DMITRY YAGODIN

The Blogization of Journalism

How blogs politicize media and social space in Russia

ACADEMIC DISSERTATION
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UNIVERSITY OF TAMPERE
DMITRY YAGODIN

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Preface

I owe many thanks to you who made this work possible. I am grateful to you for making it worthwhile. It is hard to name you all, or rather it is impossible. By reading this, you certainly belong to those to whom I radiate my gratitude. Thank you all for your attention and critique, for a friendly talk and timely empathy.

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My dearest friends, my fellows, my critical readers, and my language editors, thank you for keeping me ambitious, motivated, but still social all this time. Matt Tegelberg deserves a separate acknowledgement for playing all these roles at once. I appreciate the time and effort of my examiners Sarah Oates and Bart Cammaerts.

My final and the biggest spasibo is to my beloved family. Spasibo dad for raising me the way you did. Spasibo Zhenya for your sisterly kindness. Spasibo Olga for your patience and love. Above all, spasibo mother for the life energy you gave to me.

This is to you, mom.

Tampere on March 25, 2014
Dmitry Yagodin
Blogization is the term that I develop in this dissertation to describe the current state of Russian journalism and consider its broader implications for political and social life. In December 2011, oppositional protests in Russia moved to the forefront new political figures and civic activists who often emerged from the community of Russian bloggers and journalists. In this case, the overlap and mutual interaction between journalism and blogging stretched far beyond the realm of internal struggles within the institutional setting of journalism. The very idea of journalism was shattered. Today its old definitions are no longer adequate, and its new definitions are disputable and controversial. I argue it is the process of blogization that is partly responsible for this theoretical, and indeed empirical, uncertainty about what constitutes journalism.

This subject cuts across several ongoing theoretical discussions and practical applications. I build my argumentation on the premises of the following four strands of knowledge.

First, there is a broad discussion about journalistic professionalism and the roles of mass media in modern societies. Blogging presents an alternative approach or a potential turning point in journalistic development. The notion of blogization also opens a valuable framework in which one can study ongoing symbolic struggles and identity constructions within the sphere of mass communication. I identify this sphere as a field – a shared space for individual journalists, bloggers, and media institutions. This perspective emphasizes the dialectical relations between social actors and structures of cultural production.

Second, I consider the blogization of journalism as part of the larger context of socio-political modernization. In this respect, the case of Russia presents a timely and relevant example. Through the lenses of blogization, we can assess the theoretical premises of transitology – a research perspective that frames the recent history of Russian political and media systems as reflections of a shift toward democratization and modernization. These two notions are repeatedly emphasized in literature about new online media and in the context of the so-called post-Soviet transition paradigm. Thus, I work with two narratives of social change induced by new media: changes in professional journalism and the transition of Russian society. Accordingly, my
broader intention is to evaluate normative shifts in Russian journalism under the influence of blogging.

Third, I conceptualize news making by journalists and by bloggers as a social practice through the lens of field theory, developed by Pierre Bourdieu. Bourdieu’s thinking provides useful analytical tools to delimit such a vague research object as relations between journalism and blogging. Bourdieu’s work helps to focus on the institutionalized, structural level of professional journalism, while retaining an element of agency and contingency.

Fourth, to view journalism from a less structured, partly marginalized and radicalized position of the news blogging sub-culture – I draw on Laclau and Mouffe’s discourse theory. This theory helps me to understand the meaning of ideological struggles within the broader journalistic project (journalists and bloggers acting together).

The main research question of this study focuses on the implications of journalism-blogging relationships for a broader understanding of news media in Russia between 2001 and 2013. This time period is limited by the first visible instances of journalism-blogging interaction after 2001 and culminates with an unprecedented wave of political protests in early 2010s.

The subject of journalism-blogging relations is an example of a highly interconnected social reality that is difficult to address using conventional sociological methods of sampling, inferences and validation. This poses a series of limitations on the study, in which I explore blogization mainly through analysis of mass media organizations, media representations of individual bloggers, and the results of their cultural production (texts). While interviewing journalists and bloggers could significantly enrich this work, it would also multiply the overall complexity and feasibility of such a project. Instead, I relied on a broader contextualization amplified by longitudinal observations.

The project’s core empirical data includes eight examples of mass media and eight Live Journal bloggers, who are all important actors in the blogization process. The media sub-sample that I chose does not claim to be exhaustive or strictly representative of the Russian media landscape. It is however relatively diverse in terms of political, economic and technological contexts. I deliberately included three types of media: television as the medium with the largest audience (Channel One and NTV); newspapers targeted to specific social groups (Kommersant, Novaya Gazeta, Moskovsky Komsomolets, Rossiiskaya Gazeta); and online publications popular among younger generations, the middle class and intellectuals (Vz.ru and Lenta.ru).
I limit my focus to *Live Journal*, a single blog platform, where I chose a sub-sample of bloggers with large readerships who come from various backgrounds and professional orientations. The final list consists of eight names. The list is not representative of the blogosphere, but covers some of the most remarkable examples of current blogging in Russia: pro-Kremlin and oppositional bloggers, trained journalists and blogging celebrities. The list also covers different genres ranging from investigative and opinionated reporting, to facts, aggregate stories, and daily life reflections.

This research analyses two main types of data: the quantitative characteristics of studied media actors (journalistic organizations and bloggers), and qualitative examples of their practices. The initial overview of relations between journalism and blogging is based on official reports and media statistics. Several statistical and other publicly available reports are drawn on to describe the journalistic field in terms of its internal structure and external relations with other fields. Furthermore, I collected numbers and examples of where and how discussions of journalism and blogging appear and evolve over time. From several hundred texts that I came across during the years of this study, I selected and included a total of 151 stories in the qualitative analysis; 95 of them are from traditional media and 56 are from blogs. These texts cover a time period from March 2003 through to June 2013. The main difference between quantitative and qualitative data in this research is a difference of context and text. While various sets of quantitative data provide contextual background, the qualitative data highlights crucial examples of the development of relations between journalism and blogging in Russia.

This research is designed so that the main research question is operationalized in four sub-questions. I discuss each of these sub-questions consecutively in four empirical chapters. Chapter 4 looks at the conditioning of the common space occupied by mass media and bloggers. This chapter argues that convergence and mass “produsage” culture dissolves boundaries between mass and interpersonal communications; that the stability of traditional mass media in Russia is secured by the strategic control and support of the state; that online media are less susceptible to the influence of the state. Accordingly, blogization becomes a challenging factor for the otherwise prevalent journalistic model of statist commercialism. Though, blogization has a limited effect on the whole media system, it raises important questions about new conditions for media ethics. There is also (mostly) indirect evidence that the Russian political system tries to co-opt, depoliticize, and at times disrupt the uncontrolled advances of the blogosphere.
Chapter 5 looks at the symbolic capital of journalism-blogging interactions and the reproduction of existing hierarchies within the journalistic field. The political meta-capital of the state is a central asset for journalism in mass media that is state-controlled and loyal to the Kremlin. Journalists and bloggers, less controlled by the state and thereby critical of the Kremlin, rely on the dense digital networks of social capital and the journalistic capital of peer-recognition. This chapter describes blogger Aleksey Navalny and journalist Leonid Parfenov as examples of blogization’s potential to create alternative centers of political capital.

Chapter 6 discusses some of the key discursive elements of blogization and describes the logic of their articulation. There are contested meanings of blogization that are attached to ideas of journalistic autonomy, credibility, subjectivity, and responsibility. Analysis of mass media and blogs reveals that the logic of difference dominates the discursive field, in which the signifiers “journalist” and “blogger” serve as catalysts for undecidability. The key finding of this chapter is that blogization does not split the “new” journalistic space directly into journalists and bloggers, but this borderline creates the more complex structures of identification.

Chapter 7 addresses the formation and contestation of the discourse of blogization in Russia. In this final chapter, I argue that blogization as a discourse becomes divided along old philosophical traditions of slavophilism and westernism. These two traditions are sources for two competing discourses: hegemonic conservative and liberal counter-hegemonic. Hegemony is secured by the conservative forces who control the mainstream mass media in ways similar to the ideas of slavophiles. Its dominance rests upon an image of responsible journalism that criticizes the credibility of some marginal blogging, and justifies the lack of media autonomy by equating it with chaos. Counter-hegemony is based on the ideas of westernism and often labeled as “liberal.” Westernism in blogization relies on the values of individual autonomy, freedom, subjectivity, and the diversity of styles.

This work poses new questions. The past years of commercialization, political clientelism and media self-censorship have all but marginalized what remains of Russia’s independent and socially committed journalism; a view that has been increasingly talked about by media scholars. Can we talk today, in the context of blogization, about reviving the rhetoric of glasnost in its 2.0 version? Or, is it a more suitable point to mention the more rigorous police surveillance and the spread of censorship into digital networks? The difference between late Soviet glasnost and glasnost based on new media phenomena is that the former had been a top-down conscious decision, whereas the latter is mostly a bottom-up spontaneous movement. In the end, this difference is crucial.
Tiivistelmä


Toiseksi tutkimus tarkastelee journalismin blogisaatiota sana laajempaa yhteiskunnallis-politiittista modernisaatiota ja sen ymmärtämistä. Tässä mielessä Venäjä on erityisen relevantti ja kiinnostava esimerkki. Blogisaation avaaman näkökulman kautta onkin mahdollista paitsi pohtia journalistin muutosta myös arvioida yleisemmin ”transitologiat”. Tämä tutkimusnäkökulma jäsentää Venäjän poliittisen ja joukkoviestintäympäristön viimeaikaisen historian muutoksena kohti demokraattisempaa ja modernimpaa yhteiskuntaa. Nämä kaksi käsitetä – demokraattisuus ja moderni – toistuvatkin jatkuvasti, kun uutta verkko ja online-
mediaa arvioidaan Neuvostoliiton jälkeistä tilaa ja sen erityisyyttä korostavassa transitio-paradigmassa. Työssä siis arvioidaan uusmedian vaikutuksesta Venäjällä suhteuttamalla niitä kahteen muutostarinaan: yhtäältä yleisempään ammattijournalismin viimeaikaiseen kehitykseen ja toisaalta venäläisen yhteiskunnan murrokseen. Tarkoituksena on näin myös avata normatiivisista kysymyksistä bloggaamisen aiheuttamista muutoksista venäläisessä journalismissa.

Kolmanneksi tutkimus tarkastelee myös bloggaajien ja journalistien uutisten tuottamista sosiaalisena käytäntöön Pierre Bourdieun kehittämän kenttäteorian näkökulmasta. Bourdieun ajattelun avulla voidaan tarkastella ammattijournalismin institutionaalisia ja rakenteellisia rajoituksia yhtä aikaa toimijuuden ja kontingenssin ajatusten kanssa.

Neljänneksi ”blogisaatiota” lähestytään korostamalla sen radikaalia, alakulttuurista merkityspotentiaalia. Tätä näkökulmaa ohjaavat Ernesto Laclau ja Chantal Mouffen diskurssiteoria. Se auttaa ymmärtämään ideologisten kamppailujen merkitystä sekä journalismia koskevassa kamppailussa että laajemmassa yhteiskuntakehyksessä.


Tutkimuksen ydinaineiston muodostaa yhtäältä kahdeksan LiveJournal-alustalla toimivan bloggaajan työn tarkastelu. Bloggaajien kohdalla on mahdotonta arvioida
heidän määrällistä tai sisällöllistä ”edustavuuttaan”, mutta kaikki valitut esimerkkitapaukset ovat olleet merkittäviä venäläisen journalismin blogisaation prosessissa. Ne myös havainnollistavat sen erilaisia puolia ja ulottuvuuksia. Työ rajautuu siis yhteen blogialustaa, jonka on valittu otos bloggaajia, joilla on toisistaan poikkeavat taustat ja ammatilliset orientaatiot. Valittu kahdeksan bloggaajan joukko ei ole systemaattisesti edustava otos blogosfääristä, mutta se kattaa tärkeimmät ja näkyvimmät esimerkit venäläisestä bloggauskulttuurista ja sen kirjosta: Kremlin politiikkaa myötäilevät bloggaajat, sitä kritisoivat kirjoittajat, journalistiselta pohjalta ponnistavat bloggaajat ja julkisibloggaajat. Heidän tuotantonsa kirjo kattaa myös laajasti bloggaamisessa sovellettuja laijtyypejä tutkivasta raportoinnista mielipidekirjoitteluun, faktoiden levittämiseen, juttujen aggregoimiseen ja arkielämän sattumusten reflektointiin.

Toisaalta käytän hyväkseni myös media-aineistoa. Tämäkään aineisto ei ole suoraviivaisesti edustava tai systemaattisesti kattavaa suhteenä venäjäiseen mediamaisemaan. Se kattaa kuitenkin monipuolisesti ne poliittiset, taloudelliset ja teknologiset ulottuvuudet, joilla venäläinen media toimii. Mukana on kolmenlaisia tiedotusvälineitä: televisiokanavia jotka tavoittavat laajimman yleisön (Ykköskanava ja NTV), erityisille sosiaali/yleisöryhmille suunnattuja sanomalehtiä (Kommersant, Novaja Gazeta, Moskovski Komsomolets, Rossijskaja Gazeta) sekä verkkojulkaisuja jotka on suunnattu joko nuorisolle, keskiluokalle tai älymystölle (Vz.ru ja Lenta.ru).


Tutkimuksen pääkysymys on operationalisoitu jakamalla se neljään alakysymykseen, joita tarkastelen neljässä luvussa. Luku 4 rakentaa kuvan yhteisestä tilasta, jossa joukkoviestimet ja bloggaajat toimivat. Luvun keskeisiä vääritteitä ovat,
että median konvergenssi ja ”joukkotuotteliasuuden” (mass produsage) kulttuuri
purkaa rajoja joukkoviestinnän ja kehittävissä joukkoviestinnän väliltä ja että valtion
perinteisen joukkoviestinnän pysyvyystä ja uudelleen, on valtion strateginen kontrolli.
Verkkomedia puolestaan on vahemman 2000:ta näiden valtion resurssien vaikutukselle.
Tämän vuoksi blogisaatio viriää haasteena vallitsevalle viestinnän ja keskimääräisellä
journalismin mallille. Vaikka blogisaation vaikutukset koko mediajärjestelmään ovat
rajoittuneet, ne nostavat esiin tärkeitä mediaaettisiä kysymyksiä. Työ tuo myös esiin
(epäsuoraa) todistusaineistoa siitä, että valtion poliittinen järjestelmä pyrkii
kaapaamaan, epäpolitiisoimaan ja ymmärtämään blogosfärin
rajoittamatonta toimintaa.

Luku 5 tarkastelee journalisti-bloggaaja suhteita symbolisen pääoman ja
journalistisen kentän näkökulmasta. Tässä näkökulmassa
valtion poliittinen metapääoma on keskeinen, vaikuttava valtion
joukkoviestinnälle, joka on valtion kontrolloimaa ja lojaalia Kremlissä. Ne
bloggaajat ja journalistit, jotka ovat vahemman tämän kontrollin
piirissä ja siitä
kriittisempiä Kremlissä, kohtaan, nojaavat toiminnaansa enemmän
älyisen
digitaalisten
verkostojen

Luku 6 erittelee näkyviin bloggaamisen esiin nostamia diskurssinsa
yhteisöelementtejä

Luku 7 käsittelee blogisaatio-diskurssin muutostumista ja sen
jäsentämään
laajempana yhteiskunnallista haastetta vielä uudella tavalla. Väitetään on, että
blogisaatio diskurssina jäsentyy
ja jakautuu noqdaan vanhah sekä
slavofiilien

Hegemonisen diskurssin

Hegemonisen diskurssin
takeena toimivat Venäjällä

Hegemonisen diskurssin
valta-asema

ajatukseen vastuullisesta journalismista, joka kritisoi bloggaamista uskottavuuden puutteesta ja joka oikeuttaa media autonomisuuden puutteen uhkaavalla kaaoksella. Hegemoniaa haastava vastadiskurssi puolestaan nojaa länsimaisuuden kuvastoon ja se leimataankin usein ”liberaaliksi”. Se nojaa yksilöllisen autonomia, vapauden, subjektiivisuuden ja tyylien moninaisuuden kuvastoon.

Viime vuosien kaupallistumisen, poliittisen klientelismi ja median itsensensuuri ovat kutakuinkin syrjäyttäneet rippeetkin Venäjän itsenäisestä ja yhteiskunnallisesti orientoituneesta journalismista. Tämän ovat yhä enemmän panneet merkille myös mediatutkimat. Voidaanko siis blogisaation puitteissa puhua uudelleen virinneestä avoimuuden politiikasta, Glasnost 2.0 versiosta? Vai onko osuvampaa nostaa esiin entistä tarmokkaampi poliisin urkinta, seurantatyö ja sensuurin leviämin digitaalisin verkostoihin. Ero myöhäisen Neuvostoliiton Glasnostilla ja nykyisen mediakehityksen luoman avoimuuden välillä on se että ennen mainittu oli ylhäältä alas suuntautunut, suunniteltu ja tietoinen kampanja kun taas jälkimmäinen on suurimmaksi osaksi alhaalta ylös suuntautuva spontaani liike. Tämä ero saattaa loppujen lopuksi olla perustavaa laatua.
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1 Introduction

In 2005, the Russian mass media reported on the first blogger to enter the White House as a journalist (Lenta, March 8, 2005). The news story raised a question about the legal status of such a practice, because de jure blogs were not mass media, and American media law did not have specific regulations to protect freedom of speech for bloggers in the same way as it did for the journalistic community. This was a rare example of a “blogger” news story at a time when, for many Russians, blogging as phenomenon was barely known, and Russian media mentioned “blogs” mostly in foreign contexts. Of course, by 2005 Russian blogs had already existed for several years and Russian-speaking bloggers had been actively cultivating these new media territories. However, there were very few journalistic accounts of this early period of blogging practices.

The first Russian blogger was invited to the Kremlin press pool in 2009. He was Rustem Adagamov, a blogger who, just before the invitation, criticized the work of the presidential photographers. Dmitry Medvedev, then the President of Russia, allowed Adagamov to accompany him and take pictures at ceremonies normally off limits for accredited journalists. At about the same time, Medvedev’s press service launched a video blog of the President, who thereafter played the role of an active internet user and blogger (see e.g. Yagodin 2012). The generous offer to Adagamov and the start of a Presidential blog are now considered notable journalistic events. In 2009, the spreading influence of the blogosphere was already prevalent in mainstream news stories and commentaries. These developments simultaneously presented a new topic for journalists and a new challenge for journalism: symbolic power was at play. Adagamov’s invitation to the Kremlin potentially undermined the established authority of professional journalists. However, Adagamov was later disgraced by state authorities in order to silence one of the loud voices of the opposition. He was forced to emigrate in order to avoid possible criminal charges – a common practice used to silence critical bloggers.

References to mass media and blogs that are part of the research data are included to the list of empirical materials separately from the main list of references. Citations of that kind in the text include the name of the author(s) when available, the name of the medium (blogger), along with day, month and year of publication.
The purpose of this book is to examine the development of journalism-blogging relations in contemporary Russia. Although it covers the years between 2001 and 2013, its relative weight grows exponentially towards the later, more recent period of time. As I will show, this is due to the heightened rate of interactions between journalists and bloggers in the wake of the political controversies of the 2011 parliamentary and 2012 presidential elections.

After December 2011, the overlap and mutual interaction between journalism and blogging in Russia reached a scale and produced effects that stretched far beyond the realm of internal struggles and the adaptive co-existence of “journalism” and “blogs” as separate institutions. What began as a “winter of discontent” with election falsifications (Oates 2013:165-84) had far-reaching repercussions for the media landscape. These political protests moved to the forefront new political figures and civic activists who often emerged from the community of Russian bloggers and journalists. At the core of this conflation was the figure of anti-corruption blogger Aleksey Navalny whose investigative blog made him a sole leader of the newly emergent opposition to the authoritarian regime of Vladimir Putin. Mass media and the blogosphere divided into supporters and opponents of Navalny’s political agenda. In July 2013, the blogger was convicted on trumped-up embezzlement charges (Englund and Lally 2013), only to be released a day later to run for mayor of Moscow. During a staggering campaign, he mobilized thousands of volunteers and grass-roots media actors. Blocked from the main television channels, Navalny finished second in the election, narrowly missing a run-off situation. This roller-coaster story marks the culmination of what I call in this book the blogization of journalism.

1.1 Point of departure

Reading newspapers and watching television news programs, somewhere between 2005 and 2006, I started paying attention to the emerging news-like content in internet blogs. As a journalism student, I followed with interest the growing popularity of individual bloggers. Such practices made me think about possible changes in journalism. With that focus in mind I started this research project in 2008.

I have looked for various ways to formulate the subject of journalism and blogging relations scientifically. The existing literature has gradually led me to a conviction, at least a temporary one, about the key questions to be asked. The respective answers that I wanted to find rested in the domain of journalistic culture.
and ideology, both of which were very specific to the national context of Russia. My own experience in journalism, as well as the historical and social contexts of which I am part, convinced me to focus on the ethical and political antagonisms of the profession. By this I mean not just relations between journalism and political institutions, but also antagonistic relations between different journalistic identities. Choosing such a perspective, I was inspired by the post-structuralist discourse theory of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (1985).

Laclau and Mouffe (1985:163ff.) claim the present growth of social conflictuality (“new social movements”) is an extension of an ongoing democratic revolution rooted in French revolutionary discourse. They distinguish several common trends in the diffusion of conflictuality. First, is the commodification and bureaucratization of social relations characteristic of so-called consumer society and the increasing state intervention into our daily lives. Second, is “the reformulation of the liberal-democratic ideology – resulting from the expansion of struggles for equality” that triggers conflict. A third trend reinforces the two previous ones and is especially important in the context of media studies: “the expansion of the means of mass communication <…> [and] a new mass culture which would profoundly shake traditional identities” (ibid.). As a consequence of these trends the “new antagonisms” develop “not in the form of collective struggles, but through an increasingly affirmed individualism” (ibid:164). New forms of self-expression, such as blogs, seem to fit well with such a theoretical approach. The underlying claim of my work then is that within these new forms of communication – and through their interaction and conflict with older forms – a new journalistic order can emerge.

Initially, Laclau and Mouffe’s discourse theory (1985) was largely seen as philosophical criticism of neo-liberal ideology and mostly applicable in the field of Political Science. By the late 1990s, only a few studies followed a similar approach in media and journalism research (e.g. Curran 1997). More recently, Nico Carpentier and his colleagues have made more explicit introductions of this theory into media studies (Carpentier 2005; Carpentier and Cammaerts 2006; Carpentier and De Cleen 2007; Carpentier and Trioen 2010). This area of application has now grown extensively across various disciplines and, in a way, crossed the threshold of marginality in media studies. For instance, Lincoln Dahlberg and Sean Phelan (2011), provide multiple entry points for understanding modern media in terms of discourse theory. My work offers another example of this media trend in post-structuralist discourse theory.

The use of discourse theory is challenging due to the philosophical complexity of Laclau and Mouffe’s writings. Furthermore, their approach does not offer any clear
methodological instructions for empirical applications. Fellow researchers and senior scholars wisely recommended proceeding from the data, from the exact phenomenon which I was interested in; that is, journalism on internet blogs. My excuse for not jumping directly into empirical research was the lack of agreement among scholars and, of course, my own confusion concerning the exact meaning of “the journalism of blogs.” In this digital age of constant media transformations and innovations, I was not sure even about journalism. Where should we envision it starting and where does it end? What qualifies as journalism and what does not? The same questions apply to blogs, which are just an easy technological solution for content generation on the Internet. If we think of Russia, where the media system still struggles with the label of “post-Soviet,” and the country indeed remains far from stable political and economic conditions, the composition of my research object was simply too blurred to be addressed directly. The empirical reality seemed far too complex for that.

With such an elusive object, I found no better choice but to start my investigation from a theoretically informed discourse perspective. This opened up an opportunity to understand social phenomena from the point of view of meaning construction. The post-structuralist notion of discourse sends us to the broadest contextual level of a given phenomenon. Proceeding in this way, we can see why contemporary theories emphasize “networking” as one of the key features of emerging media forms. For example, there has been a strong emphasis on the potential of the so-called networked information economy to enable a new mode of non-market cultural production (Benkler 2006). Likewise, Manuel Castells (2009:125ff.) has argued in favor of the “creative audience” as an embodiment of a counter-power network, which acts against the communication power of institutional mass media. James Curran (2012:59) claims the opposite tendencies, concluding that “the rise of the Internet was accompanied by the decline of its freedom,” either due to commercialization in the West or state censorship in the East.

After finishing my first reading of Laclau and Mouffe, I broadened my perspective by incorporating insights from Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of cultural production and applying his concept of the field. The concept of the journalistic field is fruitful for pointing to political and economic influences on journalism-blogging relations. Bourdieu especially has emphasized the role of the economy in structuring the field of cultural production. For example, the process of hyper-commercialization can be regarded as a threat to the social orientation of news production. Rodney Benson calls this the “commodification of news culture” (2006:193). Benson also notes a gap in Bourdieu’s theorizing which mostly considers
the state or political power “in league with economic power” (ibid:195). Since Benson’s theoretical constructs are mainly bound to the Western democratic contexts of the United States (and France), they may be interpreted differently in other political contexts.

I pursued the topic of journalism-blogging relations for several years before the name “blogization” came to mind. This term regards blogging as a new source of journalistic positions (vacancies and empty spaces in the news market). It also identifies an emerging arena of symbolic struggles for recognition within the journalistic profession, enabled and conditioned by surrounding contexts. A new journalistic ideology is at once a part of these struggles and their result.

In addition to discourse and field theory, I draw on modern theories of journalism. I consider news journalism as a field of practices with established rules and normative settings. This field, however, has always been relatively open for external influences and interventions, of which blogging provides recent examples. I look into political, economic, technological and cultural influences as conditions of blogization. A normative view of journalism frames and supplements my argumentation. For example, media scholars define four key journalistic roles: monitoring social life, facilitating dialogue between members of society, radical challenging of social injustices and collaboration with other social institutions (Christians et al. 2009). However, this normative theorizing provides only scarce insights into normative dimensions of the rapidly changing landscape of new media and blogging.

While the volume of new media studies has grown significantly, researchers admit there are almost no coherent theories on new media as forms of journalism (Weiss 2009). It is a fact already that blogging has expanded the field of news production. Extensive literature exists on mutual enrichment (see e.g. Singer 2006) and moments of rivalry in blogging-journalism relations (see e.g. Perlmutter 2008). I do not, however, draw a line separating bloggers from journalists. Rather, with the idea of blogization, I show that it is becoming impossible to define this line.

1.2 The blurring boundaries of journalism

Professionalism and amateurism

An increasing amount of media-oriented resources and the means for their distribution (online forums, blogs, and social networks) require new skills to process
and present this information in a reliable form. As Adrienne Russell (2011:144) argues, today new kinds of professionals are needed to handle the abundance of information. These people must be able to organize available flows of information in order to build communities of loyal readers. We can see now how bloggers act as journalists, and journalists act as bloggers. There are the examples of bloggers being accredited as journalists at major media events; moreover, in Russia, blogs can be registered as mass media with corresponding legal rights (and responsibilities). On the other hand, journalists, who work for traditional media, are among the most active participants in the blogosphere. Clearly, both groups increasingly rely on each other as sources of information.

The initial development of online interaction and digital sites of communication has been accompanied by growing concern with the ethics underlying anonymity and the absence of regulations and responsibilities. The advent of so-called web 2.0 tools and the increased accessibility of online publishing tools raised these questions of ethics to a new level. With easy access to web publishing tools and the declining prices of digital devices (computers, mobile phones, etc.), active citizens can now bypass the monopoly of media professionals and become journalists themselves. The consequent blend of professional and amateur practices in the public space makes it difficult to define the occupational boundaries of journalism. This can potentially lead to a redefinition of the roles of journalism in the society. The process may lead toward rather positive (e.g. more freedoms, transparency, accountability of media) changes, on the one hand, or toward the aggravation of negative (e.g. lack of ethics, manipulations, abuses) consequences on the other hand.

Initially, active bloggers were anxious themselves about the striking shift in the quality of information production. Nicholas Carr saw a problem in what he called unreliable and appalling amateur writing:

I’m all for blogs and blogging. (I’m writing this [in a blog], ain’t I?) But I’m not blind to the limitations and the flaws of the blogosphere – its superficiality, its emphasis on opinion over reporting, its echolalia, its tendency to reinforce rather than challenge ideological extremism and segregation. (Carr 2005:np)

Carr’s opinion played an important role in countering the argument of Yochai Benkler, who positively valued the amateur peer-production model of web content and predicted its dominance over the more traditional, price-incentivized model by 2011. Carr contended that professionalism would still prevail, and this argument became known as the Carr-Benkler wager (Arthur 2006). The argument proved a difficult one to settle, because the initial formulation did not clearly define the winning conditions. Recently, Benkler (2012), mostly armed with quantitative
evidence, once again argued in favor of his initial idea. Carr, by contrast, placed emphasis on qualitative dimensions of content production and did not accept the mere numbers as a convincing argument. In this wager, both seem to be right, social media are omnipresent today, but in many cases the core of the information flow is still qualitatively filtered by professionals, experts, commercial and political interests groups.

Theorizing the potentialities of blogging has led some media thinkers to the idea of citizen journalism. The term, propagated in one of the most quoted accounts on the subject (Gillmor 2004:236-38), predicts a “superb form of journalism” where people break with their previous identity – “the former audience” – to make their own news. The important distinction is that citizen journalists do not represent institutionalized media when publishing their stories in blogs. Thus, even an employed journalist may act as a citizen journalist in the blogosphere.

Although citizen journalism, a central idea of blogization, does not always imply the use of blogs, it is this very form of self-publishing that inspired scholars to use the term (Briggs 2007; Gillmor 2004; Schaffer 2007; Rosen 2008a). The advent of citizen journalism was not seen as a revolution but rather as an evolution in mass communication:

The printing press and broadcasting are a one-to-many medium. The telephone is one-to-one. Now we had a medium that was anything we wanted it to be: one-to-one, one-to-many, and many-to-many. Just about anyone could own a digital printing press, and have worldwide distribution. (Gillmor 2004:13)

Gillmor’s “just about anyone” sounded like a challenge to media professionals, they were no longer the only players in a trade that had expanded dramatically within several years. Indeed, blogs potentially introduce new spaces of news production. Of course, institutionalized mass media do not disappear as a result. Rather, they adjust to new environments that are “boundless, more fluid and open” than before (Waisbord 2013:216). These adjustments are part of the blogization process, for blogs do not only offer alternative news, but they also connect traditional journalists to blogosphere.

In some cases bloggers are able to mobilize social and political protest (Hamdy 2009) and to influence the media agenda (Lennon 2003), though other studies have found that these influences are quite limited (Lowrey and Mackay 2008:75). Still, as part of the growing phenomenon of social media, blogging contributes to the overall volume of media content. What is the nature of that contribution? Do bloggers mainly follow the patterns of established media routines or do they also demonstrate
new approaches and angles in their stories? Clearly, some web blogs may function just as traditional mass media: providing news content in the form of textual or visual accounts of significant events from our public life.

**Lack of regulation**

Normally the production of mass media content has been regulated by media laws, professional conventions, cultural taboos, and market forces. The so-called media gatekeepers – editors and owners of media organizations – have been responsible for the practical implementation of guidelines for identifying the limits of journalistic profession. There have always been challenges to and deviations from such order, but it seems the emergence of blogging has multiplied and intensified them in new ways, blurring the boundaries of journalism on unprecedented scale.

