Act claims were made to include the WWW as a platform for DW content (Kleinsteuber, 2003; Lilienthal, 2000). The 2004 amendment eventually accommodated this demand.

Considering that radio, TV, *and* the internet now make up DW's output channels, the term "broadcasting" has become somewhat inaccurate for describing what the media organization engages in. While there are suggestions to just replace "broadcasting" with "media" (Lowe & Bardoel, 2008), the term "international broadcasting" is maintained in this study as a generic term which also includes online activities.

2.2 Central functions

This section discusses three central functions of international broadcasting in general and *Deutsche Welle* in particular. It also looks at tensions that affect the fulfillment of these functions.

2.2.1 Public service function

By looking at the case of DW this study focuses on international broadcasting designed according to public service criteria. So what specific function does DW fulfill from a public service point of view? The general rationale of PSB systems "is that they should serve the public interest by meeting the important communication needs of society and its citizens, as decided and reviewed by way of the democratic political system" (McQuail, 2005, p. 179). This involves the presumption that commercial media alone – being subject to market forces – would fail to satisfy these diverse communications needs. In Germany's dual media system PSB is supposed to ensure what the Federal Constitutional Court calls "Grundversorgung" (*4. Rundfunkurteil)*, that is, providing a basic service that

reaches the entire population and offers an all-encompassing program. Providing this basic service for the German public, however, is not a mandate that is applicable to international broadcasting with its orientation towards international audiences. Thus, *Deutsche Welle*'s raison d'être differs from the other German public service broadcasters (Pieper, 2000, p. 118). From a public service point of view, *Deutsche Welle*'s legitimacy lies in the provision of objective, professionally produced information especially for countries that lack media freedom (Feilcke, 2011; Kleinsteuber, 2002a; Meyen, 2008). Hafez (2007) calls this the "compensatory function" of international broadcasting. It is an ideal according to which international broadcasters "bring[..] necessary information to people who otherwise would not have access to it" (Price, 2001, para. 13), thus "mak[ing] up for the lack of pluralism in the media systems of many authoritarian countries by means of multi-perspectival news programmes on the target region" (Hafez, 2007, p. 123). Accordingly, international broadcasting usually focuses on news rather than on entertainment. World-wide dissemination of news is regarded as its core competency (Hoff, 2008). The target audiences of international broadcasting are typically those members of a society who can act as multipliers by spreading news and contributing to their dissemination (Zöllner, 2002, p. 184). In terms of DW, this is clearly reflected in the broadcaster's 2010-2013 task plan:

> DW caters to the target group of `information seekers´, that is, people who are interested in diverse points of view and who feature high levels of media information usage. This also includes decision-makers and people who have or will prospectively have a high influence on the public opinion of a country, as well as people who advocate democracy, rights to freedom, and progress in authoritarian states, thus strengthening civil society.[6] (Deutsche Welle, 2010, p. 10)

Whether the compensatory function of international broadcasting still holds relevance is contested in view of satellite TV and the WWW enabling global news

6 Translated from German. Original: "Die DW richtet ihre Angebote auf die Zielgruppe der "Informationssuchenden"/"Info-Seekers" aus, also Menschen, die sich für vielfältige Sichtweisen interessieren und sich durch eine hohe Nutzung von medialen Informationen auszeichnen. Dazu gehören auch Entscheidungsträger und Menschen, die einen hohen Einfluss auf die öffentliche Meinung eines Landes haben oder zukünftig haben werden, sowie Menschen, die sich in autoritären Staaten aktiv für Demokratie, Freiheitsrechte und Fortschritt einsetzen und so die Zivilgesellschaft stärken."

flows. Youmans and Powers (2012), for instance, draw attention to the fact that international broadcasters no longer operate as the only alternatives in noncompetitive marketplaces now that people can draw from a variety of modern media to fulfill their information needs. This loss of their "take-it-or-leave-it bargaining stance" (p. 2152) forced the broadcasters to "adjust their content and formats to connect to audiences" (p. 2152). How exactly international broadcasters have set out to adjust to the circumstances of modern communication is discussed in further detail in Subsection 2.2.3. While Hafez (2007) would principally agree that international broadcasting is required to develop new functions, he is much less worried about globalization undermining the relevance of its compensatory function. The author argues that "through their radio and television programmes in numerous national languages, they [international broadcasters] reach the monolingual but politically decisive middle classes across national borders, a group left untouched [both by the internet and][7] by regular satellite broadcasting" (p. 118). An indication for the continuing relevance of DW's compensatory function can be found in Fiedler and Frère (2016). Their interview study on international broadcasters in francophone Africa suggests that DW's program *Afrique Francophone* fills two niches. First, the program is said to provide serious information on topics such as international, pan-African or health-related issues that would be too resource-intensive for local stations. Second, it was found to be welcomed as an alternative to the dominant international broadcaster *Radio France Internationale* who is perceived as "the voice of the former colonial power" (p. 75).

2.2.2 Political function

What is moreover typical for international PSB organizations is that they fulfill relatively clear political functions (Köhler, 1988). While journalistic freedom is said to represent a guiding principle in day-to-day editorial routines – especially in democratic states with long-established public service traditions – the

7 Wording in German original: "[...] während sie durch ihre Programme in zahlreichen Landessprachen über Radio und Fernsehen diejenigen monolingualen, aber politisch entscheidenden Mittelklassen jenseits staatlicher Grenzen erreichen, an die weder das Internet noch der reguläre Satellitenrundfunk herankommt." Hafez (2005, p. 159)

overall goals and structures of international public broadcasters are often linked to political interests (Braun 2003; Feilcke 2011).

This used to be particularly obvious during Cold War times when international public broadcasting served the block powers as a means to overbear one another's communication barriers and to reach the people of the respective opponent nation (Hagedorn, 2016, pp. 266–267; Kleinsteuber, 2002a; Meyen, 2008). After the Cold War subtler approaches to influencing public attitudes towards states gained relevance. Accordingly, international broadcasting is nowadays more often associated with concepts such as "cultural policy abroad" (Kleinsteuber, 2007; Schneider, 1998), "public diplomacy" (Kuhl, 2002; Michalek, 2009; Zöllner, 2006) or the exertion of "soft power" (Feilcke 2011; Price, 2003). In this context, international broadcasting is justified "as a means of projecting an appropriate image of the funding country so as to extend its influence, facilitate the acceptance of its foreign policies and, possibly, further its general economic and trade objectives" (Price, 2001, para. 14). Hence, the political function of contemporary international broadcasting is mostly a "self-presentation function" (Hafez, 2007, p. 123) that is supposed work in favor of the respective country of origin.

However subtle it may be, the political function of international broadcasting still creates a certain tension. At the heart of this tension lies "the potential split between advancing national policy and acting as a credible journalistic enterprise" (Price, 2003, p. 51). After all, as Zöllner (2006) points out, "many international broadcasters which are operated or funded by states or governments of a liberal democratic type emphasize their overall journalistic mission but do, either implicitly or explicitly, welcome the promotion of their country's national image or its policies" (p. 162). Especially international broadcasters who "fail to liberate themselves from national navel-gazing" (Hafez, 2007, p. 124) are said to run the risk of coming under propaganda suspicion and of alienating the savvy audiences they target (Kuhl, 2002; Meyen, 2008; Schneider, 1998; Youmans & Powers, 2012). In light of this, authors like Kleinsteuber (2007) and Zöllner (2002) argue that the most credible way for an international broadcaster to promote its country's national image is by just providing high-quality reporting.

So, how does this tension play out at *Deutsche Welle*? In her historical account of German international broadcasting from 1953 to 2013, Hagedorn (2016) points to several incidences where tension between DW's professional standards and Germany's official foreign policy became obvious (pp. 328–374). She demonstrates

that many a foreign government has filed complaints to Germany's Federal Foreign Office in the past about DW allegedly meddling with internal affairs by covering social problems or human rights violations in the respective countries. According to Hagedorn's analysis, the broadcaster's staff mostly managed to protect their editorial independence in cases where the Germany's Foreign Office – for fear of damaging its international relations – passed on the pressure created by such complaints. Yet, there also were a few instances when DW was blatantly instrumentalized by the Foreign Office, for example in 1974 when it was pressured to air a communiqué by Chadian rebels who had taken a German doctor hostage. This is said to have caused critical discussions among the German public as it was perceived as an illegitimate intervention that had made DW seem susceptible to blackmail and undermined journalistic independence (p. 493).

A 2003 study conducted by Hafez on commission of DW in the run-up to the latest amendment of the DW Act provides insights as regards the issue of Germany's self-representation via DW. One of the study's conclusions is that DW displays an overt German agenda which resulted, for instance, in out of touch reports about German football heroes in Dari and Pashtu at a time when war-torn Afghani audiences longed for solid journalistic analysis of what is happening in their region (see Hafez, 2007). The author attributes this "Germanomaniac tenor" (p. 125) to an internalized sense of obligation on the part of DW's employees to convey a comprehensive image of Germany, just as stipulated in the 1997 version of the DW Act. Apparently, the study's conclusions resonated with the legislators and as part of the 2004 amendment the DW Act was eventually extended to stipulate that the offers of DW "should provide a forum [...] for German *and other points of view* [emphasis added] on important topics" (Deutsche Welle, 2004, p. 8). This reformulation of DW's goals demands equality of German perspectives and those from other countries. DW's Director General at the time, Erik Betterman, interpreted this as "calling for a regionalization of reporting in the sense that not only what is happening in Germany and Europe should be subject of reporting, but also what is going on regionally, on-site, as well as the local points of view"[8] (Bettermann, 2004, p. 14). To what extent this regionalization has been put into

8 Translated from German. Original: "eine Regionalisierung der Berichterstattung in dem Sinne erfordert, dass nicht nur das Geschehen in Deutschland und Europa Gegenstand der Berichterstattung sein soll, sondern auch die regionalen Ereignisse vor Ort und die dortigen Sichtweisen dazu"

practice remains questionable. A content analysis by Richter (2008) after the reformulation shows that more than 50 percent of DW's Arabic newscasts contained references to Germany and Europe while references to the Arab region made up less than a fifth of the program.

By and large, it seems fair to assume that DW's editorial independence is not severely constrained. Kleinsteuber (2002a) asserts that "the professionalism of DW's work is beyond dispute"[9] (p. 355). According to Hagedorn (2016), DW's independence as an international broadcaster has benefited from the fact that it is overseen by a broadcasting board which, even though it has repeatedly been an arena of political rivalries, could never be claimed entirely or for a longer time by one party or another (p. 494). After all, also the above-mentioned study by Hafez (2007) concludes that aside from whatever tendency to prioritize Germany-related issues DW "maintains a critical and balanced distance from German foreign policy and the local circumstances referred to in reports" (p. 126).

2.2.3 Dialogical function

In this subsection we come back to the dialogical function of international broadcasting, that is, the function because of which DW is selected as a case study in this examination. The dialogical function is one that international broadcasters have only adopted more recently as the end of Cold War and the emergence of diverse information sources has piled the pressure to demonstrate legitimacy. In competition with private news networks such as *CNN* or *Al-Jazeera*, who also target international audiences, international broadcasters are increasingly forced to sharpen their profiles (Price, 2001; Thomass, 2007). Transnational communication, the former specialist area of international broadcasters, has become a common phenomenon now that digital content can both be created and accessed from almost all over the world (Meyen, 2008). As a consequence, international broadcasting is faced with the question of its specific contribution within the global media landscape (Niepalla, 2008). In this context, the concept of dialogue seems to serve as a promising new paradigm (see e.g. Hafez 2007; Lynch, 2010; Riordan, 2004). As we will see in Section 3.1, dialogue is conceived

9 Translated from German. Original: "steht die Professionalität der DW-Arbeit außer Frage"

as an equal exchange based on the recognition of mutual differences. Advocates of a dialogical reorientation in international broadcasting consider international broadcasters particularly well-positioned to facilitate this communication mode (Kops, 2008). Critics, in turn, argue that it is an unrealistic communication mode within the greater endeavor to link states and foreign publics:

> States are not likely to change their policies based upon the opinions of foreign populations, because governments are not accountable to them in any direct or institutional way. It is improbable that any government broadcaster will listen to the degree promised by the term *dialogue* [emphasis in original]. (Youmans & Powers, 2012, p. 2151)

In the case of *Deutsche Welle* it seems that dialogue was indeed welcomed as a new guiding concept and source of legitimacy. Kleinsteuber (2004a), for one, considers DW an ideal place to put into practice what he conceptualizes as dialogical journalism (see Subsection 3.1.3). He points to the fact that DW's language services are largely staffed with journalists with diverse backgrounds. Since bridging cultures is part of their own identity he deems them especially credible when it comes to creating understanding between different cultural perspectives. In terms of securing DW's competiveness, Kleinsteuber (2003) argues that dialogical journalism is useful because it emphasizes one of DW's distinct competitive advantages, namely the combination of professionalism and multiculturality.

That DW is supposed to fulfill a dialogical function was officially confirmed when this function acquired legal status as part of the latest amendment of the *Deutsche Welle* Act. Ever since then, the Act stipulates that *Deutsche Welle*'s offers should aim at "promoting understanding and the exchange of ideas among different cultures and peoples" (Deutsche Welle, 2004, p. 8).

A qualitative study by Krasteva (2007) shows that the role of "the mediator in the dialogue of cultures"[10] is indeed part of the journalistic self-understanding at *Deutsche Welle*. Journalists who identify strongly with this role were found to be motivated by the wish to facilitate a dialogue between Germany and other countries and to make common people's voice heard within this dialogue (pp. 113–115). In an attempt to evaluate DW's efforts to feature dialogue in radio, TV, and online services for the Arab world, Zöllner (2006) comes to the conclusion

10 Translated from German. Original: "der Mittler in Kulturdialog"

that such efforts were observable to a certain extent, for instance in the form of broadcasted discussion forums. At the same time, however, he detected concrete limitations to these efforts:

> Some are rooted in cultural and political circumstances that are detrimental to a climate of openness which is needed in any true dialogue. Other limitations are inherent in the technical nature of the one-way medium that broadcasting mostly is. Reading excerpts from listeners' letters on-air or quoting from website users' email responses is feedback (and possibly highly valuable as such) but does of course not permit audience members to take on the role of respondent in true dialogic fashion. It is the broadcaster, after all, who decides on his own terms which feedback material will be used on programmes while other parts of it will be mostly ignored. (p. 175)

This begs the question to what extent *Deutsche Welle* fulfils a dialogical function if the technical nature of the medium does not pose a limitation – as it is the case in the two-way communication structure of social web.

2.3 Summary and conclusion: *Deutsche Welle* as an instructive case study

This chapter gave an overview of the profile and the central functions of Germany's international broadcaster *Deutsche Welle* who serves as a case study for this examination. DW was characterized as a public service media organization that targets international audiences and – unlike the other national German public service broadcasters who are largely financed by a license fee – is financed directly by Federal Government funds. DW's working basis is a federal law known as "*Deutsche Welle* Act". It stipulates particular goals such as the promotion of understanding between different cultures and of the German language, but also adherence to journalistic principles such as truthfulness and factuality which are by monitored by a broadcasting board. The broadcaster offers radio, TV, and internet services in the local languages of its various target regions around the globe.

International broadcasting in general was discussed as fulfilling three central functions: a public service function, a political function, and a dialogical function. The public service function of international broadcasting was specified as a function to compensate for a lack of diversity and balance in the news of politically controlled media systems. Accordingly, international broadcasters usually have

a news focus and target audiences who can serve as opinion leaders and multiplicators. In view of ever more global news flows, the compensatory function of international broadcasting turned out to be somewhat contested. Studies, however, were found to point to its continuing relevance especially in under-resourced media landscapes and for monolingual, politically decisive middle classes.

Fulfilling a political function was described as being pursued by international broadcasters in a rather subtle fashion nowadays compared to Cold War times when international broadcasting quite overtly served propaganda purposes. In modern international broadcasting a political function was said to usually play out in attempts to project a positive image of the transmitting country. Critics were found to argue that such a focus on the transmitting country still aroused propaganda suspicion which could only be countered by providing high-quality journalism. In the context of DW, the latest amendment of the *Deutsche Welle* Act implied that DW regionalizes its reporting by not only providing a forum for German points of view but also for "other points of view". While a content analysis on DW's Arabic newscasts revealed that even after the amendment there was a focus on Germany-related news, the broadcaster's general professionalism seemed undisputed.

The dialogical function was characterized as one that international broadcasting has only adopted more recently under the impression of an increasingly competitive environment haggling over the attention of international audiences. In this context, the capacity to facilitate dialogue is framed as a distinctive competence and thus a competitive advantage of international broadcasters. At DW this was acknowledged as part of the latest amendment of the *Deutsche Welle* Act which specifies DW's mission to promote understanding and exchange between cultures. Empirical studies on DW's dialogical engagement showed that a dialogical self-understanding is indeed detectable among DW journalists, in practice, however, it turned out largely constrained by the technical nature of the one-way media channels used.

While this chapter clearly illustrates the particularities of German international broadcasting, it gives reason to believe that the case of DW can be instructive at different levels for the study journalism in the social web. Of course, by using DW as a case study this inquiry first and foremost accounts for the concrete situation of international PSB in Germany. It sheds light on a specific public service product that is rooted in Cold War times and needs to justify its legitimacy as a publicly funded media organization against the background of today's global

news flows. As of late, it is mostly DW's alleged dialogical expertise that serves as its main source of legitimation. Now that DW has become active in the social web it seems worthwhile to examine to what extent the broadcaster makes use of the social web's two-way communication structure in order to fulfill its dialogical mission more effectively.

An analysis of DW's social web practices moreover allows seeing to what extent and in what form its other functions, such as the public service function and the political function, play a role in its professional identity management. This seems relevant for improving our understanding as to how international broadcasting at large deals with the tensions inherent to its central functions.

Finally, it is assumed that using DW as a case study also holds relevance at a more general level for editorial offices maneuvering in social web structures. Its particular constitution notwithstanding, DW appears comparable to other journalistic news outlets running social web accounts inasmuch as it is expected to create, maintain, and adjust specific work routines (see Section 4.6) and handle the comments of their social web users in a professional manner (see Section 4.6). Before we turn to the expectations and challenges that journalism as such faces when practiced in the social web (see Chapter 4), we take a closer look at what it means to practice journalism in a dialogical manner. The following Chapter 3 takes the concept of dialogical journalism as a starting point to explore the broader idea of journalism as a facilitator of democratically relevant communication.

3 Journalism as a facilitator of democratically relevant communication

One of the central aims of this study is to assess journalistic handling of user comments in the social web according to democratic standards. This chapter provides the theoretical foundation for such an assessment by delineating three journalism concepts, each facilitating one specific democratically relevant communication mode.

The three communication modes discerned here are dialogue, discourse, and everyday talk. These terms are standard vocabulary in academic reflections about the democratic quality of communicative practices. Especially "dialogical" seems to have naturalized as an attribute for communication in the social web, typically with reference to the emancipating potential of multidirectional communication flows afforded by the social web's network structure (see e.g. Hornmoen & Steensen, 2014; Siapera, 2012; Schmidt, 2011b).

But how is journalism conceived as a facilitator of these communication modes? Interestingly, efforts to theorize journalists as "dialogical mediators" or "discourse advocates" do not just exist since the rise of the social web but date back prior to that. They commonly came up in response to certain shortcomings of (news) journalism, such as its focus on elites (Heikkilä & Kunelius, 1998, p. 72) or its increasingly profit-driven nature (Brosda, 2008a, pp. 304–305), that were deemed to diminish journalism's democratic role. The terms "dialogue", "discourse" and also "everyday talk" (or related ones) mark basic reference points within these alternative journalism conceptualizations and – as this chapter will show – numerous authors utilize them, individually or jointly, in order to link communication to a certain democratic potential. Yet, across studies – sometimes even within one and the same study – this terminology is marked by inconsistency. In fact, the usage of these terms often seems to rest upon preconceived ideas of the underlying theories. Therefore, this chapter engages in an in-depth analysis of the long-standing theoretical underpinnings of the aforementioned journalism concepts' based on primary sources. In doing so, it seeks to add consistency to the concepts' usage and their operationalization in communication research on social web contexts.

Section 3.1 starts off by looking into journalism and dialogue, then Section 3.2 goes on with addressing journalism and deliberation before Section 3.3. considers

journalism and everyday talk. Each of these sections first elaborates the respective communication mode's theoretical underpinnings before it explicates its democracy-theoretical relevance and finally details the associated journalistic role. In the conclusive Section 3.4 the three journalism concepts "dialogical journalism", "discursive journalism" and "objectivity-oriented journalism", along with the associated communication modes, are ranked according to their level of democratic standard from high to low and eventually converted into a model for assessing the response stage of the journalistic news process in the social web. On this basis, it becomes measureable to what extent journalism in the social web lives up to ideals of stimulating democratically relevant communication.

3.1 Journalism and dialogue

The fact that the structure of the social web allows for a dialogization of communication flows marked one of the starting points of the study at hand. As we will see in Chapter 4 dialogical expectations towards journalism have risen in the digital age. At the same time, such dialogical expectations are not entirely new. In international public service broadcasting, for instance, a dialogical function has already been considered an important asset for quite a while. This calls for a deeper enquiry of the concept of dialogue and its translation into journalistic practice in this section.

3.1.1 Theoretical underpinnings of dialogue

While the cradle of dialogue is said to be the ancient Greek theater (Kleinsteuber, 2002b), we find that in modern times the concept of dialogue has been picked up in a variety of fields. Around the beginning of the new millennium it featured popularly in cultural policy, for instance, with the General Assembly of the United Nations designating 2001 as the "Year of Dialogue among Civilizations" (Dallmayr, 2002, p. 1) or the German Federal President declaring "Intercultural Dialogue" a guiding principle (Kleinsteuber, 2004a, p. 41).

When it comes to academic disciplines, there is a whole strand of philosophy revolving around dialogue with seminal contributors such as Buber, Bakhtin,

Bohm, Freire, or Gadamer (Stewart, Zediker, & Black, 2004). These philosophers' understandings of dialogue may differ in their foci. Deetz and Simpson (2004), for example, ascribe a liberal humanist perspective focusing on individuals' private internal meanings to Bohm, a critical hermeneutic orientation emphasizing meaning production and negotiation to Gadamer and a postmodern position mostly concerned with indeterminacy and otherness to Bakhtin. However, basic commonalities between these philosophical approaches to dialogue have been identified by Stewart et al. (2004). The authors argue that holism and tensionality are overall shared characteristics. That is, all of these philosophers of dialogue approached their subject matter "broadly rather than narrowly, as much as possible as a totality" (p. 23) and they all featured a "tendency to understand whatever is of interest [...] dynamically and dialectically rather than as a static construct" (p. 23). These philosophical underpinnings of the concept of dialogue serve as an informative basis for this examination.

One striking aspect in a dialogical understanding of communication is that the recognition of differences between dialogue partners' is regarded as marking the beginning of any dialogical interaction. Kleinsteuber (2004a) considers this "a stringent necessity"[11] (p. 46). According to Bohm, Factor, and Garrett (1991), this recognition of difference is interlinked with awareness about the fact that the way one interprets the world is not the only sensible way in which it can be interpreted:

> [...] we live in a world produced almost entirely by human enterprise and thus, by human thought. The room in which we sit, the language in which these words are written, our national boundaries, our systems of value, and even that which we take to be our direct perceptions of reality are essentially manifestations of the way human beings think and have thought. (para. 7)

Having acknowledged that others may interpret the world differently, dialogue partners show a "commitment to embracing and struggling with others whose worldviews may be radically different from and threatening to [..] [their] own" (Wood, 2004, xvi). Healy (2011) calls this "the 'clashing and meshing' of diverse viewpoints" (p. 308). His conceptualization of dialogue does not only acknowledge difference, but is also responsive to it, which implies "to allow others to articulate their own positions in their own terms and accord them the status of

11 Translated from German. Original: "zwingende Notwendigkeit"

equal partners in the conjoint exploration of a topic [...]" (p. 302). The explorative nature of dialogue is also evident in Bohm et al. (1991) where it is said to rely on interlocutors' "willingness to gain a deep insight" (para. 7).

How is dialogue being enacted once the prerequisites of recognizing mutual difference and readiness to explore it have been met? What is strongly emphasized as a constituting feature of dialogue is its back-and-forth movement. Bohman (1996), who advocates a dialogical approach to public deliberation, highlights the mechanism of "shifting and exchanging perspectives in the course of dialogue – shifting between speaking and listening" (p. 63). As a part of this exchange, he argues, "each speaker incorporates and reinterprets the other's contribution in his or her own" (p. 58). Dialogue is seen as "a fluctuating, unpredictable, multivocal process in which uncertainty infuses encounters between people and what they mean and become" (Wood, 2004, xvi). This brings up the aspect of tensionality which indeed many authors stress as a major characteristic of dialogue. Obviously, this unpredictable back-and-forth between different perspectives is prone to tension. Wood (2004), for instance, points out:

> [...] tension is inherent in and integral to dialogue. Tension may be of many sorts: tension between the perspective one holds at a given moment and the perspective of another(s); tension between possible views and versions of self; tension between alternative ways of ordering and acting in the world. We enter into dialogue with perspectives - beliefs, opinions, values, assumptions, interests, and so forth - on ourselves, others, and the world. Yet we hold these perspectives provisionally, if dearly. We allow - perhaps even embrace - tension between our perspectives and those of others, which may challenge and change our own. (xvii)

Healy (2011) understands this tension as a creative force that remains untapped if attention is only focused on what participants have in common. In a dialogical engagement with difference, he argues, tension can fuel a dialectical learning process (p. 304).

Tension may moreover arise from the fact that dialogue grants a fair amount of leeway to the subject of debate. Already Bohm et al. (1991) stipulate that in dialogue "any subject can be included and no content is excluded" (para. 17). This entails that "extremes of frustration, anger, conflict or other difficulties may occur" (para. 20). In cases where such communication behavior is perceived as "disturbing or not fitting" (para. 38) by any of the participants Bohm et al. stress the importance of making this explicit so that the process of dialogue itself can be

explored and clarified in the form of a meta-dialogue (para. 20). Even though the authors give weight to self-regulation effects from within the group of dialogue partners, they also consider facilitation an essential element, especially in the early stages of a dialogue (para. 36). The role they assign to facilitators ("leaders") of a dialogue is limited, though. While facilitators are supposed to occasionally point out when participants seem to have reached a sticking point, they have to make sure not to act in a manipulative or obtrusive manner. Bohm et al. underline: "Leaders are participants just like everybody else. Guidance, when it is felt to be necessary, should take the form of `leading from behind´ and preserve the intention of making itself redundant as quickly as possible" (para. 36). After all, it remains the authors' conviction that "any controlling authority, no matter how carefully or sensitively applied, will tend to hinder and inhibit the free play of thought and the often delicate and subtle feelings that would otherwise be shared" (para. 35). Healy's (2011) conceptualization of dialogue, in turn, does mention "dialogical ground rules" (p. 308) by which participants are supposed to abide. While these ground rules aren't elaborated further, one of their main function is said to prevent "a preoccupation with adversarial competition" (p. 308).

Another significant feature of dialogue seems to be that it is not goal-driven. Bohman (1996), for example, states: "Unlike a joint activity that is engaged in to achieve some collective goal, the success of a dialogue cannot always be specified in a means-end way" (p. 56). Bohm et al. (1991) specify that it is the absence of a goal that characterizes a dialogical communication mode: "It is not concerned with deliberately trying to alter or change behavior nor to get the participants to move toward a predetermined goal" (para. 17). Along the same lines, Wood (2004) explains that the very essence of dialogue lies in this incompleteness: "[...] we resist tendencies to reconcile or synthesize perspectives, much less to choose between them. Instead, we wrestle with the discomfort that comes from lack of closure and lack of unquestionably right answers" (xvii).

Even though dialogue is not conceptualized as striving towards a specific goal, certain outcomes are brought up by authors as side products of dialogical communication. One of them is the mere development of interpersonal relations and a certain level of trust (Bohm et al., 1991, para. 21; Kim & Kim, 2008, p. 65; McCoy & Scully, 2002, pp. 122–123). As participants of a dialogue are listening to fellow participants and reflecting on their personal perceptions free of imposed consensus and free of any domination or submission, sensitivity and experience are

said to increase and to nurture trust. This, in turn, is said to enrich the dialogue: "Increasing trust between members of the group – and trust in the process itself – leads to the expression of the sorts of thoughts and feelings that are usually kept hidden" (Bohm et al., 1991, para. 21). Without building a level of trust, as McCoy and Scully (2002) argue, it would be "difficult for people to examine publicly the basic assumptions and values that underlie their own views, let alone understand others' perspectives" (p. 122).

Another side effect of dialogical communication evident in the literature is the creation of mutual understanding. As a dialogue partner, Simpson (2001) describes, "I try to understand – but not necessarily agree with – what you take your life to be about, and [..] you do the same for me" (p. 79). Thus, dialogue creates an understanding of others' perspectives, but at the same time it also "serves to construct the concept of the self" (Kim & Kim, 2008, p. 65) by bringing to awareness one's own perspective in relation to the others: "Through the give and take of dialogue the limits of the hearer's understandings become clear as the dialogue shifts between the experiences of the life histories of individuals or groups and the current framework of understandings and norms" (Bohman, 1996, p. 61). Differences in understandings, however, are not meant to be dissolved. They are just meant to be recognized. As Wood (2004) points out in this respect: "Rather than the reproductive goal of finding `common ground´ or `resolving differences´, dialogue allows differences to exist without trying to resolve, overcome, synthesize, or otherwise tame them" (xvii). Bohm et al. (1991), too, clarify: "The dialogue is not aimed at settling anything. We explore meaning together [...]" (para. 5). Still, mutual understanding can be deemed an outcome of dialogue because this exploration "creates new categories or expands old ones in order to incorporate these life histories [of others] and their new experiences" (Bohman, 1996, p. 61). In view of this enlargement of understanding, Healy (2011) speaks of "transformative learning through a commitment to respecting and preserving difference" (p. 303).

3.1.2 Democracy-theoretical relevance of dialogue

The philosophical occupation with the dialogical concept is very much concerned with interpersonal communication. Yet, Kleinsteuber (2004a) asserts that "by emphasizing the importance of dialogue we commit to democratic communication:

Dictatorships know no substantial dialogue"[12] (p. 48). So, how does dialogue relate to society at large, to communication in the public sphere? To what extent is dialogue relevant from a democracy-theoretical perspective?

One of the main philosophical contributors to dialogical theory, David Bohm, actually makes an explicit connection between the interpersonal communication concept he advocates and democracy. Together with his colleagues Factor and Garrett, Bohm (1991) argues that dialogue revealed an aspect of "koinonia, a word meaning `impersonal fellowship´, which was originally used to describe the early form of Athenian democracy in which all the free men of the city gathered to govern themselves" (para. 22). Indeed, dialogue is said to have played a significant role in ancient Greece. According to Dalfen (1975), Plato picked up dialogue as a main format for his writings because he understood political philosophy as an ongoing interaction that proceeds through questions and answers and leads to knowledge. By uniting format and message, Plato's dialogues served the purpose of making the readers train the political virtues that were supposed to characterize citizens of the polis (Waschkuhn, 1998).

Another main representative of dialogical philosophy, Buber, allegedly used to be skeptical about the feasibility of interpersonal dialogue as a public undertaking, fearing that "listeners and onlookers would impede necessarily participants' attempts to hear and respond to each other in genuine and spontaneous ways" (Cissna & Anderson, 2004, p. 201). Apparently, Buber dropped his skepticism after experiencing a successful public dialogue with American humanistic psychologist and psychotherapist Carl Rogers in 1957. This instance encouraged Cissna and Anderson (2004) to look into the factors that can facilitate public dialogue between potentially adverse participants. The authors argue that there is an acute relevance for this in view of modern societal challenges:

> We live in an increasingly and necessarily pluralized society and in an era of persistent conflicts and disagreements across ethnicity, religion, gender, and sexual preference, as well as ideological, economic, power, and status distinctions. Modern media enable us to transmit messages more efficiently, but communication itself, as we are only too painfully aware, does not automatically improve. (p. 202)

12 Translated from German. Original: "Im Betonen der Wichtigkeit des Dialogs bekennen wir uns zu demokratischer Kommunikation: Diktaturen kennen keinen substantiellen Dialog."

A similar position is taken up by Healy (2011) when he argues that "transformative dialogue provides a [..] fitting template for a truly inclusive democratic process capable not only of meeting the needs of an increasingly pluralistic and multicultural world but also of doing justice to its multifaceted complexity [...]" (p. 309). So, some authors see dialogue's democratic relevance predominantly in its capacity to handle difference.

Others stress its democratic relevance as a prerequisite of purposive and rational discourse. Kim and Kim (2008), for instance, argue that dialogic deliberation is a crucial underpinning of the larger deliberative democratic process of political will-formation:

> Democracy is not only about what decisions to make and how to make decisions but also about why we make such and such decisions and about what and who we are. Democracy is not only about negotiating conflicting self-interests but also about understanding one's own and others' interests. Democracy is not only a way of achieving certain goals but more often than not, it is also about constructing our goals. Democracy is not only a way of reaching consensus but also about constructing the fundamental background on which we can collectively negotiate to achieve a consensus. (p. 65–66)

This is in line with what McCoy and Scully (2002) observe in their study circle programs of civic engagement in which they try to combine dialogue and deliberation. The authors report that in the first few sessions their strategy is to rather emphasize dialogical aspects. Pros and cons of different proposals for actions are usually not addressed by the participants before the penultimate session. "By this time", the authors argue, "people have become more comfortable with each other and with the issue, making it easier for everyone to have a voice" (p. 124).

Overall, the above-mentioned considerations illustrate that "using the word *dialogue* [...] foregrounds specific normative hopes" (Deetz & Simpson, 2004) and that these hopes are indeed often connected to more inclusive democratic participation.

3.1.3 Journalists' role as dialogue mediators

In dialogue studies, it does not seem to be taken widely into consideration that journalism could play a role in facilitating dialogical communication.

According to Pauly (2004), it is a common stereotype in dialogue studies that mass media rather discourage dialogue than encourage it, or that the mass media and dialogue even represent incommensurable modes of communication (pp. 244–245). The according argumentation goes: "Dialogue is direct, a person-to-person encounter. The media are, well, mediated, they rely on technology rather than interpersonal commitment as their mode of connection" (p. 244). Vice versa, as Pauly points out, journalism studies have never foregrounded dialogue in their conceptualizations even though they share concerns with dialogue theory, for example when it comes to engaging people. In the author's view, "media studies would profit from closer relations with dialogic theory" (p. 256).

In fact, there are instances where media scholars apply dialogical principles to journalism practice. Heikkilä and Kunelius (1998), for example, suggest using the concept of dialogue as a reference for a conceptually grounded critique of journalism practice at the time. They differentiate between dialogue *in* journalism and dialogue *between* journalism and the community of readers. By reference to dialogue *in* journalism one could, for instance, criticize that journalism is eager to polarize between two adversaries instead of representing a variety of opinions (pp. 74–75). Also the fact that journalists cover voices unequally according to status and the resulting lack of room for common peoples' "own (unique and particular) experiences, and feelings" (p. 75) could be criticized on that basis, they argue. If dialogue served as a reference for what is going on *between* journalism and the community of readers, the focus would shift to how much dialogue and what sort of dialogue journalism is able to facilitate. What could be subject to critical scrutiny from this point of view is journalism's ability to offer "room for the readers' own accents and interpretations, which connect the consumption of journalism to their own everyday experiences" (p. 76) as well as its ability to "encourage different readings" (p. 77).

Another example for a dialogical conceptualization of journalism ensuing from a critique of journalism practice stems from Anderson, Dardenne, and Killenberg (1994). The authors argue that the journalism of their day is in crisis because it has become an industry that regards its audience as nothing but consumers. As a solution, the authors suggest that journalism "turn[s] from transmitting news and information to an active role of assisted people-to-people communication that ranges far beyond the printed page or newscast script" (p. 2). What would characterize journalistic dialogue as conceived by Anderson et al. is, for instance,

that it is accessible and responsive to its audience, that it leaves room for surprise, "strange otherness", and alternative voices, that it acknowledges its responsibility as creator (as opposed to reporter) of social representations, and that it is committed to maintaining communication (pp. 25–27).

Another conceptualization that defines concrete roles of a dialogical journalist is provided by Kleinsteuber (2004a). His conceptualization picks up on the idea that dialogue is conducive to the needs of an increasingly pluralistic and multicultural world. The author notes that in today's world people's sense of belonging is increasingly determined by cultural affiliations that may well exist independent of geographic or territorial borders (p. 45). Diverse cultural affiliations, he argues, result in diverse viewpoints which can be exchanged only by means of an open dialogue. As intercultural dialogue is quite a demanding mode of communication for its participants, it requires external mediation. In Kleinsteuber's view, this task can be fulfilled by journalists. He conceives journalists as "dialogical mediators" who attach equal value to all persons involved despite of differences in perspectives or interests (p. 57). At the same time, journalists' work is supposed to be close to individual perspectives and personal emotions (p. 56). Journalists as dialogical mediators furthermore fulfill the function of moderators who structure, explain, and evaluate the different viewpoints within dialogues of cultures and thus provide clarity. The author sees the Internet as a key sphere of activity for dialogical journalists. Here, they can serve as navigators who help systemizing raw information from around the globe (pp. 57–60).

3.2 Journalism and discourse

For any study of democratic quality of communicative practices one concept is absolutely essential: Discourse. As this chapter will show, discourse is rooted in Habermas' model of the public sphere, it is part and parcel of a whole strand of democracy theory, namely deliberative democracy theory, and has inspired normative thinking about journalism and its ideal functions. Interestingly, many of the authors cited in the previous section developed their dialogical communication concepts as alternative notions to what is conventionally understood as "discourse" or "deliberation" (e.g. Bohman, 1996; Healy, 2011; Kim & Kim, 2008; McCoy & Scully, 2002). Healy (2011), for instance, regards his

dialogical reconfiguration of the standard deliberative model as "a means of liberating potentials inherent in the deliberative proposal from the outset but typically suppressed by an undue emphasis on homogeneity, uniformity and consensus" (p. 296). Against this background, this section takes a close look at the conventional notion of discourse, clarifies from where it originates and which of its features have become subject to criticism.

What has to be noted in terms of terminology is that "deliberative" and "discursive" are widely used interchangeably in the literature (Dryzek, 2000, p. 3). This probably has to do with the fact that the term "discourse" contains a connotation strongly influenced by the Foucauldian sense of the word which understands it in hegemonic terms. While Habermas himself initially used the term "discourse" in his work "The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere" (1989)[13] and developed corresponding "discourse ethics", the reception and advancement of his work happened under the notion "deliberation". Habermas, too, started to refer to public discourse as "deliberation" in his work "Between Facts and Norms"[14] (Waschkuhn, 1998, p. 69) and also in a relatively recent publication he maintains: "Deliberation is a demanding form of communication" (Habermas, 2006, p. 413). Thus, in the remainder of this study both the term "deliberation" and the term "discourse" shall signify the same communication mode.

3.2.1 Theoretical underpinnings of discourse

The "perhaps the most widely referenced conceptualization" (Stromer-Galley, 2007, p. 2) of discourse is Habermas' model of the bourgeois public sphere. In "The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere" Habermas (1989) gives a detailed account of how this public sphere evolved historically, what mode of communication it involved, what it meant socially and politically, and how it deteriorated in the face of increased influence of market structures and consumerism. Thus, he describes a bygone phenomenon but holds it in high esteem as a model for a normatively desirable sphere between private people and the state.

13 Originally appeared in German under the title "Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit" in 1962

14 Originally appeared in German under the title "Zwischen Faktizität und Geltung" in 1992

According to Habermas, the bourgeois public sphere developed in the 17th and 18th century when for the first time there was a stratum of autonomous citizens – the bourgeois – who discussed with one another in public communicative spaces such as Germany's "Tischgesellschaften", France's "salons", or Great Britain's coffee houses (pp. 30–36). What Habermas regards as unparalleled about this kind of communication is the general relevance of its subject-matter and the pertinent use of reason:

> The bourgeois public sphere may be conceived above all as the sphere of private people come together as a public; they soon claimed the public sphere regulated from above against the public authorities themselves, to engage them in a debate over the general rules governing relations in the basically privatized but publicly relevant sphere of commodity exchange and social labor. The medium of this political confrontation was peculiar and without historical precedent: people's public use of their reason. (p. 27)

Aside from all their differences, in size or style for instance, Habermas stresses three criteria that these publics in the communicative spaces across different countries had in common. The first criterion is that they "preserved a kind of social intercourse [...] that disregarded status altogether" (p. 36). That is, even though the members of the bourgeois stratum were not necessarily equal in their social status, these differences did not affect their debates. Secondly, these publics all addressed hitherto unquestioned areas of common concern on which church and state authorities used to have "the monopoly of interpretation" (p. 36). They could do so because cultural products such as philosophical and literary works had become generally accessible as a commodity and challenged the bourgeois "to determine its meaning on their own (by way of rational communication with one another), verbalize it, and thus state explicitly what precisely in its implicitness for so long could assert its authority" (p. 37). The third common criterion of these publics is that they were all inclusive in the sense that they constituted "the new form of bourgeois representation" (p. 37). That is, people did not only think of themselves as the group of actual discussants present while debating, but understood themselves as immersed within a larger public: "The issues discussed became `general´ not merely in their significance, but also in their accessibility: everyone had to *be able* [emphasis in the original] to participate" (p. 37).

"Tischgesellschaften", "salons", and coffee houses represent the early institutions of the bourgeois public sphere in Habermas' theory. With the rise of monthly and weekly journals in the second half of the 18th century, the public became "held together through the medium of the press and its professional criticism. They formed the public sphere of a rational-critical debate in the world of letters" (p. 51). This public sphere in the world of letters soon appropriated the state-governed public sphere by establishing public opinion as a powerful factor for regulating civil society. In the bourgeois constitutional state "legislation was supposed to be the result not of a political will, but of rational agreement" (82) and, thus, state activity became bound to norms legitimated by public opinion. In this context, Habermas' highlights the importance of consensus as an outcome of deliberation: "*Public debate was supposed to transform* voluntas *into a* ratio *that in the public competition of private arguments came into being as the consensus about what was practically necessary in the interest of all* [emphasis in the original]" (p. 83).

The deterioration of the bourgeois public sphere is finally described by Habermas as a consequence of market laws pervading the sphere of private people forming a public. As private life became more and more subjected to a cycle of production and consumption after the first half of the 19th century, rational-critical debate, too, was increasingly replaced by consumption and so the web of public communication unraveled (pp. 160–161). The rational discourse around which the bourgeois public sphere had formed, however, survived as an ideal.

This communication mode of the bourgeois stratum rationally discussing social and political concerns on equal terms is reflected in conceptions of ideal deliberation by deliberative democratic theorists (e.g. Cohen, 1997; Elster, 1998; Schudson, 1997). Cohen's (1997) model of an "ideal deliberative procedure", for example, is very much in line with the historical "Habermasian" template. The ideal deliberative procedure as conceived by Cohen is free, equal, and leads to rationally motivated consensus (pp. 74–75). In Cohen's understanding such a mode of communicating almost naturally plays out as reasoned argumentation because

> [...] the mere fact of having a preference, conviction, or ideal does not by itself provide a reason in support of a proposal. While I may take my preferences as a sufficient reason for advancing a proposal, deliberation under conditions of pluralism requires that I find reasons that make the proposal acceptable to others who cannot be expected to regard my preferences as sufficient reasons for agreeing. (p. 76)

A similar approach is evident in a communication ideal which Schudson (1997) refers to as "problem-solving conversation" and which he discerns from "sociable conversation". What signifies problem-solving conversation is that it "focuses on argument, the conversational partners' capacity to formulate and respond to declarative views of what the world is and what it should be like" (p. 300). Both Cohen's and Schudson's concepts subscribe to the idea that the "unforced force of the better argument" (Habermas, 1996, p. 306) prevails. Accordingly, they conceptualize communication partners as striving to provide persuasive reasons for their claims. This reason-giving is said to be prompted by a shared commitment to "resolv[e] their differences through deliberation" (Cohen, 1997, p. 76), that is, to arrive at consensus. Consensus, in this conventional understanding of deliberation, always refers to matters of public concern. From this point of view, the justification of a statement lies "in its practical relationship to the articulation of common ends" (Schudson, 1997, p. 300). The according mode of communication, Schudson argues, requires a degree of civility and has to abstract the public from the sociable. As such he deems it "more ambitious" (p. 304) than sociable modes of communication. Proper public deliberation is considered to "*shape[..] the identity and interests* [emphasis in the original] of citizens in ways that contribute to the formation of a public conception of common good" (Cohen, 1997, p. 69). An optimal deliberative setting is seen as one that is "conducive to genuinely impartial deliberation about the common good" (Elster, 1998, p. 116).

In sum, these deliberative democratic theorists' conceptions of ideal deliberation lay a focus on reasoned argumentation and on the public good. This very focus has brought some critics to the scene.

The main charge of these critics refers to deliberation's alleged exclusiveness. Scholars concerned with diversity see valid agents and communication styles excluded from a communication mode as described above. With a view to its emphasis on reasoned argumentation, Young (1996), for instance, argues that such a concept of deliberation privileges certain kinds of speech, namely speech that is "assertive and confrontational", "formal and general", and "dispassionate and disembodied" (p. 123-124). Along the same line, Sanders (1997) notes: "Arguing that democratic discussion should be rational, moderate, and not selfish implicitly excludes public talk that is impassioned, extreme, and the product of particular interests" (p. 14). The argument of these authors is that the kind of communication conceptualized as deliberation coincides with social privilege and, thus, contributes to privileged

groups' domination of the public discourse and disadvantages speech cultures of minority groups or women, for instance.

As for deliberation conceptions' focus on consensual agreement on matter of public concern, Fraser (1990) detects a "bourgeois masculinist bias in standard liberal views of what counts as a public concern" (p. 12) which prompts her to call for a rethinking of the "Habermasian" public sphere. Also Cohen's scheme meets with concrete criticism in this respect. On the level of interpersonal communication, it is interpreted as "leaving little room for private interests in public reasoning" (Graham, 2009, p. 13) or as masking conflict by making it "harder to recognize that deliberation may legitimately conclude correctly that the interests of the participants are fundamentally in conflict" (Mansbridge, 1999, p. 226). The fact that Cohen (1997, p. 71) had designed his ideal procedure as a template for deliberation in social and political *institutions* rather than for interpersonal debate seems to weigh little in these interpretations.

Overall, the critics largely seem to proceed from implicit attributions to deliberation.[15] That is, they point to indirect assumptions inherent to the concept. The ensuing debate on the exclusiveness of deliberation "has led many deliberative theorists to reformulate and specify aspects of the theory to make it both more concrete and better able to deal with pluralism" (Chambers, 2003, p. 320). In fact, Habermas had already specified his notion in his work "Between Facts and Norms" (1996) by discerning "decision-oriented deliberations" and "informal processes of opinion-formation in the public sphere" (p. 307), the latter being

> a medium of unrestricted communication [where] [..] new problem situations can be perceived more sensitively, discourses aimed at achieving self-understanding can be conducted more widely and expressively, collective identities and need interpretations can be articulated with fewer compulsions than is the case in procedurally regulated public spheres. (p. 308)

Another deliberation scholar, Dryzek (2000), reacts directly to the diversity theorists' criticism. He clarifies that deliberation does not necessarily have to be understood in exclusive terms. In his conceptualization, for instance, communication forms such as gossip, emotion, or humor pass as legitimate variants of deliberation (p. 1). Yet, while recognizing communication forms that had not been

15 As openly stated in Sanders' in the quote above

explicitly mentioned in the original descriptions of deliberation, Habermas and Dryzek both continue to emphasize the communication mode's demanding nature. Habermas (1996) upholds the discursive level of public debates as "the most important variable" (p. 304) and emphasizes that such debates can fulfill their socially integrative function "only because citizens expect its results to have a reasonable quality" (p. 304). When it comes to the question of public interest, Dryzek (2000) explicitly endorses private concerns as part of deliberation, but maintains that they have to be able to "connect the particular to the general" (p. 68).

To this day, Habermas (2006) premises that communication partners are per se interested in understanding one another and that engagement in communicative action inevitably prompts them to develop rationality:

> In the course of everyday practices, actors are always already exposed to a space of reasons. They cannot but mutually raise validity claims for their utterances and claim that what they say should be assumed—and, if necessary, could be proved—to be true or right or sincere, and at any rate rational. An implicit reference to rational discourse—or the competition for better reasons—is built into communicative action as an omnipresent alternative to routine behavior. (p. 413)

3.2.2 Democracy-theoretical relevance of discourse

How is discourse linked to democracy theory? As already noted above, Habermas regards the bourgeois public sphere as the locus of a communicative process that generates public opinion. Thus generated public opinion, in turn, is conceived by him as producing a legitimate political force. In this sense, the concept of the bourgeois public sphere lays the foundation of a normative democracy theory. Even though some voices point out that this initial conceptualization by Habermas is not directly geared to empirical realities of political practice (e.g. Dryzek, 2000, p. 26; Waschkuhn, 1998, p. 71) it still marks the point of departure for a whole strand of democracy theory, namely deliberative democracy theory. The emergence of deliberative democracy theory is associated with "a turning away from liberal individualist or economic understandings of democracy and toward a view anchored in conceptions of accountability and discussion" (Chambers, 2003, p. 308). Famously termed "the deliberative turn" it is hailed by its proponents as "a renewed concern with the authenticity of democracy: the degree

to which democratic control is substantive rather than symbolic, and engaged by competent citizens" (Dryzek, 2000, p. 1). To put it in a nutshell, while representative democracy stresses the individual and looks at the individual's preferences as something given that needs to be aggregated in the form of elections for the political will of an electorate to be expressed, deliberative democracy acts on the assumption that well-informed opinions on the common good are a product of rational debate during which preferences transform in the light of new information, claims, or arguments brought forward by fellow citizens (Chambers, 2003, p. 308; Elster, 1998, p. 1; Graham, 2009, p. 10). In a relatively recent account, Habermas (2006) elaborates on the role of deliberation in democratic legitimation. He emphasizes the processual character of reaching a clear vote for or against a certain political decision:

> As an essential element of the democratic process, deliberation is expected to fulfill three functions: to mobilize and pool relevant issues and required information, and to specify interpretations; to process such contributions discursively by means of proper arguments for and against; and to generate rationally motivated yes and no attitudes that are expected to determine the outcome of procedurally correct decisions. (p. 416)

Even if they deviate from standard practices of representative democracy, theorists of deliberative democracy do not categorically reject representative institutions (Bohman, 1998, p. 415). Instead, they rather understand deliberative democracy as "an extension of representative democracy" (Chambers, 2003, p. 308) that helps giving significance to citizens' participation in the political process and making the expression of political will more enacted by them. Schudson (1997) raises the point that this kind of political engagement is quite demanding as it requires citizens to be outspoken "in uncomfortable settings where we risk embarrassment if we do not know or cannot articulate what we believe" (p. 304). Against this background he underlines that democratic conversation is "not simply a facility of social interaction", but a communication mode that requires participants' commitment to "make it work" (p. 303) for a higher purpose beyond sociability.

In practice, deliberative settings have shown to indeed affect people's opinion formation. Fishkin (1995), for instance, organized a so-called "deliberative weekend" to find out whether people's conclusions about crime and how to deal with it differ before and after they engage in a well-ordered deliberation on it.

For this purpose, he gathered a random sample of 300 British participants at a venue in Manchester. In the run-up to the event the participants had taken a baseline survey on their attitudes about crime and had afterwards been provided with briefing material on crime. During the actual "deliberation weekend" the participants first spent time discussing the issue in small groups before they were able to address their questions and concerns in a plenary session with competing experts and politicians (pp. 161-163). The outcome of Fishkin's survey after the event suggested that "the participants demonstrated a new appreciation or the complexity of the issues, the conflicts of values the issues posed, and the limitations of any one solution" (p. 168). When a similar research design was repeated years later with a control group as part of the "EuroPolis" deliberative poll (Sanders, 2012; Isernia & Fishkin, 2014), the experiment indeed revealed significant attitude changes of the test group.

3.2.3 Journalists' role as discourse advocates

In Habermas' (1989) model of the bourgeois public sphere journalism is credited with a vital role. As a "forum for rational-critical debate" (p. 184) the press is deemed the successor of the early discursive institutions such as "Tischgesellschaften", "salons", and coffee houses. After the elimination of censorship in the 18th century, the British press is said to have reached an unprecedented status of "a genuinely critical organ of a public engaged in critical political debate: as the fourth estate" (p. 60). Later, the press in France and in Germany also managed to evolve into "an instrument with whose aid political decisions could be brought before the new forum of the public" (p. 58). Habermas highlights aspects such as the press' autonomy from the domain of leisure or its autonomy from the domain of consumption (pp. 181–182), but does not offer greater detail in terms of actual journalistic practice. Overall, his description of the role of the press for transmitting and amplifying the ideal rational-critical discourse of the bourgeois stratum remains at the macro-level.

Yet, Brosda (2008b) argues that it is possible to deduce implications for journalistic practice from the deliberative communication ideal. The author develops a concept of "discursive journalism" based on Habermas' premise (see Subsection 3.2.1) that communication partners are per se interested in understanding

one another and that engagement in communicative action inevitably prompts them to develop rationality. Following Baum (1994), Brosda (2008b) understands journalistic action as genuinely communicative and as geared towards rational understanding. Against this background, he conceives the journalistic role of the "discourse advocate"[16]. Journalists as discourse advocates stimulate, maintain, and advance a context of rational discourse and, thus, communication that is relevant in terms of a deliberative model of democracy (pp. 15–16). In doing so, journalists fulfill a double role – both as conveyers of discourse and as participants in discourse. Brosda (2008a) deems involvement "a necessary condition for journalists' to understand"[17] (p. 378) and therefore considers these two roles inseparable. From his point of view, even ordinary-seeming journalistic actions count as participation in discourse, for example talking to sources while researching, conducting interviews, publishing opinion pieces, or triggering follow-up conversation (Brosda, 2000, pp. 118–119). He emphasizes: "Above all, facilitation of an understanding-oriented public sphere in this sense requires the journalist to act on his own initiative and make his own contribution."[18] (p. 119)

The most concrete hints for discursive journalistic practice are delivered by Brosda (2010) with a view to political journalism. He formulates the following twelve concrete questions for journalistic actors to ask themselves in order to ensure that their work facilitates discursive communication:

> (1) Extensive research: Do you know all of the debate's statements and points of view?
>
> (2) Inclusion of all persons concerned: Have you been adding missing points of view and have you catered for all persons concerned to be represented within the debate?
>
> (3) Relevance: Have you checked the statements with regard to societal relevance?
>
> (4) Checking validity claims: Have you checked validity claims of truth, sincerity and rightness in terms of their plausibility or their argumentation, for example, by interpreting sources yourself?

16 Translated from German. Original: "Diskursanwalt"

17 Translated from German. Original: "notwendige Voraussetzung journalistischen Verstehens"

18 Translated from German: Original: "Die Herstellung einer verständigungsorientierten Öffentlichkeit in diesem Sinne erfordert vom Journalisten vor allen Dingen auch Eigeninitiative und Eigenleistung."

(5) Comprehensibility of the journalistic judgment: Have you made your judgment of the argumentation level transparent?

(6) Complete conveyance: Have you communicated the relevant statements and your judgment of them?

(7) Communicating arguments: Have you considered and – if necessary – added justifications for any propositional claims?

(8) Explication of social dimension: Have you revealed the statements' illocutionary aspects, that is, the social relationship between sender and receiver; for instance by making implicit verbs explicit and thus making clear whether a politician demands, encourages or asks?

(9) Responsiveness: Have you pulled together the statements of the debate and thus facilitated social debate?

(10): Contextualization: Have you incorporated your context knowledge?

(11) Lifeworld relevance: Have you been communicating content in a way that it is likely to reach the recipient and that facilitates follow-up communication and discourse participation?

(12): Being criticizable: Is journalism practice itself accessible for argument and discourse? (p. 97)

3.3 Journalism and everyday talk

What if journalists do not understand their professional role as dialogical or discursive and do not engage accordingly? Is the follow-up communication they generate not democratically relevant from a democracy-theoretical point of view? Not at all: Numerous authors have been drawing attention to a rather spontaneous, casual kind of communication and its democratic potential which, they argue, should not be neglected in favor of more formalized communication modes (e.g. Conover & Searing, 2005; Graham, 2015; Hefner, 2011; Mansbridge, 1999; Scheufele, 2000). This section deals with conceptualizations of communication that display less rigorous standards than those so far discussed in connection with "dialogue" and "discourse" or "deliberation". Often termed "everyday talk" this kind of communication is being located in diverse communicative spaces available in people's personal everyday lives, from the dinner table (Mansbridge, 1999, pp. 217–218) to online discussion fora (Graham 2015, pp. 250–251). There are examples for everyday talk being distinguished from discourse (see Conover & Searing, 2005; Graham, 2015; Mansbridge, 1999) as well as for everyday talk being

distinguished from dialogue (see Kim & Kim, 2008) in the literature. This section tracks down the theoretical underpinnings of the concept of everyday talk as well as its democracy-theoretical relevance. Eventually, it identifies the relatively detached journalistic role of the objective observer as a journalism concept that is in line with the communication standards of everyday talk.

3.3.1 Theoretical underpinnings of everyday talk

One of the most elaborated pleas for increased scholarly attention to citizens' everyday talk is made by Mansbridge (1999). She situates everyday talk in what she calls the "larger deliberative system" (p. 213) even though this kind of talk "does not meet all the criteria implicit in the ordinary use of the word `deliberation´" (p. 211). However, if one modified and loosened these criteria, she argues, they can be applied to everyday talk. Freedom and equality, for instance, which constitute necessary conditions for discourse merely serve as reference points in Mansbridge's conceptualization. There aren't any prerequisites per se to everyday talk (pp. 224–225).

When it comes to the subject matter of communication, Mansbridge suggests replacing rational reason-giving with considerateness as a standard for everyday talk. She acts on the assumption that there are "justifiable places for offensiveness, noncooperation, and the threat of retaliation – even for raucous, angry, self-centered, bitter talk, aiming at nothing but hurt" (p. 223) in everyday talk. In doing so, she acknowledges that "the looser and less accountable settings of everyday talk foster greater incivility" (p. 223) than more formalized settings. A focus on reason, however, would exclude legitimate emotions whereas considerateness could increase everyday talk's receptivity to both cognitions and emotions.

As regards goals, she asserts that everyday talk "is not necessarily aimed at any action other than talk itself" (p. 212) and that it "may be almost purely expressive" (p. 212). Goals such as rationally motivated consensus or the formation of a conception of the common good are rejected as inappropriate in Mansbridge's conceptualization. Instead, she considers it a legitimate intent that everyday talk should be helpful in making citizens understand their interests better, and for this the articulation of self-interest would be crucial (p. 226). Also beyond Mansbridge's conceptualization, everyday talk is widely considered a communication mode that is

"typically unstructured, spontaneous, and without clear goals" (Conover & Searing, 2005, p. 271) and that does without "any direct purpose outside the purpose of talk for talk's sake" (Graham, 2015, pp. 249–250).

What seems to characterize everyday talk overall is that it is free from any "formal procedural rules and predetermined agenda" (Kim & Kim, 2008, p. 53). The loosened standards Mansbridge suggests are by no means conceived as defining features. She rather brings them up to make the point that everyday talk is part of a larger deliberative and, thus, democratically relevant system. This very point will be picked up on in the ensuing subsection.

3.3.2 Democracy-theoretical relevance of everyday talk

At first sight, it may seem odd to associate a communication mode as ordinary and un-rigorous as everyday talk with democratic potential. Graham (2015), for instance, recounts bewildered reactions when he introduces everyday talk as a research subject to his students (p. 248). So, where exactly do champions of a greater focus on everyday talk see the connection to democracy?

For Mansbridge (1999) "everyday talk anchors one end of a spectrum at whose other end lies the public decision-making assembly" (p. 212). As such, she argues, "everyday talk, if not always deliberative, is nevertheless a crucial part of the full deliberative system that democracies need if citizens are, in any sense, to rule themselves" (p. 211). In this understanding, the informality of everyday talk is seen as a chance. As people feel comfortable and relieved from social norms in informal communicative spaces they may bring to light issues that would otherwise be ignored (Conover & Searing, 2005, pp. 279–280; Mansbridge, 1999, p. 222).

But in what ways can the articulation of such issues be democratically relevant? Some scholars argue that the mere act of expression already has a democratic value because it requires that people organize their opinion elements. Kim and Kim (2008) sum up three basic assumptions of this position which is said to be commonly taken up by public opinion researchers and political psychologists:

> (a) people do not have preformed opinions, but rather multiple and often conflicting opinion elements about an issue; (b) people usually do not realize that they have conflicting opinion elements until they have had a chance to discuss and

> reflect on their thoughts about an issue; and (c) only when people have had an opportunity to express their opinions by speaking do they try to organize their opinions in more coherent ways – consistent with what they "say" and what they now believe. (p. 61)

What people express in the form of everyday talk may coincidentally be political. Scheufele (2000) points out that "people who talk to others more frequently about a variety of issues may also be more likely, by pure chance, to talk about political topics with some regularity" (p. 738). In this case, everyday talk would make people realize their political opinions. Even though realizing one's political opinion does not automatically lead to direct political action, it is still regarded as meaningful for democratic participation. Graham (2015), for instance, associates it with a preparatory function: "It is the web of informal political conversations conducted over time and across and between the multitude of levels and spaces, which fosters public opinion, preparing citizens and the political system at large for political action" (p. 250).

Both dialogue and discourse scholars have considered everyday talk as a vehicle for their respective communication ideals. From the perspective of the dialogue scholars Kim and Kim (2008) the democratic value of everyday talk lies beyond itself, namely when everyday talk is "elevated to dialogue" (p. 57). The authors regard "casual, informal, spontaneous, nonpurposive conversation, or conversation for the sake of conversation, [a]s the womb for dialogic moments" (p. 57). Searing and Conover (2005) have tried to examine the democratic value of everyday talk from a discursive point of view. Even though they followed Mansbridge and applied loosened standards, their research revealed that "the everyday talk of ordinary citizens falls short of deliberative ideals" (p. 278). In different instances of everyday talk, they found citizens to disrespect fellow citizens, to rather shun public contexts and public issues, to be likely to state their preferences without offering reasons, and to avoid having to consider alternative arguments (pp. 276–277). However, the scholars also draw attention to the fact that citizens' motivation to engage in everyday talk isn't predominantly deliberative in the first place. Social, rhetorical, identity-related, and narrative reasons were found to play as much a role as self-articulation and information gaining. Some of these multiple functions simply caused everyday talk to be "at odds with the normative goals of democratic deliberation" (p. 272). Nevertheless, the authors do not completely deny everyday talk a democratic potential. They also found that it

"helps citizens to work out their preferences, try out justifications for them, and develop confidence about performing in the public arena" (p. 281). Eventually, Searing and Conover come to the conclusion that "despite the structural shortcomings of everyday political talk compared to other discussions in the deliberative system, it nevertheless appears to promote many of the desirable consequences for good citizenship that are attributed to rigorous deliberative practices" (p. 280). In doing so, the authors comply with Mansbridge's (1999) assertion that "the criterion for good deliberation should be not that every interaction in the system exhibits mutual respect, consistency, acknowledgement, open-mindedness, and moral economy, but that the larger system reflects those goals" (p. 224).

3.3.3 Journalists' role as objective observers

Subsection 3.3.2 rendered clear that everyday talk features relatively low standards compared to dialogue or discourse. In principle, everyday talk may turn out offensive, self-centered, and nothing but expressive. The role of journalism in facilitating this very mode of communication is not explicitly considered in Mansbridge's (1999) conceptualization of everyday talk. Only in a passing remark she mentions that she assumes media and citizens to mutually influence each other in the larger process of citizen deliberation, but does not pursue this matter any further (p. 213).

In journalism studies, it is a central idea that journalism generates communication (of any, non-specified kind). Facilitating what German-language literature calls "Anschlusskommunikation" is commonly regarded as one of the purposes of journalism in pertinent journalism theory (Meier, 2011). The term literally translates into "follow-up communication" and seeks to grasp any interpersonal communication that either explicitly or implicitly refers to mass media content (Ziegele, 2016, pp. 24–26).

So, what kind of journalism facilitates follow-up communication that can be considered in line with the standards of everyday talk? Journalism practice that remains below discursive or dialogical standards can often be found to serve as a reference in more demanding journalism conceptualizations. Brosda's (2000) discourse advocate, for instance, is required "to leave the standpoint of the

supposedly neutral information transmitter"[19] (119). Heikkilä and Kunelius (1998) as well as Anderson et al. (1994) contrast dialogical journalism standards with a journalism understanding that is removed from common people's concerns and unique experiences. An explicit labeling of such an understanding as "objective journalism" is made by Hornmoen and Steensen (2014). The authors analyze four journalism eras in the history of journalism in search of dialogical standards: pre-objectivity, objectivity, new journalism, and digital. While they detect dialogical aspects in all of these eras to varying degrees, they find them least salient in the objectivity era. They argue that "objectivity as an ideal promoted a monological kind of discourse" (p. 545) because it assumes that journalists act as detached transmitters of fixed messages. Also Soffer (2009) describes objective ideals in journalism as contradictory to discursive and dialogical ideals. The objective position assumes that journalists are able to detach themselves in their work both from their own personal values and perceptions as well as from the social and political phenomena they cover. They act as experts for transmitting factual reality (pp. 477–480). That way, any "symmetrical, mutual relationship between the 'objective' journalist and the 'objects' he covers" (p. 474) is seen as precluded. Thus, objective journalism would imply a relatively passive role when it comes to facilitating follow-up communication. Such passiveness is often associated with traditional mass media and broadcasting logics, according to which

> potential audiences are viewed as large aggregates of more or less anonymous consumers, and the relationship between sender and receiver is affected accordingly. [...] The relationship is inevitably one-directional, one-sided and impersonal, and there is a social as well as a physical distance between sender and receiver. (McQuail, 2005, p. 55)

These descriptions of objective journalism and mass media communication are obviously in conflict with the previously discussed concepts of discursive and dialogical journalism. Yet, they do not contradict communication standards as normatively undemanding as those of everyday talk. The concept of objective journalism displays a relative indifference towards the nature of the follow-up communication it generates. As such, it represents an appropriate conceptual

19 Translated from German: Original: "den Standort des vermeintlich neutralen Informationsvermittlers zu verlassen"

counter-part for everyday talk whose settings have been described as "free of formal procedural rules and a predetermined agenda" (Kim & Kim, 2008, p. 53).

3.4 Summary and conclusion: Ranking journalism concepts according to democratic standards

The purpose of this chapter was to reach terminological and conceptual clarity in terms of journalism as a facilitator of democratically relevant communication modes. To this end, the chapter provided an in-depth analysis of the theoretical underpinnings and the democracy-theoretical relevance of dialogical, discursive and objectivity-oriented journalism concepts.

A review of dialogical journalism conceptualizations showed that these add up to a journalistic role that structures, explains, and evaluates the different viewpoints within a dialogue and, thus, provides orientation. Journalist as "dialogical mediators" facilitate dialogue by attaching equal value to all persons involved despite differences in perspectives or interests. Accordingly, a look at conceptualizations of dialogue as a communication mode revealed that it grants participants an equal status while recognizing that they may well differ in their interpretations of the world. Dialogue was found to be characterized as a tension-packed back-and-forth movement of speaking and listening that gives room to personal experience. Situations in which subject-matters or communication styles cause irritations with dialogue partners are meant to be resolved through meta-dialogue or through facilitators who offer light communicative guidance. While dialogue turned out not to pursue any predetermined goal, it is expected to lead to increased trust and mutual understanding. The chapter moreover disclosed that dialogue is considered democratically relevant in so far as it conveys political virtues that were already deemed important in early Athenian forms of democracy. Dialogue's capacity to handle difference was found to be highlighted as especially democratically relevant in light of increasingly pluralistic and multicultural societies. Some authors also turned out to view dialogue as the preliminary stage of rational discourse.

A discursive journalism conceptualization, in turn, was found to understand journalists as "discourse advocates" who stimulate, maintain and advance a context of rational discourse, e.g. by making sure that all persons concerned

are represented within the debate or by adding justifications for propositional claims. The chapter helped to develop a theoretical understanding of discourse by tracing the concept back to its origins in Habermas' model of the bourgeois public sphere and then inspecting how this concept has been adopted by both deliberation scholars and deliberation critics. The analysis demonstrated that the definition of discourse as a communication mode that is based on rational arguments, confined to topics that are of public interest, and that aims at reaching a consensus is in fact reflected in Habermas' model. But it also demonstrated that this communication mode represents an ideal which deliberation scholars have typically conceived as applying to formal institutional settings. Critics of deliberation, however, usually proceeded from implicit attributions to Habermas' reflections. While this criticism has prompted Habermas and other deliberation scholars to be more explicit about the exact area of application of their conceptualizations, the study at hand holds on to the conventional notion of discourse/deliberation for the purpose of conceptual clarity in differentiating it from dialogue and everyday talk. The democratic relevance of discourse/deliberation showed to be well-elaborated by deliberative democracy theory – a strand of democracy theory that emphasizes the significance of rational debate for citizens to form well-informed opinions on the common good.

Both dialogical and discursive journalism approaches were found to be often conceptualized in distinction to the journalistic role of the objective observer. Journalists as "objective observers" are considered to act as detached transmitters of fixed messages who keep aloof from their audience and its follow-up communication. Thus, it is argued that objectivity-oriented journalism serves as a suitable conceptual counterpart for everyday talk, a communication mode that is undemanding but still democratically relevant. Everyday talk is conceptualized as a communication mode involving no requirements, no communication rules, and no limits as to its subject-matter. Accordingly, it may pursue no other purpose than simply articulating self-interest. This unstructured and informal nature of everyday talk was found to be considered the very source of its (potential) democratic relevance. Engaging in everyday talk arguably allows people to bring up otherwise suppressed issues, to organize their opinion elements, and to realize their political opinions in the first place.

Based on this terminological and conceptual differentiation, it is now argued that the three journalism concepts can be ranked according to their level of

democratic standard. Acting as a discourse advocate is considered highly demanding. Journalists acting as discourse advocates are, for example, expected to check statements for societal relevance, to add missing viewpoints, or to be accessible for argument and discourse. Compared with that, it can be considered moderately demanding to act as a dialogical mediator. Journalists acting as dialogical mediators are, for instance, expected to provide room for different accents and interpretations, to offer guidance, and to be responsive to their audiences. The least demanding role when it comes to facilitating democratically relevant communication is expected from the objective observer. Journalists acting as objective observers are viewed as somewhat removed from their audiences' concerns and experiences and focused on transmitting fixed messages.

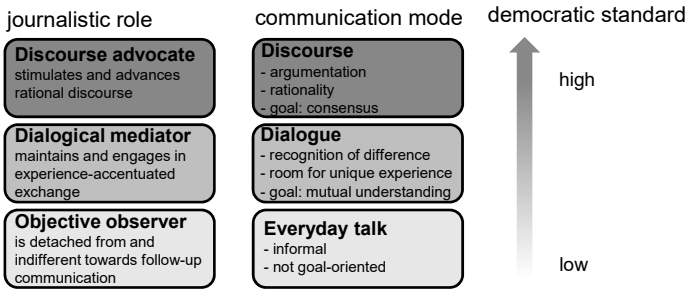
Moreover, it is argued that the same ranking can be applied to the three communication modes discourse, dialogue, and everyday talk. The analysis showed that discourse is highly demanding for those who engage in it. Discussants would have to stick to issues of public concern, provide reasons for their claims, and work towards resolving their differences. Dialogue, too, turned out to demand quite a lot from its participants. They would be required to acknowledge that their dialogue partners may see the world differently and they would need to be willing to explore these differences and to endure resulting tensions. Yet, dialogue gives more topical leeway than discourse and does not insist on a specific outcome. Unlike discourse, dialogue is not conceived as confined to subjects of common concern or the public good. People who engage in everyday talk, in turn, are free to express themselves in whatever way on whatever issue that crosses their minds. What marks the distinction between everyday talk and the other communication modes is that everyday talk is informal, non-goal oriented opinion expression whereas the other two communication modes go beyond that. Unlike dialogue and discourse, everyday talk does not necessarily involve a person's positioning in relation to other interlocutors, even less does it aim at collective decision-making. Following this distinction, discourse/deliberation is considered the most demanding communication mode in this study, dialogue is classified as less demanding than discourse/deliberation, and everyday talk is classified as the least demanding communication mode.

Still, what the analysis showed is that all of these modes have been accredited with democratic relevance from a democracy-theoretical point-of-view. Simply put, in the case of discourse democratic relevance is connected to a

model that involves speaking, listening, and agreeing. Dialogue, in turn, settles with participants speaking and listening to one another. The democratic relevance of everyday talk is argued to lie in people's act of just speaking and, thus, arranging their thoughts. All in all, the three communication modes add up to an instructive framework of benchmarks for different levels of democratically relevant communication.

In conclusion, the following model for classifying journalistic roles and their associated communication modes according to democratic standards can be constructed (see Figure 1):

Figure 1: Democratic standards of communication modes and associated journalism roles



In the study at hand, this model serves as a basis for assessing the response stage of the journalistic news process in the social web in terms of democratic relevance. In Subsection 6.1.2., this model is refined in light of insights on journalism in a digital age from Section 4.5 and eventually operationalized.

With regard to conceptual clarity, the chapter moreover demonstrated how various notions of democratically relevant communication floating around in the academic literature can be subsumed under the three communication modes discourse/deliberation, dialogue, and everyday talk as delineated above. Table 1 provides an overview of existing terminology and its subsumption under the developed scheme. The terms in bold signify the authors' respective conceptual focus.

Table 1: Subsumption of existing terminology under communication modes in this study

Author(s)	Everyday Talk	Dialogue	Discourse/ Deliberation
Bohman (1996)		**"dialogical account of public deliberation"**	"proceduralist account of public deliberation"
Cohen (1997)			**"ideal deliberative procedure"**
Conover & Searing (2005)	**"everyday political talk"**		"deliberation"
Graham (2015)	**"everyday political talk"**		"institutional and formal notions of deliberation"
Habermas (1996)	"informal processes of opinion-formation in the public sphere"		**"decision-oriented deliberations"**
Healy (2011)		**"transformative dialogue"**	"Habermasian discourse model"
Kim & Kim (2008)	"everyday political talk"	**"dialogic deliberation"**	
Mansbridge (1999)	**"everyday talk"**		"deliberation"
McCoy & Scully (2002)		**"dialogue"**	"deliberation"
Schudson (1997)	"sociable conversation"		**"problem-solving conversation"**

4 Journalism in the social web

In the previous chapter on democracy-theoretical relevance we have seen that already before the emergence of the social web alternative journalism concepts such as dialogical journalism or discursive journalism were designed with the aim to tackle certain problems of journalism. In today's digital age, criticism of journalism's focus on elites and profit-making hasn't waned – quite the contrary. Across the United States, United Kingdom, Ireland, Spain, Germany, Denmark, Australia, France, and Greece, Newman and Fletcher (2017) found that particularly people below the age of 35 and on low incomes distrust the traditional news media by reason of political or commercial bias, profit orientation, or estrangement from the interests of ordinary people (p. 17–26). A demise of trust in traditional news media is generally notable especially in societies with high levels of political polarization (Newman, Fletcher, Kalogeropoulos, Levy, & Kleis Nielsen, 2017) and little trust in political institutions (Hanitzsch, van Dalen, & Steindl, 2018). At the same time, the proportion of people who state they use social media for news each week has increased globally from around 25 percent to around 50 percent between 2012 and 2017 (Newman & Fletcher, 2017, p. 27). Against this background, this chapter takes a look at journalism as an institution that has been subject to major changes as part of digitalization and that is subject to increased pressures to serve its audience well.

According to Jenkins (2008) the broader development of the internet is not merely a technical but also a cultural development. He coined the term "convergence culture" which describes a changing cultural logic of media production and consumption accompanying the emergence of the digital web. A key element of this changing logic is the possibility to create and publish content in an unprecedented scope. This has implications for how public sphere is formed, especially in the social web. Section 4.1 outlines these implications and elaborates on democratic potentials that have been ascribed to the new possibilities of producing, sharing, and discussing content. The section attends to journalism as the conventional nurturer of the traditional public sphere who nowadays also nurtures intertwined publics in the social web, most notably by using social web formats itself. Social web usage in professional contexts is then elaborated in Section 4.2. The section introduces the model of analysis that is applied in this study for identifying journalistic social web practices at the output stage of the news process.

Afterwards, Section 4.3 deals with the changing relationship between journalists and their audience in a digital age and explores how journalists handle demands and instances of involving users in the professional news process. The section demonstrates that actual instances of direct contact between journalists and users are largely concentrated at the response stage of the news process where users comment on journalistic output. Therefore, the ensuing Section 4.4 concentrates on the output stage and the response stage of the news process when identifying communicative expectations and challenges of journalism in the social web[20]. As for the output stage, Subsection 4.4.1 sheds light on the seeming specialization of personnel when it comes to publishing journalistic content in the social web and discusses how social web-specific news values affect what kind of content gets published there and in what form. In terms of the response stage, Subsection 4.4.2 outlines expectations of how journalists should tackle the relatively new task of dealing with direct and immediate user comments. It also addresses especially challenging aspects in this respect, such as journalists' experience of low-quality contributions or hate-speech. Section 4.5 draws a parallel between the long-standing conceptualizations of how journalism practice can facilitate democratic communication modes such as dialogue or discourse (see Chapter 3) and contemporary demands towards journalism in the social web. It shows that expectations of how journalists are to deal with direct and immediate user comments in the social web can actually be subsumed under the concepts of discursive journalism, dialogical journalism, and objectivity-oriented journalism. Finally, the section

20 Focusing on the output stage and the response stage of the news process – in this section as well as in the empirical part of this study – actually appears beneficial for several reasons. First and foremost, social web output (output stage) and the corresponding follow-up communication (response stage) exist in the form of manifest content on social web platforms and can thus be easily studied by means of content analysis. This allows for tackling research gaps which, as this chapter will illustrate, exist in terms of selection criteria for and the nature of social web output of media organizations as well as regarding the democratic relevance of media organizations' handling of user comments in the social web. Of course, also the input stage and related questions of how journalists investigate and gather news under social web conditions are interesting and relevant, as research by Broersma and Graham (2012), Paulussen and Harder (2014), or Schifferes et al. (2014) demonstrates. However, analyzing the input stage would eventually exceed the scope of this study which is mainly interested in the democratic contribution of communication evolving around media outlets' social web output.

looks into current findings on how journalistic activity affects the response stage and draws conclusions with respect to the empirical part of this study.

Before we go deeper into the topic of journalism in the social web a short remark on terminology seems worthwhile: The meaning of terms such as "social web", "web 2.0", "social media" or "social networking sites" is often taken for granted (Kirchhoff, 2015, p. 28). They are used both in colloquial speech and in academic elaborations, at times even synonymously. This study primarily uses the term "social web" to refer to its major field of interest. In doing so, it subscribes to terminology advocated by Ebersbach, Glaser, and Heigl (2008) and Schmidt (2011b). Ebersbach et al. (2008, p. 31) introduce "social web" as an umbrella term which subsumes three facets: (1) web-based applications that allow people to exchange information, build or maintain relationships, and collaborate; (2) the data produced while people do so; (3) the relationships between people doing so. In the study at hand, the term "social web" is preferred over the term "web 2.0" because it highlights a particularly social part of the WWW rather than suggesting a radical leap forward (Schmidt, 2011b; Scholz, 2008). When referring to single applications that make up the social web the study uses the term "social web formats" instead of "social media". That way, the term "media" can be reserved for institutions as opposed to technologies. This is supposed to add clarity considering that the study is actually interested in examining media (or "media houses", "media outlets" respectively) as agents of public communication (Voltmer, 2013, pp. 51–54). At the same time, the study recognizes that "social media" is an established term in colloquial speech and sticks to the original diction when used in the field (as in "Social Media Coordinator", "Social Media Editor", "Social Media Guidelines", for example). The term "social web formats" is meant to signify both technological tools and social spaces. More precisely, social web formats are understood as technologies employed by both private and professional users through which networked publics are enacted based on certain practices of social web usage[21].

We now start off with shedding light on how public sphere is constituted in the social web and how this differs from the traditional formation of public sphere.

21 It is also acknowledged in this study that social web formats are usually provided by commercial organizations. While this circumstance and its effects on social web users' experience should not be neglected, it is not a central concern of this study.

4.1 Public sphere under social web conditions

The concept of public sphere has been extensively discussed and developed in a variety of disciplines (Kellner, 2014) – not least in media studies (Lunt & Livingstone, 2013) – ever since Habermas's (1989) initial analysis of the emergence of the bourgeois public sphere of the 17th and 18th centuries and its structural transformation (see Subsection 3.2.1). According to the basic definition by Habermas (1984), public sphere signifies "a realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed" (p. 49). Three kinds of fora within which public sphere forms have been distinguished by Gerhards and Neidhard (1990):

- The first forum is called the *encounter public sphere*. It consists of everyday, face-to-face communication between citizens and takes place on streets, in parks, pubs, etc.
- *Public events* are considered the second forum within the public sphere. Examples are town hall meetings, public lectures, or protest rallies.
- The *mass media* which "possess full-fledged technical and organizational infrastructure and are dominated by specialists like journalists, experts and collective actors" (Gerhards & Schäfer, 2010, p. 144) represent the third forum within the public sphere.

Out of these three fora the one constituted by the mass media is considered to rank lowest when it comes to openness for citizen participation. At the same time, it is assumed to have the highest impact on society "because this forum reaches a large audience and organizes substantial parts of societal self-observation and opinion formation" (p. 144). Before digitalization most of modern public communication was assumed to happen in the mass media forum (see e.g. Dahlgren, 1995, pp. 7–8). With the emergence of the social web, however, the public sphere is said to undergo another structural transformation (Schmidt, 2014b). This section seeks to outline expectations as to how the transformed structures affect openness for citizen participation in the public sphere. It also presents analyses inspecting mass media's ongoing impact under the new structural conditions. To start with, however, the section clarifies how exactly public sphere in the social web differs from public sphere that journalistic mass media constitute.

Münker (2009) argues that the difference in how public sphere is generated can be traced back to one fundamental difference between social media and mass media: Social media are immersive, mass media are not. The author points out that the "traditional" public sphere of readers, listeners, or viewers who exchange or develop views about information they have read, heard, or viewed is distinct from the mass media generating it. This distinction, he argues, can no longer be drawn in the new media environment of the social web where public sphere comes into being as people are actively participating in it (p. 73).

Schmidt (2014a) pinpoints three respects by which publics in the social web differ from the mass media generated public: (1) their criteria for selecting or displaying information (personal relevance instead of journalistic news factors), (2) their intended audience (network ties instead of disperse mass audience), and (3) their communication mode (conversation instead of the one-way mode of publishing). He refers to this new type of public sphere in the social web as "personal publics".

Of course, the traditional mass-mediated public sphere has not suddenly ceased to exist after the emergence of the social web. Mass media output is actually picked up by users of the social web and traditional media outlets contribute to that by running professional social web accounts. Professional journalists, in turn, draw on personal publics to enrich their coverage with user-generated content (UGC) or as an inspiration for story ideas. Hence, Schmidt (2011c) furthermore states that there is an *intertwining* of personal publics and the mass-mediated public sphere.

Quite a few authors highlight an emancipatory potential for citizens when it comes to public sphere in the social web. Benkler (2006), for instance, argues that the "networked public sphere" represents "a substantial alternative platform for the public sphere" (p. 177) as it allows "a very large number of actors to see themselves as potential contributors to public discourse and as potential actors in political arenas, rather than mostly passive recipients of mediated information who occasionally can vote their preferences" (p. 220). Especially the openness and the directness of the new media environment are said to nurture "hopes regarding the political system and its further democratization" (Siapera, 2012, p. 83). In a social media context, directness may as well be specified as "disintermediation". Neuberger (2008) uses this term to describe the direct contact between actors (such as politicians, NGOs etc.) who are interested in maintaining public relations to citizens. This direct contact is rendered possible in the networked public sphere. Under mass media conditions, it used to be mediated by journalists as

intermediates in the public sphere (pp. 22–23). Hence, the social web allows for "new opportunities for politicians to communicate with citizens, for citizens to communicate with each other, and for people to mobilize in order to achieve certain political goals" (Siapera, 2012, p. 83).

Directness does not only apply to the relations between political actors and citizens, it also characterizes the intertwined public spheres of the social web in which both mass-mediated issues and personal issues are being addressed. According to Schmidt and Taddicken (2016), social web formats are often associated with dialogical or conversational communication modes because the comment function allows users to engage in follow-up communication on content created or published by others. These "others" may well be traditional media outlets. Thus, there also is a certain emancipatory potential when it comes to the role allocated to ordinary citizens in relation to the mass media. Before the digital age, follow-up communication of audience members could reach mass media outlets only via a limited number of channels such as letters to the editor or phone-in programs (Engesser, 2008). What is more, these channels were subject to journalistic gatekeeping (Bruns, 2009). Under social web conditions, however, follow-up communication on mass media output is much less restricted. Social web users can react to mass media output in various ways, for instance by commenting, liking, sharing, or by using other social web-specific feedback modes. These reactions are part of the users' personal publics and can thus be seen and retraced as well as potentially be aggregated and searched by others (Schmidt, 2011b, pp. 141–142). This visibility of other users' reactions is highlighted by Nuernbergk (2013) as a special feature of follow-up communication in the web. Besides enabling direct feedback to journalistic output via the same communication channel, it can stimulate further reactions by third parties (p. 153). The fact that news are perceived as "a shared social experience" (Purcell, Rainie, Mitchell, Rosenstiel, & Olmstead, 2010, p. 40) in the social web actually represents a significant change in the power relations between ordinary citizens and the mass media. Napoli (2015) notes that "within the context of social media platforms, the flow of news and information is much more dependent upon the judgments and subsequent actions (e.g., liking, sharing, retweeting, etc.) of the individual users of these platforms" (p. 755). Thus, the role of ordinary citizens can be regarded as shifting from a relatively passive or receptive one to one that has a direct impact on the dissemination of mass media output. Singer (2014) characterizes this as a "two-step gatekeeping process, in which

initial editorial decisions to make an item part of the news product are followed by user decisions to upgrade or downgrade the visibility of that item for a secondary audience" (p. 67). While Schmidt (2011b) points to the fact that interpersonal communication had already been playing a role in the dissemination and evaluation of news in traditional mass media contexts, he does highlight "social filtering" is a key asset of the communicative spaces in the social web (pp. 141–142).

Yet, there are also commentators who associate public sphere in the social web with fears rather than with hopes for democratization. Quite early on in the process of digitalization, Habermas (2006) uttered concerns that online debates of web users "tend [...] to lead to the fragmentation of large but politically focused mass audiences into a huge number of isolated issue publics" (p. 423). More recently, similar misgivings have been voiced in discussions on social media as creators of "echo chambers" (see e.g. Colleoni, Rozza, & Arvidsson, 2014; Jacobson, Myung, & Johnson, 2015) or "filter bubbles" (see e.g. Haim, Graefe, & Brosius, 2017; Nikolov, Oliveira, Flammini, & Menczer, 2015; Pariser, 2012).

What implications the widened, low-threshold opportunities of shaping the public sphere have for professional journalistic practice is discussed in more detail in Section 4.3. Against the backdrop of these opportunities, it appears necessary at this point to scrutinize the ongoing relevance of journalistic mass media in the digital age. Now that "people formerly known as audience" (Rosen, 2006) are able to undertake tasks that used to be exclusive to the professional journalistic news process it might actually be questioned if media professionals still make a distinct contribution to the public sphere. Even more so because "the separation between the producers of news and the consumers of news has become further blurred with social media" (Hermida, 2016, p. 85). Therefore, we now have a look at conceptualizations of amateur journalistic activities and then turn to empirical results that tell us more about whether traditional mass media are still in demand alongside said activities.

"The act of a citizen, or group of citizens, playing an active role in the process of collecting, reporting, analyzing and disseminating news and information" has been specified by Bowman and Willis (2003) as "participatory journalism" (p. 9). Participatory journalism, they elaborate, "is a bottom-up, emergent phenomenon in which there is little or no editorial oversight or formal journalistic workflow dictating the decisions of a staff" (p. 9). In an attempt to characterize the phenomenon of participatory journalism, Lasica (2003) provides a list of examples.

Some of these examples – such as individual weblogs, personal broadcasting sites, or independent collaborative media sites – are indeed not subject to any formal editorial oversight or workflow. Others, however, involve audience participation at mainstream news outlets and are thus inconsistent with Bowman's and Willis' definition. In light of this ambiguity, the study at hand subscribes to the clear distinction made by Serong (2014). She suggests reserving the term "participatory journalism" for exactly those instances where users collaborate with professional journalists. In turn, she puts forward the term "citizen journalism" for instances where users do without professional editorial structures while performing journalistic tasks. "Citizen journalism" is also the preferred term of Deutsch Karlekar and Radsch (2012) to describe such cases. They deem it eminently suitable for online and digital journalism conducted by amateurs because "by juxtaposing the term `citizen´, with its attendant qualities of civic mindedness and social responsibility, with that of `journalism´, which refers to a particular profession [...], [it] underscores the link between the practice of journalism and its relation to the political and public sphere" (p. 18). Yet, as for the contribution of citizen journalism to a vital public sphere, the opinions seem to be divided. Waisbord (2013), for one, emphasizes the democratic value of citizen journalism as opposed to the elitism of professional journalism:

> Whereas professionalism presupposes distance between journalists and ordinary people, it [citizen journalism] stands for unfiltered views of regular citizens. [...] Its postmodernist qualities offer a much-needed antidote to the modern conception of professional journalism. It offers a chaotic world of information equality and pluralism against the authoritarian attachment to the world of elite expertise. (pp. 206–207)

Napoli (2015), by contrast, feels rather uneasy about the fact that "many of the responsibilities associated with the production and dissemination of the news and information essential to a well-functioning democracy fall, within the context of social media platforms, to individual media users" (p. 757). His concern is that those platforms "possess few of the public interest parameters or values that characterized legacy news outlets" (p. 757).

Any conclusive judgment of citizen journalism's contribution to a democratic society would need to consider how impactful it actually is when it comes to shaping public sphere in comparison to the mass media. A look at pertinent studies

reveals little evidence for citizen journalism being about to replace traditional forms of journalism. First of all, mass media have been found influential in driving the agenda of citizen media (Meraz, 2009; Messner & Distaso, 2008). Moreover, audiences continue to appreciate professional news outlets online for their reliability, objectivity, and topical expertise (Neuberger, 2012). While online news readers associate professional journalists with media credibility, they turned out not do that with citizen journalists (Nah & Chung, 2011). Most importantly, however, empirical results indicate that citizen journalism has not managed to become a pervasive phenomenon as the interest of non-professionals remains low when it comes to creating their own news content (Bergström, 2008; Busemann & Gscheidle, 2011; Chung, 2008; Larsson, 2011; Newman & Levy, 2014, p. 73). All these results considered, it seems more promising to focus on how professional journalism and citizens' online activities complement each other and how they integrate, rather than asking how they compete (Neuberger & Nuernbergk, 2010).

4.2 Social web usage in professional contexts

Before we examine concrete aspects of journalism in the social web more closely, let us consider how and for which purposes the social web is used in professional contexts in general. Studies looking specifically at social web usage in professional contexts tend to focus on professional actors' strategies for engaging publics (see e.g. Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012; Waters, Burnett, Lamm, & Lucas, 2009). Of course, direct interaction with audiences, customers, or stakeholders is one of the central novelties of the social web from a professional point of view. This also holds true for journalism. Nevertheless, journalistic social web usage represents a distinct case of social web usage in professional contexts. Businesses and non-profit organizations can avail themselves of direct interaction opportunities because the social web allows them to bypass traditional gatekeepers (Pleil & Bastian, 2016). Media organizations, by contrast, are the very gatekeepers being bypassed (Neuberger, 2008). Traditionally, they used to have exclusive access both to sources and publication channels, thus deciding as gatekeepers to the public sphere what information is newsworthy and will be published via mass media to reach large audiences. One may say that media organizations get to experience the direct interaction opportunities in the social web as part of a process that is "weakening the traditional editorial gatekeeping

function of professional journalism" (Paulussen, Harder, & Johnson, 2016, p. 428), and thus challenging a hallmark of their profession. Against this backdrop, this study intends to analyze journalism in the social web from a perspective that considers more aspects of social web usage than just that of engaging publics.

In fact, Schmidt (2011b) argues that analyses of social web usage need to focus on *three* central components of social web practices – identity management, relationship management, and information management – which are framed by structural dimensions. In doing so, he acts on the assumption that apart from looking at basic functions[22] of social web formats, social web usage can also be conceived from the perspective of social action theory. With its three components, the model of analysis for practices of social web usage which Schmidt (2007, 2011b) has incrementally developed appears to have an appropriately wide angle for the study at hand. What is more, it is expressly adaptable to social web usage in professional organizational contexts and applicable across different social web formats (pp. 75–76).

So, what exactly are the model's basic premises and components? Schmidt's starting point for developing his model of analysis for social web usage is the work of social theorists such as Bourdieu (1982; (1985), Giddens (1988) or Reckwitz (2003) from which he derives that all individual action is embedded in structures. Schmidt (2007) comes to the conclusion that

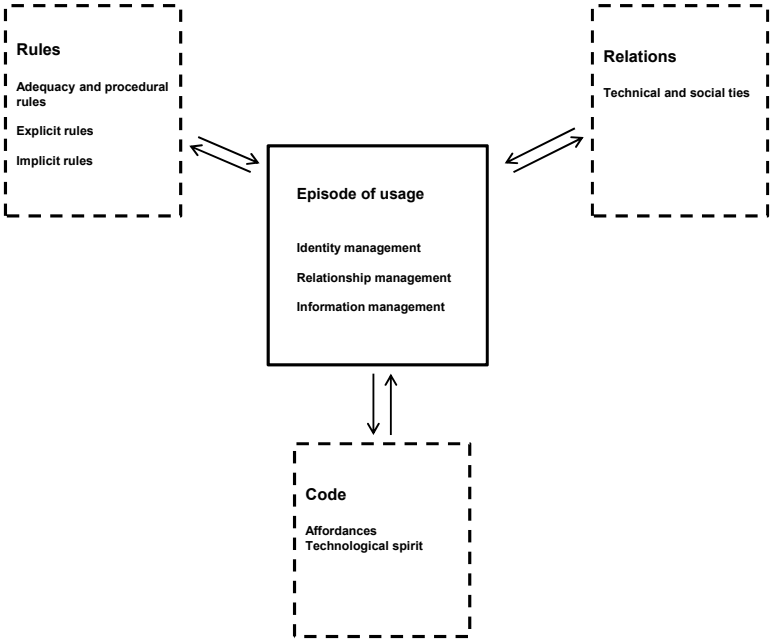
> in order to fully explain aspects of social life, one has to connect the micro-level of individual action and the macro-level of social structures by explaining the mechanisms of how the macro-level structures are framing the micro-level actions, and how the micro-level actions are in turn (re)producing the macro-level structures (p. 1411).

For making this connection between the micro- and the macro-level, Schmidt deems the notion of *practice* particularly useful. He understands practices to be carried out through individual situational actions framed by structures that are collectively shared and, thus, valid beyond the individual and across situations. By stating that structures *frame* rather than *determine* activity, Schmidt (2011a) highlights that practices are not static: While actors may rely on structures as

22 A more fundamental, more detailed differentiation of social web uses is provided by Schmidt and Taddicken (2016). Here, the authors discern seven functions of social web formats: Creating, publishing, commenting, annotating, forwarding, subscribing, and linking. For further differentiations of social web uses see Joinson's (2008) or Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, and Silvestre (2011).

expressions of social norms, codes, or expectations for orientation or reduction of complexity when executing actions, they may as well deviate from the resulting behavioral dispositions in acts of creativity and reflexivity. That again can have an impact on structures as these are (re)shaped by dynamics of social action. Hence, practices signify "the recursivity of social action and social structure" (p. 163). As Schmidt (2011b) finds numerous instances where the notion of practice has been utilized to enrich media use research, he concludes that the concept can and should be extended to analyses of social web usage as well (p. 47). Figure 2 shows the resulting model of analysis.

Figure 2: Schmidt's (2011b, p. 50) model of analysis for practices of social web usage



For the purpose of analyzing social web usage, Schmidt (2011b) suggests to look at episodes of social web usage as framed by three structural dimensions: *rules*, *relations*, and *code*.

Rules are understood as shared routines and internalized expectation-expectations that prompt certain actions while inhibiting others. With reference to Höflich (2003), Schmidt argues that in computer-mediated communication a distinction can be made between *adequacy rules* and *procedural rules*. *Adequacy rules* refer to the selection of a certain communication channel, that is, they have a bearing on which social web format or function within a format is considered adequate to obtain sought gratifications. After this decision is made *procedural rules* influence how exactly this social web format or social web function is used during an episode of usage. Both adequacy rules and procedural rules exist in varying degrees of explicitness, with formalized rules at one end of the spectrum and informal rules at the other. As examples for explicit, formalized rules in the social web Schmidt cites laws or legal regulations such as copyrights or personality rights, and usage agreements such as the "terms of service" that users of certain social web formats might be required to accept upon registration. Implicit, informal rules are said to play out, for instance, as communication conventions which may be discursively developed through debates on self-understanding (for example when bloggers come to agree that what distinguishes them from journalists is their responsiveness) or negatively enforced through sanctions imposed by other, at times more powerful actors (for example when managers of a *Facebook* page delete a user comment they consider inappropriate).

Relations are understood in Schmidt's model as the technical and social connections that structure an episode of usage. Technical connections are often present in the form of hyperlinks that allow users to navigate through different resources within a hypertext. These links are usually obvious to the users. Database links, too, are technical connections that structure user activity (e.g. in the form of connections between users on social network sites, connections between tags on an online bookmarking platform and web resources, or connections between comments and blog entries), but users may be less conscious about them. While such connections are technical by nature, they also bear social meaning. After all, connections visualizing references between pieces of data and making them accessible to various groups of users constitute communication spaces. For Schmidt, these communication spaces represent "networked publics" (Schmidt, 2011b, p. 57) (see Section 4.1) in which users expose themselves to intended or empirical audiences. Some nodes of the network, he argues, are better connected than others despite the allegedly egalitarian and decentralized structure of the

social web. This, in turn, increased the chances of the former to become even better connected. A *Facebook* page that is "liked" by many users, for instance, is more likely to attract comments or prompt shares, thus generating wider exposure. "Emerging patterns of centrality and peripherality are not only an indicator of hierarchies of attention and popularity", states Schmidt (2007, p. 1416) "but also influence the way information, ideas, and `memes´ spread [...]." Apart from that, he also emphasizes the function of social connections as means of orientation for social positioning in relation to others (e.g. as author or recipient) in the social web or as resources for support, social belonging, and group identity.

The third structural aspect in Schmidt's model is *code*. According to the author, "code refers to the instructions and procedures that are stipulated in software, but also the design of single programs and their user interfaces as well as interfaces for data exchange between single applications"[23] (Schmidt, 2011b, p. 64). Based on this understanding he specifies two main mechanisms that structure processes of technology appropriation and usage: An application's technological spirit and its affordances. The technological spirit of an application concerns the usage of an application as intended by its developers and designers. It is said to be detectable, for instance, in self-descriptions, in tutorials about the "correct" use of the application, or in what is implicitly embedded in how the application's functions are termed. An application's affordances, on the other hand, rather refer to the uses that suggest themselves as interpreted from the users' perspective. They might be consistent with the technological spirit, but they might as well deviate from it. Users or user communities may develop uses that have not been intended and are unforeseen by designers or developers[24]. Thus, the structural influence of affordances has to be considered in terms of how open or restricted an application is when it comes to adjusting it to user contexts and needs.

23 Translated from German. Original: "Code bezeichnet die Anweisungen und Prozeduren, die in Software niedergelegt sind, aber auch die Gestaltung einzelner Programme und ihrer Benutzeroberflächen bzw. Interfaces sowie die Schnittstellen für den Austausch von Daten zwischen einzelnen Anwendungen."

24 An example for that could be the usage of the photo-sharing application Instagram by Iranian citizens. They reinterpret the application's intended purpose (which is to "capture and share the world's moments" [Instagram (2017, para. 1)]) against the background that other text-heavy social media formats are blocked in their country and predominantly use it to publish texts which they convert to photographs.

Having outlined the three structural dimensions that frame social web usage we now turn to the concrete actions through which practices of social web usage are performed. Schmidt's model of analysis divides them into three central components (p. 73–106): *Identity management*, which is mainly about "making aspects of oneself accessible"[25] (p. 73); *relationship management*, which refers to "maintaining existing and forging new relations"[26] (p. 73); and *information management*, which involves "selecting, filtering, rating, and administering information"[27] (p. 73). By no means are these practices confined to an alleged online world. Rather, they involve processes that concern a person's living environment at large, namely processes of coming to terms with oneself, with others, and with artifacts. The mechanisms and tools that the social web provides are used for these very processes.

What exactly is meant by *identity management* in the social web? This practice component is derived from the circumstance that modern society requires its members to form and stabilize an individual identity. In his understanding of identity, Schmidt follows Buckingham (2008) who describes identity as "a fluid, ongoing process, something that is permanently `under construction´" (p. 8). The social web offers an extensive set of tools for disclosing, presenting, and thematizing oneself, thus allowing for this construction of the self, for example by filling in profile pages or making personal podcasts. However, social web activities can also entail subtle, less consciously produced identity cues that give communication partners some indication of a person's identity. In this respect Schmidt cites examples such as whether or not a blogger owns a domain, how professional or amateurish a video seems, or how often somebody posts something. Thus, identity management is said to always be related to a public or an audience, which is the reason why it can be difficult to tell it apart from relationship management. By separating these two components analytically, however, Schmidt attaches importance to networking aspects in the social web.

To be well connected is considered highly relevant in a society that is characterized by a variety of (rather loose) ties and in which communication is most often mediated. Against this backdrop, social web usage contributes to forging and maintaining various kinds of social relationships. In other words: It contributes to *relation-*

25 Translated from German. Original: "Zugänglich-Machen von Aspekten der eigenen Person"

26 Translated from German. Original: "die Pflege von bestehenden und das von Knüpfen neuen Relationen"

27 Translated from German. Original: "Selektieren, Filtern, Bewerten und Verwalten von Informationen"

ship management. The social web provides a variety of communication channels which are selected based on how adequate they seem in a certain communication situation. Practices of relationship management can, for example, be reflected in activities such as making or accepting contact requests, posting on somebody's *Facebook* page, sending private messages, or dividing contacts into different categories.

As a third practice component, Schmidt factors *information management* for the reason that processing information plays an increasingly important role in professional, recreational, and private contexts. As an analytical category, information management accounts for what has already been mentioned above as a specific achievement of the WWW which gains impetus in the social web: "The social web contributes to informatization because it offers tools and mechanisms which allow a greater number of actors to provide information, share it with others, edit it and disseminate it"[28] (p. 97). Accessing information and giving access to information is therefore considered a central component of social web usage. Schmidt specifies two areas of information management in the social web in greater detail: *Taking notice of information* and *rating information*. Social web users often take notice of information due to push-mechanisms, for instance when information is automatically brought to their attention via so-called "newsfeeds" that reflect the structure of their network. Information can also reach users via a pull-principle, though, for example if they make use of specialized search engines and if they purposefully view a profile page. As already mentioned above, rating is a distinctive function of the social web and as it contextualizes social web content, it is considered part of information management. This contextualization usually happens based on rating features such as "like" buttons or star scales.

To ensure a suitable adaption of Schmidt's model to the professional-journalistic environment, the following sections will review insights on various challenges of and expectations towards journalism practiced in the social web. These will then inform the specification of the model's analytical categories. How exactly the model is made workable for the empirical implementation of this study is explained in Subsection 6.1.1.

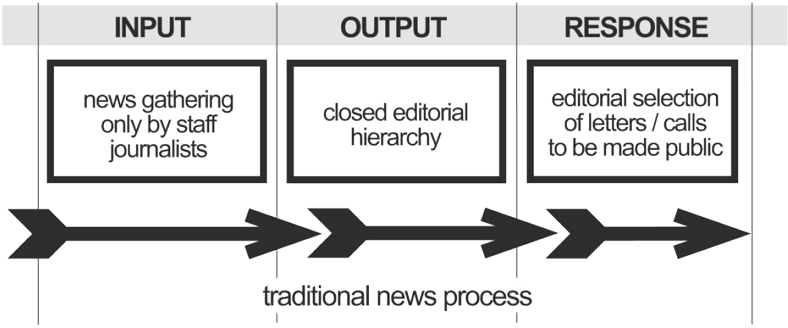
28 Translated from German. Original: "Das Social Web trägt zu der Informatisierung bei, weil es Werkzeuge und Mechanismen bietet, mit denen eine größere Zahl von Akteuren Informationen bereitstellen, mit anderen teilen, bearbeiten und weiter verbreiten kann."

4.3 Changing journalism-audience relations in the digital age

In Section 4.1 we have come to learn that professional journalism has remained impactful in shaping public sphere despite the new conditions brought about by digitalization. Given that competition between professional journalism and citizens' online activities seems less of an issue, attention should rather be directed towards how these two integrate (Neuberger & Nuernbergk, 2010). Hence, this section focuses on the integration of participatory elements into the journalistic news process.

Bruns (2005) questions the ongoing usefulness of established journalistic gatekeeping practices under digital conditions and is in favor of opening up the journalistic profession towards what he calls "gatewatching". The author describes the traditional news process as consisting of three gatekeeping stages as shown in Figure 3: The *input stage* at which journalists either allow information into the news production process or not, the *output stage* at which a closed editorial hierarchy controls decisions on what content gets released to the audience, and the *response stage* at which audience responses such as letters to the editor or calls-ins are accepted or rejected for publication based on editorial selection (p. 12).

Figure 3: Traditional news process with three stages of gatekeeping (Bruns, 2005, p. 12)

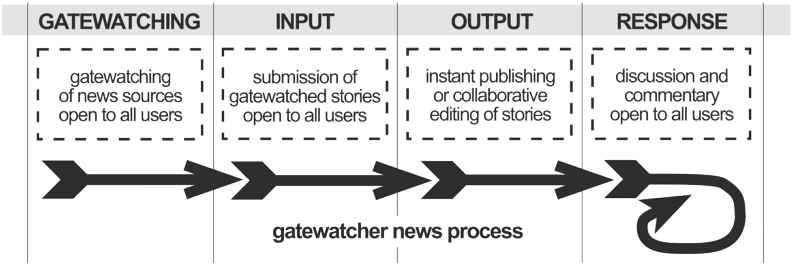


According to Bruns, traditional gatekeeping at the input stage mostly happens according to professional routine, organizational patterns, or political and commercial agendas. The author points to gatekeeping at the input stage as a key reason for audiences' disillusionment with commercial journalism as it contradicted

people's widely held notion that journalists cover events accurately and objectively. Bruns argues that "news organizations can no longer afford to implement strict gatekeeping practice at this stage" (p. 15) because the availability of primary source information and multiple journalistic perspectives in the WWW enables the audience to debunk the rationale for such gatekeeping. At the output stage as well as at the response stage, the author lists a number of practical reasons for gatekeeping such as limited availability of column space, air time, or transmission frequencies which used to force journalists to select the significant bits from the broader range of potential news. In the digital environment where space is anything but sparse, however, he no longer deems them justified (pp. 11–13).

Against this background, Bruns conceives a gatewatcher news process as illustrated in Figure 4. Its concrete implications for journalism practice at the output stage and at the response stage will be explained in the Section 4.4. Overall, the distinctive feature of this news process is that it is open to user participation at all stages.

Figure 4: Gatewatcher news process (Bruns, 2008, p. 7)



Opening up to user participation has become almost an imperative for journalism in the digital age. At least on the surface, large parts of the news production industry seem to share Bruns' conclusion that "gatewatching, not gatekeeping, is now the more useful activity" (p. 22) in one way or another, be it for economic reasons "as a means of both combating a loss in revenue and reconnecting with their audiences" (Graham, 2013, p. 116) or because the public service role of media organizations requires them to encourage civic participation (Lewis, 2012). At the same time, opening up to user participation represents a substantial change

for journalism as a profession. The following account of the relatively detached journalism-audience relationship prior to digitalization renders this quite clear:

> Journalism's ability to dominate news was made possible largely because of the characteristics of the modern media order, namely, limited citizen access, media scarcity and long-term stability. Technological capabilities and organizational norms determined that citizens were rarely able to express their views to journalists, nor were news organizations receptive to audiences' comments. Besides letters to the editors, audiences had few opportunities to express their opinions to and through the news. Interactivity between journalists and audiences was rare. Journalists rarely thought about audiences or were encouraged by news management to pay considerable attention to readers and viewers. (Waisbord, 2013, pp. 203–204)

The described situation is in stark contrast to a direct or even collaborative journalism-audience relationship. Unsurprisingly, demands and instances of increased participation of the public in news and information have been observed to create "friction about the roles and philosophies under which news providers operate and the very ways that journalists perceive their audiences" (Picard, 2014, p. 507). In an effort to define who they are and what makes them distinct in the open environment of the WWW, journalists have been found to be "increasingly [...] defining themselves in terms of professional norms, standards, and practices that, they say, are only sporadically shared by those outside the newsroom" (Singer, 2011, p. 105). To characterize these frictions and self-perceptions in more detail, we now turn to empirical insights into the subject.

Early studies on how journalists deal with integrating audience material into their work show that they tend to react to it by holding on to the existing structures. In a case study of the *BBC*, for instance, Williams, Wardle, and Wahl-Jorgensen (2011) found that material from the audience was seen by the journalists as just another news source among many and was most welcomed in formats such as eyewitness-photos, story tip-offs, or bulletin-board comments which do not disrupt the conventional reporter-source relationship. The researchers' multi-site newsroom observations and interviews showed that "rather than changing the way most journalists at the *BBC* work, in the main, the ways that *BBC News* processes audience material are firmly embedded within long-established practices and routines relating to newsgathering and sourcing" (p. 94). Also, Brants and Haan's (2010) case studies of three Dutch media outlets disclosed that the outlets' claim to be more responsive to viewers and readers mostly referred to instances where

they could harness viewers and readers as news sources. Ensuring audience participation by incorporating interactive instruments within the journalistic processes, though, was rather met with discomfort. This leads the authors to conclude:

> Whether it is unease about opening up to and coming clean with the public, or the unfamiliarity of various types of interactive instruments such as website forums, the cases illustrate that the cultural shift taking place within media organizations is somewhat lagging behind rapid technological advancements. (p. 426)

Studies focusing specifically on journalists' attitudes towards audience participation identify numerous ways by which journalists seek to distance themselves from other content providers. The ten British journalists interviewed by Thurman (2008), for example, expressed concerns over the news value of UGC and its standards of spelling, punctuation, accuracy, and balance. Accordingly, they held a strong belief that users' submissions needed to be controlled, moderated, or sub-edited to meet the standards of professionally produced output (p. 144). Also, Reich's (2011) interview study with 67 journalists from ten Western democracies reveals a perception that audience participation somehow interferes with journalistic professionalism. Many interviewees feared for their news organization's reputation and legitimacy in light of website comments and were in favor for the comments' quality to be tightly controlled (p. 103). Similarly, Singer and Ashman's (2009) ethnographic case study at the *Guardian* "suggests that journalists are incorporating issues raised by UGC within an existing normative framework, one defined by professional constructs" (p. 19). While the examined journalists were found to see a value in the fact that, in theory, more voices could be heard through UGC, they tended to uphold a traditional journalistic approach to ensuring familiar norms such as credibility and accuracy.

But what is behind journalists' adherence to the existing structures? In order to make sense of the ongoing tension between professional control and open participation in the news process, Lewis (2012) draws on "sociology of professions" and its emphasis on boundaries. From this perspective, all professions are assumed to engage in some degree of boundary maintenance in seeking to maintain control. Journalistic professionalism, the author argues, is characterized by "a mind-set of content control that [...] remains an enduring impediment to journalists' capacity to change their perceptions and practices in the digital age" (p. 845). While this explained many a journalist's insistence on existing norms, routines, and values

the author also sees "emerging evidence – small but significant – that journalism's ideological commitment to control, rooted in an institutional instinct toward protecting legitimacy and boundaries, may be giving way to a hybrid logic of adaptability and openness" (p. 850–851). The evidence Lewis refers to stems from a study by Robinson (2010). Robinson's ethnographic examination of a local US news organization found the attitudes of journalists towards users' website comments to range between what she calls "traditionalist" and "converger". Traditionalists are described by Robinson as believing "that journalists held a somewhat superior position in society as an authoritative figure and that news organizations' web pages needed to reflect that institutional responsibility" (p. 131). Convergers, on the other hand, are said to hold the conviction "that the spaces adhered to digital cultural standards – that is, no real names, less registration, less moderation and more engagement by journalists in these spaces" (p. 134).

Over time, empirical studies – as of late more often considering journalism-audience relationships in social web environments rather than just in terms of news websites – in fact reveal greater variety in journalists' pertinent attitudes and practices. This shows, for example, in the typologies developed by Hedman and Djerf-Pierre (2013) or Gulyas (2016). Based on a nationally representative survey of journalists in Sweden, Hedmann and Djerf-Pierre (2013) identify three main types of professional journalistic social web users: "skeptical shunners", "pragmatic conformists", and "enthusiastic activists". The differences between these types were traced back to journalists' age and type of work (print, TV, web etc.) as well as to professional attitudes towards audience orientation and personal branding. Accordingly, the skeptical shunners were characterized as

> journalists who avoid having anything to do with social media. This stance is shared by a minority of journalists (about 10–15 percent) and often found among older journalists working in the printed press. They avoid Twitter and Facebook and are deeply skeptical of all of the uses and impacts of social media, and they also resist the notion that this new phenomenon should change the profession to any significant extent. (p. 381)

The vast majority of the examined journalists fell into the second category of pragmatic conformists. These were regular but selective users of social media who could be found across all age groups and workplaces. Their attitude was described as follows:

> This group is using social media partly because of perceived peer pressure and organizational requirements; they think that they are expected to be up to date with the current trends in the industry and believe that cultivating their social media skills is a professional requirement. Their attitudes towards social media are, however, marked by ambivalence. On the one hand, they appreciate the new opportunities to use social media as a journalistic tool; on the other hand, they are skeptical of the social media hype and the loud appeals of the vocal activist group of users. (p. 382)

Less than five percent of the surveyed journalists made up the third category, the enthusiastic activists, who were typically found among younger journalists and among those working with digital or cross-media platforms. Interestingly, this group "shares most of the fundamental professional ideals of other journalists, but differs in its approach to audience adaptation and personal branding" (p. 382). The authors characterized the respective journalists as follows:

> [They] take advantage of all the opportunities that the Web 2.0 offers and have fully embraced and/or submitted to the inevitability of a social media life. Their usage goes beyond the information and environmental scanning functions, and they frequently use social media for networking, personal branding and collaboration. [...] [This group of journalists] holds the view that the profession must undergo profound changes because of social media. (p. 382)

Gulyas' (2016) typology, in turn, groups professional journalistic social web users into five categories according to differences in patterns of use, knowledge, motivations, and attitudes. It is based on 2012 survey data from a random stratified sample which was drawn for eight Western countries from the commercial database CisionPoint (Pole & Gulyas, 2013). The identified types were: "sceptics", "observers", "hunters", "promoters", and "architects". The categories of sceptics, observers, and architects resemble Hedman and Djerf-Pierre's (2013) categories of skeptical shunners, pragmatic conformists, and enthusiastic activists. The other two types use social media at least regularly, albeit for different reasons: For hunters, sourcing information and professional networking were the most important reasons why they use social media; for promoters, publishing and promoting their own content represented key functions of social media.

Also, Canter's (2013) study points to a widened spectrum of uses when it comes to journalists relating to audiences in the social web. Based on interviews and a content analysis of multiple social media profiles at two daily regional newspapers

in the UK, the author found that journalists engaged with their audiences in an informal, personal, and reciprocal manner when using their individual social web accounts. On the official social web accounts of the news organizations, in contrast, there was limited two-way interaction and a traditional model of just disseminating website content prevailed. This leads the author to conclude:

> The spectrum of interactivity is shifting from a traditional approach towards a more interactive one; however, the transition is still in progress. [...] [T]he extent to which this is happening is still largely dependent on individuals rather than being incorporated into organisational norms and routines. (p. 491)

If we consider openness to audience participation more practically at the different stages of the news process itself, empirical studies draw an unambiguous picture: It is usually only the response stage that is open for audience participation. In this respect, Domingo et al.'s (2008) qualitative analysis of 16 online newspaper's websites in Western democracies is quite revealing. The authors used an analytical grid that distinguishes five professional news production stages (access and observation; selection/filtering; processing/editing; distribution; interpretation) and examined how open each stage is for citizen participation. The overall finding is that for all the newspaper websites studied only the interpretation stage was significantly open to citizen participation. Against this background, the authors conclude: "Most of the online newspapers see audience-participation as an opportunity for their readers to debate current events" (p. 337). A study by Sehl (2013), which investigated participatory elements offered by German daily newspapers based on the same analytical grid, confirms this finding (p. 196). While Jönsson and Örnebring (2011) take a somewhat different approach to examining openness to audience participation in the news process, their results point in a similar direction. Their study of UGC features in online versions of major broadsheets and tabloids in the UK and Sweden focuses on the level of participation (low/medium/high) afforded by these features and the type of content (information-oriented content, entertainment/popular culture-oriented content, and personal/social/expressive-oriented content) they invite. Their data shows that high-level participation was commonly offered in relation to popular culture content and personal content. In the sphere of information, however, comments and discussion boards (considered "medium-level") were the most common forms of participation activities whereas user-produced news

texts, interviews, and other types of news material (considered "high-level") were almost non-existent. More examples of consistent results can be found in Wardle and Williams (2010) who identify audience comments as the most frequently used type of audience material at the BBC, or in Heise, Loosen, Reimer, and Schmidt (2013) whose survey of journalists and audience members of the German television newscast *Tagesschau* showed that both groups strongly agree with the statement that "journalists keep the upper hand in selecting and processing/producing news stories" when it comes to audience participation.

This tendency of openness being limited to the response stage seems to remain steady even under social web conditions. A feature analysis by Scott, Millard, and Leonard (2014) considered both traditional news outlets such as *Sky News* or *BBC News* and their social web accounts while examining openness to audience participation at different stages of the news process. Besides finding that traditional news outlets "offer opportunities for citizen contribution only when they can filter the contribution, or where the contribution is clearly separated from the work of journalists" (p. 755) the study also showed that "the news outlets' use of social networks does not create more openness as they use these outlets only as an additional distribution channel, and even the news outlets' attempts at open news systems are still relatively closed" (p. 755). Also, Neuberger, Langenohl, and Nuernbergk's (2015) study on social web usage of German online news outlets shows that the surveyed journalists rarely used social media to involve users in investigation activities or to make room for users' very own contributions. Instead, social web formats were most frequently used to hint at journalistic output and to enable follow-up discussion (p. 48).

In light of such findings some authors have come to rate the kind of audience participation which journalism allows in its news process as "symbolic participation"[29] (Engesser, 2013, p. 89) or "mere token participation" (Peters & Witschge, 2014, p. 27). What can definitely be concluded aside from any value judgement is that the increased direct contact with audience members brought about by digitalization presents journalists with quite a challenge. As a consequence, they have developed different attitudes and strategies to deal with it, ranging from quite closed to quite open ones. So far, actual instances of direct contact have turned out to be largely concentrated at the response stage of the news process.

29 Translated from German. Original: „symbolische Partizipation"

4.4 Communicative expectations and challenges of journalism in the social web

Having learnt that it is usually only the response stage that is open for audience participation, we now narrow our focus on two specific stages of the news process: The output stage (which feeds the response stage) and the response stage itself. In doing so, we generally stick to Bruns' (2005) differentiation of three news production stages. This section considers these stages specifically with regard to journalism practiced in the social web and inspects related expectations as well as challenges that arise as a consequence of the intertwining of mass mediated public sphere and personal publics.

4.4.1 Output stage

At the output stage of the news process – the stage at which content gets released to the audience – Bruns (2005) envisions the gatewatching ideal to be implemented through news *publicizing* as opposed to news *publishing*. By this he means "making available (a collection of) pointers to reports available elsewhere" (p. 19) rather than "making available complete, self-contained reports" (p. 19). Bruns argues that in the digital age in which huge amounts of news and information are available in the WWW users have an increased need to be able to see these in context. Journalists acting as gatewatchers could provide this contextualization by "observ[ing] what material is available and interesting, and identify[ing] useful information with a view to channeling this material into structured and up-to-date news reports which may include guides to relevant content and excerpts from the selected material" (p. 18). On journalistic websites engaging in gatewatching, he observes that news items usually take the form of brief summaries or digests. Such websites furthermore provided direct links to relevant information accessible on sites they monitor.

When looking into empirical data on how traditional news outlets use the social web at the output stage, however, it seems that they continue to engage in publishing rather than in publicizing. Armstrong and Gao (2010) examined nine US news organizations' use of *Twitter* at the output stage via content analysis. The scholars were specifically interested in the kinds of links employed in the tweets

and in how these tweets compare with the news headlines of the respective news organization. They found that "86% of tweets were written to drive traffic to the individual news sites (to view links) rather than for public service (e.g. road closings and inclement weather warnings), news update, or previews of upcoming stories" (p. 231) and that "67% of tweets from news organizations were the same as headlines in the linked news stories" (p. 230). Another *Twitter* study by Lasorsa, Lewis, and Holton (2012) reveals a somewhat different picture, albeit by looking into tweets from individual journalists. Among other things, the authors wanted to find out to what extent microblogging journalists link to external sources in their tweets. Based on a content analysis of tweets by the 500 most-followed journalists (according to muckrack.com), they detected that 42 percent of the tweets contained a link: "While half of these were to the journalist's own host news organization and an additional quarter were to other mainstream news organizations, 7.2 percent of these j-tweets were to outside blogs and 18 percent were to other external websites [...]" (pp. 28–29). Even though this suggests that individual journalists are more inclined to engage in social web output activities that could be considered gatewatching, studies by Hille and Bakker (2013), Lilienthal et al. (2014), or Scott et al. (2014) confirm the overall tendency that news organizations mainly use social web formats as additional distribution channels at the output stage.

Even if it seems to be a reality that journalism organizations see and use social web formats predominantly as distribution channels for their own content, the environment in which this content is being put out does push for certain adjustments of the journalistic role at the output stage. As Paulussen et al. (2016) argue with respect to the social web format *Facebook*: "Facebook is more than just another news-gathering tool for journalists or an extra platform for news dissemination. Rather, the impact of Facebook lies in its potential to reshape the flow of news" (p. 432).

What media organizations certainly need to take into consideration is how their output gets to their audiences in the social web. In a social web environment, people are said to "engage in less purposeful, directed information-seeking, and rely instead on the operation of their social media platforms, and the behaviors of the individuals and organizations within their social networks, to place relevant news and information in front of them" (Napoli, 2015, p. 756). Hermida (2016) refers to this phenomenon as "social discovery of news" and points out that for the news industry "it offers new ways to connect and engage with audiences in the spaces where they congregate [which] [...] is particularly important

in order to reach those with a passing interest in news" (p. 88). Empirical data from a nationally representative online survey in the US in fact shows that 78 percent of *Facebook* news consumers get to read news when they are on *Facebook* for other reasons (Mitchell, Kiley, Gottfried, & Guskin, 2013). One of the study's respondents aptly sums up: "I believe Facebook is a good way to find out news without actually looking for it" (para. 3).

So, in what ways does social discovery of news impact journalistic practice at the output stage in the social web? For one, it is expected that news organizations consider the "spreadability" of the news item they put out. According to Phillips (2012)

> it is no longer enough to be `first with the news´, nor is it sufficient to be comprehensive and trustworthy. It is now increasingly considered necessary to ensure that news is produced in a form that is capable of spreading virally. (p. 669)

Schmidt (2011b), too, highlights the spreadability of news content as an important feature for attracting the attention of users who rarely or never visit genuine journalism sites (p. 144). One way to facilitate spreadability is obviously by ensuring that the audience is able to share journalistic output with its contacts or social networks. A study by Singer (2014) suggests that a majority of news organizations try to make use of sharing features. The author checked 138 US general-interest newspaper websites for presence or absence of abilities for users to share website content through e-mail, social bookmarking tools, and/or social networking tools. She found that 97.1 percent of the newspapers offered users the possibility to redistribute website content through e-mail and 93.5 percent enabled users to share website content through use of at least one social bookmarking and/or social networking tool.

One could argue that news organizations who disseminate content via their own social web accounts even go one step further to ensure spreadability because they act directly on the "users' turf". After all, social web users typically avail themselves of a range of platform specific rating and sharing tools and each of the users' interactions with journalistically produced content becomes visible to their personal publics or even beyond. This, however, also makes news organizations subject to the user judgements in a more visible and direct way. From an attention economic perspective, the increased transparency of users' actions in digital environments is assumed to rebound on the content structures

of traditional journalistic output (Wendelin, 2014). Against this background, it is important to realize that users' criteria for the judgement of news may well differ from the ones of professional journalists (see Section 4.3). When it comes to news values, for instance, a study by Papacharissi and Fatima Oliveira (2012) found that news discourses on *Twitter* reflect "a mix of traditional news values and values specific to the platform of Twitter" (p. 6). The authors used computerized content analysis and discourse analysis to examine a corpus of 1.1 million tweets (in Latin characters) revolving around the #egypt hashtag during the time period in early 2011 when popular uprisings in Egypt forced President Mubarak to resign. The tweets were generated by citizens, bloggers, activists, journalists, and media outlets alike. Alongside traditional journalistic news values such as large scale of events, closeness to home, relevance, personification, or significance, Papacharissi and Fatima Oliveira also identified novel news values of instantaneity, crowdsourced elites, solidarity, and ambience. Even though these novel news values were not necessarily compatible with the fact checking processes prescribed by conventional journalism practice, journalists were found to be occasionally drawn to them as part of submitting to the platform logics (e.g. while engaging in live tweeting).

Some authors point to risks with regard to the adjustment of journalistic practices to (anticipated) user reactions in the social web. Heinderyckx (2015), for instance, utters concerns about media organizations' tendency to "conflat[e] relevance with popularity" (p. 260) when evaluating newsworthiness. In this regard, the emerging phenomenon of "click bait" seems worth mentioning. In a study by Blom and Hansen (2015) this phenomenon is examined in the form of forward-referring online news headlines whose wording induces curiosity but lacks content. The authors assume that such online news headlines serve as "a device primarily used for creating anticipation and making readers click, rather than for summarizing the story" (p. 89). Their analysis of 100,000 headlines from ten different Danish news websites revealed a correlation between forward-reference in headlines and tabloidization and commercialization. These findings match Josephi's (2016) observation "that many of the tendencies foreshadowed in tabloid journalism have entered digital journalism, especially when emanating from social media" (p. 20).

Finally, what remains to be clarified in terms of the output stage is who actually puts out professional content in the social web on behalf of news organizations

and whether this task can be considered journalistic. Early commentators seem to be somewhat divided over the journalistic value of this kind of work. Lietsala and Sirkkunen (2008), for example, assert that "when the work has more to do with just facilitating the site technically and maintaining and keeping the content creating community active it is far from the traditional work of journalists" (p. 155). They consequently suggest to call the persons in charge "media workers" instead of "journalists". Bunz (2008), in contrast, is in favor of both roles drawing closer to one another. She suggests that managing a community of audience members should be taken more seriously in journalistic terms. She envisions the persons in charge to be able to write and reply autonomously on behalf of their news organization as well as to work in close collaboration with colleagues whose news pieces are posted in the social web.

Over time, news organizations seem to have come to terms with the job description at the output (and the response) stage of the social web by taking a path that rather resembles Bunz's vision. The role news organizations have defined is commonly called "social media editor", a term suggesting that "roles of journalism and community management are increasingly intermingled" (Braun & Gillespie, 2011, p. 385). This role has, for instance, been identified by Loosen et al. (2013) as one that has been newly integrated into the workflow of the newsroom of German newscast *Tagesschau* as part of efforts to enable audience participation (p. 23). By means of case study research at *Tagesschau,* the authors were able to map pertinent structural adjustments of the newsroom. They found that a newly established social media desk was staffed in total with ten social media editors who worked in shifts. Apart from the social media shifts, these staff members also took care of "genuinely" journalistic shifts in their capacity as TV or online editors. Institutional experience was considered crucial for the role of social media editors, for example when they have to pass on material to colleagues. Interestingly, the researchers found the social media desk to be subject to a rotation system which stipulated that part of its staff gets newly recruited from other desks every two or three months. The rationale behind this system on the part of *Tagesschau's* management was to increase awareness and understanding of the work of the social media desk (p. 24–25). In the entirety of German newsrooms, however, institutional social web accounts seem to rather be taken care of by a specialized minority of editors. In Neuberger et al.'s (2015) nationally representative online survey of managing editors of German news websites, 75 percent of

the respondents indicated that a specialized minority of colleagues takes care of publishing in the social web. Likewise, 92 percent of the respondents stated that it is a specialized minority of colleagues who organizes and moderates audience participation via social web formats.

Machill et al. (2014) rightly point out that, by and large, empirical findings on the professional field of social media editing are still rare. The authors highlight a need for research that addresses questions such as: "How do social media editors investigate? What are their criteria for selection and publication? How do they collaborate with other editors? How do they communicate with the users?"[30] (p. 62). These kinds of questions indeed point the way ahead for the empirical part of the study at hand. The just reviewed expectations and challenges associated with journalistic social web usage at the output stage allow to explore these in a focused manner. Keeping the question of how social media editors communicate with the users in the back of our minds, we now turn to the response stage and to conceptualizations of as well as empirical results on pertinent journalistic practice.

4.4.2 Response stage

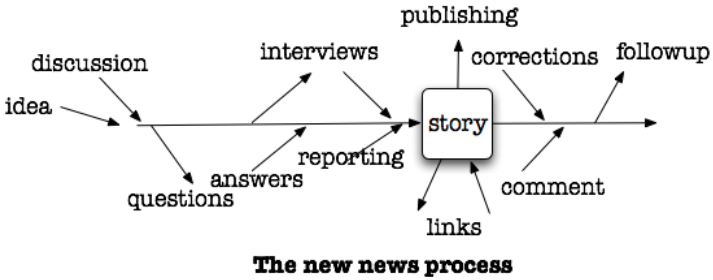
Journalists are not only faced with direct user reactions in the form of "likes" or "shares" as part of the intertwining of mass mediated public sphere and personal publics in the social web, they are also confronted with immediate and widely visible user comments. Commenting on media organizations' social web output might not be the most frequent activity of social web users. Yet, Mitchell et al.'s (2013) nationally representative study in the US shows that a majority of *Facebook* news consumers, namely 60 percent, comment on or "like" news stories at least sometimes. News consumers who had connected themselves with news organizations' or journalists' *Facebook* pages were found to comment and discuss news issues even more intensively: 29 percent of them often commented on or "liked" news stories – as opposed to 15 percent of respondents who hadn't affiliated themselves (pp. 12–13). The fact that follow-up communication has become

30 Translated from German. Original: "Wie recherchiert ein Social-Media-Redakteur? Nach welchen Kriterien selektiert und publiziert er? Wie arbeitet er mit den anderen Redakteuren zusammen? Wie kommuniziert er mit den Nutzern?"

much more direct in the social web (see Section 4.3) certainly presents professional journalism with specific scholarly expectations and practical challenges.

One set of expectations refers to journalists' engagement with user comments and their acknowledgement of users' hints, viewpoints, or preferences. The most basic expectation in this respect is that journalists no longer consider the news process finished once a news item is published. On the contrary, as Niles (2008) emphasizes, "reporters and editors need to stay engaged with a piece so long as people are commenting on it and linking to it" (para. 14). Likewise, Jarvis (2009) argues that modern journalism should see itself as "process journalism". As shown in Figure 5, he conceptualizes the news process as a learning process during which journalistic output may well be commented on and revised. Accordingly, journalists who understand their work as a process do not consider their output a finished product. A false myth of perfection in journalism, Jarvis argues, caused journalists to consider their output fixed. Therefore, he proclaims: "It is time for journalists to trade in their hubris and recapture their humanity and humility. And the best way to do that is simply to admit: We make mistakes" (para. 9).

Figure 5: News process according to the concept of "process journalism" (Jarvis, 2009)



Many academic accounts in this vein highlight user comments as resources to be picked up on by professional journalists. An early advocate of this idea is Gillmor (2006) who points out that, collectively, readers know more than media professionals. Against the background of the interactive possibilities of the internet, journalism would therefore do well to transform from a lecture to a conversation (p. xxiv). In Bruns' (2005) conceptualization, journalists' gatewatching efforts continue at the response stage in the form of pointers to links and further

material that users provide in comments (p. 19). A similar approach is advocated by Graham (2013) who suggests that journalists at least occasionally take the time to report on insights offered by users in comment sections. In such reports journalists could focus on things like "highlighting and summarizing the alternative and new positions; reporting on the new facts and sources introduced; addressing the concerns and worries expressed; answering questions and providing additional information; [...] and responding to critiques of their news" (p. 126). Graham makes this suggestion based on findings from a qualitative content analysis of comment fields in the British online newspaper *Guardian.co.uk*. He found that the audience used the comment fields, among other things, as a platform for questions and answers and for the gathering of additional information. Specifically, the researcher noticed that

> participants frequently drew on their own experiences by posting first-hand accounts and personal experiences via the use of narratives and storytelling or by posting experiences and information as an 'expert' (e.g. as a scientist, police officer, business executive, and so on). (p. 121)

Singer (2011) argues that journalists have started redefining journalism's core function in society in view of the free flow of information between them and their audience. This redefinition involved "a shift away from strict objectivity toward something that includes and invites reflection on and engagement with the information provided" (p. 106). For Singer, journalists' new role is comparable to that of a host of a dinner party insofar as it requires "keeping the discussion flowing; ensuring there is enough nourishment, in sufficient variety, to keep all the guests happy; steering together people who might enjoy one another's company; and, if necessary, heading off or breaking up any fights" (p. 107). This "new journalistic stance in relation to the audience"[31] (200) is termed "dialogization"[32] by Lilienthal et al. (2014). The authors argue that dialogization can serve as a quality criterion for journalism in the digital age because it "can contribute to a plurality of opinions, but also to the correctness and credibility

31 Translated from German. Original: "neue journalistische Grundhaltung im Verhältnis zum Publikum"

32 Translated from German. Original: "Dialogisierung"

of journalistic work and to increased relevance of journalistic offers"[33] (p. 352). The notion of "dialogue" was already used earlier to characterize the communication arising from a more direct relationship between journalism and its audience. With a view to digitalization, Bunz (2008), for instance, pointed out: "Nowadays, to publish means to communicate: journalists no longer produce items for the media, they communicate with their readers – at times via direct dialogue"[34] (p. 178). Also Siapera (2012) argues that the structure of news has turned dialogical given that publics "demand that their preferences and viewpoints are taken into account" (p. 139). She asserts that "online news no longer adopts a single perspective, ostensibly that of objectivity, but rather [...] makes room for all kinds of views, even the most marginalized ones" (p. 139) as a consequence of this structural change.

In practice, these "dialogical" expectations towards modern journalism would imply that media organizations demonstrate responsiveness in the follow-up to their social web output. So, what is known so far about media outlets' engagement at the response stage? Do journalists get actively involved with users, do they respond to user comments? Quite a few studies have looked into journalists' handling of social web comments or website comments. The overall impression from these studies is that journalists are relatively inactive at the response stage. As part of a quantitative analysis of 13 Spanish media outlets' *Facebook* pages Noguera Vivo (2010) monitored whether user comments get replies from the page owners. He found that the majority of user comments, that is 69.3 percent, remain unanswered by the media organization running the *Facebook* page. A study by Jakobs (2014) looking into the comment sections of six German newspaper's websites yields even more striking results. None of the 1,390 comments she analyzed at the response stage of 72 articles was recognizably authored by a journalist. While Jakobs rates this as a clear lack of engagement at the response stage, she can only speculate about the reasons why journalists don't get involved. In this respect, studies by Reich (2011) and Nielsen (2014) are quite revealing.

33 Translated from German. Original: "kann zur Meinungsvielfalt, aber auch zur Richtigkeit und Glaubwürdigkeit journalistischer Arbeit beitragen, aber auch die Relevanz journalistischer Angebote erhöhen"

34 Translated from German. Original: "Veröffentlichung heute heißt Kommunikation: Journalisten produzieren für Medien keine Beiträge, sie kommunizieren mit ihren Lesern – mitunter auch im direkten Dialog."

Reich's (2011) interview study with 67 journalists from ten Western democracies shows that among some interviewees there was a perception that comments are "separate from the territory controlled by journalists" (p. 103). These journalists minimized their involvement at the response stage because they felt it belonged solely to the audience. In Nielsen's (2013) survey of 528 US newspaper journalists 45 percent of the respondents slightly or strongly agreed that they should *not* respond to online comments, 22.2 percent indicated to be neutral and 32.8 percent slightly or strongly agreed they should respond to online comments. Narrative responses in relation to this issue revealed that interacting with commenters was often perceived as not being a journalistic value. A major concern uttered by one of the respondents was, for instance, that "a reporter/editor can become enmeshed in the conversation to the detriment of his/her primary role – doing the journalism" (p. 480). Reflecting on changing roles and self-perceptions of journalists against the backdrop of digitalization, Singer (2011) remarks that "it is an especially challenging transition for those who see the practice of journalism as necessitating a certain distance from people outside the newsroom, including sources and audiences" (p. 107). Maybe this kind of role understanding is less pronounced among service journalists whose primary task is to render a helpful service to people. After all, it is in service journalism that Usher (2012) found commenting abilities and social web formats to facilitate online conversations between journalists and their readers. Her case study of personal finance journalism and personal technology journalism at the *New York Times* revealed that service journalists appreciated the comment section of their professional blogs and their professional *Twitter* accounts for enabling the creation of a community, for allowing them to act as conversation facilitators, and for the input from commenters in terms of deciding what to cover.

Another set of expectations towards journalism practice at the response stage refers to ensuring standards that allow high-quality debates. This is, for example, reflected in one of the three novel communicative services identified by Neuberger, Vom Hofe, and Nuernbergk (2010) through which journalism could arguably exploit the potential of digitalization when it comes to generating public sphere. Besides services relating to content production and navigation, the authors point to moderation as a crucial communicative service that digital journalists should offer:

> (Lay) communicators need places in the internet where they can count on attention and feedback as well as on compliance with discursive rules. Journalism should provide adequate conditions for communication between users, as a moderator who observes the standards of a deliberative public sphere.[35] (p. 15)

Springer (2011), too, expects modern-day journalists to steer user comments in the direction of discourse and argues that journalistic community management needs to engage in active moderation to do so. Lilienthal et al. (2014) exhibit similar expectations towards digital journalism. As for the kind of communication to be facilitated by what they call "dialogization" they specify: "Journalism should make an effort to channel [the users'] discursive energy toward a discourse about up-to-date topics of societal relevance"[36] (p. 39).

In light of these "discursive" expectations the question arises how journalists actually perceive the quality of the comments they encounter at the response stage and what exactly they do about it. Empirical studies reveal that journalists often see themselves and their professional sensibilities severely challenged by the quality of user comments which they commonly rate as relatively low. Journalists have been found to be "taken aback by the tone of the online discourse" (Singer & Ashman, 2009, p. 19), to frequently find themselves confronted with "defamation, incitement, abusive content, and even racism and hate speech" (Reich, 2011, p. 103), and to be inclined to hold "the view that comments had nothing to offer, were not thoughtful, were not on-topic, and/or were written by a vocal minority of voices that did not reflect the broad readership" (Nielsen, 2013, p. 481). The experience of low quality comments turned out to be perceived as a bitter disappointment by many journalists as it belied their initially high expectations in terms of users' constructiveness and collective wisdom. In the course of time, these expectations seem to have mostly given way to skepticism towards the merits of user comments (Lilienthal et al., 2014, p. 287; Secko, Tlalka, Dunlop, Kingdon, & Amend, 2011).

35 Translated from German. Original: "(Laien-) Kommunikatoren benötigen jedoch Stellen im Internet, an denen sie mit Aufmerksamkeit und Resonanz sowie der Einhaltung von Diskursregeln rechnen können. Der Journalismus sollte als Moderator – orientiert an den Maßstäben des deliberativen Öffentlichkeitsmodells – geeignete Bedingungen für die Kommunikation zwischen den Nutzern schaffen."

36 Translated from German. Original: "Der Journalismus sollte sich darum bemühen, diese diskursive Energie auch in Richtung eines Diskurses über aktuelle Themen von gesellschaftlicher Relevanz zu kanalisieren."

But what is journalism's practical reaction to low quality comments? Have media organizations come up with moderation strategies to raise the standards of debate at the response stage? The empirical literature reveals that moderation is enacted in various ways. At a basic level, moderation at the response stage of the news process is pre-eminently linked to the rather technical question of whether user comments get published with or without prior review on the part of the media organization. This is what Hermida and Thurman (2008) refer to when they state a "shift towards moderation" (p. 353) based on their analysis of UGC initiatives on twelve UK newspaper websites and interviews with eleven corresponding news executives. For the vast majority (118 out of 130) of the analyzed UGC initiatives readers' comments were found to be vetted by journalists before release. In the twelve remaining cases comments were reactively moderated. The interviewed news executives turned out to see this kind of moderation as a way to protect their brands and to offer value to their audiences. Reich (2011), too, identifies these two main strategies of handling user comments on the part of news organizations. He calls them the "interventionist strategy" and the "autonomous strategy". The first one is deemed to be employed by organizations who seek direct control of user comments. These organizations insisted on pre-moderation of every comment even though it involved heavy financial and editorial tolls. The second strategy is interpreted by Reich as reflecting "more optimistic assumptions about the public and the ability to enhance accountability among commenters" (p. 113). This strategy settles for post-moderation of the comments and, in some cases, was found to have been introduced because pre-moderation had turned out to be too work-intensive.