The topic of regulation has triggered a scholarly debate concerning the possibility of a special ethical code for bloggers (Kuhn 2007). Of course, norms and ethics are not the same as the realities of a functioning media, which change faster than codified principles. Blogging may be inflicting unethical behavior in professional journalism too. For example, it is generally considered inappropriate to borrow media content without proper attribution, and media organizations in principle cite each other in such cases. But, as I will later show, the facts and opinions journalists take from blogs are quite often cited as “someone who blogged it,” portraying citizen journalists as somewhat less deserving of credit than their professional counterparts.

Without institutional restraints blogging may provoke unethical or aggressive forms of communication that may in the end influence mass media principles in general. The use of offensive and obscene language, for instance, has been typical of online forums, but exceptional in traditional mass media publications in Russia. In recent years, traditional media has expanded its vocabulary, permitting more obscenities, sometimes resulting in serious scandals. After the 2011 Parliamentary elections, the weekly magazine Kommersant Vlast published a photograph of a voting ballot with a message written on it directly insulting Vladimir Putin. The heading of the story euphemized another obscene expression. The overall tone of the story implied Putin was responsible for large scale violations during the elections. Shortly after, the magazine’s editor-in-chief was fired, formally for editorial negligence. The discussion concerning the language boundaries continued and, in March 2013, resulted in changes to media law that have since prohibited obscene language in mass media. Definitions of obscenity are to be given by philological experts in each case.
However, this does not affect the blogosphere which is still largely outside the scope of media law.

The issue of ethical control appears even more complicated, because many non-journalists (politicians, celebrities, well-known scientists and intellectuals) can communicate with their audiences directly by means of blogging and especially microblogging. Of course, one may argue it is the job of a journalist, who works for a certain media organization and is a member of a professional trade union, to find the news from celebrity blogs if needed and deliver it to the rest of society. Yet now, an active audience must no longer wait for journalists to perform their job since the information is already out there. Furthermore, an institutional affiliation does not stop media professionals from blogging in addition to their official job assignments and they may go well beyond occupational conventions in doing so.

Thus, as a result of blogization we might be facing increasingly independent but ethically unpredictable examples of journalism. This normative concern is an important cultural dimension of my study, and the process of legitimizing “normal” journalistic practices is part of my analysis of journalism-blogging relationships. Accordingly, my broader intention is to critically evaluate normative shifts in Russian journalism under the influence of blogging.

**Digital co-production**

News media companies, already puzzled by the task of profits in the era of digital content (Spivak 2011), must now compete or cooperate with newcomers from the blogosphere, some of which could be rather successful producers of media content. There are many ways in which blogging practices interact and overlap with more general, journalistic news-making practices. We witness the results of such overlap in traditional media texts quoting information from blogs, interviewing bloggers as new celebrities, or paying them as if they were freelance contributors. We also find examples of the professional co-optation of amateur bloggers, and journalists regularly recurring to blogging both within and outside their media organizations. And while most blogs may have no connection to news-making, many bloggers refer to media publications when discussing news events, and sometimes even comment on media texts, and thereby provide the media system with feedback. While these are mutually beneficial interactions, there are more competitive forms as well. Media projects like *OhMyNews* in South Korea, *The Huffington Post* in the United States, or the citizen journalism agency *Ridus* in Russia offer clear examples of collective blogs.
with original news content and large audiences comparable to that of traditional news media. Furthermore, such projects are often based on professional editing and management.

Bloggers can cause changes in the work of media. For example, journalists tend to follow popular blogs to define public concerns and newsworthy topics (Lowrey and Mackay 2008:75). Economically, however, news blogging is not as competitive, and traditional media in that sense have some obvious institutional advantages. The occupational benefits of traditional journalism still make a difference (Lowrey 2006:483-5). There are salaries, an organizational division of labor, strong connections with external institutions and organizations, qualified legal protection, and support from immediate colleagues and outside professionals who took on new jobs in other influential fields.

Mark Tremayne (2007:xvi) mentions three consecutive strategies the traditional media have applied to repel challenges from the blogosphere. When blogs began developing, the mainstream media attacked them with critique. This first strategy was brief and relatively unsuccessful, since the mainstream media failed to offer any viable criticism. The next strategy was to incorporate blogs and hire bloggers to work for the media. This resulted in an overwhelming presence of blogging sections on media websites replacing what were previously known as commentary and column pages. One of the first examples is Iraqi blogger Salam Abdulmunem. The third strategy to cope with blogging has been to learn from bloggers how to be more effective and creative, how to produce news at lower costs and in cooperation with active readers.

The gradual replacement of one strategy with another demonstrates a certain level of recognition achieved by the blogging movement. As Lowrey (2006) has noted, bloggers have their own strengths that include the opportunity to voice an individual opinion, provide deeper analysis of events, and maintain discussions around topics already forgotten by mass media in the daily rush for news. Yet, the overall tendency of this competition between bloggers and journalists has been described as potentially leading towards a persisting dichotomy: the professional versus the amateur. In particular, Lowrey (2006:493) has argued that there have been attempts to “redefine blogging as a journalistic tool, and bloggers as amateur journalists or journalism wannabes (rather than as a unique occupation).”

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2 Salam Abdulmunem, better known as Salam Pax or the “Baghdad Blogger” grew popular due to his blog reports from the besieged Iraqi capital during the 2003 war. He was later hired to work as a columnist for the Guardian. For more on Salam Pax’s war blogging see Bailey, Cammaerts and Carpentier (2008:72-83).
We realize today how routinely we already rely on online media. Depending on our interests, we get the news from various internet resources. At the same time, the amount of information produced is snowballing. On the Internet there is too much new information appearing every minute. Some of that information can be useful for news media, but it needs some kind of automated filtering.

Blogging platforms and social networking sites have a natural filter based on friendship contacts: we read what our friends posted or “liked”. Studies have found that people often seriously underestimate the size of our own audience when we share news, pictures, or links we liked in social media (Bernstein et al. 2013). The invisible audience has a complicated networked structure and controlling the spread of information is difficult to predict. Yet the thesis that audiences are trapped in echo chambers (see e.g. Bimber and Davis 2003; Jamieson and Cappella 2008) where information only circulates within limited clusters of friends and acquaintances, continues to trouble media scholars. If the thesis is correct, and social media constitute another step in social fragmentation and individualized marketing (Turow 2012), what does this mean for media industries that have already been struggling to adapt to new a media environment and increased competition?

1.3 Background

Media innovations

The term “blogging” as part of new media vocabulary was coined in the late 1990s. It stems from the expression “web log”. By now, one should think that the term “new media” is no longer very new. It came into academic language in connection to another popular term, “ICT” (information and communication technology) as early as the 1960s (Lievrouw and Livingstone 2006). ICTs embrace all kinds of computing and telecommunication devices, mobile and wireless services, as well as software and hardware products. Part of this conglomerate, blogging is based mainly upon online technologies and requires internet access. In the early 2000s, this technological dependence was quite crucial for the growth in popularity and global spread of blogging culture.

This upsurge in blogging has been explained by constantly evolving technological advancements that eventually made the publishing process easier and more accessible. As a result, at blog platforms like Blogger.com or LiveJournal.com it now takes
seconds to launch one’s own online diary. Interestingly, blogging initially turned slowly from a sub-culture of technically skilled intellectuals into populated forums for average users. However, under the influence of social networking sites like Facebook, it has recently retracted somewhat back to a slightly elitist domain, since the most popular bloggers are generally not random users and instead almost always representatives of some elite group (cf. Perlmutter 2008). Accordingly, in this research, I emphasize the role of blogs not as simply technical tools enabling abstract and fragmented masses of ordinary people to speak out within their respective friendship circles, but as an extension of the field of mass communication, or more precisely, the public space. The key participants in this extended field are representatives of the cyber intelligentsia that includes diverse social groups as well as some journalists. Hypothetically, such an extension should influence general public opinion and practices within the existing journalistic field, which is based on organizational structures and hierarchies of traditional media institutions.

Blogging, in contrast to traditional media like radio or the press, is multimedial; there are multiple designs and many functionally different types of blogs. Often a blog is understood as an online diary containing postings arranged in a reverse chronological order, with the most recent of them appearing at the top of the page. In addition, hyperlinks construct virtual surroundings that connect a blogger with other users (not necessarily only bloggers), as well as to any possible sources of information on the Web – pages of texts and images, video and sound files. Postings or posts constitute the entries that a blogger publishes in his or her diary.

The complexity of the relationship between blogging and journalism derives from the relatively fast pace of innovation, the development of digital applications, and the tools of communication. Technologically, the rapid transition – from bulletin boards and online forums to blogs and microblogs – seems to outrun the pace of our own adaptations and attempts to develop a stable taste for these new formats of cultural production. Still, blogging as a phenomenon is often seen as a personal publishing practice that is not aimed at mass audiences. Indeed, several studies of blogging have found that the vast majority of individual blogs have nothing to do with journalism, rather these were more like diaries about people’s personal lives (Herring et al. 2007; Heinonen 2008). However, some other blogs are indistinguishable in form and content from other examples of online journalism. As Heinonen (2008:np) points out, diary-like blogs do not contain “current affairs information of public interest.” But news-like blogs produce content in a manner very close to the work of journalists, demonstrating similar principles of gathering, processing and publishing information.
Prominence of LiveJournal

Throughout the book I use LJ for LiveJournal. The Russian blogosphere is known for its active political discussions, with many occurring on the community pages of LiveJournal’s blogging platform. The history of Russian blogging is closely connected with this originally American service. The initials “Zhe-zhe” from Zhivoi Zhurnal (Live Journal) are widely used as a synonym for blogging. While several competing blog platforms developed, LJ remains the key online resource for Russians (Alexanyan and Koltsova, 2009:66).

However, despite Russia’s fast growing Internet audience, this virtual public space is still inaccessible for more than a half of the population. This is why one should not overestimate the role of blogging culture in the broader social and political life of contemporary Russia. To avoid such misinterpretations, the journalistic effect of blogging must be studied first of all in relation to the field of traditional mass media and the corresponding professional principles. This is also important because journalists are often the first to read blogs (Farrell and Drezner 2008). But since it is impossible to empirically measure the readership of most blogs that resemble journalism, we can only assume that there are at least some degree of connection to the public space. In this respect, the factor of an explicitly large audience or the wider publicity of some bloggers in other media helps to establish only a provisional borderline for comparison with recognized journalistic forms.

In the early 2000s, after reaching a thousand (tysiacha in Russian) subscribed readers the top Russian bloggers were named tysiachniki. It was prestigious to be called this at the time since there was only a small number of people whose online diaries could attract that many readers. This stage of tysiachniki lasted long enough for the title to settle into the language of internet users. Of course, only a tiny fraction of Russia’s population was involved in the blogging subculture. This group of active bloggers was relatively small, initially including only narrow circles of authors that drew little attention from external audiences.

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3 It was originally an American company created by Brad Fitzpatrick in 1999. In 2007, LJ was sold to the Russian company SUP media, but the company’s Internet servers have physically remained in the United States.

4 According to www.internetworkstats.com, in 2012 the number of Internet users in Russia totaled 68 million, or 47.7 percent of the population. Compare these figures with 63.2 percent for Europe (including Russia) and the world’s average of 34.3 percent. In comparison to other large nations with vast territories, the Internet usage in Russia is much higher than in India (11.4 percent), slightly higher than in Brazil (45.6 percent) or China (40.1 percent) and significantly lower than in the United States (78.1 percent).
It is hard to determine when Russian blogging became something more than a network of authors mostly citing and commenting each other. Obviously some authors were more active than others, publishing and commenting more frequently. In this early period, popularity among peers was an obvious criterion for rating a blogger’s success. This principle is still applied in many blog ratings which rank authors according to the number of references to them and the relative popularity of the referees (other bloggers). One can guess that at one point there were already more blog readers than blog writers, and blogging outgrew its peer-to-peer capacity. It is important to note that blogs are normally public and may be accessed in the same way as any other open, online publication.

The Russian bloggers who are well-known today began their rise to popularity with very trivial steps. Just as much of the blogosphere content now is highly personal and tied to the everyday lives and interests of authors, in the early 2000s the first stories from bloggers like Rustem Adagamov did not seem deserving of large-scale attention. In 2003, Adagamov (March 23, 2003) posted a typical apology for a long period offline: “I haven’t looked at my journal for several months now, even though people have continued writing comments. I feel awkward that I haven’t answered anybody.” In the next post, about a week later, Adagamov expressed excitement about a new Apocalyptica album that he had just bought (March 29, 2003). Among such short personalized life messages, the lengthy diary of an American soldier in Iraq, borrowed from another blogger, appeared very new and inspired the first vivid commentary on the blog (Adagamov, April 6, 2003).

Over the course of time, the term tysiachniki lost part of its original, literal meaning and transformed into a symbolic measure of popularity stretching beyond the blogging culture. Within a decade, the blogosphere expanded from one major platform (LJ), with an exclusive club of old-timers, into millions of blog-type accounts based on all kinds of online services. The expansion blurred the boundaries of blogging by offering handy tools for mass social networking and digital interaction. As a result, the idea of the blogosphere now looks unclear and confusing. However, the core driving force behind the blogging movement in Russia remained the same. After ten years of growth, it continues to be associated with LJ and many prominent bloggers are former tysiachniki or newcomers with worthy stories to tell. Similarly, the readership of blogs has increased dramatically. The recent top ratings for blog subscribers are estimated in the tens and even hundreds of thousands. The audience of Rustem Adagamov’s blog (drugoi.livejournal.com), for example, is now larger than that of any national quality newspaper and has been compared with the audience of some popular dailies. Likewise, investigative blog posts by Aleksey
Navalny brought enormous popularity to its author and eventually made him a public figure with political ambitions.

The first examples of blogization

In contrast to the Western world, where blogs gained significance especially for their war and crisis reports in the early 2000s, the presence of blogging in Russian media space only became visible several years later. The following three events demonstrate the first major overlap between traditional news media and the blogosphere.

The Moscow power blackout in May 2005 exemplifies one of the first vast collective responses to a large scale emergency within the blogosphere. On 25 May, an accident at one of the Moscow’s power stations triggered a series of blackouts in many parts of the city and in several neighboring regions. Thousands of people were trapped in underground trains and stations. Some hospitals lost electricity for several hours. The accident was vividly described by news media and discussed in blogs with the traditional Russian question: “who is to blame?” The blogosphere was not yet a major source of journalistic materials at that time, but it was already a place where mass discussions of the event could be found. The fact that the blackout happened in the capital, where a majority of the active Russian bloggers lived, created an interesting roll-call effect – bloggers who remained connected to electricity and thus to the Internet and LJ shared news about the disconnected areas. However, in contrast to logical assumptions that the blogosphere would produce multiplicity of first-hand accounts, blogger Adagamov (May 25, 2005) borrowed material (a picture of people stuck in the Moscow underground station) from a foreign news agency.

In September 2006, ethnic unrest in Kondopoga raised serious political questions that the mainstream media largely downplayed, while bloggers served as the primary source of information. Kondopoga is a small provincial town in the Republic of Karelia in north-western Russia. The town became the epicenter of a violent ethnic conflict between Russians and Chechens, who moved to Kondopoga from the Caucasus. The conflict started with a scuffle in a local restaurant where two Russians were killed. According to some witnesses, the police did not intervene when it was possible at an early stage in the conflict, leading to accusations of corruption and complicity. Ethnic tensions later erupted into street clashes with the police. The riots attracted nationalist groups from other Russian regions to the town, and escalated until the federal government had to step in. The blogosphere responded critically to
a lack of official information from the site of the ethnic conflict and many journalists had to rely on first-hand witness accounts and rumors on the Internet.

A final example of the early influence of the blogosphere in Russia was the 2007 selection of Sochi to host the 2014 Olympics. The southern Russian city was elected as venue for the 2014 Winter Olympics on 4 July 2007. The ceremony took place in Guatemala and caused a big fuss in the media. The fact that the Russian city won the privilege in a tight competition with Salzburg in Austria and Pyeongchang in South-Korea, and that the president, Vladimir Putin, attended the final round of elections to support the bid, raised mixed feelings among Russians. Along with celebratory moods and elevated national pride, there were skeptical attitudes towards the excessive price that tax-payers would have to pay for the Games. The role of Putin, whose supportive speech in Guatemala sounded as if he was personally guaranteeing a successful organization of the Games, was clearly emphasized in most media and blog stories. The significance of the event, though, is hard to overestimate. In 2014, Russia hosted the Winter Games for the first time in history. Though, as preparations for the Games began, a series of acute problems have been raised in blogs. For example, the ecological concerns of environmental activists clashed with a mostly positive official media agenda.

The three aforementioned events demonstrate the growing maturity of the Russian blogosphere in producing flows of domestic news. Many traditional mass media, however, continued to pay attention mostly to foreign incidents and events involving bloggers. This is evident in the first examples of television news that picked up stories related to blogging from distant non-Russian contexts. The first ever mention of “blogger” on Russia’s main television channel appeared in a news story about the world’s oldest living blogger, a 108-year-old Australian woman, celebrating her birthday (1TV, October 17, 2007). The report makes a clear distinction that it is a female blogger (блогерыша), and explains that bloggers are “people regularly writing diaries on the Internet.” The reporter emphasizes the value of this woman’s web notes as unique long-life memories of an individual. Interestingly, a television channel that generally pays little attention to the subject of blogging and rarely mentions bloggers as such, returned to this Australian bloggersha story when the woman passed away the next summer (1TV, July 15, 2008). Again, the framing of the story stressed the uniqueness of an old lady who blogged about her first and second world war experiences. Everyone can be a blogger, not only the young, the report said.
1.4 Research objectives and questions

I consider the journalism-blogging relationship from the perspective of the production of news content. The term “production” here is not limited to simple operations of manufacturing like collecting, processing, and disseminating journalistic information. More importantly, I want to emphasize symbolic dimension of production, a kind of “production of production.” The key question is what makes some examples of news-like texts more journalistic than others, or what causes some people to be recognized as legitimate publishers of newsworthy information?

It is self-evident that journalists rely a lot on the reputation of the media they work for. Bloggers, however, usually have no such institutional support and thus have to derive their recognition from other sources. Recognition of bloggers or, consequently, their credibility, can partly be a result of active interaction with mass media organizations. But recognition can also be gained through active network building inside the blogosphere and the attraction of a readership. Speaking about the rise of news blogging, it is crucial to pay attention to the existing journalistic tradition, which is increasingly subject to the influence of blogging. In this book, I investigate the field in which blogging and bloggers make themselves known, recognized and trusted.

Some of the most common positive beliefs about blogging imply high levels of political and economic autonomy, emphasize the collective power of social networking, and the low entry requirements necessary to participate. The key words here emphasize autonomy, empowerment, and participation. The negative side effects of blogging are normally understood in terms of credibility and security, both connected to the lack of control over quality, ethics and the lawfulness of blog content. This image, based on both positive and negative beliefs, eventually produces certain expectations about the effects that blogs have on social life. Consequently, these expectations influence decision making and often turn into official policies and business strategies for the institutions and social actors whose interests are at stake.

In times of rapid technological change, many media theories and studies are inclined to technological determinism, with unduly high expectations often dominating public debates. But, as Curran (2012:59) critically notes, the underlying social conditions exert a “greater influence on the Internet than the other way around.” We should not be dazzled, in other words, by the preconceived attributes of blogging, rather, we must investigate their origin and development from within broader contexts.
James Carey (1997:332) has argued in favor of a “usable history of journalism” that rejects the focus on ideals and promotes the significance of current practices. He writes:

Like all practices, those of journalists are contingent; that is, they are variable over time, place, and circumstance. Nothing disables journalists more than thinking that current practice is somehow in the nature of things. <…> Nothing disables journalism historians more than thinking that current practice is somehow the destination to which history has directed the craft in the pursuit of ideals like truth and freedom. (Carey 1997:331)

In line with this citation, my research provides a better understanding of journalism at the moment when its old definitions are no longer adequate, and its new definitions are still disputable and controversial. The initial task of my analysis is to study the various conditions under which blogs may be seen as media and bloggers understood as journalists. I examine journalism-blogging relations at a time of rapid and radical changes in journalism. Moreover, I consider this subject in the Russian context. The case of the post-Soviet Russian media system and journalism-blogging relations provides valuable insights from a non-Western perspective.

What questions to ask?

I view changes in news journalism as partly an effect of blogization – a highly dynamic field of position-takings and subjectivities, in which any current configuration of constitutive elements may be redefined at the next moment. A practical explanation for this perspective is that, due to the ubiquity and fast growth of online social media, there is always the possibility for new social actors to enter and act upon the journalistic field, to further erode its boundaries and challenge professional norms.

My research is oriented toward theory generation rather than the pursuit of causal relationships. It does not imply hypothesis testing in a strictly positivist manner. In fact, one may consider measuring the effect of blogging on news journalism, but the problem is that we lack a clear understanding of how exactly to measure that effect. For example, we may feel blogs have caused news journalism to become more opinionated and less strict with respect to details and accuracy. However, coming up with a more rigorous explanation of whether and why this actually happens poses difficulties ranging from the probability of sampling to the consistency of measurements. We might also find that bloggers circulate some media messages and avoid others. This can lead to changes in the field of news journalism. We can count
some instances but it is difficult to draw a reliable general picture without some interpretation. It takes specific skills and knowledge, time and social ties to become a recognized and trusted blogger. So where is the line that makes a (citizen) journalist out of a blogger? It is convincing to think that competition within a changing journalistic community will shape the future ideology according to the dominant views. But how do we locate this dominant group of bloggers and journalists and separate them from others?

This string of assumptions and difficult questions can be continued. So, rather than try to provide concrete answers to them, I suggest studying what is asked by scholars, journalists, and bloggers themselves. In practice, this means identifying theoretical assumptions in the literature and examining reflexive moments of blogization with interconnected practices and meanings. Given this problematic and the contexts of the research subject, I formulate my main research question as follows:

RQ: What are the implications of journalism-blogging relationships for a broader understanding of news media in Russia between 2001 and 2013? This broad question includes several layers of practical sub-questions that need to be specified in terms of theoretical orientation, methodological choices, and empirical steps. Thus, my research starts with theoretical inquiries into relations between blogging in journalism on one hand, and the situation with journalism in Russia on the other hand. I define these relationships as “blogization” and link this term to the concepts developed and studied in academic and research literature. This step has a necessarily close connection to specific aspects of the Russian case, with its political, economic, and social contexts.

Typically media studies are conducted in the context of Western democracies. One can often sense the dominance of the respective Western liberal democratic normative standards, which can be irrelevant or even misleading in different circumstances. While the market economy is almost omnipresent globally, the Western democratic model is not illustrative of all political cultures. For example, in many national contexts researchers emphasize the issue of commercialization and describe its general economic influences on the media industries. However, in authoritarian countries the market economy can be significantly tied to political regulation and pressures.

In practice, the collective identity of bloggers as citizen journalists, as well as the identity of professional journalists, consists of expressions or subject positions that emphasize distinctions between these two social groups. In order to define various
subject positions – either antagonistic or that constitute equivalences – I draw on existing media theory and a broader interpretation of blogging as part of journalism.

Now that the general research strategy has been briefly outlined, I can divide the main research question into more practical sub-questions:

q1: How is the common space of news production shaped, with journalism and blogging occupying diverse positions in relation to each other? Chapter 4 addresses this question with the concept of the field.

q2: How do journalists and bloggers make use of each other, reproducing or challenging the existing hierarchies of news production? Chapter 5 addresses this question with the concept of symbolic capital.

q3: What logic does the discourse of an increased media role of blogs (blogization) have in the context of Russian news journalism? Chapter 6 addresses this question with the concept of discursive articulation.

q4: How do some meanings of blogization become dominant over others, and what does this dominant project say about news journalism? Chapter 7 addresses this question and finalizes discussion of the main research question with the concept of hegemony.

These questions are meant to complement each other by adding diverse angles to the central research question; they also define the general research strategy and methods. The first two questions (q1 and q2) are addressed using the analytical framework and vocabulary of field theory. The other two questions (q3 and q4) are dealt with from the point of view and conceptual tools of post-structuralist discourse theory.

**Implementation of the research**

The short history of blogging in Russia can be divided into two distinctive periods. The first period is marked by the emergence and formation of the Russian-language blogosphere as a sub-field of cultural production: beginning with the first online communities of bloggers on LJ between 2001 and 2005, where the first signs of blogization (large audiences and significant journalistic attention to blogs) started to appear. The second period, between 2006 and 2013, can be called active blogization. At this time some of the Russian-speaking bloggers on LJ reached levels of popularity (audience) comparable with the mainstream daily press. A new social group of blog-celebrities had been formed. Some bloggers had turned into journalists, and journalists began to internalize blogging culture. This is also the
period where hegemonic struggles between traditional journalism and the journalism of blogs started to begin.

Although the first Russian-language blog was registered in 1999, it was not until 2001 that blogs came to be regularly updated and acquired the first signs of an interconnected space (blogosphere). However, blogging only established itself as mass cultural phenomena in the mid-2000s. I specifically focus on the relations between traditional forms of news journalism and the journalism of blogging in Russia, during the second period. This time framework is limited by the beginning of the blogging surge in Russia (approximately 2005-2006) and the years of rapid development.

The year 2005 marks the beginning of quantitatively observable increase in references to bloggers in mass media news stories. Although I refer to some examples from 2013, the period of active data gathering mostly stopped at the end of 2012; a year which arguably stands as the moment of ultimate recognition of the power of the blogosphere to challenge the dominant information system (mainstream journalism and the core of political communication). The mass national protests after the parliamentary and presidential elections, in December 2011 and in March 2012 respectively, have brought many blogging actors into the realm of public politics and turned the Russian blogosphere into an unprecedentedly powerful alternative to the mostly state-controlled news system (see e.g. Oates 2013). The importance of this particular event is the fact that the protests were mostly inspired by elections-related exposures in blogs and other social media, rather than by the work of traditional journalism. Therefore, within this chosen period, I argue the case for the active blogization of the Russian journalistic field.

This book consists of eight chapters. Following this introduction, Chapter 2 provides theoretical background and reviews the relevant literature on the journalistic and national contexts of the research subject. Chapter 3 describes the data and methods of analysis. Chapters 4, 5, 6, and 7 are empirical, and they address the research questions outlined above. The book ends with conclusions, references and a list of empirical materials.
2 “New” journalism as practice and discourse

This project refers to two distinctive bodies of empirical research: journalism studies and Russian studies. My main focus is on news journalism, whereas Russia works as a valuable example of a country in which mass media functions in a unique socioeconomic and political setting. From the point of view of journalism theory, I draw on literature that emphasizes the professional character and ethical norms of news making practices. As the general theme of this work and the title of this chapter suggest, I also borrow from various literature on “new” journalism, ranging from accounts of gonzo reporting to public and citizen journalism. In terms of the Russian social and political context, the crucial questions have to do with the ideas of democratization and modernization. These notions are repeatedly emphasized in writing about new online media and in the context of the so-called post-Soviet transition paradigm. Thus, I work with two narratives of change induced by new media: changes in professional journalism and the transition of Russian society. The first two sections of this chapter, accordingly, discuss professionalization in journalism and briefly review some historical and contemporary developments in Russian journalism.

In addition to these narratives of change, I locate this project within two theoretical and methodological traditions. First, I conceptualize news making by journalists and by bloggers as a social practice through the lens of the field theory, developed by Pierre Bourdieu. Bourdieu’s thinking provides useful analytical tools to delimit such a vague research object as relations between journalism and blogging. Bourdieu’s work helps to focus on the institutionalized, structural level of professional journalism, while retaining an element of agency and contingency. Second, to view journalism from a less structured, partly marginalized and radicalized position of the news blogging sub-culture – I draw on Laclau and Mouffe’s discourse theory. This theory helps me to understand the meaning of ideological struggles within the broader journalistic project (journalists and bloggers acting together). Reviews of Bourdieu’s field theory and Laclau and Mouffe’s discourse theory are, respectively, presented in the third section of this chapter.
2.1 Journalism research

I approach news journalism from an occupational point of view. This emphasizes questions of professionalism, normativity and the role of journalism (as an institution) in society. Second, these changes are closely connected with the growth of alternative and new media forms, such as blogs, for example. Finally, in my work the political, economic and cultural changes are situated in the national context of Russia, that is, outside of the Western democratic world. In this latter respect, journalism research can often be viewed as culturally narrow. Hence, a key weakness of contemporary media theory (see e.g. Hallin and Mancini 2012) is the way it is inapplicable outside its original Anglo-American contexts.

Recent developments in news media can be seen – at the same time – from the standpoint of an increasing professionalization of journalists, and through a lens of de-professionalizing tendencies, often accentuated by emerging social media. This dualism is partly due to the fact that professionalism itself is a slippery concept and when applied to media workers, of course, can be and is understood differently in different empirical and theoretical contexts (Glasser 1992; Waisbord 2013).

My task here is to grasp the main interpretations of the professionalism debate, and not to draw a full and complex picture. I specifically focus on such aspects of professionalism that attribute normative connotations to occupational roles. Very roughly put, it is about defining the priorities of “good” journalism (cf. Kunelius 2006). Indeed, it is important for journalists to maintain prestige in what they do and to meet the expectations of their communities (Christians et al. 2009:54-55). In practice it means conscious normative choices between such categories as objectivity and subjectivity, autonomy and transparency, self-realization and social responsibility.

As a challenge to professionalism, and as a “boundary” phenomenon (Lewis 2012) that defines the limits of professionalism, there is the category of alternative journalism. Studies of alternativejournalisms are often concerned with non-conventional media formats, the voices of underground movements and countercultures. The word “alternative,” though a quite ambiguous and fundamentally relative term, brings attention to what Nancy Fraser (1991) defined as multiple publics in contrast to the single public space. Multiple media alternatives can posit challenges to the power of mainstream media organizations and, as a result, to the established social order (cf. Couldry and Curran 2003).
The professionalization of journalism

In the West, the beginning of the twentieth century was a period of initial professionalization of media workers, professional communicators (Carey 1997[1969]) in general and journalists in particular (Barnhurst and Nerone 2008:21). At that time, the first journalistic schools and professional associations were established in the U.S. The first codes of ethics were also adopted by the journalistic community. Winfield (2008) celebrates the centennial anniversary of journalism as a profession that started with the Missouri School of Journalism in 1908 on a democratic wave of Progressive era reforms in the U.S. It was a moment when “reformers had begun questioning the normative (presumably bad) behavior of journalists” (p. 3-4).

Similarly, it has become academic commonplace to study news journalism from the point of view of changing occupational norms (see e.g. Hellmueller et al. 2012; Hayes et al. 2007), especially those connected with the ideas of objectivity, autonomy, and, increasingly today, transparency.

Objectivity is arguably the most recognized, and yet confusing and controversial notion in media scholarship and practice, although it is just one normative principle of journalistic work. In the U.S., objectivity has been one of the central professional values pursued by journalists since the late nineteenth and early twentieth century (Schudson 2001:163). This process was accompanied and reinforced by the proliferation of educational programs, which at the early stage of the professionalization process in the Anglo-American world had naturalized values of objectivity as intrinsic to the market mechanisms (Vos 2012).