Case studies by Harrison (2010) at the *BBC*'s "UGC hub" and by Loosen et al. (2013, pp. 25–26) at *Tagesschau* illustrate the complexities of moderation processes at news organizations beyond the basic question whether to delete or keep a user comment. Moderation was found to happen on the basis of explicit institutional guidelines which, for instance, stipulated a constructive and friendly tone for discussions and ruled out racist or pornographic content. Comments infringing the guidelines were not approved for release (in case of pre-moderation) or deleted (in case of post-moderation). Despite the guidelines, editors assigned to moderate were found to vary in their pertinent practices since they interpreted the guidelines in dissimilar ways. When in doubt over whether to remove a comment or not, they usually turned to colleagues to confer. At *Tagesschau,* the

researchers observed that post-moderation involved activities such as intervening in user discussions when these appeared to get out of hand or to drift off-topic, reminding users of the guidelines, and – in cases of recurrent disregard of guidelines – banning users from participation. Against this background, it comes as no surprise that the moderation of user comments in general has been found to represent "one of the most time-consuming and resource-hungry elements of the UGC phenomenon" (Harrison, 2010, p. 250).

In the case of journalistic social web accounts, the basic question of pre- or post-moderation is usually already preempted by the technical defaults of the social web platform: Registered social web users are normally able to post comments directly to any professional account and the account owner is left with post-moderation. The social media editors interviewed by Loosen et al. (2013) mentioned an interesting development in this respect which they perceived as a relief: More and more often, they encountered forms of community self-regulation on *Facebook*, for example, users calling upon each another to adhere to communication norms (p. 26).

Neuberger et al.'s (2015) quantitative study discloses how common the various moderation measures are at the response stage according to managing editors of German news websites: Banning users who break the rules turned out to be the most common measure (82.5%), closely followed by making users aware of the commenting guidelines (79%). Less common was having journalists take part in follow-up discussions on their own pieces and having journalists actively moderate discussions (both 44.3%).

So, how do journalists get on with their role at the response stage in intertwined publics? While Hermida and Thurman (2008) rate the journalistic practice they analyzed at the response stage as "the retention of a traditional gate-keeping role" (p. 354), Viscovi and Gustafsson (2013) argue that the role rather resembled that of a censor: Unlike the gatekeeper who makes a positive selection, the censor has to make a negative selection of texts that violate the rules and lets the remaining texts be published unedited and in large quantities. This, the authors suggest, can be "as alien for journalists as for the chef to arrange a Dutch treat and serve all the food that guests have brought along, except for the food injurious to health" (p. 99). Then again, discomfort on the part of the journalists was also found to stem from a perception that censoring language or comments contradicted their journalistic principles (Braun & Gillespie, 2011) and freedom of speech (Harrison, 2010).

Among other things, this section made clear that scholarly expectations concerning journalism practice at the response stage contain references to dialogical and discursive communication modes. In Chapter 3 we came to know that there are elaborate journalism conceptualizations that detail corresponding journalistic roles of "discourse advocates" or "dialogical mediators". The following section sets out to integrate the just reviewed expectations towards journalism in the social web into these earlier conceived journalism concepts with regard to facilitating democratically relevant communication. The outcome of this integration is an analytical grid for the empirical analysis of journalistic social web practice at the response stage of the news process.

4.5 Journalism as a facilitator of democratically relevant communication in the social web

What resonates with many of the expectations towards journalism under social web conditions is hope for facilitation of democratically relevant communication. At the response stage where mass mediated public sphere intertwines with personal publics, such hope refers both to the communication between journalism and its audience and the communication which journalism facilitates between members of the audience. If we actually compare the just reviewed scholarly expectations towards journalism practice at the response stage with the journalism concepts reviewed in Chapter 3, which theorize journalists as facilitators of democratically relevant communication, we find striking overlaps.

Let us first consider the concept of dialogical journalism which comprehends journalists as dialogical mediators (see Subsection 3.1.3). This concept assigns journalists "an active role of assisted people-to-people communication that ranges far beyond the printed page or newscast script" (Anderson et al., 1994, p. 2). Niles' (2008) and Jarvis' (2009) calls upon journalists to stay engaged beyond the allegedly "finished product" of a published journalistic piece are clearly consistent with this. Just like Singer's (2011) notion of the modern journalist who, in the fashion of a dinner host, keeps the discussion flowing is consistent with dialogical journalism's commitment to maintaining communication (Anderson et al., 1994, pp. 25–27). Dialogical journalism furthermore contains the idea that journalists provide clarity by structuring, explaining, and evaluating different viewpoints.

This is especially salient in Kleinsteuber's (2004a) conceptualization of the "dialogical mediator". One could argue that Bruns' (2005) and Graham's (2013) elaborations on digital journalism practice at the response stage reflect this idea as well. Moreover, dialogical journalism is conceived as offering "room for the readers' own accents and interpretations, which connect the consumption of journalism to their own everyday experiences" (Heikkilä and Kunelius 1998, 76). Siapera (2012) highlights something similar, namely "room for all kinds of views, even the most marginalized ones" (p. 139) as a result of modern-day journalism's direct relationship with online publics. Graham (2013), in turn, stresses the importance of "first-hand accounts and personal experience" (p. 122) in user comments. So, if what the recent demands for "direct dialogue" (Bunz, 2008, p. 178) or for "dialogization" (Lilienthal et al., 2014, p. 23) refer to is a journalistic stance towards the audience marked by accessibility, responsiveness, and closeness to individual perspectives and personal emotions, then they actually tie in very well with the established conceptualization of dialogical journalism.

Interestingly enough, there is even another similarity between the established concept of dialogical journalism and contemporary dialogical expectations towards digital journalism: Both distance themselves from the concept of objectivity in journalism. As we have seen in Subsection 3.3.3, dialogical ideals in journalism are widely understood as incommensurable to the objectivity ideal in journalism. Likewise, Singer (2011) regards journalism's changing role at the response stage as a "a shift away from objectivity" (p. 106) and Siapera (2012) asserts that digital structures no longer support the news standard of "a single perspective, ostensibly that of objectivity" (p. 139).

Let us now turn to the concept of discursive journalism (see Subsection 3.2.3). We have seen that the second set of expectations towards journalism at the response stage explicitly refers to "discourse", "discursive rules", and "standards of a deliberative public sphere" (Lilienthal et al., 2014; Neuberger et al., 2010; Springer, 2011). In doing so, these expectations assume and acknowledge a deliberative communication ideal. The concept of discursive journalism is based on this very ideal which is rooted in Habermas' (1989) model of the bourgeois public sphere (see Subsection 3.2.1). It comprehends journalists as discourse advocates who stimulate, maintain, and advance a context of rational discourse (Brosda, 2008b, pp. 15–16). Lilienthal et al.'s (2014) demand for modern-day journalists to facilitate "a discourse about up-to-date topics of societal relevance" (p. 39) at the response

stage fits in well with the role conceptualization of the discourse advocate. At the same time, this role conceptualization details a set of concrete questions for journalists to consider if they want to ensure that their work facilitates discursive communication (Brosda, 2010, p. 97). These questions could provide clarity in terms of how exactly modern-day journalism can act as the moderator who ensures "adequate conditions for communication between users" (p. 15) at the response stage as envisioned by Neuberger et al. (2010).

But to what extent does journalistic activity at the response stage actually have an impact on the user comments unfolding there? Can democratically relevant journalism practice indeed facilitate democratically relevant communication in the social web? Empirical evidence to this effect suggests that journalism can have an impact. Stroud et al. (2015) conducted a quasi-experiment to find out whether news organizations can affect comment section norms by engaging directly with commenters. The researchers cooperated with a local US television news station and asked members of the newsroom to vary their engagement with commenters following up on *Facebook* posts from the news station. By doing so, three different conditions were created and implemented according to a randomized schedule: (1) No one from the station comments or respond to *Facebook* commenters, (2) The station's web team, using the station's insignia as their identity, interacts at the response stage, (3) A recognizable individual from the news organization engages with *Facebook* commenters at the response stage. As for the interaction at the response stage, the researchers advised the newsroom staff to respond to questions, ask questions, share information, and encourage good discussion. A subsequent quantitative analysis of the comments showed that engagement by a recognizable representative of the newsroom had significant effects on the comments: It decreased the probability of an uncivil comment and increased the probability of a commenter to provide evidence, compared to having no newsroom interaction. The relatively anonymous engagement by the station's web team was not found to have any significant effects. This led the researchers to conclude that "a single person can affect the deliberative norms on a news organization's social media site" (p. 197). The study moreover suggests that it helps if this person is a journalist who is identifiable as an individual.

While other studies did not specifically examine the impact of journalistic engagement at the response stage, they did look into other factors impacting the quality of user comments in news environments. Ruiz et al. (2011), for instance,

considered media outlets' ethical guidelines, legal frameworks, and moderation strategies (pre-/post-moderation, in-house/outsourced) in their analysis of the comments sections of five national quality newspapers from UK, USA, France, Spain, and Italy. The authors reviewed the comments for presence or absence of discursive elements such as relevance, provision of a different viewpoint, or civility. Based on this analysis they argue that two kinds of audience participation emerged at the response stage: One "where communities of debate are formed based on mostly respectful discussions between diverse points of view" (p. 463) which was salient with *NYTimes.com* and *Guardian.co.uk* and another one of "homogenous communities, in which expressing feelings about current events dominates the contributions and there is less of an argumentative debate" (p. 463) which was salient with *LeMonde.fr*, *ElPaís.com* and *Repubblica.it*. The authors end up ascribing the differences between these two groups to the fact that the media outlets belong to either the "Liberal" model or the "Polarized Pluralist" model of media systems as classified by Hallin and Mancini (2004) – however, without actually testing the three factors ethical guidelines, legal frameworks, and moderation strategies as causal explanations for the differences between these groups. This seems somewhat unfortunate because Ruiz et al. (2011) do mention at some point that "NYTimes.com and Guardian.co.uk are the most explicit [in their ethical guidelines] regarding the aims of their participation rules" (p. 471). This suggests that the higher communication standards found in the comment sections of *NYTimes.com* and *Guardian.co.uk* might as well result from these media outlets' straightforward guidelines which are applied during comment moderation at the response stage.

Another study looking into factors impacting the deliberative quality of comments on news sites stems from Picone and Raeijmaekers (2013). The authors examined 3,040 comments on four Flemish news websites by means of content analysis and inspected the profile of the news site, formalities of the comment sections, and the topics that were made open for discussion as contextual factors. Their results reveal that online discussions in comments sections are often paradoxical in nature when it comes to deliberative quality. While news sites with a rather "mainstream" profile were found to attract more monologic comments, news sites with a "quality" profile were found to attract commenters who were more focused on interacting with others. However, commenters who interacted more with others were also found to do that in a harsher, less respectful tone.

On the one hand, formal registration and identification requirements in comment sections were found to facilitate the formation of a community of commenters. On the other hand, communities consisting of frequent contributors were found to display less gender diversity and more derogatory comments. Finally, political topics were found to attract more comments and interactions as personal topics. At the same time, political discussions tended to contain more degradations and disrespect. In conclusion, Picone and Raeijmaekers stress that news organizations need to consider the multidimensionality of deliberative quality: "Fostering one dimension is not per definition beneficial to the other dimensions. Editors and journalists are hence confronted with specific choices to be made and in doing so might differently value the importance of one dimension over another" (p. 20).

Chen (2017) is convinced of the deliberative potential of online spaces and asserts that journalists can contribute their share in realizing it (pp. 29–41). She illustrates this by using the example of newspaper reporter Marnie Eisenstadt who, as Chen argues, created a "deliberative moment" in the comment section of her story on poverty on a local US news website. Chen describes how the journalist engaged at the response stage of the article by answering questions, giving explanations, and offering additional information "all in a rational manner" (p. 29). For Chen such conscious efforts to claim a space as deliberative are more beneficial than focusing on the limitations of online communication (p. 41). She makes a clear statement in terms of journalism as a facilitator of democratically relevant communication:

> The more people like Eisenstadt stop, listen, answer questions, provide evidence, and remain rational, the closer we will be to realizing a deliberative space online that truly rejuvenates the public sphere as a spot for the discussion about politics and other important issues of the day, like the cafés and salons of an earlier time. The online space can become the type of space that influences politics and elections, and informs the public in a way that is not imagined today. (p. 41)

At the end of the day, it remains a question of the specific standards (and presumably the resources) of a news organization to what extent it actively engages in creating "deliberative moments" in its comments sections. So far, news organizations who pride themselves on promoting relatively high democratic standards – typically those who are subject to public law – have not been scrutinized in terms of the extent to which they live up to these standards at the response

stage of their social web output. One of these news organizations, namely *Deutsche Welle,* who explicitly proclaims a dialogical mission, serves as a case study in the empirical part of this study.

4.6 Summary and conclusion: Parallels between old and new expectations

This chapter aimed at creating an understanding of the changes, challenges and expectations journalism faces in light of the broader development of digitalization and especially when practiced in the social web. In its first section, the chapter addressed the formation of public sphere in the social web. Public sphere in the social web was shown to differ from mass media constituted public sphere in that it comes into being as people actively participate in it, forming what is called "personal publics". Yet, since mass mediated public sphere also finds its way into the social web, an intertwining of personal publics and mass mediated public sphere occurs. The chapter illustrated to what extent this novel formation of public sphere in the social web is deemed to hold potential for democratization: Firstly, it allows for an emancipation of citizens towards politicians with whom they can communicate directly in the social web, and secondly, it allows for an emancipation of citizens towards journalistic mass media and mass media output with whom and about which citizens can also communicate directly in the social web. While this turned out to be rated by many authors as a positive shift from rather passive to more active roles of citizens within the public discourse, it was also found to raise concerns with authors who apprehend a possible fragmentation of public sphere in the social web into echo chambers or filter bubbles. As the emancipation of citizens towards mass media may also take the shape of citizens performing tasks that used to be exclusive to the journalistic news process, the chapter ultimately turned to the question whether such "citizen journalism" is about to assume the function of traditional professional journalism. A review of pertinent empirical studies illustrated that the mass media are still the most impactful forum of public sphere. Hence, it appears valid for this study to concentrate on professional journalism as an actor in the social web and to examine both its intertwining with personal public spheres as well as its role in realizing the potential that the social web holds for a more democratic public discourse.

Approaching journalism in the social web from a wider perspective, the chapter then looked into how social web usage has been conceptualized in professional contexts in general. In this context, it came across Schmidt's (2011b) model for analyzing social web usage from a perspective of social action theory. This model understands episodes of social web usage to be framed by rules, relations, and code, while social web usage as such is deemed to be performed through practices of identity management, relationship management, and information management. The related section described the different components of the model in detail as it will serve as the analytical tool for examining journalistic social web usage in the empirical part of this study. For this purpose, the model is adapted to social web usage in the professional context of a media organization at a later point in this study (see Subsection 6.1.1).

Afterwards, the chapter discussed a host of changes that journalism is facing as part of digitalization and on associated expectations towards journalism practice – especially with a view to media organizations' presence in the social web. These changes and expectations were outlined on the basis of scholarly analyses and then reconsidered in view of empirical findings.

In terms of journalism-audience relations the chapter disclosed that opening up the news process for audience participation – from the input stage, to the output stage, to the response stage – is a pressing demand directed at journalism in the digital age. This demand, however, implies quite a radical departure from conventional journalism-audience relations which used to be marked by few interaction opportunities and limited direct contact. The reactions of journalists towards opening up to the audience turned out to be largely dismissive in the early days of digitalization: Journalists were found to insist on the existing structures and to engage in boundary work by stressing differences between them and their audience. Over time, however, journalists' attitudes towards direct audience relations seem to have become more diverse. Recent typologies suggest that there is a relatively wide spectrum of uses in terms of how journalists relate to audiences in the social web, ranging from quite closed ones to quite open ones. The news process as such, however, turned out to have been opened up to audience participation almost exclusively at the response stage. Based on this insight, the chapter moved on narrowing its focus on the output stage (as the supplier for response stage) and the response stage of the news process in the social web.

As for the output stage, the chapter disclosed various scholarly expectations towards journalism in a digital age. Journalism is, for instance, expected to engage more in pointing out reports available in the WWW than in publishing its own reports. Moreover, journalists are expected to care for spreadability of news and for social web specific news values, given that news are more and more perceived as a social experience. Empirical findings showed, however, that journalists remain quite focused on publishing their own reports in the social web. Spreadability and social web-specific news values, in turn, seem to indeed impact the content structures of journalistic output. The actual task of putting out content in the social web was discussed in this chapter with a view to the newly established role of the "social media editor" in journalistic newsrooms. While social media editors have been found to either cover "social media shifts" besides taking care of "regular" journalistic tasks or to be (exclusively) specialized on social web management, there is still little insight as to how exactly they go about their work.

In terms of the response stage, the chapter revealed two sets of expectations: One involves expectations as to journalists' engagement with and acknowledgement of user comments, the other one contains expectations as to journalistic efforts in facilitating high-quality debates. The former – characterized as dialogical expectations – envisage, for instance, that journalists stay engaged and accessible at the response stage and that they acknowledge and highlight the added value of user contributions. The latter – specified as discursive expectations – amount to journalists ensuring adequate conditions for a socially relevant discourse by engaging in active moderation. While the empirical data reviewed in this context pointed to a relatively low involvement of journalists at the response stage and to moderation activities that are predominantly focused on removing comments that violate the news organizations' guidelines, there was also evidence suggesting that journalists can actually impact follow-up communication at the response stage if they actively engage with commenters.

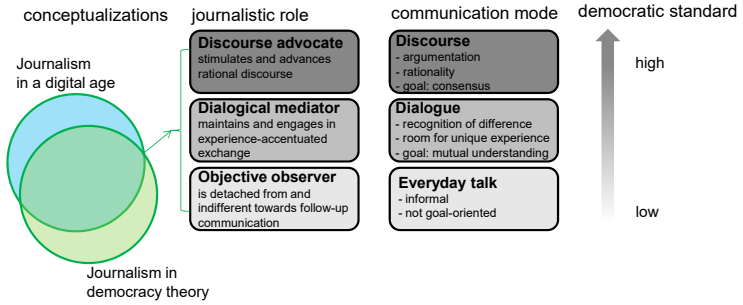
Finally, the chapter drew a comparison between the above mentioned sets of expectations and the concepts of discursive journalism, dialogical journalism, and objectivity-oriented journalism as detailed in Chapter 3. This comparison demonstrated clear parallels between contemporary expectations towards journalism at the response stage and long-standing conceptualizations of how journalism practice can facilitate democratically relevant communication. Table 2 shows how the respective authors' demands can be subsumed under the already existing conceptualizations.

Table 2: Categorization of literature on digital journalism according to established journalistic role concepts

Objective observer	Dialogical mediator	Discourse advocate
as a reference point Siapera (2012); Singer (2011)	Bruns (2005); Graham (2013); Jarvis (2009); Lilienthal et al. (2014): Siapera (2012); Singer (2011)	Lilienthal et al. (2014); Neuberger et al. (2010); Springer (2011)

Based on these parallels it is now argued that the model developed earlier in terms of democratic standards of communication modes and associated journalism roles (Figure 1) can serve as an analytical grid to assess professional journalistic social web usage at the response stage with regard to democratic relevance. An updated version of the model is provided below (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Analytical grid for assessing professional journalistic social web practice at the response stage



Extending previous role conceptualizations of the discourse advocate, the dialogical mediator, and the objective observer to journalism in a digital age means that journalism practice at the response stage becomes classifiable in terms of democratic standards. Acting as a discourse advocate is regarded as fulfilling higher democratic standards than acting as a dialogical mediator. Acting as a dialogical

mediator at the response stage, in turn, is deemed to fulfill higher democratic standards than acting as an objective observer. Even acting as an objective observer is deemed democratically relevant in the proposed analytical grid proposed, albeit to a low degree.

Being able to systematically assess and classify professional journalistic social web usage at the response stage with regard to democratic standards is vital given that expectations towards journalism in a digital age are loaded with dialogical and discursive demands. So far, such demands have largely been made without conceptualizing in detail what the corresponding journalistic practice would involve. Likewise, hope for increased democratic relevance of communication in the social web (or, for that matter, concern about the low level of democratic relevance of communication in the social web) has been expressed without defining benchmarks for democratic relevance. Against this background, the proposed analytical grid contributes to substantiating the role of journalism in facilitating democratically relevant communication in the social web.

5 Specified research interest

In light of the previous theoretical considerations and empirically grounded insights the research interest of the study at hand will now be formulated in a way that makes it detectable in the field. In a first step, the chapter starts off with an introduction of the research approach that is chosen for this study: case study research. Section 5.1 explains why case study research appears suitable to examine the phenomena in question and to what extent case study results are meaningful beyond the immediate case. The subsequent Section 5.2 sets out to transform the research interest into clear research questions which name the concrete journalistic context in which the case study is conducted. A sound basis for upcoming methodological decisions is established by connecting these research questions to theory-driven propositions for expected results. The last Section 5.3 specifies the three cases that are in the center of the empirical data collection and gives reasons why these cases are selected as especially instructive subjects of examination.

5.1 Case study: Methodological approach and objectives

The empirical part of this project relies on case study research. Before it is explained why case study research seems well suited for the purposes of this project, we need to be clear what case study research is about. According to Weerakkody (2009) "a case study uses just one or a few cases, instances or `objects of interest´ to analyse a complex, contemporary phenomenon within specific limits of time (When?) and space (Where?), and examines it from various viewpoints to understand the multiple realities or diverse perspectives of the informants or research participants" (p. 228).

What becomes clear with this definition is that case study research has a relatively narrow focus. This focus is defined in temporal and spatial terms. Within that defined scope, however, case study research is permissive to any aspect that contributes to a better understanding of the phenomenon under study. As such it is a comprehensive research method that uses "multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulation fashion" (Yin, 2009, p. 18). A case study inquiry is neither limited to qualitative nor to quantitative data acquisition

only (Gerring, 2007, p. 10). In fact, it makes use of a variety of data with the objective of increasing knowledge about a real-life phenomenon in relation to its contextual conditions (Yin, 2009, pp. 18–19).

So, how is the case study method advantageous for the study at hand? First of all, it accounts for the nature of the study's research interest. In a situation where "a `how´ or `why´ question is being asked about a contemporary set of events over which the investigator has little or no control" (p. 13) the case study method is said to have a distinct advantage over other methods such as surveys, historical methods, or experiments (pp. 8–14). Surveys cater to research interests that focus on enumerating the incidence or prevalence of phenomena. Historical methods are geared towards studying past events which cannot be accessed through up-to-date sources. Experiments draw information from systematic manipulations of behavioral events. Case study, in turn, is a method for acquiring data from rather unpredictable, direct sources that are currently available and can hardly be manipulated for the sake of a scientific examination as the involved behavior is difficult to control. This is exactly what characterizes the research interest at hand. Social web usage in contemporary professional journalistic contexts and its democratic relevance are real-life phenomena. The involved activities need to be traced as they unfold and they need to be explained rather than enumerated.

Beyond that, case study research also appears beneficial for this research endeavor because it accounts for the theory situation at hand. There certainly are theoretical conceptualizations to inform this investigation of journalism in the social web. In fact, the theoretical framework constructed in the first part of this study is a combination of different conceptualizations and reveals new conceptual touch points between journalistic social web usage and theories of democratically relevant communication. These touch points, however, are in need of further exploration. Thus far, the existing conceptualizations are neither dense enough nor sufficiently focused on journalism practice as to prompt testable predictions about a definite number of variables. In sum, the point of departure for this empirical examination is neither detached from theoretical presumptions nor confined by them. Case study research makes use of this very "interspace". It does not belong to those methods that "deliberately avoid specifying any theoretical propositions at the outset of an inquiry" (Yin, 2009, p. 35). Rather than that, case study research "benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis" (p. 18). Yet again, it is neither

a method "whose primary purpose is to test an extant theory" (Gerring, 2007, p. 41). As such, the case study method entails two specific advantages with regard to the outcome of this research project: (1) It allows identifying unknown aspects going beyond a study's theoretical framework; (2) it offers an opportunity to refine and advance applied models of analysis.

The first advantage refers to the fact that a deductive starting point does not detain a case study from being open to data outside the given concepts. Instead, a case study also generates insights from the data itself and, thus, accounts for the fact that there is no pure form of either deduction or induction (Flick, 1995, p. 165). The case study method permits to proceed systematically along theoretically derived points of reference on the basis of preliminarily reviewed conceptualizations. This procedure appears fruitful for this study. Its theory part discloses, for example, how certain stages of the journalistic news process may be affected by special social web logics when the output is meant to be published in the social web. This conceptual knowledge can concretely inform the research design applied here. At the same time, using the case study method for empirical data collection also offers "evidentiary leeway" (Gerring, 2007, p. 41) – say for uncovering aspects affecting the news process that are yet unknown and that may only become apparent outside the structure predetermined by the theoretical framework. Thus, the case study's embracement of methodological triangulation as a strategy to inspect a contemporary phenomenon in depth and from various points of view appears viable for this research project.

The other advantage is connected to the method's openness towards theoretical adjustment and, thus, enhancement. Operating in the grey zone between generating theory and testing theory, case study research presents an opportunity to evaluate the empirical fruitfulness of the analytical models it acts upon. This study's research interest focuses on a subject that is fairly new and whose theoretical conceptualization is still in progress. The analytical tools to be used – such as Schmidt's (2011b) model of analysis for practices of social web usage and the developed grid mentioned earlier – have been adapted and developed in lack of established tools for the purpose of studying journalism in the social web. Applying these tools in a holistic, in-depth case study of journalistic social web usage while keeping this examination open to accounting for relevant sources of influence beyond the tools seems particularly promising for probing to what extent the underlying theoretical concepts sufficiently grasp this real-life

phenomenon. It discloses to what extent the models of analysis are able to make sense of what is going on in the field and whether they can be further elaborated. In other words, in the context of this research project case study research can add to theory construction of a fairly new field.

This takes us to the question to what extent such theory construction can claim to be valid beyond the immediate case. How wide does the explanatory power of case study research range? The external validity of case studies has been a contentious issue. According to Gerring (2007), case study research "suffers problems of representativeness because it includes, by definition, only a small number of cases of some more general phenomenon" (p. 43). He implies that a small number of cases only generates a low statistical confidence level to back up generalizations from the sample to a broader population. This low level of statistical confidence has prompted critics to question the external validity of case studies in general. While Gerring is convinced that this alleged flaw will "forever haunt" (p. 43) case study research, Yin is actually able to overcome it. In Yin's (2009) view, the assumption that case study research strives for representativeness in a statistical sense is erroneous in the first place (p. 43). He draws attention to the fact that there are two ways of generalizing: "statistical generalization" and "analytic generalization". While statistical generalization relies on "quantitative formulas for determining the confidence with which generalizations can be made, depending mostly on the size and internal variation within the universe and sample" (p. 38), analytic generalization relies on a previously developed theory that is "used as a template with which to compare the empirical results" (p. 38). Following Yin, the latter method of generalizing results is what one should try to aim for in doing case studies. A researcher then generalizes from particular case study results to broader theoretical concepts. This procedure is what George and Bennett (2005) refer to as "contingent generalizations". The authors describe the way in which a case study contributes to theory development as a "cumulative refinement" by which "the cells or types of a more comprehensive theory" (p. 112) are filled out. This way of generalizing gives direction to the study at hand.

There are certain measures that help to ensure a solid basis for analytic generalization. One of them is replication (Yin, 2009, p. 44). Repeating the examination in more than one case of a context to which the theoretical framework applies and reaching coherent results adds substance to analytic generalization. In this research project, replication is put into practice by testing the project's theoretical

framework three times in the form of multiple cases (see Section 5.3). Another way to strengthen analytic generalization is to be specific about the scope or domain to which a study's findings can be generalized (George & Bennett, 2005, p. 119; Yin, 2009, p. 40). In regards to the research project at hand, this would translate into delivering a clear definition of the scope of journalistic activity covered by the underlying theoretical framework. This definition is presented in the next chapter, Section 6.1, along with the project's models of analysis.

Before going into detail about how the case study approach is put into practice, the study's research questions and propositions need to be made explicit.

5.2 Research questions and propositions

For this empirical study of professional journalism in the social web the two specified fields of interest – journalistic social web usage at the output stage and its democratic relevance at the response stage – are linked to a concrete media outlet, namely Germany's international public broadcaster *Deutsche Welle*. DW's normative configuration seems to tie in well with the phenomena to be studied. As elaborated in Chapter 2, DW is a journalistic news provider with an explicit democratic mandate and a dialogical mission. Thus, it can be assumed that by focusing on the DW context the study examines social web usage at a media outlet that has a basic interest in using the social web and exploiting its democratic potential. This ensures that the study captures what it is supposed to capture. Apart from that, the DW context is relevant because it is instructive on different levels. First of all, by focusing on DW's capacity as a journalistic news outlet the research questions are generally relevant for editorial offices who professionally maintain social web presences. Furthermore, DW being an international broadcaster with public service standards the questions may also prove insightful for other public news providers targeting global audiences. Finally, the inquiry accounts for the concrete situation of international PSB in Germany. It sheds light on a specific public service product that is rooted in Cold War times and needs to justify its existence against the background of today's global news flows.

All in all, the study aims at answering two major research questions. The first research question is:

RQ1: *How is Deutsche Welle's social web usage to be characterized with regard to practices of identity, information, and relationship management at the output stage?*

This question aims at systematically reconstructing the work flows related to running social web accounts at DW. Its explanatory potential lies in identifying professional practices that are part of journalistic social web usage. The empirical reconstruction of these practices is anchored in theory. It relies on Schmidt's (2011b) division of social web usage into three practices. By asking about social web usage, RQ1 refers to these practices. This approach offers an opportunity for increased knowledge gain because it encompasses both situational action and greater structures. By acting on the assumption that practices are framed by structural dimensions, Schmidt's model of analysis not only specifies individuals' – here: journalists' – social web activities, but also offers insights into how work routines, professional norms, or conventions structure these activities. Thus, it offers a plausible analytic framework for studying social web usage in a professional journalistic environment. An adaption of the model of analysis to journalistic social web usage and a specification with relation to how it is to be applied in the field is delivered in the methodology chapter, Subsection 6.1.1.

Besides exploring the practices involved in professional social web usage at the output stage, the study is interested in the democratic standard of the kind of communication evolving at the response stage of media outlets' social web presences. Thus, the second major research objective is to assess this communication. Thus, after RQ1 identifies practices of journalistic social web usage, the second research question is geared towards an evaluation of journalistic social web activity in relation to user comments. Concretely, the second research question reads:

RQ2: *How is Deutsche Welle's social web activity at the response stage to be classified with regard to democratic standards?*

Formulated this way, the research interest is focused on the post-publishing part of the news process, a part that meets significant changes in the social web. As previously discussed, these changes are deemed to involve a certain democratic potential. Accordingly, the research question is targeted on finding out to what extent a democratic potential is exploited in the DW context.

Yet, how exactly a media organization engages at the response stage its social web accounts is interrelated with how the users follow up on the news items put out there. How much effort it takes a media organization to ensure a certain standard of democratically relevant communication on their social web accounts depends on the existing standard of user comments. A high standard of user comments requires less of an effort than a low standard. Hence, to what extent journalistic social web activity tries to facilitate democratically relevant communication can only be judged in relation to the user comments. Its assessment needs to consider the interplay of the two. This makes the democratic relevance of the user comments an important parameter to be included into the analysis. Therefore, it is proposed to break down RQ2 into the following sub-questions:

RQ2a: *What kind of user communication unfolds at the response stage with regard to democratic standards?*

RQ2b: How does *DW handle this user communication?*

For answering these questions, the study uses the analytical grid developed earlier (see Figure 6). The grid's points of departure are three different modes of democratically relevant communication. For each mode, the grid features an according journalistic role conceptualization of facilitating democratically relevant communication. Thus, it allows both analyzing communication as such and journalistic handling of communication at the response state. Inherent to the grid is a classification of social web activity at the response stage according to normative democratic standards. The different communication modes and the pertinent journalistic roles are ranked from low normative standards to high normative standards. Applied to going about RQ2a, the grid helps to determine the kind of user communication prevailing on DW's social web presences in terms of democratic relevance. With regard to RQ2b, it serves to examine the journalistic role taken up by DW in handling this user communication. How the empirical application of the grid is translated into concrete research tools is shown in the methodology chapter, Subsection 6.1.2. A comprehensive answer to RQ2 is eventually reached in consideration of the results acquired to both answer RQ2a and RQ2b.

The research questions render this study's research interest more specific already. Further specification can be reached through propositions. Propositions

are advantageous in directing a study's attention to concrete aspects to be examined in connection with the research questions (David & Sutton, 2004). Rather than hypotheses to be tested, the propositions formulated for this study should be understood as qualified guesses about the outcome of this study based on the theoretical and empirical accounts reviewed so far on democratically relevant communication, journalistic social web use, and international PSB. Hence, they serve as references for making sense of the both qualitatively and quantitatively acquired study results.

The following propositions concerning RQ1 reflect Schmidt's division of social web practice into identity management, information management and relationship management. The propositions' primary purpose is to express theoretically informed hunches in such a way that they become comparable to real-world conditions. The first proposition reads:

> P1: *Deutsche Welle's identity management reflects facets of a public service function, a political function, and a dialogical function. A public service function plays out as an orientation towards providing serious rather than entertaining news, especially for information seekers and opinion leaders. A political function is pursued subtly by aspiring to serve as a democratic role model rather than overtly by focusing on Germany or stressing German perspectives. Striving to fulfill a dialogical function serves as a main motive for DW to make itself accessible in the social web.*

The proposition is derived from the insights in Chapter 2. First of all, these insights suggest that DW's self-image is informed by a public service understanding. The public service provided by international broadcasters is to offer balanced information especially to countries where media freedom is limited and, hence, to raise alternative voices and promote democracy. There is reason to assume that DW subscribes to this understanding because it is constituted as a public service broadcaster. Content-wise DW is assumed to act as a provider of hard news rather than soft news so as to fulfill the informational standards connected to a public service understanding. Furthermore, the broadcaster's social web presence is believed to be targeted on information seekers and active opinion leaders who are capable of reaching wider networks when disseminating the information.

DW also fulfills a political function for the German state. While this function mainly consists of creating a positive image of the respective country, the literature

suggests that due to the fact that international broadcasters commonly face propaganda accusations they are well advised to fulfill this function through reliable high-quality reporting rather than through direct promotion efforts. It is assumed that DW is aware about the risk of arousing suspicion and takes the suggested approach to avoid it. In doing so, the broadcaster is expected to present German points of view as one perspective among others as it is stipulated in the DW Act. The literature also suggests that this mandate is interpreted at the organizational level of DW as an urge to cover the events in target regions from local perspectives. Overall, DW's output in the social web is assumed to reflect this.

The DW Act moreover specifies the dialogical goal of "promoting understanding and the exchange of ideas among different cultures and peoples" (Deutsche Welle, 2004, p. 9). This is expected to play out in how DW understands itself as an actor in the social web especially because the social web environment offers room for realizing this role on a practical level. Since the amended DW Act defines digital services as one pillar of the broadcaster's program it is expected that it was an organizational decision to make DW accessible in the social web. Based on this mandate the broadcaster is likely to take up a more active role when it comes to initiating and shaping social web activity now than at the advent of the Internet when DW's website was allegedly created through individual action within a legal vacuum.

The second proposition focuses on professional practices of information management and reads:

> P2: *DW rather engages in publishing than in publicizing at the output stage. It adapts its information management practices according to (anticipated) user ratings. Social media editing at DW is carried out by regular editorial staff with extended duties as opposed to specialized personnel.*

This proposition sketches a picture of how and why content gets put out on DW's social web accounts. Professional considerations that may play a role in this process can be deduced from the conceptualizations and findings reviewed in Subsection 4.4.1. With regard to the output stage of the news process, Bruns' (2005) concept of gatewatching serves as a reference. It suggests that journalistic practice accounts for the networked environment of the WWW not by publishing supposedly complete news stories but by surveying and pointing to other relevant primary sources ("publicizing"). Empirical findings, however, suggest

that media organizations hardly engage in this kind of activity. On this basis, it is assumed that DW, too, is more interested in distributing its own content than in pointing to external content. Furthermore, the literature suggests that social web-specific sharing and rating tools have an impact on what journalists select as social web output and how they phrase it. This is expected to also hold true for DW. To what extent, however, remains up for examination. In terms of personnel, DW is expected to display an approach similar to the one found at its ARD colleague *Tagesschau* (Loosen et al., 2013) where editors work in social media shifts as well as in "traditional" journalistic shifts, thus deviating from the mainstream approach of having a specialized minority of social media editors take care of the social web accounts.

How relationship management plays out as a professional practice at DW is considered in the third proposition:

> P3: *DW represents a rather open and progressive type of news organization when it comes to relating to users in the social web.*

This proposition is concerned with how DW relates to users of their social web offers. The literature discussed in Section 4.3 provides useful indication for how journalists deal with the new direct exposure to the audience in digital surroundings. Scholars have been trying to grasp their pertinent attitudes in different typologies (see e.g. Gulyas, 2016; Hedman & Djerf-Pierre, 2013; Robinson, 2010). The identified types typically range from quite closed to quite open attitudes towards dealing directly with users in the social web. The fact that online services are defined as a pillar of DW's program suggests that the two-way communication structure of these services is regarded as something favorable within the organization. Since DW has opted for being present in the social web it is assumed that the broadcaster embraces how the communication structure plays out there, namely as a basis for social interaction. Thus, DW is expected to take a rather open approach to relating to its social web users.

While the preceding propositions focus on aspects touched upon in RQ1, the fourth proposition is tailored to RQ2. It refers to DW's activity at the response stage and reads:

P4: *Deutsche Welle handles user communication at the response stage mainly in the fashion of a dialogical mediator.*

The broadcasters' online services have been framed as a unique field of expertise (Niepalla, 2008) in fulfilling the contemporary goal of "promoting understanding and the exchange of ideas among different cultures and peoples" (Deutsche Welle, 2004, p. 8). Being able to fulfill this mission seems especially important to publicly funded DW against the background of a constant necessity to prove its legitimization in an age of increasingly unhindered international news flows. Therefore, it is assumed that the role DW adopts at the response stage mainly corresponds to the one conceptualized by Anderson et al. (1994), Heikkilä and Kunelius (1998), and Kleinsteuber (2004a) in Subsection 3.1.3. The authors' contributions add up to a role description of a dialogical journalist who structures, explains, and evaluates the different viewpoints within a dialogue and, thus, provides orientation. This journalist facilitates dialogue by attaching equal value to all persons involved despite of differences in perspectives or interests. Hence, it is expected that DW considers each user comment relevant as long as it is not off-topic or offensive. In case of the latter, DW is expected to provide an explanation because this represents a way to keep the exchange alive so that the points at issue can be dealt with. Based on the same rationale it is assumed that DW requests users to provide explanations for the opinions they voice in their comments. The dialogical journalist is furthermore conceptualized as a mediator. Therefore, there is reason to assume that DW tries to establish a connection between users, for example by pointing out how the topics they raised relate or by requesting them to refer to one another. Considering the dialogical journalist's moderating function, it seems likely that DW adopts a metaperspective and tries to make users aware about the way they discuss with one another. In case of feedback being uttered on its journalistic performance, DW is expected to remain dialogically accessible itself. Hence, it is assumed that the broadcaster replies on an equal level and in a cooperative way.

How these propositions are linked to data – that is, how exactly the social web practices and the journalistic roles they touch upon are operationalized for the purpose of this study – is presented in detail in Chapter 6. Prior to that, the next section specifies the three cases under study and the rationale behind their selection.

5.3 Multiple cases: DW German, DW English, and DW Russian on *Facebook* and *YouTube*

This case study consists of multiple individual cases which share a similar context. The cases under study are DW's English service, DW's German service, and DW's Russian service. This section outlines at first why a multiple-case design was favored over a single-case design. Then it moves on to describe on what grounds these cases were selected and in what way they allow for a more precise anticipation of the results than a single case. Finally, this section pinpoints the boundaries of the cases.

Even though studying a single case can be worthwhile, especially when the case is so extreme, unique, representative, typical, or critical that its in-depth examination provides inimitable insights into a phenomenon (Yin, 2009, pp. 47–53), studying multiple cases is often considered more advantageous. The following advice by Yin is unambiguous in this matter: "[...] when you have the choice (and resources), multiple-case designs may be preferred over single-case designs" (p. 60). In fact, there are substantial analytical benefits which justify a preferential treatment of the multiple-case design. A major asset is that the multiple-case design permits the researcher to pursue a replication logic. As previously mentioned in Section 5.1, replication is a helpful strategy to render analytic generalizations more robust. The evidence of a single-case study leading to findings which comply with the theoretical framework becomes stronger when confirmative findings are produced in further case studies. Whether case study results are sought to be similar or divergent across cases depends on the pattern suggested by the theoretical framework. Both similarities and differences need to be explainable on its basis. If it is rich enough, already the original theoretical framework may display the explanatory power to do so. If it is not, the theoretical framework needs to be adjusted so as to appropriately grasp the phenomena of interest the way they have shown to play out empirically (pp. 54–58).

What implication does this have with regard to the selection of cases? It implies that it must be clear in what ways relevant to the enquiry the chosen cases are comparable. In this respect, a multiple case study follows a logic analogous to the one of multiple experiments (p. 54). The outcome of an experiment (known as dependent variable) is assumed to be affected by certain conditions. Some of these conditions (known as control variables) are held constant, while others

(also known as independent or explanatory variables) are varied across multiple experiments. That way, it is secured that the outcome is attributable to the independent variables (Nestor & Schutt, 2012, pp. 175–176). Accordingly, the cases for this study are selected based on certain characteristics – some of which are constant while others differ across cases. In particular, the selection strategy pursued here aims at choosing cases that can be considered similar in most respects. At the same time, the cases feature one major difference whose effect on the results is considered anticipatable and explainable based on the theoretical framework. In social science research this strategy is known as the *method of difference* (Mill, 1973), the *comparable-cases strategy* (Lijphart, 1975) or the *most-similar method* (Gerring, 2007). Basically, all of these concepts describe a procedure in which cases are selected for being as similar as possible with regard to control variables while having different values of the explanatory variable with the objective to check whether the outcome differs across cases.

The organizational structure of DW provides a good basis for applying the most-similar method. At the time of the inquiry the broadcaster encompasses 30 language services (Deutsche Welle, 2013). Each service is run by a distinct editorial team in a distinct language. The institution that provides the context for each service's operations, however, is the same: *Deutsche Welle*. Hence, there are numerous editorial units under one umbrella sharing similar conditions for professional social web usage: They all operate under the same directorship, they are embedded within the same organizational structure and their work is based on the same charter, the *Deutsche Welle* Act. These are constant conditions which are valid for all editorial units of DW. So, how to narrow down the choice? It should not be withheld that – next to theoretical considerations – also practical issues play a role in this decision-making. Initially, the cases need to fulfill the basic prerequisite "to provide data, information or documentation necessary to examine the phenomenon under study" (Weerakkody, 2009, p. 234). Thus, the question of access is crucial for doing case study research. For this research project access to the institution was established via DW's "Global Partnerships" department. Attached to this department is the position of an institution-wide Social Media Manager who takes care of overseeing the editorial units' social web activities. After it was confirmed that DW would be generally available as a cooperation partner of this project, the cases to be studied were considered in collaboration with the Social Media Manager. Thanks to the Social Media Manager's institutional knowledge,

editorial offices could be identified according to their willingness to take part in the study, their multimedia mix, and their comparability in terms of the number of personnel in charge of social web activity. But, of course, these language services also differ in certain respects.

So, which language services to select as cases for this study? For this final decision it is important to consider that the respect in which they differ needs to be backed up by theoretical underpinnings. In regards to the central functions of international public broadcasting as discussed in Section 2.2 (public service function, political function, dialogical function), DW's services may all be considered reflective of them. However, there is reason to assume that the prioritization of these functions varies across language services. Thus, it was decided to select three cases with different principal functions. Harking back to the experiment allegory, one could say that the editorial units' principal function represents the explanatory variable. Against this background, the choice fell on the English service, the German service, and the Russian service.

The English service's focus is assumed to be on intercultural dialogue. This service attracts a culturally diverse audience via the lingua franca English. Hence, pursuing the broadcaster's dialogical mission is highly relevant here. Also, this service faces competition with several other international English-language news providers such as *BBC, CNN,* or *al-Jazeera*. That's why it seems likely that DW English tries to leverage its know-how on intercultural dialogue as a distinctive feature that stands out from other international broadcasters.

The German service is one in which the broadcaster's political function for the German state is expected to be relatively influential. As we have seen in Subsection 2.2.2, the political function of promoting a country's national image can be approached in a rather overt fashion (as it was the case during Cold War) or in a subtler fashion (as suggested by the regionalization of viewpoints stipulated in the latest amendment of the DW Act). DW German is the service with the longest tradition at DW. As such, it has been influenced for decades by DW's earlier primary mission to provide a forum for German perspectives in the world. Therefore, it seems likely that the German service is the one most inclined to approach the political function in a rather overt fashion, acting as an "official voice" whose main responsibility it is to put out news from a German point of view.

The Russian service is expected to be one for which promoting democracy and, thus, the public service function plays a central role. The political systems of

most post-Soviet countries can be considered in a condition in which transitions from authoritarian rule to more democratic forms of government haven't proved successful (Evans, 2011). Therefore, it is assumed that DW Russian's main focus is on providing a Russian-speaking audience with information they wouldn't normally get, thus stimulating and advancing political opinion formation among citizens of this region.

How exactly is the dissimilar key function of the cases expected to affect the results? On the whole, it is expected that the propositions formulated earlier are generally valid for each case. That is, each replication is assumed to generate results that point into a similar direction, namely the direction indicated by the propositions. However, deviations across cases are now anticipatable on the basis of their dissimilar main function. It is expected to play out especially on aspects of P1 and P4. Let us review P1 and P4 accordingly:

P1 states that DW's identity management is informed by the three central functions of promoting democracy (public service), representing the German state (political), and promoting understanding among different cultures (dialogical). Within the multiple case study, the public service function is assumed to be most salient with the Russian service. Thus, DW Russian is expected to have the biggest share of hard news output among the three. The political function is expected to be most striking in a direct fashion with the German service. Therefore, DW German is expected to be most amenable to stressing German points of view (because of the service's pertinent tradition). The dialogical function is assumed to be most notable with the English service. Hence, DW English is expected to have been most strongly driven by dialogical motives in making DW accessible in the social web.

P4 refers to DW's handling of user communication at the response stage. The proposition states that the broadcaster mainly acts in the fashion of a dialogical mediator at the response stage. Among the three cases it is assumed that the Russian service shows the strongest inclination towards acting as a discursive advocate because of its focus on raising democratic standards. The English service is assumed to display the most straightforward tendencies towards dialogical journalism among the three cases because of its focus on playing out DW's know-how on intercultural dialogue as a competitive advantage over other international broadcasters. The German service is assumed to display the strongest tendencies towards acting as an objective observer among the three because of its focus on the role as an official transmitter of news from a single perspective.

Now the selection strategy which led to choosing the English, the German, and the Russian language service for this multiple case study is clear. Each of these editorial units consists of a number of employees and involves a variety of workflows and journalistic routines. However, not all of these are relevant to be examined in the course of this study. Thus, what is left to be specified is what exactly defines the case. To do so, it is important that "both its boundaries (terms of reference) demarcated between the phenomenon to be studied and the context within which it is examined (such as the time and place) are clearly defined" (Weerakkody, 2009, p. 233).

The phenomenon to be studied here is journalistic social web usage at the output stage and its democratic relevance at the response stage. Hence, the research interest is limited to professional practices involved in running a social web account within a language service. Media organizations usually make use of several social web services (Oriella PR Network, 2009). This study is particularly interested in how established journalistic mechanisms of output and response are adapted to the logics of the social web environment. Therefore, it makes sense to look at platforms that offer room for such journalistic output and response activity. This applies to two of the most widely used social web services: *Facebook* and *YouTube*. *Facebook* is a social networking site whose basic principle is maintaining contacts. *YouTube*'s main function is providing a site for video sharing. Both platforms have extended their initial functionalities over time and by now they offer special services for corporations such as the "*Facebook* page" or the "*YouTube* channel". A media organization running a *Facebook* page can publish content on this page in the form of postings. Corporate postings on *Facebook* pages are generally public. Yet, users have to be registered on *Facebook* to be able to fully interact with the page and "like" the page in order to include it into their individual newsfeed. There is a similar situation in terms of *YouTube*. Videos published by media organizations within the framework of a *YouTube* channel are public on principle; however, only registered users can comment on videos and get updates about the channel operator's activities as a consequence of subscribing to the channel. Unlike in the comment sections provided on media organization's own websites, users' postings and comments on social web platforms such as *Facebook* or *YouTube* are embedded within the greater network of these users' accounts – possibly including significant social contacts such as family members or childhood friends. This suggests a different quality of social control. Uncivil

communicative behavior, for example, has been found to be more common in readers' comments on a media outlets' homepage than on its *Facebook* presence (Rowe, 2014). While *Twitter* is acknowledged as an important journalistic social web tool (Cision & Bates, 2009; Oriella PR Network, 2012), this service is not considered for examination here. Due to its unique property of allowing only for a restricted number of characters as an output, *Twitter* is likely to be used for fast information dissemination and reception. It has developed very peculiar communication logics "breaking with classic narrative structures and deviating from long-held and fiercely defended norms" (Hermida, 2013, p. 306). Thus, the nature of this particular tool is more conducive to studies that are interested in how certain topics spread (e.g. Bruns & Burgess, 2012; Papacharissi & Fatima Oliveira, 2012) or how journalistic content is disseminated by users (e.g. Maireder, 2011; Nuernbergk, 2013). For analyzing journalistic practices and the democratic relevance of communication processes, *Facebook* and *YouTube* offer more conventional and therefore more suitable formats. To recap, in terms of the phenomenon to be studied a case encompasses an editorial units' activities related to running its social web account on *Facebook* and on *YouTube*.

DW's organizational structure constitutes the context within which the phenomenon is examined. Within this structure all those factors are part of the case that impact how social web usage of *Facebook* and *YouTube* is put into practice by the editorial offices. Of course, both the context-based factors and the concrete social web practices as such may vary over time. To delimit the temporal scope of the data collection, it was decided that a case spans one year's time, from beginning January 2013 to end of December 2013. To summarize, DW's organizational structure and the year 2013 represent the context in which the phenomenon is studied.

5.4 Summary and conclusion

The goal of this chapter was to formulate the research interest in a way that makes it detectable in the field. To do so, it was first of all specified what methodological approach is pursued in this study, namely case study research. Case study research appears suitable because it accounts for the nature of this study's research interest as a contemporary, real-life phenomenon over which one has little control. Another asset is that case study research is informed by theoretical underpinnings, but at the

same time it remains open towards yet unknown aspects and theoretical adjustment. Through analytical generalization it can contribute to further theory building. This accommodates the incipient state of theorizing journalism in the social web.

After the research approach was clarified, the chapter moved on to specifying the research questions. In doing so, the research interest was linked to *Deutsche Welle* as a concrete journalistic media outlet whose context serves to study the phenomena of interest. The first research question asks how the social web is used in DW's professional journalistic context, and aims at systematically reconstructing the work flows related to running social web accounts along the lines of Schmidt's (2011b) pertinent model of analysis. The second research question relates to DW's professional journalistic social web activity at the response stage and inquires how it can be classified with regard to democratic standards. The second research question is broken down into two more sub-questions because the related analysis also needs to consider user comments. Accordingly, the sub-questions ask about the classification of user communication at the response stage and DW's way of handling it. Subsequently, four propositions are put forward. Propositions 1 to 3 touch upon aspects to be examined in the course of answering RQ1. Proposition 4 relates to aspects to be studied throughout the inquiry for RQ2. The propositions express theoretically informed hunches as regards the outcome of this study.

Afterwards, the chapter provided details about the study's multiple-case design. This design is favored over a single-case design because its replication logic adds to robust analytic generalization. For selecting the cases, the study relies on the most-similar method. This method led to choosing DW's English, German, and Russian language services as cases that are similar in most respects, but feature one major difference whose effect on the results is anticipatable and explainable based on the theoretical framework. The major difference of the three selected cases is their main function. While the English service is assumed to focus on intercultural dialogue, the German service is assumed to foreground the political function of representing the German state, and the Russian service is assumed to pay special attention to the public service function of promoting democracy. How this major difference plays out on the expected results was anticipated for each proposition. Lastly, the chapter made clear what constitutes the cases in terms of the phenomena they encompass as well as in terms of their organizational and temporal context.

6 Analytical framework and methodological design

After the research interest has been specified, this chapter sets out to explain in detail how it can be empirically examined. To this end, the chapter starts off with Section 6.1 showing how exactly the analytical model by Schmidt (2011b) presented in Section 4.2 and the analytical grid developed in Section 4.5 are applied as models of analysis within the case study enquiry of DW English, DW German, and DW Russian. Subsection 6.1.1 details the adaption of Schmidt's model for the purpose of identifying professional journalistic social web practices. Subsection 6.1.2 specifies the assessment of social web communication with regard to democratic relevance. Both subsections detail theoretical concepts, indicators, and data sources that are considered relevant for the respective analyses.

Generally, the data of interest for this study stems from content-based data sources and statement-based data sources. What is meant by content-based data sources are social web-related documents issued by *Deutsche Welle* at the organizational level as well as social web content on the *Facebook* and *YouTube* accounts of the three language services in question. Social web-related documents issued by DW are the media organization's "Social Media Guidelines" and its "Netiquette Policy" (which is stated in the guidelines). Social web content to be incorporated into this examination is the active output released by the three language services in question at the output stage as well as reactive comments both by users and DW at the response stage. Figure 7 provides an overview of the content-based data sources.

Subsumed under statement-based data sources are self-reports from strategists and editors at DW. The differentiation between strategists and editors reflects the difference between the organizational level and the language service level at DW. Strategists are DW employees dealing with organization-wide, strategic questions of social web usage at DW. Editors, in turn, are staff members of the editorial units of DW English, DW German, and DW Russian. Within the respective editorial unit another distinction is made between the editor in chief and editorial staff in charge of social web activities. An overview of the statement-based data sources relevant to this study is provided in Figure 8.

Figure 7: Content-based data sources considered in the empirical examination

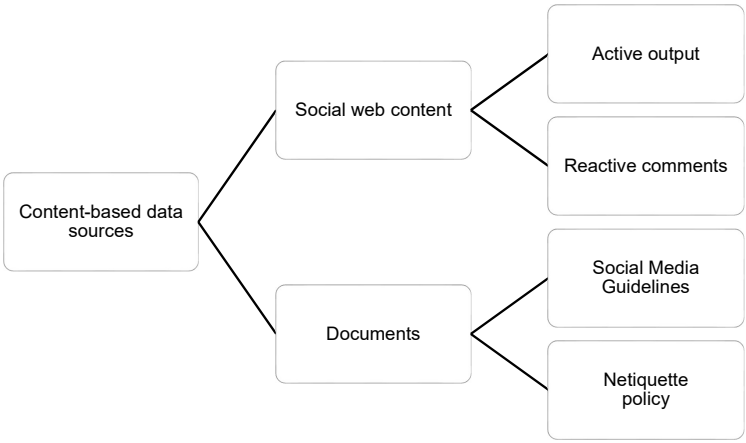
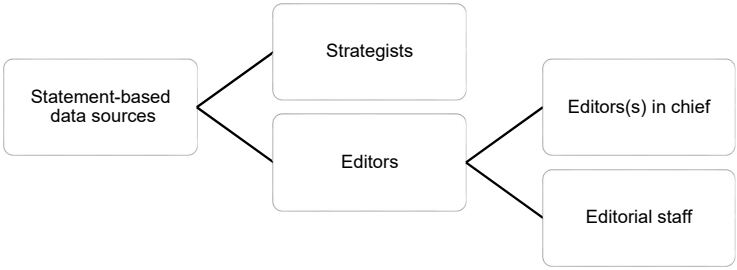


Figure 8: Statement-based data sources considered in the empirical examination



Section 6.2 presents the research methods and instruments used to get hold of the different data sources. Subsection 6.2.1 elaborates on the social web content analysis conducted as part of this study and gives details about its sample, its coding units and units of analysis, the defined variables, the involved coding procedure, quality criteria, and the concrete steps of analysis. Subsection 6.2.2 then details the method of the expert interview employed in this study. The subsection provides information about the interview inquiry, the selection of interviewees, the interviewees themselves, the interview guide, the data collection, the data

quality, and describes the steps of data analysis. Likewise, Subsection 6.2.3 provides details about the selected documents and the steps of data analysis as part of the document analysis employed as a method in this study. Finally, Subsection 6.2.4 explains how these methods are combined within the case study enquiry.

6.1 Models of analysis

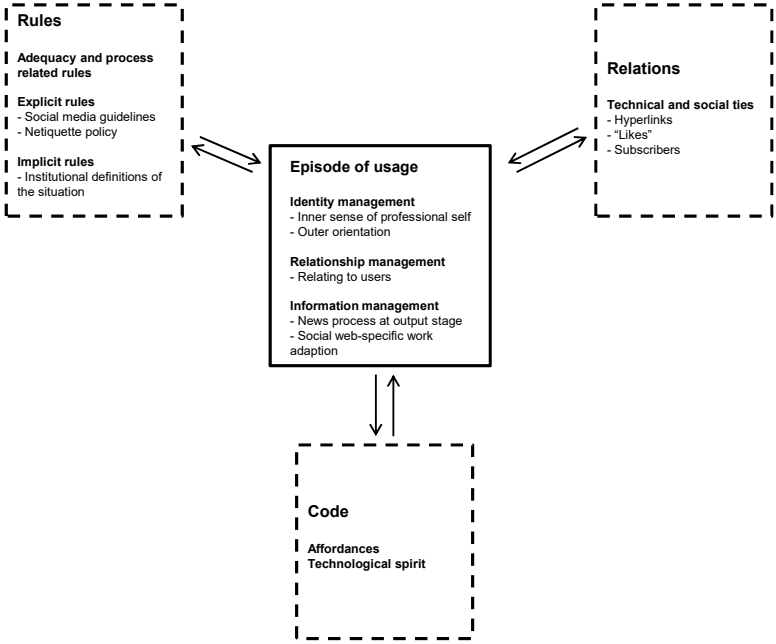
6.1.1 Identifying professional journalistic social web practices

RQ1 on DW's social web usage is to be answered by applying Schmidt's (2011b) models of analysis. The model distinguishes three practices (identity management, information management, and relationship management) framed by the structural dimensions "rules", "relations", and "code" (see Section 4.2). Schmidt's model is not geared towards professional social media usage in the first place. However, neither is it limited to analyzing private individual activities of social web usage only. Schmidt in fact deliberates on journalistic practice (pp. 136–154) and points out that his model of analysis is adaptable to professional activity "because it is possible to identify certain role-specific rules, because one can examine how professional actors are embedded in specific networks and what resources result from these networks, and because the software code's structuring role is also valid for professional activities in the social web"[37] (Schmidt, 2011b, p. 76). What needs to be clarified to make use of the model for the present examination is how exactly its underlying principles, structural dimensions, and categories translate to the professional-journalistic environment of DW. This section explains what the notion of "practices" refers to in the context of DW, it clarifies how exactly rules, relations, and code are factored in the examination, and it specifies how each component of social web activity is defined and operationalized.

37 Translated from German. Original: "weil sich bestimmte rollenspezifische Regeln identifizieren lassen, weil die Einbettung professioneller Akteure in spezifische Netzwerke und die daraus folgenden Ressourcen untersucht werden können, und weil die strukturierende Rolle des Software-Codes auch für professionelle Tätigkeiten im Social Web gilt"

A first overview of the adapted version of Schmidt's model of analysis for the purpose of this study is provided in Figure 9.

Figure 9: Schmidt's (2011b, p. 50) model of analysis for practices of social web usage adapted to professional journalism practices



As explained in Section 4.2, the notion of "practice" refers to activity of individual actors. This individual activity is deemed embedded in certain structures that go beyond the individual. These structures guide the actors' activity, but they do not dictate it. Oftentimes, actors are not entirely conscious about their practices. It is eventually through the actors' mental and bodily performance that practices manifest themselves. Even though practices play out in concrete situations, it is their validity beyond a single situation that constitutes them. Hence, to identify social web practices at DW the study needs to look at individual activity, but at the same time it needs to consider how this activity is framed by structures. Accordingly, the examination focuses on those DW editors who actively run the

social web accounts at the editorial level, and additionally refers to sources that structure these editors' performance at the organizational level. As the editors' performance manifests itself both mentally and physically, it is important to obtain information from editors' statements as well as from visible traces of their performance in the form of social web content. The study covers a time span that is likely to encompass a fair number of situations so as to be able to grasp practices which – as mentioned above – transcend single situations. This is reflected in this study's temporal definition of a case as covering one year's time.

A major asset of Schmidt's model is that it specifies concrete structural dimensions that are at work in practices of social web usage. As was noted before, the model differentiates *rules, relations,* and *code* as structural dimensions that frame an actor's social web usage.

So, what kind of *rules* framing a DW editor's social web usage are taken into consideration in this study? With regard to adequacy rules, it is of interest which specific communication channel offered in the social web is used by the editors for what purpose. Procedural rules of interest in the DW environment refer to what routines are involved in the process of releasing output to the social web.

When it comes to implicit rules it is accounted for how the editors define the situation in the social web: What do they think is expected from them and what do they do accordingly? What rules are advocated by DW staff members at the organizational level? Explicit rules to consider can be extractable from documents specifically designed to regulate DW's social web accounts. In this respect, social media guidelines and netiquette policies seem likely to contain references to rules that frame social web usage at DW.

With regard to *relations,* this study accounts for connections such as hyperlinks in DW's social web output, "likes" on *Facebook* or "subscribers" on *YouTube* which are software-based, but can indicate social ties at the same time.

Thirdly, the model's reference to the structuring effect of *code* is put into practice by paying attention to what kind of usage is suggested by *Facebook*'s and *YouTube*'s code, what "technological spirit" this implies and to what extent DW's usage complies with it.

Having clarified how the structural dimensions play out, the question remains how the model's three components of social web practices can be interpreted in the context of the professional-journalistic environment under study.

In a journalistic media outlet *identity management* can be understood in terms of social web activities that uncover a sense of the professional self that acts in the social web. This self-perception is assumed to be sustained both in relation to "inner" factors and "outer" factors. "Inner" factors are perceptions of the professional identity among DW employees as well as social web editors' interpretations of their individual roles within this organizational context. "Outer" factors considered to impact the perceived professional self are images about the audience and about what the audience expects DW's social web accounts to offer as journalistic output.

Information management is an activity that is anyway part and parcel of the professional environment under study. Gathering, selecting, editing, and publishing information is part of a well-established process in journalism. By applying the model's analytical category of information management to social web accounts run by DW, the study concentrates specifically on the output stage of the journalistic news process. From this perspective, information management encompasses *what* is selected to be published in the social web and *how* information is published there. Moreover, the study also covers the aspect of journalistic work adaption to social-web specific features for information management such as rating tools.

Relationship management touches upon the network character of the social web which allows "building, maintaining, and sustaining a specific set of mutually regarded relationships" (Hogan, 2009, p. 14). Yet, the maintenance of a *Facebook* page or a *YouTube* channel can have affordances that differ from those of a private *Facebook* or *YouTube* account when it comes to relationship management. A person having a *Facebook* account can "like" a DW *Facebook* page whereas the DW *Facebook* page account cannot send a friend request to any owner of a private account, for example. However, once a media outlet is present in the social web in the form of an official account it becomes generally accessible there. DW grants social web users to make use of this accessibility, to connect with its accounts and, in doing so, to establish a basis for a direct relationship. How DW relates to the users within social web structures is what this study looks at in terms of relationship management. One could argue that the second research question, too, deals with how such relationships are managed. Acknowledging this argument, relationship management needs to be delineated as a category of analysis relevant for RQ1 from what is examined in connection to RQ2. An

according analytical differentiation is made based on the fact that the focus of the first research question is on *identifying* the practices involved in social web usage whereas the second question is more interested in *assessing* journalism-audience communication with regard to democratic relevance. Thus, in this study relationship management is analyzed in terms of the general novelty for media outlets to be directly accessible to users in the social web. The category "relationship management" focuses on how DW deals with the fact of users being able to proactively approach them in the social web. The users' actual response to DW output and DW's concrete handling of this response, on the other hand, are dealt with within the scope of RQ2.

It is now possible to associate each practice component as suggested by the adapted model with underlying theoretical concepts, indicators, and data sources containing these indicators. Tables 3–5 provide an overview of these associations per practice component. The tabulated concepts are derived from the study's theoretical framework and should be understood as "dragnets" for fishing the data systematically. These dragnets do not determine conclusively what will count as "catch" at the end of the day. There might as well be some valuable "by-catch". As mentioned before, case study research is open towards unknown aspects and theoretical adjustment.

Table 3 gives an overview of the operationalization of "identity management".

Table 3: Operationalization RQ1 "Identity Management"

Theoretical concepts to be considered	Indicators	Content-based data source	Statement-based data source
INNER SENSE OF PROFESSIONAL SELF • Public service function: Promoting democracy, making alternative voices heard • Political function: • Subtle democratic role model ←→ Overt representation of Germany • Dialogical function: • Embracing two-way communication structure of the social web	Expressions of self-characterization		Strategist Editor
	Reasons for making oneself accessible	Documents	Strategist Editor
	Role perception: organizational / individual sphere of activity		Journalist
AUDIENCE AND CONTENT ORIENTATION • Public service function: Targeting active opinion-leaders and decision makers, news focus • Political function: • German perspective as one of many; regionalized focus ←→ Germany focus • Dialogical function: • Serving audience's communication needs	Target group specifications	Documents	Strategist Editor
	Image of the audience (fans, subscribers)		Strategist Editor
	Germany-related references / national perspective	Active output	
	News character	Active output	

Reflections of a public service understanding, of a political function, and of a dialogical function are supposed to be detectable in DW's identity management. With regard to the inner sense of the professional self, a public service function would become evident in claims of promoting democracy and making alternative voices

heard. References to dependence or independence from the German state or an aspiration to serve as a democratic role model would touch upon DW's political function. DW's dialogical mandate would become evident in accentuations of the merits of the social web's two-way communication structure and in pronounced organizational backing of making DW accessible in the social web.

What exactly needs to be observed in order to identify ambitions towards fulfilling these functions in one way or another? What concrete empirical phenomena are related to these theoretical concepts of international broadcasting? The study uses three indicators to pinpoint these concepts: Expressions of self-characterization, reasons for making oneself accessible, and role perceptions as to organizational and individual spheres of activity. Expressions of self-characterization are observable in statement-based data sources. To collect the data, the study harks back to DW strategist as well as editors. Reasons why DW is accessible in the social web in the first place are extracted from DW's Social Web Guidelines and from statements by DW strategists and editors. As for the third indicator, it is the role perception of the DW editors that is of interest. Here, the focus is on whether they perceive their role rather in individual or in organizational terms when putting out social web content on behalf of DW.

Also the second component of identity management – the outer orientation as regards content and audience – may reflect the three concepts that were found relevant in international broadcasting. A public service understanding would show in aspirations to provide serious information for active opinion leaders and decision makers. How the broadcaster perceives its political function would become evident in the way DW represents Germany: Indirectly through high-quality coverage or directly through highlighting German assets? DW's dialogical mandate would be reflected when the covered perspectives are regionalized and when the German perspective is presented as one of many. To identify these aspects, the study uses target group specifications, images of the audience, references to Germany, and the news character as indicators. Target group specfifications are acquired by means of DW's Social Media Guidelines and statements from DW strategists and editors. The latter are also resorted to for images of the audience. To identify Germany-related references and the news character, the study harks back to active social web output as a data source.

How exactly identity management is expected to play out with regard to these underlying theoretical concepts is summed up in proposition 1 (see Section 5.2).

The second category of analysis – information management – is defined as being constituted by the news process at the output stage and social web-specific work adaption. Its operationalization for the purposes of this study is shown in the following Table 4:

Table 4: Operationalization RQ 1 "Information Management"

Theoretical concepts to be measured	**Indicators**	**Content-based data source**	**Statement-based data source**
NEWS PROCESS AT THE OUTPUT STAGE • Gatewatching vs. distribution	Distinct social media content (vs. additional distribution channel)	Active output	
	Links to external content	Active output	
SOCIAL WEB-SPECIFIC WORK ADAPTION • Spreadability • Popularity • Media work vs. "proper" journalism	Statements about selection criteria		Editor
	Posting frequency	Active output	
	Form of content (tonality, phrasing, type)	Active output	Editor
	Staff involvement in work proceedings	Documents	Strategist Editor
	Statements on special challenges as regards information dissemination		Strategist Editor

At the output stage of the social web news process, the theoretical concept of gatewatching (Bruns, 2005) is supposed to be detectable. There are two indicators that are used to check its existence. The first one is distinct social media content (as opposed to content that has already been produced for the website, for example). The second indicator is represented by links to external content, that is, content that has not been produced by DW. Both of these indicators are observable via active social web output.

In terms of social web-specific work adaption, there are several theoretical concepts that may be reflected here. What would be in line with the logics of the

social web, for example, is to care about spreadability (Phillips, 2012; Schmidt, 2011b, p. 144) and, eventually, popularity (Heinderyckx, 2015). The work that DW adapts to specifics of the social web could be considered "just" media work (Lietsala & Sirkunnen, 2008) or "proper" journalism (Bunz, 2008). Five indicators are used in order to get a hold of social web-specific work adaption: Statements about selection criteria, the posting frequency, the form of content (tonality, phrasing, type), staff involvement in work proceedings, and statements on special challenges as regards information dissemination. The data source to find out about selection criteria are the DW editors. Active output is consulted to get a hold of the posting frequency. As for the form of the content with regard to tonality, phrasing, and type, the study consults both active comments and DW editors. How staff involvement in social web work proceedings is organized at DW is retraced on the basis of its Social Media Guidelines and both strategists' and editors' accounts. The latter are also consulted for statements on special challenges as regards information dissemination in the social web.

Proposition 2 captures how information management is expected to play out (see Section 5.2).

Finally, the analysis of relationship management focuses on how DW relates to the users. The operationalization overview is below (Table 5):

Table 5: Operationalization RQ 1 "Relationship Management"

Theoretical concepts to be measured	Indicators	Text-based data source	Statement-based data source
RELATING TO THE USERS • Traditionalists vs. convergers • "Skeptical shunners", "pragmatic conformists" and "enthusiastic activists • "Sceptics", "observers", "hunters", "promoters" and "architects" • Boundary work: Maintaining professional norms/values/ authority	Statements on types of relationships		Strategist Editor
	Lessons learnt		Editor
	Statements on special challenges as regards direct audience contact		Strategist Editor
	Staff involvement regarding user relations	Documents	Strategist Editor
	Handling of proactive user posts / direct user requests (non-output related)		Strategist Editor
	Bonding efforts	Active output	Editor

Theoretical constructs that play a role in terms of relating to the users are, for example, the typologies by Gulyas (2016), Herdman and Djerf-Pierre (2013) or Robinson (2010). Moreover, the literature on how journalists position themselves towards their digital audience contains references to boundary work (Lewis, 2012) through efforts to protect professional norms, values, or authority (Brants & Haan, 2010; Reich, 2011; Singer & Ashman, 2009; Thurman, 2008; Williams et al., 2011). Six indicators are used in this study to pinpoint how DW positions itself when it comes to relating to the users: Statements on types of relationships, lessons learnt, statements on special challenges as regards direct audience contact, staff involvement regarding user relations, handling of proactive user comments and direct requests, and bonding efforts. Strategists and editors represent data sources for statements on types of relationships, lessons learnt, and statements on special challenges as regards direct audience contact. To find out about staff

involvement regarding user relations, DW's Social Media Guidelines are consulted besides strategists and editors. DW's handling of proactive or direct user requests is retraced by means of strategists' and editors' reports. Whether and how DW makes efforts to establish social bonds with the users can be retraced through active output and editors' reports.
How DW's relationship management is expected to turn out is stated in proposition 3 (see Section 5.2).

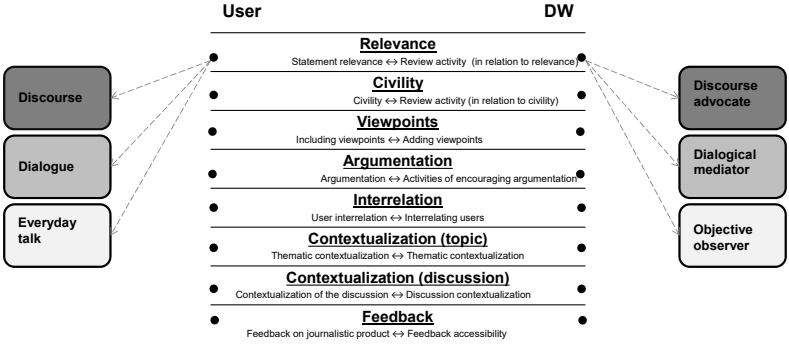
6.1.2 Assessing social web communication with regard to democratic relevance

RQ2 enquiring about DW's social web activity with regard to democratic relevance is to be answered by applying the analytical grid developed in Section 4.5. The grid distinguishes three modes of democratically relevant communication with varying levels of normative standards. Discourse as an argumentation-based, rational mode of equal exchange geared towards consensus features the highest normative standards. Dialogue as a communication mode that requires dialogue partners to acknowledge mutual differences with the intention of dealing with issues on a joint basis through equal exchange is normatively less demanding. Everyday talk understood as informal, non-goal oriented communication is a potential vehicle of political opinion making that involves relatively low normative demands. How journalism practice is to facilitate these communication modes has been at the center of academic efforts theorizing journalists as "discourse advocates", "dialogical mediators", and "objective observers". These journalistic role conceptualizations complete the analytical grid. In Section 4.5 the conceptualizations showed to be extendable to journalism under social web conditions. Their operationalization, too, is now being extended to journalism under social web conditions in order to make the grid serviceable for the present examination. To do so, this section reviews operationalization efforts made in similar studies which results in an identification of eight indicators. How exactly these indicators are associated with the democratically relevant communication modes and the related journalistic roles is again illustrated in the form of operationalization overviews.

For an initial overview, the following Figure 10 shows the eight indicators, each pointing to one aspect of democratically relevant social web communication – on the

one hand in terms of the users' commenting activity, one the other hand regarding the journalistic handling of this commenting activity.

Figure 10: Eight pairs of indicators for assessing social web communication with regard to democratic relevance



As a point of departure to specify the measurements concerning RQ2, the study harks back to Brosda's (2008a) concept of discursive journalism. As this concept pertains to the most normatively demanding communication mode, it is assumed that inferences can be drawn from here about the less normatively demanding communication modes dialogue and everyday talk.

Here again, Brosda's (2010) theoretical conceptualization of discursive journalism proves to be useful. He offers hands-on suggestions for a discursive journalism practice by listing typical questions that journalists as discourse advocates should consider (see Subsection 3.2.3). Some of these questions can be discounted for the specific purpose of assessing journalistic handling of user communication in the social web. "Extensive research", for example, does not relate to the response stage of the news process. "Checking validity claims" appears to be a point difficult to break down in empirical terms because a speech act satisfying the demands connected to the three validity claims sincerity, rightness, and truth is an idealization really (Bohman & Rehg, 2014, sec. 3.1). What is essential for the empirical study at hand is that Brosda (2010) envisages the journalist as checking for plausibility and argumentation when it comes to validity claims. For the sake of operationalizing journalistic handling of user comments, the study focuses on

this commitment to argumentation. The remaining eight points seem well adaptable to the needs of the present analysis even though they have not been deployed for empirical examination by Brosda himself, let alone for an empirical examination of journalistic handling of user comments in the social web. Take for example the issue of "inclusion of all persons concerned". It can be related to journalistic handling of social web comments at the response stage insofar as a discursive journalist would be expected to include viewpoints that have previously been missing within the debate.

A review of earlier empirical endeavors to evaluate the democratic relevance of (online) discussions (Freelon, 2010; Halpern & Gibbs, 2013; Jakobs, 2014; Papacharissi, 2004; Picone & Raeijmaekers, 2013; Ruiz et al., 2011; Steenbergen, Bächtiger, Spörndli, & Steiner, 2003; Witschge, 2011; Zhang, Cao, & Tran, 2013) provides two major insights with regard to the upcoming operationalization. First, the indicators used in the reviewed studies can mostly be subsumed to the points listed by Brosda (2010). Accordingly, the study at hand ends up using eight indicators which combine the reviewed operationalization approaches. Second, the reviewed studies use varying levels of measurement when applying their analytical frameworks. Some of these measuring systems raise reliability concerns which the present methodological design tries to dispel.

Against this backdrop, the following strategy is proposed for assessing DW's social web activity at the response stage: The empirical inquiry relies on eight indicators, each indicator representing one aspect of democratically relevant social web communication – on the one hand in terms of the readers' commenting activity, one the other hand regarding the journalists' handling of this commenting activity. At the same time, the three modes of democratically relevant communication and the related journalism concepts of discursive journalism, dialogical journalism, and everyday talk are understood as ordinal-scaled values. That is, the indicators have to be examined in terms of their compliance with the three categories discourse, dialogue, or everyday talk and the related journalism concepts. While the grid implies that these categories can be put in an order ranging from low to high with regard to democratic relevance, the amount of difference between them remains indeterminable. Hence, the study measures at the ordinal level of measurement (Fielding & Gilbert, 2006, p. 15).

This measurement approach tries to strike a good balance between nominally assessing the sheer occurrence of democratically relevant communication modes

and ranking their degree on the basis of an interval scale. A nominal assessment as seen in Papacharissi (2004) or Witschge (2011) is feasible, but neglects valuable information that is after all available in the data. It even is of special interest for finding evidence that points to discourse, dialogue, and/or everyday talk. *Ranking* the degree to which an indicator is reflected in the data reliably and comprehensively, in turn, appears rather difficult. Jakobs (2014) attempts to do that by using a 5-point interval scale to rank, for example, the argumentation level of comments from low to high. However, it remains questionable whether a differentiation between intervals such as "many arguments" or "arguments only" is cogent. Thus, an interval level of measurement is rejected here for objectivity and reliability reasons.

Let us now turn to the indicators. There are eight umbrella terms under which the indicators for user comments (as addressed by RQ2.1) and for journalistic handling (as addressed by RQ2.2) are paired. How exactly the manifestations of the indicators are classified with regard to the three categories discourse, dialogue or everyday talk and the related journalism concepts will be explained in connection with the respective research instrument in Section 6.2. The following list describes the indicator pairs on a general level:

Relevance (statement relevance / activity in relation to relevance):

This study's guiding question for assessing a user comment is similar to the one posed by Ruiz et al. (2011): "Does it focus on the topic of the news story? (p. 470)" As regards DW, the study follows Brosda (2010) by asking whether the editors check the user statements in terms of relevance and what consequences this has at the response stage.

Relevance is quite a common indicator when it comes to assessing comments with regard to democratic relevance (see Freelon, 2010; Halpern & Gibbs, 2013; Jakobs, 2014; Ruiz et al. 2011; Steenbergen et al. 2003; Witschge 2011; Zhang et al., 2013).

Civility (civil commentary / review activity in relation to civility):

This pair of indicators considers whether and to what extent user comments contain uncivil remarks, and how DW reacts to such commentary. Previous studies have used similar measures while touching on different aspects. Jakobs (2014), for instance, rates the tone of comments from "inappropriate" to "completely

appropriate". Steenbergen et al. (2003) and Zhang et al. (2013) consider uncivil comments under the heading "respect". Halpern and Gibbs (2013) check for "civility", while Papacharissi (2004) distinguishes "civility" and "politeness". Witschge (2011) refers to uncivil comments as "personal attack", while Ruiz et al. (2011) look for "insults or derogatory remarks". This study differentiates between commentary containing derogative remarks about a certain state of affairs and offensive commentary directed at a person. After all, the study's overall interest is on how journalists' handle user comments. Therefore, the indicator "review activity in relation to civility" is added to investigate DW's side. This indicator is the only indicator that amends the list of points suggested by Brosda (2010).

Viewpoints (including viewpoints / adding viewpoints):

This pair of indicators pertains to the provision of new viewpoints at the response stage. As for the user commentary, the indicator considers whether comments include what Witschge (2011) calls an "alternative approach to issue" and what Ruiz et al. (2011) term "a different point of view than other comments". Concerning DW, this refers to activities of adding missing viewpoints as reflected in Brosda's (2010) point "inclusion".

Argumentation (argumentation / activity of encouraging argumentation):

On the one hand, what is considered in this indicator pair is whether the users provide arguments when voicing opinions by stating the reason for these opinions. On the other hand, it refers to DW's activities to encourage such argumentation at the response stage. This kind of indicator is also widespread in studies assessing the democratic relevance of comments (see Freelon, 2010; Halpern & Gibbs 2013; Jakobs, 2014; Ruiz et al. 2011; Steenbergen et al. 2003; Witschge 2011; Zhang et al., 2013). On the part of DW, it draws from Brosda's (2010) call for "communicating arguments".

Interrelation (user interrelation / interrelating users):

This pair of indicators is concerned with whether user comments relate to one another. In terms of the users' comments it considers whether a comment

contains a reference to another comment(ator). Similar indicators are used by Jakobs (2014), Ruiz at el. (2011) and Witschge (2011). Also Freelon's (2010) indicator "inter-ideological reciprocity" comprises this aspect. In Halpern and Gibbs (2012) it is subsumed under the indicator "conversational coherence". In regards to DW, Brosda's (2010) point "explication of social dimension" is taken up. Here, the indicator refers to the journalistic efforts to establish a connection between the commentators at the response stage.

Contextualization (topic):

This indicator pair captures communication activities, both on the part of the users and on the part of DW, that involve the provision of context information about the output topic. It brings to bear what can be found in Witschge's (2011) study in the form of the expression type "providing information" and what Brosda (2010) calls "contextualization".

Contextualization (discussion):

This indicator pair considers the contextualization of the discussion itself, that is, when the discussion becomes subject of the discussion. Comments both by users and by DW may display such meta-approaches to the discussion. In fact, Witschge's (2011) study touches upon this issue under the heading "meta-talk about the discussion". The journalistic side of contextualizing different statements of a discussion is reflected in Brosda's (2010) point "responsiveness".

Feedback (feedback on journalistic product / feedback accessibility):

The final indicator pair is geared towards assessing whether and how journalism itself is open to critique expressed by social web users. Of course, it is not a common question in studies assessing democratic relevance whether user comments contain feedback on journalistic output. This indicator stems from this study's specific research interest in the interaction between users and journalistic actors. In order to account for Brosda's (2010) call for discursive journalism to be criticizable, the occurrence of feedback on the journalistic product needs to be captured in the first place. The journalism-related indicator then considers feedback accessibility.

Having specified the indicator pairs, it is now possible to provide a comprehensive operationalization overview in Table 6 for assessing democratic relevance of journalistic social web activity at the response stage. The theoretical concepts to be measured with regard to democratic relevance can be found in the first column. Next to that, the table lists the indicators and the data sources. The data sources are again differentiated into content-based and statement-based.

Table 6 recalls that professional journalistic social web activity is regarded as an interplay between the readers' follow-up comments on the published news items and the handling of these follow-up comments on the part of the media organization. It is assumed that reflections of discourse, dialogue, or everyday talk are detectable in the user comments. The journalistic handling of user communication, in turn, is supposed to contain reflections of discourse advocacy, dialogical mediation, and objective observance.

Everyday talk would become evident in informal, non-goal oriented everyday communication activities that do not fulfill the normative standards of dialogue. Communication modes that acknowledge mutual differences and deal with diverse issues on the basis of equal exchange would qualify as dialogical. Discursive communication would show in rational, argumentation-based exchanges that strive for consensus on public issues.

What concrete empirical phenomena need to be observed to pinpoint these modes of user communication? As mentioned above, the study uses statement relevance, civility, viewpoint inclusion, argumentation, user interrelation, topic-related contextualization, discussion-related contextualization, and feedback on the journalistic product as indicators. All of these indicators are observable in content-based data sources, more precisely in reactive user comments.

Table 6: Operationalization RQ 2 "Professional journalistic social web usage at the response stage"

Theoretical concept to be measured	Indicator pair	Content-based data source	Statement-based date source
DEMOCRATIC RELEVANCE (user commentary) • Everyday talk • Dialogue • Discourse	Statement relevance	Reactive comments	
	Civility	Reactive comments	
	Including viewpoints	Reactive comments	
	Argumentation	Reactive comments	
	User interrelation	Reactive comments	
	Contextualization (Topic)	Reactive comments	
	Contextualization (Discussion)	Reactive comments	
	Feedback on journalistic product	Reactive comments	
DEMOCRATIC RELEVANCE (journalistic handling of user comments) • Objective observer • Dialogical mediator • Discourse advocate	Activity in relation to relevance	Reactive comments, Documents	Strategist Editor
	Activity in relation to offensive comments	Reactive comments, Documents	Strategist Editor
	Adding viewpoints	Reactive comments, Documents	Strategist Editor
	Activity of encouraging argumentation	Reactive comments, Documents	Strategist Editor
	Interrelating users	Reactive comments, Documents	Strategist Editor
	Contextualization (Topic)	Reactive comments, Documents	Strategist Editor
	Contextualization (Discussion)	Reactive comments, Documents	Strategist Editor
	Feedback accessibility	Reactive comments, Documents	Strategist Editor

Accordingly, the second component of professional journalistic social web activity at the response stage – the actual handling of user comments – is examined with regard to the journalism concepts incorporated in the analytical grid. The objective observer would show in a distanced, mostly one-directional way of handling user comments. A dialogical mediator's approach to handling user communication would become evident in efforts to moderate an equal exchange between diverse viewpoints. Handling user communication by trying to stimulate, maintain, and advance a context of rational discourse would qualify as discourse advocacy. To identify these concepts, the study looks at the eight indicators mentioned earlier: activity in relation to relevance, activity in relation to civility, viewpoint addition, activity of encouraging argumentation, activity of interrelating users, topic-related contextualization, discussion-related contextualization, and feedback accessibility. These indicators are extractable from both content-based and statement-based sources in the form of reactive DW comments, the Social Media Guidelines, reports by strategists, and reports by editors.

How exactly DW's social web activity at the response stage is expected to play out with regard to these underlying theoretical concepts is summed up in proposition 4 (see Section 5.2).

6.2 Research methods and instruments

This section describes how exactly the case study evidence is collected. As already mentioned in Section 5.1, the case study method draws from multiple sources of evidence to achieve a thick description of cases. In the introduction to this chapter it was elucidated that the data of interest here stems from both content-based data sources and statement-based data sources. In order to collect content-based data from the social web, the study employs a social web content analysis. Semi-structured expert interviews with DW strategists and editors are applied to collect data in the form of self-reports. By means of document analysis it collects the evidence from social web-related documents issued by the media organization. In principle, content analysis, expert interviews, and document analysis are all full-fledged methods of their own. For the sake of this study, however, they are combined as sources of evidence while applying the case study method. This section begins by describing each of these "sub-methods", the related

research steps, and tools of data collection in detail before it outlines how exactly the data from these three sources are combined so as to add up to a straightforward data base for addressing the research questions.

6.2.1 Social web content analysis

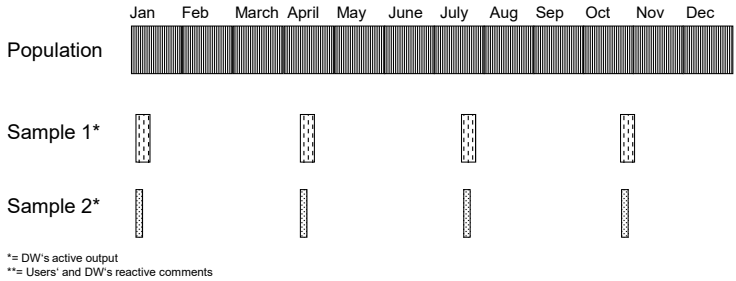
Leaving detectable "digital traces" (Jürgens, 2012) that make social sense to others is the basic principle of social web usage. Capturing these traces in a systematic manner represents an attractive research opportunity for any scholar interested in analyzing occurrences in social web environments. Content analysis appears to be a promising method to do so especially because social web content not only transmits meaning but also allows conclusions on social web usage (Lomborg, 2012). An analysis of the content being produced while a media organization runs social web accounts illuminates social web usage on a professional level. An interesting aspect in this respect is that even a lack of social web content resulting from an organization's *inactivity* bears significance for identifying and assessing its social web usage. Therefore, this study uses quantitative content analysis to examine the social web content produced in connection with the *Facebook* and *YouTube* accounts of DW German, DW English and DW Russian. The following paragraphs define the sample of this content analysis, its coding units, its units of analysis, and its variables. These definitions provide the basis for detailed coding instructions specified in the codebook[38] which is the research tool for the content analysis. An outline of the coding procedure as specified by the codebook is provided at the end of this section along with the quality criteria for the content analysis.

Sample

The present study relies on two samples as illustrated in Figure 11. Sample 1 relates to the first research question; sample 2 relates to the second research question and is generated from sample 1.

38 See Appendix 3

Figure 11: Samples within content analysis



The first sample consist of DW's German, English, and Russian services' active output on *Facebook* and *YouTube* during four authentic weeks throughout 2013: The first week of January, the second week of April, the third week of July, the fourth week of October. These weeks were selected with the objective of covering the cases' time span in a balanced way, representing different points in time of the year 2013. Including each quarter of the year and each quarter of the month within the sample represents an attempt to control for any seasonal characteristics while it was not feasible to a cover the entire year. The second sample is based on comments following up on the active output that constitutes sample 1. To narrow down the second sample, a topic-based selection criterion was applied: The sample consists of all those follow-up user comments and reactive DW comments that were uttered in connection to initial output dealing with human rights topics. This selection criterion was chosen for the comment analysis because of its likeliness to attract socially relevant discussions. It was possible to use this criterion because the content analysis of DW's initial social web output includes a category covering certain pre-defined topics[39], one of them being "human rights".

In technical terms, the samples were compiled in two different ways. As for the *Facebook* data, the author accessed the *Facebook* pages of DW German, DW English, and DW Russian and took screenshots of the active posts published during the aforementioned weeks in 2013 and the related comment threads. Each screenshot of a post-and-comments combination was saved in a file in which the text of the post and any linked content was added in text format. This procedure

39 Detailed information about this category are provided later in this subsection in the context of the coding procedure.

of archiving the data was conducted in several phases. The first phase lasted from September 18 to 24, 2013, and included DW German's and DW English's *Facebook* data from January, April and August. In a second phase lasting from November 5 to 7, 2013, the October data of these pages was retrieved. Due to the fact that the Russian-language data needed to be translated to be analyzable by the author, it was gathered after funding for the translation service had been granted. This was the case in January 2014. Therefore, DW Russian's *Facebook* data from January, April, July, and October 2013 was archived during January 16 and February 12, 2014. The *YouTube* data could be retrieved automatically via an application programming interface (API) on February 14, 2014. The identification code, the title, the description, and the follow-up comments of each video published by DW German, DW English, and DW Russian during the aforementioned weeks could be extracted by means of a Phyton script.

What often poses a challenge to the sampling process of an online content analysis is the fact that online content is transient (Rössler & Wirth, 2001). In this study, the issue of transience is circumvented by relying on the content's archived form as opposed to engaging in live coding. The sampling strategy applied here did not depend on the way comments were displayed right upon release. At the time of data collection, the sampled social web output and the sampled comments dated back at least two weeks (the October items) or more (the rest of the sampled weeks) which suggests that further commenting of this output was rather unlikely.

Coding units and units of analysis

Breaking down content into meaningful units is the essence of a content analysis. In this regard *coding units* refer to the overall aspects that are of interest in order to answer the research questions, while *units of analysis* are the distinct elements to be coded (Rössler, 2010, pp. 41–44). In the analysis at hand, the coding units for tackling the first research questions are:

- Outer orientation (as part of identity management)
- Relating to the users (as part of relationship management)
- News process at the output stage (as part of information management)
- Social web-specific work adaption (as part of information management)

The single completed DW output item represents the unit of analysis in sample 1. On *Facebook*, the output item is called "post", on *YouTube* it is a "video". All in all, sample 1 consists of 941 units of analysis (DW German: 375; DW English: 268; DW Russian 298).

The coding units in relation to the second research questions are defined as follows:

- Communication as discourse, dialogue, or everyday talk
- Handling as discourse advocate, dialogical mediator, or objective observer

The single discussion thread following up on a human rights-related DW output item was chosen as the unit of analysis for sample 2. An output item may be followed up by one or several threads while each thread may be constituted by one or several comments. In fact, both *Facebook* and *YouTube* offer the possibility to leave direct replies to first-order comments. Then, the unit of analysis refers to a thread's complete taxonomy of comments. In other words, each new first-order comment following up on an output item marks the beginning of a new unit of analysis. By coding per thread, the analysis submits to the chronological order of first-order comments while also covering possible second-order comments. On the whole, the second sample encompasses 1,425 units of analysis (DW German: 311; DW English: 762; DW Russian: 352).

An overview of how many units of analysis were coded per case and platform is provided in Table 7.

Table 7: Number of units of analysis per case and platform

	Sample 1	**Sample 2**	
DW German *Facebook*	131	120	
DW German *YouTube*	244	191	
DW English *Facebook*	104	554	
DW English *YouTube*	164	208	
DW Russian *Facebook*	215	215	
DW Russian *YouTube*	83	137	
In total	941	1,425	2,366

Variables

The most concrete step in setting up a content analysis is the definition of variables and unambiguous categories that are able to grasp what the study attempts to find out. The starting point for developing variables and categories for this study were the indicators defined earlier as observable via text-based sources in the form of active output and reactive comments (see Subsection 6.1.1. and Subsection 6.1.2.). The following list states the variables and the categories in which they are assumed to be falling[40]. We start off with the variables in relation to RQ1 which enquires about DW's social web usage at the output stage.

The coding unit *outer orientation* (as part of identity management) was measured through the following three variables:

- Germany reference
- Country covered
- News character

The following variables belong to the coding unit *news process at the output stage* (as part of information management):

- Specific content
- DW link
- External link

With regard to the coding unit *social web specific work adaption* (as part of information management) four variables[41] were defined. The first three are supposed to specify the content elements of the output item and are coded dichotomously as to whether the output item features the content element in question or not:

40 For detailed descriptions of each variable please see Appendix 2. Detailed coding instructions and coding examples please can be found in the codebook in Appendix 3.

41 Originally, six more variables had been defined and measured: Item length; Verb expressing call for action; Number of "shares" / "views"; Number of comments; Number of likes; Number of dislikes (see codebook, Appendix 3). As part of the research process, however, these were discarded because they seemed outside the focus of the study.

- Teaser text
- Picture
- Video
- Addressing the audience

In terms of the coding unit *relating to the user* (as part of identity management) the following variable was defined:

- Output aimed at social bonding

Two sets of variables were defined for gathering evidence to answer the second research question. They relied on an ordinal level of measurement with categories representing the three different levels of democratic standards. These sets of variables reflect the indicator pairs developed in Section 6.1.2. The first set of variables refers to user comments. Subject to this set of variables were all those discussion threads where the first comment was authored by a user. The second set of variables was coded for all those discussion threads that comprised a comment by DW (either at first-order or thereafter).

The following list starts off with specifying the variables covering user commentary at the response stage:

- Statement relevance
- Civility
- Including viewpoints
- Argumentation
- User interrelation
- Contextualization (topic)
- Contextualization (discussion)
- Feedback on journalistic product

Comments by DW were assessed on the basis of the following set of variables:

- Review activity (relevance)
- Review activity (civility)
- Adding viewpoints

- Activities of encouraging argumentation
- Interrelating users
- Contextualization (topic)
- Contextualization (discussion)
- Feedback accessibility

The following Table 8 sums up per theoretical concept what has just been explained per variable. The table illustrates which manifestations of a variable fall under which theoretical concept.

Table 8: Manifestations of variables subsumed to journalistic role concepts

Variable	**Objective observer**	**Dialogical mediator**	**Discourse advocate**
Review activity (relevance)	No engagement in checking for relevance / Silent removal of irrelevant content	Checking and requesting topical relevance	Checking and requesting public relevance / Argumentation-based removal of irrelevant content
Review activity (civility)	No engagement in checking for offensive comments / Silent removal of offensive comments	Requesting to refrain from offensive commentary	Argumentation-based removal of offensive comments
Adding viewpoints	No engagement in managing viewpoints	Neutral structuring and commenting of diverse viewpoints	Adding missing publicly relevant viewpoints
Encouraging argumentation	No engagement in managing argumentation	Requesting justifications for stated opinions	Adding missing justifications for stated opinions

Variable	Objective observer	Dialogical mediator	Discourse advocate
Interrelating users	No engagement in interrelating users	Illustrating mutual thematic references or requesting dialogue partners to refer to one another respectively	Explicitly illustrating the quality of the social relation between speaker and addressee
Contextualization (topic)	No engagement in contextualizing	Adding personally relevant context knowledge	Adding publicly relevant context knowledge
Contextualization (discussion)	No engagement in contextualizing	Contextualizing the statements of the debates with a view to keeping the discussion going	Contextualizing the statements of the debates with a view to reaching consensus on the greater public interest
Feedback accessibility	Being inaccessible towards critique	Being open and accessible towards cooperative critique and responding accordingly	Being open and towards argumentation-based critique and responding accordingly

Coding procedure

The coding procedure of this content analysis was based on two codebooks[42]. The first codebook covered the coding instructions for sample 1, the second codebook guided the coding of sample 2. The codebooks served as practical research tools for conducting the analysis (Rössler, 2010, p. 96). Each codebook consists of an introductory part and a main part. The introductory part contains an outline of the research interest and definitions of the population, the sample, the units of analysis, and the coding units. The main part features the codes, the coding instructions, and coding examples for each variable.

42 See Appendix 3

In each codebook there is a set of "formal" variables preceding the actual variables. Those formal variables are: Platform, date of item, date of coding, serial number, and context number. Via the variable "platform" it was recorded whether the unit of analysis in question originated from DW English's *Facebook* page, DW German's *Facebook* page, DW Russian's *Facebook* page, DW English's *YouTube* channel, DW German's *YouTube* channel or DW Russian's *YouTube* channel. Thereafter, it was coded on what day the item was published and on what day the coding took place. By means of the variable "serial number" each unit of analysis was given a unique number. Finally, two context numbers were coded as a key allowing to backtrack what output and commentary items belong together. The first number labels the output item. This code remains consistent across samples. The second number refers to the comment threads of the second sample. It remained zero while coding sample 1. In sample 2 it was coded serially in the order of appearance below the output item. The formal variables serve as practical points of reference during the data evaluation that help to keep track of the units of analysis within the greater samples.

The coding started on February 2nd, 2014, and was finished on July 2nd, 2014. It was conducted by one coder, the author of this study, on a paper coding sheet. The author's language skills allowed for the English and German items to be processed immediately. The items in Russian, however, needed to be translated into English by an external service provider. Translations were commissioned for *Facebook* posts and relevant *Facebook* follow-up comments as well as *YouTube* videos' titles, descriptions, and relevant *YouTube* follow-up comments.

The coding took place in two steps. First, sample 1 was coded. For units of analysis originating from *Facebook*, the coding relied on the archived screenshots. To code units of analysis originating from *YouTube*, their retrieved identification code was entered into *YouTube*'s search engine. German- and English-language videos were watched for 60 seconds so that the coder could get an idea of the content[43].

As mentioned before, the content analysis of sample 1 recorded certain predefined topics within DW's social web output. These topics represented DW's thematic foci at the time and were included in the codebook per request of DW as a part of the cooperation for this research. Accordingly, the variables

43 The decision to have the coder watch the video for one minute is based on data on "viewer abandonment" which suggests that the majority of users abandon a video after 60 seconds (Mindlin, 2010).

"Profile topic `human rights´", "Profile topic `Globalization´", and "Profile topic `Sustainability´" were included in first codebook to identify whether the output items contained a reference to these topics. The variable "Profile topic `human rights´" was coded in the affirmative when the output item dealt with questions of human rights as addressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The topic "Globalization" was coded as existing when the output item referred to issues dealing with the effects of globalized structures. The variable "Profile topic `Sustainability´" was coded when the item referred to issues dealing with the enduring maintenance of natural resources.

Based on the coding of the variable "Profile topic `human rights´" it became possible to compile the second sample, which was then coded in a second step. The second sample's units of analysis were coded from oldest to newest per related output item. The units of analysis originating from *Facebook* were again coded according to the archived screenshots. The *YouTube* commentary was coded based on the retrieval from the API. In the second codebook, the coding scheme starts off with considering per unit of analysis whether there is an involvement of a user and/or of DW. This is done by coding the authorship of the primary comment in each thread. If there are second-order comments, it is also recorded whether or not there is a response on the part of DW within the thread. Based on these evaluations, the coding either proceeded with the codebook section relating to the user commentary or with the section relating to journalistic handling of user comments or it covered both.

A common practical challenge for online content analyses is hypertextuality (Rössler & Wirth, 2001). It was therefore clearly defined in the codebooks how linked content is to be handled. Hypertextuality could, on the one hand, occur in the initial DW output item. If a posting by DW included a link to content located outside the *Facebook* page, codebook 1 stipulates that this content needs to be comprehended, that is, read, watched or listened to by the coder. This is to ensure a sound classification of the follow-up comments. On the other hand, hypertextual content could be featured in the follow-up comments. The second codebook calls for regarding the linked content as part of the unit of analysis.

Quality criteria

Measures were taken to ensure that the way the content analysis was put into practice produces robust results. One of these measures was a pre-test. After the codebooks were drafted, the pre-test helped to test whether the defined categories were unambiguous and exhaustive. This pre-test was conducted with ten percent of the English- and German-language items which – other than the Russian language items – were directly available and workable for the author of this study. The number of units of analysis to be included into the pre-test samples was extrapolated based on the output during the sample period in October. All in all, the pre-test sample for codebook 1 consisted of 84 units of analysis (three randomly selected *Facebook* items and seven randomly selected *YouTube* items of the German service per sampled week; five randomly selected *Facebook* items and six randomly selected *YouTube* items per sampled week). Based on the coding of pre-test sample 1, the pre-test sample for codebook 2 was derived. It consisted of 163 units of analysis. The pre-test revealed where coding instructions needed to be formulated more precisely and where categories needed to be refined or added. The codebooks were adapted accordingly.
A couple of weeks after the actual coding the consistency of the categorization was tested by means of a reliability test. The reliability test focused on variables that required interpretative efforts by the coder. Straightforward variables such as the formal categories or "number of comments" were skipped. To conduct the test, 50 units of analysis of the first sample and 52 units of analysis of the second sample were coded once more by the coder. For the most part, these units of analysis were randomly selected. As for the second sample, however, it was ensured that the selection included a decent amount of items requiring to apply the codebook in its entirety. Then, the congruence of the original coding and the repeated coding was calculated using Holsti's formula (Rössler, 2010, p. 202). The resulting reliability scores can range between 0 and 1, with 1 representing full congruence. Table 9 and Table 10 report the intra-coder reliability scores for each variable. The scores represent satisfying reliability levels which suggest that the content analysis was able to produce robust results. Of course, with only one coder who is the researcher at the same time, the coding did not require any intersubjective negotiation processes which might have turned the coding procedure more complex. Yet, given the practical reality of this study, the achieved level of reliability gives reasons to be optimistic that acceptable results could have been produced even if several coders were involved.

Table 9: Report of intra-coder reliability based Holsti's method for RQ1-related variables (n = 50)

Variable	Holsti
Profile topic `human rights´	0.96
Profile topic `Globalization´	1
Profile topic `Sustainability´	0.96
Germany reference	0.94
News character	0.94
Output aimed at social bonding	0.98
Teaser text	1
DW link	1
External link	1
Picture	1
Video	1
Specific content	1
Addressing the audience	1

Steps of data analysis

For analyzing the data from the social web content analysis, the author made use of the software package SPSS 21 for statistical analysis. For each sample, the data from the paper coding sheets was entered by defining variable names, variable labels, as well as value labels and then typing in the respective coded values. On this basis, it was possible to run analyses of frequency distributions in order to determine and compare the language services' social web output and their activity at the response stage.

Table 10: Report of intra-coder reliability based Holsti's method for RQ2-related variables (n = 52)

Variable	Holsti
Statement relevance	0.96
Offense	0.98
Including viewpoints	1
Argumentation	0.96
User interrelation	1
Contextualization (topic)	1
Contextualization (discussion)	1
Feedback on journalistic product	1
Review activity (in relation to relevance)	0.98
Review activity (in relation to offense)	1
Adding viewpoints	1
Activities of encouraging argumentation	1
Interrelating users	1
Contextualization (topic)	1
Contextualization (discussion)	1
Feedback accessibility	1

In order to find out whether the observed frequencies were associated with the respective language service or whether they occurred by chance, the chi-square (χ^2) test was applied (Fielding & Gilbert 2006, pp. 270–274). The chi-square test determines whether the frequency values of two nominal variables deviate significantly from the frequency values that would be expected if there was no association between the variables (null hypothesis). The chi-square value is calculated by squaring the difference between each expected value and the corresponding observed value, dividing it by the expected value and summing these results over all categories. This test can be used under the condition that all of the expected frequencies have a minimum value of 5 (Kühnel & Krebs, 2014, pp. 334–335).

Once the chi-square value is calculated, it can only be properly interpreted by considering the number of the categories in the variables. This is being accounted for by the degrees of freedom (df). They are the product of the number of rows in a cross tabulation of the pertinent variables minus 1 and the number of columns in said cross tabulation minus 1 (Iversen & Gergen, 1997, p. 359).

In this study, both the chi-square value and the df value were calculated via SPSS. The significance levels of the calculated chi-square values were eventually looked up for the calculated df values in a chi-square distribution table. If the calculated chi-square value suggested a statistically significant association between the variables, a strength test was carried out. A commonly recommended strength test for the chi-square is the Cramer's V test (Bryman & Cramer, 1994, p. 178). It provides results between 0 and 1, with smaller results indicating weaker relationships between variables and larger values indicating stronger relationships.

6.2.2 Expert interview

Besides social web content, another crucial source of evidence in this study are self-reports by those people who shape DW's social web presence, be it directly at the editorial level or indirectly from a more strategic, organizational point of view. The knowledge of DW staff members who are involved in social web activities is crucial for finding out about the considerations and decisions that impact what content ends up being released to the social web and how user communication is handled at the response stage. In order to access this internal "process knowledge"[44] (Meuser & Nagel, 2002, p. 76), this study relied on semi-structured interviews during which the interviewees were addressed in their capacity as experts for a special field of knowledge. In this study, this expertise related to professional experience with the *Facebook* and *YouTube* accounts of DW German, DW English, and DW Russian. The following paragraph makes transparent how the interviewees were approached and selected. After a brief overview of the interviewees' professional positions, the chapter turns to the structure of the interview guide and its rationale. Thereafter, information about the interview situations is provided along with reflections on the quality of the acquired data. Finally, the chapter closes with describing the steps of data analysis.

44 Translated from German. Original: "Betriebswissen"

Interview inquiry and selection of interviewees

Professional positions likely to possess the kind of knowledge needed to inform the study were determined prior to inquiring about concrete interview opportunities. DW editors who take care of a language service's social web accounts were deemed promising interviewees as well as DW editors who oversee social web activity at a language service. Beyond the editorial level, it was assumed that DW staff holding strategic positions would be able to provide useful information with regard to the organizational context framing professional social web usage at DW.

To identify specific persons holding these positions and to get access to them, the author of this study relied on the media organization under study and its willingness to cooperate. Initial contact with *Deutsche Welle* was established via one key person based on the assumption that if this key person agreed to cooperate and to help making contact it would facilitate the forthcoming inquiries (Helfferich, 2009, p. 175). Judging from the organization chart[45] as provided on DW's website at the time a relevant person to contact seemed to be the Head of the "New Media" department. Hence, a cooperation request was sent to him by e-mail in December 2012 along with a project overview. The head of the "New Media" department replied by connecting the researcher with DW's Social Media Manager who was then also provided with the project overview and finally phoned by the researcher. At first, there was reluctance on the part of the Social Media Manager who pointed to time constraints and suggested additions to the research design in order to make it more useful for internal purposes. According to Bogner, Littig, and Menz (2014, pp. 37–39) such challenges to access the field are quite common when interviewing experts. Fortunately, the Social Media Manager's doubts could be resolved by consulting her wishes with regard to the research design. In March 2013, the author of this study was finally invited to DW's headquarters in Bonn to present the project in person to the Social Media Manager and staff members from DW's "Corporate Communications" department and "Market and Media Research" department. After the project obtained approval in this circle, the Social Media Manager officially agreed to cooperate. In the following weeks, she informed the staff of the language services DW German, DW English, and DW Russian about the project and provided the researcher with the contact details of

45 See Appendix 4

colleagues holding the relevant positions. The potential interviewees were then contacted directly by the researcher and asked for an interview appointment.

Interviewees

Interviews were conducted with ten people. Table 11 gives an overview of the interviewees' professional roles and the length of the interviews in minutes. It also lists the acronyms according to which direct quotes or paraphrases are referenced in the remainder of this thesis. To preserve the interviewees' anonymity, the female form of the personal pronoun is used throughout the thesis to refer to them.

Table 11: Interviewed experts at DW

Acronym	**Position**	**Interview length**
DW_Strat_1	Social Media Manager	58 minutes
DW_Strat_2	Strategic Planner	54 minutes
DW_Strat_3	Managing Editor of "Hintergrund Deutschland"	111 minutes
DW_Deu_1	Social Media Coordinator, DW German	60 minutes
DW_Deu_2	Social Media Editor, DW German	44 minutes
DW_Eng_1	Chief Editor, DW English	38 minutes
DW_Eng_2	Social Media, Editor DW English	60 minutes
DW_Ru_1	Chief Editor DW, Russian	47 minutes
DW_Ru_2	Social Media Coordinator, DW Russian	60 minutes
DW_Ru_3	Social Media Editor, DW Russian	66 minutes

Three of the interviewees (DW_Strat1-3) were representatives of DW's organizational level with deepened knowledge about the organization's strategic direction as regards the social web. Among them was DW's Social Media Manager. The position of the Social Media Manager resided in the "Distribution" division's "Global Cooperations" team. It had been created in an effort to centralize the task of overseeing DW's development in the social web realm from a strategic point of view (see Subsection 7.1.1). The Social Media Manager served as the main

reference person for editorial units on general social web matters, both via direct consultation and training events. Another interviewee at the organizational level was a staff member specialized in online strategy. She worked in the "Strategic Planning" department of the "Distribution" division and advised the Social Media Manager in matters of strategic development. In the remainder of this study, she is referred to as the "Strategic Planner". In addition, the Managing Editor of the "Hintergrund Deutschland" desk was interviewed as a representative of the organizational level because of her involvement in developing organization-wide communication standards in the early days of DW's social web activity.
The other seven interviews were conducted with staff members from DW's editorial multimedia divisions, two of them affiliated with DW German, two with DW English, and three with DW Russian. At least one interviewee per language service was a "Social Media Editor" directly in charge of publishing content and handling user communication in the social web. The remaining interviewees supervised their language service's social web activity at different hierarchical levels, either in the capacity as "Social Media Coordinators" or as "Chief Editors" (see Subsection 7.2.1).

Interview guide

The interviews were semi-structured. That is to say, they relied on an interview guide[46]. An interview guide is an instrument that specifies "a sequence of themes to be covered, as well as suggested questions [while] [...] there is an openness to changes of sequence and forms of questions in order to follow up the answers given and the stories told by the subjects" (Kvale, 1996, p. 124). The themes and questions of this study's interview guide were oriented towards the analytical framework specified in Section 6.1 and followed corresponding indicators. At the same time, the interviews were not restricted to the subjects covered by the guide. In compliance with the overall case study approach (see Section 5.1), the instrument allowed for flexibility to also pursue unanticipated aspects brought up by the interviewees.

There were two versions of the interview guide with slight differences in questions according to the interviewees' immediate working environment: One for interviews with strategists at the organizational level and another one for

46 See Appendix 5

interviewees at the practical editorial level. On the whole, the interview guide was based on the four broader themes "identity management", "information management", "relationship management" and "handling of user comments". The interview questions developed for each theme were aimed at "contribut[ing] thematically to knowledge production and dynamically to promoting a good interview interaction" (Kvale 1996, p. 129). Hence, they were phrased in relation to the theoretically derived indicators but were kept "easy to understand, short and devoid of academic language" (p. 130) so as to ensure that they bear a connection to the interviewees' everyday life (Gläser & Laudel, 2009, p. 142).

Following Gläser and Laudel (2009), special attention was paid to how the questions were sequenced and structured (pp. 144–150). To begin with, the interview guide features so-called "warm-up questions" that are of little complexity and therefore easy to answer. They are supposed to permit the interviewee (but also the interviewer) to come to terms with the interview situation. In the case of the study at hand, the warm-up questions fulfilled a double function as they referred to the interviewees' position and touch points with social web formats. Thus, they also bore informative content. Thereafter, the interview guide starts out by activating interviewees' knowledge about past events and then gradually proceeds to present-day approaches. That is to say, it begins with questions about DW's early stages of social web activity and concludes with supposedly more delicate questions on the current practice of dealing directly with users. In order to grant enough room for the experts' original accounts, it was paid attention to being as little suggestive as possible in posing the questions. Generally, the interview guide could be handled flexibly. If the interviewees touched upon topics by their own accord, these topics were picked up regardless of the guide's chronology. What is more, not all questions included in the guide had to be posed by all means. Some of them were prompts that had the function to dig deeper into a subject and were not to be employed if the experts' individual elaborations were already informative enough. All these tactics were employed to avoid what is being referred to as "bureaucratization of the interview" (Hopf, 1978, p. 101), that is, adherence to the interview guide in such a rigid way that it ends up producing less knowledge than it could have produced if handled flexibly.

Data collection and data quality

The interviews took place between May 21st and 24th, 2013. The author of this study conducted them face-to-face with the interviewees at the headquarters of *Deutsche Welle* in Bonn. The interviewees met with the researcher at a quiet interview location of their own choice. Hence, the interviews were either conducted in separate rooms of the language service's editorial offices or in meeting rooms or lounges. The interviewees were free to choose whether the interview is conducted in German or in English. One interviewee opted for the interview to be conducted in English, the rest was conducted in German. The interviewees were informed prior to the interviews about the purpose of the examination following the principle of informed consent. Their consent was also obtained with regard to reporting their positions in this study as this information may potentially be recognizable to others. All interviewees agreed on the interviews to be recorded by the researcher. The interviews' lengths ranged from 38 minutes to 111 minutes (see Table 11).

Subsequent to the data collection, the researcher transcribed the recorded interviews into written texts in the respective language. The transcription was carried out verbatim and considered emotional expressions such as laughter or sighing whenever those added to a better understanding of the content. Other modes of expression such as pitches of the voice or paralinguistic elements were not detailed in the transcripts assuming that the interviewees' expert knowledge is interpretable regardless of such individual particularities. Statements that did not bear direct relevance to the research interest were omitted in the transcription.

In terms of data quality, it can be stated that the applied data collection strategy seems to have produced robust interview data. No major interaction effects or irritations affected the interview process. In fact, all interviews were conducted in a pleasant and communicative atmosphere. The requested time slot of approximately one hour was granted by all experts except for the Chief Editor of DW English who was available for a shorter amount of time. However, none of the interviews was conducted in a hurry. The interviewees possessed the expert knowledge they were believed to possess, albeit with differences in their wealth of experience. There were no tendencies of blocking an interview on the part of the interviewees. The vast majority of the interview statements represented

valuable input, only a few exemplifications were negligible because they deviated from the research interest. This, however, was neither due to experts completely wandering off the subject nor due to role confusion during the interviews. On the contrary, the experts seemed to be quite conscious about the position they were approached for and, in one way or another, also seemed to enjoy the opportunity to be able to give an account of the experiences gained through their jobs. Three of the interviewees who had opted for the interview to be conducted in German weren't mother-tongue speakers. Their high level of language proficiency and the fact that they live and work in Germany suggests that they were nevertheless able to express themselves the way they wished to.

Steps of data analysis

The analysis of the data followed four main steps as suggested by Gläser and Laudel (2009): (1) Preparing the extraction, (2) Extracting, (3) Editing, (4) Evaluating (pp. 199–204).

The first step involves compiling the data material and determining the indicators as well as the unit of analysis. It may also involve a technical preparation if the analysis is supposed to be carried out by means of computer tools. In the case of the study at hand, the researcher made use of the qualitative data analysis software NVivo (version 10) which allows a digitalized categorization of the interview statements. Accordingly, the transcripts were uploaded to NVivo and the previously identified indicators were reproduced in the form of a categorization system within the software. It was decided that the unit of analysis consists of a meaning unit, that is, at least one complete sentence (but more likely a passage) that conveys a point comprehensively.

The second step of analysis is specified as extracting information from the transcript according to a search grid that is constructed based on the theoretical assumptions. In the concrete case of this study, the transcripts were read entirely and those parts deemed relevant for examination were subsumed to the according indicator-based category. Throughout this process, the pre-determined categories were not considered definite. New categories could be constructed based on unanticipated information contained in the data. During the analysis, an amendment was made, for instance, with regard to the concept "journalistic handling of user comments" where the interviewees described their general

stance towards handling user comments rather than making reference to the more specific previously defined indicators. Accordingly, the researcher added the category "general approach".

In the third step, the extracted information is edited, which means it is sorted according to criteria relevant to the upcoming evaluation, summarized, and reviewed for redundancies or contradictions. This is supposed to result in a structured information basis which, in a next step, allows to efficiently reconstruct the cases. Applied to this study, this step involved that the researcher had the data displayed per indicator and interviewee affiliation (differentiating between strategists, DW German, DW English, and DW Russian). Based on this sorting, the data was read consecutively and condensed by noting the central themes of the displayed meaning units. The essence of the displayed data was then written up in summary according to these themes with a view to similarities and differences across interviewees.

The fourth step consists of reconstructing and evaluating the cases. As for this study, it meant that the summaries were grouped per language service and work level according to the main analytical dimensions (identity management, relationship management, information management, and democratic relevance of handling user comments). This allowed for a reconstruction of each case and its embeddedness in the organizational framework. For the final evaluation, the summarized interview data per case was reviewed in combination with the data from the other data sources in order to identify coherence or contrasts across cases (see Subsection 6.2.4).

6.2.3 Document analysis

Documents are the third source of evidence considered in this study. The document analysis was carried out against the background that certain rules framing DW's social web usage were assumed to be extractable from documents issued by DW with the intention to regulate their social web accounts. With a view to document analyses, Yin (2009) stresses: "Important in reviewing any document is to understand that it was written for some specific purpose and some specific audience *other than* those the case study being done" (p. 105). In this sense, the analysis did not look at the standards specified in the documents as given rules,

but regarded them as evidence indicating what is considered desirable at DW's organizational level. To what extent the documented standards take effect as actual rules at DW's editorial level, was considered remaining up to examination.

The next paragraph states what documents were selected to be analyzed and gives reasons for the selection. It is followed by a description of the steps of the data analysis.

Selected documents

Equipping one's staff with guidelines for social web usage seems to be quite common among organizations or corporations running social web accounts. In fact, social media guidelines proved to serve as "relevant sources for studying how journalism tries to manage its extension to new communication spaces and practices" (Loosen, Reimer, & Schmidt, 2012, p. 3) in previous scientific analyses. Hence, the author of this study inquired about DW's Social Media Guidelines once the cooperation was agreed on. Thereupon, the Social Media Manager provided the researcher with the latest beta version of DW's Social Media Guidelines (in German language) from May 16, 2014. The Social Media Guidelines had been designed for internal purposes and were available to all staff members in DW's intranet. The document's first chapter dealt with DW's strategic positioning as a player in the social web, the second chapter contained practical hints for professional social web usage. These chapters were subject to analysis.

Stated in the appendix of DW's Social Web Guidelines was moreover DW's Netiquette Policy. This policy was considered another source of evidence because it contained the official rules that were supposed to apply to the users' activity on DW's social accounts as publicly announced on DW's website. Hence, the Netiquette Policy was incorporated in this study as another document of analysis, albeit cited from the appendix of the Social Media Guidelines.

Steps of data analysis

The analysis of the documents followed the same steps and logics as the analysis of the interview transcripts described above (see Subsection 6.2.2). The documents were uploaded to NVivo, they were perused and the meaning units deemed relevant for examination were subsumed to the according indicator-based category.

Then the data was displayed per indicator and the central themes were noted respectively. Summaries according to the themes were finally written up in conjunction with the data analysis of the strategists' interviews because both the information from the documents and the information provided by the strategists were regarded as representing the organizational level. Finally, these summaries were sorted per case according to the main analytical dimensions and then evaluated based on a synopsis of data from all three sources. The subsection below details how exactly the methods and the acquired data were combined.

6.2.4 Method combination

The overarching method used here is the case study method. The case study at hand relies on a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. An important question with respect to multi-method approaches is: "How and for which purposes are methods related to each other in one research design?" (Loosen & Schmidt, 2016, p. 567) This subsection addresses this question.

The evidence gathered as part of this case study is meant to shed light on journalistic social web usage and its democratic relevance at two levels: The organizational level of *Deutsche Welle* as a media organization and the editorial level of the selected DW language services.

A document analysis of the organization-wide guidelines for social web usage at DW serves to comprehend DW's corresponding stance at the organizational level. It is combined with expert interviews which provide insights into the views and understandings of strategists who play a role in shaping the guidelines. These two methods complement each other in the sense that "one method is supposed to address the 'blind spots' of another method" (p. 568). While the documents provide a snapshot of DW's "official" stance, the strategists can provide context on how this stance formed, what its underlying assumptions are, and to what extent it may be in a state of flux.

A content analysis yields evidence on immediate social web usage at the editorial level. It is combined with expert interviews that disclose the considerations and motives related to social web usage at the editorial level. These methods, too, complement each other. They validate each other to the extent that

what journalists state in the interviews can be compared with their language service's social web output and activity at the response stage.

The document analysis, the content analysis, and the expert interviews were mostly designed and applied in parallel. Thus, their structural coupling mostly focused on mutual complementation. This becomes evident in the operationalization tables (Table 3-Table 6) which specify the data source(s) for each indicator.

For reporting the findings acquired through this multi-method approach, it was decided on a narrative that follows the structure of the study's models of analysis and synthesizes information from the individual cases into a cross-case analysis. In some instances, the report includes direct quotes from the data that illustrate an issue in an exemplary way (Gläser & Laudel, 2009, pp. 273–274). If the data in question was in German, the quotes to be included were translated into English by the author of this study.

PART B: RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION

7 Journalistic social web usage at the output stage

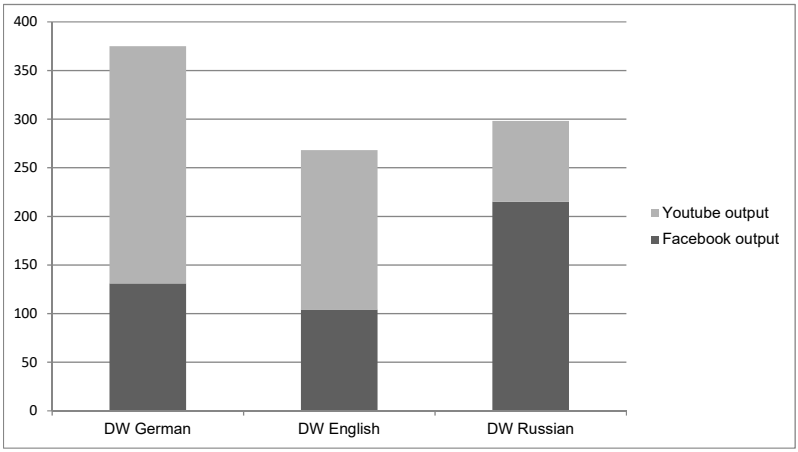
This chapter presents the results produced to answer RQ1 (*"How is Deutsche Welle's social web usage to be characterized with regard to practices of identity, relationship, and information management at the output stage?").* The presentation of the results is guided by Schmidt's (2011b) model of analysis for practices of social web usage which has been adapted to professional journalism practices for the purpose of this study. The chapter is divided into thematic sections, each covering one of three types of practices as envisaged by the model. It starts off with identity management, then it covers information management and lastly looks at relationship management. The final section provides a condensed answer to RQ1 and provides an interpretation of the overall results based on the theoretical concepts discussed in the theory part.

Before delving into specific results, it should be helpful to look at some general information on DW's social web usage for grasping the bigger picture. In total, the largest number of items, namely 375, was put out by DW German during the four examined weeks in 2013, followed by DW Russian which had an output of 298 items, and DW English whose output comprehended 268 items. An overview of the amount of social web output per language service is provided in Figure 12.

A look at the amount of social web output per platform reveals a deviation from the aggregated order. As for *Facebook*, it was DW Russian who put out the largest number of items, namely 215, during the four examined weeks in 2013, followed by DW German who put out 131 items, and DW English who posted 104 items. On *YouTube*, in turn, DW German ranks first with a total output of 244 video clips, followed by DW English with 164 video clips, and DW Russian with 83 video clips.

As for the number of *Facebook* page likes and *YouTube* subscribers there was a similar pattern across platforms with DW English having the largest number of likes and subscribers, followed by DW German, and finally DW Russian[47].

Figure 12: Quantity of social web output per language service



7.1 Identity management

Which identity management practices were part of DW's social web usage? How did being present in the social web interact with DW's construction of the self? To characterize DW's identity management in the social web, the presentation of the results concentrates on two aspects: DW making itself accessible in the social web (presented in Subsection 7.1.1) and DW reconciling functions of international broadcasting with social web usage (covered in Subsection 7.1.2). The subsections present the according results across cases and in relation to the

47 On October 15, 2013, it was recorded that DW English had ~169.500 fans/page likes, DW German had ~90.400, and DW Russian had ~20.000. The same descending order was prevalent on with DW English having ~60.300 subscribers, DW German having ~51.500, and DW Russian having ~14.800 on January 29, 2015. Unfortunately, the number of YouTube subscribers at a point in time during the period of investigation is not available. It is however assumed that the relation between the number of subscribers per YouTube channel has remained steady.

organizational level. The final subsection reviews P1 and outlines how the results compare to findings from earlier empirical studies.

7.1.1 Making DW accessible: From single-handed to concerted action

We start off by retracing how DW made itself accessible in the social web and how its staff perceived its ongoing social web presence between the poles of acting as a media organization and acting as individual journalists.

In the case of DW German and of DW Russian the rationale for making oneself accessible in the social web was quite similar: Both language services acted on the realization that the social web is where they can reach their target groups. With DW Russian, the urge to set up their first social web accounts seemed especially strong. DW Russian's Chief Editor had observed that certain parts of the Russian society shunned television and radio when it comes to political information. At the same time, he deemed these people especially prone to adopt social web formats in order to fulfill their information needs. As DW Russian's social web target group was considered congruent with its target group in general, she deemed it "elementary for [DW Russian] to engage in social media" (DW_Ru_1, §2). Against this backdrop, the Chief Editor had set up social web profiles single-handedly at quite an early stage of DW's social web activity: "At the time you could not really tell anybody what it is, because nobody understood" (DW_Ru_1, §2). DW Russian first opened a career-focused account in the Russia-based social network "VKontakte" and then also started to become active on two *Facebook* pages because they "had the impression that the creme de la creme, the urban multiplicators, migrated" (DW_Ru_2, §5). Having had reacted quite hastily to the dynamics of the Russian media market, the interviewees expressed some dissatisfaction with the fact that their social media audience is now somewhat scattered across various groups and pages.

At DW German, too, the initial decision to be present in the social web was taken by the German language service autonomously, however, it was soon backed up with advice from DW's "Distribution" division[48] and the Social Media Manager. The decision to be present in the social web was described by DW German's Social Media Coordinator as a parallel process taking place in the "Distribution" divisi-

48 For an overview of DW's organization chart see *Appendix* 4.

on and DW German's editorial office. On the one hand, social web presence was regarded as a matter of distribution brought about by the realization that certain target groups in demand are highly active in social networks and that therefore it is necessary to "get the content where they are" (DW_Deu_1, §5). On the other hand, there was strong intrinsic motivation of individual editors at DW German who sensed a new opportunity to increase visibility and therefore started social web activities autonomously (DW_Deu_1, §5).

DW English's first social web accounts, too, were set up on the initiative of individual pioneers, however with a view to tapping dialogical potential rather than broadening reach. According to the Chief Editor, DW English's first moves in the social web happened on the initiative of a single journalist who had asked for approval to set up a *Facebook* page. She had given her consent thinking of it as some kind of experimental playground. Her skepticism vanished quickly when she realized that "there really is an audience out there and that one has a chance to exchange, to engage in a dialogue with this audience" (DW_Eng_1, §1). During the interview she highlighted the possibility of getting direct feedback as a reason for deciding to advance DW English's social web presence. By setting up a *Facebook* page the English service had reportedly not only been a pioneer at DW but also at *ARD* as a whole. In the absence of internal role models the Chief Editor felt that they "were lucky that a lot of American media had discovered [the social web] at the time and were also present there" (DW_Eng_1, §1). The Chief Editor had apparently been engaged in a bottom-up development of advancing social web activity at DW: From promoting it in her own team, to finding allies within the German service, to founding working groups, to convincing the management at the organizational level.

From the organization-wide strategic perspective, the main point for DW to be present on social web platforms was to use them as distribution channels. This was reflected both in strategists' accounts of the early days of social web activity at DW as well as in their accounts of the present situation. Similar to how it was described by DW German's Social Media Coordinator initial interest in social media was said to have come up in parallel among two groups: "[...] particularly innovative journalists and those people in the strategy and marketing departments who monitor the market, who follow up on what is happening in the USA, on what other big media houses do" (DW_Strat_2, §2). Individual journalists were said to have started to create *Facebook* accounts single-handedly from 2007

onwards as they saw that Facebook is helpful to further disseminate DW content (DW_Strat_1, §3). Officially, however, the IT department "New Media" had been in charge of setting up new accounts as the social web had been "regarded as a rather technical distribution platform" (DW_Strat_1, §3). Automated *Twitter* feeds, for example, had initially been set up by "New Media". Concerted action of the "Distribution" division and editorial offices started in 2009. From the strategists' perspective, this effort was geared

> "to systemize, to define goals, and to enter into a dialogue with the editorial departments about 'How can this look like? How can we give advice from a marketing perspective so that, overall, we have a successful product which capitalizes on our core product?'" (DW_Strat_2, §3).

The status of social web formats as distribution channels seemed to hold true until in the present day. Social media were referred to as a "growth factor" (DW_Strat_1, §3) and "critical success factors as regards world-wide use of DW, its recognition, and strengthened audience ties" (Social Media Guidelines, p. 3). DW's increasingly strategic approach to being present in the social web seemed to have led to a more detailed notion of how these distribution channels are supposed to function. The Social Media Guidelines stated, for instance, that "social media efforts are supposed to become visible in the form of a growing number of users and an increased number of loyal users" (Social Media Guidelines, p. 4). This indicates that concrete reference points for what makes the distribution successful have come into focus. DW's Social Media Manager moreover mentioned that language services with very active users are considered for intensifying one's social web efforts (DW_Strat_1, §9). In the course of time, user numbers, user loyalty, and user activity seemed to have gained relevance, but as vehicles for successful distribution rather than as means to an end.

At the time of the examination specific requirements for opening new social web accounts were detailed in the Social Media Guidelines. These obviously contrasted with the early days of social web activity when there had been no rules available (DW_Strat_2, § 6). The guidelines detailed that if DW editors wished to open a new account they needed to confer with their Chief Editor and the Social Media Manager. Based on a written concept and a set of strategic considerations the latter two would take the decision as to whether or not a new account will be created. The written concept had to include specifications of the target group, the

language, the unique selling point and considerations as regards user interaction and staff responsibilities (Social Media Guidelines, pp. 11–12). These detailed specifications suggest an increasingly strong positioning on the part of the organization when it comes to determining what reasons count as valid for making DW accessible in the social web.

How was journalistic social web usage perceived as a sphere of activity? Was it considered an organizational activity or an activity by individual journalists? To answer this question, we first of all have to consider how exactly the organizational level interacted with individual journalists who ran DW's social web accounts.

In 2009, members of the "Distribution" division had come together with members from editorial divisions as a working group for social media. Within this working group, representatives of the departments "New Media", "Strategic Planning" and the editorial units had developed the first "Social Media Guidelines" together (DW_Strat_1, §3). These were regularly updated by the same working group based on experiences gained in the meantime. The latest version at the time of the examination had, for example, been amended in regards to DW's strategic goals and the phenomena of hacking and shit storms (DW_Strat_2, §13–15). The guidelines were supposed to offer a "reliable and binding framework for working in and with social media", thus, enabling all persons involved "to act with confidence" (Social Media Guidelines, p. 3). DW's Social Media Manager regarded them as a "strategic superstructure" on the one hand and as "practical support" (DW_Strat_1, §15) on the other. The introduction of the Social Media Manager role itself as a constant contact for the language services' Social Media Editors (Social Media Guidelines, p. 7) was another organizational measure for providing strategic guidance in terms of social web activity. On the initiative of DW's Social Media Manager, a forum had been introduced where the organizational level and the editorial level interacted: the so-called "Social Media Regulars' Table". The Social Media Manager offered this open meeting on a regular basis for Social Media Editors to exchange about their daily experiences and to form a network. Additionally, the Social Media Manager had introduced a jour fixe for the editorial units of the division "Multimedia Direction Regions"[49] (MMDR). Another regular meeting existed between the Social Media Manager and the Head of "MMDR".

49 Editorial units at DW were subsumed under two so-called Multimedia Directions at the time of the study: The Multimedia Direction Regions (MMDR) and the Multimedia Direction Global (MMDG). For an overview of the organization chart see *Appendix* 4.

Apart from that there was interaction in the form of workshops. The Strategic Planner had run workshops with more than half of the editorial units after his department had conducted an evaluation of three DW *Facebook* accounts. Her goal had been to share the results with the editorial units and to point out what these "could or should do differently in order to improve" (DW_Strat_2, §9). The Social Media Manager, too, offered workshops. She either approached individual editorial units after consultation with the "Strategic Planning" department with the aim to develop individual concepts for intensified social media efforts. Or otherwise, she was approached herself by members of editorial units who felt a need for further training. In general, DW's Social Media Manager defined her work with editors as "briefing, training, and counseling" (DW_Strat_1, §1). She pointed out that the strategies she developed at the organizational level translated into a variety of concepts at the editorial level "because we have different regions who deal with social media in different ways" (DW_Strat_1, §1). This leeway granted for the distinctiveness of the editorial units was also reflected in the guidelines which stressed that the ultimate decisions on what gets published remains with the editorial teams:

> We work together closely. Our expert knowledge in the field of social media is diverse and complementary. Editorial work, marketing measures, technical and legal support go hand in hand. The divisions act jointly when taking decisions on the strategic development of our social media offers. Responsible for the content are the editorial units. (Social Media Guidelines, p. 7)

The organizational level seemed to represent an important reference for DW English in terms of social web usage. The interview with DW English's Chief Editor revealed that she had been actively involved in institutionalizing social web usage at DW. She had been part of the initial social media working group and had participated in drafting the guidelines. She had also organized first training courses with external trainers for her editorial unit and was part of the jour fixe in order to exchange best practices with colleagues from other language services. The rationale for the Chief Editor to help strengthening the organizational level in terms of social web usage was to legitimize DW English's activities at the editorial level (DW_Eng_1, §1). Meanwhile, the Social Media Editor of DW English, who was fairly new in her position at the time of the examination, took it for granted that certain parts of DW English's social web accounts such as profile pictures or

general information were the responsibility of the organizational level, that is DW's Social Media Manager (DW_Eng_2, §22).

At DW German, the increasingly strong organizational regulation of social web usage seemed to cause ambivalent feelings. The interviews revealed a perception that in the early days of social media activity it had been rather an individual sphere of activity bearing "small creative niches" in a "big public service house" (DW_Deu_2, §1). DW German's Social Media Editor described a phase where she had felt she had free reign because the responsibilities were not yet clear within the organization. At the time, she would mainly go for a potpourri of topics whereas nowadays her output was more in line with the institutionally defined profile topics because there had been a push towards more coordinated procedures (DW_Deu_2, §2). The interviewees at DW German nevertheless expressed understanding for the necessity to harmonize the activities of DW's many language services (DW_Deu_2, §3) and said they trusted in the expertise of DW's Social Media Manager to judge which platforms are relevant in a certain regional context (DW_Deu_1, §5). Yet, sometimes the increase of strategic guidance in DW's social web activities made the interviewees feel as if they were "being instructed" (DW_Deu_2, §3) on how to do their job.

At DW Russian, the perception was again different. With regard to their sphere of activity the interviewees at DW Russian perceived the organizational guidelines as a "framework" (DW_Ru_2, §17) offering a "unified perspective" (DW_Ru_1, §12) on professional social web usage. They perceived their leeway within the confines of this framework as quite big and they allegedly made use of this leeway to adapt their output, profile information, and profile pictures to the taste of their regional target audience (DW_Ru_2, §24).

So, how did the actors at the editorial level balance their management of DW social web accounts between organizational and individual? Across all language services there was a fair amount of reservations in terms of coming across as an individual while managing DW social web accounts. The clear preference was to come across as an organization. At DW English, for instance, the Chief Editor stressed that the social web accounts needed to represent DW and its mission which is why they should not be associated with editors' private matters (DW_Eng_1, §10). The Social Media Editor of DW English assumed that the audience perceives the output to be coming from a page anyway and that her influence as an individual is noticeable not more than in the form of a certain spin (DW_Eng_2, §17).

At DW Russian, the social web accounts were generally supposed to be perceived as if "it is *Deutsche Welle* speaking and acting there while the personal things of the author or the social media editor rather stay on the sideline" (DW_Ru_1, §13). At the same time, DW Russian's Chief Editor considered that this impersonal approach might be in contradiction to the social standards of the platforms. Interestingly, DW Russian's Social Media Editor felt that she and her colleagues left quite individual marks in the social web (DW_Ru_3, §18). While the editors were in fact free to address the users the way they would address their peers (DW_Ru_2, §14) they deliberately chose to exercise restraint in some respects. The Social Media Editor refrained, for example, from "certain jokes or sarcasm" (DW_Ru_3, §18) and DW Russian's Social Media Coordinator said it was important to ask oneself before publishing whether a Chief Editor would be able to justify the output (DW_Ru_2, §17). Overall, the sphere of activity was perceived as a balancing act whose limits were said to often be the subject of internal discussions within the Russian language service (DW_Ru_2, §14).

The strategists clearly understood the sphere of activity as an organizational one. That is, they regarded DW's social web accounts as communication channels of the media outlet DW rather than of the individual editors who manage them. The accounts were supposed to be driven by issues rather than by personalities (DW_Strat_1, §13; DW_Strat_3, §1).

Efforts to personalize the management of the social web accounts were nonetheless mentioned, albeit to a small degree. DW German's Social Media Editor, for example, pointed to their decision to add the initials of editors to *Facebook* posts. She was supportive of this rule because it signified that there is a human being behind each post who made a professional effort to edit the content. This seemed to be welcomed by her as a recognition for her work. At the same time, she had no interest in revealing more of her personality:

> I am not very keen on that because I do not go to the mat with my private points of view here. I am the one who makes a selection in the context of *Deutsche Welle*. Of course I have my own opinion and there is always a human touch to it. That's exactly what is appealing, that one or another editor takes this seat and gives it a certain spin. But always in the knowledge that we sit here for *Deutsche Welle* [...]. (DW_Deu_2, §10)

At DW Russian, personalization efforts were mentioned in the interviews in the form of giving users insight into everyday life in an editorial office, for example by posting pictures of anchors in the make-up room (DW_Ru_2, §14).

At DW English, the Chief Editor moreover pointed to a good experience with posting pictures of radio anchors along with disclosing their hobbies. Here, the goal was indeed to show that there are real human beings behind the scenes. The Chief Editor of DW English contemplated featuring personalized expertise such as book or film recommendations. However, she seemed to grapple with the question of increased personalization because she found it difficult to decide to what extent it was appropriate (DW_Eng_1, §11).

The quantitative analysis revealed that internal DW topics indeed only made up a small share of the language services' output. As Table 13 shows, such "in-house news" made up 1.3 percent of DW German's and DW Russian's output and only 0.7 percent of the output by DW English.

Measures to personalize the accounts were also taken into consideration at the organizational level. So far, these considerations had merely resulted in including "lots of faces in our visual language" (DW_Strat_1, §30). Further considerations veered towards "personalization of a certain expertise" (DW_Strat_1, §13), that is, having specialized DW journalists make personal appearances within the confines of established social web accounts. The Strategic Planner was convinced that personalization needed to be intensified on DW's social web accounts with interpersonal communication being one of the key characteristics of the social web which also bears tremendous bonding potential. In her view, DW was lagging behind substantially in this respect due to internal reservations. On the one hand, concern was voiced in the interviews about losing audiences due to these reservations (DW_Strat_2, §41), but on the other hand also about having to explain tricky situations, for example when highly visible editors changed their employers (DW_Strat_1, §29). One of the strategists perceived it as problematic to reconcile the idea of personalized accounts with the individual editors' right to take a break or go on holiday (DW_Strat_3, §9). All in all, she summarized DW's institutional stance as follows: "We are still a bit cautious in that respect, we try things out and give it a thought. We have not yet reached a final decision" (DW_Strat_3, §9).