However, in studies of Western contexts there is a growing tendency to observe cultural shifts from ideas of journalistic objectivity to ideas of journalistic transparency (Karlsson 2010; Hellmueller et al. 2012), particularly in connection to new media forms (Singer 2007). Michael Karlsson’s (2010) comparative analysis of online news media in the United States, the United Kingdom and Sweden finds that although some transparency techniques have become part of journalistic rituals in these countries, they are still in an embryonic phase and do not meet scholarly expectations of a full-fledged shift. This is a situation described by Deni Elliot (2008) as a pre-paradigmatic conflict rather than an actual paradigmatic shift. A recent study based on a survey of American journalists tested the “normative shifts” hypothesis from the point of view of truth-telling (Hellmueller et al. 2012). The study shows the transformation of the long-standing norm of objectivity, which had been especially
strong in the pre-digital stage of the twentieth century, into a new norm of transparency under the influence of online participatory interactions with audiences.

Values of autonomy, or independence from political parties and national and local governments, is another aspect of journalistic professionalism. On one hand, journalists can be seen as public servants providing citizens with unbiased information about current affairs – relatively autonomous from political institutions. On the other hand, journalists can also be voicing problems and protecting the interests of certain social groups, very possibly dominant groups and elites, sometimes consciously, sometimes not. This second professional model is often the case when it comes to political advocacy in many authoritarian regimes, but also in some democratic countries. Hallin and Mancini (2004:28-30) suggest viewing this aspect through the lens of political parallelism, a high degree of which is common for the professional role of “publicist,” who actively influences public opinion. By contrast, a low level of political parallelism in that framework means that journalists stay neutral in their political judgments and do not reveal their own preferences.

Professionalism can also be seen as an ideological or cultural aspect of journalistic practices. Some elements of journalistic culture that appear to be similar across many localities and contexts constitute a kind of unity, a “shared occupational ideology among news workers which functions to self-legitimize their position in society” (Deuze 2005:446). Thomas Hanitzsch (2007) deconstructs this ideological dimension of journalism by defining and elaborating on its three key components. First, journalistic culture is constituted through its institutional roles, manifested in: (1) interventionism (active action versus the passiveness of journalists); (2) distance from power structures (challenging power versus being loyal to it); and (3) market orientation (prioritizing consumer values versus citizen's interests).

Second, journalism culture is based on its two particular epistemological commitments: (4) objectivism (the journalistic belief in the existence of an ultimate truth “out there” versus the belief that every “truth” is the result of a judgment); and (5) empiricism (emphasis on observation and experience versus reliance on analysis and reason).

Third, journalistic culture involves ethical ideologies that can be split into either (6) relativism (ethics as context-based or universal) or (7) idealism (achieving what is right only with the right means versus the end justifying the means). This constellation of seven dialectical constituents of journalistic culture poses multiple options to focus on in a discussion about blogization.

Hanitzsch (2007) has also argued that the culture of journalism “becomes manifest in the way journalists think and act” (p. 369). Hence, journalistic culture is a set of ideas, practices and results of these practices, that is, texts. Moreover, the
outcomes of journalistic culture should be understood broadly and not limited to
textual or audio-visual news publications only; they are always results of particular
practices and ideas. In more general terms, Hanitzsch suggests conceptualizing
journalism culture as “the arena in which diverse professional ideologies struggle
over the dominant interpretation of journalism’s social function and identity”
(ibid:370). Such a definition at least potentially moves beyond predominantly
Western interpretations, which, as I said, are often not tenable in non-Western
contexts. Thus, in some contexts journalistic culture could be dominated by different
institutional roles, epistemologies and ethical considerations. This can be so, for
instance, in particular political contexts, such as in Russia.

However, as Hanitzsch admitted himself (2007:380), his model did not include
various alternative and new forms of journalism. New media forms broaden our
understanding of journalistic culture. For example, Adrienne Russell promotes the
term networked journalism, by which she emphasizes the collectiveness of
contemporary news production and the resulting changes in our understanding of
truth (2011:146-7), that is the credibility of journalistic forms. The criteria of trust in
what the news says nowadays are, according to Russell, bound to the transparency
of the news production, rather than to journalistic neutrality. She also argues that the
ability for a quick cross-checking of sources via links to original materials or a general
networked reaction to the news replaces the values of objectivity and the separation
of facts from opinions. New media spaces, such as the blogosphere for example,
stimulate more transparent and open practices for news production, sometimes
making blogs more credible than traditional journalism (Lasica 2004).

Normative theories of news journalism emphasize professional roles and ethical
norms as two distinct themes in the relationship between traditional journalism and
new forms of journalism. For example, a radical role is one of the key functions of
journalism in contemporary societies. This role implies that media practices aim “to
challenge the injustices perpetrated by hegemonic alliances and to propose instead a
new order and support movements opposing these injustices” (Christians et al.
2009:179). This perspective received much attention in scholarly literature under the
labels of radical media, alternative media, and sometimes citizen media. But the
radical role is just one normative path for journalism. Authors of “Normative
Theories of the Media” (ibid.) distinguish at least three more roles: monitorial,
facilitative, and collaborative. The monitorial role is understood as a basic provision
of information between social actors. The facilitative role emphasizes higher levels
of communication when journalism facilitates dialogue between diverse social
groups and institutions. The collaborative role can mean different practices ranging
from closer contacts with agents of civil society to strong ties and cooperation with the state in such cases as public safety.

All these roles assume different dominants in the journalistic professional culture. But today, traditional journalism has also to take into account numerous non-professional practices of journalism. The first impression of these non-professional practices is that professionals intuitively try to retain their control over content in spite of its growing integration with social media and participatory media designs (Lewis 2012). At the same time, overemphasizing professional and non-professional practices misses the point when one discusses the hybridization of occupational cultures (Waisbord 2013:229-32). This means we should not try to study only differences between professionals and amateurs, but should consider them just one part of a whole new journalistic culture.

De-professionalization and alternatives

Media theory recognizes two major branches of journalistic practice: journalism in a traditional sense and various alternative kinds of journalism. And while traditional journalism has often been viewed through the lenses of professionalization and institutionalism, alternative media tend to be associated with grass-roots and amateur initiatives that often pose challenges to their traditional counterparts (Atton 2003:267). In many ways, alternative media have served to undermine and hence provide recognition to the very idea of journalistic professionalism. In the end, it may be possible to say that the growing influence of alternative media de-professionalizes communication. On the other hand, the rise of alternative voices can be the result of an increase in communicative sophistication that brings the alternative standards close to the standards of professionalism. In that case, the relations and influences connecting alternative and traditional journalism are mutual and should be studied as part of a single whole.

For decades alternative media studies remained marginal just like their research objects: studying the counter culture of amateur magazines (“zines”) (see e.g. Vale 1996; Duncombe 1997), or analyzing the activism of radical and marginalized groups (Downing 2001; Rodriguez 2001), and community media (Jankowski and Prehn 2002; Rennie 2006). Many of these studies emphasized the democratic potential of alternative forms of communication. For example, John D.H. Downing (2001) has argued that underground radio, the graffiti art sub-culture and internet activism represent media forms that are more democratic than the commercial mainstream
media. This potentially empowering and democratic moment for the alternative media paradigm stems from conceptions of the *multiplicity of resistance* and the power of the collective when dispersed across connected spaces (Fenton 2008). But realization of this project of collective resistance and the eventual redefinition of politics, according to Fenton, needs “a common solidarity and a sustaining political program” (ibid:76).

Theories of alternative media clearly emphasize a variety of aspects and practical implementations. Hence, there are some crucial moments that seem to be especially relevant in the context of blogization and complementary to the ideological dimensions of Hanitzsch’s (2007) model.

In terms of the changing journalistic culture, Atton (2003:267) has pointed out that new alternatives to the mainstream have been replacing old values of objectivity with values of advocacy and radically oppositional attitudes. Taken from the point of view of individual style, journalism has been oscillating between values of objectivity (the essential reportorial values in many national contexts, but especially emphasized in the mainstream Anglo-Saxon tradition) on one side and highly *subjective*, almost literary, forms in which an author’s voice and style are appreciated, on the other. Though, much space remains between these two journalistic poles.

An illustrative example of the “subjectivity challenge” is a first-person narrative style, somewhat resembling today’s blogging, that can be found in the movements of “New Journalism” and “Gonzo Journalism” in the 1960s and 1970s.

New Journalism was an American movement of writers whose ultra-subjective literary reporting gave prominence to unconventional techniques and styles. The unsophisticated name “new journalism” is usually attributed to Tom Wolfe (1973), who collected the works of many others adherents to the style in one book. The movement appeared in the 1960s, flourished in the 1970s and entered a state of decline in the early 1980s. Experiments with style and a conscious negligence toward mainstream journalistic standards was at the heart of New Journalism. The period of its active growth in the U.S. concurred with political protests against the Vietnam War. Melissa Wall (2005:155) has argued that political and cultural crises facilitate the emergence of new journalistic forms and new styles of presenting the news. Eventually, what initially looks like a question of subjectivity in style, is in fact a question of representation and advocacy closely tied to the larger social and cultural context.

Another strand of New Journalism has been referred to as gonzo – a term with a vague origin but striking examples. There are numerous interpretations of the word gonzo including one which claims it is “crazy, off the wall, out of control” (Mosser
The term Gonzo Journalism originated as a way to describe Hunter S. Thompson’s style of reporting, whose most popular example of “crazy” journalism is the 1971 novel “Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas” (famously filmed by Terry Gilliam in 1998). It is hard to imagine adequate reporting under the influence of hallucinogenic drugs (the novel and the movie both focus on this subject). The distinctive feature of Gonzo Journalism, according to Reynolds (2012), who quotes Thompson’s own definition, “is a style of “reporting” based on William Faulkner’s idea that the best fiction is far more true than any journalism” (p. 57). Mosser (2012:86-7) describes the key features of Thompson’s style: first-person autobiographical narrative; a shift in focus from the actual subject to unrelated emotional experiences; and fragments of unfinished thoughts, notes and sketches. The latter could be, however, a result of the last-minute rush to meet the deadline.

The New Journalism movement played an important cultural role. It showed the usefulness of alternative approaches to understanding media content and generally encouraged the renewal of fixed journalistic conventions. The “craziness” of the movement showed a way for more reflexive and transparent journalistic practices, and it also refused dogmatic invitations to “new” fixations thus opening space for changes. Some scholars (Kenix 2009; Wall 2005) argue that the contemporary culture of blogging can be seen as a continuation of New Journalism, thus pointing to key features of alternative media that existed well before the advent of digital communication. Today the “craziness” of New Journalism does not seem so crazy any more. Online chat rooms, social media profiles and blogs – in turn – are full of expressions of subjectivities and unconventional examples of creativity (linguistic experiments, memes, demotivational posters). Most of that creative work is far from the standards of professional media (or sometimes common sense), yet the viral nature of digital networks (cf. Sampson 2012) turns everything upside down. New subjectivities spread as fast as traditional news stories.

Alternative media traditions also point to another means of “escaping” the constraints of traditional or mainstream mass media. The example of pirate radio stations is particularly insightful for understanding the connections between journalism and blogging in contemporary Russia. This form of alternative media sheds light on questions of legality, local jurisdiction and the international mobility of social actors. Perhaps the most known version of pirate radio is the one Britain experienced in the 1960s. To avoid payments and freely reproduce music content, alternative radio stations began broadcasting music while staying offshore. Ships with broadcasting equipment on board formally stayed on neutral territory beyond the jurisdiction of the British government that imposed strict regulations on
broadcasting (Robertson 1982). However, the signal was strong enough to reach the
land, where the broadcast content was considered illegal.

Pirate radio stations had ongoing conflicts with authorities in Britain as well as in
some other European countries. Officials were worried about copyright, performing
rights, and occasional frequency interferences with legal (traditional) radio stations.
Decision makers were also concerned with what in the 1960s had been called the
moral decadence of rock music “marked by long hair, eccentric clothes and free life
style” (Robertson 1982:75-6).

Today these accusations look like amusing anecdotes. However, contemporary
blogging culture (and other online cultures) easily stretches beyond national borders,
like offshore radio stations did decades ago. In many contexts this has been the
catalyst for a reworking of media legislation. Governments are looking for
mechanisms that can regulate all these new alternative media sources without
blocking external internet traffic. Bloggers in turn actively use the strategy of pirate
radio stations; especially in authoritarian countries where some prominent bloggers
are in fact “offshore” bloggers. They live outside their homeland but continue to
participate in its virtual public space. In recent years, several Russian bloggers (mostly
activists) left the country due to the threat of political repression.

There are interesting parallels between alternative media, like 1960s pirate radio,
in the West and alternative media in the Soviet Union. Very normal and traditional
Western media was considered alternative and prohibited in the East. Listening to
foreign radio stations (BBC, Voice of America, Deutsche Welle, and Radio Liberty)
was illegal in the Soviet Union. The broadcasts were accessible in Soviet territory,
though authorities tried to use special radio jammers; devices that could silence
particular frequencies and make the reception problematic. In this large country, not
all locations were covered by the jammers, and at least some Soviet people had been
secretly listening to the “alternative” voices. This adds a new relational perspective
to the theorization of alternative media and the role of professionalism in producing
such media.

Just as offshore pirate radio had tensions with traditional media interests and
media policies in the U.K., the culture of self-publishing or samizdat had uneasy
relations with the Soviet state. Samizdat has existed as a way to copy and circulate
prohibited texts in Russia since the eighteenth century, though its most productive
period was between 1968 and the early 1970s (Schreiber 1978). It is also not uniquely
Russian, as similar phenomena existed in other countries. Perhaps, practices of self-
publishing, whether it be the handwritten copying of texts or the use of a typewriter,
came to be known under the Russian name samizdat due to its significance in the Cold War context.

Samizdat functioned as a well-organized exchange of opinions between political dissidents and as an important source of information on the Soviet Union in Western countries (Feldbrugge 1975). Typewritten copies of samizdat were only available to certain social groups and were passed on hand to hand among people with similar backgrounds and interests. This mostly occurred among intellectuals who used samizdat to form invisible networks of dissent. Thus, this underground movement was by no means a phenomenon of mass scale. The crucial point for samizdat dissemination was for it to only spread among a tight network of people who completely trusted one another.

The important lesson of samizdat is that the digital revolution with all its social networking capacity did not create entirely new forms of alternative media. Rather technological innovations intensified network building processes and accelerated the process of cultural exchange. Indeed, networks of clandestine communication have been an inherent part of social life at different historical periods. The art of ciphering and deciphering messages was widely used in early modern Europe (Briggs and Burke 2009:43). In the eighteenth century, Parisians circulated rumors and news about royal life in the form of songs and café gossip, while the police spied on them (Darnton 2000). Today’s dissenters are better equipped, but so is the counter-power of the state with its better tools to trace and monitor modern versions of samizdat.

The blogging subculture in contemporary Russia has many parallels with samizdat. In the 1970s, Schreiber (1978) raised some issues pertinent to the development of dissent and the underground samizdat press in the Soviet Union. These issues are relevant today too. Concerns about the legality of self-publishing were among the leading themes in the samizdat movement. Using samizdat media, many Soviet dissidents discussed the values of free speech and the press, and called for the freedom to assemble and demonstrate, which was formally guaranteed in Article 125 of the Soviet constitution but impossible in reality. On the other hand, samizdat criticized the uncontrolled privileges of the Party elites. The illegal underground press was constantly under surveillance by the KGB and experienced selective repressions. Josif Brodsky, a well-known Soviet dissident, once explained that the KGB had been deliberately ineffective in completely destroying samizdat (Schreiber 1978:37). Their strategy was only to limit dissent to controllable, organized forms. This bears close resemblance to what the Russian political system does with media today, and includes the so-called oppositional media. Thus, in
Russia, the politicized blogosphere represents a newer version of the Soviet samizdat system.

The three alternative inspirations discussed here demonstrate the ways in which the “professional,” “mainstream,” and “state” power bloc, are in any given instance always somewhat vulnerable to challenges. These can be articulated here as evasive tactics of identity, evasive tactics of location and alternative uses of communication channels and networks. Moreover, in many cases, alternative forms of journalism use all three of these tactics.

The proliferation of online media has convinced some scholars to rethink the claims of counter-culture, radicalism and political activism. Chris Atton (2002) included in the idea of alternative media the first personal web sites. Couldry and Curran (2003) have projected the globalizing effect of computer networks on the potentiality of opening of the new media battlefields. Bart Cammaerts (2007) extends the idea of alternative media to strategies of reversing dominant cultural codes, a phenomenon known as “cultural jamming.” In this context, alternative voices once marginalized and fragmented are given new authority and networked power to challenge the mainstream. Pajnik and Downing (2008) point out that because of the spread of new communication tools and digital devices “the theme of alternative media… has moved from the margins of political and academic debate to the center” (p. 7). In some contexts, the participatory journalism of publics, also known as citizen journalism, has developed into an especially powerful movement.

Towards a journalism of publics

It is useful to consider how the participatory challenge has evolved in recent years. It is as if the alternative mode changed into an audience-oriented mode first and then into an audience-centered mode. Two terms are particularly relevant here – public journalism and citizen journalism. These two should not be confused with each other though. The terms are theoretically connected but differently directed.

One way to draw the line between these two is through their approach to the role of the audience and professionals. Joyce Nip (2006) defined five models of audience involvement in news production: traditional journalism, public journalism, interactive journalism, participatory journalism, and citizen journalism. There is, however, often overlap in the definitions of these journalism. It is problematic to separate one model from another. For example, the most obscure seems to be the borderline between participatory and citizen journalism to the extent that many
scholars view the terms as synonymous (see e.g. Lasica 2003; Gillmor 2005). Nip delineates different journalisms according to a perceived volume of audience involvement in the production of media content. For example, citizen journalism implies that people collect information, create journalistic materials, and publish them independent of any editorial supervision or assistance. In the process “professionals are not involved at all (unless in the capacity of citizens but not as paid employees)” (Nip 2006:218).

In recent decades, attempts to redefine journalistic professionalism have coincided with the institutional crisis for media. Jo Bardoel (1996:299) has argued that journalism is “falling apart.” The growing interactivity of media and the fragmentation of audiences has threatened the old mediating role of journalists. Bardoel’s vision was that the new role of journalism should be more about organizing communication flows and less about traditional tasks of news gathering and reporting. This is a partial and very practical explanation of the crisis. On the other hand, in advanced countries like the U.S., the decline of journalism has been accompanied by the growth of entertainment television and related to a more general disintegration of social structures (Putnam 2000). Some experts name, among the reasons for what has been happening, the excessive commercialization of the media industry. In circumstances of constant competition for ratings, business interests do not always match the public interest (cf. Zelizer 2004:164–5). In the twentieth century, the economic successes of the mass media led to the creation of “large, arrogant institutions – call it Big Media, though even small-town newspapers and broadcasters exhibit some of the phenomenon’s worst symptoms” (Gillmor 2004:xiii). Gillmor criticizes such “arrogant” media for presenting the news in a condescending style: “We told you what the news was. You bought it, or you didn’t. You might write us a letter; we might print it” (ibid). Consequently, Gillmor welcomed a newer phenomenon – journalism “by the people, for the people” that became known as citizen journalism. It was meant to be exercised without the involvement of media organizations.

But before discussions about bypassing the authority of professionals emerged, there was – particularly in the U.S. debates – a theoretical and practical attempt to reconcile journalism with more participatory publics. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, as a reaction to the disengaged and arrogant stance of the media industries, journalism experts started promoting a new type of public-oriented journalism (see e.g. Merritt 1995; Lambeth, Meyer and Thorson 1998; Rosen 1999).

In his speeches and writings in the late 1980s, Jay Rosen began using the term “public journalism” in relation to mass media organizations. His approach presupposed the need for journalists to address the audience in a more interactive
and collaborative way than before. As Tanni Haas and Linda Steiner (2006) have put it: “The ability of the media to draw people’s attention to certain issues gets new meaning in practices of public journalism when professional journalists intentionally share their agenda-setting power with citizens” (p. 247). Thus public journalism was a movement of professional journalists, who decided to encourage participation from ordinary people in collaborative newsmaking.

Rosen’s promotion of public journalism had many strands of continuous debate about the basic ideas and ideology of the movement. Initially developed in the U.S., the public journalism movement was later experimented with and studied in other contexts (cf. Haas 2006; Ahva 2010). Although, the participatory advantages of public journalism were obvious (restoration of trust), not all media followed this path to a new ideology. Moreover, even among those that did, the media still retained a great deal of control over the process of news production. At some point public journalism transformed into journalism by the public (see Friedland 2003). Leonard Witt (2004:55) notes that it “has morphed into the public’s journalism.” The crucial theoretical point for public journalism and citizen journalism (journalism of publics) is that both ideas reconsider some crucial aspects of news journalism. In that way, they are both part of the larger tradition of alternative media.

Alternativeness favors multiple media platforms with different news agenda, hence the more democratic potential which can be realized through the development of alternative media voices. However, it has been acknowledged (Meadows 2013:44) that the citizens, implied by the idea of citizen journalism, usually represent privileged minority groups. Not everyone has access to the necessary technologies and not everyone is able or willing to be a citizen journalist. Therefore, the citizen journalism movement should still be viewed as a marginal alternative to the mainstream.

Although the rise of citizen journalism is very often associated with web blogs (e.g. Allan and Thorsen 2009; Gillmor 2004), this phenomenon is not only reduced to blogging. There are examples of citizen journalism that exist in various formats and genres, and not exclusively online (see e.g. Goode 2009). In this study, however, I define citizen journalism as a practice of publishing original news for individual web blogs. Accordingly, by so-called “traditional journalism” I refer to news production by journalists who work for media organizations, such as television channels, print newspapers, and news websites.

Compton and Benedetti (2010) call it a myth that citizen journalism functions as pluralistic news production. They remind us that blogs are mostly based on opinions rather than on finding new facts. An abundance of opinions is not enough for
pluralistic journalism, when they are all based on the same facts. Analyzing the character of power relations in practices of news making, Compton and Benedetti (ibid.) come to the conclusion that the voluntary practice of “pajama-wearing,” amateur-citizen journalists could not compensate for reductions in the professional journalistic workforce: “Piece-work reporting and participant-observer video captured during moments of crisis cannot replace the former institutional news net, flawed as it may have been” (p. 496-7).

When it comes to the challenges posed by news blogging, scholars identify above all the issues of ethics and professional news production principles (Singer 2003; Hayes, Singer and Ceppos 2007; Cenite et al. 2009; Mitchelstein and Boczkowski 2009:570-2). News bloggers have similar ethical challenges to overcome as professional journalists. Singer (2006:26-7) argues there is much to learn from the everyday routines and ethical guidelines of journalists including: the principle of checks and balances, credibility stemming from fist-hand reportage, knowledge of specific laws, and maintaining accuracy and cogency in ones writing style. However, journalists themselves are not always as earnest and committed to these ideals, and also may interpret such ideals differently.

Furthermore, blogging has generated lots of criticism in relation to universally accepted values of traditional media ethics: objectivity, reliability and responsibility. Bloggers succeed in writing opinions and immediately transmitting their messages at the expense of accuracy, which is a problem that the editing process of traditional media organizations could address to some degree (Lasica 2003). According to other studies, blogging results in the mass amatenurization of content and renders blogs “illegitimate or even dangerously skewed information archives” (Bruns and Jacobs 2006:3). This concern about mass amateur publishing (Shirky 2002) is based on assumptions that blogs destroy the value of published information, literally and in terms of quality standards. Blogging practices closely resemble what happens in the mainstream media – someone makes news by gathering information about relevant events, processing it and delivering a message to the audience. Rosen (2008b:np) described this similarity as if bloggers and journalists were “each other’s ideal other.”

Blogging can also contribute to a media professionals’ symbolic significance. Journalists maintaining personal blogs in their spare time, or j-bloggers (Robinson 2006), are able to reinstate and strengthen their media authority in online environments. Effective j-blogging makes journalists gain additional recognition through meta-journalistic practices, even though blog publications may often just be summaries of official job assignments with links to news media websites. Sometimes journalists, working as gate-keepers for traditional news media, also engage in blogging as
knowledgeable critics of the “gates,” who know the ins and outs of journalism better than anyone else. Such practices, in a way, represent “amateur journalism by professional journalists in the blogosphere” (Haiqing 2011:381). This links the general media sphere with the blogosphere and plays a crucial role in providing the media industry with feedback. J-blogging also creates spaces for journalistic experiments where new ways of news making can be tested.

As Fenton (2012:125) rightly points out “social media are communication led rather than information driven.” Social networking sites and even blogs mostly help people to communicate directly with family members, friends and colleagues to a significantly larger extent than to produce news information on a mass scale, though such an opportunity still exists as a potentiality. This potentiality in practice leads to the emergence of new ways of storytelling grounded in the values of monitory democracy and “monitorial citizens” (Schudson 1998:310-11). The idea is to have a multitude of “monitors” – self-organized grassroots groups and individual citizens, which together constitute an enhanced social critique of power and injustice.

An important consequence of this enhanced collective monitoring is that it involves interactive communication between various social groups. This increases the role of journalism, with professionals and amateurs bound closer together. The journalistic field becomes a crucial space of cultural production, where monitory information circulates to and from other fields (Couldry 2003). Therefore, the development of blogging and blog-style journalism can be viewed from a perspective of monitory democratization. But this assumption also needs to take into account the theoretical aspects of radical democratization (Downey and Fenton 2003; Carpentier and Cammaerts 2006; Dahlberg 2007) that has also been a central topic in media studies.

Journalism is generally considered an important attribute for a democracy. It ideally holds power elites accountable and encourages public debate on socially relevant issues, and hence makes societies more democratic. However, balancing democracy and journalism has recently been questioned (see e.g. Zelizer 2013). There have also been many disappointment regarding the democratizing potential of the Internet (Morozov 2011). Some scholars (Curran and Seaton 2003) describe the rise of new media with moderate optimism, noting “the frequency with which expectations about new media have been disappointed should inject a new note of caution” (p. 291). Evidence from two South Asian countries, Malaysia and Singapore, indicate that the Internet paved the way for political dissent in the former, but reinforced strategies of co-optation and control in the latter (Curran, Fenton and Freedman 2012:25).
In summary, current discussions of journalism-blogging relations are divided into categories that either stress professional questions of news making, or questions regarding power struggles both inside and outside of the journalistic field.

2.2 Journalism in Russia

In less than twenty five years, mass media and journalism in Russia have gone through a series of unprecedented transformations, not only technological, but also economical, and political (Nordenstreng, Vartanova and Zassoursky Y. 2001). Scholars have argued that the Russian media system, although it definitely regressed under Putin, is clearly more independent and pluralistic than in the pre-glasnost Soviet era (Becker 2004:140).

By the mid-2000s, Russian news journalism in a broad sense was split along a line of affiliation with the state. On one side, there is the political clientelism of the mainstream media (see e.g. Roudakova 2008), sometimes also called statist commercialism (Vartanova 2012). Whereas, on the other side, there are mainly internet-based alternatives with a high degree of political autonomy (see Zassoursky I. 2004). As Ivan Zassoursky (2004) has pointed out, while traditional media were largely consolidated with the political system, online forms of journalism thrived by “showing more and more life and developing increasingly complex forms” (p. 184). In short, journalism in the Soviet Union of the 1980s radically differed from Russian journalism in the 1990s. Yet another round of transformations in 2000s in turn has led to journalism in Russia as we know it today.

Becker (2004:151-2) defines three key assets that the Russian state possesses and that it employs to limit media autonomy since the “neo-authoritarian” regime of Vladimir Putin came to power. First of all, the state simply owns much of the mass media, including the main television channels. Hence, the media are not publicly but state governed, and given the lack of a public broadcasting tradition as such, the independence of broadcast mass media is not secure. Secondly, even if some media are privately owned and remain officially independent from the state, the factor of tight interconnection between the state and business in Russia only convinces Becker to agree with Colin Sparks (2000:43) who wrote about the interpenetration of the fields of politics and economics in post-Soviet Eastern Europe. According to Becker, the third mechanism of media control by the state stems from the general weakness of the legal system and inability of journalists to effectively protect their rights.
Studies on contemporary Russia often mention a specific historical past that the country has supposedly been struggling to overcome. Regardless of the research subject, researchers often choose post-communist explanations and narratives. This is of course the immediate legacy of the “Soviet experiment” (Suny 1998) that lasted from 1917 to 1991. The consequences of communism, the lessons of a command economy, and existing traces of Soviet culture (along with the mysterious mentality of homo sovieticus) remain standard topics in scientific and media publications. This is why even two decades after the collapse of the Soviet system we still frequently encounter the “post-Soviet” and “post-communist” rhetoric. Take for instance an article by The Economist (December 10, 2011) with the title “The long life of Homo sovieticus” which analyzes reactions to fraudulent parliamentary elections in Russia. The magazine refers to growing similarities between political processes in the Soviet Union and modern Russia. In particular, the rule of Vladimir Putin has been associated with active “sovietization” of Russia (Kryshtanovskaya and White 2009). Putin’s recipe for “sovietization” includes narrowing down the political field, so that in the end there is no visible alternative to his power.

A dominant approach to understanding and predicting the democratization of contemporary Russian society is to look at Russia through the so-called transition paradigm (see e.g. Shevtsova 2007; Trenin 2007). This paradigm has an underlying principle of seeing the country in terms of transformations from the Soviet totalitarian regime to a modern democratic, and often interpreted as Western, type of society.

Transition studies are part of a broader modernization paradigm that commonly predicted (quick) transformations of the post-communist societies on the basis of successful convergence to the patterns of Western democratic institutions and a liberal market economy. According to Paul Blokker (2005:504), such a theoretical orientation is flawed because it neglects distinct national characteristics and takes on an uncompromisingly negative position toward the pre-transition past. Transitology

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5 This phrase was coined by Aleksandr Zinoviev, a Russian dissident and prominent scholar, in a 1982 book with the same title. In an English translation of that book the author credits Western intellectuals with the discovery of this expression: “In the West clever and educated people call us Homo Sovieticus. They are proud to have discovered the existence of this type of man and thought up such a beautiful name for him. Moreover they use this term in what is for us a derogatory and contemptuous sense. It has never occurred to them that we have actually done something, more than simply finding a name for ourselves, that we were the first to develop this type of man, while it took the West 50 years to invent a new term for it; and the West reckons that its contribution to history was infinitely greater than ours. The conceit of the West deserves our mockery.” (Zinoviev 1986:39)
has also been criticized for its blindness to historical and cultural diversity, which can lead to intellectual neo-colonialism, universalism, and adverse effects of a bluntly imposed Western project (Arnason 2000:90).

In studies of post-communism, various historical approaches have been presented as alternatives to “neo-colonial” transitology. One of these, suggested by Michael Kennedy (2002), promotes a framework of transition culture. This framework recognizes the unique cultural dimensions and historical conditions of each case. Yet, similar to the claims of hard-core transitologists, it tends to underscore the emancipatory logic of the changes. As Kennedy (2002:116-8) argues, one cannot avoid contradictions when building bridges between the “anachronistic socialist” past and the “suitably capitalist” future, and the choice between them is crucial for the further development of a proper transition culture. He contends that this process requires change with the help of new agents that can substitute the dominance of nation-states in the world order with the dominance of markets. At the higher level, this transition will entail a translation of the emancipatory values of freedom into driving mechanisms for post-communist change (ibid.). Thus, in a way, Kennedy stays on the same path as mainstream transitology by distinguishing between a negative past and a positive future, the latter being the result of enacted transition culture. This can be seen as an attempt to revisit the outdated premises of an early stage of the transition paradigm. The revision, however, ends up rearticulated with only somewhat more universalistic ideas of freedom and emancipation. In the end, while it seems as if Kennedy opens a window to let in the fresh air of a new perspective, it is mostly an opening into another room in the same building.