7.1.2 *Self-assured or torn? Reconciling international broadcasting functions with social web activity*

A striking resemblance between the three language services in terms of identity management was that they all mentioned difficulties in reconciling their self-conception with what they thought was common behavior in the social web.

In the case of DW German, the interviews revealed quite a strong identification with DW's official mandate (DW_Deu_1, §33; DW_Deu_2, §19). Equally salient was DW German's self-characterization as "underpinning the state" (DW_Deu_1, §8) which, for the Social Media Editor, entailed a responsibility for "how one is being perceived in the world" (DW_Deu_2, §14). At the same time, they reflected that the fact that DW German is regulated by public law probably resulted in an attitude which could be considered quite stiff in comparison to other professional media actors in the social web (DW_Deu_1, §7). The perceived contrast between DW German's rather "official" demeanor and the communication practices that are common in the social web apparently caused some sort of inner conflict with DW German's Social Media Coordinator: "It would ease upcoming discussions if you interact[ed] more casually. But we are not casual, really" (DW_Deu_1, §7).

In a similar vein, there seemed to be a perception at DW English that parts of the social web audience perceived their attitude in the social web as out-of-place. The Chief Editor of DW English described her language service as coming across as "solid if not a bit old-fashioned and boring" (DW_Eng_1, §8) which she attributed to the fact that DW English deleted user comments when they do not comply with German law. Overall, she characterized DW English as a listener, as a home for a certain political stance, and as a contact for expert knowledge.

In DW Russian's self-characterization, being a trustworthy source turned out to be a significant aspect. This trustworthiness was especially highlighted against the background of DW's "great tradition of being the voice of freedom" (DW_Ru_1, §2) which practically translated into an obligation to bring up issues that are withheld by Russian media (DW_Ru_1, §2), but also into offering independent coverage of critical issues in Germany and Europe (DW_Ru_3, §10). Here too, difficulties of reconciling one's identity as a serious German media outlet with acting casually and, as a result, being well-received in the social web were brought up (DW_Ru_2, §17). Compared to the other language services the Russian service seemed to perceive its situation as particularly challenging.

DW Russian's Social Media Editor pointed to special tensions due to the fact that East/West divisions were very prominent on their social web accounts which made it especially difficult to act casually:

> We have to pay attention to a lot of things. Since I am constantly in touch with colleagues from other services I can see that they are much more relaxed with their subscribers. English and German, for instance, are casual – very casual topics, they joke and so on without getting punished for that by the haters. (DW_Ru_3, §31)

At the organizational level, there seemed to be an awareness of challenges associated with maintaining DW's profile in the social web. DW's Social Media Manager addressed the fact that DW's self-conception does not necessarily coincide with what gets clicked on a lot in the social web. She described it as a balancing act to deal with this situation:

> You constantly need to find your way. How do I want to present myself? Do we have a certain profile that we want to put across by all means? What is being embraced by the users? You can't just lapse into `That's what brings most clicks. Hence, I will do nothing but cat pictures from now on´. (DW_Strat_1, §10)

Reduced popularity in the social web was apparently accepted as a price for upholding DW's self-ascribed profile. At the organizational level, this profile was quite clearly defined. Trustworthiness and reliability turned out to feature prominently in expressions of self-characterization (Social Media Guidelines, p. 4; DW_Strat_1, §6; DW_Strat_2 §36; DW_Strat_3, §13). DW was characterized as taking the position of an expert who can be sought for information and exchange in the social web especially when it comes to key topics such as democracy, human rights, sustainable development, and globalization (DW_Strat_1, §6).

On this basis, it may be concluded that DW perceived itself as having to choose a special path as an actor in the social web. At the level of the language services, the media organization's identity as an officially mandated, issue-focused institution proved to be widely perceived as forming a contrast to the casual, informal communication style in the social web environment. The reaction at DW's organizational level was to try to positively frame DW's profile in the social web as that of a reliable, trustworthy expert who acts professionally and seriously in the social web while trying to live up to the communicative structure of the social web.

The study moreover examined DW's identity management on the basis of DW's Germany focus, its news focus, and its target group specifications.

Whether a focus on Germany dominated DW's social web output could be retraced via content analysis. The figures in Table 12 show that a majority, namely 52.6 percent, of DW's social web output contained Germany-related references, that is, it either covered a domestic German issue or conveyed a German perspective on a foreign issue.

Table 12: Germany-related references in % (and in total numbers) – across cases

	DW German *n* = 375	**DW English** *n* = 268	**DW Russian** *n* = 298	**Across DW** *n* = 941
Reference to Germany	57.1% (214)	54.1% (145)	46.6% (139)	52,6% (498)
Foreign issue, no German perspective	34.4% (129)	37.3% (100)	43.6% (130)	38.2% (359)
No country reference	8.5% (32)	8.6% (23)	9.7% (29)	8.9% (84)

DW German had the highest percentage of output showing a reference to Germany, namely 57.1 percent, closely followed by DW English with 54.1 percent of output referring to Germany. The output by the Russian service, in comparison, had a notably smaller share of references to Germany, namely 46.6%. The chi-square test reveals ($\chi^2 = 7.596$, df = 4, $n = 941$, $p = .108$), however, that these differences between the social web outputs of the language services may have been subject to coincidence.

The interviews at DW German also reflected that Germany-related references play an important role in the language service's social web output. In fact, the respective interviewees described references to Germany as an overarching aspect in their choice of topics, as the "golden thread" (DW_Deu_1, §8). They perceived domestic German topics as a guarantee for vivid user reactions:

> We are always fortunate when we have something typically German, for example. That always works well. Yesterday, for example, was a key date for `Wagner's year´, his 200th birthday. [...] I just put it out like that: `Here's our big Wagner special´. That's a walk in the park. (DW_Deu_2, §3)

This seems to be an explanation for DW German's relatively large share of Germany references in their social web output. By choosing German issues for their output, the interviewees felt that they catered for large parts of their audience with a special interest in Germany – particularly in Germany's history, educational system, and everyday life. They tried to give these domestic topics a spin that makes them easily accessible from an external, non-German perspective (DW_Deu_1, §31, §35). DW German's Social Media Editor understood Germany references as part of DW's mandate. He regarded it as their task to constantly find new ways of conveying a multifaceted image of Germany in the social web (DW_Deu_2, §18).

Also at DW English, Germany-related issues were perceived as a guarantee for many likes and other reactions (DW_Eng_2, §16). However, the Chief Editor emphasized that their broader task was to function as a "bridge between the regions" (DW_Eng_1, §3) by picking up a regional topic and making it generally accessible. If this could be done with a German issue, though, she perceived it as preferential.

What was remarkable in the interviews with DW Russian's editors was that Germany was very much thought of in context of Europe. The expression "German-European" was dominant when talking about thematic inclinations. According to the Chief Editor, DW Russian's output is based on three pillars thematically: Coverage of German and European issues bearing relevance to Russia, coverage of German-Russian relations, and a German-European perspective on Russia (DW_Ru_1, §2). DW Russian's relatively low percentage of output containing references to Germany might be due to its emphasis on Europe as EU issues and issues of other European countries fell under the "non-German" category in the content analysis. The interviews also revealed that the possibility of being accused of propaganda was an issue at DW Russian (DW_Ru_3, §10). Not overstressing domestic German topics might have been one strategy to avoid possible propaganda accusations. Likewise, it was highlighted that if DW Russian covered domestic German issues this also meant addressing critical issues so as to exhibit plurality and to foster DW's credibility (DW_Ru_3, §10).

In terms of the news character of DW's social web output, the findings of the content analysis indicate that hard news in fact constituted the majority, that is 69.1 percent, of the social web output across cases (see Table 13).

Table 13: News character in % (and in total numbers) – across cases

	DW German *n* = 375	**DW English** *n* = 268	**DW Russian** *n* = 298	**Across DW** *n* = 941
Hard news	64.3% (241)	66.4% (178)	77.5% (231)	69.1% (650)
Soft news	34.4% (129)	32.8% (88)	21.1% (63)	29.8% (280)
In-house news	1.3% (5)	0.7% (2)	1.3% (4)	1.2% (11)

DW Russian had the highest percentage of hard news (77.5%), followed by DW English (66.4%) and DW German (64.3%). The differences between the language services were not subject to coincidence, there was a highly significant association to the respective language (χ^2 = 14.886, df = 2[50], n = 941, p = .001), albeit to a fairly weak degree (Cramer's V = .126).

The interview statements on DW Russian's news character confirmed an inclination towards hard news. DW Russian's Chief Editor declared: "It is about information, it is about Germany. These are the crucial points" (DW_Ru_1, §21). In doing so, however, DW Russian did not claim to act as a 24-hour news channel, but rather as a provider of analyses (DW_Ru_1, §4; DW_Ru_2, §9). Apparently, the staff of the Russian service had experimented with a news mix involving more soft news but had returned to its focus on hard topics because they felt it was not their core business: "Our business is politics and we want to attract the according users. Thus, it is a mixture of various topics; soft topics, too. But first and foremost, it's serious content" (DW_Ru_2, §25).

In terms of DW English's news focus, it needs to be pointed out that the share of hard news varied a lot across the examined platforms. The output on *Facebook* (n = 104) was made up of 80.8 percent hard news whereas the output on *YouTube* (n = 164) consisted of only 57.3 percent hard news. When it comes to *YouTube,* the English language service was largely dependent on what had already been produced for TV purposes. On *Facebook* where DW English could determine the content largely independently, it seemed to strongly focus on hard news. Accordingly,

50 In-house news was subsumed under soft news for calculating the chi-square value.

"the point of view of news" (DW_Eng_2, §28) was highlighted by DW English's Social Media Editor as her main point of reference for putting out content. The Chief Editor listed DW's overall key topics (democracy, human rights, sustainable development, and globalization) when talking about her service's thematic priorities which can also be considered hard news (DW_Eng_1, §3).

DW German's news mix was characterized in the interviews as a "general store" (DW_Deu_1, §8) with "Germany" as the common thread. Topics mentioned during the interviews such as "discovering Germany" or "studying in Germany" (DW_Deu_1, §31) seem rather inclined to turn out as soft news in fact. However, also politics, economics, or DW's "hard" profile topics were said to be relevant in DW German's news mix. DW German's Social Media Editor described it as fun to try and make "bulky topics" (DW_Deu_2, §1) accessible to a social web audience. It could well be that she turns hard news into soft news through these efforts.

In general, the question of the news character of DW's social web output seemed associated with DW's self-characterization. The key topics that had been defined as constituting DW's profile at the organizational level can all be considered hard news. The principle of not necessarily conforming to click trends was underlined by DW's Social Media Manager with the statement "after all, we are a news channel" (DW_Strat_1, §10). However, the strategists also did express a need to adapt the news mix to some degree to what "works" in the social web. In this context, emphasis was put on selecting issues "people are affected by" (DW_Strat_1, §10), covering stories "from personal perspectives" (Social Media Guidelines, p. 5) and, especially when it comes to *Facebook*, offering a potpourri of topics (DW_Strat_1, §10; DW_Strat_2, §19) which means that soft news were considered legitimate components to complete the mix. Eventually, the Social Web Guidelines put straight that the news mix is not supposed to overbalance and that the output ultimately needs to represent a solid journalistic product (Social Media Guidelines, p. 13).

Lastly, it was examined as part of its identity management what groups DW defined as target groups for its social web activities. At the organizational level, it was found to be emphasized that the target groups were specific to the target regions. The Social Web Guidelines stated that the language services' target regions represented the main point of orientation (Social Media Guidelines, p. 4). Likewise, the strategists stressed the necessity for each language service to come up with its own definition of whom it plans to reach with its social web

activities (DW_Strat_1, §8; DW_Strat_3, §11). Some general specifications were made nevertheless. The Strategic Planner pointed out that an above-average information-seeking activity was common to all target groups (DW_Strat_2, §37). While information seekers were probably of general importance to DW, the interviews revealed that the audiences targeted via social web formats did not completely overlap with DW's overall target audiences. Especially age-wise, DW wanted to reach new audience segments via its social web accounts. DW's Social Media Manager, for instance, expressed the hope to reach "other people" including a "somewhat younger target audience" (DW_Strat_1, §8). Even more concrete was the statement by the Head of "Hintergrund Deutschland" who explained that for *Facebook* the targeted age range was between 20 and 49 (DW_Strat_3, §10). With this age segment, DW reportedly hoped to reach "people who come here [to Germany, I.D.] and who might want to stay for a while, who have been here before for a school exchange or their studies" (DW_Strat_3 §10).

Also at the level of the language services, information-seekers and younger audiences were regarded as important target groups in the social web. At DW English, the Social Media Editor explained: "Our target group is everybody around the world who is interested in news" (DW_Eng_2, §16). Apart from that the people they target in the social web were said to be relatively young and more modern compared to the regular DW target audience.

The interviewees from the Russian service made use of the term "information seekers" as well when describing their target group in the social web, but they specified these information seekers quite clearly for their case both in local terms as well as in terms of age. Reportedly, the Russian service targeted people aged between 20 and 50 who live in big cities such as Moscow, St. Petersburg, or Kiev (DW_Ru_1, §19; DW_Ru_3, §8). Also with regard to the target groups' status and education, the interviews provided a clear picture. According to DW Russian's Chief Editor, there is a growing well-educated middle-class consisting of people who no longer have to struggle for existence and who are able to expand their horizon beyond Russia. These people particularly constituted DW Russian's target groups. Since they also tended to be tech-savvy and wary about Russia's established media the Chief Editors figured them well-represented in the social web (DW_Ru_1, §2).

DW German's Social Media Coordinator delivered an extensional definition of their target group: "Information seekers, native speakers, people who might pull the strings in their countries now or later, students, university professors,

lawyers, politicians – these are the ones whom we also want to have on our social media" (DW_Deu_1, §30). She moreover pointed out that they defined the target group just as specified in DW's task plan.

DW German and DW English seemed to struggle with the fact that their target groups could not be characterized by locality (as was the case with DW Russian), but had to be identified by certain characteristics. The fact that DW German's target audiences were scattered around the world was perceived as tricky by the service's Social Media Editor: "Every day we struggle with striking a chord with this diverse audience" (DW_Deu_2 §4). Likewise, the Chief Editor of DW English pointed out that in the absence of a regional focus of DW English it is difficult to anticipate what topics resonate with their social web audience (DW_Eng_1, §3).

7.1.3 Review of P1 and conclusion

The first proposition relating to RQ1 assumed that *Deutsche Welle's identity management reflects facets of a public service function, a political function, and a dialogical function* (see Section 5.2). On the basis of the cases' dissimilar main functions, it was moreover anticipated that the public service function would be most salient with the Russian service, that the political function would be most striking in an overt fashion with the German service, and that the dialogical function would be most notable with the English service. To what extent this proposition and the anticipated variations hold true can now be reviewed on the basis of the results.

The public service function was assessed as an orientation towards providing serious rather than entertaining news as well as targeting information seekers and opinion leaders. In this respect, the results (see Table 13) show that DW featured a clear inclination towards serious news in the social web with 69.1 percent of its social web output being hard news. With regard to DW's target groups in the social web, it can be stated that news interest and opinion leadership played a major role indeed. Additionally, the target groups in the social web were characterized by their comparatively young age. Social web activities obviously served DW to reach out to new (meaning: younger) audience segments compared to the regular DW target audience.

In this multiple case study, the public service function was assumed to be most salient with the Russian service, accordingly DW Russian was expected to have

the biggest share of hard news output among the three language services. This actually turned out to be true. Whereas the share of hard news at DW English and DW German roughly amounted to two thirds of their output, the share of hard news at DW Russian made up more than three quarters of its social web output (see Table 13). The differences between the language services in terms of their news focus proved not to be subject to coincidence. This suggests that the public service function with its focus on providing hard news to people who otherwise would not have access to them was indeed most salient in DW Russian's social web usage. At the same time, the share of hard news was still quite high at DW English and DW German. So eventually, all three language services can be considered to reflect a public service function when it comes to their news focus. In terms of target group specifications, minor deviations across language services were detected which should not be left unmentioned at this point. DW Russian delivered the most detailed description of its social web target group stating that the people they wanted to reach were part of a growing, well-educated and tech-savvy urban middle-class in Russian-speaking countries whom they deemed especially well-represented in the social web. DW English and DW German, in contrast, settled for the rather generic characterization (information-seeker, young) of social web target groups provided at the organizational level by lack of a clear regional focus of their services.

Whether DW's identity management reflected a subtle pursuit of a political function was assessed based on DW's aspiration to serve as a democratic role model as opposed to focusing overtly on Germany or emphasizing German perspectives. Here, the results suggest that DW pursued a political function rather overtly than subtly with more than half of its social web output containing references to Germany while purely foreign issues were only covered in 38.2 percent of the social web output (see Table 12). Thus, the proposition assuming that DW rather tried to fulfill this function without engaging in direct promotion efforts turned out false. Earlier studies by Hafez (2007) and Richter (2008) already attested an overt German agenda in DW's coverage and a lack of regionalized reporting. The results of the study at hand confirm similar tendencies for DW's social web output.

The political function was found to be generally salient in self-characterizations across DW, for instance when interviewees referred to their obligation to underpin the state, to comply with German law, or to act in the tradition of being a voice of freedom. Interestingly, these self-characterizations were often perceived

as standing in contrast to common practices of using the social web. This point is picked up in Section 7.4 as part of the condensed answer to RQ1.

An overt pursuit of a political function was expected to be most striking with the German service because of the service's pertinent tradition. Thus, DW German was assumed to be most amenable to covering domestic German issues or stressing German points of view among the three language services. Formally, this assumption turned out to be correct: With 57.1 percent, DW German indeed showed the highest percentage of Germany-related references in its social web output as compared to 54.1 percent at DW English and 46.6 percent at DW German. Yet, it cannot be ruled out that these differences between the language services were a coincidence. If one takes into account the qualitative results, however, it seems fair to state that an overt focus on Germany or German perspectives was indeed most striking at the German service. After all, the interviewees at DW German considered a focus on Germany-related topics or perspectives a service to their audience and part of DW's mandate. Similarly strong convictions were not uttered at the other language services.

The reflection of a dialogical function in DW's social web usage was assessed based on the motives stated for making DW accessible in the social web. It was assumed that striving to fulfill a dialogical function served as a main reason for DW to make itself accessible in the social web. This assumption turned out to be false. The main rationale for making DW accessible in the social web was obviously to disseminate DW content on platforms where target groups were expected to be reachable. This was at least what was stated at both the organizational level as well as at DW German and DW Russian.

Already in terms of DW's first ever online activities a report by Groebel (2000) concluded that the internet was used mainly as a distribution channel at DW while using it as a communal space was largely left out of consideration. A similar pattern becomes apparent by looking at DW's main motivations for making itself accessible in the social web as revealed in this study. Here, too, the main driving force was using social web accounts as distribution channels even though the social web as such offers extensive means to "exchange information, opinions, and interests from participants from all over the world" (p. 69). Such dialogical motivations, however, did not feature very prominently in decisions across DW to become present in the social web.

Only at DW English, dialogical motives seemed to have played a role as regards the decision to become active in the social web. Having the chance to exchange and to engage in a dialogue had reportedly motivated DW English's Chief Editor to advance her service's social web activities. This, in fact, confirms the case-specific assumption that among the three cases dialogical motives for making DW accessible in the social web would be most notable with the English service. Pointers to an identification with the role of "the mediator in the dialogue of cultures" as detected in a study by Krasteva (2007) were generally most notable at the English service whose staff not only emphasized the wish to engage in a dialogue with the audience in the social web, but also to act as a bridge between the regions.

An evaluation of DW's efforts to feature dialogue in radio, TV, and online services by Zöllner (2006) pointed to limitations to dialogical efforts that are "rooted in cultural and political circumstances that are detrimental to a climate of openness which is needed in any true dialogue" (p. 175). In the study at hand such limitations have especially become obvious in the context of DW Russian. Here, it was brought up that tensions arising from ideological divisions among their users made it difficult to act in an open and casual manner on their social web accounts. The interviewees' perception was that attempts to establish an open and casual climate on DW Russian's social web accounts had had an inviting effect on "haters".

All in all, it can be stated that the first proposition holds true: Across the examined language services *Deutsche Welle*'s identity management indeed reflected facets of a public service function, a political function, and a dialogical function. The public service function was most salient with the Russian service, the political function was found to be most striking in an overt fashion with the German service, and the dialogical function turned out to be most notable with the English service.

7.2 Information management

How did DW manage information at the output stage of the journalistic news process in the social web? How did its editors select what is going to be published and in what way do they publish it? These are the questions that guided the data analysis in regards to information management. This section presents the related results by focusing on three aspects: The workflow associated with information management

(presented in Subsection 7.2.1), considerations and characteristics concerning DW's social web content (covered in Subsection 7.2.2), and overarching challenges (presented in Subsection 7.2.3). The results are presented across language services and in relation to the organizational level. Subsection 7.2.4 eventually reviews P2 and details how the results compare to findings from earlier empirical studies.

7.2.1 Workflow: Who is in charge of what?

When it comes to information management in the social web there were two models at DW as to how staff was organized. Designated social media shifts were the common model in relatively large and well-resourced language services such as the ones examined in this study. Throughout these shifts specialized "Social Media Editors" took care of everything relating to the respective language service's social web accounts. The other model usually applied to smaller, less resourced language services. Here, taking care of social web accounts was part of the "online shift" and would rotate among all staff members of the relevant unit (DW_Strat_1, §9; DW_Strat_2, §5; DW_Strat_3, §1; Social Media Guidelines, p. 8). The prioritization of social media activities within each editorial unit was said to be up to the Chief Editor which resulted in a situation where "each editorial unit does have one Facebook account and one Twitter account or whatever, but with extreme differences in quality and extreme difference in maintenance, differences as regards the consideration of resources" (DW_Strat_2, §5). In addition to social media staff organized within a certain editorial unit there were "Social Media Coordinators" who were supposed to keep track of the bigger picture per Multimedia Direction[51]. The Social Media Guidelines described these roles as follows:

51 Editorial units at DW were subsumed under two so-called Multimedia Directions at the time of the study: The Multimedia Direction Regions (MMDR) and the Multimedia Direction Global (MMDG). For an overview of the organization chart see *Appendix* 4.

> In MMDR[52] and MMDG[53] there is one Social Media Coordinator each who takes care of content-related planning and interaction across editorial units with regard to social media offers and single projects. He observes discussions relevant for DW in the web and forwards community impulses to the editorial units. (Social Media Guidelines, p. 9)

The interviewed Social Media Coordinator[54] accordingly attended the editorial meeting of the Chief Editors on a daily basis and used this forum to report on recent developments in the social web (DW_Deu_1, §37). Additionally, staff from the "Market and Media Research" department regularly offered in-house training sessions on social media analytics for Social Web Editors (Social Media Guidelines, p. 27).

Positions who keep track of the bigger picture seem to have generally become more important as social web activity expanded at DW. This became obvious at the level of the language services.

At DW German, the management of social web accounts was taken care of in dedicated social media shifts. The pool of staff members available for social media shifts at DW German was said to consist of three main editors and five supportive colleagues who stepped in if needed. Having these five substitute Social Media Editors was the result of a recent enlargement of the pool (DW_Deu_1, §3). These Social Media Editors were usually freelancers (DW_Deu_1, §1; DW_Deu_2, §21). While this was said to be a source of new impulses, it had also resulted in "unrest" (DW_Deu_2, §21) in the recent past and in incidents in which editors had been unable to appropriately respond to social web inquiries due to a lack of centralized information upon return from a longer break (DW_Deu_1, §1). In an effort to fill this gap the position of the Social Media Coordinator was created. The Social Media Coordinator herself reflected that it "was the attempt to achieve some steadiness, to think beyond the day, or the week" (DW_Deu_1, §4). DW German's Social Media Editor appreciated the new approach of having a core team of shifting Social Media Editors in combination with one constant position:

52 Short for "Multimedia Direction Regions". For an overview of the organization chart see *Appendix* .

53 Short for "Multimedia Direction Global". For an overview of the organization chart see *Appendix* 4.

54 For this study the Social Media Coordinator for MMDR was interviewed. Since the position was relatively new at the time when the fieldwork was conducted she was interviewed in connection with the German service where she used to be affiliated.

> She [the Social Media Coordinator] has been here in this house for a long time and knows her stuff. With her we have a well-chosen, central contact person for this topic. It absolutely makes sense because we noticed that things get a bit lost if you have alternating people in charge. (DW_Deu_2, §21)

A wish for continuity was also salient at DW English and had reportedly prompted DW English's Chief Editor to fill a permanent social media position:

> I needed someone who would develop formats for weeks and months, someone who has a long-term perspective, not just from day to day. And that's what I have now. Now I know I can commission things, she can produce ideas, initiate and we see how it develops. (DW_Eng_1, §13)

At DW English, the job of the Social Media Editor was not covered by several freelancers, it was a permanent position held by one staff member. At the time of the interview, the position had only been created a couple of months ago which had apparently been somewhat tricky in the first place. The Chief Editor reported that the human resources department and the staff council had difficulties grasping this position which represented "a mixture between former `listeners' response´ and `online journalism´" (DW_Eng_1, §13). Also within DW English there was a degree of resistance: "That the Social Media Editor at times chooses a different teaser, a different wording or even a different picture for a topic was strongly criticized [by colleagues, I.D.] in the beginning. [...] It is [due to, I.D.] this idea of the author's sovereignty" (DW_Eng_1, §5). Against this background it had turned out helpful that the Social Media Editor's position had been designed as to also involve tasks beyond the social web. The Social Media Editor of DW English spent 40 percent of her time as a "regular" science editor which resulted in her feeling more respected among her colleagues (DW_Eng_2, §31).

At DW Russian, one staff member functioned as an internal Social Media Coordinator within the language service. This person oversaw DW Russian's social media activities and initiated exchange between its Social Media Editors in the form of meetings or group chats. DW Russian's Social Media Coordinator, who was also active as a "regular" editor, looked at her coordination responsibilities as an attempt to ensure a certain standard against the background of the alternating social media shifts (DW_Ru_2, §27). Apart from that, information management at DW Russian was organized in social media shifts from nine to five during the week (DW_Ru_1, §4). A pool of four freelancers specialized in social media was

available to fill these shifts (DW_Ru_2, §1). DW Russian's interviewed Social Media Editor stated that she hadn't been trained as a journalist, but had a background in social media editing for a journalistic media outlet and had been then headhunted by DW Russian's Chief Editor. This absence of a journalistic background did not seem to pose a problem, neither for her work nor in the interaction with other staff members. The Social Media Editor said she felt like a normal member of DW Russian's editorial team:

> If I notice any mistakes [in articles] while reading I correct them. Or other editors seek my advice for better wording. That's why I don't have the feeling to be second class. It [social web editing] is treated with respect. (DW_Ru_3 §29)

What was said to be a minimum requirement for the job of the Social Media Editor at DW Russian was "an affinity for journalism", otherwise it was regarded as crucial that a Social Media Editor understood "how we roll, what our mandate is" (DW_Ru_2, §30). What was brought up repeatedly in the interviews with DW Russian was its "four eyes principle" when it comes to social web output. This principle implied a certain degree of involvement by Managing Editors who have to give their approval before the Social Media Editor published anything (DW_Ru_1 §4; DW_Ru_3 §14). Outside the dedicated shifts – for example at late hours or on weekends – the so-called "Front Page Managing Editor" was in charge of monitoring DW Russian's social web accounts (DW_Ru_1, §17; DW_Ru_2, §4). For these editors, DW Russian's Social Media Coordinator had recently organized a workshop in which the regular Social Media editors tried to familiarize them with *Facebook* and its analytics (DW_Ru_2, §27).

The strategists seemed to agree that having editors specialized in social web formats was preferable over having each and every staff member develop social web skills. Reasons given were, for example, that the job of a Social Media Editor was too elaborate to add it to the tasks of a regular editor (DW_Strat_3, §1) and that it also required an ability to cope with the stress involved in managing social web accounts: "For some it is just a tremendous amount of personal stress. That's the way it is. Then I cannot say: But you have to, don't stress out about it. It is stress. You can't argue this away" (DW_Strat_3, §23).

In a similar vein, the Social Media Editor at DW German argued that journalistic work in the social web required a certain predisposition and should remain

a specialized field. She had been motivated to do this job "because huge dossiers haven't been my thing, rather the faster stuff, the sharper stuff. That's what I have always been fond of" (DW_Deu_2, §21). Such an inclination was deemed crucial because the fast pace of the social web caused phases of annoyance, even with the Social Media Editor herself. Moreover, the capacity of the regular editors was considered at its limits already. In sum, it was neither regarded as feasible nor as conducive at DW German to make social web skills obligatory for every single editor (DW_Deu_2, §23).

The interviewees at DW English agreed that managing social web accounts was just not for everyone. Yet, the Chief Editor differentiated between passive and active usage in this respect. Passive usage was what she expected from all her staff members. For example, she expects them to keep DW English's social web accounts in mind and monitor them if need be. Active usage, on the other hand, wasn't something she considered generally enforceable if there is no interest (DW_Eng_2, §5). Also DW English's Social Media Editor emphasized the importance of having a genuine interest in and fondness for social media for this role. At the same time, she also considered journalism skills crucial because "I also have to work with journalists very closely and to know how they approach things" (DW_Eng_2, §31). While she could rely on the backing of a generally supportive Chief Editor, she expressed understanding for some of her colleagues who were somewhat indifferent towards her work: "It is good to know that your work is being appreciated, but the ones who are less interested they don't bother me. And I understand, it's just an additional headache for them" (DW_Eng_2 §12).

At DW Russian, there had been attempts at to involve "regular" editors in social web activity, but these had reportedly turned out somewhat difficult. The Social Media Coordinator mentioned her venture to organize question and answer sessions with editors specialized in the social web for the whole team. These sessions had been organized in vain because these "regular" editors just didn't show up. She summarized the situation as follows:

"We are still searching for the right way how to really animate the others. We make sure that those people we hire for social media are simply young and a bit funky, so that they give a bit of variety to the whole conservative journalism society" (DW_Ru_2, §29).

At the strategic level, direct involvement by each and every staff member turned out not desired. Indirect involvement, however, was expected. The strategists

deemed it obligatory for all editorial staff members to keep social web activities in mind throughout regular working routines. The Head of "Hintergrund Deutschland" talked about a situation in which she encouraged staff members in charge of filming to think about utilization possibilities for the social web: "Are you somewhere where it's interesting, where one could post it before or while you are there? If you bring something with you, then let the social media shift know" (DW_Strat_3, §24). Accordingly, it was pointed out explicitly in the Social Media Guidelines that cooperation between social media staff and reporters is welcomed at DW: "Social media supply can be commissioned at investigation outings and the extra effort and expense can be taken into account" (Social Media Guidelines, p. 6). So far, however, it did not seem very common that "regular" staff took DW's social web accounts in consideration while producing content. In fact, DW German's Social Media Editor expressed a feeling of not being taken seriously by some colleagues. She blamed this on people's general skepticism towards new developments.

7.2.2 Social web output: Considerations and characteristics

Now we turn to DW's information management in terms of content. First, this subsection presents insights into considerations that played a role when social web output was selected at DW and insights on DW's posting frequency. Then, it reviews the instant reactions prompted by the selected output. Finally, it specifies the frequency of different features of DW's output such as external links, distinct social web content, content types, and phrasing.

First, we have a look at considerations in terms of selection criteria at the organizational level. Actually, it was not deemed very constructive at the organizational level to formulate specific selection criteria for social web content. What was emphasized instead was the relativity of selection criteria, both with respect to platforms and with respect to language services: "Each platform has different rules as to what works there. For us at DW, this definitely means that we need to try things out in each language" (DW_Strat_1, §10).

As regards DW's *YouTube* channels, it turned out that the selection of video content was quite limited due to the fact that usage rights needed to include social web usage. In the Social Media Guidelines, it was pointed out that such extensive ownership of rights was usually only given in case of video material genuinely produced

by DW. Since DW seemed to resort regularly to video material from third-party producers such as ARD, European Broadcasting Union (EBU), or news agencies the guidelines specified the relevant restrictions in much detail. For further guidance in terms of usage rights the guidelines pointed to DW's internal system called "REIS" (RechteInformationsSystem) in which staff members can review license agreements (Social Media Guidelines, p. 17).

What the strategists repeatedly stressed in terms of content selection was the importance of specific experience that the language services had gained over the years (DW_Strat_1, §10; DW_Strat_2, §19). In doing so, they seemed to be taken for granted, however, that the language services' basis for selection was DW material and that the general goal of social web usage was to stimulate interaction. A recommendation in the Social Media Guidelines said: "Not any content from the website and from broadcasts is suitable for social media. Choose topics that stimulate users to discuss. Content that your users are happy to share and that supports interactivity with DW offers is suitable, too" (Social Media Guidelines, p. 13). Moreover, the guidelines detailed what quantitative parameters are used by the Strategic Planning department for evaluations. Per platform, these parameters were the frequency of serving as a referrer to DW.de, the number of likes, comments and shares per output item, the number of postings per month, the trends in numbers of Fans (*Facebook*) and views (*YouTube*) and the size of the community (Social Media Guidelines, p. 27). This emphasis on quantitative web analytics in the guidelines seemed to be somewhat at odds with what was stated by the strategists during the interviews. The Social Media Manager, for example, proclaimed: "Well, you can't solely rely on those quantitative analyses. Instead, it really is totally important that one keeps talking about it and that one keeps listening to the language services individually in terms of what works how" (DW_Strat_1, §11). Overall, it seemed to be understood by the strategists that soft topics get more clicks on the social web, but they still did not deem it advisable to select such topics. The Head of "Hintergrund Deutschland" explained:

> What we in fact rule out [...] is to post just because it generates clicks. This mustn't be the only motivation. Of course we analyze click numbers, of course they are important. They are an indication for what interests people and what doesn't. However, BILD [German tabloid] has most clicks in Germany and we all know why. We won't start posting half-naked women and cars now, that's for sure. (DW_Strat_3 §17)

The posting frequency of DW's social web accounts was supposed to be "geared to the respective target region" (Social Media Guidelines, p. 4). General advice with regard to posting frequency was only uttered by the Head of "Hintergrund Deutschland". She mentioned that in the early days of social web activity at DW, there was concern about being perceived as annoying by the users if one posted too often. Meanwhile however, DW's posting frequency had amplified because people increasingly understand social web platforms as news media (DW_Strat_3, §10). Overall, she stressed that posting frequency must depend on what the Social Media Editors are able to reliably sustain: "Continuity and reliability can always be complemented and enlarged. That is better than being unpredictable, not to be able to react, not to be transparent" (DW_Strat_3, §13).

At the level of the editorial units, a strong motivation for selecting a certain type of content for the social web was actually generating response. In the interviews with DW German for instance, it became apparent that Social Media Editors mostly relied on their experience of what "works" in terms of selection criteria for social web output. On average, DW German put out 4.8 *Facebook* posts and 8.7 *YouTube* videos per day (see Table 14 and Table 15). Selecting a topic for the mere purpose of reaching a satisfying level of response was reported as something that happened on a regular basis:

> The post and the occasion, those can be void and banal, just like the world kiss day where we had a picture gallery with the most famous movie kisses, where you say: `Does *Deutsche Welle* have to do this, too?´ That's open to dispute, but this thing just killed it. The post was banal, but it enjoyed great popularity. That's a form of success. (DW_Deu_2 §13)

What becomes apparent here is, again, a certain ambivalence between DW's role as a news provider and the wish to be a successful actor in the social web (see Subsection 7.1.2). For the purpose of generating response, DW German's Social Media Coordinator reported that they used different selection strategies for different platforms (DW_Deu_1 §5) and that they relied on certain "fast-selling" topics such as discovering Germany, German lifestyle, historical events, religion, faith, technology or nutrition (DW_Deu_1, §31; DW_Deu_2, §3). The selection itself was perceived as relatively smooth since the pool of topics available to DW German was quite large: "Since we can draw from unlimited resources of everything in German language [...] we can pick and choose the topics which we deem to work

well in social networks" (DW_Deu_1, §33). What was emphasized by DW German's Social Media Editor was the fact that their current topic selection was the result of a longer development. From the early days of social web activity until today she described different strategies which had been applied. While in the beginning they had focused a lot on politics and economics in their selection of topics, they had soon realized that lighter topics generated better response in the social web. Based on this experience they decided to favor lighter topics while not doing completely without hard news. However, once social web activity had become more institutionalized and more centrally organized at DW as a whole, they adapted to the pre-determined focus on DW's key topics such as human rights and globalization (DW_Deu_2, §2).

Also at the Russian service social web content was said to be selected with a view to generating comments, shares, likes, and clicks. DW Russian's Social Media Editor and the Social Media Coordinator especially emphasized comments and shares (DW_Ru_2, §13; DW_Ru_3, §26). The Chief Editor explained that output generating strong reactions in all four respects was their ideal scenario, but that being strong at least in one respect was something they aspired (DW_Ru_1, §6). Accordingly, content such as pictures and collages were deemed a good choice. At the same time, however, DW Russian expressed quite strongly that soft content was only one part of their output:

> We pay attention to having a good mix of serious content that prompts discussion, but also entertaining things and a few nice videos and pictures that people like to share, so that we generate a viral effect. What we sell is of course politics and economics, but via other content we try to attract attention. (DW_Ru_2, §13)

On average, DW Russian put out 7.7 *Facebook* posts and 3 *YouTube* videos per day (see Table 14 and Table 15). According to DW Russian's Social Media Editor, they used to say that six posts per day was the target frequency. For their choice of topics there weren't any specific rules or topics mentioned. Instead, the selection process was said to be based on experience and could well turn out erroneous at times. The Social Media Editor explained: "It is predominantly a gut feeling because you can never be sure what turns out as a top topic. [...] Of course one has to look back at what went well in the course of the week" (DW_Ru_3, §11). Apparently, learning mechanisms had been established at DW Russian in this respect: The staff members monitored the reactions to their output on a regular basis and tried to draw lessons

from these reactions (DW_Ru_2, §26; DW_Ru_3, §11). While this monitoring activity was perceived helpful for systematically developing a sense for selection criteria, it was also considered an ongoing learning process: "I would not say we have found the philosopher's stone nor are we at the end" (DW_Ru_1, §6).

When it comes to developing a feeling for selection criteria at DW English, the Social Media Editor expressed the feeling that she was very much on her own, her Chief Editor being the only other staff member who gave hints in terms of what to include in the social web (DW_Eng_2, §9). She disclosed that her main criterion for selecting topics was abnormity: "In social media you always want to go for something that is a bit controversial, edgy, funny" (DW_Eng_2, §28). Her rationale for selecting such content was to generate shares and comments which she considered more important than clicks (DW_Eng_2, §5). Similar to the editors at DW Russian, she stressed the importance of pictures which she often uses to manufacture a certain edginess: "Last week we had something about beer and I posted a picture of Angela Merkel drinking beer. That one got a lot of reactions" (DW_Eng_2 §28). On average, DW English put out 3.7 *Facebook* posts and 5.9 *YouTube* videos per day (see Table 14 and Table 15). The interviews moreover revealed that DW English's strategy in terms of posting frequency had changed over time. The Chief Editor reported that they had started off posting one or two articles on *Facebook* per day (DW_Eng_1, §1). Once the Social Media Editor had taken up her job she was told that one post per hour and a half would be ideal. However, she came to the conclusion that the posting frequency should depend on the users' response to the output: "[...] in my opinion when something is quite interesting it should remain there for at least two hours. You don't post something in-between. And if it does not generate a lot of interest you can post something else after fifteen minutes or an hour" (DW_Eng_2, §30). She based this strategy on *Facebook* analytics which she said she was checking constantly (DW_Eng_2, §6). In this connection, the Social Media Editor also pointed to a certain risk of developing obsessive behavior:

> I think that's a challenge because you want to look and see if something is happening, so you got to look all the time and for me it is kind of hard go home in the evenings and not look at the Facebook page at least two or three times. Social media is addictive. (DW_Eng_2, §26)

Table 14: Average number of Facebook posts per day – across cases

	DW German	DW English	DW Russian	Across DW
Facebook posts per day	4.8	3.7	7.7	5.4

DW's overall posting frequency on *Facebook* turned out to be 5.4 posts per day during the investigation period (see Table 14). Across cases, DW Russian stuck out with a comparatively high frequency of 7.7 *Facebook* posts per day whereas DW German posted 4.6 times per day and DW English only 3.7 times per day. On *YouTube*, the average number of clips published per day during the period of examination was 5.9 across DW (see Table 15). As pointed out earlier, the language services were very much dependent on usage rights for publishing on *YouTube*. Apparently, video material permitted for social web usage was most conveniently available to DW German who, on average, published the highest number of clips per day on *YouTube*. For DW Russian, who published the lowest number of *YouTube* clips per day, running a *YouTube* channel had only become relevant as of late because producing video clips was something that DW Russia had only recently started to be involved in (DW_Ru_2, §6).

Table 15: Average number of YouTube clips published per day – across cases

	DW German	DW English	DW Russian	Across DW
YouTube clips per day	8.7	5.9	3	5.9

Now we look at the different features of DW's social web output in more detail. As for the question if DW linked external content in the social web the results provide a clear picture (see Table 16): The number of external links was vanishingly small. DW English did not link any external content at all. DW German included two links to external content resulting in 0.5 percent of its output and in DW Russian's output there was one link to external content representing 0.3 percent of its output. The majority of social web output by DW, in turn, included a link to content on DW's website, namely 86.6 percent. DW English was frontrunner in this respect with 90.7 percent of social web output linking DW content.

DW Russian included a link to DW content in 84.9 percent percent of its social web output and DW German in 82.7 percent.

Table 16: Output linking DW content in % (and in total numbers) – across cases

	DW German *n* = 375	**DW English** *n* = 268	**DW Russian** *n* = 298	**Across DW** *n* = 941
Link to external content	0.5% (2)	0% (0)	0.3% (1)	0.3% (3)
DW link	82.7% (310)	90.7% (243)	84.9% (243)	86,1% (796)

Items specifically produced for the social web only occurred on *Facebook*, not on *YouTube*. *YouTube* was used by DW exclusively as an additional distribution channel for content which had already been produced. On *Facebook* distinct content was detectable, but only in a small scale (see Table 17). Across DW, the percentage of content specifically produced for *Facebook* was 6.5 percent. With 7.9 percent DW Russian showed the highest percentage of content specifically produced for *Facebook* and was followed by DW German (6,9%) and DW English (4,8%).

Table 17: Facebook-specific content in % (and in total numbers) – across cases

	DW German *n* = 131	**DW English** *n* = 104	**DW Russian** *n* = 215	**Across DW** *n* = 450
Content specifically produced for Facebook	6.9% (9)	4.8% (5)	7.9% (17)	6,5% (31)

While these figures suggest that DW's social web accounts mainly served as additional distribution channels, the interviews revealed that this strategy was not entirely welcomed at the level of the language services.

The interviews at DW German principally confirmed that producing distinct social web content was not something the service spent a lot of time and resources on. However, the desire to produce distinct content was said to be a prominent one:

> That is a question many Social Media Editors or units ask themselves: Are we only a link thrower or can we also post our own content? Actually we are on the way to: We also want to post our own content. (DW_Deu_1 §36)

DW German's Social Media Coordinator considered a lack of self-confidence a main reason for this. She described the current situation in the daily editorial meetings as one where social web activity is only conceived in connection to content produced within the editorial units' standard procedures. So far, it followed the established logics of "announcement pieces" followed up by "result pieces" which caused a certain inability on the part of the social web staff to respond to current events while these pieces are in the making. It would take the social web staff some boldness to go against these routines because, by doing so, they would accept to become more prone to errors and they would counter the distribution imperative. The Social Media Coordinator was in favor of such emancipation from the given procedure arguing that distinct social web content could often be produced without much additional effort by the Social Media Editors and would strengthen DW's self-ascribed profile as the "reliable expert" (DW_Deu_1, §36, §37). She concluded:

> It's just always a matter of goals. If you want the Facebook people to go to DW.de, then having distinct content is nonsense. But if you want to show `they listen, they react, I can put in my two cents´ and you initiated a small discussion on Facebook which led to interaction and this, in turn, led to new friends, it is okay. (DW_Deu_1, §38)

The distribution imperative also seemed to be increasingly questioned at DW Russian. At least the service's Social Media Editor no longer believed that linking existing content should be at the center of one's efforts:

> [..] the networks are still regarded as a click generator. I am trying to change this somehow because I think the paradigm must change. One lives in these social networks. That is, one enters and actually wants to stay there rather than going to our website just because there are two interesting lines. (DW_Ru_3 §11)

DW Russian's Chief Editor, in contrast, mentioned that increasing clicks on DW.de by referring social web users to the website was one of the main objectives of their social web activity (DW_Ru_1, §5). DW Russian's Social Media Coordinator

even called it "the only safe additional channel of distribution" (DW_Ru_2, §7) in the light of their audiences' changing practices of media usage.

The Social Media Editor at DW English, in turn, had another explanation for the lack of distinct content at their output stage: "Most of what we do is not breaking news. *Deutsche Welle* rather delivers analysis" (DW_Eng_2, §8). She explained that they only produced distinct content in the event of breaking news such as the death of Margaret Thatcher or the outcome of the Eurovision song contest.

Surprisingly, in DW's Social Media Guidelines it was acknowledged that sharing or linking content from other sources was part and parcel of the social web environment. There were precise rules for linking external content. The guidelines detailed that in order to be linkable, external content needed to offer an added value for DW's audience and it needed to be in line with DW standards. Linking commercial content was defined as unacceptable. Therefore, DW social media staff was supposed to review blog posts for adequacy when linking blog content (Social Media Guidelines, p. 16). The guidelines also included a general warning which highlighted that DW is legally liable for linked content (Social Media Guidelines, p. 19).

In terms of producing content specifically for the social web the interviews with the strategists revealed that they hardly ever considered this useful. The Head of "Hintergrund Deutschland" pointed out:

> We are a bit cautious in this respect because we say: This consumes an awful lot of resources. [...] If it is just more effort and I could make something out of stuff I already got, then it's just pointless because we make these [social web] offers in order to promote our content and to get [people] to DW.de. (DW_Strat_3 §18)

Thus, it was obvious that what drove DW in the social web remained the distribution of already produced content. In everyday business, social web content was confirmed to be derived from topics that were already on the agenda and from content in the making for the established channels. At the same time, however, "it is cared about giving it different spin" (DW_Strat_1, §23). A newly adopted strategy seemed to be to take social media into account right from the start when conceptualizing and designing multimedia projects (DW_Strat_1, §24; DW_Strat_2, §32). The Strategic Planner envisioned DW to "develop formats that work [...] on linear television, that work on YouTube, that I can integrate on social media channels – so that you start to think across media eventually" (DW_Strat_2, §32). While this approach was not yet the rule at DW, the strategists seemed determined to push for

it arguing that at least the bigger, resource-rich services such as the German and English would be equipped to put it into practice.

Another feature examined as part of this study is the form of DW's social web output. Based on the content analysis, it could be determined what types of content the output contained. As Table 18 shows, the vast majority of *Facebook* posts by DW, that is 96 percent, contained a teaser text. Pictures, too, were common in DW's *Facebook* posts. They could be found in 82 percent of DW's *Facebook* output.

Table 18: Type of content published via Facebook in % (and in total numbers) – across cases

	DW German *n* = 131	**DW English** *n* = 104	**DW Russian** *n* = 215	**Across DW** *n* = 450
Teaser text	99.2% (130)	100% (104)	92.1% (198)	96.0% (432)
Picture	85.5% (112)	85.6% (89)	78.1% (168)	82.0% (369)
Video	0% (0)	1.9% (2)	0.9% (2)	0.9% (4)

Videos, however, only made up a small share of 0.9 percent of DW's output on *Facebook*. This low number can be explained by the according organizational policy. DW's Social Media Guidelines stated that *YouTube* is regarded the most appropriate platform for circulating video clips while uploading videos exclusively on *Facebook* was actually not welcomed. The envisaged practice was to link DW's clips from *Facebook* once they were uploaded to *YouTube* (Social Media Guidelines, pp. 14, 18).
On *YouTube*, it is possible to add a teaser text to a video clip. DW made use of this in 99.6 percent of their *YouTube* videos (see Table 19).

Table 19: Teaser texts published on YouTube in % (and in total numbers) – across cases

	DW German *n* = 244	**DW English** *n* = 164	**DW Russian** *n* = 83	**Across DW** *n* = 491
Teaser text	100% (244)	99.4% (163)	98.8% (82)	99.6% (489)

In the interviews with DW staff it was generally confirmed that pictures represented an important ingredient of social web output. The Social Media Editor of DW English, for instance, pointed to the "huge role" (DW_Eng_2, §28) pictures played in the social web as they could generate a lot of response even if the topic as such probably wouldn't. Therefore, she tried to find images with a certain "`haha´ effect" (DW_Eng_2, §28) such as a picture of German Chancellor Angela Merkel drinking beer when the output had to do with beer in general. Similarly, an interviewee from DW Russian revealed that there had been a lot of "playing and experimenting" (DW_Ru_1, §4) with the use of pictures. The current strategy was to come up with collages or amusing "pictures of the day" (DW_Ru_1, §4; DW_Ru_3, §17) which "people like to share, so that we achieve a viral effect" (DW_Ru_2 §13). At the organizational level, too, it was regarded useful for social web purposes to include pictures (DW_Strat_1, §10; DW_Strat_3, §5; Social Media Guidelines, p. 13).

At the same time, the use of images also presented DW's Social Media Editors with a challenge because images require publishing rights for the social web. In this respect, DW German's Social Media Editor pointed to limitations due to a lack of picture rights at DW (DW_Deu_2, §3). The Social Media Editor of DW English reported that her colleagues who acted as picture editors had not yet internalized the need to secure publishing rights for the social web which is why she often had to make special requests for pictures (DW_Eng_2, §29). On the part of the organization as a whole, it was considered essential to pay special attention to the copyrights of the content (DW_Strat_1 §31; Social Media Guidelines, pp. 16–20). Given that video and photo material often comes with serious restrictions regarding social web circulation, DW had implemented a note on "circulation on social media" in its central "REIS" system urging its social web staff to confer with the legal adviser's department in case of doubt. It was made clear that an individual editor's misdemeanor could result in law suits against DW (Social Media Guidelines, p. 18).

Apart from content types, the study also examined the phrasing of social web output. There were no specific guidelines provided from an organizational point of view with regard to phrasing social web output. The Social Media Guidelines proclaimed: "Principally there is no `one size fits all´ template for all editorial offices to act on. What works well in one language, may yield very different results in another" (Social Media Guidelines, p. 12). Furnishing social web accounts via automated feeds represented an exception at DW according to the Social Media Guidelines (p. 9). The interview with the Head of "Hintergrund Deutschland" revealed that in the

early days of social web activity teaser texts from DW's website had remained unchanged when published in the social web. But then younger colleagues had started to rephrase them before posting and yielded a better response. She explicitly acknowledged the effort and time it took social web editors nowadays to formulate teasers for social web purposes in a meaningful way (DW_Strat_3, §1, §5).

Acknowledgement for the efforts involved in phrasing social web output seemed to be quite an issue at the level of the language services. The Social Media Editor of DW English strongly expressed that social media editing represented a serious activity:

> Especially when you are working in journalism there is something resonating very strongly that journalism is only about creating content, whatever that means. But putting content on Facebook is also creating content. I write a few lines and post a picture. For some people that is not enough content, but it is content because after that it created content made up of Facebook reactions from the users and that is in its own right a lot of content. (DW_Eng_2 §31).

The interviewees from DW German explained that phrasing social web output required that the editor pays attention to the level of implicit knowledge users need to understand the post and to reducing complexity accordingly (DW_Deu_1, §34-35.; DW_Deu_2, §12). Using a language that "is common on social media" (DW_Deu_2, §1) was again perceived as a balancing act. It was supposed to be "not too sloppy, not too playful, but a bit wittier than it might be the rule on *Deutsche Welle*'s website" (DW_Deu_2, §4). Especially the Social Media Editor of DW German pointed out that the efforts of finding the right form of content should not be underestimated:

> [...] We are producing something in its own right by giving the topic a certain spin and by saying `That is not really suitable, we cannot take the same picture, we have to illustrate it with a different picture und then we have to combine an article with an interview and we anyway rephrase the teaser´. Then this is valid and not just copy and paste. (DW_Deu_2, §9)

Also in the interviews at DW Russian it became clear that the phrasing of social web output was regarded as an important task. While "copy and paste" or automated feeds had been standard procedures in the early days of the service's social web activity, they were now replaced by deliberate wording (DW_Ru_1, §4; DW_Ru_2, §14). Here, however, acknowledgement for one's work within the newsroom

seemed to be less of an issue than acknowledgement from the users. DW Russian's Social Web Editor reported that one always had to bear in mind that "one is under surveillance of `haters´" (DW_Ru_1, §13) when phrasing social web output.

In terms of phrasing social web output, the Strategic Planner revealed that, according to her evaluations, the way users are addressed by DW in social web teasers was currently regarded as too formal at the organizational level. At the same time, however, she stressed that "it is the news report that's at the center of attention, not the phrasing or the address" (DW_Strat_2, §18). While she had offered a workshop for Social Web Editors across DW in order to raise awareness about this issue, she also conceded that DW was still in the act of "finding this middle course" (DW_Strat_2, §18).

Quantitative study results in terms of how the audience was addressed in DW's social web output could be acquired through the content analysis (see Table 20):

Table 20: Output addressing the audience in % (and in total numbers) – across cases

	DW German *n* = 375	**DW English** *n* = 268	**DW Russian** *n* = 298	**Across DW** *n* = 941
Audience is addressed	22.7% (85)	76.5% (205)	22.5% (67)	37.9% (357)

Overall, 37.9 percent of DW's social web output addressed the audience in one way or another. Yet, a look at the individual cases reveals that DW English's audience address differed considerably from the other language services. 76.5 percent of DW English's social web output addressed the audience whereas DW German's and DW Russian's social web output did so in barely 23 percent. The most common ways for DW English to address its audience was via calls for action (43.3% of its output) and concrete questions (27.6% of its output). If DW German addressed its audience, it most often happened indirectly (10.9% of its output). The same goes for DW Russian where the audience was addressed indirectly in 13.1 percent of the output.

These results could be largely confirmed in the interviews at the language services. DW German's Social Media Coordinator rated the language service's way of addressing its audience as quite reluctant and would like to have it more engaging (DW_Deu_1, §7). At DW German, Social Media Editors were actually grappling with an issue specific to the German language: Should the audience be

addressed formally with "Sie" or less formal with "Du"? While the formal form was the standard on DW.de, DW German chose to use "Euch" or "Ihr" in the social web, the plural form of the less formal personal pronoun as a compromise (DW_Deu_1, §27). Addressing users casually *and* individually seemed to be still regarded as inappropriate for DW German.

The Russian language service's reluctance in terms of addressing users, in turn, rather appeared to be a lesson learnt. DW Russian's Chief Editor stated that they refrained from phrasing the content too casually and rather focused on delivering unambiguous, compact summaries of news since a humorous tone had proved to provide a target for trolls in the past (DW_Ru_1, §11, §13).

DW English, in contrast, seemed to have already moved beyond such considerations and was mainly concerned about "establishing a voice on Facebook" (DW_Eng_2, §38). The Social Media Editor reflected that due to the previous lack of continuity in terms of who manages the accounts it had been hard to establish a standard style and sound. With herself having the main responsibility now, she assumed it will be easier "to adapt to [...] the audience" (DW_Eng_2, §38). In future, she would like find ways to connect DW.de content and DW *Facebook* content. Website formats that picked up on what is happening on DW English's social web accounts, for instance, were considered desirable and "definitely a step forward" (DW_Eng_2, §11).

What was repeatedly pointed out as a challenging aspect of phrasing social web output was a certain ruthlessness of the users in case of any mishaps on the part of DW. While the Social Media Editor of DW English derived instant gratification from the immediate reactions to the output, she also pointed to an increased fear of getting something wrong. The fact that any mistake in the output is visible and will immediately be noticed by the social web audience was said to exert quite some pressure (DW_Eng_2, §25). The Social Media Coordinator of DW German pointed to users who do not concede DW German one typo without sarcastic hints to quality journalism. In such cases, she regarded it as challenging to reply in a way that does not incite further discontentment (DW_Deu_1, §10). Along the same lines, DW Russian's Social Media Editor found it challenging to manage information in an atmosphere where haters seemed to be just waiting for mistakes. As a consequence, she tried to detach herself from severe user criticism: "If shit happened, it just happened. Just delete it. It's not the end of the world. Your day will most probably be ruined, but there's no need to panic" (DW_Ru_3, §22).

7.2.3 Overarching challenges: Constant change and online security

Besides the challenges already mentioned in connection to social web output, the interviews at DW also disclosed two overarching challenges in terms of information management. Firstly, the fast pace of changes in the social web was widely perceived as challenging at DW. DW Russian's Social Media Coordinator lamented, for instance, that "there is never a feeling of accomplishment and of knowing how it works and how it is supposed to work" (DW_Ru_2, §33). Similar remarks were made by DW Russian's Chief Editor who considered her service to be in a constant "phase of experimenting" (DW_Ru_1, §22) in face of ever changing functionalities in the social web. Likewise, the Chief Editor of DW English stated that one is forced to constantly try new things and come up with unique solutions rather than adapting content from the DW website (DW_Eng_1, §1). For DW German's Social Web Editor, the fast-moving nature of the social web required a special approach which differed from classic online journalism because one's content is in direct competition with other content: "If you don't manage to catch the people with your first sentence, then it [your content, I.D.] gets lost" (DW_Deu_2, §5).

Also at the organizational level it was brought up as a challenging aspect that the social web is constantly subject to change. Especially the Head of "Hintergrund Deutschland" referred to the need of keeping up with the latest developments which she rated as something unusual for public broadcasters with a radio and TV tradition. She regarded it as a lesson learnt that strategic decisions on social web activity can hardly be long-term and that one has to keep asking strategic questions all the time: "Do I still do what I intended to do? Is what I intended to do still the right thing to do? Do I have to adjust?" (DW_Strat_3, §19)

Secondly, it was generally perceived as challenging to stay secure in the social web. A "major challenge" (DW_Strat_1, §16) which had caused "a lot of alarm" (DW_Strat_2, §13) at DW in the past was hacking, for instance. Apparently, there had been cases where third parties had hacked social web accounts of DW and published content on DW's behalf. The Social Media Guidelines included several hints on how to prevent such incidents. It was recommended, for example, to change passwords on a regular basis, to browse the web via a protocol for secure communication, as well as to not have the password saved in the browser for logging in (Social Media Guidelines, p. 25). In case an account was hacked, the Social Media Editors were advised to inform the Chief Editor and the Social Media Manager (Social Media Guidelines, p. 24).

Online security concerns were particularly salient at DW Russian. The interviewees at DW Russian worried especially about secret service activities in the social web that were trying to harm their work. Concrete annoyance was reportedly caused by fake user accounts that spammed DW Russian's social web accounts (DW_Ru_2, §5).

7.2.4 Review of P2 and conclusion

The second proposition, which refers to RQ1, assumed that as part of its information management *DW rather engages in publishing than in publicizing at the output stage, that DW adapts its information management practices to (anticipated) user ratings, and that social media editing at DW is carried out by regular editorial staff with extended duties as opposed to a small group of specialized personnel.* We are now able to see to what extent this proposition holds true in the face of the results.

In terms of whether DW engaged in publishing news stories rather than in surveying and pointing to other relevant primary sources ("publicizing"), the proposition turned out to be correct. The largest part of DW's social web output, that is 86.1 percent, contained links to news items on DW's own website (see Table 16). The share of social web output linking external content, in contrast, turned out to be vanishingly small. With this practice of rather distributing one's own content than pointing to external content, DW's information management seems to represent a common practice of professional journalism in the social web. After all, the acquired results are in line with findings from Armstrong and Gao (2010), Hille and Bakker (2013), Lilienthal et al. (2014) and Scott et al. (2014) which suggest that news organizations predominantly use social web platforms as additional distribution channels for their own content at the output stage.

As for the second aspect in the proposition, it was assumed that due to the increased transparency of user ratings in the social web DW would be prone to adapt its information management practices in anticipation thereof. The results on practices of selecting content for the social web actually show that anticipated user ratings indeed played an important role at DW. Especially at the level of the language services there seemed to be quite a strong desire to generate considerable user response in the form of shares, likes, clicks, and comments with one's social web output. To achieve this, there was a general willingness among the Social Media Editors to post content that is at best edgy, funny, and eye-minded or

void and banal at worst. Often times, the editorial staff members reported to hark back to quantitative web analytics in order to monitor their output's popularity in terms of user ratings. On the part of the news organization's strategists, this focus on user ratings was put somewhat into perspective. While they generally approved of social web content that stimulates user response, they stressed that the related quantitative measures and click trends should not represent the main reference for measuring DW's success. As DW's identity management (see Section 7.1.2) revealed, reduced popularity in the social web was accepted at the organizational level as a price for upholding DW's self-ascribed profile as a reliable expert and respectable news source. Against this background, it can be stated that tendencies to adapt one's information management to anticipated user ratings were indeed detectable at DW (especially at the editorial level), but were only tolerated at the organizational level to an extent that would not jeopardize the broadcaster's respectability as a serious news source.

In terms of the third aspect of P2 – staff involvement in information management – it was found out that there were two models of how social media editing was organized at DW. Social media editing took place the way it was assumed in P2 in smaller, less resourced language services at DW. Here, it was indeed part of the duties of all regular editorial staff members to take care of their editorial unit's social web accounts at times. Social media editing was part of the "online shift" which rotated among all staff members. In the second model, it was a small group of specialized personnel who was in charge of managing a service's social web accounts. This model was the standard in the relatively large and well-resourced language services that served as case studies in this examination. Here, either several specialized freelancers (DW German and DW Russian) or one permanent position (DW English) covered social media shifts exclusively. The work of the specialized freelancers was furthermore complemented by a constant coordinator role designed to ensure continuity between them. The second model at DW actually corresponds to what Neuberger et al. (2014) found most common at news websites across Germany, namely that a specialized minority of staff members is in charge of putting out social web content. Compared to the findings by Loosen et al. (2013) on social web workflows at *Tagesschau,* it seemed less of a concern at DW to try and get "genuinely" journalistic staff in touch with the social web accounts. Broad consent at DW was rather that social media editing required certain interests and inclinations which could not just be expected from anyone working

in journalism. Yet, for the Social Media Editors it was considered crucial to at least have an affinity for journalism or, better still, to be generally able to cover "genuine" journalistic tasks. This had turned out to contribute to Social Media Editors being respected for their work by their "regular" colleagues at DW.

Overall, it can be stated that the second proposition turned out partly true: As part of its information management, DW indeed engaged in publishing rather than in publicizing at the output stage. DW was moreover found to adapt its information management practices to (anticipated) user ratings – however, only to a certain degree. The results moreover show that DW mostly relied on specialized staff when it comes to information management at the output stages of its key language services' social web accounts. At the same time, this staff was expected to be able to also carry out "regular" editorial duties as well.

7.3 Relationship management

Which practices of relationship management were reflected in DW's social web use? The study examined how DW related to the users based on several indicators (see Subsection 6.1.1). The according results are presented in this section across cases and in relation to the organizational level. The presentation of the results is divided into two parts: Subsection 7.3.1 covers issues of relating to the social web audiences and Subsection 7.3.2 deals with the issue of making the broader newsroom aware of social web audiences. The final Subsection 7.3.3 discusses the results with a view to P3 and compares them to earlier empirical findings reviewed in the first part of the study.

7.3.1 Directly in charge: Relating to the social web audience

This subsection presents results on how DW related to its social web audience. It provides insights into how DW staff imagined their social web audiences and what kind of relationships they formed with them. It also discloses to what extent DW engaged in concrete bonding efforts at its output stage.

At the level of the language services, it can be stated that the notions of the respective social web audience were quite matter-of-factly. The language

services largely deemed their audiences to match different facets of DW's profile. At DW German, for example, the image of the social web audience was one of an "international clique" (DW_Deu_1, §5) consisting of lots of German language learners and potential exchange students or travelers to Germany. The Social Media Editor of DW English shared this image of a social web audience being especially interested in Germany (DW_Eng_2 §16). Besides people with a special interest in Germany, the Chief Editor saw two more groups of people among their "constant, sound friends" (DW_Eng_1, §8): The lonesome ones who are looking for a virtual community and those with a clear political stance which they hope to find confirmed by DW English (DW_Eng_1, §8). This political aspect also played an important role at DW Russian. Here, the interviewees deemed their audience to mainly have ideologically charged reasons to connect with them on social web accounts. A large part of DW Russian's audience was assumed to use DW as part of their own identity management:

> Who interacts with us? These are mostly people who deem DW a news provider that suits their identity. That is, people who consider themselves European, who have some bearing on Germany, who have deep interest in the rule of law, democracy, values, who are in touch with the German-Russian area for professional or private reasons. (DW_Ru_1 §9)

A certain part of the audience, however, was assumed to consist of users who want to oppose this very identity. They were described by DW Russian's Social Media Editor as people who considered DW "an agent of the West" and who are dismissive towards Europe because they have no access to it (DW_Ru_3, §10).

What kinds of audience images were noticeable in the documents and in the statements by the strategists? The documents displayed a few general assumptions about social web audiences: Social web users wanted to communicate at eye level (Social Media Guidelines, p. 3) and were keen on exchanging and sharing (p. 13). Reconciling DW's profile with the need to be at eye level with the social web audiences, however, seemed to pose a challenge. Admittedly, both aspects were depicted as essential and as concurrent necessities in the Social Media Guidelines:

> We write our posts in a way that is suitable for the respective medium. Even if this has to be as casual, informal, and as personal as possible, we are always professional and we stick to the role of the reliable expert. (Social Media Guidelines, p. 4)

Yet, during the interview with the Strategic Planner it turned out that DW was still grappling with this demand: "The issue of 'at eye level' is just really difficult for an institution with a tradition of 60 years and with journalistic standards" (DW_Strat_2, §18). The interviews moreover revealed specific assumptions concerning DW's social web audiences. The strategists imagined them as some kind of elite. The Strategic Planner, for instance, explained: "I think they have the distinction of being very informed, very well-educated, well-paid, they are opinionated and not easy to handle because they are demanding" (DW_Strat_2, §38).

It can furthermore be stated that the notions of the respective social web audience were mostly shaped by direct experience with the users – at the level of the language services that is. DW German's Social Media Editor, for example, explained: "Considering the level of speaking and writing in German [on Facebook] it is quite obvious that there are people from all over the world taking part [...]" (DW_Deu_2, §11). DW German's Social Media Coordinator turned out to be somewhat dissatisfied that the impressions they had of their audience were only based on comments and reactions and, thus, perceived them as insufficient. She would like to see a more systematic approach to getting to know what topics matter to their users:

> The way it is now is that we have been active in social media for years but we don't really engage in listening yet. That is, there is no real monitoring in terms of `What do DW users talk about when they are not talking to us?´. (DW_Deu_1, §4)

Monitoring and platform statistics seemed to be more common sources for audience images at the organizational level. However, also projections of one's own individual social web usage seemed to play a role here. The Strategic Planner, for example, related to her own behavior with regard to the risk of losing fans as active contributors: "I don't know how many pages I am a fan of, but due to the page rank they are no longer displayed to me because I did not interact with them" (DW_Strat_2, §38).

Similarly, the Head of "Hintergrund Deutschland" reflected on the threshold of actively commenting on social web platforms by comparing it with her own behavior: "This is how you act yourself, hence other users are also like that" (DW_Strat_3, §27).

When it comes to characterizing relationships with the social web audience the interviewees from the language services appeared largely influenced by their

specific experience with regular users – both in a positive and a negative sense. The Social Media Coordinator of DW German reported that she felt on familiar terms with users she referred to as "top dogs" (DW_Deu_1, §11). Tops dogs, she explained, are frequent commenters "who set the tone [...] and the course of the discussion, who may also tell the editors off if they dislike something" (DW_Deu_1, §24). She felt confident to reply in a rather casual manner to these users and personalize the tone. Another type of relationship seemed to be established when users resorted to DW German for seeking personal advice. The Social Media Editor gave an example of a Mongolian user who wanted to apply for further education in Germany but suffered from exam anxiety:

> Almost a bit bizarre, but then one thinks `Wow, *Deutsche Welle* is regarded a point of contact by somebody from Mongolia who is apparently interested in Germany and is internet-savvy´. Those are instances which one can then make use of by replying something nice in mini format or by providing a bit of assistance. (DW_Deu_2 §7)

The representatives of DW English very much emphasized their appreciation for being close to the users in the social web when reflecting on audience relationships:

> Social media is so much closer to people than we think. And in a sense the content you get via social media is also shaped by your audience which is much, much stronger than just having a static DW page or any organization's page whereby you say `This is our page´ and that's it. [...] Social media is the only opportunity that people have to engage directly in a discussion and sort of feel like they are on the same level as the organization. (DW_Eng_2, §34)

The Chief Editor of DW English also stressed the advantage of being able see audience members' names and faces which helped the editors to relate to them when telling a story (DW_Eng_1, §4). However, the results also show that this close relationship to the audience was not entirely trouble-free (DW_Eng_1, §4). Among the "regulars" who appeared frequently on DW English's social web platforms there were also users they perceived as annoying:

> You get to know who is always going for controversial things. You get to know who... the regulars. There's one who I know who only says things like: Oh yeah, you are all socialists and communists and whatever. So, I know what this guy is going to say. This is a thing with social media, because you actually develop a sort of knowledge of who people are. (DW_Eng_2, §36)

Especially at DW Russian, direct contact with the social web audience was perceived as a novel situation which bore unique challenges. According to its Chief Editor, DW Russian had not been exposed to a lot of feedback before digitalization because letters to the editors used to be held back by the former Soviet secret service. What was perceived as a major challenge now was to find oneself confronted with what DW Russian's Chief Editor referred to as "political trolls": "Whether commissioned or paid or because they can't help it, they come to us and throw around certain swear words or anti-Semitic tendencies" (DW_Ru_1, §9). These user comments usually appeared in unusual amounts over a short period of time and were published from accounts with no real names. In such situations DW Russian felt impelled to block the according users. Hence, the relationship to the audience was perceived as relatively tense (DW_Ru_3, §31). The types of relationships mentioned in the interviews with DW Russian all referred to problematic users. DW Russian's Social Media Coordinator explained that they have identified different types of problematic commentators: Those commissioned to be part of a shit storm, the naggers, and those who are in a bad mood. According to this typology they decided on their reactions (DW_Ru_2, §21).

This stands in marked contrast to the Strategic Planner who envisions DW's relationships with users in the social web ideally like those of friends (DW_Strat_2, §26). The Head of "Hintergrund Deutschland", however, admitted that in reality the relationships to users in the social web are rather characterized by "having it in for some people" (DW_Strat_3, §6). Relationships were said to commonly form with users who repeatedly violate the Netiquette even though they had been made aware of it earlier. The language services seem to have developed strategies to handle their problematic regulars over time as they reportedly only sought the strategists for advice in concrete situations where social web discussions took an unexpected turn and editors were not sure how to proceed (DW_Strat_1, §16; DW_Strat_3, §21).

As another indication of DW's relationship management, it was examined how the media organization handled direct user requests in the social web. On *Facebook* pages the owner of the page can determine whether visitors are allowed to post direct requests or not. At DW, language services were free to choose whether they want to allow direct posts on their *Facebook* pages or not (Social Media Guidelines, p. 20). If they did allow it, such direct posts became part of the editors' regular range of duty. That is, the Social Media Editors were

supposed to monitor them within 36 hours (p. 24) and to reply in a timely manner (DW_Strat_1 §3; DW_Strat_3 §9).

Out of the examined cases only DW Russian did not allow for direct user posts on its *Facebook* page. When asked about the reason for this decision, DW Russian's Chief Editor pointed to their liability for what appears on their pages. He considered DW Russian prone to be troubled with racist content and feared that they would not be fast enough to monitor and delete direct posts that violated the Netiquette (DW_Ru_1, §11). The Social Media Coordinator shared this view by expressing her wish to stay in control in terms of what content shows up on their platforms (DW_Ru_2, §23). The *Facebook* pages of DW German and DW English, in turn, allowed for direct user posts. DW German's Social Media Editor, for one, seemed to take it for granted that she gets back to direct requests from users even if they seem quite personal – just like the post of the Mongolian user who wanted to apply for further education in Germany.

Another aspect examined in terms of DW's relationship management were the broadcaster's efforts to bond with social web audiences. At DW's organizational level, the interviewees considered such efforts in the form of measures to make journalistic work transparent and to generate understanding for the editors as human beings. According to the Head of "Hintergrund Deutschland" bonding efforts would for example take the form of greetings, farewells, or holiday wishes so that the audience was informed about the beginning or the end of a shift (DW_Strat_3, §8, §9). The data from the content analysis, however, revealed that greetings and the like were not at all prominent in DW's social web output (see Table 21). Bonding efforts could only be detected in 2.1 percent of DW's overall social web output. The percentage was small at all examined language services.

Table 21: Output aimed at social bonding in % (and in total numbers) – across cases

	DW German *n* = 375	**DW English** *n* = 268	**DW Russian** *n* = 298	**Across DW** *n* = 941
Social bonding	3.7% (8)	3% (8)	1.3% (4)	2.1% (20)

The interview with DW German's Social Media Coordinator confirmed DW German's reluctance in terms of bonding with the social web users: "There is no

`Good morning, good evening´, what other editorial teams already do. We haven't quite gotten there yet" (DW_Deu_1, §8). The interviewee reflected on the fact that DW German's relatively strong feeling of obligation to represent the state inhibits them in that respect.

7.3.2 Indirectly in charge: Making the newsroom aware of social web audiences

Relationship management is not limited to those staff members who are directly in touch with social web audiences. Direct contact with the audience in the social web also rebounds on the broader newsroom. Based on the documents and the interviews with the strategists, it could be traced what kind of involvement was expected of various staff members at DW in terms of relationship management.

The main responsibility for relationship management was assigned to the Social Media Editors whose function can be described as managing a hub. Social Media Editors were deemed the only staff members who are supposed to be in direct touch with the audiences at a given time. As noted in the Social Media Guidelines: "In each editorial office it should be clear at any time: Who is the contact person for social media and who is responsible for what is being posted and how user feedback is being handled" (p. 8). At the same time the editors were expected to confer with different other members of the DW staff concerning their replies to users (Social Media Guidelines, pp. 20–21; DW_Strat_1, §25; DW_Strat_3, §5). In the first instance, DW's Social Media Editors were supposed to forward critique, hints, or additional information to the relevant editorial unit or department (Social Media Guidelines, p. 20). Furthermore, they were supposed to confer with fellow members of their editorial unit before they write an answer "because the Social Media Editors just might not have done the research, because those who are working the shift are not necessarily the ones who have notion of the topic" (DW_Strat_1, §25). When it comes to the question whether a potentially inappropriate comment should be deleted the deliberations were supposed to further include the pertinent Chief Editor and the Social Media Coordinator (Social Media Guidelines, p. 21). An additional notification of DW's Legal Advisor was considered in case of prosecutable user comments (p. 21). If general questions about *Deutsche Welle* reached an editorial office via social web platforms the editor in charge was supposed to get in touch with DW's Corporate Communications Department in

order to formulate an answer (DW_Strat_1, §25). The same was true for situations where a so-called "shitstorm" was developing. In this case, the Social Media Guidelines envisaged collaboration between the editorial unit, the Social Media Coordinator and the Corporate Communications Department. In case of major corporate changes at DW, it was tried to avoid repeated checks with the Corporate Communications Department by anticipating user feedback and pre-formulating appropriate answers: "Whoever is working the shift has the answer already and does not need to double-check, but knows `This is the in-house position and I can explain it´" (DW_Strat_3, §9).

This general division of work seemed to be commonly approved by the strategists. Only the Head of "Hintergrund Deutschland" formulated a "medium-term goal" to get staff members who aren't specialized in social media more involved. She was, for example, in favor of authors following up on their pieces on social media "because I do think that you get a different sense for it [user feedback, I.D]" (DW_Strat_3, §1). While having more editorial staff members interact with the social web audience was not exactly a goal at the organizational level, getting more editorial staff members to take social media audiences into consideration was in fact regarded something desirable. A major strategic measure in this respect was the integration of social media feedback into editorial meetings (DW_Strat_1, §25). Accordingly, the Social Media Guidelines stated:

> What we publish on social media – and what reactions come after – is part of the daily editorial conference: That's where we talk about the content and where we give feedback, just like we do it with online, audio and video content too. (Social Media Guidelines, pp. 14–15)

This attempt to "mainstream" social media feedback into daily editorial routines was seen as slowly coming to fruition. The Head of "Hintergrund Deutschland" observed that while authors still considered it more valuable to have their articles published on the landing page of DW's website than having them published on one of DW's social web accounts, they increasingly "find it cool to learn that the article did best out of all other articles on Facebook today and [...] had so-and-so many comments below" (DW_Strat_3, §21).

At the level of the language services, it was confirmed by the interviewees that cooperating with colleagues from the larger newsroom was essential for relationship management. At DW Russian, Social Media Editors were said to be in close

contact with other relevant staff members of the Russian language service – even locally. The Social Media Coordinator explained:

> We attach great importance to having the Social Media Editor sit in the midst of where it's all happening. So, she always sits at the desk where the news editor sits, the desk with a background in politics and economics. There definitely is an exchange there. (DW_Ru_2 §28)

DW Russian's Chief Editor, too, emphasized this spatial proximity (DW_Ru_1, §17). It was deemed crucial for a short response time and also for generating topics from user comments. Even the involvement of staff members who were not designated Social Media Editors seemed to be quite far-reaching at DW Russian. The Social Media Editor said it was "clearly supported that authors with well-kept profiles engage in *Facebook* discussions" (DW_Ru_3, §25). The number of editors who did so, however, was said to be quite small. Rather than directly interacting with the *Facebook* audience the colleagues were said to be interested in the click rates of their articles (DW_Ru_2, §20).

This was also the case at DW English where the Chief Editor had observed changes in her larger team's attitudes towards direct user feedback from the social web: "They consider it increasingly important because after all they are also egoistic. They do find it great when their stuff gets shared and linked and tweeted" (DW_Eng_1, §5). This represented a departure from their early attitudes when social web feedback used to be a cause for uneasiness. She attributed this to the fact that as an international broadcaster DW used to be quite removed from its audiences unlike local newspapers who know and even see their audiences. DW English's Social Media Editor did not mention any difficulties when she talked about how she gets in touch with colleagues in case of social web comments referring to their articles. She gave an example of a successful collaboration with one of her "regular" colleagues. Together, they solved an issue of political incorrectness which had been pointed out by a social web user (DW_Eng_2, §13–14). The way she expected her colleagues to engage in relationship management in the social web was by being conscious about it:

> I think what needs to be in every journalist's mind is the fact that social media is a part of the work. And they don't need to know how to do it, but they have to maybe do things that make it easier for the social media person to put it on Facebook and take care of it. (DW_Eng_2, §32)

A lack of such consciousness was actually bemoaned at DW German. The interviews with DW German's staff members revealed that they relied heavily on the authors or editors of the published content to give appropriate feedback to user enquiries. DW German's Social Media Editor gave an example of a case where she needed to know why a certain headline had been chosen so she could explain the decision to a user who found the headline misleading. Only after having consulted the editor she was able to do so (DW_Deu_2, §7). However, both interviewees at DW German pointed out that they usually encountered difficulties when trying to confer with the relevant colleagues. The colleagues were either hard to reach by phone (DW_Deu_2, §8) or they did not reply to social web-related e-mails (Deu_1, §15). The interviewees felt that their fellow staff members attached little importance to what is going on in the social web as a realm separate from DW's website. Even in editorial meetings the Social Media Editor sensed a lack of acceptance: "If you want to say something about this topic [the social web, I.D] you need to wrap it in a very interesting or original way so that you get a certain degree of attention. It's not that easy" (DW_Deu_2 §8). It seems that the guidelines in regards to staff involvement in the social web had not yet been internalized by all parts of staff which made it difficult for DW German to put them into practice.

Dismissive attitudes towards social web audiences among the broader DW staff were assumed to be mainly caused by prejudice. DW German's Social Media Coordinator reportedly felt challenged by colleagues who questioned that social web users can be taken seriously at all and who wondered: "Oh Facebook, that's where people write what they had for breakfast, right? Do these people even understand what we want from them?" (DW_Deu_1 §17) She regarded such prejudices as something "we need to talk about" (DW_Deu_1, §17) which can be seen as a signal to the organizational level. The Chief Editor of DW English also voiced concerns in this respect. She was, for example, bewildered by the fact that parts of the older generation of editors failed to regard critique from social web users as constructive while they did appreciate critique from letters to the editors by radio listeners (DW_Eng_1, §5). This lack of respect towards social web users reportedly left her with quite a lot of explanatory work within her team.

At the organizational level, the problem was diagnosed as one occurring typically with staff members who were short of direct experience with the social web. The Head of "Hintergrund Deutschland", for instance, observed that colleagues with only a hazy notion of what is going on in the social web and no clear image

of the audiences are usually skeptical towards it (DW_Strat_3, §21). From a more general point of view, such skepticism was attributed to the fact that journalists were losing their powerful status as part of opening up towards the audience. According to the Head of "Hintergrund Deutschland", some editors at DW struggled with not having the last word in the social web:

> Journalists have a hard time surrendering their interpretational sovereignty. This is where they all have to go outside their comfort zone. To accept that one knows it all, but that other people simply have a different opinion and that they hold it against you [...]. (DW_Strat_3, §20)

Due to this "teacher-student perspective or `let me explain the world to you´ attitude" (DW_Strat_2, §18) among some of the editors the Strategic Planner perceived it as a huge challenge to ensure that a real dialogue at eye level is taking place on DW's social web accounts.

The strategists generally characterized DW as an overly thoughtful and slow institution when it comes to adapting to new developments such as direct contact with the audience. The Head of "Hintergrund Deutschland" brought this up especially with respect to other European journalistic players in the social web. Compared to them, she argued, DW pondered quite a lot before taking new steps in the social web realm. This, however, was not entirely considered a bad thing by the strategists:

> Sometimes it slows us down, but not in a way that keeps us from doing things. Rather in a way that you have to think twice and that's most often advisable. And I do think that the outcome is absolutely reliable because of that. We can present it anywhere, to our colleagues or to committees, and say: This is how we did it and it was okay. (DW_Strat_3, §16)

The Strategic Planner, too, had accepted that "DW won't be quick" (DW_Strat_2, §34), but assured that she generally appreciated the social web-related decision-making at the management level of the institution: "They are generally willing to try things out and they are also open towards new things. A lot has changed at DW especially during the last couple of years, so I am not pessimistic really" (DW_Strat_2, §34).

7.3.3 Review of P3 and conclusion

The third proposition relating to RQ1 assumed that *DW represents a rather open, progressive type of news organization when it comes to relating to users in the social web* (see Section 5.2). To what extent this proposition holds true can now be reviewed on the basis of the results.

Interviews across different levels made evident that open and progressive attitudes towards direct journalism-user relationships definitely existed at DW. They were, for instance, reflected in Social Media Editors' appreciation for the closeness to their audience in the social web or in the Strategic Planner's understanding of journalist-user relationships as those of friends. Such attitudes indeed reflect an embrace of digital cultural standards which Robinson (2010) ascribe to "convergers", Hedman and Djerf-Pierre (2013) to "enthusiastic activists" or Gulyas (2016) to "architects".

Yet, what also resonated in large parts of the interviews was that even if interviewees had originally approached relationship management with an open, enthusiastic attitude they could not keep that up over time. In fact, many a Social Media Editor's attitude towards social web users seemed to have sobered up in the face of difficult realities of having to deal with "problematic regulars". Unavoidably, users who are frequent, opinionated commenters on DW's social web accounts and who are prone to violating the Netiquette make a bigger impression on Social Media Editors than others. While at DW German and DW English these regulars were perceived as not more than annoying, at DW Russian they represented a constant source of unrest and determined large parts of the language service's relationship management. In line with this, DW Russian was the only language service in this study that had disabled the function for direct user requests on its *Facebook* account. Thus, other than open attitudes the study also disclosed ambivalent attitudes towards direct journalism-audience relationships among the social web staff at DW. In this respect, the staff resembled the "pragmatic conformists" as identified by Hedman and Djerf-Pierre (2013) or the "observers" as identified by Gulyas (2016). These attitudes, however, did not exist per se, but had formed based on direct experience with certain ever-present users.

Last but not least, dismissive attitudes towards direct journalism-user relationships were also detected in this study. These were reportedly especially pronounced with staff members who were not directly in touch with social web

audiences. Examples given in the interviews referred to colleagues who thought social web users cannot be taken seriously and who were not interested in hearing about social web feedback in editorial meetings or in replying to pertinent e-mail enquiries from their social web colleagues. This kind of attitude clearly reflects that of Robinson's "traditionalists" who believe "that journalists held a somewhat superior position in society as an authoritative figure" (p. 131) and thus cannot be bothered with opening up towards the social web audience. Yet, not all of DW's editorial staff members who weren't directly in touch with social web audiences displayed dismissive attitudes. The interviewees talked about colleagues who willingly collaborated with Social Media Editors and who became more and more interested in social web statistics. So, even if these staff members were only passive users of social web formats, they were relatively open and progressive when it comes to relating to users in the social web.

In summary, it can be stated that the third proposition turned out only partly true: There actually was a range of attitudes which constitute what type of news organization DW represents in terms of relating to users in the social web. The spectrum of these attitudes ranged from open and progressive convergers to dismissive traditionalists. Not surprisingly, traditionalist attitudes were held much more by those staff members who had no direct experience with social web users. This, however, did not necessarily mean that staff members who had direct experience with social web users were always completely positive and open towards this direct relationship. At times, their initial progressive and open attitudes seemed to have in fact made way for somewhat ambivalent views as direct contact with certain regular users had turned out be more strenuous than fruitful.

7.4 Answer to RQ1

This subsection provides the answer to RQ1 ("*How is Deutsche Welle's social web usage to be characterized with regard to practices of identity, information, and relationship management at the output stage?*"). This final answer to the first research question summarizes the professional practices that were found to be part of journalistic social web usage at DW. The empirical reconstruction of these practices relied on Schmidt's (2011b) division of social web usage into three practices: Identity management, information management, and relationship management.

Acting on the assumption that practices are framed by structural dimensions, the according analysis not only identifies individual journalists' social web activities, but also considers rules, relations, and technical affordances structuring these activities. The manifestation of the three central practices at DW is moreover interpreted here on the basis of theoretical concepts of international broadcasting and journalism in the social web as discussed in the theory part.

Identity management

We start off with the characterization of DW's social web practices of identity management at the output stage. Professional identity management in the social web was understood as involving activities that uncover a sense of the professional self that acts in the social web.

In this respect, it was first of all examined what kinds of activities led to DW becoming present in the social web in the first place. The results show that it had been mostly single-handed action by individual pioneers at the level of the language services who had created the first social web accounts. They were driven by the wish to broaden their service's reach (DW Russian and DW German) and to engage directly with the audience (DW English). DW's dialogical mission as stipulated in the DW Act, which can be thought of as an *explicit procedural rule* to structure DW's social web usage, turned out to have played only a minor role as a motive for making DW accessible in the social web. Thus, the dialogical function of international broadcasting was neither prominently reflected in DW's identity management as a competitive advantage of DW (Kleinsteuber, 2003) nor as a new paradigm in international broadcasting (Hafez, 2007; Lynch, 2010; Riordan, 2004). Interestingly enough though, the public service function of international broadcasting, which Youmans (2012) expects to be losing relevance in the age of global news flows, did play a role here. In fact, it served as DW Russian's main driver for opening its first social web accounts. DW Russian saw a chance to better fulfill its compensatory function in the social web as its target audience of Western-oriented Russian-speakers had started to shun the established Russian media and to resort to the social web for news.

Unlike DW's very first online activities as described by Kleinsteuber (2007), the broadcaster's first social web activities did not happen "in the absence of strategic interests" (p. 7). In fact, the results reveal that the decision to be present in the

social web had mostly been a parallel development taking place both in editorial units and in departments of the strategically operating division "Distribution". This parallel social web activity of editorial and strategic units was soon harmonized, for example by founding a cross-organizational working group for social media, by developing the Social Media Guidelines, and by appointing the position of the Social Media Manager. This does not mean that these developments weren't also playful and incremental. At least on the part of the editorial units, individual creative pioneers had often implemented their ideas single-handedly. In contrast to the initial online activities at DW, however, these first activities in the social web seemed to have been quickly linked to the organizational level and concerted with activities of the "Distribution" division. Consequently, opening a new DW social web account was no longer a matter of individual ad hoc action at the time of the examination, but required adherence to an organizationally pre-defined procedure (written concept, approval of Chief Editor and Social Media Manager). On top of that, plenty of meeting occasions such as a regulars' table, a jour fixe, or workshops were established to serve as institutionalized coordination mechanisms between the organizational level and the editorial level to achieve concerted social web activity across DW. This development makes apparent that over time the power to decide which social web format is adequate to pursue one's goals shifted from the editorial level of the language services to the organizational level of the strategic departments. In other words, *adequacy rules* which had largely been defined implicitly at the editorial level at the very beginning of social web activity had clearly become an organizational task which finds explicit expression in the Social Web Guidelines. This swift advance from the editorial to the organizational level seems to have been facilitated by the fact that the WWW had already been acknowledged as one pillar of DW's portfolio in the *Deutsche Welle* Act at the time when DW's social web activities had started. Apparently, this *explicit procedural rule* allowed for a quick and structured regulation of these activities on the part of the organization. At the editorial level, opinions on the increased organizational regulation of social web activity were found to be diverse: While organizational regulation was well-received and actively supported at the English language service, it was seen ambivalently at the German language. The Russian language service, in turn, did not even consider itself much affected by it. After all, the "strategic superstructure" which the Social Media Guidelines were said to offer was found to grant leeway for the distinctiveness of editorial units and did not challenge their editorial sovereignty.

Acting as a professional self in the social web for DW predominantly meant acting on behalf of DW as an organization. To make an appearance as an individual professional was something the interviewed Social Web Editors felt they only did and should do to the extent that they gave the social web output a certain spin. Otherwise, they deemed it most appropriate to act as representatives of DW and its mission. Apparently, this perception structured identity management at DW as an *implicit procedural rule*. It was also shared by the Chief Editors and strategists interviewed. Efforts to personalize DW in the social web were found to be limited to adding the initials of the Social Web Editors to the output item and posting occasional "behind the scenes" pictures. Internal DW topics made up only 1.2 percent of DW's social web output. To intensify DW's personalization efforts was found to be something the Chief Editors and strategists contemplated only in the form of showcasing the expertise of individual DW journalists. However, concerns about having to explain these individuals' absence in case of holidays or a change of employment were causing internal reservations at DW in this respect. In light of these results, it may be stated that one *implicit procedural rule* structuring identity management at DW was that social web activity needed to be representative of the organization not the individual Social Web Editor. At the same time, however, showing that there is a human being behind each social web output item and getting recognition for the work involved turned out to be an important issue for the Social Web Editors. Within this balancing act, the relatively discrete display of initials of Social Web Editors seemed to represent a satisfying compromise solution for the time being.

The analysis of DW's identity management furthermore disclosed that a widely-perceived challenge was reconciling international broadcasting functions with social web activity. Interviewees at DW German and DW English pointed to political obligations such as underpinning the state or adhering to German law that, in their perception, contrasted with the informal and laissez-faire communication practice that is common and sought-after in the social web. For interviewees at DW Russian, it was first and foremost DW's status as a trustworthy public service news source that prevented them from acting casually in the social web. At least partly, the friction between international broadcasting functions and social web activity seems to be caused by the t*echnological spirit* of social web applications. The interviewees at the editorial level felt that social network services such as *Facebook* and social sharing platforms such as *YouTube* were intended to be used

for a playful, easy-going exchange among equals. This technological spirit contrasted with the formal and serious communication practice that the political and the public service function of international broadcasting suggest. Pursuing these functions eventually made DW staff members feel like they were using the applications incorrectly. *Relations*, too, appeared to play a role in this respect as staff members also felt that their formal and serious communication practice was not very well-received by the social web users. At the organizational level this inner conflict among editorial staff members was known. It was tried to be solved by reassuring them that DW's profile as a reliable and trustworthy expert was the way to go, even if it was an uncommon way according to social web logics. Conceptually, the image of the reliable and trustworthy expert picks up on the political function and on the compensatory public service function, but does not reflect much of the dialogical function. Emphasizing DW's dialogical function would actually have seemed quite promising for resolving this inner conflict as the implications of the dialogical function are largely consistent with the technological spirit of a playful, easy-going exchange among equals.

At the same time, DW's identity management in the form of a Germany focus revealed a pursuit of the political function of international broadcasting. More precisely, it revealed an overt pursuit of it. The results show that a focus on Germany dominated DW's social web output across language services. Especially at DW German, it was understood as an important task to provide the social web users with a multifaceted image of Germany. Apparently, *relations* played a role in this respect as the services largely perceived their audience to be keen on Germany-related topics and to react positively to them. This focus on Germany forms a certain contrast to the regionalized coverage as stipulated in the latest amendment of the *Deutsche Welle* Act. The *explicit procedural rule* that DW "should provide a forum [...] for German and other points of view" (Deutsche Welle, 2004, p. 8) seemed to yield to a stronger *implicit procedural rule* or internalized duty to focus on conveying a comprehensive image of Germany (Hafez, 2007). The only language service problematizing this overt German agenda was DW Russian. Here, propaganda accusations (Kuhl, 2002; Meyen, 2008; Schneider, 1998; Youmans, 2012) were indeed a reality which the language service faced and tried to dissolve by reporting critically on Germany, that is, providing high-quality reporting (Kleinsteuber, 2007; Zöllner, 2002). Accordingly, the Russian service showed the lowest share of references to Germany in its social web output.

DW's identity management was moreover found to reflect a public service function in the sense that its social web output mainly focused on hard news and was targeted at information seekers. DW's self-conception turned out to be clearly that of a provider of serious news. That the dissemination of news represented its core competency (Hoff 2008) was especially stressed by DW Russian's staff members who, after experimenting with a softer news mix in the social web, had returned to the serious content they wanted to be associated with. Nonetheless, across DW soft news were still considered legitimate components to complete the social web news mix, especially at DW German. Yet, soft news were not supposed to be put out to an extent that would question DW's status as a serious news provider. After all, the main characteristic of the broadcaster's target group in the social was above-average information seeking activity. In this respect, the social web target group was identical with DW's conventional target group, even if age-wise DW hoped to reach somewhat younger audience segments in the social web.

Information management

Now we turn to the characterization of DW's practices of information management in the social web. Professional journalistic information management in the social web was defined as encompassing practices of selecting information to be published in the social web and practices of determining how this information is published in the social web.

As part of the analysis of DW's information management it was first of all examined how the pertinent workflow was organized. At the language services under study, information management in the social web was taken care of in dedicated social media shifts. In the case of DW German and DW English a core group of three to four freelancers specialized in social web formats worked these shifts as Social Media Editors. As of recently, both services had introduced one steady coordinating position ("Social Media Coordinator") to supplement the work of the freelancers by ensuring certain standards and continuity beyond single social media shifts. The introduction of these coordinating positions suggests that there had been a lack of *procedural rules* structuring DW's information management. On the part of the Social Media Editors this lack had caused a degree of uncertainty and inability to act. Thus, a main task of the newly introduced Social Media Coordinators was now to establish *explicit procedural rules* for information management

that would be valid beyond Social Media Editors' individual situational actions. At DW English, the issue of continuity in information management had been solved by creating one permanent Social Media Editor position. Here, one central person was in charge of all aspects of the language service's social web activities.

Across DW it was generally considered a key requirement for the job of a Social Media Editor to be able to cope with the fast pace of the social web. DW German's Social Media Editor, for instance, was a trained journalist who, by her own admission, always has had a preference for fast and focused reporting. Whether a Social Media Editor had been formally trained as a journalist or not turned out to be of varying importance across the language services. At DW Russian an affinity for journalism and an understanding of DW's mandate sufficed to become a Social Media Editor and to be accepted as a full member of DW Russian's editorial team. At DW English, in contrast, the Social Media Editor's position deliberately included some duties of a "regular" science editor which was said to lend the position more credence towards the rest of the team. So, in terms of the question whether Social Media Editors are mere "media workers" (Lietsala & Sirkunnen, 2008) or whether they need to be taken more seriously in journalistic terms (Bunz, 2008), it can at least be stated at this point that proper journalistic training played a secondary role for the concrete tasks of Social Media Editors at DW. It seemed more important as a marker for Social Media Editors to be respected among their peers in the newsroom. For a conclusive answer to this question we will furthermore consult the results on phrasing social web output at DW.

The analysis of DW's information management furthermore focused on interviewees' considerations in terms of selecting social web content and on features of the social web output. The interviewees at the organizational level did not consider it very constructive to try and formulate generally applicable *procedural rules* for the selection of social web content at DW. The strategists acted on the assumption that each language service would develop its own selection criteria based on its specific experience of "what works". At the level of the language services, it was indeed common to point to a rather ambiguous gut feeling of Social Media Editors in terms of selecting content for the social web. Hence, *procedural rules* guiding the Social Media Editors' selection of social web content seemed to exist *implicitly* rather than explicitly. At the same time, the parameters for measuring "what works" (referrers to DW.de, number of likes, comments or shares etc.) were explicitly stated in the organization-wide Social Media Guidelines. Likewise, the

Social Media Editors were keen on generating comments, shares, likes, or clicks in large quantities with the output they select for the social web. Thus, *relations* (in the form of likes, comments, shares, or clicks) played a significant role in shaping the implicit procedural rules for selecting social web content. A risk to "conflat[e] relevance with popularity" (Heinderyckx, 2015, p. 260) seemed highest at the level of the language services where the Social Media Editors derived instant gratification from these relations. At the organizational level, though, it was emphasized that generating large amounts of likes, comments, shares or clicks must not happen at the expense of DW's reputation as a serious news provider. In conclusion, it can be stated that considerations to increase "spreadibility" (Phillips, 2012; Schmidt, 2011b, p. 104) indeed guided social web-related information management at DW. As a consequence, edginess, wittiness, and visual presentability seemed to have gained importance as news values which, at times, even justified that Social Media Editors selected relatively mundane or void content as social web output. This could indeed be interpreted as a kind of tabloidization (Blom & Hansen, 2015; Josephi, 2016) of journalism practiced in the social web. Also, *Code* seemed to factor in this respect: By allowing a constant monitoring of user reactions and user ratings based on quantitative web statistics, social web applications encouraged obsessive behavior on the part of Social Media Editors which may lead to an overemphasis of user reactions and user ratings in judging their journalistic performance.

Let us now turn to the features of DW's social web output examined as a part of DW's information management. The study looked, for instance, into the amount of social web output specifically produced for social web purposes, the amount of links to external content, and the amount of links to DW content. The pertinent quantitative results strongly suggest that DW used its social web accounts predominantly as additional distribution channels for its self-produced website content. This "distribution imperative" was actually found to be questioned in the interviews at the level of the language services. Among the editorial social web staff there was a sentiment that they wanted to be more than just distributers of DW.de links which reflects Paulussen et al.'s (2016) claim that journalism needs to acknowledge social web formats as more than just "extra platform[s] for news dissemination" (p. 432). DW's social web staff was in favor of producing genuine social web content unconstrained by the established editorial standard procedures. These established editorial standard procedures, however, seemed to act as *implicit procedural rules* which restrained the social web staff from producing a

considerable amount of distinct social web output even though, so they argued, this could be done without much additional effort. At the organizational level, however, the opposite view prevailed: Producing distinct social web content was regarded as too resource-consuming. A future vision was that any new journalistic project at DW would to be conceptualized as a multimedia project that yields potential output for all channels.

Linking external content was actually acknowledged at the organizational level as a common social web practice. The Social Media Guidelines contained detailed *explicit procedural rules* in this respect as DW's legal liability extended to external content once it was linked from DW accounts. This might have acted as a deterrent for the Social Media Editors and could be an explanation why they hardly ever linked external content in their language service's social web output. Against this backdrop, it becomes obvious that gatewatching activities of "making available (a collection of) pointers to reports available elsewhere" (Bruns, 2005, p. 19) might actually be inhibited by practical (time) constraints of everyday journalistic information management. If Social Media Editors need to scrutinize web pages entirely to make sure that their content is legally safe before linking it, they might as well save time and effort by just resorting to news output by their own trusted colleagues.

Pictures and teaser texts turned out to be prominent features of DW's social web output. Consequently, the Social Media Editors had a great demand for pictures with publishing rights for the social web. The *explicit procedural rule* that usage rights for social web content need to be secured seemed to be a generally important factor for DW's information management. This rule was not only explicitly stated in the Social Web Guidelines, it was also detailed in DW's internal legal information system "REIS". On DW's *YouTube* accounts it had a significant impact on the posting frequency of the various language services as self-produced video material with publishing rights was not always available in large quantities to all language services. On DW's *Facebook* accounts it rather had an impact on the manufacturing of a post for which the Social Media Editors would have liked to be able to draw from a wider selection of pictures. This demand on the part of the Social Media Editors, however, seemed not yet internalized organization-wide as the picture editors at DW who compile photos for publication reportedly often failed to keep it in mind.

When it comes to phrasing social web output DW's Social Media Editors pointed to specific challenges: Among other things, the phrasing of social web output required rephrasing website teasers, seeing things from the users' perspective, reducing complexity, finding a tone that is witty but not sloppy and that makes it difficult for "haters" to deliberately misunderstand the post. These results suggest that the work of DW's Social Media Editors was more than just "facilitating the site technically and maintaining and keeping the content creating community active" (Lietsala & Sirkkunnen, 2008, p. 155) and that the work actually isn't "far from the traditional work of journalists" (p. 155). Whether or not the Social Media Editors' work is taken seriously in journalistic terms (Bunz, 2008), however, seemed to be a different story. The interviewed strategists explicitly acknowledged the time and effort that Social Media Editors spent on phrasing social web output. Nevertheless, the Social Media Editors conveyed a strong need to highlight how complex a task it is to phrase social web output. Apparently, they felt that they were not given enough credit for their job – neither from their newsroom peers, nor from the users. The editorial social web staff perceived users' reactions to any minor editorial mishap as quite merciless. In this sense, *relations* put the language services under quite some pressure when phrasing social web output.

In terms of addressing the users, DW turned out to act quite cautiously in its social web output. Especially DW German's and DW Russian's users were rarely addressed in the language services' social web teasers and, if so, it was mostly in an indirect way. What seemed to inhibit DW German in this respect was mainly a perception of acting inappropriately as a media house if one talked directly to users in a casual tone. At DW Russian it had more to do with trying to provide trolls with less of a target by focusing on delivering the news report as such. DW English stood out against the other examined language services in so far as it addressed its social web users directly in most of its social web output and was quite keen on establishing a voice that is close to social web users. What becomes obvious here is that different factors were at play structuring the language services' individual information management: At DW German there seemed to be an *implicit procedural rule* suggesting to remain rather formal, while at DW Russian and DW English *relations* caused the language services to address their users in particular, yet dissimilar ways. Maybe that's why at the organizational level it was stated that DW was still in the process of finding a right balance when it comes to phrasing social web output.

Lastly, the analysis of DW's information management disclosed two overarching challenges that DW was faced with in the social web. The first challenge was largely connected to *code*. It arose from the fact that the uses of social web applications – both as intended by the developers as well as interpreted from the users' perspective – were constantly subject to change. At the organizational level this was said to create a pressure for being ready to innovate which public service broadcasters weren't exactly used to. At the level of the language services this demand was tried to be met with a lot of experiments and attempts to find unique solutions, but at times it also caused a sense of deficiency.

The second overarching challenge was online security. As the *relations* of a professional social web account do not necessarily need to be mutual, hackers and/or secret service agents can connect with DW via its social web accounts. Apparently, the *code* of social web applications had borne security loopholes in the past which had enabled these actors to temporarily harm DW's work. At the organizational level, DW reacted by laying down *explicit procedural rules* to at least minimize these security loopholes from within the organization to the extent possible.

Relationship management

Finally, we turn to characterizing DW's social web practices of relationship management at the output stage. Professional relationship management in the social web was understood as activities that uncover professional attitudes towards DW's new direct exposure to the audience in the social web. The results on relationship management at DW were divided according to two aspects: Relationship management based on direct contact with social web audiences and relationship management as a concern of the broader newsroom.

As part of the first aspect it was examined how the interviewed DW staff members (who were all more or less directly in charge of DW's relationship management) imagined their audience. Interviewees at the editorial level imagined their audiences to have concrete reasons to connect with DW in the social web, for instance a special interest in Germany or a particular political stance which the audience members either want to find confirmed or countered on DW's social web accounts. On the part of the strategists, these motives were interpreted as characteristics of a well-informed elite that is not always easy to handle because of its strong opinions. This image of a challenging audience was very salient with DW

Russian where interviewees assumed that significant parts of the audience were attracted to the language service's social web accounts because they wanted to actively oppose "the West" there. Images of an audience looking for community and exchange were detected at DW English and in the Social Media Guidelines. Between the staff members at the editorial level and the staff members at the organizational level there was clearly a difference in how they formed their audience images. The audience images of the editorial staff members obviously relied on *relations,* that is, the direct experience with users they are technically and socially connected to via the social web accounts. The strategists rather concentrated on the social web applications' *code* by forming their audience images largely based on quantitative web statistics. Interestingly enough, they furthermore drew inferences from themselves about the social web audiences which could be interpreted as an indication for group identification with other "fellow" social web users.

As for concrete relationships being formed as part of DW's relationship management, the analysis showed that this usually happened with users who commented frequently on the social web accounts. The Social Media Editors referred to these commenters as "top dogs" or "the regulars". What was perceived as problematic was that these frequent commenters were rather keen on stirring up controversies and prone to violating DW's Netiquette. Thus, the Social Media Editors commonly formed user relationships under a certain pressure of having to keep these "problematic regulars" at bay. This pressure seemed most intense at DW Russian where shit storms and political trolling was said to be a common phenomenon. Against this background, DW Russian had disabled the function for direct user posts on its *Facebook* page while DW German and DW English allowed for these posts. Occasional positive examples of journalism-audience relationships were stated in the interviews too, for instance when Social Media Editors experienced that they could serve social web users with advice on personal matters. Those rare examples complied with the ideal friend-like and equal relationship between DW and its social web audience as envisioned at the organizational level. Despite this ideal, the data revealed that greetings, farewells, or other wishes were uncommon in DW's social web output. Instead, there was a great deal of reluctance at the editorial level in terms of bonding with the social web users. Here again, an *explicit procedural rule* as stated in the Social Media Guidelines ("be as casual, informal, and as personal as possible") seemed to yield to a stronger *implicit procedural rule* at the editorial level that suggests that it is inappropriate

for an institution with a long journalistic tradition and a representative function to communicate with its audience on equal terms. This seems to confirm Canter's (2013) observation that the transition to an informal, personal, and reciprocal journalism-audience relationship is difficult to "incorporate[..] into organizational norms and routines" (p. 491).

Let us now turn to relationship management as a concern of the broader newsroom. As the only staff members directly in touch with the social web audience, DW's Social Web Editors were expected to inform colleagues from various divisions (starting with their own language service, to the Social Media Coordinator, to DW's Legal advisor and DW's Corporate Communications Division) about relevant critique, hints, or information reaching DW via its social web accounts. Likewise, these colleagues were expected to attend to the matters brought forward by the Social Media Editors and, if needed, collaborate with them in formulating replies to social web users. This communication flow was supposed to happen on a daily basis as part of the editorial conferences, not just on acute demand. This is at least how it was envisioned at the organizational level in the form of *explicit procedural rules*. At the level of the language services, however, this seemed to work out with varying degrees of success. At DW Russian, it seemed to run smoothly to involve the broader newsroom in relationship management. The Social Web Editors here literally worked in the midst of their colleagues which facilitated close cooperation. The Social Web Editor at DW English did not seem to encounter major difficulties when conferring with colleagues about input from social web users either. At both language services, the passively involved staff was said to be increasingly interested in the click rates of their articles in the social web. At DW German, however, it seemed more difficult to get the broader newsroom involved in relationship management. User input from the social web was said to be commonly met with ignorance by colleagues of the broader newsroom, no matter whether the Social Web Coordinator reported about it in the editorial conference or whether the Social Media Editors tried to contact colleagues by phone or email. At DW English, too, it was brought up that some of its staff members assumed dismissive attitudes towards social web users. These attitudes commonly implied that social web users can generally not be taken seriously. According to the interviewees, such views were rather typical for staff members with little direct social web experience. Thus, these staff members' audience images can be deemed to be framed by *relations* too, more specifically framed by the absence of direct experience with the social web and its users in general.

Looking at the different practices of relationship management at DW through the lens of journalistic boundary work (Lewis, 2012) offers interesting insights. It exposes that insisting on journalistic professionalism might not only work as a means to draw a line between journalists and users. In fact, the boundary work of some of DW's journalists, particularly those with little social web experience, seemed to relate to their social web-savvy colleagues whom they denied journalistic seriousness. These staff members considered social web audiences "abnormal" audiences whereas DW's social web strategists, being social web users themselves, were found to identify with social web audiences. Thus, one variant of boundary work at DW seemed to rest upon social web usage as a marker: It was about drawing a line between those who did not use the social web and those who did. This suggests that journalistic boundary work may also come into effect in the form of internal boundaries within a media organization between staff members who are dismissive of social web usage and staff members who are open-minded towards social web usage. DW was characterized as a comparatively slow media organization by its social web strategists when it comes to adapting to digital innovations. This slowness, along with the fact that the attitudes of DW's staff towards social web users were nonetheless quite diverse, might actually have prevented this friction between users and non-users of the social web from escalating.

8 Democratic relevance of journalistic social web activity at the response stage

This chapter presents the results produced to answer RQ2 (*"How is Deutsche Welle's social web activity at the response stage to be classified with regard to democratic relevance?"*). The study acts on the assumption that an assessment of a media organization's engagement at the response stage needs to take into account what kind of user comments the media organization is faced with (see Section 5.2). Accordingly, Section 8.1 presents the results that show how the user comments on DW's social web accounts was constituted in terms of democratic relevance. Section 8.2 then presents evidence on DW's handling of user comments with regard to democratic standards. In both sections the results are provided with due regard to remarkable similarities and differences across language services, but they are generally summed up as a whole, that is "across DW". The last section finally provides the answer to RQ2.

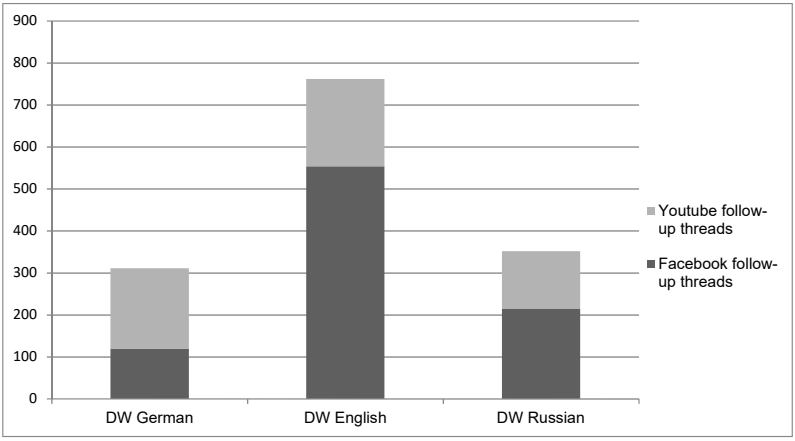
A preliminary understanding of the communication dynamics at the response stage can be gained by looking at key characteristics of the examined commentary. In total, the largest number of comment threads, namely 762, was recorded at the response stage of DW English during the four examined weeks in 2013, followed by DW Russian with 352 comments threads, and DW German with 311. Figure 13 provides an overview of the amount of comment threads at the response stage per language service.

Out of the 762 comment threads following up on DW English's social web output, 554 were recorded on *Facebook* and 208 on *YouTube*. On *Facebook*, 549 comment threads were user-initiated and five were initially authored by DW English. On *YouTube*, 203 comments thread were initiated by users and five by DW English.

As for DW German's response stage, 120 comment threads were recorded on *Facebook* and 191 on *YouTube*. Out of the 120 comments threads recorded on Facebook, 115 were user-initiated and five were initiated by DW German. On YouTube, users initiated 188 comment threads and DW German three.

DW Russian's response stage was made up by 215 *Facebook* comments threads and 137 *YouTube* comment threads. On *Facebook*, 197 comment threads were initiated by users and 18 by DW Russian. On *YouTube*, all 137 comment threads were initially authored by users.

Figure 13: Quantity of comment threads at the response stage per language service



8.1 User comments

The user commentary examined in this study consisted of 303 user-initiated comments threads at the response stage of DW German, 752 user-initiated comment threads at the response stage of DW English, and 334 user-initiated threads at the response stage of DW Russian. The key question here is how this user commentary was constituted in terms of the democratic relevance. The data reveals the following overall pattern in this respect: A vast majority of the commentary lived up to discursive standards in terms of civility and relevance; a notable share of comment threads was in line with dialogical or discursive requirements when it comes to including new viewpoints, relating to other users, or giving reasons; only a small minority of the commentary fulfilled dialogical or discursive standards in terms of contextualizing the topic or the discussion and giving feedback on the journalistic product.

This pattern sets the structure for this section. Subsection 8.1.1 presents the results on user commentary that mainly lived up to high democratic standards. Subsection 8.1.2 provides the results on user commentary that partly fulfilled dialogical or discursive standards. Subsection 8.1.3 presents the results on user commentary that only complied with a relatively low democratic standard. After a conclusion in Subsection 8.1.4 the section delivers an answer to the sub-question RQ2a in Subsection 8.1.5.

8.1.1 *Where users largely fulfilled high democratic standards: Relevance and civility*

Most of the user commentary lived up to discursive standards in terms of civility and in terms of relevance.

Across DW, 89 percent of the user commentary was free of harsh language and thus fulfilled the standards of discourse (see Table 22). Another 5.8 percent of the user commentary across DW bore derogative content but was not explicitly directed at other people which would be in line with dialogical standards. In total, 94.8 percent of the user commentary qualified as at least dialogical. The remaining 5.2 percent of the commentary across DW contained personal assaults, either on persons within or outside the immediate conversation. This signifies the percentage of comment threads that only qualified as everyday talk.

Between language services the user commentary did not differ significantly ($\chi^2 = 8.753$, $df = 4$, $n = 1{,}389$, $p = .056$). In fact, there was a quite similar pattern across language services, with user commentary following up on DW English's social web output displaying the lowest percentage of incivility (9.0%) and user commentary following up on DW Russian's social web output displaying the highest (14.7%).

Table 22: Civility of comment threads in % (and in total numbers)

	DW German $n = 303$	**DW English** $n = 752$	**DW Russian** $n = 334$	**Across DW** $n = 1{,}389$
Civil	88.1% (267)	91.0% (684)	85.3% (288)	89.0% (1,236)
Derogative remarks	5.9% (18)	5.2% (39)	7.2% (24)	5.8% (81)
Offensive remarks	5.9% (18)	3.9% (29)	7.5% (25)	5.2% (72)

A majority of the examined user commentary proved to be relevant in the sense that it related in some way or another to the output issue (see Table 23). Across DW, 86.8 percent of the user commentary related to the output issue by making a connection to public issues. This commentary can be considered in line with discursive standards. 6.6 percent of the user commentary across DW related to

the output on a personal level which meets the requirements of dialogical communication. So, all in all, three quarters of the examined user commentary picked up on the topic(s) addressed in DW's social web output. The remaining quarter, more precisely 24.9 percent, turned out to be off-topic.

As for relevance, the results revealed noticeable differences between the language services. In fact, there was a very highly significant association between language service and relevance (χ^2 = 47.149, *df* = 4, *n* = 1,389, p <.000), albeit to a fairly weak degree (Cramer's V = .130). The user commentary following up on DW English's social web output showed a relatively small share of irrelevance (19.4%) as compared to that of DW Russian (30.2%) and DW German (32.7%). At the same time, its share of threads that relate to the output issue on a societal level is quite large (75.8%) compared to DW German (61.1%) and DW Russian (58.7%). What furthermore stands out across language services is DW Russian's comparatively large share (11.1%) of user commentary in which commentators related to the output issue by making a connection to their personal lives.

Table 23: Relevance of comment threads in % (and in total numbers)

	DW German *n* = 303	**DW English** *n* = 752	**DW Russian** *n* = 334	**Across DW** *n* = 1,389
Relates to output issue (societal)	61.1% (185)	75.8% (570)	58.7% (196)	68.5% (951)
Relates to output issue (personal)	6.3% (19)	4.8% (36)	11.1% (37)	6.6% (92)
Does not relate to output issue	32.7% (99)	19.4% (146)	30.2 % (101)	24.9% (346)

What should be noted in terms of these results is that the analysis captured the content as displayed at DW's response stages at the time of data collection. Potential comments that had already been removed by the language services (or, for that matter, the platform operators) due to incivility or irrelevance at that point in time could not be captured by the analysis unless they had been removed with a corresponding note. Therefore, a conclusive assessment certainly needs to take into account the findings on DW's handling of user comments as regards civility (see Subsection 8.2.2) and relevance (see Subsection 8.2.3).

8.1.2 *Where users partly fulfilled higher democratic standards: Viewpoints, interrelation, argumentation*

A much smaller, yet considerable part of the user commentary fulfilled higher – that is, dialogical and/or discursive – standards when it comes to including original viewpoints, relating to other users or comments, and giving reasons for one's assertions.

Threads in which users provided new viewpoints from a societal angle made up 33.0 percent of the user commentary across DW (see Table 24). In other words, a third of the examined user commentary lived up to discursive standards in that respect. In another 2.5 percent of the user commentary across DW users added a new viewpoint from a personal point of view. Thus, a total of 35.5 percent of the examined user commentary could be classified as at least dialogical. The share of user commentary in which no new viewpoint was added was 64.5 percent across DW. This majority of user comments only lived up to standards of everyday talk.

Differences between language services were generally small and may well result from coincidence ($\chi^2 = 8.289$, $df = 4$, $n = 1{,}389$, $p = .082$). The lowest percentage of user commentary without new viewpoints (62.0%) was recorded at the response stage of DW English, the highest (70.1%) was found at the response stage of DW Russian.

Table 24: Threads that include new viewpoints in % (and in total numbers)

	DW German $n = 303$	**DW English** $n = 752$	**DW Russian** $n = 334$	**Across DW** $n = 1{,}389$
New viewpoint, societal angle	32.3% (98)	35.1% (264)	28.7% (96)	33.0% (458)
New viewpoint, personal angle	3.0% (9)	2.9% (22)	1.2% (4)	2.5% (35)
No new viewpoint	64.7% (196)	62.0% (466)	70.1% (234)	64.5% (896)

Also, user interrelation was found not to happen very often (see Table 25). Discursive standards were fulfilled in only 12.2 percent of the examined user commentary with users relating other users. The share of user commentary in which users

at least related to another comment was 9.9 percent. Thus, higher democratic standards were fulfilled by a good fifth of the user commentary across DW.

However, the picture looks somewhat different when the results are considered per case. DW German, DW English, and DW Russian were found to differ very highly significantly in terms of user interrelation (χ^2 = 62.910, *df* = 4, *n* = 1,389, p <.000), even though the strength of association between language service and user interrelation is relatively weak (Cramer's *V* = .150). Especially the share of users who explicitly related to other users was strikingly larger at DW Russian's response stage (23.1%) than at the response stage of DW German (9.9%) and DW English (8.4%).

Table 25: Threads in which users interrelate in % (and in total numbers, multiple coding)

	DW German *n* = 303	**DW English** *n* = 752	**DW Russian** *n* = 334	**Across DW** *n* = 1,389
Relates to other user	9.9% (30)	8.4% (63)	23.1% (77)	12.2% (170)
Relates to other comment	11.9% (36)	7.7% (58)	13.2% (44)	9.9% (138)
Does not relate to user/comment	78.2% (237)	83.9% (631)	63.8% (213)	77.8% (1,081)

As for giving reasons, the share of user commentary living up to higher democratic standards was even smaller than the ones mentioned before (see Table 26). Across DW, only 16.8 percent of the user comment threads provided an argument – mostly straight away (16.4%), occasionally on request by another user or DW (0.4%). Large parts of the examined comment threads, namely 83.2 percent, did not contain justifications for the assertions made. Thus, they only fulfilled the requirements of everyday talk.

While the chi-square value could not be calculated due to a violation of its assumption, the pattern seemed similar across language services.

Table 26: Argumentation-based threads in % (and in total numbers)

	DW German *n* = 303	**DW English** *n* = 752	**DW Russian** *n* = 334	**Across DW** *n* = 1,389
Gives reason straight away	20.5% (62)	16.5% (124)	12.6% (42)	16.4% (228)
Gives reason on request	0% (0)	0.5% (4)	0.3% (1)	0.4% (5)
Gives no reason	79.5% (241)	83.0% (624)	87.1% (291)	83.2% (1,156)

8.1.3 Where users rarely fulfilled higher democratic standards: Feedback, context information, meta-discussion

When it comes to the remaining variables the picture looks different again. The majority of the user communication hardly ever lived up to standards of dialogue or discourse when it comes to giving feedback on the journalistic product, contextualizing the topic, or contextualizing the discussion.

Users across DW rarely used the response stages for giving feedback on the journalistic product (see Table 27). Overall, only 5.5 percent of the threads contained feedback. In order to assess the democratic standard of the user feedback the analysis differentiated between argumentation-based feedback which fulfills discursive standards, feedback at eye-level which can be classified dialogical, and feedback that regards journalists as authorities which complies with standards of everyday talk.

The user threads turned out to follow a very similar pattern across language services with no significant association between language service and the existence/absence of feedback (χ^2=.790, *df* = 2, *n* = 1,389, p <.674). What can nevertheless be stated is that the largest share of reasoned feedback was found at the response stage of DW German (2.6%) while the smallest share of reasoned feedback was detected at the response stage of DW Russian (0.6%).

Table 27: Threads containing feedback in % (and in total numbers)

	DW German *n* = 303	**DW English** *n* = 752	**DW Russian** *n* = 334	**Across DW** *n* = 1,389
Feedback	5.9% (18)	5.1% (38)	6.3% (21)	5.5% (77)
Feedback based on argumentation	2.6% (8)	1.2% (9)	0.6% (2)	1.4% (19)
Feedback at eye-level	1.0% (3)	1.1% (8)	1.8% (6)	1.2% (17)
Feedback assuming authority	2.3% (7)	2.8% (21)	3.9% (13)	3.0% (41)
No feedback	94.1% (285)	94.9% (714)	93.7% (313)	94.5% (1,312)

Context information was even provided less often than feedback by the users of DW's social web platforms (see Table 28). In only 3.3 percent of the examined threads users provided context information on a general societal level across DW. This part of the commentary qualified as discursive. A vanishingly small part of the comment threads, namely 0.2 percent, contained context information that was based on personal experience. All in all, only 3.5 percent of the user commentary can be classified as compliant with higher democratic standards when it comes to contextualizing the topic.

Table 28: Comments providing further context information (multiple coding) in % (and in total numbers)

	DW German *n* = 303	**DW English** *n* = 752	**DW Russian** *n* = 334	**Across DW** *n* = 1,389
Provides context info (societal)	3.3% (10)	2.7% (20)	4.8% (16)	3.3% (46)
Provides context info (personal)	0.7% (2)	0.0% (0)	0.3% (1)	0.2% (3)
Provides no context info	96.0% (291)	97.3% (732)	94.9% (317)	96.5% (1,340)

Between language services the user commentary only differed slightly. The chi-square value could not be calculated as its assumption was violated.

The aspect with the lowest activity on the part of the users was meta-discussion (see Table 29). In only 2.3 percent of the user commentary across DW the discussion itself became subject of the discussion. This share signifies a dialogical communication mode. The vast majority of user commentary, namely 97.7 percent, can be considered everyday talk because it did not engage in meta-discussion.

A look at the differences between the language services seemed promising as there was a very highly significant association between language service and meta-discussion ($\chi^2 = 20.477$, $df = 2$, $n = 1{,}389$, $p < .000$), albeit to quite a weak degree (Cramer's V = .121). What is indeed striking is DW Russian's relatively large share of threads involved in meta-discussion (5.4%) compared to the fairly small shares of DW English (1.7%) and DW German (0.3%).

Table 29: Threads contextualizing the discussion in % (and in total numbers)

	DW German	**DW English**	**DW Russian**	**Across DW**
	n = 303	*n* = 752	*n* = 334	*n* = 1,389
Meta-discussion	0.3%	1.7%	5.4%	2.3%
	(1)	(13)	(18)	(32)
No meta-discussion	99.7%	98.3%	94.6%	97.7%
	(302)	(739)	(316)	(1,357)

8.1.4 Interim conclusion

The results show that the democratic standard of user commentary differs depending on which aspect (or indicator) one looks at. In some respects, the user commentary turned out to largely fulfill high democratic standards: This was the case in terms of civility and relevance. In other respects, only a minority of user threads reached higher democratic standards: This was about a third of the commentary when it comes to including original viewpoints, a fifth as for relating to others, and a sixth in terms of giving reason. In case of the remaining aspects – context information, journalism feedback, and meta-discussion – it was only a very small share.

In Subsection 4.4.2 we came to know that journalists often lament the poor quality of user comments. Journalists were found to complain, among other

things, about comments being uncivil, not on-topic, and lacking an added value. In this regard, it can be stated that, on the one hand, the user commentary examined at DW's response turned out not all doom and gloom in terms of civility and relevance. On the other hand, it would indeed have room for improvement in terms of added viewpoints, interrelation, argumentation, contextualization of the topic and the discussion, as well as journalism feedback. It remains to be seen, however, if this room for improvement existed *despite of* active engagement on the part of DW at the response stage or *in lack thereof*.

Therefore, the conclusion at this point is that the results on user commentary at the response stages of DW German, DW English, and DW Russian need to be considered in light of the results on journalistic handling of user comments. While this study has not been designed to test causal relationships between journalistic engagement and user comments, it does take into account that and how these two are interrelated. In the next step, the study is able to offer a thick description of the pertinent dynamics by considering DW's journalistic handling of user comments both quantitatively (in terms of detectable engagement) and qualitatively (in terms of motives, experiences, constraints etc.). Concerning the final assessment of DW's handling of user comments, the results presented here raise the following issues:

- What do significant differences between the user commentary across language services tell us? Are they possibly linked to language services' dissimilar strategies of handling user comments or are there other causes for these differences?
- Are the high standards of the user commentary with regard to civility and relevance a reflection of DW's active engagement as a dialogical mediator or discourse advocate in these respects or did they occur despite DW's inactivity at the response stage?
- Does DW's handling of user comments give hints for explaining the small but considerable share of user commentary that adds original viewpoints, relates to others, or justifies assertions?
- Do the low standards of the user commentary in terms of context information, journalism feedback, and meta-discussion reflect DW's inactivity in these respects or did they occur despite an active engagement of DW as a dialogical mediator or discourse advocate at the response stage?

8.1.5 Answer to RQ2a

The democratic relevance of user comments is assumed to be an important parameter that needs to be taken into consideration when assessing democratic relevance of journalistic activity at the response stage. Accordingly, RQ2a ("*What kind of user communication unfolds at the response stage with regard to democratic standards?*") was posed as a sub-question to obtain a comprehensive answer to RQ2 in the end. This subsection provides the answer to sub-question RQ2a.

This study differentiates three communication modes with regard to democratic standards. Their levels of democratic standards are assumed to range from high to low. To what extent does the examined user commentary match these communication modes?

Let us first consider discourse as the communication mode that is assumed to feature high democratic standards. Discourse was defined as a rational, argumentation-based mode of equal exchange geared towards consensus. The user commentary met the relatively demanding requirements of this communication mode in two respects: It was predominantly civil and referred to the output issue in a publicly relevant way. Other important features of discourse, however, were only reflected to some extent in the examined user commentary. For instance, discourse provides that a public conception of the common good is formed based on citizens' various viewpoints. Such publicly relevant viewpoints, however, were only detectable in a third of the user commentary. An interest in interacting with other citizens and, thus, forming a public can only be attributed to the small share of threads in which users related to other users. A focus on argumentation is certainly not observable in the user commentary given that justifications for assertions remained an exception. It would have seemed fair to rate the user commentary as overall discursive if it would have lived up to discursive standards in these respects in addition to being civil and on-topic. The user commentary as it was, however, cannot be characterized as representing a full-fledged discourse. As for the remaining aspects – providing context info that is publicly relevant and feedback that is reasoned – it seems in hindsight that they would have served as additions to discursive quality rather than as determinants. But their manifestation was minimal anyway.

The next communication mode, dialogue, is considered moderately demanding in terms of democratic standards in this study. Dialogue was defined as

requiring dialogue partners to acknowledge their differences and as emphasizing personal experience with a view to increasing mutual understanding. The user commentary reveals an interesting pattern concerning dialogue: If user commentary exceeded the standards of everyday talk, it often "surpassed" the dialogical communication mode and moved straight to fulfilling discursive standards. If users referred to the output issue, for instance, they rather made connections to public issues than to personal experiences. Likewise, if users included original new viewpoints this happened rather from a publicly relevant point of view than from a personal point of view. Hence, genuine dialogue was actually a rare occurrence in the user commentary.

The third communication mode, everyday talk, is considered to involve relatively low democratic standards. Everyday talk was characterized as individual, non-goal-oriented expression of opinion that may well be uncivil and nothing but expressive. Large parts of the user commentary only fulfilled the relatively low requirements of everyday talk. By mostly not offering new viewpoints, not relating to other users or comments, not justifying assertions, not adding context information, not giving feedback, and not addressing the discussion as such the user comments indeed match the informal, non-goal-oriented communication mode that everyday talk represents.

Overall, it can be stated that the user commentary which unfolded at the response stage can largely be considered to represent everyday talk. This, however, does not mean that the user commentary lacked democratic value. Their spontaneous, informal expression may well have enabled DW's social web users to organize their opinion elements and to become aware of their related opinions, especially considering that their talk was predominantly civil and stuck to the output topic of human rights.

This assessment of the user commentary moreover disclosed that a weighting of the different variables inspected seems useful and should be taken into consideration in future research. While the variables all represent aspects of democratically relevant communication, they may vary in their importance for reaching a certain democratic standard. The absence of offensive and off-topic remarks, for instance, seems more of a prerequisite for dialogue and discourse than a mere aspect of it. When these prerequisites are met, the communication may rise in democratic standards depending on whether or not and how it includes original viewpoints, relates to others, and gives reasons. Context information on

the topic, feedback, or meta-discussion are then further aspects that, depending on their nature, can add substance to the democratic standards reached. This thought will be picked up later and elaborated in connection with suggestions for future research (see Section 9.3).

8.2 Journalistic handling of user comments

Based on the results on user commentary it became possible to assess DW's engagement at the response stage. This section presents the corresponding results. Subsection 8.2.1 starts off by providing the results on DW's general approach when it comes to handling user comments. The following two subsections are guided by the pattern detected in the remaining results: Subsection 8.2.2 states where DW most likely fulfilled higher democratic standards at the response stage; Subsection 8.2.3 details where DW rarely lived up to higher democratic standards at the response stage; Subsection 8.2.4 provides the results on instances where DW never fulfilled higher democratic standards at the response stage. Subsection 8.2.5 sums up how DW handled user communication at its response stage, thus offering a condensed answer to RQ2b. Finally, Subsection 8.2.6 reviews P4 which assumed that DW handles user communication at the response stage mainly in the fashion of a dialogical mediator and goes into particulars about the different cases. It moreover draws conclusions as to how the results resonate with earlier empirical findings.

8.2.1 General approach: "Step back and let the discussion unfold on its own"

Overall, the results on DW's general approach to handling user comments at the response stages of its social web platforms point to a certain passiveness. This was reflected in interviews across all language services. DW German's Social Media Coordinator, for example, generally understood their role at the response stage as a passive one: "We are rather the ones who led things slide" (DW_Deu_1, §18). This reservation was said to be based on the experience that users usually regulated the discussion themselves. Therefore, DW German would not get involved until they are being addressed directly (DW_Deu_1, §18). Also at DW English, it was generally

considered favorable to "be able to step back and to let the discussion unfold on its own" (DW_Eng_1, §4). DW Russian's current approach of handling user comments seemed to be the result of a learning process. The Social Media Coordinator explained that, initially, they had only reacted when user comments violated the Netiquette (DW_Ru_2, §14). In order to encourage more discussion, they had decided to get actively engaged at the response stage. Since this had caused a few clashes between users and editors acting on behalf of DW, they had decided to change their strategy again. At the time of the interviews, the policy was that besides enforcing the Netiquette one was only supposed to get engaged in case of a direct question or if DW Russian's social web output required clarification or correction.

Also at the organizational level, DW's role was understood as a relative passive one. The guidelines specified that Social Media Editors "may intervene for corrective action, but the user is to the fore" (Social Media Guidelines, p. 20). Accordingly, the Social Media Manager expressed a preference for moderation to become "unneeded because people sort things out among themselves" (DW_Strat_1, §17).

The quantitative evidence on DW's general approach to handling user comments clearly confirms that DW's engagement at the response stage was generally quite low. As Table 30 indicates, only 3.6 percent of the threads at the response stage were initiated by DW or contained a reaction from DW. Across cases, DW Russian stuck out with a slightly higher level of engagement than the other services: It was found to be engaged in 6.5 percent of the threads at its response stage, while DW German was found to be only engaged in 2.9% and DW English in only 2.5 percent of the threads. The association between language service and engagement proved in fact highly significant ($\chi^2 = 11.933$, $df = 2$, $n = 1{,}425$, $p < .003$), albeit to very weak degree (Cramer's V = .092). Apparently, DW Russian finds itself more often compelled to leave the passive role than the other language services.

Table 30: Journalistic engagement at the response stage

	DW German $n = 311$	**DW English** $n = 762$	**DW Russian** $n = 352$	**Across DW** $n = 1{,}425$
Threads with DW engagement	2.9% (9)	2.5% (19)	6.5% (23)	3.6% (51)
Threads without DW engagement	97.1% (302)	97.5% (743)	93.5% (329)	96.4% (1,374)

Securing compliance with the Netiquette was widely considered the most valid reason for getting engaged at the response stage if at all. At the organizational level, the principles specified in the Netiquette were defined as the main reference for handling user comments and feedback at DW (Social Media Guidelines, p. 20). User comments were supposed to be vetted within a maximum of 36 hours (Social Media Guidelines, p. 20). Moreover, the Social Media Manager regarded it a language services' "first task to delete everything that violates the Netiquette" (DW_Strat_1, §19).

This view was shared by the Chief Editor of DW Russian who understood his team's role at the response stage as one of a host: "If it is the responsibility of a good host to keep things in order, then it is our job to interfere. Otherwise we should not try to fuel the discussion" (DW_Ru_1, §7). At DW English, too, it was considered a key task to ensure compliance with the Netiquette, however more with an emphasis on *reminding* users of the Netiquette (DW_Eng_2, §19).

Moderation tasks apart from safeguarding adherence to the Netiquette were brought up only to some extent. In principle, the Social Media Guidelines proclaimed: "We understand ourselves as moderators of an exchange of views here [in the social web, I.D.]" (Social Media Guidelines, p. 4). They even called upon DW's Social Media Editors to "take up the role of the reliable expert und moderator who engages in a dialogue with Fans and Followers of DW" (p. 13). In the interviews with the strategists, however, this role understanding was put into perspective. The strategists made clear that active moderation at the response stage was always a question of capacity. Smaller language services with no designated social media shift, for example, were advised not to encourage user comments because they would not be able to adequately follow up on the discussion (DW_Strat_1, §17; DW_Strat_2, §30; DW_Strat_3, §8).

At the level of the language services, such active moderation was only contemplated at DW English. Here, the Chief Editor explained that, for her, acting as a moderator also meant to first wait for the user reactions and then "to spin on, to ask a question or to ask for other opinions" (DW_Eng_1, §6).

Further general advice for Social Media Editors was found with regard to differentiating between private and professional activity when handling user comments. Apparently, there was concern at the organizational level that these editors get carried away and react too personal at the response stage. In the Social Media Guidelines, a call to actively monitor the discussion was complemented

with a hint that personal views should be published privately and not in one's capacity as a Social Media Editor (p. 20). Moreover, the Guidelines explicitly asked the editors to refrain from giving out private information such as telephone numbers or email addresses (p. 27).

On a general note, the strategists also remarked that the way the language services handled user comments on *YouTube* was in need of improvement. The Social Media Manager pointed out that the current mode of handling *YouTube* comments was mere monitoring whereas she wanted to see "more conversation" (DW_Strat_1, §31). According to the Strategic Planner, there was a lack of understanding for *YouTube* as a social medium among the editors which they were trying to tackle at the organizational level (DW_Strat_2, §32).

This was in fact reflected in the quantitative results insofar as the language services generally engaged less on *YouTube* than on *Facebook*. If they did engage on *YouTube*, it was only for ensuring civility. A look at the results per language service offers more detailed insights in this respect:

DW German engaged in five (4.2%) out of the 120 examined *Facebook* threads at its response stage:

- In one of these threads DW German asked to refrain from offensive behavior.
- In two of them DW German requested a viewpoint from users: Once successfully, once unsuccessfully.
- In two of these threads DW German added socially relevant context knowledge.
- On *YouTube* DW German engaged in four (2.1%) out of the 191 examined threads. In all four comment threads DW German asked to refrain from offensive behavior.

DW English engaged in 12 (2.2%) out of 554 examined threads that followed up on its *Facebook* output:

- In two of these threads DW English responded to offensive or derogatory commentary: In one of these threads DW English asked to refrain from offensive behavior, in one of them it justified removal of offensive content.

- In one of these threads DW English requested social relevance, however from a user who had already related to the output on a personal level.
- In three of these threads DW English requested viewpoints from users: twice successfully, once unsuccessfully.
- In two of these threads DW English successfully asked users to give reasons.
- In five of these threads DW English added socially relevant context knowledge.
- In two of these threads DW English provided an argumentation-based response to feedback.
- On *YouTube* DW English was engaged in seven (3.4%) out of the 208 examined comments threads. In all of these comment threads DW English asked to refrain from offensive behavior.

DW Russian was engaged in 23 (10.7%) out of the 351 examined comment threads at its response stage on *Facebook*:

- In three of these threads DW Russian responded to offensive commentary by justifying its removal.
- In nine of these threads DW Russia added a viewpoint itself from a societal angle.
- In 19 of these threads DW Russian added socially relevant context information.
- In one of these threads FB Russian responded to feedback by giving reasons.
- DW Russian turned out not to have engaged on *YouTube* at all.

While these differences in engagement on *Facebook* and *YouTube* need to be taken into account, the study continues considering the two platforms in concert. This answers to the study's interest in DW's social web activity as a whole (beyond certain social web formats) and is assumed to be unproblematic as it is done consistently across cases.

8.2.2 Where DW most likely fulfilled higher democratic standards: Civility

The general figures already disclose that DW's engagement at the response stage was largely marked by inactivity. This subsection provides the results on the

most frequently detected activity on the part of DW: Review activity in terms of civility.

As mentioned above, there was a strong perception across DW that the primary reason for getting engaged at the response stage at all is ensuring compliance with the Netiquette. In line with this, civility proved to be the aspect which accounted for the largest part of DW's activity there. The basis for assessing DW's pertinent engagement were the results on uncivil user commentary. They indicate the number of threads in which there was good reason for DW to get engaged. Accordingly, Table 31 shows DW's civility-related review activity based on the threads that had been identified as derogative or offensive plus the threads that had obviously been removed for these reasons (DW German *n* = 36; DW English: *n* = 68+1; DW Russian: *n* = 49+3).

Table 31: Review activity (civility) in % (and in total numbers)

	DW German *n* = 36	**DW English** *n* = 69	**DW Russian** *n* = 52	**Across DW** *n* = 156
Reasoned removal of uncivil comments	0% (0)	1.4% (1)	5.8% (3)	2.6% (4)
Asks to refrain from incivility	13.9 % (5)	11.6% (8)	0% (0)	8.3% (13)
No pertinent review activity	86.1% (31)	87.0% (60)	94.2% (49)	89.1% (139)

In only 2.6 percent of these threads DW lived up to discursive standards by giving reasons for removing uncivil comments. In this respect, DW Russian was more active than the other language services, for example by telling a user on *Facebook*: "@[user] Your comment was removed since it contained an insult. Please review the rules of our network Netiquette." What happened more often, namely in 8.3 percent of the threads, was that DW asked users to refrain from incivility. Here, DW German and DW English were more active than DW Russian, mostly posting standardized comments such as the following on *YouTube*:

> Dear YouTube users, Please help us to keep this discussion clean and agreeable and refrain from using racist or sexist slurs as well as personal insults. For further information, please click the `DW Netiquette´ link in the `About us´-Section of this channel. Thank you!

What should be noted is that it was not possible to statistically determine any significant relationships between the language services and their respective review (in)activity as some expected frequencies were below the minimum value of 5 and, thus, violated the assumption of the chi-square test.

The considerations and strategies that guided DW's review activity in terms of civility could be disclosed through qualitative evidence.

At the organizational level, a three-step procedure was advocated for reviewing potential violations of DW's Netiquette (DW_Strat_3, §1; Social Media Guidelines, p. 21). Warnings and reminders to comply with the Netiquette were considered the proper way of handling user comments "when we realize `now the tone is getting a bit rough, now people start getting personal´" (DW_Strat_3, §1). If comments violate the Netiquette DW editors were expected to delete these comments and to publish an explanation pointing to the Netiquette rules (DW_Strat_1, §21; DW_Strat_3, §5; Social Media Guidelines, p. 21). In such cases both the Social Media Manager and the Head of "Hintergrund Deutschland" deemed it advisable to send an additional direct message to the respective user provided that this is technically possible (DW_Strat_1, §21; DW_Strat_3, §5). Blocking users was regarded the last resort in case of repeated violation of the rules (DW_Strat_3, §6; Social Media Guidelines, p. 30).