From the point of view of journalism, transition was “troubled almost from the beginning” as the appropriation of capitalist ideas was not followed by the appropriation of democratic values (Trenin 2007:1). For example, in the mid-1990s, the period of Russian history with the widest political and media freedoms, what existed was a system of elite pluralism (Shevtsova 2007:25). Media represented the interests of those close to the Kremlin oligarchs and (re)-produced the illusion of democracy. This short period of illusion, however, is still a rather striking difference when compared to what preceded it (the official Soviet state ideology) and what followed after (direct or indirect control by the Kremlin). As Dmitri Trenin (2007:10) notes, in Putin’s Russia leaks of governmental information, that were common during Boris Yeltsin’s presidency, have become very rare, and almost everything that the Kremlin releases for publication in the mass media follows a strict logic of controlled and weighted public messaging.
The long period of transition eventually raised doubts about the necessarily democratic direction of transition and some authors started talking about the inadequacy of that assumption, and claiming “the end of the transition paradigm” (Carothers 2002). Lawrence King (2002) has rejected the universality of Western-style capitalism and argued in turn that scholars accept the patrimonial capitalistic relations characteristic of Russian society. More recently, Vladimir Gelman (2013) pointed out that Russia had missed its opportunities for democratization, as the very idea of democratic development did not become a priority in the years following the collapse of the Soviet Union, neither for the general population nor for the ruling elites.

Another way to look beyond the post-Soviet transitology model is to understand transition as an uninterrupted process in a longer historical perspective. Specializing in media studies, Elena Vartanova (2012) makes major references to the post-Soviet legacy of Russian journalism, though she suggests considering transitory periods spanning over at least the last two hundred years. Indeed, it is possible to search for the foundations of a Russian journalistic tradition not simply in Soviet communistic ideology, and the ideas of Leninism, Stalinism and perestroika, but also in the roots of the tsarist censorship regimes and even in the eighteenth century Westernizing reforms of Peter the Great.

As we saw in the case of samizdat, this historical perspective is highly relevant. However, a full-blown historical excursion into this literature is beyond the scope of this work.

De-westernizing journalism research

Much has been written on the inapplicability of Western models of journalism which are also the only thoroughly described models, in non-Western contexts (e.g. Keane 2006; Shaw 2009; Skjerdal 2012), particularly to Russia (e.g. de Smaele 1999; Becker 2004; Roudakova 2008). As Hedwig de Smaele (1999:182) points out, in the West it is the law and rational philosophy that matters, while in the East (i.e. Russia) respect for authority and spirituality, based either on religious beliefs or political ideology, plays a more important role.

One of the first large scale attempts to de-westernize media studies (Curran and Park 2000) aimed to look beyond the universalizing claims of predominantly English-language media studies. The example of Russia in that collective work is part of a section on “transitional and mixed societies”. In it, U.K. scholar Brian McNair
(2000) pointed to some crucial aspects of the Russian media system as they appeared less than a decade after the Soviet disintegration. He viewed Russian journalism of that time as professionally underdeveloped. Since journalists were still generally perceived as “politically committed propagandists” (ibid:80) manipulation remained the dominant mechanism of relations with the audience, and private interests valued more than public interests. Another snapshot of that period (Jakubowicz 2001) describes journalists in the new Russia, as well as journalists in other former communist countries, influenced by the previous cultural tradition of didacticism that favored practices of mentoring and the use of a patronizing style.

The “civilizing” and “modernizing” concepts of Western discourses are difficult to apply universally. But some overlaps can still be found. Hallin and Mancini (2012:280) argue that many countries “beyond the Western world,” including Russia, can be effectively compared and theorized with the help of the model prevalent in Southern Europe. This model defined as polarized pluralism has roots in weak traditions of commercial press and close integration of media organizations with political parties and the state.

De-westernization sometimes takes a different, more practical perspective. In addition to a broader societal explanation, the term has also been used to characterize changes in the Russian journalistic profession. For example, Svetlana Pasti (2007:90-102) refers to the de-westernization of media space in the mid-2000s as a departure from the values of the relatively free Western style of journalism of the 1990s and a return to strong state control.

These empirical accounts of de-westernization are the result of a Western model of thinking about journalism in non-Western contexts. From this point of view, conclusions made by researchers are often gloomy and pessimistic. Becker (2004), in his analysis of the Russian media system in the early 2000s, refers to its “neo-authoritarian” character and a necessity for the media to demonstrate political loyalty. Becker avoids excessive dramatization by arguing that political pressures under the presidency of Vladimir Putin are “in no way as dire as in the pre-Gorbachev Soviet period” (2004:140). However, this is hardly a comforting argument for “suffering” media practitioners in Russia. This perspective essentially connects the current lack of freedoms and the weakness of media as democratic institutions with the Soviet legacy. Sarah Oates (2007) reaches the conclusion that the newly formed Russian media system retained many features from its Soviet past, though some changes are also in place. The “neo-Soviet model,” as Oates calls it (2007:1296-7), adds to the old Soviet model the pressures of the market and the increased dangers of harassment and violence experienced by journalists. In the neo-
Soviet mass media, there is still no real diversity of opinion, no place for true political debates, and the elitist orientation prevails.

Thus, despite a growing non-Western consciousness among media theorists, studies of the Russian political situation and the place of journalism in it are still mostly based on the same long-established theoretical principles of liberal thought. Perhaps, this is inevitable due to the lack of coherent alternative approaches. In this study, if not suggesting such an alternative, I aspire to take one step further in reconciling the largely pessimistic Western accounts with the Russian cultural and socio-political contexts. Addressing this issue is far more complicated than simply measuring how much Russia is unlike the idealized West. More importantly, one must account for the dramatic social and ideological transformations that the country and its journalistic community went through during the past several decades. The state-controlled ideological function of journalism in the Soviet period gave way to a new game with unwritten rules. Consequently, today Russian journalists face two options. They either recognize and accept state-imposed limitations on their freedoms or they pay the price of uncertainty and risk losing their job in return for independence.

A study of Russian journalistic culture (Pasti 2005a) has shown that for most journalists the choice of political freedoms conceded to the values of social stability. Many preferred to work for media supported by local governments rather than enjoy more freedom of expression in an oppositional newsroom. The former guaranteed permanent employment and higher salaries, while the latter did not. In another study (Pasti 2005b:107), the older generation of Russian journalists, who started their careers in the Soviet system before 1990, remain more inclined to collaborate with power elites and support the existing social order than their younger colleagues. Pasti (ibid.) found that younger journalists are more likely to fulfill a self-interest in the profession and thus less bound by moral obligations to collaborate with the regime. However, this does not preclude younger generations from giving in to financial rewards and stable working conditions in exchange for their loyalty to the regime.

Corrupted and endangered

Today, in many cases, journalism in Russia is either perceived as largely corrupted or as a dangerous occupation.

High level of corruption has become one of the distinctive features of the Russian society in general and the media system in particular (McNair 2000). A review of
corruption levels (Transparency International 2013) placed Russia in 133rd position among 176 countries. The higher the number, the more corrupted the country’s public sector is perceived “by analysts, businesspeople and experts in countries around the world” (ibid.). In everyday discussion, especially in informal contexts, popular opinion concerning the journalistic profession in Russia sees it as intrinsically dishonest. This view denounces journalists in general terms as corrupt (prodazhnie zhurnaliugi) servants of the political regime and elite business interests. Natalia Roudakova (2009) describes the role of Russian media in a highly corrupted society with the self-explanatory title: Journalism as “Prostitution.” This is not just the researcher’s perception. Roudakova points out that many Russian journalists themselves have internalized the idea of journalism being “the second oldest profession” (ibid:427) after prostitution.

Yet, the problem is also recognized among representatives of the profession and has become a topic of conscious and public self-criticism. In February 2009, Vsevolod Bogdanov, then the head of the Russian Union of Journalists, said: “Mass media, formerly known as the fourth estate, no longer seem like that to anyone, on the contrary, journalism is increasingly associated with corruption” (Lenizdat 2009:np). He gave this assessment as a comparison to what it felt like “fifteen years ago,” that is, in the middle of the 1990s. One might say that this nostalgia would be especially valid in relation to a short period between 1991 and 1993, the so-called golden age of Russian journalism (Zassoursky Y. 2004:222) when the Soviet state was no longer able to dictate and the market had not yet got on its feet. In any case, the comments demonstrate the strong narrative of decline associated with the 2000s.

At first sight, corruption among media workers seems to be a moral issue. But one can also argue that it is a socially determined issue and not exclusively a matter of journalistic ethics. Particularly in the early post-Soviet years, when the country was in economic and political turmoil, the dog-eat-dog principles dominated many spheres of social life. Studies have shown (Pasti 2005a; 2005b) that at that time journalists nearly unanimously accepted corruption as a norm of practice, because “everything around them [was] corrupt and dependent, there [was] no other way to escape poverty” (Pasti 2005b:106). For the same reasons many, paradoxically, saw this corruption as part of an individual market strategy, almost equating it with professionalism. Notably, when asked about professionalism, Russian journalists emphasized technical skills and not ethics (ibid:107).

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6 Prodazhnie zhurnaliugi is a Russian colloquial expression with negative connotations of a deprecatory character. The phrase describes journalists without professional norms and principles, who can be secretly paid to use the media to say anything a person wants them to tell.
The second popular opinion about journalism is that being a journalist in Russia is simply dangerous. Ironically, the risk of violence and threats comes from a more general corruption that poisons the society as a whole (Oates 2006:21). Thus, corruption and danger point to two opposing modes of practicing journalism in Russia. The corruption thesis explains how to avoid dangerous situations, and vice versa – it is dangerous to be incorruptible. The idea of dangerous journalism emphasizes the futility and, at the same time, perils of practicing “good” and “proper” journalism. This is also one of the underpinnings of self-censorship that I discuss later. Basically, this is a question of the threat of violence. For many Russian journalists, fear for their personal safety is the root of the problem (Azhgikhina 2007) and struggles for press freedom can sometimes turn into struggles for physical survival. In this respect, the gloomy saying “a good journalist is a dead journalist” (e.g. Pasko 2008:np) cynically reflects a grave situation in the profession that has been recently intensified by high levels of violence and premeditated murder. The phrase also has a less brutal variant pertaining to the general condition of media workers: “an independent journalist is one that is unemployed.”

Anna Politkovskaya, an investigative journalist for Novaya Gazeta, was shot and killed in October 2006. Her case is the most widely known of unsolved violent crimes against journalists in Russia. But there is a long list of killings dating back to the first post-Soviet years. The cases of Dmitry Kholodov (killed in October 1994) and Vladislav Listyev (killed in March 1995) were the harbingers of growing problems for the media community, although the deaths of these two distinguished Moscow journalists only confirmed a trend that had been taking place all over the country. It is hard to estimate the overall scale of crimes against journalists. Available statistics are inaccurate, since it is not always possible to talk about exact motives, people die for various reasons and different agencies report different data. Between 1993 and 2009, one source mentions 313 deaths of journalists in Russia (Tlisova 2010:73), with at least 86 killed because of their work. Russia’s Ministry of Internal Affairs, however, reports only 19 deaths over the same time period (ibid.). Another report estimates that 30 journalists have been murdered since 1992 (Ognianova et al. 2009). The same report ranks Russia as the third deadliest country for journalists following Iraq and Algeria, or Iraq and the Philippines, if we only consider the period after 2000.

The safety situation is aggravated by a very low percent of successfully investigated legal cases. Russia is among several states where officials do not only fail to conduct proper investigations, but also actively impede them and withhold information on findings (Wolfe 2010). This explains why those who murder journalists are rarely found and punished (Simonov 2008). The details of
Politkovskya’s case, for instance, have remained unsolved for years. The shocking image of journalism as a high risk profession with a number of new, outrageous cases triggered by discontent inside Russian society (cf. Burrett 2010), and the question of journalistic freedom and safety, were key issues raised during the political protests of 2011-2012.

On the positive side, there are signs of increased solidarity within the journalistic community. This solidarity is being generated as a networked movement for the rights of journalists, and it is mostly mediated via online platforms. Reactions to certain threatening incidents have inspired powerful support and legal assistance by organizations like “The Center for Journalism in Extreme Situations” and “Glasnost Defense Foundation.” One of their collaborative projects is an online database called the “Deaths of journalists in Russia.” This resource collects relevant information and is used for investigations and news references. As of June 2013, the database consisted of 342 cases of deaths or disappearances of Russian journalists. The database interface is bilingual. In addition to Russian it retrieves information in English, which makes it a powerful source of broad international impact and creates the foundation for global support and journalistic solidarity.

Thus, popular wisdom outlines these two poles of influence within the journalistic profession in contemporary Russia. Of course, there are numerous variations and additional meanings between the loathed corruption and heroic dangers associated with being a journalist. When journalism is not perceived as corrupted, it can be endowed with the highest moral authority. This is the feeling of journalists themselves. For example, Tina Burrett (2010) has quoted one television journalist saying:

> Russian people look to journalists to guide them through the moral maze of our post-Soviet society. Journalists are more important moral leaders than politicians. Presidents come and go, but journalists and journalism last. I was here before Yeltsin and I am here after him. I was here before Putin and I will be here after him too. (P. 24)

This paradoxical situation elevates the journalistic mission above the dilemma of being corrupted or risking one’s own life. Somehow, philosophically inclined media workers recognize the limitations of particular historical moments and stress the value of a longer perspective.

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7 This online database is available at www.journalists-in-russia.org. According to the site, it has been designed to enable comparative search requests specified by such categories as the nature of the incident, the incident location, the results of official investigations, and whether the death is connected to journalistic work or not.
The evolution of censorship

Frank Ellis (1999) has argued that the collapse of the Soviet Union was to a considerable degree a consequence of omnipresent censorship. He claims that the Soviet system of censorship led Marxist-Leninist ideological propaganda to an internal deadlock. Likewise, the command economy’s failure to compete with the West in the information and communication technologies market was responsible for ideologically restricted communications. Ellis underlines the impossibility of a transition from an industrial command economy to a post-industrial information economy. While such a narrative has its merits, it is also part of the transitology approach to post-Communism and echoes the arguments of the Cold War period. It crucially disregards the fact that it was a period of glasnost and liberalization in the mid-1980s that paved the way for dissolution of the Soviet Union. From another point of view, countries like China, where state censorship did not disappear at all, have demonstrated that today economic progress cannot be straightforwardly limited to information freedoms.

It is also worth remembering the longer perspective. Censorship was an integral part of the Soviet state for many years, but it also existed uninterruptedly for centuries in pre-revolutionary Russia. Historians (Zhirkov 2001:7-8) trace the first institutional forms of Russian censorship back to Ivan the Terrible’s Stoglav in 1551. This volume of church code prescribed, among other things, the first religious limitations on published texts. Later, in the eighteenth century, starting with the reforms of Peter I, there was a gradual transformation of censorship from religious to secular spheres of social life. Another milestone is the early nineteenth century when the first censorship committees were established and the first censorship law (Tsenzurnii ustav) implemented in 1804. Traditions of censorship in Russia span different historical epochs, demonstrating varying degrees of freedoms and constraints. Therefore, it is a mistake to consider censorship as an exclusive

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8 Peter I, or Peter the Great (1682-1725), was the first Russian emperor. He is known as the most vigorous reformist and modernizer in Russian history. In 1702, Peter founded the first Russian printed newspaper Vedomosti. He also personally edited some of the first issues of the newspaper, wrote numerous articles for it and did not miss a single line in terms of pre-publishing censoring (Zhirkov 2001:17). Vedomosti is considered by many scholars to be the starting point of Russian journalism and publishing. At about the same time, Peter granted exclusive rights to his Dutch friend Yan Tissen (Jan Tessingu) from Amsterdam to publish and export books and maps to Russia (Reifman 2005:13). With this monopoly, Tissen received a prescription that became the first secular censorial decree – the books must only glorify the Great emperor, no criticism of him or of the Russian state is possible. This rule has stayed in effect for centuries.
characteristic of the Soviet period of mass media development or, for that matter, an exclusively Russian characteristic.

This is to say that the existence of censorship as such is not enough to characterize a certain historical period or even to connect it directly to some radical changes in social life. The policy known as *glasnost*, from the Russian word for “openness” and “publicness,” once encouraged a whole new philosophy of more transparent and free flowing information; a policy that did not only enable changes but also actively stimulated them. Introduced by Mikhail Gorbachev, in the second half of the 1980s, the policy of *glasnost* reversed the trend of the previous Leonid Brezhnev era that preferred to withhold unflattering news about economic developments. The result of this reversal were some excessively critical and accusatory media reactions to state policies, even by Western standards (Colton 1991:66). However, Russian historians of the mass media (Ovsepian 1999:200) note that the task of Soviet journalists during the second half of the 1980s was especially difficult. On the one hand, journalists willingly exposed all the flaws of the administrative command system. But, on the other hand, criticism had to be done carefully in order to avoid encroaching upon the positions of the communist party. Unlike the official press, a growing number of alternative and samizdat media (ibid.)\(^9\) did not face such institutional constraints and actively attacked the fundamentals of one-party totalitarianism.

Legally, the use of official censoring bodies has been prohibited in Russia since 1991. Thus, since the fall of Communism, official censorship in Russia does not exist. The only exceptions are, as elsewhere in the world, for specific emergency situations or periods of war when media freedom may be temporarily restricted. However, since the early 2000s, the theme of censoring news media has re-surfaced. These censorship-like pressures have been justified by referring to a war on terrorism (Simons and Strovsky 2006). In a way, under similar pretexts a set of additional surveillance measures and national security restrictions have been implemented in Western democracies as well. However, the scope and use of the notion of national security can be different, sometimes extending to any kind of critical remarks about the state or political regime.

While I disagree with Ellis (1999) with regard to the role of censorship, I share his idea of connecting the conditions of transparency in the period of *glasnost* with

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\(^9\) According to Ovsepian (1999:201), by August 1988, in the Soviet Union there were 64 illegal *samizdat* magazines, with titles like *Glasnost’, Ekspress-hronika, Merkurii, Obshchina, Den’ za dnem, Rossiiskie Vedomosti*. Some of these reached a circulation of 700 copies and could be found mainly in Moscow, Lenigrad, in the Ural region and the Baltic republics.
the later development of new digital forms of communication. Indeed, it is because of new technologies that facilitate user-generated content on the Internet that we may now talk of the possibilities for a glasnost 2.0. The difference, though, is that glasnost was sanctioned as a political initiative from above.

But, just as in the case of censorship, the mere existence of a free public space is not enough. What is needed for change is also a broader social impetus. The real problem of Russian journalism today thus is neither (or not just) direct or indirect state control of a large number of the mass media, nor is it mainly an issue of top-down censorship procedures. The more fundamental problem is the widespread phenomenon of self-censorship. This phenomenon has much greater effect on the content of Russian journalistic works and is rooted in conditions of media ownership (Simons and Strovsky 2006:208). The key is often the very cautiousness of journalists themselves, a kind of bottom-up self-censorship that puts limits on the level of criticism that circulates in the public domain (Khvostunova and Voinova 2009:195).

2.3 Combining the field and discourse

To study the blogization of journalism I rely on two overarching theoretical traditions, which I find complementary. The first one is sociological and based on the works of Pierre Bourdieu (1993; 1998a; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992) and his followers (Benson 1998; Benson and Neveu 2005). The second tradition is mostly viewed as political and stems from post-structuralist discourse theory (Laclau and Mouffe 1985; Torfing 1999; Howarth, Norval and Stavrakakis 2000; Glynos and Howarth 2007; Glynos et al. 2009). The use of political discourse theory is relatively rare in media studies. Though, several studies conducted in recent years have proven the method useful for macro contextualization and critical media research (Carpentier 2005; Carpentier and De Cleen 2007; Phelan and Shearer 2009; Dahlberg and Phelan 2011; Maggilchrist 2011).

Theoretical synthesis

The social is generally divided into a fundamental triad of culture, politics, and economics. Bourdieu conceptualized these triadic elements as fields of specific practices with distinctive values, or types of capital, underlying each of them. At the same time, within the totality of social fields there is the overarching field of power
(Benson 1998:465), and within this field of power is the subfield of cultural production. Within the cultural field there are subfields with greater and lesser market dependence. However, in non-Western media systems the political power of the state may sometimes be even more influential than the economic power of the market (see e.g. Hallin and Mancini 2012). This important distinction opens up new interpretations of the Bourdieuiuan tradition, in which Benson’s model, with the dominant economic power at the center, requires further elaboration.

Bourdieu (1998a:56) ascribes a powerful role to the mass media, which, according to him, exert structural pressures on all other fields of cultural production. As a recognized sociologist, he was once invited to give lectures on French television, and based on this experience he made a point of calling the mass media an “instrument of symbolic oppression” that also threatens political life and democracy (ibid:12). This growing disenchantment with the journalistic field was obvious in Bourdieu’s writings, although he recognized that journalists themselves were subject to the external influences of media commercialization.

Field theory is usefully complemented by post-structuralist discourse theory (Phelan 2011), which also goes by the name political discourse theory. The political approach to discourse theory was introduced by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (1985) and further developed within the tradition of the Essex school of discourse (Howarth et al. 2000). This tradition, though more typical for political studies, does not limit itself to politics alone, with its broad social implications applicable in other areas too. The main premise of this type of discourse analysis is that all meanings are subject to hegemonic construction and driven by intrinsic social antagonisms.

Post-structuralist discourse theory focuses on the discursive formation of social identities with a political nature. As Laclau (1994:3) argues, we live in time of an “increasing awareness of the political character embedded in the institution of all social identity.” It is necessary to clarify that “the political” in this framework is understood in a broad sense as designating the conflictual nature of any identification, rather than as the political of politics. Chantal Mouffe (2005), who co-authored the foundations of discourse theory with Laclau, put it as follows:

[B]y ‘the political’ I mean the dimension of antagonism which I take to be constitutive of human societies, while by ‘politics’ I mean the set of practices and institutions through which an order is created, organizing human coexistence in the context of conflictuality provided by the political (P. 9).

A key assumption, proposed by Laclau and Mouffe, is that social relations are inherently conflict-based, and meanings are contested and only able to reach a temporary fixation. In Laclau and Mouffe’s account (1985:159), antagonism emerges
when there is “equivalential displacement between distinct subject positions,” which could mean with regard to blogization, for instance, the expansion of traditional journalistic roles to include bloggers as regular sources of news.

Bourdieu’s field theory offers useful conceptual tools for exploring relationships inside the journalistic field (Benson and Neveu 2005), with blogging being its sub-field (unless one finds it to be a separate field with its own rules). The theory also provides an analytical framework for a more general explanation of the position of news journalism in Russian society. Bourdieu is a proponent of closer empirical observation instead of the blind application of taken for granted preconceptions. He encourages the generation of theoretical concepts out from data.

Whereas Bourdieu’s inquiry of social phenomena starts with analysis of the exact positions taken by social actors and expressed in practice, Laclau and Mouffe first seek to deconstruct the ideologies that underpin such positions. Their political discourse theory is well suited for the study of blogization that appears rather vaguely defined and the discursive formation of its meaning is an ongoing process.

The field theory approach accounts for the reproduction of social structures (see e.g. Eyerman 1997), whereas political discourse theory better reflects the possible transformations of the same structures. Thus both traditions help to look at the same phenomenon but from different angles. In my research, Bourdieu’s framework is useful for understanding what keeps the journalistic field stable, and what maintains the relative autonomy of the field and enables the continuity of professional journalistic norms and practices. But to fully conceive of that stability one needs to take into consideration the forces and mechanisms challenging its existence; this is where Laclau and Mouffe’s concepts of subject positions, articulation, and hegemony become effective.

In more practical terms, I see the difference between the two traditions as follows. Field theory makes it possible to look at blogging as an activity with bloggers occupying specific positions in relation to each other and in relation to journalists. According to this theoretical approach, such positions, could be defined in terms of some measurable form of capital, whether it be economic, cultural, or social. Discourse theory, in turn, can consider blogization in less calculable terms as the interplay of various meanings relating to certain practices. The discourse approach implies recourse to wider contexts of a given research subject. In this respect, a review of existing research on journalism studies in the Russian contexts provides essential points of reference or, nodal points, to use the terminology from discourse theory.
Ultimately, combining post-structuralist discourse theory with field theory helps to address the limitations of both approaches (cf. Phelan 2011:129). Take, for example, the concept of subject position as it relates to discourse theory. How does a particular subject position manifest itself? An answer may be given on two levels. First, the notion of position has already been explored from the perspective of field theory, and this sociological vision does not contradict post-structuralist discourse theory, which considers contexts and texts as equally important aspects of discursive formations. Thus, one way to think about subject positions is through the placement of journalists and bloggers within a common field of practices. Accordingly, the second answer is that subject positions are also embedded in communication patterns; that is they can be observed as texts produced by subjects.

The premises of field theory

In Bourdieu’s view, social reality consists of various fields of practices. Each field in this framework has its own specific rules, according to which field participants, that is, individuals or institutionalized actors and values compete for dominant positions.

An important presupposition in Bourdieu’s theory is that “To think in terms of field is to think relationally” (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:96; italics in original). His key concepts – field and capital – are rather abstract and lack clear-cut definitions. Bourdieu refuses to claim universal applicability for his analytical tools, and thus rejects the idea of a positivistic epistemology. On the contrary, he argues for the openness of key concepts which, according to him, always acquire their meaning within systems of relational dispositions. For example, a field should be seen as a network of relations between individuals or institutions, whose positions are structured by these relations and determined by the amount of their accumulated capital. This framework makes it possible to study social phenomena in terms of relations, such as relations of domination, subordination, and homology.

In addition to rejecting positivism, Bourdieu parts with rigid structuralist ideas about social action that are structurally determined and objectively settled. Instead, he attempts to go beyond the subject-object distinction by arguing that what we witness as coherence and apparent functionality in the field is “born of conflict and competition, not of some kind of immanent self-development of the structure” (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:104).

Bourdieu (1998a) places journalism within the broader category of cultural production and provides some insights on the effects of this placement. Indeed, his
writings on the news media industry and journalistic culture are relatively scarce. Moreover, it was only in the late 1990s that late English-language translations of his works began to benefit researchers (Benson 1998:463).

Initially, media studies based on Bourdieu’s work mainly focused on mass media – centralized television, the national press and radio (see e.g. Benson and Neveu 2005). Today, as technical innovations constantly offer up new means of communication, the field of journalism is especially dynamic.

Bourdieu, who witnessed the rise of online media, did not reflect upon this area of cultural production in his writings. However, late in Bourdieu’s career, the topic was already being widely discussed by scholars of field theory. In early 2000s, for instance, Nick Couldry, a leading theoretician of media power, displayed skepticism toward the Internet’s capacity to challenge dominant patterns of media use (2003:657). Yet, he admitted to the necessity of considering the long-term effects of new media which are less centralized that traditional forms of mass communication (ibid:673). My own choice of field theory as one of the cornerstones of this book suggests that Bourdieuan cultural sociology can and should be fruitfully extended to emerging forms of new media.

In order to make sense of blogization as the advent of bloggers into journalism, I must first define the boundaries of the journalistic field, or at least identify the frontier zone where blogs are supposedly situated. However, as Bourdieu admits, “the question of the limits of the field is a very difficult one, if only because it is always at stake in the field itself and therefore admits of no a priori answer” (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:100). This means that the answer to that question can be given only by means of an empirical study of the field and its areas of entry.

Any search for the boundaries of a field should be guided by the assumption that “the limits of the field are situated at the point where the effects of the field cease” (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:100, my emphasis). Therefore, it would be wrong to claim that the field of news journalism includes only prominent bloggers who are invited to press-conferences along with other journalists, or that it includes only blogs that either aggregate news from mainstream sources or contribute to them with original content. A blogger with a large audience and original news content obviously relates to other news workers as a competitor in the field. It is however less obvious in the case of popular bloggers who are known not as producers of newsworthy content but as celebrities writing about their personal life; that is, as news-makers rather than as news workers. On the other hand, blogs that are practically unknown may join the journalistic game by publishing unique information
or valuable evidence, and therefore gaining the symbolic capital of journalistic recognition.

The big question is who determines if a newcomer is part of the field. Is this the privilege of the field’s dominant actors? Or is it based on the growing attention of audiences and/or media and blog ratings? In his analysis of the field of the arts, Bourdieu asks “who creates the creator” (who makes a painting worth a fortune), and answers by arguing against the concentration of power in the hands of a specific actor:

What ‘makes reputations’ is not <…> this or that institution, review, magazine, academy, coterie, dealer or publisher; it is not even the whole set of what are sometimes called ‘personalities of the world of arts and letters’; it is the field of production, understood as the system of objective relations between these agents or institutions and as the site of the struggles for the monopoly of the power to consecrate, in which the value of works of art and belief in that value are continuously generated. (Bourdieu and Nice 1980:265)

Every field thus constitutes a potentially open space of play. The boundaries of this space are dynamic and at the stake of struggles within the field itself. We can notice how Bourdieu sometimes uses words like “game” or “market” as synonyms for the more common and neutral signifier “field”. These two words inevitably introduce new and important connotations that make the idea of a field less abstract. There must be some distinctive features that, according to Bourdieu (1993), allow us to talk about fields:

In order for a field to function, there have to be stakes and people prepared to play the game, endowed with the habitus that implies knowledge and recognition of the immanent laws of the field, the stakes, and so on (P. 72).

By joining a game or entering a particular market people or organizations not only accept internal rules, they are also expected to meet the entry conditions. As Bourdieu has put it, the newcomers have to pay an entry fee “which consists in recognition of the value of the game <…> and in (practical) knowledge of the principles of the functioning of the game” (ibid:74).

The not so obvious aspect of entrance, however, raises the question of what or who exactly, in each case, determines the appropriateness of new participants. We can see, for example, how an institutionalized mechanism of licensing may function as a technique of acceptance in law or medicine. There is only a small number of countries with a licensing system for journalism. However, in most places, including Russia, the rules are not that strict. And if we take into consideration the ease with which an individual can start doing journalism by means of personal blogs, the idea of controlling the borderlines of the journalistic field through formal accreditation
systems seems obsolete. One can hypothesize then that because of blogization, the fee to enter the journalistic field has become lower than ever before.

The question of entry fees and internal struggles is, of course, a complex one. It does not suffice that someone simply claims “I am a journalist.” This implies a negotiation of what being a journalist means and what it could mean. Thus, in order to enter into the interaction and become part of the game, a newcomer must – in some sense – claim to offer something valuable to the field. This could be an audience, a perceived trust, expertise or knowledge. Field theory develops a concept of capital to embrace these values:

People are at once founded and legitimized to enter the field by their possessing a definite configuration of properties. One of the goals of research is to identify these active properties, these efficient characteristics, that is, these forms of specific capital (Bourdieu 1993:107-8).

Therefore, entry and participation in the journalistic field is still linked to certain requirements. Only those with symbolic power that matters to the field can become legitimate actors and start dictating the rules of the game. Assuming that some bloggers can partially meet the requirements of the journalistic field (as random newsworthy eye-witnesses, for example), we cannot expect the new logics of these newcomers to conform entirely. At the same time, by reluctantly admitting newcomers with their new logics to the field, the dominant actors acknowledge that the field changes; often through a rhetoric which emphasizes that nothing actually changes.

**Symbolic capital**

Field theory encourages inquiries into the relations between different fields as well as the relations between the social actors within a particular field. It becomes possible due to the concept of capital – a symbolic measure of power, wealth or dominance in any given field. This symbolic measure is unique for each field, but it may be translated or exchanged into “acceptable currency” while moving from one field to another.

Fields are seen as relatively autonomous from external influences, thus representing more or less fixed positions that are defensive against interventions. To make sense of a field’s internal logic one has to investigate the basis of competition, which is always a social struggle within a given field for a specific form of capital. Such competition, as suggested above, involves a struggle “between the newcomer who
tries to break through the entry barrier and the dominant agent who will try to defend the monopoly and keep out competition” (Bourdieu 1993:72). Thus, once inside the field social actors encounter a new challenge – the struggle for unequally distributed capital which can be accumulated and thereby condition future struggles.

It is important to understand the character and composition of symbolic capital as the field’s most valued asset. In practice, capital is what field participants would seek to accumulate in order to dominate the field. In my research, symbolic capital is not only convertible, as in the case of knowledge transformed into money, but also has a floating exchange rate, which means new developments in the journalistic field can potentially devalue some aspects of journalistic capital while heightening the importance of others.

In the journalistic field, internalized news values and the ability of journalists to effectively fulfill them constitute internal, orthodox struggles for symbolic dominance inside the newsroom. These struggles lead to the redistribution of specific types of intra-field journalistic currency or editorial capital (Schultz 2007:194). On this micro level, according to Schultz, everyday working routines are defined by the field's invisible doxic values which he calls “gut feeling.” On the other hand, much of the field structuring occurs through constant interactions with external structures and more general social imaginaries (Kunelius and Ruusunoksa 2008), some of which include adherence to competitive business models, commercialism and consumer orientation, adaptations to technological innovations, and a broadly accepted imagination of societal apathy toward politics. Furthermore, the journalistic field plays a decisive role in shaping the general field of power and public debate (Kunelius 2006).

Some scholars have drawn on Bourdieuan field theory to develop the notion of media capital (see e.g. Couldry 2003; Davis and Seymour 2010). Initially, it was an attempt to extend the application of the theory beyond merely internal logics of fields. Couldry (2003:655-6) found that while Bourdieu promoted field-based research he also theorized symbolic power and symbolic systems in his earlier works. However he did not link them in his field theory which primarily focused on the internal logics of cultural production rather than the general, social effects of that production. In “Invitation to reflexive sociology” Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992:112) suggest viewing the state as an “ensemble of fields” with a sort of overarching authority or universalizing condition. Thus, the symbolic capital or power of a given nation-state defines all other forms of capital specific to each field. Couldry uses this idea of an overarching structure to develop the concept of media meta-capital, meant to designate the power of media to influence social life and hence the power
over other fields. Consequently, the original perception of field-specificity, complex but unique to each field, is replaced (or situated alongside) by the elusive concept of meta-capital. Indeed, this increased complexity reflects the manifold roles media play in contemporary societies. That is also why, according to Couldry (2003:653), “accounts of media and media power that concentrate exclusively on either questions of “production” or questions of ideological “effects” are likely, therefore, to be unsatisfactory.”

Davis and Seymour’s study (2010) of the British political field in relation to the field of media provides one example of the empirical application of the concept of media capital. This study elaborates on the concept of media capital to explain the political success of David Cameron on his path to leadership in the Conservative Party in 2005. The study makes two important distinctions: firstly, that the media capital possessed by politicians can be external to the field of politics, produced in relation to broader audiences, and internal to the field, thereby establishing relations between peer politicians and political journalists. In addition, media capital includes “institutionalized” and “individualized” components. The former is based on hierarchical placement within an institution and endowed through statuses and titles. The latter depends upon the personal capacity to present oneself in the media and for the media (Davis and Seymour 2010:743). It is easy to notice the assembled character of media capital in this framework, for it consists of various combinations of social, cultural and symbolic forms. In Davis and Seymour’s study (2010), the researchers investigated these different aspects of media capital to explain how personal ties with journalists (social capital) coupled with a good command of media performance skills (cultural capital) made the “strange” case of David Cameron’s rise possible. Despite his inferior positioning in terms of external media exposure at an early stage in the political campaign, Cameron overtook his rivals in the long run due to better internal positioning.

The strength of field theory lies in its decentering of both the structural level of analysis and the micro level of agency-centric social theories (Willig 2013:383). It becomes possible, with the help of these conceptual tools, to produce understandings of social action from both positions simultaneously. As Joas and Knöbl (2009:385) note, Bourdieu’s conception of capital, is much broader than just in terms of financial interests, thereby allowing for the distinction between various social struggles that would have otherwise been primitively treated merely from an economic standpoint.

In Chapter 5, I continue this discussion of the concept of symbolic capital and demonstrate its relevance to meta-state capital in the Russian case. A few words,
however, should first be said concerning the limitations of such conceptualizations. Criticism of Bourdieu stems from the vagueness of his main concept of the field. Social scientists have often been puzzled with the problem of defining how many fields there are and where the boundaries between them are to be drawn (Joas and Knöbl 2009:392). Also, while field theory provides a convincing account of the social order and social reproduction, it is not as well equipped to explain the no less important question of social change (ibid:395). Nicholas Garnham and Fred Inglis (1990:86) define this theoretical weakness in terms of insufficient attention to different aspects of social reproduction that can vary between basic replication and more innovative reformation. Moreover, the delimiting character of the field offers little explanation of ideologies and discourses that spread across multiple fields or even constitute a more general social fabric (Kunelius and Ruusunoksa 2008:666).

These criticisms can be addressed by introducing new approaches to the concept of state meta-capital in the journalistic field. The power of the state, for example, can be contrasted with the power of other forms of meta-capitals, such as the journalistic capital produced in the process of blogization. Finally, field analysis can be conducted in conjunction with other theoretical approaches, particularly discourse studies that consider macro-contextual social processes. Discourse theory fills some of the gaps of the field perspective and widens the angle of observation in this research. I demonstrate how Bourdieu’s notion of doxa can be connected to field theory and discourse theory to produce new insights.

From doxa to discourse

Each field consists of rules that are self-evident and others which are taken for granted without being discussed or mentioned. These rules are hence missing meanings, beliefs or values that are not voiced by the field’s actors or cannot be found within the cultural texts of a particular field. These rules constitute what Bourdieu (1993) calls *doxa*, which he describes as “everything that goes without saying, and in particular the systems of classification determining what is judged interesting or uninteresting, the things that no one thinks worthy of being mentioned, because there is no demand” (p. 51-2). It would be quite natural to try to understand which problems the actors in a field leave unnoticed and why. For instance, in his evaluation of the hidden problems of the field of sociology, Bourdieu defines two kinds of problems: *taboos*, which are “de jure unthinkable,” and *problems that de facto cannot be intellectually addressed* due to a lack of proper tools.
The idea of doxa helps us to understand field practices in terms of either the conservation of an existing order (orthodoxy), or the transformation of that order (heterodoxy). Social actors with a larger amount of capital specific to a given field, and therefore more privileged in terms of status, are motivated to preserve and defend an existing orthodoxy. In the same field, less successful actors, with lower levels of accumulated capital, but who are also possibly younger or less experienced in matters of the field, tend to compete for better positions using strategies of heresy. In Bourdieu’s view (1993:73), such heterodoxy functions “as a critical break with doxa” and is often understood as a crisis, which mobilizes the dominant social group to defend its principles and restore doxa.

The idea of doxa can be illustrated further by the example of a social protest or trade-unionism. Bourdieu (1993:172) points out that in workers’ strikes, apart from legitimate demands of employees which can be fulfilled under certain conditions, there are certain things that are not voiced even among the protesters themselves. This third aspect constitutes the doxa of protest. As an extreme example, it is hard to imagine workers asking to be paid for not working at all; that is, to challenge the underlying idea of getting money in return for work. No one could possibly act in support of such a demand without discrediting the common sense, or doxa, of the strike movement which is normally manifested in requests for better job conditions, a rise in wages and additional social benefits. We may find similar conditions in the journalistic field.

In general terms, intra-field struggles can be described as defensive strategies of the dominant social group. They are used, on the one hand, to maintain doxa and, on the other hand, as a means of challenging the alternative views of a dominated group. When radical redefinition of the positioning of a field is at stake, such a confrontation takes on a specifically political significance “with the denunciation of this tacit contract of adherence to the established order which defines the original doxa” (Bourdieu and Thompson 1991:127).

Post-structuralist discourse theory (Laclau and Mouffe 1985) comes very close to these ideas with such concepts as articulation and hegemony. The centrality of the political for social change in Laclau and Mouffe’s writing have made them known as the first scholars to bring discourse analysis into the domain of political theory (Andersen 2003:49). This theory privileges undecidability and the contingency of the social. In a sense this epistemology is a rejection of positivism with its causality and law-like regularities (Glynos et al. 2009:7). The approach, Laclau and Mouffe develop in “Hegemony and Socialist Strategy” (1985) now fits under several labels. It may be simply called Laclau and Mouffe’s discourse theory (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002).
Some of the less personified variants include: the neo-Gramscian theory of discourse (Torfing 1999), political discourse theory (Andersen 2003; Glynos et al. 2009) or the discourse theoretical approach (Carpentier and De Cleen 2007). This type of discourse research is also sometimes associated with the Essex school of political discourse theory (Dahlberg and Phelan 2011; Howarth, Norval, and Stavrakakis 2000), a name associated with the University of Essex where Laclau established a specialized research program in 1982.

Arguably, the historical roots of discourse analysis span thousands of years and can be traced back to Aristotle’s rhetoric. However, after antiquity there were centuries that sank many of these ancient ideas into oblivion. Hence, contemporary understandings of discourse theory stems mostly from ideas of Russian formalism and French structuralism (van Dijk 1988:18-9). In the late 1960s, analysis of discourse developed into an interdisciplinary field in the social sciences and the humanities. Rapid advancement of the theory occurred due to the growing influence of linguistic disciplines: literary studies, semiotics, sociolinguistics, the ethnography of language, conversation analysis and speech communication.

This new research tradition did not have explicit disciplinary orientation, rather it established a separate methodological and theoretical approach to studying texts and language use “from all possible perspectives” (van Dijk 1988:24). Today, one of the major discourse analytical traditions is critical discourse analysis (CDA). It has been largely promoted by van Dijk himself, and Norman Fairclough and Ruth Wodak are two other notable theorists who share this interest in CDA. Because of its detailed and comprehensive set of analytical tools, CDA has become one of the main empirical approaches to the study of discourses in different disciplines, including media studies.

However, CDA should not be confused with the less conventional discourse analysis developed by the Essex school. The key distinction between the two is analytical focus. The application of CDA is connected to textual analysis at the linguistic level, with a focus on discourse-as-language. Laclau and Mouffe’s discourse theoretical approach (DTA) deals with discourse-as-representation and tends to look at the broader, macro-textual interplay of meanings and ideologies embedded in texts (Carpentier and De Cleen 2007:277). In addition, practices as strategies and the representation of practices are central for DTA, whereas CDA considers them as separate from the idea of discourse, as non-discursive practices. As Carpentier and De Cleen note (2007), the definition of discourse in DTA is closer to the Foucauldian tradition.
There are many influential thinkers whose work has made crucial advancements to discourse theory. It is generally recognized that the advent of discourse theory in the social sciences developed through the structural anthropology of Claude Lévi-Strauss, and the post-structuralist philosophy of Jacques Derrida. For example, one of the most elusive ideas of discourse theory – the concept of articulation – stems from structuralist linguistics and the first non-linguistic field to appropriate it was anthropology. Claude Lévi-Strauss borrowed articulation from linguistics to analyze systems of kinship and myths among indigenous people. Hegemony is another concept, borrowed from the works of Antonio Gramsci, that is particularly important for political discourse theory.

The conceptual tools of discourse theory

As Laclau and Mouffe argue, “any discourse is constituted as an attempt to dominate the field of discursivity, to arrest the flow of differences, to construct a centre” (1985:112). This approach explains meaning construction as a process of partial fixations around privileged discursive points, or *nodal points*.

The two notions – discourse and the field of discursivity – are not identical and, in my research, the former is a relatively stable part of the latter. The post-structuralist understanding of discourse is that it consists of multiple elements or *subject positions* that appear pertinent to the overall meaning. In their interpretation of discourse, Laclau and Mouffe reject the distinction between discursive and non-discursive practices. For them every object is a part of discourse and could not constitute itself as an object outside any discursive field. Discourse is understood as “a differential and structured system of positions” and a discursive formation occurs when “certain regularities establish differential positions” (1985:108-09).

A study of discourse implies a two-step procedure consisting of deconstruction and hegemonic analysis (Andersen 2003). By means of deconstruction it is possible to detect the possible logics of differentiation attributed to the phenomenon of blogization. For example, the distinctions between mainstream and alternative, trust and distrust, social responsibility and self-interest can be found pertinent. All the possible distinctions appear as a result of what discourse theory calls *articulation* or articulatory practice. Discourse becomes possible through the mechanism of articulation:

The practice of articulation, therefore, consists in the construction of nodal points which partially fix meaning; and the partial character of this fixation
proceeds from the openness of the social, a result, in its turn, of the constant overflowing of every discourse by the infinitude of the field of discursivity (Laclau and Mouffe 1985:113).

To become part of a discourse, not all subject positions have a similar chance of being articulated. Take, for instance, democratic discourse. However vague the idea of democracy is, it would most likely include a subject position advocating the necessity of laws for maintaining the social order and would rarely, by contrast, include a position that favors anarchy. The same mechanism applies to other subject positions, each of which has different potential to be or not to be part of a given discourse.

The totality of subject positions constitutes a field of discursivity that includes actual and potential articulations (Carpentier and De Cleen 2007:288). If a society does not have diverse opinions on a certain topic, then there is basically only one potential articulation and one discourse: in this instance, meaning becomes so natural that it appears nearly universal and is perceived as commonsensical. This is where discourse theory comes close to Bourdieu’s idea of doxa. However, according to discourse theory, there is no possibility for a complete fixation of social meanings. There is also never a complete transition of elements into moments. Laclau and Mouffe (1985) refer to this status of elements as floating signifiers, that is, “subject positions incapable of being wholly articulated to a discursive chain” (p. 113). As long as new interpretations of seemingly fixed meanings emerge, the discourse is no longer stable and turns into a hegemonic discourse. The discourse is not grounded on universalistic statements but on such an illusion. Hence, Laclau and Mouffe argue that the specific nature of a hegemonic articulatory practice is the result of its “confrontation with other articulatory practices of an antagonistic character” (ibid:114). It is also possible for a discourse to have two or more equally strong interpretations competing for dominance, for hegemonic closure under the pressure of a counter-hegemonic alternative.

Moyo (2011) has studied alternative communicative tools appropriated by bloggers during elections in Zimbabwe, where the ruling regime used violence and coercion to achieve the necessary political results. This provides an example of how hegemony can be contrasted with counter-hegemony. In this case, the citizen journalism of blogs was de-institutionalized and de-professionalized, and therefore differed radically from form and content in mainstream mass media controlled by the government. As the research shows, blogging practices generate counter-hegemonic discourses that challenge both the dictatorial regime and dominant journalistic conventions, even if the effect is rather limited due to limited internet
access among the general population and the largely elitist neo-liberal character of the alternative blog spaces.

Thus, the second step in discourse research involves *hegemonic analysis*. It is meant to discover the mechanisms of dominance and the fixation of meanings. Hegemonic analysis developed from a “Gramsci-inspired critique of structural Marxism, via a neo-Gramscian theory of discourse, to a new type of postmodern theorizing” (Torfing 1999:13). In Chapter 7, I outline the neo-Gramscian roots of this tradition further. With regard to the idea of blogization, hegemonic fixations are similar to the doxa of dominant journalistic actors who normally represent the mainstream media. This mainstream hegemony can be challenged by alternative media voices (Bailey, Cammaerts and Carpentier 2008:17).

Laclau and Mouffe (1985) argue that any achieved consensus is based on a mechanism of *hegemonic articulation*, meaning some external force is always trying to undermine the status quo. This perspective is relevant for the project of evolving journalism-blogging relations, for if we want to discover potential paths to a consensus between these two social groups, it would be useful to follow the basic articulatory principles of this respective hegemonic formation. The concept of *hegemony* becomes applicable, as Laclau and Mouffe (1985:13) note, when there are conflicting subject positions that are not clearly articulated and the existing struggles are fragmented.

At the same time, discourse theory rejects the existence of “privileged points,” that is of any unifying center of meaning. These premises are applicable not only to studies of political order in the traditional sense of the term “political.” Laclau and Mouffe’s theory can usefully function as an explanatory tool for various socially constructed identities. The nature of many contested identities is understood as political. In “Hegemony and Socialist Strategy,” one of Laclau and Mouffe’s major theoretical contributions lies in the field of political studies. The book develops a project of a radical democracy based on “the plurality and indeterminacy of the social” (1985:152). As part of this radical democratic project, the authors identify conditions that enable collective actions against social inequalities and relations of subordination. Ultimately, the new forms of political identity (minorities, ecological activists, feminists, and in the context of this research bloggers as citizen journalists) are sources of social antagonism – a precondition for hegemonic struggles. This vision of pluralism as inevitably entailing war-like antagonism in social conflicts was later reformulated into an agonistic model based on less violent adversarial relations (Mouffe 2005).
Many empirical studies of discourse have a sobering effect on some of the hyped academic discussions and excessive privileging of certain dispositions as natural. For example, it has been common for theories of new media to highlight the experiences of participatory mediation as positive. The concept of participation came to be a moment to celebrate the democratizing potential of interactive media tools and online media in general. However, discourse analysis (Carpentier 2009) of this subject has revealed inconsistencies between audience perceptions of participatory elements and theoretically grounded common sense. This study exposes a flaw in participatory media theory, which often does not take the conditions of participation into account. Carpentier (2009:412) argues that a better understanding of participation requires a broader contextualization that allows us to see how strong the discourses of the old mass communication paradigm are and how they remain embedded in practices and perceptions of the audience.

Summary

This chapter presented four strands of knowledge that constitute important theoretical and empirical background for the study of “new” journalism.

First, from the point of view of journalism, blogization, also the subject of this book can and must take into account the occupational issues it raises. Journalism is becoming increasingly professionalized, and yet we are constantly reminded about the de-professionalizing impacts of alternative media forms. I paid specific attention to historical media forms such as the New Journalism movement, off-shore pirate radio, and the tradition of the samizdat press in Russia. Each of these cases has similarities and parallels to the contemporary phenomenon of citizen journalism on internet blogs.

Second, the chapter reviews the Russian case, demonstrating how blogization makes sense not only as a renewal of journalism from within, but also as a renewal from without. The country is still largely conceived in terms of the premises of transitology and democratization according to Western standards of political organization and models of journalism. Meanwhile, it is worth noting that journalism in Russian society has had difficulties on the way to such renewal. Corruption and the dangerous nature of journalistic work are currently contrasted with strategies of self-censorship.

Third and fourth, I look at journalism-blogging relations through the analytical lens of Bourdieu’s field theory and Laclau and Mouffe’s discourse theory. Field
theory divides social reality into specialized spheres of human action, which it calls fields and describes as “structured spaces of positions (or posts) whose properties depend on their position within these space and which can be analyzed independently of the characteristics of their occupants” (Bourdieu 1993:72). The theory helps us to draw a picture of the correlation between institutionalized politics, economics, and other fields that might be relevant for a specific field analysis. Since journalism may be defined as a sub-field of cultural production, the citizen journalism of bloggers might be similarly defined as the next level in this division of the field. In this context, citizen journalists are social actors within the journalistic sub-field of cultural production.

I use Bourdieu’s field theory to outline the contextual boundaries of blogization and to single out the relationships between journalists and bloggers. With a grip on some connections within the journalistic field, it is essential to identify the central symbolic assets of blogization. As for the question of the social identities, their meaning stems from a continuous interplay of conflicting statements. According to the tradition of discourse analysis, “all identities and all values are constituted by reference to something outside them” (Torfing 1999:6-7). Discourse theory then, with its central concepts of hegemony and articulation, offers a useful analytical strategy to complement and build upon the findings of field theory. In subsequent chapters, this framework enables me to explore the discursive logic of blogization and develop a better understanding of the hegemonic formation of new journalistic identities among bloggers and journalists themselves.
3 How to study blogization?

This chapter explains how the research for this book is done. I explain methods and procedures used to study the relations between journalism and blogging (blogization). I also begin my initial exploration of the subject. First, it is necessary to define and contextualize the object of the study. What is blogization, indeed? By summarizing the key moments of blogization I formulate the working definition of this term. Secondly, this is also the place where I make epistemological remarks concerning my way of thinking about blogization. I outline possible methodological paths and explain which one I chose to conduct this research. I recognize the limitations of the chosen research strategy and describe its strengths and advantages. Finally, I describe at length how this research has been done in practical terms: describing the sources of evidence I use and how the methodological premises of field theory and discourse theory are applied throughout the research.

3.1 Defining the research object

The key moment for many, if not all, social theories lies in determining how real social life is. Philosophers of knowledge have distinguished between the view of reality as objective (positivistic epistemology) and subjective (constructivist epistemology). Positivism, sometimes also called realism, claims it is possible to study social phenomena from one, objective point of view. In contrast, constructionism or social constructionism claims the inherently constructed (subjective) character of the social and hence permits multiple interpretations. These epistemological traditions can be taken as opposing points of departure, though attempts have been made to overcome this division. Dave Elder-Vass (2012) stresses the importance of combining both approaches and adjusting them to particular research topics.

As previously mentioned, the object of this study is flexible and unstable. With such a vague and rapidly evolving object as blogization, it seems difficult to argue convincingly in favor of positivistic accounts. Perhaps, more nuanced questions of journalism-blogging relations can be addressed with a positivistic agenda and quantitative inferences. But the broader picture still requires qualitative
interpretations, even when dealing with descriptive, statistical data. As Matt Carlson (2007) points out, it is difficult to understand the role of blogs in political communication without also knowing the broader media context of established journalistic institutions. Thus, from a constructivist point of view, blogization is under construction. Social actors (both journalists and bloggers) interact with each other, generating and contesting meanings of what they do. This process is at such an early stage that interpreting these social constructions is more relevant than drawing an objective picture. Therefore, my research leans more towards social constructivism.

The epistemology of social constructivism

In human history, knowledge had long been a product of observations and experiments. In the 1960s, Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1966) proposed a new formula for knowledge. Their vision of reality as socially constructed inverted the traditional flow of sociological research and opened up new possibilities for non-essentialist interpretations of the social order. It was “a major redefinition of the sociology of knowledge, making it and the study of the social construction of reality central to sociological theory” (Schneider 2005:725). This epistemological shift is known as social constructionism or social constructivism. Instead of asking questions about the essence of reality like “what is journalism” or “what is blogging,” social constructivism seeks to know what a group of people, in a defined context, think about the reality of journalism or blogging. In other words, both phenomena are socially constructed through chains of interaction among people who ascribe them with certain meanings and definitions thereby distinguishing them from one another. It is the overarching task of social constructivism to investigate the process that recreates reality, names it and makes it part of the general knowledge.

The work of Berger and Luckmann is a major milestone of social constructionism. However, a range of other theories nourished the paradigm, making it an umbrella term for numerous methodological approaches and research strategies. Marianne Jørgensen and Louise Phillips (2002:6) see a close connection between social constructionism and French post-structuralism, with the latter considered a subcategory of the former. Although no scientific consensus exists concerning such a relationship, and both approaches are highly contested in their own right, many authors see the value in this comparison. Both approaches reject the universality and totalizing worldviews characteristic of Marxist and
psychoanalytic theories. Michel Foucault has made an important contribution to social constructivism, in spite of the difficulties with qualifying or attributing his work to any particular scientific school. Instead, innovative approach to the sociology of knowledge, and his theoretical and methodological legacy, is now commonly referred to as Foucauldian archaeology and genealogy. Foucault uses these terms to unveil the social fabric of various strands of knowledge, tracing the historical development (construction) of such ambiguous phenomena like illness, sexuality, and madness.10

During the second half of the twentieth century, parallel to the foregoing scientific motions, an introduction of the notion of discourse into social studies was undertaken with growing persistence and elaboration. Most remarkably, for example, in “The Order of Things” (1970) and “The Archaeology of Knowledge” (1969) Foucault elaborated on the idea of discourse to study processes of production and reproduction of knowledge. Thus, from a constructivist point of view, it is not a set of fundamental conditions that allow for the diagnosis of a particular illness but a state of medical knowledge specific to a particular time and location. Ultimately, the anti-foundationalist premises of social constructionism imply that “all knowledge is discursively produced and therefore contingent, and that there is no possibility of achieving absolute or universal knowledge since there is no context-free, neutral base for truth-claims” (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002:175).

Hence, when I pose a question like “what is blogization?,” I do not search for a positivist and objective definition of the term, but rather examine the process of social construction associated with this term. The difficulty dealing with constructs is that, in the context of scientific research, there are two sources of construction: the social actors directly involved in the process blogization; and the scientists themselves, including me, who attribute certain abstract concepts and theoretical explanations to the construction of social reality.

Contemporary societies are increasingly interconnected. This is made particularly visible by practices and representations on the Internet, where societal structures and individual actors are at times almost indistinguishable. Accordingly, the ontological treatment of such technologically mediated social contexts has been shifting its research focus. Instead of studying fixed objects and rigid structures, some scholars have begun focusing on communicative flows, systems of relations, networks and processes (e.g. Latour 2005; Castells 2009). This process-oriented ontology also suggests looking at the general context and “exploring culture in formation”

Studies of highly networked phenomena and processes have emphasized the importance of background immersion into respective research subjects (Bennett, Foot and Xenos 2011:225-6). This methodological step helps to identify the patterns of interconnectedness inside a network and to choose the entry points for further analysis.

In recent theoretical accounts, the idea of a network is increasingly conceptually replacing the classic dichotomy of structure and agency. Bruno Latour and his colleagues (2012) argue that the availability of digital data today makes the distinction between the social level of individual actors and the level of social aggregates counter-productive. This distinction forces researchers to constantly switch between two levels of analysis, drawing conclusions and causalities between them. Consequently, the choice of a starting point and sample raises questions of validity and representativeness. Today digital communication systems make these questions especially problematic. Therefore, Latour (2005) offers the alternative of a “flat” vision of social reality, that better reflects the hyperlinked format of online documents, institutions, organizations and individual profiles, since this permits one-level of exploration. Drawing on Gabriel Tarde’s nineteenth century social theory, Latour et al. (2012) reintroduces the notion of monads. According to this restored theory, a monad is “a highly specific point of view” that unfolds in reality through its ties, attributes or items:

The farther the list of items extends, the more precise becomes the viewpoint of this individual monad. It begins as a dot, a spot, and it ends (provisionally) as a monad with an interior encapsulated into an envelope. Were the inquiry to continue, the ‘whole world’, as Leibniz said, would be ‘grasped’ or ‘reflected’ through this idiosyncratic point of view. (Latour et al. 2012:599)

In a networked social reality, the privileging of a particular point of departure (a network node) potentially leads to the discovery of other nodes, which provide further insights until we arrive at a fuller picture of a given network. This means that it is possible to study a social phenomenon thoroughly and consistently starting from any of the available entry points. The subject of journalism-blogging relations is an example of a highly interconnected social reality that is difficult to address using conventional sociological methods of sampling, inferences and validation. Therefore, I naturally take advantage of a networked epistemology that justifies and encourages multiple entry points in the study of social phenomena.

Another important ontological and epistemological dimension of any study is that researchers interpret what they see in terms of their own cultural frame of reference (Dilley 2002). This means taking into account the inevitable limitations of research.
What then constitutes valid empirical materials on journalism-blogging relations? In this research, the answer to that question is debatable. However, in Latourian terms, it is also an answer that does not have to be too precise. Furthermore, any social inquiry is a product of “epistemes” (Foucault 1970) or forms of knowledge that are specific to certain historical epochs and scientific paradigms. This post-structuralist impossibility of objective knowledge opens the space for scientific interpretation and stimulates a more explicit and justifiable position for research. Taking the epistemological stance described above to its extreme, I argue that what is advantageous about acknowledging a researcher’s subjectivity is being part of the studied phenomenon. Thus, I take the bias under partial control by suggesting a complete epistemological U-turn in consciously privileging my own frame of reference. As I outlined in the introduction, culturally and practically I am tightly embedded with my research subject. This embeddedness enables me to consider my particular viewpoint as a logical point of entry for this investigation, and one that fits with Tarde’s notion of monads.

What is blogization?

By blogization, I refer to instances when traditional mass media draw on content from independent blogs, and when the blogosphere becomes a notable resource for everyday news. I consider this process from two theoretical perspectives that are related to journalism: (1) on the one hand, blogization is rooted in the ideas of participatory journalism, emphasizing the involvement of ordinary people in news production and, in a way, facilitating a media system of collaborative and collective actions (Singer et al. 2011); (2) on the other hand, blogization is connected to a broad theoretical tradition which focuses on alternative forms of journalism, traditionally seen as a challenge to mainstream media power (Couldry and Curran 2003). Both theoretical perspectives provide useful insights into the nature of news blogging, but the crucial difference between them is that they highlight opposing modes of news production. I view this as a distinction between a mode of participation that emphasizes commonalities, and a mode of alternativeness that emphasizes differences. Thus, I develop the term blogization to identify certain kinds of relationships between the journalism of traditional media organizations and the journalism of blogs.

My basic assumption is that blogization takes place within the general media space. I conceptualize this general media space as both a field (when focusing on
social actors and hierarchies) and as a post-structuralist discourse (when focusing on meanings and hegemonies). As structural elements of the journalistic field, media organizations are subject to various political and commercial influences such as affiliation with certain political and business interests, structures of ownership, and, most subjectively, a perceived reputation in the general public opinion.

Journalistic hierarchies are in the process of radically shifting across the globe, and Russia is not an exception. At the bare minimum, journalistic roles and shared values are becoming more nuanced and diversified. As this shift occurs, blogging is at times considered in opposition to the mainstream journalistic field, and at others viewed as indistinguishable from it. I argue that the field of blogging, which at first sight, is not bounded by the same institutionalized hierarchies and rules that characterize the field of traditional mass media, it must still follow an internal logic, however uncertain it may be. In this project I aim to identify this internal logic. This means identifying new types of social identities and subjectivities and analyzing their positions in relation to each other. It also involves the study of subjective expressions generated by and about news blogging.

I consider the phenomenon of news blogging as part of a broader theoretical and empirical context frequently defined as citizen journalism. Accordingly, I use “blogger” and “citizen journalist” synonymously, while recognizing their multiple meanings and interpretations in other studies. The object of my research then are journalism-blogging relationships which are constructed by journalists and bloggers themselves. By the blogization of journalism, I refer to the influence of this type of blogging as a new form of journalistic production that opens up new possibilities for citizen participation in media production.

Blogging affects institutional boundaries, occupational hierarchies and the ideological principles of the journalistic profession. It does so by offering new approaches to news making, while also raising new ethical questions. Can we expect, for example, reliable, accurate and responsible journalism from blogs? What kind of culture do bloggers generate and import into mainstream journalistic culture? Moreover, blogization is not a one-way causal process from blogs to journalism, rather journalists take blogging into account and actively contribute to the reconstruction of journalistic culture. Thus, the mutual coexistence of two social constructs, the “blogger” and the “journalist,” is marked by symbolic struggles over the meaning of good and bad journalism, appropriate and inappropriate blogging, objectivity and subjectivity in reporting, etc.