DW English seemed to have adopted this three-step procedure at the editorial level. The interviewees described their approach to reviewing uncivil user comments in similar terms (DW_Eng_1, §6; DW_Eng_2, §19 & §20). At DW German, comments violating the Netiquette were generally perceived to occur rarely. According to the Social Media Coordinator DW German's social web communities were "really well-behaved" (DW_Deu_1, §18). Deleting comments was clearly considered something to be avoided. However, in the rare cases where the editors did remove content, they reportedly informed the user in question and pointed to the Netiquette (DW_Deu_1, §22). DW Russian's approach to reviewing problematic comments turned out to be described somewhat differently, with a greater emphasis on fulfilling a "control and supervision function" (DW_Ru_1, §7). DW Russian's approach seemed to be informed by a regular experience of

politically motivated shit storms and trolling. All three Russian interviewees mentioned cases where they had users posting repeatedly the same comment from one or several fake accounts in a short amount of time (DW_Ru_1, §9; DW_Ru_2, §21; DW_Ru_3, §5). According to DW Russian's Social Media Coordinator, such incidents mounted up in connection with topics like elections or political protests (DW_Ru_2, §21). Other topics – such as Islam or Putin – were generally considered sensitive and likely to attract trolls (DW_Ru_3, §4) "who simply spread a bad mood and act in a way that others don't feel like discussing further" (DW_Ru_2, §21). Against this background, pointing to the Netiquette or offering an explanation after deleting a comment was something the editors only did if they deemed the violation accidental (DW_Ru_3, §19). DW Russian's Social Media Editor questioned even that:

> So, some editors point to our Netiquette after deleting something. I am tired of making this effort, actually. I think it goes without saying. If somebody is stupid and does not understand why we delete it, then he may as well remain stupid and will be blocked after a while. That's less of a problem than pointing a finger at what is good and what isn't good. (DW_Ru_3, §21)

Also in terms of blocking users DW Russian had reportedly become increasingly ruthless over time. Unlike in the early days of social web activity its editors were no longer cautious about blocking ominous users even without prior warning (DW_Ru_1, §10). However, before taking such radical measures they also hoped for "self-regulating forces" (DW_Ru_1, §10; DW_Ru_3, §4) from within the user community. While DW Russian's comparatively strict approach is not reflected starkly in the results from the content analysis, it might explain why DW Russian was less prone than the other language services to issue warnings and reminders to comply with the Netiquette rules.

Censoring was a topic raised repeatedly in the interviews in connection with handling incivility. While DW Russian's Social Media Editor quite confidently referred to his role as one of a "censor" (DW_Ru_3, §13), the other language services rather seemed to struggle with it. At DW English, censorship accusations from users were experienced regularly after deleting comments. This was said to force the editors to be prepared to justify their decisions (DW_Eng_1, §9). At DW German, censorship accusations were a key reason for the language services' reluctance in terms of deleting comments. The Social Media Editor

considered deleting comments "very dangerous, because you already know what will happen, that we will be accused of censoring again" (DW_Deu_2, §7). What they did instead was hiding problematic comments as spam which the Social Media Coordinator explained as a way to prevent the commentator from noticing that the comment is no longer visible to others. He considered the option to mark comments as spam "an instrument provided by Facebook [...] that wonderfully strikes a balance between having to live with the stupid response and getting an earful of censorship accusations" (DW_Deu_1, §20). The Social Media Coordinator moreover regarded it as contradictory to Germany's and DW's support of democracy and freedom to remove comments.

A certain fear of users' reactions towards removed content was also detectable at the organizational level. The Social Media Guidelines warned editors that users should not get "the impression [...] that opinions are being censored" (p. 21). Also the Head of "Hintergrund Deutschland" reported that they had been worried that removing comments and blocking users would trigger a censorship debate – especially against the background that a rough tone may be more acceptable in other cultures. In her view, however, these concerns had largely turned out unjustified (DW_Strat_3, §6).

In principle, the "quality standards" (Social Media Guidelines, p. 5) for user comments were clearly defined at the organizational level. On the whole, the discussion at the response stage was expected to be fair and to not involve any abusive behavior (DW_Strat_1, §17; Social Media Guidelines, p. 5). In order to judge what commenting behavior was acceptable or inacceptable the Netiquette was supposed to serve as the main reference. It detailed three types of problematic content. Content-wise the Netiquette stated:

> Racist, pornographic, sexist, xenophobic, discriminative or offensive content will be deleted, as will comments or material that advocate violence or pursue fomenting purposes. Refrain from political appeals of any kind. `Trolling´ or `flaming´ is not permitted. (Social Media Guidelines, p. 30–31)

With regards to the tone of comments it asked the users the following: "Accept the opinions of others and refrain from personal attacks. Treat other users as you would like to be treated" (p. 31). Lastly, the Netiquette also detailed what formal aspects were considered problematic: "Refrain from using upper letters. This could be seen as shouting. Also avoid repeated punctuation (such as ????? or !!!!!)" (p. 31).

Every DW language service present in the social web was obliged to point to and link the Netiquette from its social web profiles (p. 30).

At the editorial level, however, the standards detailed in the Netiquette were often perceived as somewhat impractical. At DW German, for example, review activity with respect to unacceptable comments was said to happen discretionary rather than guided by the Netiquette: "You cannot squeeze everything into rules and sections of the law. You rather have to decide on a daily basis what is fine and may remain there based on the context" (DW_Deu_2, §7). DW Russian's Chief Editor pointed out that the Social Media Editors had "developed a sure feeling" (DW_Ru_1, §10) for handling problematic cases. Their review activities seemed to rely more on their situational assessment than on the general rules as provided by the Social Media Guidelines: "You have to decide yourself what a swearword is, what a personal insult is" (DW_Ru_3, §19). A special challenge in this respect raised by DW English was differentiating between mere opinions and actual Netiquette violations. The Social Media Editor of DW English found this "very tricky and there are definitely many things that are very borderline" (DW_Eng_2, §17). Accordingly, she had developed a quite nuanced approach to considering the comments:

> Well, you have to react as a [...] moderator and think: What does this mean? Does this person insult someone else? Is this person being offensive? Or is this just an opinion? Everybody is entitled to have an opinion. And if someone says something I don't agree with [...] I just have to accept that there are extreme opinions. We can't just have one type of audience, politically correct and totally behaving in a way that we want [...]. (DW_Eng_2, §18)

8.2.3 *Where DW rarely fulfilled higher democratic standards: Feedback, context information, viewpoints, argumentation*

This subsection details the aspects in which there was rare activity on the part of DW. Here, too, the results on user commentary serve as the basis for assessing DW's respective engagement at the response stage. They indicate the number of threads in which there was good reason for DW to get engaged. It should be noted that none of the aspects allowed for running chi-square tests to statistically determine significant relationships between the language services

and the respective activities because some expected frequencies were below the minimum value of 5 and, thus, violated the assumption of the chi-square test.

DW responded rarely to feedback provided by social web users (see Table 32). The basis for examining this consisted of threads in which users provided feedback on DW's journalistic performance (DW German: *n* = 18, DW English: *n* = 38; DW Russian: *n* = 21).

Table 32: Feedback accessibility in % (and in total numbers)

	DW German *n* = 18	**DW English** *n* = 38	**DW Russian** *n* = 21	**Across DW** *n* = 77
Reasoned response to feedback	0% (0)	5.3% (2)	4.8% (1)	3.9% (3)
Cooperative response to feedback	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)
No such response to feedback	100 % (18)	94.7% (36)	95.2% (20)	96.1% (74)

Across DW, 96.1 percent of the user feedback remained unanswered. This corresponds to the relatively low standards of the objective observer. In the three threads (3.9%) in which DW did respond to user feedback the broadcaster provided a justification, thus acting as a discourse advocate. This was the case, for example, when DW English responded to a user who wondered about an output item on modern slavery on *Facebook*:

> User: How come this image shows that there is no slavery in US, UK and EU although most human traffickers smuggle women and children there for forced prostitution and forced labor?
>
> DW English: Slavery is a worldwide problem – the graphic only shows the country's [sic] with the ten highest numbers of people living in modern slavery.

While DW English and DW Russian responded to user feedback at least once and twice, DW German remained completely inactive. Also the qualitative data reflected this inactivity. The interviewees at DW German admitted that they perceived most of the feedback on their social web output as hairsplitting and

lacking substance. Users were said to blow up typos or minor inconsistencies in DW German's output into major issues of quality in journalism (DW_Deu_1, §10; DW_Deu_2, §7). In terms of handling such feedback DW German seemed to have developed a relatively low-key approach which aimed at de-escalating and bringing the discussion to a halt. Rather than providing lengthy explanations or justifications for editorial decisions they would, for example, just "like" the user's comment expressing brief and friendly recognition for it (DW_Deu_1, §10 & 12). Responding to user feedback represented a balancing act for DW German's Social Media Editor: "As *Deutsche Welle* you cannot get involved in every playground quarrel, but on the other hand neither are you supposed to arouse suspicion of being arrogant as a media house" (DW_Deu_2, §7). She pointed to a case where she did reply to a user by explaining the rationale behind a caption that this user had previously criticized. What she allegedly got in return was a confrontational response. In such cases it excited her to "not take offence, but to be a good sport and to tell yourself: `Hey, I will remain really nice´" (DW_Deu_2, §7).

The other language services, in turn, had developed a standardized work-flow in response to user feedback. The Social Media Editor of DW English gave several examples where users had righteously pointed out errors in their social web output (DW_Eng_2, §13 & 25 & 37). The usual procedure was then to confer with the colleague responsible for the article, revise the content accordingly, and get back to the user (DW_Eng_2 §14–15). This procedure was described similarly at DW Russian (DW_Ru_3, §24). Yet, here it was moreover noted that feedback merely expressing a user's (dis)taste may well be ignored: "We don't have to react if someone thinks our article is crap. He has a right to think so" (DW_Ru_3, §24).

Among the strategists, feedback was understood as a means to generate new ideas for articles and was therefore welcomed (DW_Strat_1, §3; DW_Strat_3, §20). The Social Media Manger, for example, considered it ideal if feedback contained "questions that an article left unanswered and [that] open up a new topic to be covered at another point" (DW_Strat_1, §17). In the Social Media Guidelines, feedback was even framed as something the editors are supposed to actively seek for the same reason: "Here [in social networks] we find inspiration for topics and we call on users to give us feedback and hints" (Social Media Guidelines, p. 5). On the other hand, the guidelines explicitly requested DW staff to "deal professionally with any kind of feedback" and to "approve of critique and handle it politely" (p. 20). The Head of "Hintergrund Deutschland" submitted that many journalists at

DW had reservations when it comes to user feedback. She would then point to the potential competence of users and stress that feedback should be understood as useful for future investigations (DW_Strat_3, §20).

This understanding of feedback as a resource was generally shared by DW English, especially when it was about getting to know users' topic preferences (DW_Eng_1, §4; DW_Eng_2, §37). At DW Russian, the Social Media Editor mentioned a case where user feedback had prompted them to produce new articles after a catchy but inaccurate teaser text had caused confusion among users. This, however, was perceived as a time-consuming obligation rather than a useful inspiration (DW_Ru_3, 13).

Providing context information was another activity in which DW engaged rarely at the response stage. For the related frequency analysis all user-initiated threads were considered (DW German: *n* = 303; DW English: *n* = 752; DW Russian: *n* = 334).

Table 33: Activity of topic contextualization in % (and in total numbers)

	DW German *n* = 303	**DW English** *n* = 752	**DW Russian** *n* = 334	**Across DW** *n* = 1,389
Provides context info (societal)	0.6% (2)	0.7% (5)	5.7% (19)	1.9% (26)
Provides context info (personal)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)
No pertinent activity	99.3% (301)	99.3% (747)	94.3% (315)	98.1% (1,363)

Table 33 shows that if DW provided context information it was always socially relevant, never personally relevant, which matches the role of a discourse advocate. This, however, only happened in 1.9 percent of the examined threads across DW. DW Russian proved to be comparatively active in terms of providing context information. It did so in 5.7 percent of the threads at its response stage. The context information added by DW Russian usually followed up on the output issue and included links to the latest DW articles on this issue. DW Russian commented, for instance, on an output item on the conviction of Russian opposition leader Alexey Navalny: "Navalny's headquarters take his candidacy off the elections: http://dw.de/p/19A85." Most of the time, however, DW resembled an objective observer by not providing any further information at the response stage.

The matter of using the response stage as a space to add context information was not brought up in the interviews with the representatives of the language services. In the interviews with the strategists it was discussed as relatively time-consuming. The Strategic Planner described such activity as an ideal case that could only be expected from well-resourced language services (DW_Strat_2, §30). The Head of "Hintergrund Deutschland" reported that it happened rarely and only if previously planned (DW_Strat_3, §12). The Social Media Guidelines and the Netiquette only dealt with the case of users providing context information. The Guidelines stipulated that when users posted external links these need to be checked for compliance with the Netiquette by DW editors (Social Media Guidelines, p. 21). The Netiquette itself urged users who post quotes from other sources such as newspaper articles or books to ensure the copyright and to be transparent about where this material originates from (p. 31).

Enriching the discussion with new viewpoints was another activity DW rarely engaged in. Here, the frequency analysis was based on all those threads that did not add a different viewpoint plus the ones in which a viewpoint was added on DW's request or by DW (DW German: n = 196+1; DW English: 466+2; DW Russian: n = 234+9). Table 34 discloses that, overall, DW added new viewpoints in 1.0 percent of the threads and requested new viewpoints in 0.6 percent of the threads. DW Russian actually accounted for all instances in which a viewpoint was added, which matches the role of a discourse advocate. This was the case, for example, when DW Russian added that the "Bundeswehr participated in the surveillance program Prism in Afghanistan" to an output item on whistleblower Edward Snowden's request for asylum in Russia. DW English and DW German accounted for the instances where viewpoints were requested in the fashion of a dialogical mediator. DW English asked the users, for example, "What do you think is the solution?" in the follow-up to an output item on poverty among the elderly. DW German requested new viewpoints, for instance, by asking: "What's your view on replacing discriminatory terms with non-discriminatory terms in classic books?" DW's inactivity in 98.5 percent of the response stage represents the role of the objective observer.

This quantitative data cannot be complemented with qualitative insights because neither the documents nor the interviews contained remarks on adding viewpoints at the response stage.

Table 34: Activity of adding viewpoints in % (and in total numbers)

	DW German *n* = 197	**DW English** *n* = 468	**DW Russian** *n* = 243	**Across DW** *n* = 908
Adds new viewpoint	0% (0)	0% (0)	3.7% (9)	1.0% (9)
Structures/ request new viewpoints	1.0% (2)	0.6% (3)	0% (0)	0.6% (5)
No pertinent activity	99.0% (195)	99.4% (465)	96.3% (234)	98.5% (894)

Table 35: Activity of encouraging argumentation in % (and in total numbers)

	DW German *n* = 241	**DW English** *n* = 626	**DW Russian** *n* = 291	**Across DW** *n* = 1,158
Adds reasons	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)
Requests to give reason	0% (0)	0.3% (2)	0% (0)	0.2% (2)
No pertinent activity	100% (241)	99.7% (624)	100% (291)	99.8% (1,156)

The slightest activity on the part of DW was detected in terms of encouraging argumentation (see Table 35). Here, those threads were considered that did not provide an argument plus those in which an argument was provided on DW's request (DW German: *n* = 241; DW English: *n* = 624+2; DW Russian: 291). DW was engaged in only 0.2 percent of the threads at the response stage in this respect which means DW acted in the fashion of an objective observer most of the time. In fact, DW German and DW Russian were completely inactive in terms of encouraging argumentation. It was only DW English that requested users to give reasons in two instances (0.3%) at its response stage, thereby acting momentarily as a dialogical mediator. This was, for example, the case when DW English reacted to a user who had commented "used to like Bushido's music.....not so

much for the past few years though……now he shames us……." by asking "How do you think his music has changed?".

Reason-giving wasn't a prominent topic in the documents or interviews either. Only DW German's Social Media Editor remarked that they hardly ever had "profound, long-lasting discussions" (DW_Deu_2, §7) in the social web. At the same time, she did not mention any efforts to encourage argumentation.

8.2.4 Where DW engaged not at all: Relevance, interrelation, meta-discussion

This subsection details the aspects in which DW did not get engaged at all. It starts off with the results on relevance and then gives insights on DW's take on interrelating users and on addressing the discussion as such.

In terms of relevance the frequency analysis considered all those threads that did not relate to the output issue (DW German $n = 99$; DW English: $n = 146$; DW Russian: $n = 101$). It revealed that none of the language service requested topical and public relevance after a user had posted something off-topic. In terms of democratic standards this can be considered to match the relatively low standards of the objective observer. When public relevance was requested once at the response stage, it was the follow-up to a comment that had already related to the output topic. This request came from DW English and the exchange looked as follows:

> Output: "[...] How are genetically modified products perceived in your country?"
> User: "I just hope that GMOs don't enter my country."
> DW English: "Where do you live? [...]"
> User: "In Lebanon. [...]"

While content analysis can provide evidence on whether or not relevance was actively encouraged by DW, it is unable to disclose DW's engagement in deleting irrelevant topics at the response stage. Here, the evidence from the documents and the interviews offer useful information. DW English reportedly made short work of irrelevant comments: "We do get things that are not related to the topic sometimes. I delete those" (DW_Eng_2, §36). Compared to this, the other language services' approaches seemed less drastic. The Social Media Coordinator of DW Russian expressed not more than a preference with regard to relevance:

"What we like to see is of course when topics such as politics or economics in Germany and Europe are discussed in relation to Russia [...]" (DW_Ru_2, §12). DW German's Social Media Editor reported that he has learnt to take off-topic user comments easier than at the beginning. In the early days of social media editing he tended to feel offended especially by indifferent comments from certain regulars which he referred to as a "club of freaks". He elaborated that

> they goaded each other and posted nonsense. So sometimes there would be a question, for example `Have you been gaining experiences at German universities?´ And as a reply came `No´. [...] Simply silly and cheeky stuff which one would have liked to delete, but one just let it be" (DW_Deu_2 §16).

This matched the relatively relaxed view of the interviewed strategists. While they displayed an awareness of off-topic content (DW_Strat_1, §20; DW_Strat_3, §14) and said they preferred "substantial, comprehensive comments" (DW_Strat_1, §17), they did not seem to consider drastic measures to react to it. If someone posted something off-topic the Social Media Manager suggested that the editors react by posting a topical question, but she also appreciated "if other commentators expose that immediately and stop him from doing that or bring him back on track" (DW_Strat_1, §19).

The Netiquette generally contained several specifications with regard to relevance and resulting review activity on the part of DW. Deviation from the respective service's language, spam, content of commercial nature, off-topic content, and content posted several times was regarded as improper and said to be removed by DW's editorial teams (Social Media Guidelines, pp. 30–31). Internally, the Social Media Guidelines actually suggested a less strict approach with regard to deviation from a service's language. They advised the editors to "read the entries by the help of a translation tool (or colleagues) and ask the user to compose all comments in the shared language in the interest of dialogue" (p. 21). Language problems were only mentioned as an issue in the interview with DW German's Social Media Coordinator. She said that in case of grammatically flawed comments they usually tried to add clarity to the discussion by just asking what exactly the users (whom they considered to be learning German as a second language) meant (DW_Deu_1, §18).

As for activities to interrelate users the frequency analysis was based on threads in which users did not relate to another comment or another commentator (DW German: $n = 237$; DW English: $n = 631$; DW Russian: $n = 214$). As there was no

activity on the part of DW in this respect, its pertinent handling of user comments can be classified as representing an objective observer.

While the interviewees from the language services did not address the issue of interrelating users, the Social Media Manager said she considered it ideal "when the people who comment respond to one another" (DW_Strat_1, §17). At the same time, the Head of "Hintergrund Deutschland" saw a risk that people "lock jaws and become unkind with one another" (DW_Strat_3, §6) which, then again, made it necessary for DW to intervene by reminding the whole community of the rules of the Netiquette.

In terms of meta-discussion it was analyzed to what extent DW contextualized the discussion itself from a meta-perspective. This analysis was based on the threads in which users had not contextualized the discussion from a meta-perspective (DW German: n = 302; DW English: n = 739; DW Russian: n = 316). It revealed that DW did not engage in such activities at all, neither in terms of stimulating the discussion nor to work towards consensual closure. Thus, DW's pertinent handling of user comments only fulfills the low standards of an objective observer.

At the organizational level, meta-discussion was apparently regarded as something that is up to the users. The Head of "Hintergrund Deutschland" was the only interviewee who brought up this issue. She reported that the discussion typically becomes subject of the discussion in cases where two users have a go at one another. Then a third user would often intervene and ask why they attacked one another (DW_Strat_3, §6).

8.2.5 Answer to RQ2b

This subsection provides the answer to subquestion RQ2b ("*How does DW handle user communication at the response stage?*"). In combination with RQ2a ("*What kind of user communication unfolds at the response stage with regard to democratic standards?*") it is supposed to yield a comprehensive answer to RQ2 which is then provided in Section 8.3.

Reservation proved to be the key feature for describing DW's general approach at the response stage. DW staff largely regarded the comment sections on its social web accounts as a space where the users are in the driving seat and sort things out among themselves. Accordingly, the language services were found not to be engaged

with the bulk of the threads at the response stage. The interviewees deemed it most acceptable to deviate from this general approach in case of violations of DW's Netiquette. Moderation activities apart from safeguarding adherence to the Netiquette, however, seemed to remain an abstract idea at DW rather than something that is practiced: While the Social Media Guidelines and one interviewed Chief Editor were generally in favor of active moderation that engages in a dialogue with users, the strategists actually ruled it out as long as there is not enough capacity to follow up the discussions adequately. What was generally unwelcome at DW's response stage were personal views and personal information of staff members. DW's engagement on the two examined social web formats turned out to be somewhat more intense and more varied on *Facebook* as compared to *YouTube*.

Consistent with DW's general approach, the only aspect in which DW seemed to engage more or less regularly was ensuring civility. If the broadcaster engaged in this respect, it was most often by asking users to refrain from incivility. This was rather common with DW German and DW English. The other type of engagement – reasoned removal of uncivil comments – was more common with DW Russian. These differences were also reflected in the qualitative data. While DW German and DW English mainly seemed to follow the three-step procedure of warning, reasoned removal, and blocking as suggested in the Social Media Guidelines, DW Russian appeared to have come up with a separate approach. Regularly confronted with uncivil comments in the form of shit storms and trolling, DW Russian's editors reportedly opted more and more often for deleting content without prior warning or giving explanations. Accordingly, they confidently identified with acting as a censor at the response stage whereas the staff members of DW German and DW English expressed their discomfort with this role and with according accusations from users. In their judgement of uncivil comments, DW's Social Web Editors generally relied rather on their gut feeling than on the Netiquette.

Occasional engagement at the response stage on the part of DW was detected in terms of responding to feedback, providing context information, as well as enriching the discussions with new viewpoints and arguments. The results suggest that DW's low response rate as regards user feedback stemmed from the fact that the Social Media Editors largely understood feedback as petty or deconstructive. This stood in contrast with what was envisaged at the organizational level, namely that user feedback is to be understood as a resource and an inspiration. Making sure that new viewpoints enter the discussions was not an activity DW seemed to

feel accountable for. In the rare cases where according activities were detected, DW German and DW English tended to ask users to add new viewpoints while DW Russian was more inclined to add viewpoints itself. As regards encouraging argumentation, active engagement was only observable at DW English whose staff was found to sporadically ask users to justify their assertions.

DW was found to not engage at all at the response stage when it comes to ensuring relevance, interrelating users, and addressing the discussion as such. Instead of asking the users to make relevant comments, DW English reportedly tended to just delete off-topic comments. The other language services and the strategists seemed rather careless about comments being irrelevant. Only in cases where comments lacked meaning due to language problems Social Media Editors were expected to get in touch with the users. Pointing out references between comments or requesting users to respond to one another was nothing DW actively engaged in at the response stage. User interrelation was in fact considered more of a risk than a chance because users who relate to one another could as well easily come into fight with one another. Addressing the discussion from a meta-perspective was something DW left completely up to the users.

8.2.6 Review of P4 and conclusion

Concerning RQ2 it was proposed that *Deutsche Welle handles user communication at the response stage mainly in the fashion of a dialogical mediator* (see Section 5.2). It was moreover anticipated that, among the three cases, the Russian service shows the strongest inclination towards acting as a discursive advocate, that the English service displays the most straightforward tendencies towards dialogical journalism, and that the German service is most inclined to act as an objective observer (see Section 5.3). With the results at hand, it can now be stated to what extent this proposition and the related anticipation hold true.

Table 36 sums up for each language service[55] and across DW in how many threads there was engagement as an objective observer, as a dialogical mediator, or as a discourse advocate according to the analytical grid presented in Section 4.6. These results clearly show that *Deutsche Welle* mainly handled the user communication at the

55 In three threads DW English engaged in two aspects. Two of them were counted as dialogical and one was counted as discursive.

examined response stages in the fashion of an objective observer. More precisely, it did so in 96.4 percent of the examined threads. Hence, the proposition that DW mainly acts in the fashion of a dialogical mediator turned out to be wrong. Apparently, DW's dialogical goal of "promoting understanding and the exchange of ideas among different cultures and peoples" (Deutsche Welle, 2004, p. 8) had little repercussion at the response stages of its social web accounts.

Table 36: Journalistic engagement according to democratic standards at the response stage in % (and in total numbers)

	DW German	**DW English**	**DW Russian**	**Across DW**
	n = 311	*n* = 762	*n* = 352	*n* = 1,425
Discourse advocate	0.6%	0.9%	6.5%	2.2%
	(2)	(7)	(23)	(32)
Dialogical mediator	2.3%	1.6%	0%	1.3%
	(7)	(12)	(0)	(19)
Objective observer	97.1%	97.5%	93.5%	96.4%
	(302)	(743)	(329)	(1,374)

In terms of differences between the language services, however, it can be stated that the anticipated tendencies did point in the right direction.

Among the three cases DW Russian indeed showed the strongest inclination towards acting as a discourse advocate. While the German and the English service reached discursive standards in less than 1.0 percent percent of the threads, DW Russian acted according to discourse standards in 6.5 percent of the examined threads. It can basically be stated that *if* DW Russian got engaged it did so in the fashion of a discourse advocate. In this respect it differed from DW German and DW English whose engagement was mixed.

Judging by the percentages presented in Table 36, the remaining anticipations appear to be erroneous. With 2.3 percent of the threads showing a dialogical approach, DW German was actually the service displaying the most straightforward tendencies towards acting as a dialogical mediator compared to DW English with 1.6 percent and DW Russian with 0 percent. The strongest inclination towards acting as an objective observer could be ascribed to DW English who remained inactive at the response stage in 97.5 percent of the threads compared

to 97.1 percent of inactivity on the part of DW German and 93.5 percent on the part of DW Russian. This assessment, however, is put somewhat into perspective when we consider the total numbers and the qualitative results. Judging by the total numbers presented in Table 36, DW English engaged most often as a dialogical mediator, namely twelve times as opposed to DW German who engaged as a dialogical mediator seven times. The English service's comparatively low percentage of dialogical acts stems from the fact that it had more than twice as many follow-up comments as DW German and DW Russian. As we have come to know in Subsection 8.2.1, however, engagement at the response stage was largely a matter of capacity. Considering that the language services had comparable capacities available, DW English's more frequent engagement in dialogical activity appears quite remarkable. The English service's dialogical activity was not only more frequent, it was also more varied than DW German's. While DW German's dialogical activity was confined to asking users to refrain from offensive behavior and requesting viewpoints from users, DW English moreover asked users to give reasons. On top of that, interviewees from DW English appeared to be quite tolerant towards extreme opinions and appreciative of audience feedback while DW German seemed less open in these respects. All in all, tendencies towards acting as a dialogical mediator were pronounced at DW English, so the anticipation should not be rejected solely on the basis of the percentages. After all, the differences between DW English and DW German were marginal and their strongest inclination by far was to act as an objective observer.

The anticipated differences between the cases had been derived from their main functions. Because of its focus on raising democratic standards it was expected that the Russian service would show the strongest inclination towards acting as a discursive advocate. The English service was assumed to display the most straightforward tendencies towards dialogical journalism because of its focus on playing out DW's know-how on intercultural dialogue as a competitive advantage over other international broadcasters. Due to its focus on acting as an official transmitter of news from a single perspective, the German service was assumed to display the strongest tendencies towards an acting as an objective observer. The study results, however, suggest that there are more complex reasons for the language services' ways of handling user comments beyond their main functions. Other factors emerging from the data were:

- *Audience perception:* DW German handled user comments mainly under the impression that its audience is "really well-behaved" (DW_Deu_1, §18). DW English, in turn, displayed acceptance for the fact that they "can't just have one type of audience, politically correct and totally behaving in a way we want" (DW_Eng_2, §18). These perceptions contrasted with what DW Russian saw itself confronted with at the response stage. The Russian service handled user comments largely under the impression that the next severe troll attack or the next shit storm is imminent. As we have already learnt in Section 7.3.1, DW Russian assumed that a part of their audience opposes the democratic values DW represents and is mainly looking for confrontation. It seems that this audience perception played a part in prompting DW Russian to leave its passive role at the response stage more often than the other language services in order to remove comments and to steer the discussion towards a higher democratic quality by adding publicly relevant viewpoints and context information.

- *Organizational principles:* Passiveness and containment were pronounced guiding principles advocated by the strategists in terms of handling user comments because the capacities allegedly did not allow for anything beyond that. This objective observer-type of approach seemed to have been widely adopted at the level of the language services. In certain aspects, active engagement was welcomed at the organizational level. In this case, however, there often seemed to be a disconnect with the language services. The Social Media Guidelines stipulated, for instance, that the removal of comments should be accompanied with hints to the Netiquette. This rule was at times consciously disregarded by DW Russian because users reportedly felt lectured by it. The strategists also largely welcomed user feedback at the response stage as a source for story ideas. Likewise, the Social Media Guidelines stipulated that editors should actively seek user feedback in the social web. For the staff members of the language services, however, user feedback was more annoying than useful, and they largely ignored it. All in all, organizational principles seemed to be an ambivalent factor because they conveyed mixed messages. It was beyond question at DW that user comments should only be encouraged to an extent that the language service in question is able to sustain on the basis of its limited resources.

> At the same time, the Social Media Guidelines officially stipulated certain resource-hungry discursive or dialogical approaches. In this fuzzy situation, language services seemed to rely on their own interpretations of the situation in which Social Media Guidelines sometimes served as references to be consciously disregarded if the situation was deemed to require it.

Now that P4 and the anticipated differences between cases have been reviewed, we turn to comparing the study results with earlier empirical findings.

First of all, it can be stated that the low level of journalistic engagement at the response stage that the study reveals is clearly in line with findings from earlier studies (e.g. Jakobs 2014; Noguera Vivo 2010). A perception that the response stage belonged primarily to the audience (Reich 2011) was also salient at DW and served as a justification for not getting too involved there. DW Russian's reservation, however, rather stemmed from negative experience with increased engagement at the response stage. It had reportedly caused clashes between editors and users.

Earlier studies found that a common criticism of user comments on news was its harsh tone (e.g. Reich, 2011; Singer & Ashman, 2009). This is not entirely confirmed by the results of the study at hand. DW German turned out to actually perceive its audience as well-behaved. DW Russian, on the other hand, was indeed found to feel plagued by users who provoke others and poison the discussion. This experience had caused DW Russian to be quite ruthless in its moderation of the response stage.

As for moderation measures the study results generally reflect what was found out by Neuberger et al. (2015): Safeguarding the commenting rules was the most common moderation activity of journalists whereas participation in discussions and active moderation happened less often. Many of the interviewed DW editors turned out to associate enforcing the Netiquette rules with censorship – also because censorship was perceived as a common accusation made by users at the response stage. While the staff members of DW Russian were found to grapple no longer with their role of a censor because they considered it a necessity, the Social Media Editors at DW German and DW English seemed rather troubled by it. Especially at DW German having to delete, that is, having to "censor" comments did not sit well with the staff. Consistent with Harrison's (2010) findings, the Social Media Coordinator felt that it contradicted principles of freedom of speech. Accordingly, the editors felt most comfortable just relying on self-regulation

forces (Loosen et al., 2013) from within their social web communities. Moderation activity at DW was generally found to be based on elaborate organizational guidelines. Similar to the journalists in the newsrooms studied by Harrison (2010) and Loosen et al. (2013), DW's Social Media Editors interpreted these guidelines in different ways, mostly by relying on their gut feeling and on former experience with user reactions. Handling user comments was regarded as "time-consuming and resource-hungry" (Harrison, 2010, p. 250) at DW, too. For the very same reason user comments were not at all times actively encouraged at DW. If a language service's capacities didn't allow for following up on what happens at the response stage, it was actually supposed to avoid fueling discussions.

8.2.7 Answer to RQ2

This section provides the answer to RQ2 ("*How is Deutsche Welle's social web activity at the response stage to be classified with regard to democratic standards?*"). This final answer to the second research questions needs to take into account both the results on user commentary and the results on journalistic handling. Therefore, it is first of all considered to what extent user commentary and journalistic handling appeared interrelated. For this purpose, the questions raised in Subsection 8.1.4. are revisited. Afterwards, it is inspected to what extent the examined journalistic social web activity at the response stage matches the role conceptualizations of the discourse advocate, the dialogical mediator, and the objective observer.

The analysis of the user commentary disclosed significant differences between the language services' response stages in terms of relevance, user interrelation, and meta-discussion. This raised the question whether these differences can possibly be traced back to the language services' different strategies of handling user comments. In view of the results on journalistic handling, this only seems plausible in terms of relevance. While none of the language services actively demanded public or topical relevance at the response stage, the Social Media Editor of DW English explained that she deleted comments that are not related to the output topic. This might have contributed to the outstanding percentage of relevant user commentary at DW English's response stage. In terms of interrelating users or addressing the discussion DW was completely inactive at the response stage. Therefore, the significant differences between the user

commentary in these respects cannot stem from the language services' specific ways of handling user comments.

The analysis of the user commentary moreover revealed that the majority of the user comments were civil. This begged the question whether DW's active engagement as a dialogical mediator or discourse advocate in this respect might have facilitated this. Even though civility-related activity was the most frequent activity of DW at the response stage, it still didn't happen very often overall. This suggests that user comments had turned out quite civil and relevant even without DW's active engagement. To what extent DW might have silently removed uncivil comments remained impossible to track within the scope of this study. However, the evidence from the interviews suggests that DW German and DW English did not delete any comments without publishing a hint to the Netiquette. Only DW Russian might have "silently" reduced the number of uncivil comments at its response stage.

A small but considerable share of user commentary was found to add original viewpoints, relate to others, and justify assertions. Corresponding activities on the part of DW only happened occasionally at the response stage. Therefore, they do not serve as a probable explanation for how the user commentary turned out in these respects.

Finally, the analysis of the user commentary revealed that users rarely engaged in providing context information, giving feedback, and addressing the discussion. This was not the case despite an active engagement of DW as a dialogical mediator or discourse advocate at the response stage. In fact, DW rarely encouraged users in these respects, if at all. Thus, it can be assumed that the low standards of the user commentary in these respects are also a reflection of DW's inactivity.

Overall, it can be concluded that the user commentary unfolded at the response stage largely untouched by DW. Paradoxically, the bulk of DW's active engagement at the response stage was devoted to an aspect where user commentary anyway fulfilled higher democratic standards: Civility. In respects where user commentary showed room for improvement, however, DW was only marginally engaged.

Now we go through the democratically relevant journalistic role concepts to see how *Deutsche Welle*'s social web activity at the response stage can be classified with regard to democratic standards. This study differentiates three concepts understanding journalism as a facilitator of democratically relevant communication. Their levels of democratic standards are assumed to range from high to low.

Let us first consider the role that is assumed to feature high democratic standards: The discourse advocate. A discourse advocate was defined as a deeply involved journalist who stimulates, maintains, and advances a context of rational discourse. Among other things, a discourse advocate is supposed to be criticizable and accessible to feedback. This, however, was hardly the case with DW. While DW English and DW Russian were found to only occasionally respond to user feedback in a reasoned manner, DW German did so at no time. Discursive activity was also seldom when it comes to ensuring civility. Among the three language services examined, only DW Russian was found to have removed uncivil comments a few times along with giving an explanation why the comments were removed. The Russian service was also a frontrunner in terms of adding publicly relevant context information and viewpoints to the discussion, albeit to a small degree. All in all, the role of the discourse advocate was scarcely reflected in DW's handling of user comments at the response stage.

The second journalism concept – dialogical journalism – is considered moderately demanding in terms of democratic standards in this study. The corresponding role of the journalist as a dialogical mediator was defined as one that is committed to engaging in and maintaining an experience-accentuated exchange. This role was even less pronounced in DW's handling of user comments than the role of the discourse advocate. Dialogical activity was only detected in three aspects: Civility, viewpoints, and argumentation. Asking users in a dialogical manner to refrain from incivility was a relatively common activity at DW English and DW German. Beyond that, dialogical activity in the form of asking users for new viewpoints or justifications for their assertions was barely noticeable across DW. Activities such as providing context information from a personal point of view, asking users to relate to one another, or stimulating the discussion via meta-discussion were not detected at all at the response stage even though DW's Social Media Guidelines explicitly envisaged that editors "take up the role of the [...] moderator who engages in a dialogue with Fans and Followers of DW" (Social Media Guidelines, p. 13). In fact, it was revealed in the interviews with the strategists that such active engagement remained an ideal and was actually to be avoided at DW as long as there is not enough capacity to put it into practice sustainably. In this context, the results on user commentary raise the question whether there is actually much of an interest in genuine dialogue among the audience. After all, user comments were found to often "surpass" the dialogical communication mode and move straight to fulfilling

discursive standards. Thus, chances are that facilitating highly democratic discussions in a discursive fashion would actually be easier than expected.

The third role conceptualization understands journalists as objective observers and is considered to involve relatively low democratic standards. An objective observer was defined as a journalist who wants to stay detached and is largely indifferent towards follow-up communication. This role characterizes DW's handling of user comments most adequately. The language services remained mostly inactive in all examined aspects at the response stage, in some aspects they were even completely inactive. There was in fact a widespread perception among the editorial staff members that the response stage predominantly belonged to the users and that engaging at the response stage was not worth the trouble.

In conclusion, DW's handling of user comments at the response stage can be classified as fulfilling relatively low democratic standards, namely the standards of an objective observer. The image of journalists acting at the response stage as hosts who "keep[..] the discussion flowing; ensur[e] there is enough nourishment, in sufficient variety, to keep all the guests happy; steer[..] together people who might enjoy one another's company; and, if necessary, head[..] off or break[..] up any fights" (Singer, 2011, p. 107) proved incorrect for DW. Neither was it the case that DW actively turned the response stage into a space where users "can count on attention and feedback as well as on compliance with discursive rules" (Neuberger et al., 2010, p. 15). Interestingly enough, the user commentary at DW's response stage was nonetheless mostly civil and on-topic. The quality of user comments is of course subject to multiple factors that, in combination, can have both detrimental and beneficial effects on democratic standards (Picone & Raeijmaekers, 2013). Yet, with its inactivity at the response stage DW precludes the possibility to be a factor of any kind, thus missing out on chances to "claim the space as deliberative" (Chen, 2017, p. 41). Principally, DW would be in a position to build on decent levels of civility and relevance in its user commentary at the response stages. Principally, it could also try something new and involve Social Media Editors as recognizable individuals at its response stages to positively affect the deliberative norms there (Stroud et al., 2015). Against this backdrop, the prospects for higher democratic standards at DW's response stages do actually not seem that bleak in principle.

9 Conclusion and discussion

This final chapter draws an overall conclusion of the study's central findings and discusses their meaning with regard to theory, practice, and future research. Section 9.1 concentrates on the findings' theoretical implications. It presents the findings in connection with the respective models of analysis and the related theoretical concepts, pointing out to what extent the findings allow for a refinement of these models and concepts. Section 9.2 then turns to the practical implications of the study's findings. These are presented with a view to news journalism in general and also specifically with a view to international broadcasting and the concrete case of Germany's international broadcaster *Deutsche Welle*. Finally, Section 9.3 offers methodological reflections and leverage points for future research.

9.1 Theoretical implications of the findings

The findings of this study were generated as part of an endeavor to find answers to two research questions. A theory review in relation to professional-journalistic social web usage informed the formulation of the first research question.

As part of this review, it was first of all clarified what definition of "social web" this study subscribes to. Then, conceptualizations of social web usage and specific forms of organizational social web usage were examined. Schmidt's (2011b) model of analysis for practices of social web usage was identified as a useful model to guide the first part of this study's empirical examination because it rests on the social web understanding that the study subscribes to and because the model was designed to be also applicable to social web usage in professional-organizational contexts besides private individual contexts. The model focuses on practices of identity management, information management, and relationship management.

Throughout the remainder of the theory review, theoretical considerations and concepts from the broader realm of journalism studies were consulted. Theoretical reflections on international broadcasting were used to inform the analytical category of identity management. Theoretical considerations with regard to journalism in the social web were used to enrich the analytical category of information management. Considerations theorizing journalism-audience

relations in a digital environment were used to inform the analytical category of relationship management.

On this basis, the study's initial research interest in professional-journalistic social web usage could be specified: The first research question was formulated to enquire about professional-journalistic social web usage at Germany's international broadcaster *Deutsche Welle* with regard to practices of identity management, information management, and relationship management at the output stage of the news process. The theoretical implications of the findings obtained in this respect are summed up in the following paragraphs.

Model of analysis for identifying professional-journalistic social web practices at the output stage

To answer the first research question, this study built on Schmidt's (2011b) model of analysis for practices of social web usage. It successfully applied the model as part of an empirical examination of professional-journalistic social web usage. Hence, Schmidt's assertion that his model is principally applicable to professional contexts could be practically confirmed with regard to professional journalistic social web practices. The practical application of the model in this study moreover disclosed concrete merits of the model when it comes to analyzing professional-journalistic social web usage.

First of all, the model's analytical differentiation of practices of identity management, information management, and relationship management proved useful for the empirical examination at hand because it allowed for a structured and focused incorporation and reconsideration of theoretical concepts relevant to the research interest. Paying attention to rules, relations, and code – the model's structural dimensions – was found to add substance to the reconsideration of these theoretical concepts in light of the findings because it offered possible explanations for them. Last but not least, the fact that the model takes into account both the micro-level of individual action as well as the macro-level of social structures proved to be crucial for fully grasping the dynamics that shaped social web usage at the media organization in question. It ensured that the empirical examination not only focused on individual social web usage by social media editors, but also considered how the broader newsroom, social media guidelines, netiquette policies, and the media organization's strategists affected this usage.

Now that the general merits of applying Schmidt's model of analysis in the context of professional-organizational journalism have been outlined, we turn to the theoretical implications of the concrete findings that the model helped to generate.

Journalistic identity management in the social web

This study analyzed journalistic identity management based on Germany's international broadcaster *Deutsche Welle*. From a theoretical point of view, international broadcasting is conceptualized as fulfilling three central functions: A public service function, a political function, and a dialogical function.

International broadcasters' public service function involves the provision of reliable information for countries that lack media freedom (Feilcke, 2011; Kleinsteuber, 2002a; Meyen, 2008). This function is also known as the "compensatory function" of international broadcasting (Hafez, 2007). In an age of global news flows where people are increasingly able to access diverse news sources, this function has been increasingly questioned (Youmans & Powers, 2012). The results of this study show, however, that the public service function still serves as a guiding principle even in the modern social web activities of *Deutsche Welle*. The international broadcaster's identity management practices in the social web featured a considerable news focus as well as a focus on information-seekers as a target group. Among the three examined cases, this was most salient at DW Russian. Here, the editors even felt that they could fulfill the public service function particularly well in the social web because that's where their target audience had started to resort to for credible news. At the same time, the study identified a general tension at DW resulting from the perceived difficulty to reconcile the public service function with the casualness that was deemed the communication standard in the social web. Here, the structural dimensions *relations* and *code* (especially the technological spirit) were identified as sources for inner conflicts at DW. This should be considered in attempts to theorize the relevance of the public service function in modern international broadcasting.

The political function of international broadcasters refers to efforts to present the country of origin in a favorable way (Hafez, 2007; Price, 2001; Zöllner, 2006). While the nature of these efforts are said to have changed over time from rather overt to subtler ones, they still arouse the suspicion that international broadcasters engage in national PR missions rather than in credible journalism to promote

their country's image. DW's overall strong focus on Germany-related issues and German perspectives, which the study detected in the broadcaster's social web output, indeed suggests that the organization still pursues the political function in an overt way. This runs contrary to what had been defined as an explicit procedural rule in the DW Act, namely that DW regionalizes its reporting. Thus, efforts to theorize the political function of international broadcasting in a digital age would do well to consider overt self-presentation attempts. The analysis of structural dimensions of DW's identity management practices revealed that relations were a factor that seemed to influence the extent to which the broadcaster's language services focused on Germany: At DW German, where the social web audience was deemed keen on learning about Germany, the focus on Germany-related topics and German perspectives was most pronounced; at DW Russian, where the social web audience was said to regularly accuse the broadcaster of engaging in propaganda, the Germany focus was least pronounced.

The dialogical function of international broadcasting refers to international broadcasters' efforts to promote understanding for different cultural perspectives (Kleinsteuber, 2004a; Kops, 2008). The concept of dialogue is considered a promising new paradigm that can serve international broadcasters as a competitive advantage over commercial international broadcasters (Hafez, 2007; Lynch, 2010; Riordan, 2004). In fact, the latest amendment of the DW Act included a dialogical mission against this background. Thus, this mission was considered an explicit procedural rule structuring DW's social web usage in this study. The study disclosed, however, that dialogical motives played only a minor role for DW in terms of making itself accessible in the social web. Instead, economic reasons seemed to represent a more significant driving force. The dialogical function of international broadcasting was generally not prominently reflected in DW's identity management. Most amenable to it was DW English. Hence, critics such as Youmans and Powers (2012) seem to have a point by saying that dialogue is a rather unrealistic communication mode for international broadcasting. What the study also revealed, however, was that the reason for this might not just be, as Youmans argues, a lack of incentive on the part of international broadcasters to genuinely listen to the foreign publics that make up their audiences to the degree implied by the term dialogue. The results actually suggest it might also work the other way around: As foreign publics do not feel accountable to international broadcasters' states of origin, they are unlikely to listen. After all, the case of DW Russian

vividly illustrated that dialogue is difficult to put into practice when editors have to deal with users whose least interest is to acknowledge that others' diverging positions are just as valid as their own.

Journalistic information management in the social web

This study's analysis of journalistic information management at the output stage was informed by several theoretical concepts. One of them is Bruns' (2005) gatewatching concept for journalism in a digital age. This concept provides that journalists no longer focus on publishing self-authored, finished reports at the output stage of the news process. Instead they engage in contextualizing the large amount of information that is available in the WWW by pointing to other relevant primary sources. The study results actually show that, at least at DW, this was not the case: The share of external links in DW's social web output was vanishingly small. An explanation as to why publicizing has not superseded publishing at DW could be found in the structural dimension of *rules*. DW's Social Media Guidelines urged social media staff to ensure that the content they link is legally sound as DW is legally liable for external content once it is linked from DW accounts. Given editors' tight schedules, however, reviewing external articles or videos is probably too time-consuming for them. With this in mind, the gatewatching ideal appears quite removed from the actual reality of professional-journalistic information management in the social web.

Spreadability (Phillips, 2012; Schmidt, 2011b, p. 144) and popularity (Heinderyckx, 2015) have been conceived as factors reshaping the flow of news in the social web because they prompt novel news values. The findings of this study suggest that these factors indeed played an important role for the selection of social web output at DW, especially for staff members directly in charge of selecting this output (that is, Social Media Editors). Their information management practices seemed to be considerably influenced by the structural dimension of *code* which allows a constant monitoring of user reactions and user ratings based on quantitative web statistics. As Social Media Editors derive instant gratification from these statistics they might indeed be prone to overemphasize spreadability and popularity in the judgement of their journalistic performance. Against this background, a rebound of user ratings on the content structures of traditional journalistic output – as predicted from an attention economic perspective (Wendelin, 2014) – does not seem unlikely.

DW's strategists, on the other hand, showed an awareness of the overemphasis of user ratings as a problem and declared that user ratings must not represent the main reference for measuring DW's success. Thus, tabloidization tendencies emanating from social media (Blom & Hansen, 2015) may actually be brought to a halt if they are unwanted by the strategists of a media organization.

Another conceptual issue raised in the theory part was whether Social Media Editors can be considered journalists or not. What the findings demonstrate is that DW's Social Media Editors were not just "media workers" in the sense of Lietsala and Sirkkunnen (2008) with tasks confined to technically facilitating social web accounts and activating the community. Principally, the Social Web Editors at DW needed to be able to deal with the fast pace and the directness of the social web and with the pressures attached to it. As part of their editorial work, they had to reduce the complexity of website teasers, rephrase them, give them an interesting spin and match them with pictures, all while anticipating the audience's level of implicit knowledge and any issue that could potentially cause turmoil or confusion. Moreover, their work required them to be in close contact with colleagues from their own newsroom and from various other departments. It was welcomed at DW when Social Media Editors had completed formal journalistic training and were able to cover regular editorial shifts – this, however, was more important for earning respect from their colleagues than for their genuine tasks as Social Media Editors.

Whether this job profile of the Social Media Editor fits conventional definitions of professional journalism remains up for discussion. Perhaps more fruitful would be to abandon this either/or-discussion and conceive the complex job of Social Media Editors as a specialized occupation in modern professional journalism contexts. With its detailed insights into the work of DW's Social Media Editors, this study provides a starting point for such conceptual efforts.

Journalistic relationship management in the social web

One way of conceptualizing journalists' attitudes towards the audience is to define a spectrum with progressive convergers at one end and conservative traditionalists at the other end (Robinson, 2010). Typologies discerning multiple categories (e.g. Gulyas, 2016; Hedman & Djerf-Pierre, 2013) have added nuances to this spectrum, for example by identifying pragmatic or observing attitudes. This study contributes to rendering this spectrum even more nuanced by pointing to

factors, such as practical experience with audience members or organizational appreciation of audience reactions, that seem to shape and reshape journalists' pertinent attitudes. At DW, progressive attitudes towards the audience were typically held by staff members who were directly in charge of dealing with social media audiences. Yet, if these staff members had repeatedly gained negative practical experience with social web users they seemed prone to shifting more towards the pragmatic center of the spectrum. Conservative attitudes, in turn, seemed to be more prevalent among staff members who were not directly in charge of dealing with social web audiences. Yet, those of them who had realized that audience reactions get more and more attention within their news organization seemed encouraged to depart from their end of the spectrum and become more interested in audience reactions. Therefore, what needs to be taken into account when conceptualizing journalists' attitudes towards the audience is that these attitudes are not fixed. Instead, they are shaped and reshaped based on a growing realm of experience and may alter over time according to newly evolving factors.

In terms of journalistic boundary work (Lewis, 2012) the study revealed an interesting occurrence at DW: Boundaries were not only maintained towards users, boundary work was also found to be an internal issue between editors who were dismissive of social web usage in general and editors who were open-minded towards social web usage. The former seemed to highlight their own work's journalistic seriousness as opposed to the editorial work of their social web colleagues. Their desire to maintain control might be induced by a perceived loss of control in the face of changes in the journalistic profession that render social web skills increasingly important. As a defensive reaction, journalists who don't have these skills frame their social web colleagues as not really belonging to their profession. Against this background, it seems promising to devote attention to the relationships between (different types of) colleagues in contemporary newsrooms when conceptualizing journalists' adherence to existing structures in the face of changes brought about by digitalization.

The formulation of this study's second research question was prompted by a research interest in journalism's capacity to realize the democratic potential inherent to the dialogical structure of the social web.

In a first step, a theory review of democratically relevant communication modes served as a starting point for developing the second research question. As part of this review, the communication modes deliberation/discourse, dialogue, and everyday

talk were found to be linked to journalism concepts in which journalists were conceived as taking up the roles of discourse advocates, dialogical mediators, or objective observers in order to facilitate the respective communication mode.

In a second step, a look into theoretically derived expectations towards modern-day journalism revealed that these expectations can be subsumed under the long-standing concepts of discursive journalism, dialogical journalism, and objectivity-oriented journalism. On this basis, an analytical grid for assessing professional journalistic social web practice at the response stage with regard to democratic standards was put forward. The grid classifies the journalism concepts and the related communication modes according to democratic standards: Acting as a discourse advocate is regarded as fulfilling higher democratic standards than acting as a dialogical mediator; acting as a dialogical mediator at the response stage, in turn, is deemed to fulfill higher democratic standards than acting as an objective observer; acting as an objective observer is deemed democratically relevant to a relatively low degree.

Thus, the second research question was eventually formulated to investigate how DW's social web activity at the response stage can be classified according to these democratic standards. The theoretical implications of the pertinent findings are summed up in the following paragraphs.

Analytical grid for assessing professional journalistic social web practice at the response stage with regard to democratic standards

To answer the second research question, this study relied on an analytical grid that was specifically developed for this purpose. The development of the grid went hand in hand with a systematization of concepts dealing with democratically relevant communication and journalism's role in facilitating democratically relevant communication.

One of the grid's merits is that it establishes clarity in terms of various notions of democratically relevant communication modes floating around in democracy theory literature. This clarity was established by subsuming these notions under three clearly defined communication modes, namely discourse/deliberation, dialogue, and everyday talk.

As for deliberation/discourse, the theory review illustrated that the apprehension of this communication mode as one that is based on rational arguments,

confined to topics that are of public interest, and aimed at reaching a consensus is rooted in Habermas' (1989) model of the bourgeois public sphere in the 17th and 18th century. Moreover, it demonstrated that deliberation scholars typically conceive this communication mode as one that applies to formal institutional settings. The social web, which is in the focus of this study, cannot be considered a formal institutional setting. The grid was nonetheless developed on the basis of the conventional notion of discourse/deliberation as this ensured conceptual clarity in differentiating it from dialogue and everyday talk. At the same time, it was acknowledged that discourse represents an ideal outside formal institutional settings and that Habermas and other deliberation scholars have widened their concepts for less formal non-institutional settings.

In terms of dialogical communication concepts, the theory review showed that these are often conceptualized as more realistic alternatives to the conventional notion of discourse/deliberation (see e.g. Bohman, 1996; Healy, 2011; Kim & Kim, 2008; McCoy & Scully, 2002). Essentially, dialogue signifies a tension-packed back-and-forth movement of speaking and listening in which all participants enjoy an equal status while recognizing mutual differences in their interpretations of the world. Within the grid, dialogue was classified as involving lower democratic standards than discourse because it is not confined to subjects of common concern or the public good (instead, dialogue leaves room for personal experience) and because it does not pursue any predetermined goals (instead, it brings about increased trust and mutual understanding as side effects).

The concept of everyday talk, too, was found to be conceptualized as an alternative to the conventional notion of discourse/deliberation (see e.g. Conover & Searing, 2005; Graham, 2015; Mansbridge, 1999). It allows people to bring up otherwise suppressed issues, to organize their opinion elements, or to become aware of their political opinions. Yet, as this concept involves no requirements, no communication rules, and no limits as to its subject-matter, it can be considered involving relatively low democratic standards. In the grid, it was classified as the democratically relevant communication mode with the lowest democratic standards because – unlike dialogue and discourse – it does not necessarily involve a person's positioning in relation to other interlocutors, neither does it aim at collective decision-making.

Another key insight from this study driving the development of the grid was that there are three concepts from journalism studies – discursive journalism

(Brosda, 2008a), dialogical journalism (Anderson et al., 1994; Heikkilä & Kunelius, 1998; Kleinsteuber, 2004a), and objectivity-oriented journalism (Hornmoen & Steensen, 2014; Soffer, 2009) – that can be matched with these democratically relevant communication modes in the sense that they conceive journalists as facilitators of these communication modes. In a further step, the theory review of expectations towards journalism in the social web revealed striking overlaps with these long-standing, elaborate journalism concepts. Integrating these expectations into the concepts and organizing them within the analytical grid put them on a sound theoretical basis and eventually permitted a systematic assessment of professional journalistic social web activity at the response stage with regard to democratic standards.

Last but not least, the developed analytical grid contributed to enhancing the empirical measurement of democratic standards in (online) discussions. Proceeding from Brosda's (2010) hands-on suggestions for discursive journalism practice, eight indicators could be distilled. Each indicator represents one aspect of democratically relevant social web communication – on the one hand, in terms of user comments and on the other hand, regarding the journalists' handling of these comments. Various indicators used in earlier empirical endeavors to evaluate democratic relevance of (online) discussions (Freelon, 2010; Halpern & Gibbs, 2013; Jakobs, 2014; Papacharissi, 2004; Picone & Raeijmaekers, 2013; Ruiz et al., 2011; Steenbergen et al., 2003; Witschge, 2011; Zhang et al., 2013) could be subsumed under the indicators inspired by Brosda and thus systemized. By pursuing an ordinal measurement approach, the empirical implementation of the grid moreover contributed to dissolving objectivity and reliability concerns raised by some of these earlier assessments at the nominal or interval level of measurement.

Now that the general merits of the developed analytical grid have been outlined, let us turn to the theoretical implications of the concrete findings that the grid helped to generate with regard to journalism's role in facilitating democratically relevant communication in the social web.

Democratic relevance of journalistic social web activity at the response stage

In social web environments, where mass mediated public sphere intertwines with personal publics, two sets of scholarly expectations towards journalistic activity at the response stage of the news process were identified.

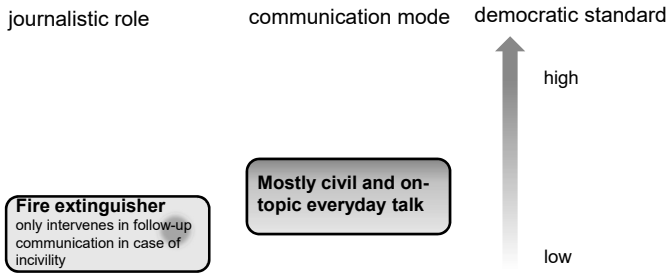
The first set of expectations was classified as dialogical in this study. It involves expectations as to journalists staying engaged and accessible at the response stage as well as journalists acknowledging the added value of user contributions (Bruns, 2005; Graham, 2012; Jarvis, 2009; Lilienthal et al., 2014; Siapera, 2012; Singer, 2011). As part of this study, these expectations were theoretically enriched and empirically examined based on the above-mentioned grid. The empirical examination revealed that journalistic social web activity in the manner of a dialogical mediator was the least common occurrence at the response stages of DW's social web accounts. The findings illustrate that genuine dialogization of journalism in the digital age is thwarted by a neglect of basic dialogical requirements on the part of journalists, even if media organizations may pride themselves on subscribing to the general idea of dialogue. True dialogue requires recognition of others' perspectives and willingness to engage with these perspectives, however different they may be from one's own. However, if journalists perceive audience feedback as hairsplitting and ignore it rather than appreciate and explore it, they fail to meet a basic requirements of dialogue. Dialogue moreover implies a certain tensionality. If an unpredictable back-and-forth between different perspectives is unwanted on journalistic social web accounts, then dialogue is ruled out by definition. This makes obvious that the technical possibility of two-way communication alone does not suffice for ascribing a dialogical role to modern-day journalism. Thus, scholarly expectations towards journalism in a digital age should take into account the requirements of the dialogue concept.

The other set of expectations was specified as discursive expectations in this study. It involves expectations as to journalists ensuring adequate conditions for a socially relevant discourse by engaging in active moderation (Lilienthal et al. 2014; Neuberger et al., 2010; Springer, 2011). These expectations, too, were theoretically enriched and empirically examined based on the grid. The empirical examination showed that a high-quality debate was indeed in the interest of DW, however this rarely resulted in journalistic social web activity in the manner of a discourse advocate. Instead, DW's dominant strategy was to contain user comments. The media organization's principle was that user comments should only be encouraged to an extent that the language service in question is able to sustain. The more user comments, the higher the probability of inappropriate comments. By lack of sufficient resources to actively moderate the user debate, DW chose a containment strategy over a discursive journalism approach in order to ensure acceptable standards.

What seemed to trigger discursive activity on the part of DW, however, were audiences already known as especially troublesome. In this case, the editors obviously saw themselves forced to leave the general passive strategy in favor of active safeguarding of discursive standards. Against this background, scholarly expectations towards discursive journalism in the social web are highly relevant. Future models of discursive journalism in the social web should to take into account media organizations' resources for active moderation activity as well as their actual willingness to deploy available resources for this very purpose.

Based on the developed grid, DW's handling of user comments at the response stage was classified as predominantly fulfilling relatively low democratic standards, namely the standards of an objective observer. At this relatively low level of democratic standards, journalists were assumed to act as detached transmitters of fixed messages from a single perspective. The concrete case study findings allow for a refinement of this journalistic role in social web environments. What the findings illustrate is that DW's (in)activity at the response stage is not all detached and indifferent. There is one aspect about which DW is actually quite concerned: Civility. If the tone of the debate becomes rough DW considers to take action and once users clearly violate the Netiquette Social Media Editors may eventually intervene. Up until then, DW relies on self-regulation from within the social web user communities. Apart from this, the media organization does not give the impression to care much and it takes no visible measures to steer the user discussion at the response stage. The only "measure" taken to prevent a problematic course of discussion is a passive one, namely not fueling the discussion in any way. Hence, the journalistic role crystallizing in the data could be more accurately described as a "fire extinguisher" who only acts in case of emergency and otherwise pursues a containment strategy. In Figure 14, the initially developed classification (see Figure 1) is adapted based on a posteriori knowledge gained through this study.

Figure 14: Democratic standard of DW's social web activity at response stage



9.2 Practical relevance of the findings

Let us now turn to the practical implications of this study's findings. It is assumed that the findings hold general relevance to journalistic newsrooms professionally maintaining social web presences as the research questions relate to *Deutsche Welle* in its capacity as a journalistic news outlet. The findings seem especially insightful for public service news providers who, like DW, target global audiences. Finally, they shed light on the specific situation of international public service broadcasting in Germany as a public service product that is rooted in Cold War times and that needs to justify its existence against the background of today's global news flows. The following paragraphs sum up major takeaways from this study for practitioners and strategists working in these contexts.

- *Institutionalizing points of contact between staff members at the editorial and organizational level helps media organizations to react coherently to digital innovations.*

The findings suggest that meeting formats such as the "Social Media Regulars' Table", the jour fixe with the Social Media Manager, or workshops helped to systemize social web activities across DW's diverse departments. This systematization of DW's social web activities happened relatively fast compared to its very first online activities. Early direct contact between staff members from editorial offices and staff members from the strategy departments seems useful towards spurring concerted action across an organization without anybody feeling undermined or controlled.

- *Emphasizing a dialogical function seems promising for resolving news organizations' inner conflict between their status of trustworthy, reliable news sources and the need to act casually in the social web.*

The findings disclose that many social media editors at DW felt an inner conflict between their news organization's status as a trustworthy, reliable news source and the need to act casually in the social web. At the organizational level, there were efforts to resolve this conflict by promoting the image of the "reliable expert" which DW is supposed to represent in the social web. However, this image did not resolve much as it emphasizes attributes that are at the core of the conflict. In fact, by harking back on these conventional attributes DW seems to miss an opportunity to emphasize and enact its dialogical function as stipulated in the DW Act. Being accessible to one's audience and close to individual perspectives or personal emotions as suggested by the dialogical function is largely consistent with the social web's technological spirit of a playful, easy-going exchange among equals. Thus, it would have actually seemed quite promising for resolving this inner conflict.

- *If their editors make no appearance as individuals in the social web, news organizations miss a chance to positively affect the response stage.*

At DW, it proved to be an implicit rule that editors appear as representatives of the news organization in the social web. Thus, the organization had a much stronger presence than the individuals maintaining its social web accounts. At the same time, it was a wish of DW's social media editors to be acknowledged as individuals in the social web. For the time being, the compromise solution found at DW was to state the initials of the social media editors after each post. Yet, research shows that a more courageous practice in personalizing social web accounts can help media organizations to positively affect their response stages. Canter's study (2013) suggests that journalists engage in more informal, personal, and reciprocal exchanges when they use their individual accounts. Plus, Stroud et al. (2015) found that a recognizable individual from the news organization engaging with the commenters decreases incivility and increases the probability that the commenter provides evidence. Thus, DW as an organization could try

something new and deliberate with its social media editors on how they could become more recognizable as individuals in the social web.

- *Media organizations who place value on meaningful content should take caution that social media editors do not get carried away by interaction statistics.*

Tendencies that the study revealed in connection to social web analytics tools can be regarded as alarming for media organizations that place value on having meaningful content. One of the interviewed social media editors reflected that generating a lot of clicks with one's social web output can feel rewarding even though the content may be void or mundane. Another social media editor admitted that it is easy to become obsessed with the statistics generated by analytics tools. These findings point to a substantial risk that social media editors attach more importance to interaction rates than to the quality of the content they put out.

- *The mere introduction of social media editor roles in the newsrooms does not suffice to ensure consistent and smooth management of social web accounts.*

The case study at DW showed that when social media editing tasks are taken care of by several specialized people working in dedicated social web shifts, there is a demand for coordinating roles to ensure consistency between these individual social media editors. Apart from newly established roles, also regular staff members need to be prepared for the needs of their social web colleagues. Picture editors, for instance, have to remember to secure copyrights for the social web so that their social web colleagues can choose from an adequate amount of pictures. These examples illustrate that the maintenance of social web accounts does not only concern staff members whose job it is to put out the content but pertains to workflows across the entire news organization.

- *The mere introduction of social media editor roles in the newsrooms does not automatically make social media editors well-integrated in the newsroom.*

One quite telling finding of the study is that journalistic training was less important for the genuine tasks of the social media editors than for other newsroom members in order to take their social media colleagues seriously.

Whether or not social media editors get due respect for their work from their "regular" editorial colleagues turned out to be a major point for discussion at DW. Different options are conceivable for news organizations to tackle this issue. The approach that Loosen et al. (2013) found at *Tagesschau* was a rotation system designed to ensure that "regular" staff members familiarize themselves with the work at the social media desk for a certain amount of time. Yet, there might as well be other useful strategies. Judging from the case study at hand even smaller tricks may do. At DW Russian, the Social Media Editor seemed to have developed unproblematic, equal relationships with the other colleagues as a result of sitting amidst them. What also seemed helpful for strengthening social media editors' positions within the newsroom were chief editors emphasizing the importance of social media editors' work and mainstreaming it in editorial meetings.

- *Preventing friction between non-users and users of the social web within the news organization seems to be a pressing issue.*

The study revealed and specified boundary work at DW between editors who were dismissive of social web usage and editors who were open-minded towards social web usage. For news organizations, this poses a risk of ending up with friction between staff members which can slow down workflows, thwart innovation, and lower job satisfaction. Especially so-called legacy media in which large parts of the staff has been employed prior to digitalization should be aware of this risk and develop strategies to increase respect and understanding between various types of social web users and non-users in their organization.

- *The promotion of dialogue requires that resources are dedicated to this task.*

Journalistic activity, let alone dialogical journalistic activity, was rarely detected at the response stages of DW's social web accounts even though the news organization's guidelines explicitly envisaged that editors "take up the role of the [...] moderator who engages in a dialogue with Fans and Followers of DW" (Social Media Guidelines, p. 13) and the DW Act stipulates a general dialogical mandate. In fact, it was revealed in the interviews with the strategists that such active engagement remained an ideal and was actually to be avoided at DW as long as there

is not enough capacity to put it into practice sustainably. As a result, DW acted more like a fire extinguisher at its response stages, only taking action once a discussion violated the Netiquette. This raises the question why there is this lack of capacity and illustrates that a dialogical mandate remains lip service if it is not backed up with resources accordingly.

- *If a media organization truly wants to promote dialogue or discourse in the social web, then it needs to have a straightforward approach on how this translates to social media editors at the practical level.*

Promoting dialogue, or discourse for that matter, not only requires capacity in the sense of working time to sustain the according user communication, it also requires capacity in the form of practical knowledge how exactly these communication modes can be facilitated. The findings of this study show that many possibilities of acting in the manner of a dialogical mediator or a discourse advocate were left unexploited at the response stages of DW's social web accounts. The operationalization of these journalistic role concepts as conducted in this study (see Table 8) may actually serve as an inspiration in this respect. Following this operationalization, a social media editor can act dialogically, for example, by requesting topical relevance and justifications for stated opinions, by illustrating mutual thematic references or by requesting commenters to refer to one another. A social media editor who wants to promote discourse could check or request public relevance, add missing justifications for stated opinions, or illustrate social references between commenters.

- *In pursuit of higher democratic standards at the response stages of their social web accounts, journalism outlets should consider building on decent levels of civility and relevance in (most) user comments instead of concentrating on the poorness of (some) user comments.*

The study revealed that DW would principally be in a position to build on predominantly decent levels of civility and relevance in the user comments at its response stages. Thus, the prospects for DW to be able to raise the democratic standards of the user comments at its response stages seem quite good. Against this backdrop, it appears advisable for journalism organizations and their staff

to overcome their disappointment in the poorness of some of the comments and just deal with these comments matter-of-factly according to clear rules. This would allow putting more effort into enhancing the contribution of those comments that are essentially civil and on-topic.

9.3 Methodological reflections and future research

The overarching method applied in this study is the case study method. The case study conducted as part of this examination relied on a multiple-case design and a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods.

Reflecting on this methodological approach, it can first of all be stated that choosing the multiple-case design over a single-case design turned out to be beneficial. Studying the cases of DW English, DW German, and DW Russian allowed to pursue a replication logic which revealed the extent to which the editorial offices' varying tendencies in terms of identity management and handling user comments could be traced back to their varying key functions (public service function, political function, dialogical function). These varying key functions proved to have explanatory power indeed. Since it was possible to compare results from three cases, even further factors could be identified that seem influential in determining editorial offices' social web usage (e.g. their audience perception or organizational principles).

The methods combined for this multiple case study were a quantitative content analysis, qualitative expert interviews, and a qualitative document analysis. Of course, each of these methods has certain limitations. These were tried to be compensated by combining the methods. By means of content analysis, for example, it was possible to systematically examine how DW's social web output is constituted. At the same time, content analysis did not allow to get to know the reasons why output items get selected. By means of expert interviews, in turn, these reasons could be explored while a judgement of DW's social web output based solely on self-reports from the experts would probably have been distorted. Eventually, the applied combination of methods proved useful for accomplishing the study's objectives of delivering a thick description of professional journalistic social web usage at the output stage and of assessing journalistic social web activity at the response stage with a view to democratic relevance.

However, what should not go unmentioned is that, in hindsight, an alternative combination of methods would have been conceivable and perhaps would have provided even deeper insights in some respects. For practical reasons, the study concentrated on mutual complementation of the methods and so the document analysis, the content analysis, and the expert interviews were mostly designed and conducted in parallel. Yet, for the purpose of increased mutual validation the content analysis and the document analysis could have also been conducted prior to the expert interviews. This would have allowed to face the journalists with selected results from the content analysis and to have them explain how exactly these came about.