We can already see how journalists and bloggers both articulate their positions in relation to each other’s work: bloggers actively cite and comment on the mainstream
media agenda, while professional journalists refer to blogs and other social media accounts as sources of information. In economic terms, blogging poses challenges but also new opportunities for journalism. We do not know yet whether blogization will have a positive or negative impact on journalistic products. What counts here is the size and quality of the audience for an individual blogger or a mainstream media outlet. I view assessing the construction of these market-oriented oppositions as an important task. Similarly, politically blogization is creating alternative public spaces and news agendas, but what the way the journalistic community chooses to respond to these circumstances (polarization, radicalization, or, perhaps, co-optation) and the roles journalists will choose to play in the new media environment remains uncertain. These are difficult questions, to answer because in some cases it is becoming increasingly problematic to differentiate between a blogger and a journalist.

It has been argued that the term citizen journalism usually designates “the ordinary person’s capacity to bear witness” particularly in relation to crisis events (Allan and Thorsen 2009:18; Allan 2013). This is especially true for sudden catastrophes such as earthquakes, tsunamis, hurricanes and the like. It is also remarkable how various alternatives to mainstream journalism evolved in conjunction with a major media event. In 1999, anti-globalization protests in Seattle gave birth to media activism and the network of *Indymedia* journalists (see e.g. Platon and Deuze 2003; Meikle 2002; Kidd 2003). The 9/11 tragedy in 2001 is often linked to the emergence of journalism on blogs (Tremayne 2007:xii). Similarly, the phrase “citizen journalism” entered the journalistic lexicon right after the devastating tsunami in South Asia in December 2004 (Allan 2010). Immediate witnesses to tragic events, like devastating natural disasters, are often victims surprised by an event. Yet, they are also able to take video and pictures of the event. These reports often become first-hand news on the Internet and later on mainstream media. But this type of journalism is rather accidental and spontaneous, albeit the most valuable for media companies striving for breaking news. Naturally, established mass media emphasize the importance of this news and encourage audiences to actively contribute to the news production. Such a perspective inevitably brings citizen reporting into the mainstream (cf. Kperogi 2011). However, in the end it is media professionals who decide which amateur reports to publish, how to do it and in what context.

Connecting globally renowned events with changes to the social practice of new media presents an image of the uneven advancement of new forms of mass communication. However, the sequence rather illustrates the general trend of mediatization (Hjarvard 2008) that today influences various spheres of social life, including science. According to the theory, mediatization imposes a specific media-
based logic on the practices and modes of scientific research. Scholars are increasingly surrounded by media-generated contexts and inevitably become engaged in the reproduction of these contexts. For example, the mediatization of academia makes scholars inclined to present their results in the media. This generates publicity for researchers that emphasize subjects that correspond to the mass media’s selection of “newsworthy” topics and social issues. Hence, dialectical relations between media practices and media research on these practices, are highly contingent and difficult for traditional sociological analysis of causes and effects.

One of the problems of this research is that its argument is based on a specific type of blogization, while there are numerous other formats and possible intersections between traditional journalism and new media forms. Web 2.0 (O’Reilly 2005), or tools for user-generated content, have pushed the studies of new media to a completely new level of complexity. Before the astounding growth of 2.0 applications, it was more or less feasible to grasp and monitor all the main actors and structures involved in the production of media content. Today, the Internet’s varied social media and interactive features have burst open the door for phenomena that are difficult to observe in their entirety.

Multiple media forms can also be confusing when it comes to defining a key aspect of blogization – blogging. This notion is relatively new. It has been on the scientific agenda for a little more than a decade. However, it remains a vague concept since so many different practices are referred to as blogging. Consequently, blogging must always be defined, especially when it is related to another concept, like the concept of blogization that I develop in this research. In existing studies of blogging, researchers often fail to clearly define what they mean by the term (Garden 2012:494). According to Garden, blogs should be defined, either in terms of a specific cultural genre or a technological medium, as professional work or as an amateur activity. Without a clear definition there is a risk of misconception. One common mistake, as suggested by Garden, is the simplistic description of blogs as online diaries, though this is just one genre among others. Similarly, researchers erroneously separate blogs from journalism, while it is often reasonable to identify blogging as a sub-genre of journalism. Likewise, defining blogging as an exclusive example of citizen journalism means forgetting about blogs written by professional journalists. Finally, Garden concludes, unlike many other scholars, that the features of hyperlinking and commenting are not indispensable to blogging. These key misconceptions demonstrate the complexity of the relations between journalism on blogs and journalism in traditional forms of media. Hence, instead of separating the
two, I suggest using the concept of blogization to emphasize the analytical and practical integration of the two.

Media studies offers a multitude of labels that try to embrace several topics relevant to this question: the centrality of the audience, the empowering effect of the Internet, and the collective character of new journalistic forms that are closely tied to the issue of professionalism. This research recognizes the multitude of terms used in the literature to explain a phenomenon similar or closely related to an overlap between traditional and new forms of journalism. These labels include public or civic journalism (Glasser 1999; Rosen 1999), citizen journalism and grassroots journalism (Gillmor 2004), collaborative citizen journalism (McIntosh 2008; Rouse 2006), open source journalism (Platon and Deuze 2003), participatory journalism (Lasica 2003), hyperlocal journalism (Schaffer 2007), journalism 2.0 (Briggs 2007), networked journalism (Beckett 2008; Beckett and Mansell 2008; Beckett 2010; Russell 2011), ambient journalism (Hermida 2010), and post-professional journalism (Waisbord 2013:202-21). Also Andrew Chadwick’s (2013) theorization of hybrid media system suits this diverse set of notions. In some degree all these concepts are related to my argument, though I will mostly refer to citizen journalism of blogging, which seems to reflect my line of argumentation better than others.

Some terms provide a much broader perspective on journalism than the idea of blogization that I utilize in this book. Charlie Beckett’s (2008; 2010) notion of networked journalism considers all kinds of web 2.0 tools as part of the new journalistic and news media environment. The term “networked journalism” naturally emphasizes connectivity and interaction between various forms of news media content, in which blogs play only a partial role. My own commitment to conceptualizing blogization in the context of Russia is not an attempt to give another name for what Beckett describes in the U.K. Rather, this is an attempt to highlight the dominant mode of journalistic development in a specific empirical case. Thus, the Russian case does not contradict the idea of networked journalism but clarifies its national features. This distinction is crucial if we consider Western contexts, where the term “networked” is more applicable for general purposes. It is much easier to think about Western media systems as networked wholes, than it is in cases like Russia with very clear ideological divisions between journalism and the audiences at play.

Whereas the idea of networked media serves to extend the continuity of media practices toward further participation and citizen engagement (Beckett 2010:7-10),

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11 The comparison between blogization and these terms is addressed in my work thanks to the valuable comments provided by Dr. Bart Cammaerts.
this book on blogization explores moments of discontinuity—individual blogs can break the flow of conventional practices for professional and amateur journalists. This research views the blogization of journalism as a sub-category of networked journalism and describes it qualitatively as one possible form of networked journalism.

Another way to describe relations between journalism and new media tools is through the concept of “ambient journalism.” Alfred Hermida (2010:301) compares ambient journalism to the mechanism of awareness systems, which transforms journalistic work from the content-oriented communication of separate news sources to communication based on the interconnected and cumulative effect of multiple sources. A great example of ambient journalism is the use of micro-blogging feeds (like the ones on Twitter) to build a news story. Access to such data facilitates newsmaking practices. At the same time, the ambience of journalism implies an atmosphere in which the audience (social media users) is surrounded by a constantly evolving space of news bites and events. Therefore, an analytical approach that relies on the concept of this new ambient journalistic ecology points to changes in professionalism and defines broader normative implications for the vast amounts of raw data available in millions of social media accounts.

Hermida (2010:303) suggests the potential for future empowerment of social media actors (general public) in regulating and negotiating the ambient media space. However, the role of individual agency, and the formation of collective agencies, what we find in the context of highly personified journalism-blogging relations in Russia, requires a more specified conception. The concept of ambient journalism, in other words, contributes to our understanding of the new media environment, but it is less useful for describing the relations of contradiction, power and resistance that exist between individual journalists and bloggers, as well as between mainstream and alternative media forms. On a more general critical note, terms like networked and ambient journalism seem to view changes in the contemporary news media landscape as optimistic solutions to a largely economic crisis, which has stricken media industries across the world. The notion of blogization has a less utilitarian purpose.

“The Hybrid Media System” by Andrew Chadwick (2013) reflects the overlapping and mixture nature of new journalistic forms in contemporary societies. My definition of blogization is very close to Chadwick’s idea of hybridization. Hybrid journalism, like networked journalism, is an overarching term that can include journalism-blogging relations, which I call blogization, as an essential part. The broad scope of the term “hybridization” suggests a kind of balanced interaction between
old and new media. However, the idea of blogization, by contrast, indicates a particular direction in the way this new form of hybrid journalism emerges in the Russian case. Moreover, central to the hybrid media system are new kind of media platforms like WikiLeaks, which create a new space bridging old and new media. According to this view, whistleblowing projects like WikiLeaks function simultaneously as the core of this hybrid system and as its building blocks. Such a viewpoint, however, decenters less hybrid forms of old and new media, old and new forms of journalism.

In Chadwick’s framework the process of blogization can be seen as one suturing mechanism that tightly binds old and new journalistic forms together. An important reservation is needed here. One should not understand blogization as a universally dominant mode of connectivity in hybrid media systems. My reliance on this term stems from the empirical realities of the Russian case.

The frame of reference: Russia

The historical and contemporary development of Russian journalism can be viewed from two angles: either as a slow broadening of press independence or as moments of shrinking freedoms (cf. de Smaele 2007). By Western democratic standards, the current state of media in Russia is not free. But it is also true that Russian media space is now far more diverse, pluralistic and politically independent than at any other period in its history (Lipman 2010:156). Thus, one viewpoint emphasizes the growth in censorship-like restrictions and state control over the mass media. The opposite view takes a longer historical perspective and connects changes in media with the liberating idea of glasnost. This notion became internationally known due to large scale political and economic transformations (perestroika) late in the Soviet Union era. But today the notion of glasnost is frequently used in relation to new media forms, like blogging and other online formats.

One might argue the Russian media system and journalism in particular have followed an oscillating trajectory during the last thirty years. From a period of strong state control in the early 1980s it oscillated toward an extended period of glasnost, only to later retreat into yet another period of political pressures in the 2000s (most visible in the practices of self-censorship among journalists). The rise of the online

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12 With some reservations, we may refer to the first post-Soviet decade as a continuation of glasnost, despite the various complex developments that happened at that time in the Russian media system.
media and the blogging subculture paved the way for the so-called glasnost 2.0 (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Broadening of Freedoms and Tools of Oppression

In recent years, well-educated middle-class Russians have refocused their media consumption habits on the Internet (Pietiläinen 2008). It is important, however, not to overestimate the role of the Internet in shaping general public opinion. The majority of the Russian population continues to use television as their main source of news. Recent national surveys showed only a moderate decrease in the consumption of television news between 2009 and 2013. The share of Russians who get news from a television station dropped from 94 to 88 percent during this period (Levada 2013). Of course, most people have access to several sources of information, including interpersonal contacts. The number of respondents who mentioned such contacts among their primary news sources amounted to 26 percent in 2009 and 24 percent in 2013. The same surveys also demonstrated that the consumption of internet news rose from 9 to 21 percent. Reliance on online social networks also increased from 6 to 14 percent.

This research primarily focuses on specific segments of Russian society – journalists and bloggers – who must not be mistaken for representatives of the general population. Accordingly, my arguments apply to a narrow network of active communicators who define their roles and reflect upon journalism-blogging relations among themselves, even though these interactions can have a much broader effect on society as a whole.
Knowledge of the size of an active online audience only indirectly indicates the number of social actors that are involved in the abstract project of glasnost 2.0, and eventually the process of blogization. The slowly rising numbers of internet media users should not be understood in terms of an unambiguously counter-television and counter-oppression logic. The scope of this new online media provides equal opportunities for glasnost 2.0 initiatives and for the transfer of large state-controlled media (television) to a new terrain of communication. The fact that people may be spending less time in front of their TV-sets does not mean they do not watch the same television channels online or read the same kinds of carefully censored news on the Internet.

Figure 1 demonstrates the variability of different tools of oppression and liberation. It also shows the broadening of tools for media freedom as well as the broadening of a set of tools for oppression. This process assumes that state propaganda, the policy of glasnost, selective persecutions, glasnost 2.0 and whatever comes in response are extensions of previous stages of media development. As the Figure suggests, the corridor of opportunities broadens with time, so that there is now simultaneously more ways to stay free and to infringe upon the freedoms of others. Therefore, by only considering short-term changes or a longer, one-sided historical perspective, a researcher can emphasize one trend or another as more important. In other words, both arguments make sense in certain situations, but when taken separately they tend to distort the broader picture.

In the late 1990s, media scholars (de Smaele 1999:185) argued that the Russian media system had only two poles – authoritarian state control and commercialization, allowing no room for civil society. It seems this view is even more valid today. Elena Vartanova (2012:122) notes that to understand the Russian media system one should start with the category of “the state” taken in a broad theoretical and cultural sense, for it is the state that defines and influences all other fields and institutions.

In contrast to Western capitalist democracies, where economic powers and the role of civil society are relatively strong and where governments and political competition are closer to a horizontal model of inter-field relations, neo-authoritarian regimes, like the one in Russia, unfold this structure in a more vertical direction, increasing hierarchical distances between ruling political elites and the rest of society. In Russia, while the neo-authoritarian state dominates political, economic and social life in an asymmetrical way, largely overriding and suppressing any attempts for reverse influences, it is particularly important to consider the effects of
the non-institutionalized, grassroots phenomenon of blogging on the common journalistic space.

3.2 Sources of evidence

In the Russian context, blogization can be studied by focusing on mass media organizations, individual bloggers, and the results of their cultural production (texts). In this section I describe media and bloggers that constitute key sources of empirical evidence for this research. The sources, eight mass media outlets and eight Live Journal bloggers, are important actors in the blogization process.

The selection of mass media

The sample that I chose does not claim to be exhaustive or strictly representative of the Russian media landscape. It is however relatively diverse in terms of political, economic and technological contexts. All the media are established and well-known. I deliberately included three types of media: television as the medium with the largest audience, newspapers targeted to specific social groups, and online publications popular among younger generations, the middle class and intellectuals. Here is a brief overview of these media organizations.

Channel One (1TV) is the most influential news source for the majority of the Russian population. Its news programs are the most watched in the country, reaching the most distant territories of Russia. 1TV is a powerful governmental source of mass information, with 51 percent of the company’s shares belonging to the state. The 1TV program Vremya has the highest ratings of any television newscast. During the 2000s, the channel was also the main voice of state propaganda.

The NTV television channel belongs to Gazprom Media, a state-controlled company since 2000. Before that NTV was the only state-independent national television channel in Russia. Today, the channel is among three leading television companies. Despite its strong commercial orientation, NTV also supports the official news agenda. Known for its sensationalist and scandalous programming, NTV has often been used to discredit political opponents of the Kremlin.

Kommersant is an elite daily newspaper oriented toward business and economics. Founded in 1989, the newspaper has a circulation of about 130,000 and is primarily oriented to executive and business circles. Kommersant belongs to Russian
businessman Alisher Usmanov, and it is more politically autonomous than the two television channels discussed above.

*Moskovsky Komsomolets* (MK) is one of the leading tabloids in Russia with a circulation somewhere between 700,000 and 1,000,000. MK belongs to its chief editor, Pavel Gusev. The newspaper covers social, political, and cultural life with an emphasis on the life of celebrities and sensations.

*Rossiyskaya Gazeta* (RG) is the official newspaper of the Russian government. One of its functions has been to publish official statements, new laws and decrees. But it has also been a source of general news and information. The newspaper has a circulation of approximately 150,000. In a 2009 study by TNS Media Intelligence, RG was named among the key sources of business and political information along with *Kommersant* and another daily *Izvestia*.

*Novaya Gazeta* (NG) is one of the most well-known newspapers in Russia, due to its investigative journalism and its unyielding criticism of the political regime. It is one of the few national mass media outlets that stands in clear opposition to Kremlin politics. NG is owned by its staff and headed by Dmitry Muratov. The newspaper is one of the most dangerous media to work for. During the 2000s, several staff journalists, including Anna Politkovskaya, were killed, allegedly due to their professional work for NG.

*Lenta.ru* (Lenta) is one of the first Russian online newspapers (established in 1999) and is currently a leading source of news for internet audiences. Owned by Russian oligarch Vladimir Potanin through a chain of subsidiaries, *Lenta* successfully competes with traditional news media. With the exception of the business-oriented RBC (Ross Business Consulting), the web page of *Lenta* attracts more readers than any other news site in Russia. It also permits the publication of news that is critical of the Russian state.

*Vzglyad.ru* or *Vz.ru* (Vz) was created in 2005 by Konstantin Rykov, a state propagandists and member of the leading United Russia party. It is the youngest mass media in the sample. According to some media experts, this online media was launched to confront the overwhelming dominance of critical political information on the Internet. Vz positions itself as a news resource for political and business elites.

These eight media are important examples of Russian journalistic organizations. However they are also interesting because of the journalists working for them, or more exactly, because of the texts produced by them. These texts provide important evidence of the practices and meanings associated with blogization. I use various numbers, such as ratings, circulation, and citation indexes, media market shares and revenues, or the frequency of quotations, as quantitative data to provide initial
explorations into the journalistic field. In contrast, textual statements and expressions of subjective positions in the news items represent qualitative dimension of the journalism-blogging relationships in my analysis.

In this study I reduce the multimedia potentiality of technologically diverse media to the form of a written text. Working with television reports, for example, I focus primarily on textual transcriptions that television websites often place alongside respective video files. In terms of content, I chose television channels that publish full versions of their broadcast news programs on their websites. Therefore I assume that television texts are made in the first place for the purposes of broadcasting, with certain policies, audiences and modes of reception in mind; and it is only a secondary aspect of production that these news broadcasts are made accessible on the Internet. The same applies in the case of print newspapers: although I searched for my examples in print versions of the newspapers, the placement and formatting of these texts was not as important to me as the content itself. In this way, all the texts in my sample are comparable, at least at the level of textual meaning. At the same time, with only a few exceptions, irrelevant to the overall picture, all the media texts in my research are available online. This makes my blogization argument stronger since the presence of all the media sources in the same digital format improves interactions between journalists and bloggers. Therefore, I simplify the idea of media publication by perceiving it as the product of a specific mass media organization, on one hand, and by limiting it to the level of textual analysis on the other. This naturally limits the scope of my analysis. By reducing the data for practical reasons of consistency and feasibility, I do not take important aspects of visual expressivity and the symbolic role of photo and video images into account.

The selection of individual bloggers

I draw many of my empirical examples directly from blogs to understand the character of connections between journalism and blogging. I chose a small sample of a few individual bloggers, like the examples from mass media. Mass media can be described formally in terms of the traditional media system with observable and measurable characteristics and attributes. The blogosphere, on the contrary, has no clear institutional characteristics and does not permit strict definitions of what counts as a blog and what does not.

I limit my focus to Live Journal (LJ), a single blog platform, where I chose a group of bloggers with large readerships who come from various backgrounds and
professional orientations. The final list consists of eight names. The list is not representative of the blogosphere, but covers some of the most remarkable examples of current blogging in Russia. Firstly, it covers both political camps—pro-Kremlin and oppositional bloggers. Secondly, it covers trained journalists that combine their daily work with active blogging. Thirdly, it covers different genres ranging from investigative and opinionated reporting, to facts, aggregate stories, and daily life reflections. Finally, it covers people who have become popular due to blogging and those with symbolic capital that stretches beyond the blogosphere.

The following summaries are based on each blogger’s LJ profile page and supplemented by information from publicly available sources. In addition to short descriptions, screenshots portray these bloggers in the context of coverage from the aforementioned mass media sample, positing each blogger in relation to a mediated news story. In most cases, any association between bloggers and the media where they appear are merely coincidental. However, something about relations between journalism-blogging can already be drawn from these examples. In the images, the two samples of media actors (mass media and bloggers) mix, suggesting the first evidence of blogization. The short profiles are listed in alphabetical order according to the surnames of each blogger.

Rustem Adagamov (drugoi.livejournal.com)

Adagamov is a graphic designer and photographer. Born in 1961, he is one of the earliest representatives of blogging. He started his blog in 2002 and has been a top rated LJ blogger since 2006. He is now recognized as one of the most well-known Russian bloggers. With the exception of Aleksey Navalny, another blogger represented in this sample, Adagamov is considered the highest rated blogger in Russia. It is worth mentioning that Adagamov’s nickname on LJ is Drugoi, literally meaning “the other” or “different.” This is symbolically relevant in terms of the construction of a common space between journalists and bloggers as part of the blogization process.

From the late 1990s until the mid-2000s, Adagamov lived in Norway, where he worked for an advertising agency. In 2005, Adagamov returned to Moscow and began paying more attention to blogging. Adagamov calls his blog an “illustrated magazine about everything in the world”. The blog gained its initial popularity due to the blogger’s stories about his life abroad and translations from the Norwegian media. Today, the blog is primarily visual. It syndicates photographs from news agencies (mainly Reuters and France Press) and occasionally contains original photo
Before becoming an oppositional figure, Adagamov was mentioned as a “long-time acquaintance of President” Dmitry Medvedev: “Their ‘relationship’ began after the blogger criticized the official photographers of the Head of State. After that he was invited to the Kremlin, and then on a number of presidential trips” (Zamakhina, MK, April 29, 2011).

During a wave of large political protests in Russia (winter 2011 to spring 2012) Adagamov played the role of an active reporter, documenting numerous street actions and police crackdowns. Eventually, he became a member of the Opposition’s Coordination Council, a civic platform that tried to unify various oppositional forces
in Russia. Having entered public politics and challenging the ruling regime, Adagamov became a target of state propaganda and the repression apparatus. As part of a blackwashing campaign, Adagamov’s ex-wife made an unexpected announcement about his “criminal past.” She accused him of pedophilia that she claimed had been taking place while the couple was living together in Norway. The accusations did not end with an official investigation or charges, but the vast media coverage of these scandalous rumors (see Figure 2) and the possibility of legal consequences convinced Adagamov to immigrate to Europe and continue blogging in an “off-shore” mode.

Vladimir Burmatov (burmatoff.livejournal.com)

Vladimir Burmatov, born in 1981, is known on the Internet for his pro-state propaganda work in the blogosphere. He started his political career as an active participant of a pro-Kremlin youth organization called the “Young Guard of United Russia” in Chelyabinsk, an industrial city in the Ural region.

In 2008, Burmatov moved to Moscow to become one of the leaders of the organization. In his political work, Burmatov put a great deal of effort into online activities. He participated in many discussion forums and blogs, sometimes explicitly but at other times in a subtle way, defending the interests of the United Russia party and the ruling regime. In 2010, when the party increased its activity on the Internet, Burmatov became particularly prolific as a LJ blogger and a notorious provocateur. However, in December 2010 after being exposed as a fraud after publishing fake photographs he lost all credibility among his LJ audience and stopped blogging. In spite of the scandals, or rather, sarcastically speaking, due to them (as proof of his political commitment and loyalty to the party), in 2011 Burmatov was granted a deputy position in the State Duma.

When Burmatov ceased being active on LJ he began writing columns in mass media loyal to the Kremlin, such as Vz. As a Member of Parliament, he now receives more media attention than previously. A recent scandal implicating Burmatov (see Figure 3) occurred after a story was published about a group of bloggers who found plagiarism in his dissertation.

Although Burmatov continued to deny the accusations, and there were no direct sanctions from an academic body against him, he lost his status as a relatively high-ranking official of the Duma. Ironically Burmatov had to move from a vice-chair post at the educational committee to an ordinary position in another committee. I
use the case of Burmatov’s blogging as an example of active but not always effective attempts by the state to “harness” the blogosphere.

Figure 3. Burmatov in the Lenta News. Headline: “Bloggers found plagiarism in Burmatov’s dissertation.” (Lenta, December 3, 2012)

Artemy Lebedev (tema.livejournal.com)

Artemy Lebedev can be viewed as one of the most notorious and extravagant blasphemers, an “enfant terrible” (Podshibyakin 2010:192), in the Russian blogosphere. His blogging style combines elements of the utmost carelessness, creativity and productivity. Ostentatiously apolitical in his credo, Lebedev is however an incessant source of controversial suggestions, shocking initiatives and first-hand travel reports from around the world. His blog states the intention “to publicly arouse admiration or friendship, as well as to elevate the sense of dignity of an individual or a group of individuals along the lines of gender, race, ethnicity, language, origin, religion or membership in a social group.” One entertaining initiative launched by Lebedev is the weekly contest called “Saturday’s tits” (sis’ki po subbotam). The blogger asks female LJ users to send him topless photographs with a
compulsory LJ nickname tag placed somewhere in the picture, so that other LJ users can confirm its authenticity. Blog readers evaluate the “tits” and Lebedev awards monthly and annual prizes to the ones with the highest ratings. The project has lasted for several years and in 2013 the blogger promised to give 500, 1000 and 2000 dollars to the three winners.

**Figure 4.** Lebedev in Moskovsky Komsomolets. Headline: “Lebedev suggested beginning insults of religious people with a special warning.” (Khrennikov, MK, October 3, 2012)

There is another side to Lebedev’s ambivalent personality. Lebedev was born in 1975 to a family of intellectuals. His father Andrey Lebedev held a position as a philology professor and his mother Tatiana Tolstaya is a famous writer, journalist and television host. In 1991, Artemy entered the journalism department at Moscow State University but quit his studies during the second year. He later became one of Russia’s most successful designers working with international brands and developing his own design-studio. Many of the earliest internet projects in Russia were designed by Lebedev and his firm. As a successful business owner he can now afford to travel the world and share these experiences on his blog. Like Adagamov, Lebedev started his blog in early 2001. For many years Lebedev and Adagamov have been the two closest competitors as Russia’s top bloggers.

In October 2012, Moskovsky Komsomolets, in a manner typical of a popular daily, published a news story about Artemy Lebedev (see Figure 4). According to the story,
the blogger announced a new contest for designers. The task was to develop a special symbol that could mark, for example, media products containing offensive remarks concerning religious beliefs. Such a symbol could be placed on websites or television programs just like age restriction symbols. The sarcasm of the initiative is that it alludes to the notorious Pussy Riot trial and the consecutive legislative steps to impose tighter restrictions on freedom of expression.

Oleg Makarenko (fritzmorgen.livejournal.com)

Oleg Makarenko has long kept his real name from the public by using the nickname “Fritzmorgen” and not mentioning details of his personal life. Makarenko is no longer an anonymous blogger. Readers of his blog can see that he was born in 1978 and lives in Saint-Petersburg. Makarenko writes at least one long blog post every day and has done so since April 2007 when the blog was created. His LJ rating has remained firmly within a group of 20-50 leading bloggers. It is known that Makarenko runs a small IT company and has enough spare time to be one of the most prolific LJ users. His texts are often aggregates of various media sources that he combines in one story to prove or to criticize a specific viewpoint that is usually first introduced in the title.

In light of the recent commotions in Russian political life (controversial elections, a legislative tightening of freedoms, and a series of scandalous political trials), Makarenko exposed himself through his clear support of the Kremlin. In his writings, he explicitly states anti-liberal views and constantly criticizes the opposition movement. These attacks are often subtle and manipulative.

Makarenko draws a substantial audience of at least 20,000 “followers” and regularly receives feedback in the form of long comment feeds. Makarenko’s support of the ruling regime may be based on genuine personal conviction. However, it is also possible that Makarenko strategically, and not without the occasional remuneration, brainwashes the “swing state” of the Russian political blogosphere.

Makarenko is also a founder of the Ruxpert.ru project that positions itself as the handbook for Russian patriots. This project is a wiki-based platform, the name stems from “Russian expert.” According to the “Patriot’s handbook” homepage, the main purpose of the project is to expose “the falsity of liberal myths and the lies of the

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13 In February 2012, anonymous hackers stole and published a private electronic correspondence between some of the leaders of the pro-Kremlin youth organization. According to the leaks, Fritzmorgen was one of several top bloggers allegedly catering to the information and propaganda needs of this state-sponsored political organization.
‘independent’ media” that allegedly act in collusion with enemies of Russia in information warfare.

**Figure 5.** Makarenko is a Columnist for the pro-Kremlin News Website Vz.ru. Headline: “The democratic squabble.” (Makarenko, Vz, June 28, 2012)

In addition to his blog, Makarenko actively publishes in the mass media. Vz is one of the main media platforms for his anti-oppositional commentaries (see Figure 5). Presented as anti-liberal his rhetoric is actually targeted against many different movements that are non-liberal but critical of the state.

Dmitry Medvedev (blog-medvedev.livejournal.com)

As Russian President (2008-2012), Dmitry Medvedev played a role that was attractive to liberal-minded audiences. This was the role of a modernizer and a progressive user of gadgetry and online technology. The President’s video blog, which was originally created on the Kremlin’s official webpage (October 2008), was later duplicated and hosted on LJ (April 2009). This supported the widespread conviction of media experts that the service was indeed the most significant space for online political communication at that time. While the other bloggers had been building
their reputation and popularity for years, Medvedev rushed into this domain using the symbolic capital of his presidency. While Adagamov and Lebedev continued the race for blogger-number-one, mainstream national news media quickly named newcomer Medvedev as the most popular blogger in Russia.

Figure 6. Medvedev’s Video Blog in the Governmental Daily Rossiiskaya Gazeta. Headline: “Dmitry Medvedev’s blog.” (RG, July 2, 2009)

Medvedev’s blog is not however very typical in the Russian context. First, it is primarily a video blog, with recorded messages of the President, who later became the Prime Minister, simply uploaded to a LJ web account. Second, Medvedev almost never personally answered, commented or posted anything on his blog. Instead, everything was done by his press secretary office, which is probably understandable in such high-profile circumstances. Third, the blog is heavily pre-moderated, meaning that obviously outrageous and offensive comments were deleted before becoming public, and sensitive or unfavorable questions could be carefully sifted through. Finally, with some rare exceptions, the majority of Medvedev’s videocasts are not meant for the blog, as they are often taken from official ceremonies and speeches.

In a way, this experiment can be viewed as an attempt to get closer to the most critical audience, and to intensify the image of the national leader as an open-minded
politician. The blogosphere is heterogeneous, not all blog account holders are fierce opponents of state power. Therefore, the accumulation of additional public consent through Medvedev’s blog could be considered a positive experience rather than a negative one for state propaganda (Yagodin 2012). It makes sense to talk more generally about the role of Medvedev’s blog in enhancing public discussions about blogs, bloggers and internet participation, thereby enhancing the process of blogization. It has been common for some media to start their news reports with words like “Dmitry Medvedev made an announcement via his blog and here is what he said” (see Figure 6).

Aleksey Navalny ( navalny.livejournal.com)

When I began this research in 2008, Navalny was another popular blogger among LJ users. By the beginning of 2013, he had literally become the leading Russian blogger. Due to his political activism and anti-corruption campaigns, Navalny had become more popular than Adagamov and Lebedev and widely known abroad.