What would also have been thinkable, too, is selecting other methods to conduct the case study. In place of the expert interviews, for example, focus group discussions involving various types of editors within a newsroom (directly in touch with social web formats and not directly in touch with them) could have yielded interesting insights into the social web-related dynamics between editorial colleagues.

Of course, every study needs to narrow its focus in order to be feasible. There are several aspects that were not covered within in the scope of this study, but that would make interesting objects of study or topics for future research. Audiences, for example, represented a constant reference group throughout this study, but they were not studied directly. Yet, they are one part of the puzzle when it comes to journalism-audience relationships or the value of online discussions following up on news articles. Therefore, future research would do well to shed more light on the audiences' perspective of these issues. Initial research efforts to interview audience members about their expectations towards participation features offered by news journalism outlets (Loosen et al. 2013) or their quality perception of online news discussion (Ziegele, Breiner, & Quiring, 2014) have already been made. The conditions under which users perceive commenting online as valuable and beneficial seems a promising research focus that is both theoretically and practically relevant and would deserve further attention.

Further options for future research emerge from the study itself. What could for example be examined based on the data gathered is how the follow-up user commentary varied according to the specific social web content put out by DW. This would allow finding out whether a certain form or content of journalistic social web output attracts certain kinds of reactions. Furthermore, the data would allow for a separate examination of the social web formats *Facebook* and *YouTube*. In the study at hand, these formats were largely examined together with the aim

to grasp social web dynamics beyond single formats. Yet, principally, the data would also yield platform-specific insights. Another option would be to advance the analytical grid developed in this study for measuring democratic standards in (online) discussions. As mentioned earlier in the answer to RQ2a (see Subsection 8.1.5), future research endeavors could weigh the variables of the analytical grid. This would transform the current grid, in which all variables are treated equally, into an index that considers relative contributions of the variables. The relative contributions could either be derived from theory or they could be deduced from empirical findings, for example from audience perceptions of the importance of each variable for democratically relevant online discussion.

The following quote by Iosifidis (2011) aptly summarizes what is as well an overall conclusion of the study at hand: "[....] in the end, it all depends on how one uses the Internet. We should not forget that the Internet, as all new media technologies, can provide a useful *tool* or the *basis* for a public sphere, but it cannot itself create such a space" (p. 626). This realization would eventually be useful for any future study – as well as for any journalistic endeavor in the social web.

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Appendix 1: Summary

Appendix 1.1: German version

Die vorliegende Studie untersucht Journalismus im Social Web am Beispiel des deutschen Auslandsrundfunks. Hierfür wird ein Analysemodell, das drei zentrale Komponenten von Social-Web-Nutzungspraktiken (Identitätsmanagement, Informationsmanagement und Beziehungsmanagement) unterscheidet, für eine umfassende Beschreibung professionell-journalistischer Social-Web-Nutzung fruchtbar gemacht. Darüber hinaus werden drei demokratietheoretisch relevante journalistische Rollenkonzepte (Diskursanwalt, dialogischer Mittler und objektiver Beobachter) voneinander abgegrenzt und in eine Rangfolge gebracht um als Bewertungsmaßstab für professionell-journalistischen Umgang mit Nutzerkommentaren zu dienen.

Geprüft wird mittels einer multiplen Fallstudie, wie sich die Social-Web-Nutzungspraktiken dreier Redaktionen des Auslandsrundfunksenders Deutsche Welle an der Ausgangsstufe ihrer jeweiligen Facebook- und YouTube-Auftritte ausprägen und inwiefern sich dort an der Antwortstufe demokratietheoretisch relevante Rollenkonzepte widerspiegeln. Zu diesem Zweck wird eine quantitative Inhaltsanalyse von auf Facebook und YouTube veröffentlichtem Content (n = 941) und daran anschließenden Nutzer- und Journalisten-Kommentaren (n = 1.425) durchgeführt. Ergänzend werden qualitative Experteninterviews mit Redaktionsmitgliedern und Strategen (n = 10) geführt sowie eine qualitative Dokumentenanalyse der Social-Media-Leitlinien des Medienhauses durchgeführt.

Im Ergebnis zeigt sich, dass das Identitätsmanagement der Deutschen Welle im Social Web deutlich geprägt ist von einem Selbstverständnis als staatstragender, öffentlich-rechtlicher Auslandsrundfunksender. Sowohl auf Redaktions- als auch auf Organisationsebene stellt es eine der Hauptherausforderungen beim Identitätsmanagement dar, dieses Selbstverständnis in Einklang mit den als lässig wahrgenommenen Kommunikationskonventionen des Social Web zu bringen.

Die Ergebnisse zum Informationsmanagement des Senders im Social Web zeigen, dass die entsprechende Praxis genuin redaktionelle Tätigkeiten der Informationsselektion und -aufbereitung umfasst. Gleichzeitig bedarf das Informationsmanagement eines ausgeprägten Antizipationsvermögens bezüglich

User-Reaktionen und schneller Anpassungsfähigkeit hinsichtlich technischer Neuerungen. Die spezialisierten Redakteure, die dieses Aufgabenspektrum in der Funktion von „Social Media Editors" übernehmen, stoßen bisweilen auf Akzeptanzprobleme seitens ihrer konventionell tätigen Kollegen.

Auch im Rahmen des Beziehungsmanagements sind organisationsinterne Abgrenzungstendenzen zu verzeichnen und zwar zwischen solchen Mitarbeitern, die Beziehungen zu Social Web-Nutzern ernst nehmen und solchen, die diese als trivial abtun. Letztere Einstellung weicht allerdings immer mehr auf, zumal Nutzerreaktionen organisationsweit an Anerkennung gewinnen.

In Bezug auf den Umgang mit Nutzerkommentaren spiegelt sich an der Antwortstufe der untersuchten Social-Web-Auftritte der Deutschen Welle größtenteils die Rolle eines objektiven Beobachters wider, welche demokratietheoretisch als wenig anspruchsvoll einzuordnen ist. Damit bleiben höhere demokratische Ansprüche wie die des dialogischen Mittlers oder des Diskursanwalts unerreicht. Interessant erscheint in diesem Zusammenhang das durchaus solide Niveau der untersuchten Nutzerkommentare an der Antwortstufe: Sie sind mehrheitlich anständig (89 Prozent) und zum Thema gehörig (75 Prozent). Dies suggeriert, dass es ohne erheblichen Mehraufwand seitens der Redaktionen möglich sein müsste, den demokratietheoretischen Gehalt dieser Nutzerkommentare weiter zu steigern. Der Hinderungsgrund scheint hier hauptsächlich in fehlenden personellen Kapazitäten zu liegen. Dementsprechend nehmen die Redaktionen an der Antwortstufe eine eher passive Haltung ein, die durchaus in Widerspruch zu den dialogischen Ansprüchen steht, die das Medienhaus selbst in seinen Social-Media-Leitlinien formuliert.

Insgesamt macht die Studie deutlich, wie komplex die durch die Digitalisierung in Gang getretenen Veränderungsprozesse im Journalismus sowohl auf Redaktions- als auch auf Organisationsebene sind. Allein aufgrund der Tatsache, dass professioneller Journalismus seinen Weg ins Social Web gefunden hat, kann jedenfalls nicht davon ausgegangen werden, dass dieser die demokratischen Potenziale der dortigen Kommunikationsstruktur auch ausschöpft.

Appendix 1.2: English version

This study examines journalism in the social web on the basis of German international broadcasting. It makes use of a model of analysis that discerns three central components of social web usage (identity management, information management, and relationship management) in order to provide a thick description of social web usage in professional-journalistic contexts. The study moreover delineates three journalistic role concepts (discourse advocate, dialogical mediator, and objective observer) and ranks them according to their level of democratic standard in order to enable a classification of professional-journalistic handling of user comments in the social web.

In the empirical part of the study, three editorial offices of Germany's international broadcaster Deutsche Welle serve as cases for studying how practices of social web usage play out at the output stage of journalistic Facebook and YouTube accounts and to what extent democratically relevant role concepts are reflected at the pertinent response stages. As part of this multiple case study, a quantitative content analysis is conducted of the editorial offices' Facebook and YouTube output (n= 941) as well as its follow-up commentary (n = 1,425). In addition to this, editors as well as strategists (n = 10) are interviewed by means of qualitative expert interviews and a document analysis of the media organization's social media guidelines is carried out.

The results show that Deutsche Welle's identity management in the social web is markedly shaped by a self-conception as a public service broadcaster who is internationally representative of the German state. In this context, the study identifies tension both at the editorial and the organizational level resulting from the challenge to reconcile this self-conception with the casualness deemed to be the communicative standard in the social web.

The broadcaster's information management in the social web is found to involve genuinely journalistic tasks of selecting and editing information. On top of that, it requires the specific ability to anticipate user reactions and to adapt to technical innovations. The specialized staff that covers these tasks in their capacity as "social media editors" turned out to face problems of acceptance at times on the part of colleagues who cover conventional journalistic duties.

In regards to relationship management in the social web, the results point to tendencies of internal boundary work at Deutsche Welle between editors who

take the relationship to social web users seriously and editors who consider it trivial. Yet, the attitude of the latter is slowly fading as, on the whole, user reactions are gaining recognition across the media organization.

In terms of handling user comments, the role of the objective observer, which is classified as fulfilling rather low democratic standards, turns out to be the most salient one at the response stages of Deutsche Welle's social web accounts. Thus, higher democratic standards, such as the one of the dialogical mediator or the discourse advocate, remain unattained. Interestingly enough, the examined user comments show quite a solid standard: They are mostly civil (89 percent) and on-topic (75 percent). This suggests that raising the user comments' democratic standard should actually be possible without huge efforts on the part of the editorial offices. A lack of staff capacities seems to be the main inhibiting factor in this respect, though. As a result, the editorial offices adopt a relatively passive attitude at the response stages of their social web accounts which is actually at odds with dialogical claims made in the social media guidelines of Deutsche Welle.

Overall, the study illustrates the complexities of the change process that journalism undergoes as part of digitalization, both at editorial and organizational levels. The sheer fact that journalism outlets are present in the social web does not necessarily mean that they tap the democratic potential of its two-way communication structure.

Appendix 2: Variables (quantitative content analysis)

The following list details the variables and describes the categories in which they are assumed to be falling. It starts off with the variables in relation to RQ1 which enquires about DW's social web usage at the output stage.
The coding unit *outer orientation* (as part of identity management) was measured through the following three variables:

- Germany reference

This variable considers whether an output item refers to a certain country and from what perspective. In view of DW's mandate, it aims at finding out whether a German perspective is stressed by any of the editorial units under study. Thus, the variable's categories cover whether an output item refers to an issue connected to a certain country and from what country's perspective this issue is being addressed. The variable was measured at the nominal level based on seven sub-categories: (1) No country reference, (2) Item refers to Germany-related issue, (3) Item refers to Germany-related issue in relation to non-German countries/regions, (4) Item refers to non-German issue, (5) Item refers to non-German issue in relation to Germany, (6) Item refers to non-German issue in relation to other non-German countries /regions, (7) Item refers to non-German issue in relation to both Germany and to other non-German countries/regions. For the sake of clarity, these categories were condensed into three categories (No country reference; Foreign issue, no German perspective; Reference to Germany) during the data analysis.

- Country covered

This variable names the country / countries covered in the output item.

- News character

This variable assesses the news character of the output item. It differentiates between the nominal categories "soft news", "hard news" and "in-house news".

The last category applies to items referring to topics from an internal DW perspective such as the weather at DW's hardquarters or "behind the scenes" insights.

The following variables belong to the coding unit *news process at the output stage* (as part of information management):

- Specific content

This variable considers to what extent the editorial units in question distributed content that had been exclusively produced for the social web. Two nominal categories grasp whether the output item "refers to content already existing elsewhere" or whether it "contains distinct, platform-specific content".

- DW link

This variable identifies whether the output item includes a link to DW content available elsewhere. Hence, it considers to what extent the social web formats are used as additional distribution channels.

- External link

To measure whether the editorial units under study use their social web presence to point to non-DW content, this variable captured whether the output item links external content or not.

With regard to the coding unit *social web specific work adaption* (as part of information management) four variables were defined. The first three are supposed to specify the content elements of the output item and are coded dichotomously as to whether the output item features the content element in question or not:

- Teaser text

This variable captures whether the output item contains a teaser text. In terms of *Facebook*, it referred to a potential teaser text as part the post. As

for *YouTube*, it assessed whether there is a teaser text in the description space below the video.

- Picture

This variable captures whether the output item contains a picture. Since publishing a picture is not possible on *YouTube*, the question whether or not there is a picture only applied to the active *Facebook* posts.

- Video

By means of this variable, it was specified whether the output item involves an uploaded video or not. In terms of *YouTube*, this was coded in the affirmative by default.

- Addressing the audience

This variable was set up to measure if and how an output item addresses the audience. It was classified into five nominal sub-categories: (1) No explicit audience address, (2) Audience is addressed indirectly, (3) Audience is addressed directly, (4) Audience is addressed directly by means of a concrete question, (5) Audience is addressed directly by means of a call for action.

In terms of the coding unit *relating to the user* (as part of identity management) the following variable was defined:

- Output aimed at social bonding

This variable captures to what extent the editorial units under study engage in relationship management. It considers content such as greetings or personal questions that is straightforwardly geared towards building or maintaining relationships with the users. The variable was initially classified into three subcategories: (1) Output without a social bonding aspect, (2) Output aimed at social bonding, (3) Output featuring a mixture of content aimed at social bonding and news content. For the sake of clarity, these categories were later condensed into

two categories stating whether there are social bonding efforts or not. The variables' sub-categories represent a nominal level of measurement.

Two sets of variables were defined for gathering evidence to answer the second research question. They relied on an ordinal level of measurement with categories representing the three different levels of democratic standards. These sets of variables reflect the indicator pairs developed in Section 6.1.2. The first set of variables refers to user comments. Subject to this set of variables were all those discussion threads where the first comment was authored by a user. The second set of variables was coded for all those discussion threads that comprised a comment by DW (either at first-order or thereafter).

The following list starts off with specifying the variables covering user commentary at the response stage:

- Statement relevance

This variable was set up to examine whether and how user commentary relates to the initial output item. The user commentary could either be classified as bearing no topical relation to the issue addressed in the output and, thus, fall into the category of everyday talk. When the commentary related to the output on a personal level and commentators made a connection to their personal lives it is considered a category in line with dialogical communication. Finally, the commentary could be categorized as making a connection to greater public issues. Then it is deemed to fulfill the standards of discursive communication.

- Civility

This variable aims at identifying different types of uncivil commentary. It was classified into three sub-categories. The first category was coded when the thread was free of harsh language. Such a civil way of communicating fulfills the standards of discourse. The second category was used when the commentary bore derogative content but was not explicitly directed at other people. The third category subsumed commentary displaying personal attacks (irrespective of within or outside the immediate conversation). Whereas the second category

does not infringe dialogical standards, the third category is considered inacceptable in dialogical terms where difference is acknowledged. Therefore, the latter can only be classified everyday talk.

- Including viewpoints

This variable is targeted on finding out whether a comment thread included a different viewpoint to the output issue. If this was not the case, the first category applied which alludes to everyday talk. If users added new viewpoints from an individual angle based on personal experience, their comments were subsumed to a second category which reflects the standards of a dialogical communication mode. A third category grasped commentary that added viewpoints from a societal angle based on public information. This mode of communicating is considered discursive.

- Argumentation

This variable is designed to determine whether or not commentary provides arguments. It is divided into three sub-categories. Commentary expressing an opinion while not giving reason(s) for this opinion would point to everyday talk. If the reason for a certain opinion is given after it has been requested by another user or DW, a dialogical communication mode can be considered. Providing an argument for a certain opinion by immediately stating the reason for it would be in line with discursive requirements.

- User interrelation

This variable assessed whether and how commentators refer to one another. Its categories factored threads that did not refer to another comment/ator (neither thematically nor socially), threads displaying a reference to another comment/ator (either structurally, for example by having used a "reply" function, or thematically, for example by following up on a certain statement) and threads in which another commentator was explicitly addressed. This trisection corresponds to the different normative demands of the three communication modes.

- Contextualization (topic)

This variable is targeted on identifying whether further context information is provided by users in a thread. The first category comprised commentary that did not provide any further context information. Commentary providing context information on a personal level (that is, when the added information is based on personal experience) was subsumed to a second category. Commentary providing context information on a general societal level (that is, when the added information is based on knowledge of public issues) the third category applied. The three sub-categories reflect the grid's different levels from normatively less demanding to normatively highly demanding.

- Contextualization (discussion)

This variable deals with user approaches to the discussion from a meta-perspective, namely, when the discussion itself becomes subject of the discussion. It consists of two sub-categories. Users may either leave comments that do not contextualize the discussion from a meta-perspective or comments that do (for example by referring to the course of the mode of the discussion). In the affirmative, this variable provides evidence for a dialogical communication mode.

- Feedback on journalistic product

This variable determines if and how feedback on the journalistic product was voiced in a thread. It is classified into four sub-categories. The first category applied when there was no such feedback. The second category grasped feedback on the journalistic product that revealed an expectation of professional authority. Both categories represent everyday talk. When feedback on the journalistic product was brought forward on an equal level and in a cooperative way, it was assigned to a third category representing dialogue. Commentary containing argumentation-based feedback on the journalistic product was coded as belonging to a fourth category. This one was classified as discursive.

Comments by DW were assessed on the basis of the following set of variables:

- Review activity (relevance)

This variable traces relevance-related review activity on the part of DW. It consists of four sub-categories. The first category was applied when it was not necessary or apparent that DW reacts to off-topic user comments. The second category was coded when DW requested users to stick to the topic. The third category was used when DW requested users to relate to the output in a publically relevant way. The fourth category applied when due to an according explanation it was detectable that DW had removed off-topic user comments.
Obviously, what cannot be grasped by means of this content analysis is when DW had silently removed any off-topic user comments. Any recognizable review activity as explained above was classified according to the familiar grid as follows: If off-topic user commentary is not followed up by DW with a pertinent request (that is, if the first category of this variable applied after a thread was coded as not relating to the output issue), then this can be considered an objective observer approach. DW's activity can be considered to fulfill the standards of facilitating dialogical communication if it requests topical relevance from users. Requesting public relevance and giving reasons for having removed off-topic content is considered to reflect the approach of a discourse advocate.

- Review activity (civility)

This variable assesses DW's response to uncivil user comments. The variable was divided into three sub-categories. The first category of the variable applied when DW had not engaged in removing user comments due to civility issues. The second category was used when DW asked users to refrain from offensive commenting behavior. The third category applied when DW stated a reason for having removed offensive comments.
Similar to the variable described before, in cases where harsh comments had been silently removed content analysis hits a wall. Any detectable processes were classified as follows: The first category was considered to represent an objective observer's approach, especially in connection with prior uncivil user comments identified through the analysis of the user commentary. A mediator's approach was deemed reflected in the second category where DW tries to uphold the exchange rather than cutting it off. A stricter kind of review activity is the one displayed in the third category. It

characterizes the approach of a discourse advocate who removes any content that harms the discourse along with providing an explanation.

- Adding viewpoints

By means of this variable it is measured if and how DW engages in adding viewpoints that had yet not been brought up. The analysis differentiates between four categories: (1) no engagement, (2) neutral structuring/commenting on stated viewpoints, (3) requesting new viewpoints from users, (4) adding new viewpoints. No activity in terms of adding a different viewpoint would comply with the standards of an objective observer. A dialogical mediator's approach is reflected in the second and third category where the next move remains with the users. The fourth category represents the approach of a discourse advocate who takes action in order to ensure the standards of a discourse.

- Activities of encouraging argumentation

This variable is designed to determine DW's activities of encouraging argumentation. There may be no engagement on the part of DW in this respect. In this case the variable was coded as belonging to a first category representing an objective observer's approach. Otherwise, DW's commentary may encourage argumentation by requesting users to give reasons for their stated opinions. In that case, the DW commentary was assigned to a second category regarded as dialogical. A third category applied when DW itself provided arguments for a certain opinion. This was considered a discursive advocate's approach.

- Interrelating users

This variable identifies any efforts of pointing out references between users. It discerned five situations: (1) no activity in terms of interrelating users on the part of DW, (2) DW pointing out thematic references of preceding user comments, (3) DW requesting commentators to refer to one another thematically or structurally, (4) DW requesting commentators to address one another, and (5) DW illustrating commentators' social references by making clear in what way one commentator addressed the other (for example through claiming, asking, sugges-

ting etc.). While the last category lives up to discursive expectations the other activities point to a dialogical approach. Inactivity is deemed to fulfill the standards inherent to an objective observer's role conception.

- Contextualization (topic)

This variable considers to what extent DW engages in providing context information at the response stage. The variable consists of one category subsuming inactivity in this respect on the part of DW. A second category was used when DW commentary provided context information on a personal level (that is, when the added information was based on personal experience). A third category was applied when DW commentary provided context information on a general societal level (that is, when the added information was based on public knowledge). With regard to democratic relevance, the first category would represent the approach of an objective observer. Adding context information from personal experience was considered in line with the standards of a dialogical mediator. A discourse advocate's approach keen on public relevance was deemed be reflected in the third category.

- Contextualization (discussion)

This variable identifies to what extent DW commentary contextualized the discussion from a meta-perspective. Three categories were set up to grasp this. The first category applied when there was no activity in terms of commenting the discussion on the part of DW. With regard to democratic relevance, this would correspond to an objective observer's approach. A dialogical approach would become apparent in the second category which comprised DW commentary intending to stimulate the discussion further. When DW contextualized the discussion in a way that was intended to work towards a consensual closure of the discussion, a third category was coded which was deemed to represent discourse advocacy.

- Feedback accessibility

This variable assesses journalistic accessibility to user feedback. It was classified into three sub-categories: The first category was used when DW did not

respond to user feedback on its journalistic performance. This was considered in line with the standards of an objective observer. The second category applied when DW responded to the feedback on an equal level and in a cooperative way. This kind of feedback accessibility would count as dialogical. When DW's response to feedback justified the performance in question it was assigned to a third category. This last category was deemed to fulfill standards inherent to a discursive understanding of the journalistic role.

Appendix 3: Codebooks

Appendix 3.1: Codebook RQ1 (quantitative content analysis)

Research Interest – Introduction

The quantitative content analysis is conducted as a means to capture both DW's activity on its social web platforms and the user activity in relation to these platforms. As such the insights from this analysis add to the results drawn from the qualitative content analysis of expert interviews and from document analyses.

For the research project as a whole the following research questions are being raised. They are relevant in guiding this quantitative content analysis:

RQ 1:

How is *Deutsche Welle*'s social web usage to be characterized with regard to practices of identity, information, and relationship management at the output stage?

RQ 2:

How is *Deutsche Welle*'s social web activity at the response stage to be classified with regard to democratic standards?

RQ 2.1:

What kind of user communication unfolds at the response stage with regard to democratic standards?

RQ 2.2:

How does DW handle this user communication?

The greater aspects of the analysis have been initially deduced from the theoretical background. In terms of RQ1 – the focus of this codebook - I look at three practices (Schmidt 2011):

- Identity Management
- Information Management
- Relationship Management

1. Research design

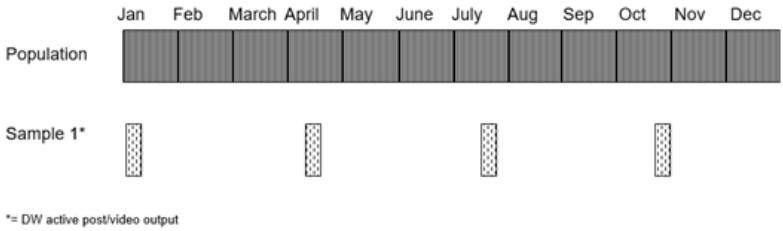
Population

Social web content on Facebook and YouTube put out by DW's German, English and Russian services.

Sample

Sample 1 (RQ1):
DW's social web usage is being analyzed during *4 authentic weeks in 2013* on the basis of *active output*

- January 1st week (CW 1 = 1- 6/1)
- April 2nd week (CW 15 = 8-14/4)
- July 3rd week (CW 29 = 15-21/7)
- October 4th week (CW 43 = 21-27/10)



Unit of analysis

The unit of analysis is:

- Single completed output item by DW

The respective platform specific term for the output item differs: On Facebook it is called "post", on YouTube it is a "video".

Coding units

The following coding units constitute the bigger picture in answering the research questions:

RQ 1:

Identity Management

1. Orientation

Information Management

2. News process the output stage

3. Social Web specific work adaption

Relationship Management

4. Relating to the user

These four coding units serve as a basis for the categories and values to code.

Proceeding

The coding proceeds through the following sections of the codebook:

2.1 Formal categories

2.2.1 Identity Management

2.2.3 Information Management

2.2.3 Relationship Management

2. Categories

2.1 Formal categories

V1 Pl - Platform

1 Facebook
11 Facebook Deutsch
12 Facebook English
13 Facebook на русском
2 YouTube
21 YouTube Deutsch
22 YouTube English
33 YouTube на русском

V2 Date I – Date of item

Mode: yyyymmdd

Definition + example:
20130321

V3 Date II – Date of coding

Mode: yyyymmdd

Definition + example:
20131212

V4 SN – Serial number

Mode: four digits
Coding instruction:
Each coded item has a serial number consisting of four digits

Example:
0001

V5 CN – Context number

Mode: four digits - four digits - four digits

Coding instruction:
Within the greater framework of this research project it is both the particular DW output (post/video) and its follow-up communication that is to be coded. This variable serves as a key code which allows reconnecting these two types of units of analysis. Since the codebook at hand deals with DW's active output only the first four digits will be relevant here.

Example:

DW (English)
10 September
Both during his election campaign and in his acceptance speech before parliament, Iran's new President Hassan Rouhani announced that he would try to work toward better relations with the West. Last week, as the Jewish community observed its... See more
Like · Comment · Share
4
57 people like this.
Top Comments
Write a comment...
Jane Rhodeside Fonouni i trust president rouhani. it will take time for him to make change.i also hope for the best
Like · Reply · 3 · 10 September at 14:20
DW (English) What exactly makes you trust that he will bring about change?
Like · 10 September at 14:23
Jane Rhodeside Fonouni things in iran take time. he is an educated man with good ideas which i hope come to fruition.
Like · 2 · 10 September at 14:30
Amit Chandra He cant since Irans top leader is the Khomani ! he runs the show.
Like · 1 · 10 September at 20:32 · Edited
Write a reply...
Manoj Raghunath All these signs look good. Let's hope for the best
Like · Reply · 3 · 10 September at 13:33
0001-0000
0001-0001
0001-0002

2.2 Content categories

2.2.1 Identity Management

Orientation

V6 Topic – News item's overall topic

Catchword

Coding instruction:
Enter a brief note summarizing the news item's overall topic

Example:
Summer Olympics 2020

V7 NC – News character

1 Soft news
2 Hard news
3 In-house news

Coding instruction:
- Note 1 when the item refers to topics such as arts, entertainment or life-styles from a human interest perspective
- Note 2 when the item refers to up-to-date politics, war, economics, science or crime topics and the like
- Note 3 when the item refers to topics from the internal DW-perspective

Example:

1

2

3

V8 - V10 DW ... - Profile topics

Coding instruction:
The following three variables (V8, V9, V10) refer to the profile topics that DW mentions in its Social Media Guidelines. They are supposed to grasp to what extent these topics are reflected in DW's output.

V8 DWhr – Profile topic human rights

0 No reference to human rights
1 Human rights

Coding instruction:

- Note 1 when the item deals with questions of human rights (reference: Universal Declaration of Human Rights) being complied

Example:

1

V9 DWgl – Profile topic Globalization

0 No reference to globalization
1 Globalization

Coding instruction:

- Note 1 when the item refers to issues dealing with the effects of globalized structures

Example:

1

V10 DWsus – Sustainability

0 No reference to sustainability
1 Sustainability

Coding instruction:

- Note 1 when the item refers to issues dealing with the enduring or long-time maintenance of natural resources

Example:

1

V11 GER – Germany reference

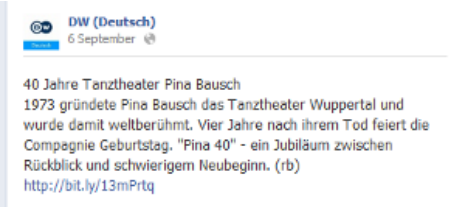
0 No country reference
10 Item refers to Germany-related issue
11 Item refers to Germany-related issue in relation to non-German countries /regions
20 Item refers to non-German issue
21 Item refers to non-German issue in relation to Germany
22 Item refers to non-German issue in relation to other non-German countries /regions
23 Item refers to non-German issue in relation to both Germany and to other non-German countries / regions

Coding instruction:
The references to a certain country to be coded here do not necessarily have to literally mention country names. They may also be coded when the item refers to places, people, products, events etc. of a certain country.
Even though Germany is in Europe, Europe as a region is also coded "non-German" since this discrimination can be done in V12.
The difference between 11 and 21 is a matter of the original meaning and relevance of the issue.

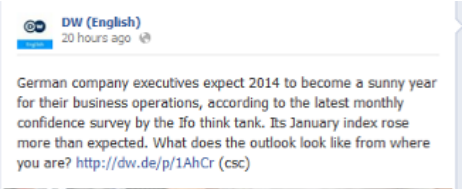
- Note **1** when the item refers to a Germany related issue.
- Note **11** when the item refers to a Germany-related issue and relates it to a non-German perspective
- Note **2** when the item refers to an issue connected to (a) foreign country/ countries/region(s)
- Note **21** when the item refers to an issue connected to (a) foreign country/ countries/region(s) and relates it to a German perspective
- Note **22** when the item refers to an issue connected to (a) foreign country/ countries, region(s) and relates it to a foreign (non-German) perspective
- Note **23** when the item refers to an issue connected to (a) foreign country/ countries/region(s) and relates it to both a foreign (non-German) and to a German perspective

Example:

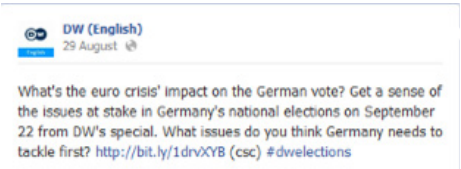
1



11

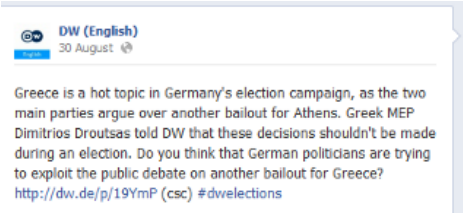


21



22

23



V12 CC – Country covered

Country name / Region name

Coding instruction:
Note the name(s) of the country/region covered or asked for.

Example:
South Korea

2.2.2 Information Management

News process at the output stage

V13 - V17 OE... - Output elements

Coding instruction:
The following five variables refer to the type of DW's output. They are supposed to specify what content elements the output item consists of. It refers to the immediate content immediate on the platform as opposed to the content that is being linked to.

- Code **0** if the output does not feature the content element in question
- Code **1** if the output features the content element in question

V13 OEText – Output element: Teaser text

0 No teaser text
1 Teaser text

V14 OELinkDW – Output element: DW link

0 No link to DW content
1 Link to DW content

V15 OELinkex– Output element: External link

0 No link to external, non-DW content
1 Link to external, non DW-content

V16 OEPic– Output element: Picture

0 No picture
1 Picture

V17 OEVid – Output element: Video

0 No video
1 Video

Social Web specific work adaption

V18 SWspec – Distribution

1 Item refers to content already existing elsewhere
2 Item contains distinct, platform specific content

Coding instruction:

- Note 1 if the item contains or links DW content that has been produced earlier and is now additionally being distributed via the Social Web
- Note 2 if the item contains or links content that has been exclusively produced for the Social Web and makes sense in the realm of the very SW platform

Example:

2

V19 num.c – Number of comments

Number of comments

Coding instruction:

- Note the number of comments as counted below the item. The number being displayed might include items that aren't visible anymore.
- Note 0 if there is no comment

Example:

3

V20 num.c – Number of likes

Number of likes

Coding instruction:

- Note the number of likes
- Note 0 if there is no like

Example:

21

V21 shares – Number of dislikes

Number of dislikes

Coding instruction:
This category only applies to YouTube items!

- Note the number of dislikes
- Note 0 if there is no like

Example:

65

V22 shares – Number of "shares" / "views"

Number of "shares"

Coding instruction:

- Note the number of shares (Facebook) or views (YouTube)

Example:

5

V23 length – Item length

characters / time
mode: xxx / ss

Coding instruction:

- Note the number of characters excluding space (Facebook) or the length (YouTube) in seconds. Also incorporate links and hash tags.

Example:

548

"Snowden's latest disclosures that even encrypted communication is not safe shatter the last remnants of hope for privacy in the digital age. This should alarm even those who don't mind intelligence services reading their Facebook page, says DW's Michael

Knigge. If it does make you cringe, you should push politicians to do something about it, he adds. Have Snowden's revelations forced you to do something about data privacy? Do you think that something would change if more people try to push politicians? http://dw.de/p/19d2N (csc) #nsa #snowden"

V24 address – Addressing the audience

0 No explicit audience address
10 Audience is addressed indirectly
20 Audience is addressed directly
21 Audience is addressed directly by means of a concrete question
22 Audience is addressed directly by means of a call for action

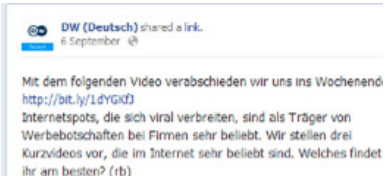
Coding instruction:

- Note 0 if there is no explicit address
- Note 10 if the audience is being addressed indirectly for example in the form of a general / rhetoric question
- Note 20 if the audience is being addressed directly ("you") and / or greeted
- Note 21 if the audience is being addressed directly ("you") by means of a concrete question the users are asked to answer
- Note 22 if the audience is being addressed directly ("you") by means of a call to do something

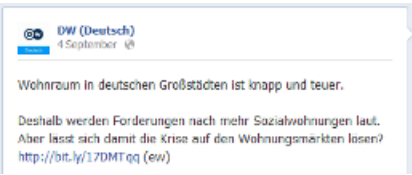
Example:

0

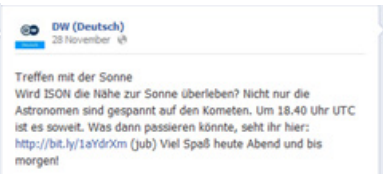
21



10



20



22

V25 Actverb – Verb expressing call for action

Verb

Coding instruction:
Only code if V24 was coded 22. Otherwise, move on to V26!
Enter the verb implying the call for action.

Example:
Send

2.2.3 Relationship Management

Relating to the user

V26 sb – output aimed at social bonding

0 Output without a social bonding aspect
1 Output solely aimed at social bonding
2 Output featuring a mixture of socially relevant and newsworthy content

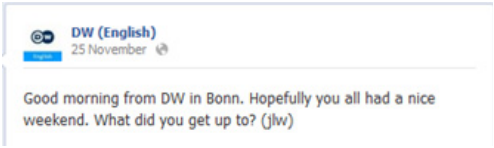
Coding instruction:
This variable captures to what extent DW deviates from its traditional role as an information provider and aligns to relationship management in the social web by posting content solely geared towards establishing, maintaining or sustaining a relationship to the users, rather than conveying information.

Coding instruction:

- Note 0 if the output item does not feature content with a sole social dimension
- Note 1 when the item is solely geared to relate to the user without conveying journalistic news content for example by picking up social conventions such a greetings, asking for a person's condition, talking about the weather etc.
- Note 2 when there is a mixture of topically independent content relating to the user socially and other content conveying journalistic information

Example:

1


DW (English)
25 November
Good morning from DW in Bonn. Hopefully you all had a nice weekend. What did you get up to? (jlw)

2

DW (English)
28 November
What are you doing today? This year, Hannukah - the Jewish Festival of Lights - begins on November 28, coinciding with the US Thanksgiving Day. The festival, which is also known as the Feast of Dedication and celebrated around the world by people of Jewish faith lasts until December 5. Share your Hannukah and/or Thanksgiving plans if you are commemorating those holidays. http://dw.de/p/1APny (csc)

Appendix 3.2: Codebook RQ2 (quantitative content analysis)

Research Interest – Introduction

The quantitative content analysis is conducted as a means to capture both DW's activity on its social web platforms and the user activity in relation to these platforms. As such the insights from this analysis add to the results drawn from the qualitative content analysis of expert interviews and from document analyses.

For the research project as a whole the following research questions are being raised. They are relevant in guiding this quantitative content analysis:

RQ 1:

How is *Deutsche Welle*'s social web usage to be characterized with regard to practices of identity, information, and relationship management at the output stage?

RQ 2:

How is *Deutsche Welle*'s social web activity at the response stage to be classified with regard to democratic standards?

RQ 2.1:

What kind of user communication unfolds at the response stage with regard to democratic standards?

RQ 2.2:

How does DW handle this user communication?

RQ2 is informed by an analytical grid that distinguished three modes of democratically relevant communication:

- Discourse
- Dialogue
- Everyday talk

1. Research design

Population

Social Web content on Facebook and YouTube in context of DW's German, English and Russian services.

Sample

DW's Social Web usage at the response stage is being analyzed during *4 authentic weeks in 2013* on the basis of *reactive comments*

- January 1st week (CW 1 = 1- 6/1)
- April 2nd week (CW 15 = 8-14/4)
- July 3rd week (CW 29 = 15-21/7)
- October 4th week (CW 43 = 21-27/10)

Sample 2 (RQ2):
In order to find out how DW's Social Web usage at the response stage is to be classified with regard to democratic relevance the analysis looks at the users' follow-up comments to DW's active output and DW's according reactive comments. The selection criterion for the focused sample 2 is topic-based: It consists of all those follow-up user comments and reactive DW comments that are uttered in connection to active posts from sample 1 dealing with the topic of human rights.

Unit of analysis

The unit of analysis is:
Single completed thread following up on a DW output item

Coding units

The following coding units constitute the bigger picture in answering the research question:

RQ 2:

Democratic relevance of journalistic social web usage at the response stage

5. Communication as discourse, dialogue or everyday talk

6. Handling of user comments as discourse advocate, mediator, or objective observer

These two coding units serve as a basis for the categories and values to code.

Proceeding

The coding proceeds through the following sections of the codebook:

2.1 Formal categories

2.2 Democratic relevance

2. Categories

2.1 Formal categories

V1 Pl - Platform

1 Facebook
11 Facebook Deutsch
12 Facebook English
13 Facebook на русском

2 YouTube
21 YouTube Deutsch
22 YouTube English
33 YouTube на русском

V2 Date I – Date of item

Mode: yyyymmdd

Definition + example:
20130321

V3 Date II – Date of coding

Mode: yyyymmdd

Definition + example:
20131212

V4 SN – Serial number

Mode: four digits

Coding instruction:
Each coded item has a serial number consisting of four digits

Example:
0001

V5 CN – Context number

Mode: four digits - four digits

Coding instruction:

Within the framework of this research project it is both the particular DW output (post/video) and its follow-up communication that is to be coded. This variable serves as a key code which allows reconnecting these two types of units of analysis. Since the codebook at hand deals with the follow-up communication all digits will be relevant here.

Example:

V27 totalc – Total number of comments per thread

Mode: four digits

Coding instruction:
Code the total number of comments constituting this **thread**

Example:
0004

V28 Aut – Author of comment

1 User
2 DW

Coding instruction:
- Note 1 when the primary comment is authored by a user
- Note 2 when the primary comment is authored by DW

FILTER:
If V28 was coded 2 then continue the coding with V37

2.2 Democratic relevance

2.2.1 Communication as discourse, dialogue or everyday talk

V29 u.feedb – Feedback on journalistic product

0 No feedback on journalistic product
1 Feedback as regards professional authority
2 Cooperative feedback on journalistic product
3 Argumentation-based feedback on journalistic product

Coding instruction:

- Note 0 when the comment does not include any feedback on the journalistic product
- Note 1 when the comment contains feedback on the journalistic product that reveals an expectation of professional authority
- Note 2 when the comment contains feedback on the journalistic product brought forward on an equal level and in a cooperative way
- Note 3 when the comment contains argumentation-based feedback on the journalistic product by stating (the) reason(s) for it

Example:

1

3

V30 u.vpadd – Adding viewpoints

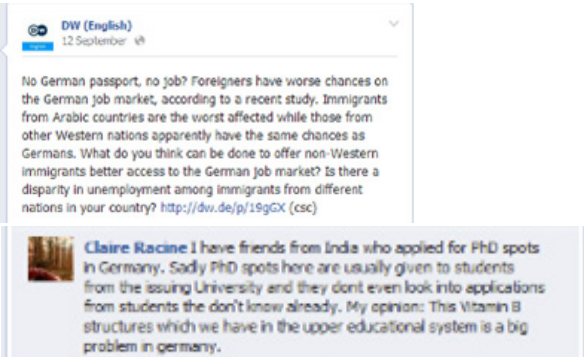
0 Comment does not add a different viewpoint
1 Comment adds a different viewpoint from a personal angle
2 Comment adds a different viewpoint from a general societal angle

Coding instruction:

- Note 0 when the comment does not add a different viewpoint
- Note 1 when the comment adds a different viewpoint to the output issue that is based on personal experience or when it suggests a different approach based personal experience
- Note 2 when the comment adds a different viewpoint to the output issue that is based on general public knowledge or when it suggests a different approach based on general public knowledge

Example:

1



V31 u.rel – Statement relevance

0 Comment does not relate to the output issue(s)
1 Comment contains statement relating to the output issue(s) on a personal level

2 Comment contains statement relating to the output issue(s) on a societal level

Coding instruction:

- Note 0 when the comment bears no topical relation to the issue(s) addressed in the output
- Note 1 when the output issue(s) is/are being related to on a personal level, that is, when the commentator makes a connection to her/his personal life.
- Note 2 when the output issue(s) is/are being related to on a societal level, that is, when the commentator makes a connection to greater social affairs.

Example:

1

2

V32 u.off – Offense

0 No offense
1 Comment is derogative
2 Comment is offensive

Coding instruction:

- Note 0 when the comment does not bear any impolite content
- Note 1 when the comment bears derogative content, but does not yet explicitly offend someone
- Note 2 when the comment bears offensive content

"Offensive" may refer to personal attacks such as using swear words directed at other individuals or groups of people.

Example:

2

V33 u.argu – Argumentation

0 Comment does not provide argument
1 Comment provides argument on request
2 Comment provides argument

Coding instruction:
In case of an argument delivered on request (code 1) the added comment is being analyzed in connection with the initial comment (and its respective context number)

- Note 0 if the comment states an opinion, but does not provide the reason(s) for the opinion
- Note 1 if the reason(s) for a certain opinion is/are being given after it has been requested by another user or DW
- Note 2 if a comment provides an argument for a certain opinion by stating the reason(s) for it

Example:

1

2

V34 u.inter – User interrelation

0 No reference to another comment/ator
1 Thematic / structural reference to another comment/ator
2 Social reference to another commentator

Coding instruction:

- Note 0 if the comment does not refer to another comment/ator - neither thematically nor socially
- Note 1 if the comment refers to another comment/ator – either structurally (for example by having used a "reply" function) or thematically (for example by following up on a certain statement)
- Note 2 if the comment refers to another commentator by explicitly addressing him or her

Example:

1

2

V35 u.th.cont – Thematic contextualization

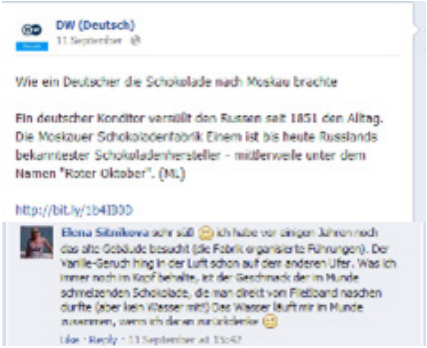
0 No provision of further context information
1 Provision of context information on an individual level
2 Provision of context information on a general societal level

Coding instruction:

- Note 0 when the comment does not provide or add any further context information
- Note 1 when the comment provides or adds context information on a personal level, that is, when the added information is based on personal experience
- Note 2 when the comment provides or adds context information on a general societal level, that is, when the added information is based on general findings

Example:

1


DW (Deutsch)
11 September
Wie ein Deutscher die Schokolade nach Moskau brachte
Ein deutscher Konditor versüßt den Russen seit 1851 den Alltag. Die Moskauer Schokoladenfabrik Einem ist bis heute Russlands bekanntester Schokoladenhersteller - mißlerweile unter dem Namen "Roter Oktober". (ML)
http://bit.ly/1b4I300
Elena Sitnikova sehr süß ich habe vor einigen Jahren noch das alte Gebäude besucht (die Fabrik organisierte Führungen). Der Vanille-Geruch hing in der Luft schon auf dem anderen Ufer. Was ich immer noch im Kopf behalte, ist der Geschmack der im Munde schmelzenden Schokolade, die man direkt vom Fließband naschen durfte (aber kein Wasser mit!) Das Wasser läuft mir im Munde zusammen, wenn ich daran zurückdenke
Like · Reply · 11 September ab 15:47

2

Countdown für Bergung der "Costa Concordia" | Journal
deutschewelle
Abonnieren
968 Aufrufe
Der Kaktuszüchter
Ich habe im Internet recherchiert , das Schiff soll 450 Million neu gekostet haben , ich kann mir nur die bergung nur dadurch erklären das sie der schiffahrt im wege ist ?

V36 u.disc.cont – Contextualization of the discussion

0 No contextualization of the discussion
1 Contextualization of discussion

Coding instruction:
This category deals with approaches to the discussion from a meta-perspective. That is, when the discussion itself becomes subject of the discussion.

- Note 0 when the comment does not a contextualize the discussion
- Note 1 when the comment contextualizes the discussion from a meta-perspective, for example by referring to the course or the of mode of the discussion

2.2.2 Handling as discourse advocate, mediator, or objective observer

V37 DWres – Response on the part of DW

0 No response on the part of DW
1 Response on the part of DW

Coding instruction:
- Note 0 when there is no comment by DW in this thread
- Note 1 when there is a comment by DW in this thread

FILTER:
If V36 was coded 0 then the coding for the remaining Variables (V37 to 45) is 0, too.
If V36 was coded 1 continue with V37.

V38 j.feedb – Feedback accessibility

0 No feedback response
1 Cooperative response towards feedback
2 Argumentation-based response towards feedback
Coding instruction:

- Note 0 if DW does not respond to feedback
- Note 1 if DW responds to the feedback on an equal level and in a cooperative way
- Note 2 if DW responds to the feedback by giving reasons for the pertinent performance

Example:

1

2

V39 j.vpinclu – Including viewpoints

0 No engagement
1 Neutral structuring of and/or neutral commenting on the stated viewpoint
2 Requesting viewpoint from user
3 Adding viewpoint(s) from a personal angle
4 Adding viewpoint(s) of from a societal angle

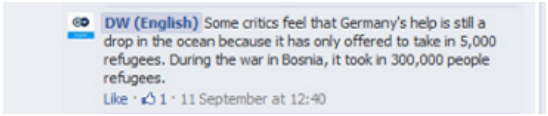
Coding instruction:
Note 0 there is no activity in terms of including a different viewpoint on the part of DW

- Note 1 when DW neutrally comments on the stated viewpoint or neutrally structures stated viewpoints.
- Note 2 when DW requests the user(s) to add their viewpoint(s)
- Note 3 when DW itself adds viewpoints from a personal angle
- Note 4 when DW itself adds viewpoints from a societal angle

Example:

1

2



V40 j.rel.rev – Review activity (in relation to relevance)

0 Activity not necessary / apparent
1 No removal activity in relation to relevance
2 Comment requesting topical relevance
3 Comment requesting public relevance
4 Argumentation-based removal of off-topic content
5 Argumentation-based removal of publicly irrelevant content

Coding instruction:

Censoring activities do not only refer to the actual removal of content, but also its critical review. Thus, DW comments resulting from a critical review belong to this category.

- Note 0 when a removal of off-topic comments is not necessary / apparent
- Note 1 when there is no removal activity after an off-topic user comment has been posted
- Note 2 when DW points to / encourages topical relevance of user comments
- Note 3 when DW points to / encourages public relevance of user comments
- Note 4 when DW gives reasons for having removed off-topic user comments
- Note 5 when DW gives reasons for having removed publicly irrelevant user comments

V41 j.off.rev – Review activity (in relation to offense)

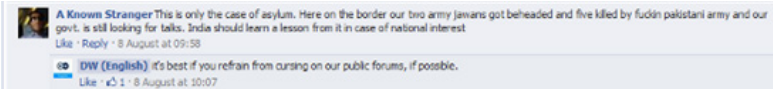
0 Censoring activity not necessary / retraceable
1 No removal activity following an offensive comment
2 Comment asking to refrain from offensive behavior
3 Argumentation-based removal of offensive comment

Coding instruction:
Censoring activities do not only refer to the actual removal of content but also to its critical review. Thus, DW comments resulting from such a critical review also belong to this category.

- Note 0 when a removal of offensive comments is not necessary / apparent
- Note 1 when there is no apparent removal activity after an offensive content has been posted
- Note 2 when DW asks to refrain from offensive behavior
- Note 3 when DW gives reasons for having removed offensive content

Example:

2



3

V42 j.argu – Activities of encouraging argumentation

0 No engagement
1 Requesting argument from user
2 Adding argument

Coding instruction:

- Note 0 when there is no activity in terms of encouraging argumentation on the part of DW
- Note 1 when DW requests the user to give reasons for the stated opinion
- Note 2 when DW itself provides arguments for (a) certain opinion(s)

Example:

1

V43 j.inter – Interrelating users

0 No engagement
1 Pointing out commentators' thematic references
2 Requesting commentators to refer to one another thematically / structurally
3 Illustrating commentators' social references
4 Requesting commentators to address to one another

Coding instruction:

- Note 0 when there is no activity in terms of interrelating users on the part of DW
- Note 1 when DW itself points out the thematic references of preceding user comments
- Note 2 when DW requests commentators to refer to one another thematically or structurally
- Note 3 when DW illustrates commentators' social references by making clear in what way (claiming, asking, suggesting for example) one commentator addressed the other
- Note 4 when DW requests commentators to address one another

V44 j.th.cont – Thematic contextualization

0 No engagement
1 Adding publicly relevant knowledge
2 Adding personal knowledge

Coding instruction:

- Note 0 when there is no activity in terms of thematic contextualization on the part of DW
- Note 1 when the DW comment provides context information on a personal level, that is, when the added information is based on personal experience
- Note 2 when the DW comment provides context information on a general societal level, that is, when the added information is based on general publicly available knowledge

Example:

2

V45 j.comm.cont – Discussion contextualization

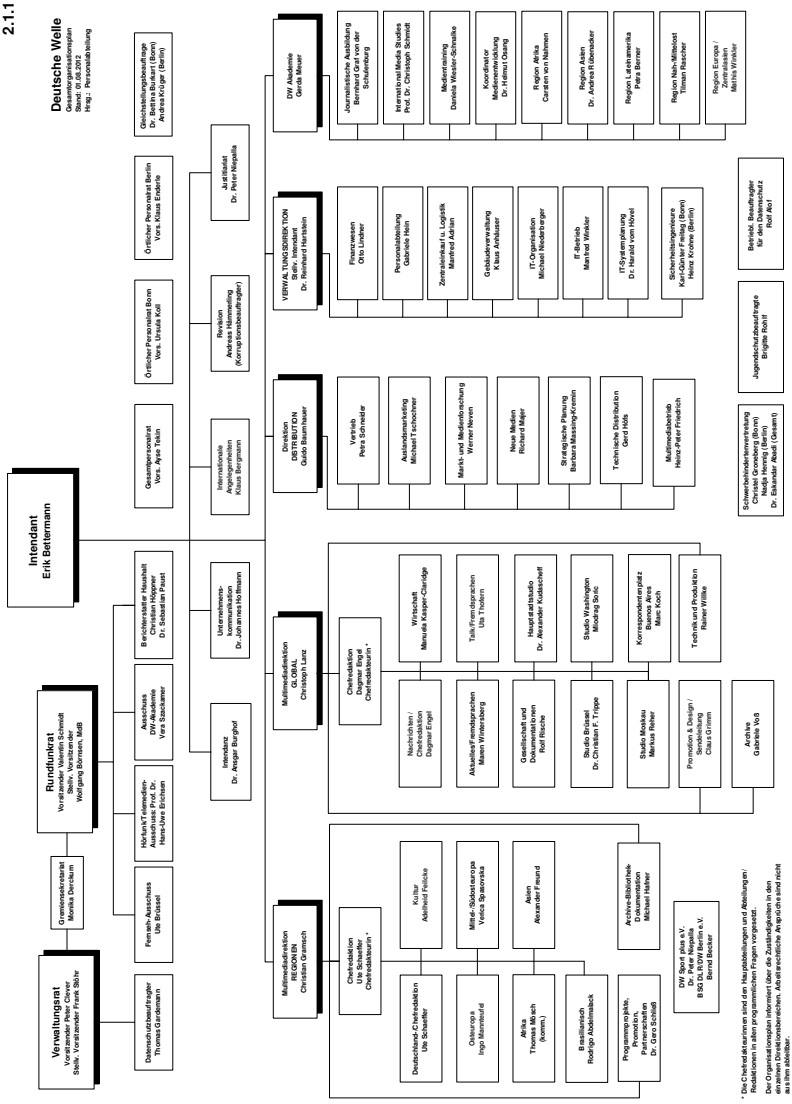
0 No contextualization of the discussion
1 Contextualization of statements towards ongoing discussion
2 Contextualization of statements towards consensual closure

Coding instruction:
This category deals with approaches to the discussion from a meta-perspective. That is, when the discussion itself becomes the subject.

- Note 0 when there is no activity in terms of commenting the discussion context on the part of DW

- Note 1 when DW comments on the discussion context in a way that is intended to further stimulate it
- Note 2 when DW comments on the discussion context in a way that is intended to arrive at a consensual closure of the discussion

Appendix 4: Organization chart of Deutsche Welle (August 2012)



Appendix 5: Interview guide

Appendix 5.1: German version (editors)

Leitfaden Redakteure

0. Eisbrecher-Fragen

- Sie arbeiten in der Abteilung „xxx“ / Redaktion „xxx“. Als was sind Sie dort tätig?
- Wie kommen Sie bei Ihrer Arbeit mit sozialen Medien in Berührung?

Ich würde gerne zunächst über den Social-Media-Auftritt im Ganzen sprechen und die generelle Entscheidung, hier präsent zu sein. Darüber hinaus interessieren mich natürlich auch das tägliche Posten und der Umgang mit den Usern.
Also, erst einmal grundsätzlich zur x-sprachigen Präsenz der Deutschen Welle auf sozialen Medien wie Facebook, YouTube oder Twitter:

1. Identitätsmanagement

Motivation

- Warum gibt es diese Social-Media-Präsenzen, die Sie betreuen? Wie ist es dazu gekommen?
- Wer war an der Entscheidung beteiligt?
- Was waren die Gründe?
- Wozu bestehen die Social-Media-Präsenzen? Was möchten Sie damit erreichen?

Selbstcharakterisierung

- Was sagt es Ihrer Meinung nach über die Deutsche Welle aus, dass Sie neben den anderen Kanälen wie Rundfunk und Homepage auch auf Facebook / YouTube / Twitter präsent sind?
- Wofür steht die Deutsche Welle auf diesen Plattformen? Was macht die Deutsche Welle auf diesen Plattformen aus?
  - Für welche Art von Inhalten steht die Social-Media-Präsenz der Deutschen Welle?
  - Die DW nennt sich „die mediale Stimme Deutschlands". Welche Rolle spielt ein Deutschlandbezug im Social Web?

Handlungsebene

- Sie posten und twittern im Rahmen des Accounts der Deutschen Welle. Inwiefern kommunizieren Sie als „Deutsche Welle" oder als DW-Redakteur [Vorname] [Nachname]?
  - Inwieweit treten Sie bei der Betreuung der Präsenzen als Redakteur_in in Erscheinung?
  - Warum ist das so (und nicht anders)?

Publikum

- Was glauben Sie, wie die Nutzer den Social-Media-Auftritt der Deutschen Welle wahrnehmen?
- Wie stellen Sie sich Ihre Fans / Abonnenten / Follower vor? Wer sind Ihre Fans / Abonnenten / Follower?
  - Wie machen Sie sich ein Bild von Ihnen?
  - Was stellen Sie sich vor, welche Erwartungen die Nutzer an Ihre Social-Media-Auftritte stellen?
- Wer ist / sind tatsächliche Zielgruppe(n)? Wen genau möchten Sie über Social-Media-Kanäle erreichen?
- Inwiefern stimmen Sie Ihren Social-Media-Auftritt auf diese Zielgruppe(n) ab?

Profilinformationen

- Neben den Posts und Tweets gibt es auf den Plattformen ja auch feststehende Angaben, wie z.B. Profilbilder, Unternehmensinformationen oder Fotoalben. Wie gestalten Sie diese Profilangaben?
  - Welche Texte und Bilder werden dort angegeben?
  - Wie werden diese Inhalte festgelegt?
  - Wann wird hier etwas geändert?

2. Informationsmanagement

Des Weiteren interessiert mich natürlich auch das aktive Vermitteln von Informationen. Lassen Sie uns also einmal über das Posten sprechen. Ich würde mit Ihrer Hilfe gerne nachvollziehen, wie der Post / der Clip ins Social Web kommt und was alles passiert bis er dort gelandet ist.

Social-Web-spezifische Arbeitsanpassung

- Wie wirkt sich die Präsenz auf Facebook, YouTube etc. aus auf die Arbeitsabläufe in der Redaktion?
  - Wie wird die Arbeit aufgeteilt?
  - Wer ist (personell) alles daran beteiligt?

Nachrichtenprozess an Ausgangsstufe

- Woher kommen die Inhalte der Postings?
- Wie wird ausgewählt, was gepostet wird?
  - Wann eignet sich ein Thema für das Social Web?
  - Welche Überlegungen oder Kriterien spielen für Sie eine Rolle bei der Auswahl?
  - Woran machen Sie fest, dass ein Post gelungen ist? (Rolle von geteilten Inhalten?)
  - Was soll ein Social-Media-Post bezwecken?

Social-Web-spezifische Arbeitsanpassung

- Wie „verpacken" Sie die Informationen für die Social-Media-Kanäle?
  - Worauf achten Sie beim Posten besonders?
  - Wie formulieren Sie dabei?
  - Welche Tonalität wählen Sie?
  - Was sind für Sie besondere Herausforderungen bei der Informationsvermittlung über Social Media?

3. Kommunikationsmodi

Nun gehen ja Beiträge nicht nur von Ihnen aus, sondern es kommen auch Reaktionen seitens der User. Da interessieren mich zunächst einmal die Reaktionen, die sich thematisch auf Postings von Ihnen beziehen.

- Welche Bedeutung haben solche User-Reaktionen für Sie und ihre Arbeit?
  - Wie werten Sie diese Beiträge?
  - Was sind für Sie gute Beiträge und was sind weniger gute?
  - Wie verfahren Sie mit weniger guten Beiträgen?
- Wie sehen Sie ihre eigene Rolle dabei?
  - Inwiefern sind Sie dabei gefragt zu reagieren?
  - Wann werden Sie dabei aktiv?
  - Meinen Sie, Sie tragen in irgendeiner Weise zum Verlauf der entstehenden Kommunikation bei?
  - Verfolgen Sie dabei irgendwelche Ziele?
  - Woran orientieren Sie sich in Ihrer Vorgehensweise?

4. Beziehungsmanagement

Dann gibt es ja auch noch Beiträge, die Sich direkt an die Deutsche Welle richten z.B. wenn eine Frage auf die DW-Pinnwand gepostet wird, wenn jemand per „@"-Zeichen direkt Bezug nimmt oder wenn Kommentare zu verlinkten Artikel die Verfasser betreffen.

- Was passiert bei Ihnen (hier in der Redaktion), wenn eine Anfrage auftaucht, die sich direkt an die DW richtet?
  - Wie reagieren Sie darauf?
  - Wonach richten Sie Ihre Reaktion aus?

    - Wer ist alles daran beteiligt?
    - In welcher Form antworten Sie? Welche Kanäle (Post / Tweet, Private Nachricht, E-Mail) nutzen Sie wann?
- Wie unterscheiden sich die Arten der Anfragen für Sie?
- Welche Herausforderungen gibt es beim Umgang mit dem Gegenüber im Social Web?
- Welche Lehren haben Sie im Laufe der Zeit im direkten Umgang mit den Usern gezogen?
    - Gab es in der Vergangenheit Situationen im Umgang mit irgendeinem Gegenüber im Social Web, die Sie heute anders angehen würden?

Vielen Dank für die interessanten Einblicke in Ihre Arbeit. Meine Fragen wären nun auch umfassend beantwortet. Gibt es noch etwas von Ihrer Seite, was Sie gerne hinzufügen würden?

Appendix 5.2: German version (strategists)

Leitfaden Strategen

0. Eisbrecher-Fragen

- Sie arbeiten in der Abteilung „xxx“ / Redaktion „xxx“. Als was sind Sie dort tätig?
- Welchen Bezug hat Ihre Arbeit zu sozialen Medien?

Ich würde gerne zunächst über den Social-Media-Auftritt im Ganzen sprechen und die generelle Entscheidung, hier präsent zu sein.
Also, erst einmal grundsätzlich zur Präsenz der Deutschen Welle auf sozialen Median wie Facebook, YouTube oder Twitter:

1. Identitätsmanagement

Motivation

- Warum hat man sich bei der DW dazu entscheiden, im Social Web präsent zu sein? Wie ist es dazu gekommen?
  - Wer war an der Entscheidung beteiligt?
  - Was waren die Gründe?
  - Aus welchen Gründen hat man sich für die einzelnen Plattformen (Facebook, YouTube, Twitter) entschieden?
- Mit welchen Zielen ist die Social-Media-Präsenz verbunden? Was möchten Sie damit erreichen?

Selbstcharakterisierung

- Was sagt es Ihrer Meinung nach über die Deutsche Welle aus, dass Sie neben den anderen Kanälen wie Rundfunk und Homepage auch im Social Web präsent sind?
- Wofür steht die Deutsche Welle auf ihren Social-Media-Präsenzen? Was macht die Deutsche Welle auf diesen Plattformen aus?
  - Für welche Art von Inhalten steht die Social-Media-Präsenz der Deutschen Welle?
  - Die DW nennt sich „mediale Stimme Deutschlands in der Welt". Welche Rolle spielt ein Deutschlandbezug in Social Web?

Handlungsebene

- Im Rahmen des Accounts der Deutschen Welle posten und twittern bestimmte Redakteure. Inwieweit sollten diese bei ihrer Tätigkeit die „Deutsche Welle" verkörpern, inwieweit sich selbst als Redakteure?
  - Wie weit kann das In-Erscheinung-Treten einzelner Redakteure bei der Betreuung der Präsenzen gehen?
  - Warum ist das so (und nicht anders)?

Publikum

- Was glauben Sie, wie die Nutzer den Social-Media-Auftritt der Deutschen Welle wahrnehmen?
- Wie stellen Sie sich Ihre Fans / Abonnenten / Follower vor? Wer sind Ihre Fans / Abonnenten / Follower?
  - Wie machen Sie sich ein Bild von Ihnen?
  - Was stellen Sie sich vor, welche Erwartungen die Nutzer Ihrer Meinung nach an Ihren Social-Media-Auftritte stellen?
- Wer ist / sind die tatsächlichen Zielgruppen? Wen genau möchten Sie über Social-Media-Kanäle erreichen?
- Inwiefern ist der Social-Media-Auftritt auf diese Zielgruppe(n) abgestimmt?

Profilinformationen

Neben den Posts und Tweets gibt es auf den Plattformen ja auch feststehende Angaben, wie z.B. Profilbilder, Unternehmensinformationen oder Fotoalben.

- Wonach richten sich die Texte und Bilder dort?
  - Wie werden die Inhalte festgelegt?
  - Worauf wird beim Ausfüllen dieser Profilangaben geachtet?
  - Wann wird hier etwas geändert?

2. Informationsmanagement

Des Weiteren interessiert mich natürlich auch die Organisation der Arbeitsabläufe, die mit dem aktiven Vermitteln von Informationen in Social Web einhergehen.

Social-Web-spezifische Arbeitsanpassung

- Welche Veränderungen oder Neuerungen sind mit der Entscheidung verbunden als Medienunternehmen auf Facebook, YouTube etc. präsent zu sein?
  - Bezüglich der Unternehmensstruktur?
  - Personell?
  - Organisatorisch?
- Wie wurden die Veränderungen organisiert?
- Wer war / ist daran beteiligt?

Nachrichtenprozess an Ausgangsstufe

- Inwiefern ist Ihre Arbeit verbunden mit den alltäglichen Inhalten der Social-Media-Postings der DW?
- Woran machen Sie fest, ob ein Post gelungen ist?

Social-Web-spezifische Arbeitsanpassung

- Worin besteht in Ihren Augen die besondere Herausforderung bei der Informationsvermittlung über Social Media im Journalismus?

3. Kommunikationsmodi

Nun gehen ja Beiträge nicht nur von der DW aus, sondern es kommen auch Reaktionen seitens der User. Da interessieren mich zunächst einmal die Reaktionen, die sich thematisch auf Postings der DW beziehen.

- Welche Bedeutung haben solche User-Reaktionen für die Social-Media-Kommunikation der DW?
- Welche Ansprüche oder Erwartungen stellt das Medienunternehmen DW an die Kommunikationsprozesse, die durch Ihre Social-Media-Kommunikation auslöst werden?
- Welche Aufgabe kommt dabei den postenden / twitternden Redakteuren zu?
- Welche DW-übergreifenden Orientierungspunkte gibt es in dieser Hinsicht?

4. Beziehungsmanagement

Dann gibt es ja auch noch Beiträge, die Sich direkt an die Deutsche Welle richten z.B. wenn eine Frage auf die DW-Pinnwand gepostet wird, wenn jemand per „@"-Zeichen direkt Bezug nimmt oder wenn Kommentare zu verlinkten Artikel die Verfasser betreffen.

- Wie sieht idealerweise der Umgang mit einer Anfrage aus, die sich direkt an die DW richtet? Was ist da der Ablauf?
  - Welche Abteilungen sollten bei der Beantwortung mit einbezogen werden?
  - Woran sollte sich die Reaktion ausrichten?
  - Wonach wird ausgewählt, welche Kanäle bei der Reaktion auf direkte Anfragen benutzt werden? Wann antwortet man per Post, wann der Nachricht, wann vielleicht per E-Mail?

- Wo sehen Sie besondere Herausforderungen beim direkten Umgang mit dem Gegenüber im Social Web?
- Wenn Sie einmal zurückdenken an die Anfangszeit der Social-Media-Präsenz der DW bis heute, sehen Sie irgendwelche Veränderungen in der Herangehensweise?
    - Welche Lehren haben Sie im Laufe der Zeit gezogen?

Vielen Dank für die interessanten Einblicke in Ihre Arbeit. Meine Fragen wären nun auch umfassend beantwortet. Gibt es noch etwas von Ihrer Seite, was Sie gerne hinzufügen würden? Weitere Gesprächspartner?

Appendix 5.3: English version (editors)

Interview guideline editors

0. Warm-up questions

- You work for the English section of DW. What do you do there?
- How do you get in touch with social media in your job?

First of all, I would like to talk about the social media presence as a whole and about the general decision to be available in the social web. Apart from that, I am also interested in learning more about your day-to-day posting activities and interactions with the users. So, let's just start talking about the English-language social media accounts on Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and the like in general:

1. Identity management

Motivation

- The social media presence you are in charge of, why does it exist? How was it started in the first place?

    - Who was involved in this decision?
    - What were the reasons to create the accounts?
- What are these social media accounts for? What is it you would like to achieve?

Self-characterization

- The fact that DW is not only available via broadcast or its homepage, but also on Facebook / YouTube / Twitter. What does it tell us about DW?
- What does DW stand for on its social media accounts? What is characteristic of DW's Facebook / YouTube / Twitter presence?
    - What kind of content if characteristic of DW's social media presence?
    - What role does a reference to Germany play?

Action focus

- You post and tweet within the framework of a DW account. To what extent do you post as "Deutsche Welle" or as DW-editor [name] [surname]?
    - To what extent do you make an appearance as an editor while managing the account?
    - Why is that? Why not the other way?

Audience

- What do you think, how do users perceive DW's social media presence?
- How do you imagine your fans / subscribers / followers? Who are they?
    - How do you picture them?
    - What do the users expect from your social media accounts?
- What's your actual target group? Whom would you like to reach via social media channels?
- To what extent do you adjust the social media presence according to your target group?

Account information

- Besides posts and tweets there is also fixed content such as profile pictures, account information or picture galleries. How do you manage this profile content?
  - What kind of texts and pictures are being displayed here?
  - How do you decide on this content?
  - When is something being changed here?

2. Information management

Furthermore, I am interested in how you actively disseminate information. So let's talk about posting content. I would like to understand how the DW post or clip ends up in the social web and what happened until it got there.

Social web specific work adaption

- How did your presence on Facebook / YouTube/ Twitter etc. affect the work routines in your editorial office?
  - How's the workload being distributed?
  - Who is involved in social media communication?

News process on the output level

- Where does the content that gets posted come from?
- How do you select what gets published?
  - When is a topic suitable for social web?
  - What considerations or criteria play a role for the selection of social media content?
  - How can you tell that post was successful? (role of shared content?)
  - What is a post supposed to do?

Social web specific work adaption

- How do you "pack" information for social media channels?
  - What do you especially care for when posting?

    - How do you phrase your posts / tweets?
    - What tonality do you choose?
- What do you think is the challenge when disseminating information via social media?

3. Communication modes

It is not just you contributing in the social web, there are also reactions from users. So, first of all I would be interested in user reactions that refer to what you have posted.

- How are user reactions relevant to you and your job?
    - What's the value of these contributions?
    - What are good contributions; what contributions are not that optimal?
    - How do you handle suboptimal contributions?
- How do you perceive your own role in that respect?
    - To what extent are you challenged here?
    - When do start to get active?
    - To what extent do you affect the course of the evolving communication?
    - What are your objectives when managing user reactions?

4. Relationship management

Then there are also contributions that address DW directly, for instance, when a questions is being posted on your wall, when somebody refers to you via the @-sign or when comments of linked articles are addressed to the authors of these articles.

- What happens if a request comes up that is directed towards DW?
    - How do you react?
    - What is your reaction based on?
    - Who is involved?
    - What form does your answer have? What channels do you use when?
- In what way do user requests differ?
- What challenges are there in terms of being in touch with users in the social web?
- What lessons have you learnt in dealing with users directly over time?
    - Have there been situations with users in the past that you would handle differently today than you did at the time?

Thank you very much for giving me such interesting insights into your work here at DW. In fact, my questions have all been answered now. Is there anything that you would like to add?

About the author

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