Aleksey Navalny was born in 1976. In spite of his relatively young age, he has been recognized by many national and international media experts as a strong and charismatic alternative to the long-lasting rule of Vladimir Putin. Navalny practices law for corporate clients and this has been his main source of income.

In 2010, Navalny spent a year at Yale University participating in the Yale World Fellows Program. The program focuses on leadership training and supports “emerging leaders from around the world that reflects a rigorous standard of excellence, a commitment to inquiry, and an ongoing pursuit of innovation” (Yale N.d.). This episode of Navalny’s biography is often used against him by state propaganda that routinely connects any oppositional activity with foreign influences, especially when such a connection is in the United States. Mikhail Leontiev from the main Russian television channel (1TV) scathingly reminded audiences that the Yale program provided training to “the leader of the next generation of ‘demo-crats’, internet-führer Aleksey Navalny” (Leontiev, 1TV, January 17, 2012). By “demo” he alludes to the unreal, meant only to demonstrate, and his uses of the German word führer, in the Russian context, creates immediate associations with Hitler.

In 2012, Time magazine included Navalny in a list of the world’s 100 most influential people (Kasparov 2012). His position in the list was labeled as “watchdog.” Navalny’s profile story for this magazine was written by former chess champion Garry Kasparov who has also been one of the most prominent oppositional figures in Russian political life.
As a blogger Navalny has published the results of his own anti-corruption investigations. In 2006, he launched a LJ blog account. The daily audience of Navalny’s blog in 2011-2013 varied between 50,000 and 100,000 readers, and the size of the monthly audience was close to one million. As Navalny himself once noted, each of his blog posts is read by approximately 150,000 to 200,000 readers (Navalny, June 3, 2013). The majority of Russian population, however, still does not know anything about Navalny. Between April 2011 and March 2013, the number of Russians who had heard of him grew impressively from 6 percent to 37 percent (Zheleznova 2013). There is, however, a downside to being widely known in Russia: many people learn about Navalny from television newscasts that do not usually mention him unless it is to make far-fetched accusations and negative implications. Beginning in 2012, Russian authorities opened several criminal investigations concerning Navalny and his relatives (see Figure 7).
Leonid Parfenov is a very well-known journalist who is barely known as blogger. The whole country watched his television programs in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Parfenov spent most of his career working for the NTV channel. He left when the company was scandalously seized by the state-controlled Gazprom but continued working on other television projects afterward. Over the years, Parfenov has been awarded with a prestigious annual prize for his achievements on Russian television five times. Between 2004 and 2007, Parfenov worked as editor-in-chief of the Russian version of Newsweek. This transition to print media was partly a result of his refusal to play by the rules of the Kremlin propaganda machine that had gained full control of the major television channels by the mid-2000s.

Figure 8. Parfenov in a Report from a Protest by Novaya Gazeta. Headline: “What will happen to television the other day?” (NG, December 11, 2011)

In 2010, the Russian media bosses decided to pay tribute to Parfenov after he had already been pushed away from journalistic television contracts and had begun playing the role of an invited jury on various shows. They awarded Parfenov a newly established prize for the outstanding contribution to the development of Russian
television. I specifically touch upon that episode in Chapter 5, as it presents a valuable example for the study of blogization. In short, Parfenov’s resistance to the depoliticization of Russian television journalism pushed him into the domain of online-based media projects and more active integration with blog culture.

While Burmatov’s career soared up from the backyard of the blogosphere to membership in the State Duma, Parfenov’s path has obviously slid from journalistic prominence down to a relatively marginal status as a blogger. Such is the role of political allegiance in Russia. It is not surprising that Parfenov was one of the leaders of the protests that erupted after the Parliamentary elections in December 2012 (exactly when Burmatov was elected). Many witnesses say that Parfenov’s speeches during the street rallies were among the brightest and most moving (see Figure 8).

Parfenov is not an example of a top blogger. His LJ blog was created in 2007 and when compared to other bloggers in my sample, there are very few blog entries on it (less than 200). However, more than 20,000 LJ users actively interact with the author and post comments. It is difficult to describe the dominant characteristics of Parfenov’s scarce blogging. He often engages in discussion with audiences on his work as a journalist cooperating with the various small-scale television projects, like the one on channel Dozhd’. He also collaborates with people by getting insights and information for new projects. For example, he has used the blog for writing a book on the history of the twentieth century.

**Natalia Radulova (radulova.livejournal.com)**

There is limited biographical information on Natalia Radulova. She was born in 1975 in Odessa, a city that is part of the Ukraine today. She writes about herself: “When I was eight, in my diary I had already prepared the text for my future gravestone” (Ogoniok N.d.). She was educated to be a pharmacist, but switched to journalism after moving from Odessa to Moscow in 1996. Radulova works for Ogoniok, a weekly magazine which became part of the Kommersant publishing house in 2009. Radulova has received several distinguished journalistic awards for her social and lifestyle reporting.

The media sometimes refer to Radulova as a blogger, sometimes as a journalist, and at other times as both. Because of the nature of the profession, journalists who work for magazines or daily newspapers are not as well-known as television stars like Parfenov. Therefore, Radulova’s occupational identity is the most unstable when it comes to journalism-blogging relations. She is more or less equally recognized as a columnist and a lifestyle blogger.
In 2008, television news (Nelson, 1TV, November 28, 2008) mentioned Radulova as a journalist who started a fundraising campaign through her blog. Radulova asked her blog readers to donate money supporting the medical treatment of a little girl, whose mother could not afford to pay for it. This story is a rare example of one mass medium (television) talking about a representative from another (print) medium who also acts in a mediated space of blogging. It is also a rare example, because, as Chapter 5 demonstrates, Russian television channels were among the last media to mention bloggers in their news.

On her blog, Radulova often posts hyperlinks to original publications in the main place of work, which is not surprising for a journalist. But she also regularly produces original materials and shares interesting behind the scenes stories about her journalistic work. She often uses the blog to complement her news stories published in Ogoniok by sharing reflections and new details. Many of her commentaries discuss relations between men and women (see Figure 9). Radulova started blogging in 2004 and in some periods her rating has been among the top 10 LJ users in Russia.
Overview of the media actors

Tables 1 and 2 can serve as reference points for the whole book. In Table 1, “Political orientation” is the most controversial category. It is based on subjective but rigorous observations. The main point of such categorizations is to plot the media against the axis of closeness to the interests of the ruling political class in Russia. In this respect the continuum starts with those closest to the state “Conservative” orientation, and moves further away via “Liberal-Conservative,” to the relatively neutral “Center-right” and “Center-left”. Then, beyond the center, there is “Liberal” and certainly the most distant from the state is the “Radical” wing. I marked Novaya Gazeta (NG) as radical because of its distinctive oppositional attitudes. I divide mass media into three groups with respective audience sizes defined as small, medium and large. I deliberately avoided precise numbers, because such data varies significantly in the available sources and thus cannot be fully reliable. This is also why I defined RG as “small and medium,” since the newspaper circulation varies depending on the day of publication. Some estimations on the size of the RG audience do not count the weekend issue, which has a circulation several times higher than the daily issue.

Table 2 provides an overview of the bloggers. The column “readers” indicates how many people subscribed to the blog as followers. The real size of the audience is also hard to estimate, but clearly for the most popular bloggers it is higher than the formal number of subscribers. In most cases potential readers do not need to be “followers” to see the content of LJ pages. In the “comments per post” column, I divided the total number of comments to the blog by the number of blog posts published (for example, 20 posts and 40 comments meant 2 comments per post). The information about “occupation” renders the primary status of bloggers at the moment of research (eventually, Aleksey Navalny can be seen more as a politician). “Closest medium” is a subjective assessment of propinquity: it is my interpretation of how bloggers correspond in style, role, and attitude to the selected mass media. The character of a political affiliation and cases of professional cooperation (e.g. Radulova, Makarenko) were also taken into account here. Apart from “occupation” and “closest medium,” the rest of the data presented in the table can be found on each bloggers’ profile pages. The category of “social capital” is measured by a LJ algorithm that considers the number of subscribers, and more importantly their behavior (how long and how active are they in their own blogs, how often do they comment other blogs, the frequency of LJ logins, and other factors that help to distinguish real people from bots.
### Table 1. Characteristics of the Mass Media Companies (as of March 15, 2013)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Ownership</th>
<th>Political orientation</th>
<th>Audience size</th>
<th>Core audience</th>
<th>Founded</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1TV</td>
<td>TV</td>
<td>Russian Government (51%)</td>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>Large</td>
<td>All social groups</td>
<td>1968</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NTV</td>
<td>TV</td>
<td>Gazprom (state company)</td>
<td>Liberal-Conservative</td>
<td>Large</td>
<td>Most social groups</td>
<td>1993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RG</td>
<td>print</td>
<td>Russian Government</td>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>Small/Medium</td>
<td>State officials</td>
<td>1990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NG</td>
<td>print</td>
<td>Staff (51%)</td>
<td>Radical</td>
<td>Small</td>
<td>Lower Middle class</td>
<td>1993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kommersant</td>
<td>print</td>
<td>Kommersant publishing house</td>
<td>Center-right</td>
<td>Small</td>
<td>Upper middle class</td>
<td>1989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MK</td>
<td>print</td>
<td>Pavel Gusev</td>
<td>Center-left</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Working/ lower middle class</td>
<td>1919</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lenta</td>
<td>online</td>
<td>Rambler Media Group</td>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Middle class</td>
<td>1999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vz</td>
<td>online</td>
<td>Konstantin Rykov</td>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>Small</td>
<td>Middle class</td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: 1TV – Channel One, RG – Rossiiskaia Gazeta, NG – Novaya Gazeta, MK – Moskovsky Komsomolets.
Table 2. Characteristics of LiveJournal Bloggers (as of March 15, 2013)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Social capital</th>
<th>Closest medium</th>
<th>Readers</th>
<th>Comments per post</th>
<th>Founded</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rustem Adagamov</td>
<td>Designer</td>
<td>11,549</td>
<td>Lenta</td>
<td>80,143</td>
<td>≈ 153</td>
<td>2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artemy Lebedev</td>
<td>Designer</td>
<td>8,353</td>
<td>Lenta</td>
<td>77,638</td>
<td>≈ 555</td>
<td>2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aleksey Navalny</td>
<td>Lawyer</td>
<td>7,599</td>
<td>NG/Kommersant</td>
<td>73,013</td>
<td>≈ 569</td>
<td>2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natalia Radulova</td>
<td>Journalist</td>
<td>4,161</td>
<td>MK</td>
<td>27,444</td>
<td>≈ 114</td>
<td>2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oleg Makarenko</td>
<td>IT-business</td>
<td>2,736</td>
<td>NTV/Vz</td>
<td>22,981</td>
<td>≈ 424</td>
<td>2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leonid Parfenov</td>
<td>Journalist</td>
<td>418</td>
<td>Kommersant</td>
<td>24,215</td>
<td>≈ 110</td>
<td>2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dmitry Medvedev</td>
<td>Politician</td>
<td>no data</td>
<td>1TV/RG</td>
<td>16,363</td>
<td>≈ 608</td>
<td>2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vladimir Burmatov</td>
<td>Politician</td>
<td>no data</td>
<td>Vz</td>
<td>3,500</td>
<td>≈ 25</td>
<td>2006</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.3 Research design

I selected the bloggers and media described above for a dual purpose. First, I wanted to find matching equivalents among them. In doing so, the idea is to allow the data to demonstrate how examples of most popular blogging correspond with traditional journalism. Secondly, I chose the particular bloggers because they appear frequently in mainstream media stories and have thus played a significant role in the process of blogization. However, my research is not limited to these bloggers, and I occasionally use other examples to draw a more nuanced picture of blogization. The amount of attention the media and bloggers receive in this research is not always equal.

This section describes how I identified, selected, and processed specific samples of empirical data in this research. There are two main types of data: the quantitative characteristics of studied media actors (journalistic organizations and bloggers), and qualitative examples of their practices. After providing short summaries of these two types of data, I conclude with a brief discussion of abductive reasoning – a method of inference that has normally been contrasted with traditional methods of induction and deduction. I explain the term “abduction” and draw on several philosophers of science to justify the choice of abductive reasoning as my primary mode of thinking through the data.

The quantitative data

For the initial overview of relations between journalism and blogging I relied on official reports and media statistics. Several statistical and other publicly available reports helped me describe the journalistic field I examine in my research. I used recent trade reports to describe the journalistic field in terms of its internal structure and external relations with other fields. The internal positioning of actors depends, for example, on the media’s audience size: ratings for television, circulations for the press, and online traffic for websites. Externally, media can be assessed, for example, from the point of view of media ownership, political affiliation and advertising revenue. I have used these resources to present a picture of the overall tendencies within the field in which the chosen media organizations, journalists, and bloggers act.
The quantitative data is used to illustrate some characteristics of the selected media actors. The two tables in the previous section are examples of such data. I used various sources of statistical information about both news media and blogs. Evaluations of the media market, advertising shares, and some other details on the Russian media system were drawn from the reports published by the Russian Association of Communication Agencies (RACA 2012; 2013), the Federal Agency on Press and Mass Communications (FAPMC 2010; 2011). I retrieved some complimentary information from analytical reports by Yandex (2011), TNS (2009), and MediaLogia (2012). I also used the most recent public opinion surveys conducted by sociological agencies WCIOM (2013) and Levada (2013). The quantitative description of bloggers is based on the statistics available from the LJ profile pages of each blogger. Finally, I evaluate the relative “online strength” of different media actors with the help of the traffic indexes of Alexa.com.

In this data, my primary interest lies in the political and economic characteristics of media businesses. For instance, I searched for any valuable information concerning changes in business structures and ownerships in media industry. Media organizations are quite often part of bigger media holdings, and sometimes they also belong to non-media corporations. This can be viewed as an increased external influence via financial and managerial dependence. It also makes it more difficult to assess a media organization’s own economic power and relative autonomy from the general field of power. Mass media companies in Russia are not public and do not provide details on their financial accounts. To partly compensate for this, I assess economic power indirectly, by relying on advertising budgets – the money spent by advertisers on different media.

As in the domain of business interests, the state has its own mechanisms for influencing the journalistic field. For one, the state simply owns much of the media, and this gives state officials the power to hire and, if necessary, fire editors. For example, Rossiiskaya Gazeta (RG) one of the newspapers in my sample, belongs to the Russian government. If not directly, many media are state-controlled through informal ties, as in the case of the NTV television channel which has been in the possession of those loyal to the Kremlin board. Monopolized by the Kremlin, the Russian political field also makes non-competitive and often controversial decisions in media legislation, such as unfair trials and selective subsidizing of loyal mass media. These aspects of media governance pose an obvious threat to journalistic autonomy. This is especially typical for small regional mass media, the very existence of which would not be possible without regular investments by local governments.
The second stage of quantitative data gathering included content analysis of texts. In the selected mass media organizations, I searched for any news items containing the word “blogger” from the earliest case in 2002 until the end of 2012. During the first several years (2002-2005), references to bloggers were quite rare. They became more common in most of the media sample beginning in 2006. In some media, “blogger” stories only began appearing later in 2009. This explains why the empirical examples in this book mainly cover the period between 2006 and 2012, with some examples from 2013. I could have selected the items based on other key words, such as “blog,” “blogging” or even “citizen journalist,” but chose to instead concentrate on the term “blogger” alone. I decided it was relevant to locate the texts with more concrete subjects, where the people who were blogging would be named, quoted, and interviewed. I also wanted to avoid the selection of controversial and sometimes misleading examples of “citizen journalism.” This expression in Russian can also mean “civilian” journalism to contrast it with military journalistic organizations.

I retrieved this second pool of quantitative data with the help of Integrum database, which contains digital copies of print and online media, and the textual transcripts for some of the television news programs. I collected a sample of 6337 news stories and analyzed distributions for each year (2006-2012) and for each of the eight mass media (see Chapter 5). In the respective media, I also counted the share of media stories that mention bloggers. My initial plans included a more rigorously designed content analysis of this large sample of data. But I found that rapid pace of changes in the number and quality of media representations of “bloggers” is far too challenging for meaningful categorizations. I also conducted online searches with the help of Yandex blog service (blogs.yandex.ru) to get a perspective that roughly corresponds with how bloggers refer to news media. In the search settings, I limited my search to only LJ blogs containing hyperlinks to the selected sample of news media organizations.

The qualitative data

The quantitative overview of the journalistic field is further sharpened by qualitative analysis of the texts produced by the selected media actors. This study involved constant monitoring and qualitative assessment of the selected sources. I paid constant attention to the content of the media actors chosen for the sample. The raw data thus consists of textual materials – examples of journalism in traditional media and blogs that contain hints on the character of the journalism-blogging
relationships (blogization) in Russia. My intention has not been to identify the causal effects of blogging on news journalism or to make generalizations concerning these findings and the larger picture. Instead I chose to approach the empirical material in a rather subjective and detached manner, since I felt this would better serve the purpose of exploratory testing and interpretation. Therefore, the data selected for this research is by no means statistically representative. However, I have tried to rely on a systematic model that includes empirical material relevant to the subject of journalism and blogging relations.

In the qualitative stage of my analysis, I distinguish three levels of relations between media actors. First, I consider materials where bloggers and journalists express their opinions on their own roles and places in the field of news production. These written statements are found on blogs and in mainstream media publications. Second, bloggers and journalists make use of each other to produce news content. Similarly, various links, references and quotations in traditional media and blogs provide examples of that. Third, bloggers and journalists make statements and evaluations of one another’s work, outlining differences and subdivisions within these two sub-fields of the common field of blogization. Hence, each of these three levels leads to some textual material either in publications of institutional mass media or in individual web blogs. And it is important to see the difference between the two major data sets: media publications and blog entries.

I looked for examples of where and how discussions of journalism and blogging appear and evolve over time. In addition, I studied media coverage of some news events in order to obtain a sample of material that represents journalism and blogging at work and not only at moments of reflexivity (although, in blogs the two often go hand in hand). Some of these news events were only chosen as potent illustrations, while others (Parfenov’s award speech, the 2008 Russo-Georgian war, and the 2010 forest fires in Russia) played a more central role in my argumentation and served as a basis for comparison across media.

I selected and included a total of 151 texts in the qualitative analysis, 95 of them are from traditional media and 56 are from blogs. These texts cover a time period from March 2003 through to June 2013.14 I refer to some of these media actors more often than others. For example, Parfenov’s blog is only referred to twice, though his example is one of the central objects of the analysis. In that case, it has been more

14 Only a small number of texts are from 2013. The year is not formally included in this study due to major changes in the media representations of some of the most prominent bloggers. For example, in 2013 blogger Aleksey Navalny was no longer considered an active “blogger,” as his media profile became increasingly connected to his political career.
important to study media reactions to Parfenov as a personality. On the other hand, the blog of Rustem Adagamov is often cited since it provides vivid illustrations of blogging practices.

This type of observation did not imply any interventions. Unlike interviewing, evidence obtained through unobtrusive observation has the advantage of not influencing the respondents, and allows for a look at them in a more natural setting. At the same time, the richness of digital networks – online social networks and interactive tools – compensates for the inability to ask questions personally. With this method of unobtrusive observation, I believe I have reached what anthropologists call “thick description” (Geertz 1973:3-30); that is, not only a detailed sample covering multiple variations and diverse perspectives but also a sample representing the dominant structures of signification expressed by the observed actors. Thick description is, thus, an approach to interpretation “by recording the circumstances, meanings, intentions, strategies, motivations, and so on that characterize a particular episode…” (Schwandt 2007:296).

The main difference between quantitative and qualitative data in this research is a difference of context and text. While various sets of quantitative data provide contextual background, the qualitative data highlights crucial examples of the development of relations between journalism and blogging in Russia.

Earlier I mentioned that most of the textual materials for qualitative assessment were collected from the Integrum database. This database proved to be very useful for quick searches and full coverage of the selected mass media. But it is important to mention that I also searched for online versions of the analyzed and quoted texts. With only a few exceptions, all of them are available on the official websites of the different media (of course Lenta and Vz only have online versions). This is important to note since studying blogization implies that the journalistic field forms a dense network of multiple information nodes with similar access, functionality and potential to effectively link to each other. This becomes especially relevant later when I discuss the media preferences of bloggers. A full list of these qualitative sources that includes hyperlinks to the original publications is provided at the end of this book.

I have been gathering my qualitative examples throughout the entire period of research from 2008 to 2013. I systematically monitored my sample of mass media and bloggers by searching for the following lists of material:

1) Any mention of the actors in the sample. For example, when I sifted through updates of television news programs it was possible to see if any other mass media or bloggers were mentioned in the transcripts.
2) Any mention of the word “blogger” (two variants of the spelling in Russian are: *blogger* and *bloger*). Less than one percent of the results contained the feminine variant of blogger (*blogersha* and *blogersha*). Unlike the word “journalist,” the use of the feminine variant of blogger is not common in the Russian language and most female bloggers referred to in the same way as men.

3) Mention in the title of the words “journalist” (both with masculine and feminine endings – *zhurnalist, zhurnalistka*), “journalism” (*zhurnalista*), and variants of “citizen journalist” and “citizen journalism,” in which “citizen” is an adjective (*grazhdanskii*).

4) Mention in the title of the words “blog” or “media” (including the widely used Russian abbreviation for mass media – “SMI”).

In an initial search, thousands of results included two or more of these keywords. Hence, in order to limit the search, the third and the fourth title-specific keywords were added. The final qualitative sample was a result of purposeful selection of materials that provided the most valuable insights on the development of journalism and blogging relations.

**Abductive reasoning**

In science there are two basic methods of handling observed empirical data. These methods are deduction (deducing conclusions from the existing theory and testing this theory) and induction (inducing conclusions about a new theory from observed facts). Deductive reasoning is usually applied for causal explanations and predictions. The inductive approach generally produces a theoretical account of a studied phenomenon, inducing a probabilistic argument from multiple observations. In social research, deduction and induction are often used together, and many studies in the positivist paradigm deal with probabilities and generalizations stemming from these two methods of reasoning.

However, studies designed according to the principles of interpretivism and social constructivism often draw on another type of reasoning, known as abduction. Originally introduced in writings of Charles Sanders Peirce, the term abduction has also been referred to as “inference to the best explanation” (Harman 1965). Post-structuralist discourse analysts prefer the name retroduction (Glynos and Howarth 2007). Although Peirce used the terms “abduction” and “retroduction” as synonyms (Peirce 1955:151), some scholars find differences and distinguish between the two as close but separate types of reasoning (see e.g. Blaikie 2000).

According to Gilbert Harman (1965), abduction is a variation of induction, but instead of formulating a theoretical description from a large number of observations
(induction), abductive reasoning leads to this description by selecting the best hypothesis out of many available hypotheses. Gary Shank (2008) compares abductive researchers to detectives. He gives the example of the famous method of Sherlock Holmes, whose style of reasoning has been mistakenly defined as deduction, though in fact it should be called abduction. When Holmes realizes in one of his investigations that the watchdog did not bark, he reaches the best available conclusion (abduction) that the dog knew the intruder. Thus, abduction involves some kind of guess work, a reliance on intuition that culminates in discovery. Norwood Hanson (1958) compared all three types of reasoning as follows: “Deduction proves that something must be; Induction shows that something actually is operative; Abduction merely suggests that something may be” (p. 85).

A general philosophy of science defines two purposes of abduction: the generation of new hypotheses and the selection of hypotheses for further investigation (Vasyukov 2003:186). The overarching goal of abductive reasoning, therefore, is to develop recommendations or a kind of road map for subsequent research. Glynos and Howarth (2007:47) have argued that abstraction (retroduction) has become central to the social sciences as it epitomizes the process of explanation through discovery.

For a study of journalism-blogging relations, the deductive method could be used for causal explanation and prediction. A deductive argument moves from a general statement on some existing theory to prove that it still works in new conditions or to show that it is inadequate and needs to be redefined. Thus, a deductive research strategy could resemble the following hypothetical example:

- There is a theory that says famous people are more likely to become prominent bloggers than ordinary people. We want to test this hypothesis.
- We find that the Russian president, who is a famous person, starts his own blog.
- By measuring the level of popularity (prominence) of the presidential blog we will be able to either prove or to falsify the hypothesis and thus suggest corrections to the existing theory.

Induction is a movement in the opposite direction. The inductive approach creates a theoretical description of a studied phenomenon, inducing a probabilistic argument from multiple observations. The same example taken from the point of view of induction would be:

- We want to study what makes bloggers prominent. We select a representative sample of blogging examples.
• Among the examples we identify a set of variables responsible for the category of “prominence” and find that pre-blogging popularity positively correlates with this category.

• Based on these findings, we conclude that famous people are more likely to become prominent bloggers than ordinary people.

Briefly put, deduction and induction are reversed versions of each other. The starting point for deduction (hypothesis) is the final destination of induction. Both kinds of reasoning require strict categorizations and agreement on what is meant by “blogger,” “ordinariness,” “prominence” and so on. The vague and overlapping notions of blogging and journalism make it difficult to apply these strategies in my research. Abduction, in turn, follows a logic that can be described as a mapping of a range of possible hypothetical explanations and the making of inferences concerning the most probable hypothesis. Abduction builds a theory from observational data, and in that sense, as Harman (1965) has pointed out, is closer to induction. As an illustration of abductive inference the same topic of blogger prominence may have the following sequence of arguments:

• We have noticed that to be a “prominent blogger” means different things in different social contexts, and the very definition of “blogger” changes with time.

• We cannot observe a “prominent blogger” because we do not know what exactly this means. To make sense of this unstable social phenomenon we must rather observe the surrounding conditions and relations between actors that we think are important. We collect evidence that offers possible explanations of the observed phenomenon.

• Based on a background immersion on the subject and thick description we find the best explanation available to us and take it as a hypothesis for a new theory. Thus, in abduction, reasoning proceeds from observations that serve as a source for hypotheses, with some always more convincing than others. The abductive conclusion, of course, can be further tested and corrected. But it must be made in order to initiate discussion of a vaguely defined subject.

Norman Blaikie (2000; 2007) brought this type of analytical reasoning into the interpretative research paradigm. He connected abduction with qualitative studies of social reflexivity. This is why he distinguishes between retroductive reasoning and abductive reasoning. Retroduction, according to him, is applied in more positivist terms, whereas his vision of abduction is based on the following set of assumptions:

The starting-point is the social world of the social actors being investigated: their construction of reality, their way of conceptualizing and giving meaning to their social world, their tacit knowledge. Their reality, the way they have
constructed and interpreted their activities together, is embedded in their language. Hence, the researcher has to enter their world in order to discover the motives and reasons that accompany social activities. The task is then to redescribe these motives and actions, and the situations in which they occur, in the technical language of social scientific discourse. (Blaikie 2000:25)

Thus, Blaikie applies the term abduction specifically to underline the “borrowing” of conceptual explanations and hypotheses from the vocabulary of the studied social actors.

It has been recently noted that many qualitative studies are based on the analytical strategy of abductive reasoning, even though this is not always recognized and remains implicit in research accounts (Blaikie 2007:106). This is seen in studies where social realities are hypothesized and empirically demonstrated, but not tested or generalized. It is clear that there are various versions of abductive reasoning, and questions with regard to their differences, implications and practical implementations. In this research I do not strictly follow one or another model of abductive reasoning. However, it has been worthwhile to outline the general direction of this inquiry and to also show what it is not. In this regard, the use of statistical data and quantitative analysis contributes to abduction as a form of background immersion and helps to make more educated abductive arguments instead of drawing conclusions about causes and effects.

Summary

This chapter combined several methodological discussions: what this study is about, what the relevant examples are, and how these examples can be addressed.

I defined my research object as the blogization of journalism and explained the complexity and multi-dimensionality of this topic. Blogization is a term that should not (and probably could not) be defined with precision. Rather it should be taken as a broad framework describing multiple processes occurring in a social space within and between traditional journalism and the journalism of blogs. I argue that studying blogization should be guided by specific contexts in which these processes evolve. For example, the blogization of Russian journalism should be considered in the context of the simultaneous expansion of journalistic freedoms and systems of political control. The increased visibility of freedom must be contrasted with the extended influence of political surveillance, intimidation and control.

The empirical materials are based on two separate but interconnected types of media actors: eight mass media organizations and eight users of the LJ blog hosting
site. It is not a typical comparative framework, since the actors are different in many respects. Still, I briefly describe the actors, though the main description will follow from the analysis in the next chapters. In the case of traditional mass media I pay attention (see Table 1) to the type of media, ownership, political orientation, audience size, and estimated core audience. The relevant differentiating criteria for bloggers are occupation, number of readers, blogging experience (based on a blog’s year of origin), level of interaction (comments on a blog’s content), and the so-called social capital that LJ evaluates and displays for each blogger individually (see Table 2).

My ontological and epistemological approach has been informed by the scientific tradition of social constructivism. I understand blogization as a social construction that makes sense and manifests itself in the language and practices of social actors. At the same time, I recognize my own role in influencing and being influenced by the overall construction that I try to explore. Unable to detach myself from the research object, I take advantage of my cultural, theoretical and practical embeddedness by taking the position of an observer as an entry point into the subject. This enables me to make informed, abductive conclusions which I distinguish in my work from more traditional deductive and inductive based reasoning.
4 The conditions of blogization

This chapter gives a general overview of the conditions of blogization in Russia. This is a macro level analysis that shows selected actors in relation to each other inside the journalistic field and in relation to other relevant fields. The chapter demonstrates how the common space of news production is shaped, with journalism and blogging occupying diverse positions in relation to each other. The idea of journalism and blogging being part of the whole draws on Bourdieu’s concept of the field. According to field theory, participants in any given field should have common interests that serve as a basis for the field’s existence (Bourdieu 1993:73). The development of this common space presupposes the establishment of relational ties inside and outside the field. Drawing on this theoretical standpoint, this chapter focuses on the first research question: How is the common space of news production shaped, with journalism and blogging occupying diverse positions in relation to each other?

The chapter addresses this question from four angles. First, it considers blogization as a field determined by the field of technological innovation. Second, the economic field and market mechanisms are taken into account. The evidence of an active “produsage” culture (Bruns 2008) and audience participation constitute the third analytical angle. Finally, blogization needs to be viewed in relation to the field of politics.

4.1 Technological innovations

The theorization of various “new” media is often linked to a belief in the transformative power of technological innovations. Such approaches tend to emphasize the tradition made famous by Marshall McLuhan’s slogan “the medium is the message.” Some researchers might be enthusiastic about the medium, because of the natural desire to find and predict changes, and technology seems very promising at that. Cherishing of the medium, however, often happens to the detriment of the message. This brand of technological determinism views new web 2.0 publishing tools as open to everyone and hence “credible by nature” (Bowman
and Willis 2003:44). No doubt, the machinery of modern communication is constantly updated and replaced with new products that enhance any given medium’s intensity, speed, and availability. However, as a result of technological determinism, we risk drawing false, inaccurate, or sweeping conclusions about new media phenomena. Technological innovations should, therefore, be considered in other contexts too.

There are several issues that connect journalism to the recent technological changes in media. Jo Bardoel (2002:504ff.) defines four key features of journalism after it began adopting online technologies. First, increasing interactivity grants more levels of control to the user. Second, hypertextuality offers an endless flow of information about information, eroding the notions of media type and media genre. Third, Bardoel refers to the multimediality of online journalism; there is a level of convergence technologically unachievable in old media formats (print, television or radio). The fourth characteristic of online journalism is its a-synchronicity; media content is now available for users at any time, whether it is in live coverage “right now” or in a stored package of information available on demand. These four features differentiate forms of journalism that are interconnected with blogging from those forms that continue to rely on previous media technologies.

The Russian media system has evolved from the more or less equal role played by television, radio and the press in the 1980s to the predominance of television in the 1990s. After the collapse of the Soviet system, newspaper circulation dropped while mechanisms of the free market system multiplied the number of publications and media businesses in general. Many newspapers were not able to offer affordable prices for audiences stricken by economic and social decline. Television, however, remained free and quickly became the main source of news and entertainment, accumulating the largest audiences and reaching the most distant locations of the country.

Today, television in Russia still occupies the most central position. This is partially explained by a relatively well developed system of signal delivery across vast territories. The fast printing and physical transportation of newspapers is more complicated. Moreover, at long distances cable-based digital networks with access to the Internet are expensive. On a large scale, radio is perhaps the only medium that can compete with television technologically. However, compared to television, radio does not have as much economic capacity and content diversity. Thus, socio-cultural preferences for TV watching, as opposed to, for example, vanishing habits of regular reading, provide exceptional opportunities for television. The large audience reach
creates additional incentives for advertising, political communication and PR on the national scale. In such circumstances, control over TV channels is strategic.

The first national television channel (1TV) is on the so-called “governmental list of strategic companies” (Romanova and Tovkailo 2012:np). Formally, the channel is an example of the shared state and business capital. The state owns 51 percent of the company and hence makes final decisions concerning the overall management and editorial policies. What part of the state or which state officials are the beneficiaries of this arrangement is classified information (Sagdiev and Boletskaia 2010). According to Sagdiev and Boletskaia, an anonymous source in the government said: “What difference does it make, who the nominal shareholders are? The main point is that they belong de facto to the state” (ibid:np). The other 49 percent of 1TV is divided between one of the largest Russian media corporations, National Media Group (25 percent), and a banking syndicate ORT-KB (24 percent). This privately-owned “half” of 1TV belongs to people close to the Kremlin. The National Media Group is controlled by Yuri Kovalchuk, one of President Vladimir Putin’s closest friends. Little is known about the ownership of ORT-KB. Some experts (ibid.) claim this third shareholder is connected to Roman Abramovich, another Russian oligarch loyal to Putin.

NTV is another major television company formally controlled by the state. As of 2011, 50.3 percent of the channel belonged to Gazprom Media, a company affiliated with the world’s largest gas producer, the state-owned Gazprom (FAPMC 2011:34). The channel remained private and independent from the state until April 2001 when it was nationalized in highly controversial circumstances known as the “political media capture” (Petrova 2008).

To understand how exactly the state controls NTV one must look at its multi-layered ownership structure and history of acquisitions. In 2005, Gazprom Media was sold to the country’s third largest bank Gazprombank, 42 percent of which belong to Gazprom and about 47 percent to the Russian pension fund Gazfond. At first glance, this deal may resemble a technical reshuffle of assets. In fact, Gazfond is part of another company controlled by Yuri Kovalchuk (Kommersant 2012). Thus, Kovalchuk controls at least one-fourth of 1TV assets and maintains an even stronger hold over NTV. This explains a lot about the greater dependence the main television channels have on the field of politics than on market forces.

The strategic status of television is actively challenged by new media. In 2012, polls showed for the first time that Russians trusted internet media more than the

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15 There are about fifty strategic companies in the list, including oil, gas and mining giants Gazprom and Rosneft, and the largest national telecommunication company Rostelekom.
television news (Synovate Comcon 2012). However, these surveys are becoming less relevant in the long run because of digital technologies that can level the differences between various media. The old media organizations can catch up with online media by adopting, for example, Internet Protocol television (IPTV) and switching to online video streaming. While most people continue watching television in its traditional analogue or terrestrial broadcasting format, this dominant position of television watching is also challenged by media fragmentation: more channels of information, smaller and more heterogeneous audiences.

Struggles in the online environment

The blogization of journalism as a process of increased inter-dependence between amateur and professional media practices originates from a virtual online space that is usually called Runet in the Russian context. Since its emergence in 1999, blogging in Russia quickly developed into a popular form of online activity. As online technologies became cheaper, the penetration rate grew steadily and basic computer skills improved. Thus, access to the Internet, as an issue related to economic capital, is now a less important differentiating factor of the digital divide than the lack of specialized training and experience in content production (Chadwick 2006). Russian users, as users elsewhere in the world, have learned to produce their own agenda. As web 2.0 applications made the production of user-generated content and social networking easier, the blogosphere has rapidly evolved into a mass phenomenon among internet users. Blogging culture has spread decisively among intellectuals, students, and so-called young professionals. For these groups, LJ blogs have become an important resource for online discussions, social networking and news delivery. Thus, the convergence of blogging and journalism is most visible in online media.

By the mid-2000s, media experts (e.g. Krestinina and Chernishov 2008) noted significant politicization in Russian blogging and argued that this “political boom” was connected to a general depoliticization of traditional news media. While mainstream journalism was becoming less critical of the political regime (mass media actually avoided using the word “regime” in relation to Russia itself), the blogosphere appropriated the tools of political communication. And it is precisely this role that anticipated the process of blogization by the end of 2000. The citizen journalism of blogs eventually became part of online media production as a whole. Today Runet is a vast media market, though it is unevenly distributed in geographical and economic space. Much of online media production is concentrated in large cities and
80 percent of all the news content comes from 20 percent of the online media companies (Yandex 2011). These aspects are worth remembering before drawing any conclusions about the scope of the blogization effects.

As television reached peak popularity in the 2000s and the printed press enjoyed only limited and highly fragmented audiences, the Internet created opportunities for new media ventures. The first successful online newspapers Lenta.ru and Gazeta.ru were created at the end of the 1990s and have dominated the market of online news media since then. These newly created mass media built their businesses from scratch and were at the forefront of innovations adoption. In Russia, the traditional media were more rigid in adopting online tools, following the path with a kind of delay. Consequently, traditional media outlets remain one step behind in terms of the effectiveness of online development and today the most visited online news resources are those that were originally created as web media.

Table 3 lists 30 websites with an explicit news orientation, not including various aggregate sites, portals and sites of specialized information. The only exception is LiveJournal (LJ), which I included to give a sense of the role that blogging plays in Russian media space. This blog service is represented by two domain names .com and .ru, occupying the first and the last positions respectively. The actual LJ blogs are always located on the international domain. Any blog name typed with the .ru ending is automatically redirected to the main .com server. I included the Russian domain site because it hosts blog ratings and offers an overview of the Cyrillic segment of LJ.

I manually selected these 30 sites from a general list of the 400 most popular web resources in Russia, ranked by the web statistics company Alexa.com in May 2012. LiveJournal.com is first on the short list and ranked number 10 on the general list of popular Russian sites. The high position of LJ among Russian internet users is indicative of its popularity as a network of thousands of blogs. At the end of the list, the localized LiveJournal.ru is comparable with other news sites, though it only aggregates and highlights the “most popular” blog stories.

In the table, the estimated “time on site” means how long an average internet user stays on the website daily. This estimation and number of “page views per visitor” influences the resulting ratings. These categories also help to explain the differences between the media websites. The first five positions on the list are occupied by online-only resources and news agencies. Internet versions of the major Russian press, radio and television companies do not match their offline prominence. The names of the media from my sample (see section 3.2 of this book) are shown in bold font. Lenta is strongly positioned in this online environment.
Kommersant and 1TV – the elite newspaper and the largest television channel – are further behind on the Internet than they are within the broader mass media market. The close positions of the newspaper RG and Vz’s website, despite large differences in terms of “page views” and “time on site,” can be explained by the larger audience Vz holds as an official governmental news source.

Table 3. Most Visited News Media Websites in Russia (May 14, 2012)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Time on site</th>
<th>Page views per user</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>LiveJournal.com</td>
<td>Online</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>08:39</td>
<td>6.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Rbc.ru</td>
<td>News agency</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>06:43</td>
<td>3.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Lenta.ru</td>
<td>Online</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>07:04</td>
<td>4.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Ria.ru</td>
<td>News agency</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>03:17</td>
<td>2.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Gazeta.ru</td>
<td>Online</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>06:40</td>
<td>3.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>KP.ru</td>
<td>Press</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>03:47</td>
<td>2.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Echo.msk.ru</td>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>07:48</td>
<td>4.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Newsru.com</td>
<td>Online</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>06:46</td>
<td>3.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Vesti.ru</td>
<td>TV</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>03:30</td>
<td>2.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Kommersant.ru</td>
<td>Press</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>03:59</td>
<td>2.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>1TV.ru</td>
<td>TV</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>03:56</td>
<td>2.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Sport-express.ru</td>
<td>Press</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>07:18</td>
<td>5.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>BBC.co.uk</td>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>06:46</td>
<td>4.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Vedomosti.ru</td>
<td>Press</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>03:35</td>
<td>2.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Utro.ru</td>
<td>Online</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>03:40</td>
<td>2.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Lifenews.ru</td>
<td>Online</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>04:16</td>
<td>2.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Rg.ru</td>
<td>Press</td>
<td>247</td>
<td>02:20</td>
<td>1.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Vz.ru</td>
<td>Online</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>06:48</td>
<td>3.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Forbes.ru</td>
<td>Press</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>04:02</td>
<td>3.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Fontanka.ru</td>
<td>News agency</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>04:37</td>
<td>4.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Slon.ru</td>
<td>Online</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>04:06</td>
<td>3.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Interfax.ru</td>
<td>News agency</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>02:24</td>
<td>1.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>NTV.ru</td>
<td>TV</td>
<td>303</td>
<td>03:13</td>
<td>2.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Ridus.ru</td>
<td>Online</td>
<td>331</td>
<td>04:38</td>
<td>2.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Regnum.ru</td>
<td>News agency</td>
<td>367</td>
<td>03:12</td>
<td>2.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Novayagazeta.ru</td>
<td>Press</td>
<td>368</td>
<td>04:09</td>
<td>2.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Aif.ru</td>
<td>Press</td>
<td>370</td>
<td>02:46</td>
<td>1.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Rosbalt.ru</td>
<td>News agency</td>
<td>380</td>
<td>04:46</td>
<td>2.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>MK.ru</td>
<td>Press</td>
<td>384</td>
<td>03:51</td>
<td>2.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>LiveJournal.ru</td>
<td>Online</td>
<td>396</td>
<td>02:57</td>
<td>1.93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


These statistics demonstrate dramatic differences in the dispositions of media organizations depending on the technological format of their distribution. Because
mass media cannot disregard the growing importance of the Internet, conventional hierarchical structures will most probably change, as will journalism, on the basis of adaptations to the online environment.

Disruptions of access to blogs

In recent years, LJ has played the essential role in political debates in Russia. Blogs and the Internet in general have long been a “safe harbor” for uninterrupted self-expression and the exchange of opinion. However as blogs gained influence in public space and challenged the political regime, ruling elites began responding with counter-strategies. The state ideological apparatus mobilized its political power to depoliticize blogging by co-opting some internet opinion leaders and by putting the blogosphere under stricter legal regulations.

By 2011, the legal methods of political struggle were mostly exhausted, and the character of contestation extended beyond legitimate legal boundaries. The practices of blunt cyber-attacks on oppositional media sites and blogs occurred more often, turning into a common disruption tool. Russian virtual public space became an arena for large-scale cyber-wars in which the attacker remains anonymous, for the most part, and cannot always be identified, traced and punished. It is not possible to say whether the attacks are always staged by a governmental agency. Formal complaints and investigations are meaningless since any compromising state evidence can be rejected in the courts. However, many members of the online community believe the state and its interest groups are responsible for the attacks. To be fair, the number of cyber-attacks against state-controlled news media sites has also grown in recent years. Hence, the relations are reciprocal, even though the resources of power are different.

The cyber-attacks cause the targeted site to experience a temporary overload referred to as a distributed denial of service (DDoS). Earlier, this term was used only in the technical language of network administrators and web designers. In March 2011, the work of the Russian blogosphere was disrupted by one of the largest wave of DDoS attacks. After this large-scale incident there were numerous others targeting various online resources. Initially perceived as a radical and exceptional practice, these cyber-attacks seem to have become commonplace in a wordless dialogue between owners of websites and their anonymous attackers. Today DDoS is a term frequently used to explain why some websites suddenly become
inaccessible. The term has become a popular internet meme and a subject of broader media attention.

It is debatable whether the attacks on LJ came as a response to the increased politicization of the blogosphere. Alternative explanations claimed the blog service itself had been malfunctioning because of its outdated software and hardware that had been aggravated by heavy online traffic. In other words, do not blame hackers when your service is poorly equipped (protected). With opinions divided, it is worth considering mass media coverage of this incident as a useful point of reference for examining journalism-blogging relations.

In the oppositional NG, Yuri Revich (August 5, 2011) called it a “cyber-war.” The article referred to a reputable internet security expert Evgeny Kaspersky, who directly accused LJ of poor performance. Kaspersky refused to believe there was someone who “hates LiveJournal enough to be willing to pay for this rather expensive attack.” He also doubted the political importance of LJ, claiming his online security services did not notice any suspicious traffic that would implicate DDoS. The article also reminds readers that LJ “would not have filed a formal complaint” demanding a criminal investigation if there were no cyber-attacks at all. Revich concludes by suggesting LJ should be more conscious about its technological weaknesses and not rest all the blame on hackers. In other words, this journalistic story considered both interpretations of the LJ disruptions as possible and potentially overlapping.

Mainstream television channels also reacted to this incident. On television, there are rarely any news stories about blogging. The scarcity of reporting on such topics explains why 1TV coverage of the “attacks” used general expressions and seemingly redundant background information:

LiveJournal, or Zhivoi Zhurnal in Russian, unites millions of people worldwide, was unavailable for users on July 25. Over a period of several hours, people in different countries faced problems accessing the service. The problem affected the owners of the internet diaries and the readers. <…> This is not the first malfunction in the operation of Zhe-Zhe. Last spring, the site was down for eight hours after a massive hacking attack. (1TV, July 25, 2011)

This is a somewhat old-fashioned description of blogging and the LJ blog service. This type of text would be more common in earlier periods of blogging development. The broad reach of this national television channel, however, suggests an audience remains that still requires this general introduction and a Russian translation of the site’s name. Phrases like “people worldwide” and “people in different countries,” exemplify how television creates distance between the blog service and the Russian national context. Unlike the story in NG, this television
report does not bother with the technological details of online security and avoids confronting opinions and political analysis of the disruptions.

I will return to the political conditions of blogization in the final section of this chapter. Meanwhile, the technological aspects of journalism-blogging relations can be further extended toward the economics of their functioning.

4.2 The economics of the Russian mass media

What mass media companies collect in revenues is often a matter of commercial secrecy. In Russia, access to such information is also hampered by a lack of systemic non-transparency across many financial operations. There has been a serious problem of illicit paid publications and hidden political advertisements, particularly during elections campaigns (Koltsova 2006:37). In some cases, journalists and editors may receive unaccounted payments to promote a particular product or interest. One can only guess about the size of such hidden profits and the actual economic conditions in which the journalists work. The official financial records of media organizations can also be inconsistent and misleading, with revenues underreported at times to stimulate new subsidies from the state or to incur lower tax payments. Print media can exaggerate their circulation numbers to appear more attractive for advertisers. This poses a research problem since it is difficult to interpret the available data that is often fragmentary and incomplete.

However, there are some indirect indicators of economic development in the Russian mass media. In the media market, advertising is one of the largest sources of economic power since all other industries spend money on commercials. The volume of official advertising spending by businesses in different types of media is regularly reported and can be considered a valuable indicator. During the 2000s, the Russian advertising market grew tremendously fast (see Figure 10). By 2000, almost ten years after the inception of market relations, total commercial advertising across different segments of the media had reached 18 billion rubles. Despite the economic recession of 2008-2009, this figure skyrocketed to 255 billion by the end of 2012. Figure 10 splits these numbers by media types, so it is possible to observe more nuanced dynamics.

The Internet is the only segment of the media industry that continued to grow during the recession. The press was the most affected by the crisis. The numbers for this sector dropped to 2005 levels and stalled there. Television and radio channels
recovered quicker but also seemed to lag behind the Internet, losing part of their potential growth to online media companies.

**Figure 10.** Changes in Advertising Budgets by Media Type 2000-2011 (in billion rubles VAT exclusive)

![Graph showing changes in advertising budgets by media type from 2000 to 2011.](image)


The same numbers presented in another format offer a good illustration of how much economic power is possessed by different media types. Figure 11 shows how the share of television advertising grew from about 35 percent in 2000 to nearly 60 percent in 2009. With significantly less television companies than online and press companies, it is clear that a large share of media economic power has been concentrated in the hands of a small number of companies. Also, more than half of television advertising money is distributed between three national channels. In 2009-2010, 1TV (*Channel One*) had a share of 22.59 percent, *VGTRK* (The All-Russia State Television and Radio Broadcasting Company) had 17.78 percent, and *NTV* had 14.64 percent (Finmarket 2012).

Thus, in my research sample that includes eight organizations, 1TV and NTV are the most economically powerful mass media, though not necessarily the most profitable and attractive for investments. The press market represented in my sample by four newspapers is the most vulnerable. At the same time, we can see the Internet gaining more and more economical significance, influencing the advertising shares of other market segments. The commercial attractiveness of online media is an indication of the growing audience that the traditional press, radio and television
could potentially be losing. To preserve the existing media and, in effect, journalistic hierarchies of symbolic power, traditional media must consider strategies of adapting to new digital formats where their authority is not as undisputed as in offline environments where competition is tougher.

**Figure 11. Shares of Advertising Budgets by Media Type 2000-2011**

![Graph showing shares of advertising budgets by media type from 2000 to 2011.]


Internet-based media, such as *Lenta*, Vz, and the LJ blogs in my sample seem to hold a privileged position in this respect. They do not have to adjust to new conditions nor do they need to cater to online and offline audiences at once. The fragmentation of audiences and the issue of media diversity, however, is a reasonable concern for new media as well. There are thousands of websites, millions of blog accounts and social network profiles. Digital media space is open for limitless numbers of newcomers. This poses a question of how to communicate effectively with an audience which is becoming increasingly fragmented, scarce and thereby a valuable resource within the changing journalistic field.

**Statist commercialism**

The statist commercialized model (Vartanova 2012:139-42) of the Russian media system distinguishes between two main forms of ownership: companies in possession of private capital and state owned assets. In this model, it is difficult at times to determine where the borderline separating the two forms lies. This is because in Russia formal business relations are often substituted by informal ties. At
first glance, some mass media appear to be in the hands of private business. A closer look reveals chains of parent companies, and eventually one might discover that the final owner is affiliated with the state-run companies or run by government officials. It is not an exaggeration to say that most mainstream media are directly or indirectly connected to political elites and merely serve as tools of political communication and propaganda. Therefore, the exact division of media ownership between state institutions and independent commercial enterprises in different segments of the media market is hard to estimate. However, knowing the origin of certain businesses and obtaining background information on individual proprietors helps to balance our vision of this aspect of the Russian media field.

The daily newspaper RG is the easiest one to identify the conditions of ownership and underlying business model within my research sample. The newspaper is completely owned by the Russian government. This makes it the least autonomous from the field of political power in the sample. RG is in an ambiguous position with respect to media concentration. On the one hand, the newspaper is not economically affiliated with any other media organization, larger business, or corporation. But on the other hand it is owned by the largest and most powerful (also economically) institution in the country, the government. In 2010, Aleksandr Gorbenko, who served as an executive manager of RG for almost a decade, was promoted to the post of vice-mayor in the Moscow government. This is the clearest evidence of the newspaper’s loyalty to state interests, corresponding to its conservative political orientation.

The other media in this sample are all financially independent from state structures. With varying levels of concentration in the hands of bigger companies they are each privately owned enterprises. The oppositional newspaper NG and the online pro-Kremlin news site Vz are the least entangled in any larger commercial structures. The owners of both these mass media outlets are well-known and it is relatively easy to interpret the character of their relations with business circles and the state. In early 2012, NG was owned by staff journalists, whose share in the company totaled 51 percent. The rest belonged to Aleksandr Lebedev (39 percent) and former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev (10 percent). In recent years, Lebedev has been considered a disgrace by Russian state officials, presumably for his attempts to expose corruption among authorities and support of the opposition. The political pressures on Lebedev grew so intense that media experts suspected he would have to give up his business in Russia (Elder 2012).

For years, NG has not been a profitable newspaper, proving that the substantial investments by Lebedev and Gorbachev have no commercial interest whatsoever.
In numerous interviews both emphasized the importance of media pluralism and the necessity to support critical, political communication in the country. However one must bear in mind that Lebedev, born in 1959, had been working for state institutions since the early 1980s and was part of the Soviet and Russian secret service. This KGB background inevitably fuels suspicions that he might be playing a double game, supporting the oppositional newspaper while informally remaining to be part of the system. In the recent past, he has been active in the mainstream Russian politics, and once held a post as a member of the State Duma (2003-2007). Today, Lebedev seems to be closer to Russian businessmen with political ambitions who live in exile rather than he is with the core business elite. In spite of his active anti-regime rhetoric, Lebedev has not been persecuted by the regime in the manner experienced by many, less notable dissidents.

The online Vz (shortened from the original name Vzglyad) is a new player on the Russia media market. The website is similar to NG in economic terms, but radically different in terms of its political agenda. In 2005, Vz was founded by Konstantin Rykov, a relatively young (born in 1979) media-producer and representative of the ruling United Russia party in the State Duma (2007-2011). Vz is an ambitious project designed in black and white colors. The news site describes (See vz.ru/about/) its target audience as “business people without much of free time but willing to know a bit more than just what happens.” Initially established as an online newspaper, Vz also launched its weekly paper version in 2006.

Rykov is often described as a talented entrepreneur who was eventually co-opted by the ideological state-apparatus. He is the author of many online projects and creator of several pro-Kremlin media resources on the Internet. In 1999, Rykov founded New Media Stars, a company that was involved in most of his projects. There is evidence that the company is associated with the ruling political party, United Russia. The business grew largely due to the political and financial support it received directly from the presidential administration. Rykov’s company was later named one of the least transparent players on the Russian media market (Kretova 2011). All this indicates that the business model of Vz does not imply accumulation of economic capital. Just like the oppositional NG, it is not oriented toward commercial profit and mostly serves political interests instead.

The similarities between NG and Vz can be grasped by the term statist commercialism, since their functioning is enabled by a system of political funding instead of market mechanisms. This statist strategy even applies to the oppositional NG. In spite of the newspaper’s limited public influence, the state decides whether
or not to interfere or to indirectly (through the capital of the former secret service officers) maintain the facade of pluralism and media diversity.

Some other mass media actors in my sample are less politically engaged than the governmental RG, pro-regime Vz, and oppositional NG. For example, the popular daily MK and the elite daily Kommersant are mainly commercial newspapers with relatively low involvement in politics.

MK is owned by a publishing house with the same name and it is based on joint-stock capital with closed membership. Since privatization in 1992, the newspaper has been the private business of Pavel Gusev, who is also the editor-in-chief. In addition to the main newspaper, MK publishes over 80 periodicals in different parts of Russia and in twelve other countries. The MK business represents one of the rare cases where one of the largest mass media outlets in the country does not belong to a larger corporation. It is also a rare case where the media assets are commercially viable and self-sufficient, and hence do not rely on external subsidies.

The long-lasting journalistic and business career of Gusev can be explained as the skillful balancing of the values of critical journalistic production and a careful approach to political agenda setting. This is how he explains this tricky business model in an interview:

> It is easy to put pressure on the press through owners for whom media is just a secondary asset. These guys have multi-billion businesses, and they don’t feel thrilled about getting into trouble because of the reckless “journos,” who write goodness knows what. It is handier for them to call an editor on the carpet and to explain where he should stick his long tongue. It doesn’t work that way in my case: there is neither a carpet to call on nor any boss above [me]. I am my own master and carry on business with my own hard-earned money. That is why, apparently, I have not been invited to the Kremlin meetings, although, I heard, TV guys are being regularly coached about what and how to say. And I’m not a party member. Though, sometimes I go hunting with the powers that be, drink some vodka. But it doesn’t affect my job. (Vandenko 2009)

This example illustrates the mechanism of relatively peaceful coexistence between Russian political and media business elites. It is immensely based on interpersonal ties that enable media-related business within informally established boundaries.

The daily Kommersant is close to MK in terms of its position on the media market. The newspaper is also a central part of the larger Kommersant publishing house. It is owned by Alisher Usmanov who was, as of 2012, the richest Russian oligarch with a fortune of about eighteen billion dollars (Forbes 2012). Usmanov is a principal shareholder in several mining companies and has investments ranging from the
English football club Arsenal to Facebook.\textsuperscript{16} Thus, \textit{Kommersant} ownership is the case that Pavel Gusev described above as a secondary asset.

For a long time \textit{Kommersant} was an influential media resource in the hands of Boris Berezovsky, another Russian oligarch who was close to president Yeltsin in the 1990s but had to leave the country following political pressure from Putin’s administration. \textit{Kommersant} was independent from the state and its business structures until 2006 when it was bought by Usmanov, who was connected to the state-controlled Gazprom. At the time, it was reported that the deal would not radically change editorial policy, because the newspaper played an important role of “authorized opposition” (Rebel and Latkin 2006:np). This authorized framework is typical of Russian business circles in general and for the media industry in particular. If the mass media does not interfere with politics or the interests of the political establishment, “authorized opposition” is considered harmless and small-scale criticism is even welcomed.

\textit{Lenta} is another online medium in my sample that is similar to \textit{Kommersant}. It is owned by billionaire Vladimir Potanin whose commercial interests stretch beyond the media industry. \textit{Lenta} is part of Rambler Media Group, a conglomeration that grew out of a popular search engine site. Today Rambler belongs to Prof-Media, a company created by Potanin to unite his numerous media assets. Potanin’s main business is a giant investment corporation \textit{Interros}. Thus, through a chain of subsidiaries and hired managers, \textit{Lenta} is connected to a powerful business empire that cannot be considered independent from state interests. The liberal orientation of \textit{Lenta} indicates that this news medium is not a strategic political tool for the regime.

Finally, a few words about the economic conditions of LiveJournal. Although originally American, this company now has strong ties with Russian business. Between August 2006 and December 2007, the Russian-based SUP Media bought the right to control the Cyrillic segment of the blog service, and later signed a deal for complete acquisition. The LJ site, however, is still physically located in the U.S. and access to its servers is regulated by American law. As of September 2012, 50 percent of SUP Media belonged to \textit{Kommersant} publishing house (Balashova et al. 2011). The other half is divided between Aleksandr Mamut (20 percent), a Russian businessman, his American partner Andrew Paulson (20 percent), and the company executive (10 percent).

\textsuperscript{16} The share of Usmanov in the ownership of Arsenal came to be 29.35 percent of the stake as of 2011, and as a co-owner of \textit{Digital Sky Technologies} he participated in the acquisition of 1.96 percent of Facebook in 2009.
In summary, news media MK and Kommersant are relatively autonomous from the field of politics. They are both mostly commercial in terms of their orientation, but can still play a political role within informal boundaries. The oppositional NG and Rykov’s online project Vz appear much more involved in politics, the former playing the radical role and the latter counterbalancing the criticism of online public space. The state-owned RG is a more pronounced mainstream voice of the state. Unlike MK and Kommersant, it is rather autonomous economically because its primary purpose is to translate the official point of view without worrying about profitability. The diverse ownership and participation of foreign capital makes LJ a relatively autonomous medium in terms of particular commercial and political interests.

4.3 The role of the audience

The question of the audience, its size and quality, is central to understanding the mass media industry. Blogization blurs the boundaries of journalism by redefining the idea of the audience. Theoretically, it takes very little for many people to produce their own news stories, at least as journalism on a small-scale. As a result, traditional media practices have encountered more and more diverse forms of amateur news production. Jay Rosen (2008a:np) described this shift as follows: “When the people formerly known as the audience employ the press tools they have in their possession to inform one another, that’s citizen journalism.”

Today citizen journalism is most visible in blogging practices. A blogger can publish a story without recourse to editorial regulations or expensive production and distribution technologies. Once a buzzword associated with advanced internet users, within a decade blogging has evolved into a common communicative tool. Blogging and its microblogging variant are now inseparable from online mass and interpersonal communication. Thus, the cultural practices of blogging are becoming an inherent part of the media system. Some blogs present full-fledged eyewitness stories or opinionated reflections and are scattered across cyberspace. Today blogs are also often integrated or closely connected with professional and online media.

This relatively new notion of citizen journalism became especially widely-used in relation to blogging, particularly in Russia. As I discussed in Chapter 2, there is a theoretical and practical connection between the ideas of citizen journalism and its supposed predecessor public journalism. The key difference between the two is that public journalism was cultivated by professional journalists and sought broader public involvement in the co-production of news. Citizen journalism in turn is driven
and fulfilled by the public alone, often without any professional involvement. As audiences have gained access to the cheap and easy publishing tools of blogs, public journalism seems to have receded into the background of journalistic theorization. In recent years, for instance, Jay Rosen has begun speaking in favor of citizen journalism after years of actively promoting public journalism.\(^\text{17}\)

Blogging should not be understood only as content creation, since it also involves reaching an audience. As the amount of individual blogs, blog communities, and blog-oriented social media platforms continue to grow, the notion of the blogosphere has been used to distinguish this totality of web applications from other media forms. Blog reports from the Iraqi war, first-hand stories about hurricanes and tsunamis, coverage of revolutions and protests in the Arab world are events that attested to the enormous potential that blogging culture has in contemporary societies. However, these are rare examples where media professionals desperately seek exclusive footage, images, and experiences on the Internet. More often, blogs play the minor role of telling stories about less significant events. At best, professional journalists monitor some parts of the blogosphere. In these cases it is far more difficult for bloggers to reach a large number of people and compete with traditional mass media.

News is generally understood as information of mass character, meant for large groups of people. The idea of sender, or an agent who communicates news messages to the masses, is also collective. It is hard to imagine how one person could possibly be substituted for the entire newsroom. Indeed, the history of mass communication illustrates how, since Johannes Gutenberg invented the printing press in the fifteenth century, the mass production of texts has always, to some extent, presupposed a large labor force and considerable financial capital (Briggs and Burke 2009). Moreover, the symbolic value of media texts and their potential impact on social life has presupposed various forms of supreme approval: by the church or monarchy, by parliaments or political parties.

For five centuries after the invention of the printing press, mass media developed towards offering greater availability and accessibility to its audience. The advent and spread of blogging and citizen journalism in blogs happened at a time when the

\(^{17}\) The shift of focus from professional journalists to ordinary people made media experts think differently about the future of mass media. In an attempt to bring mass media closer to people’s needs, by establishing a dialogue with local communities, media theorists and practitioners developed the idea of public journalism in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Public journalism implied a set of certain practices by journalists in response to the supposed public interest. In public journalism the audience was asked what they wanted media to talk about. Technological innovations of the late 1990s somehow changed the trend to the opposite, with citizens becoming capable of talking about what they wanted to and not just say what they wanted to read about.
distinction between interpersonal communication and mass communication has become flexible and vague. As Sonia Livingston (2009) points out this is a moment when everything is mediated.

When everything is mediated, a blog diary meant for a small group of friends, if not kept private can become accessible to a wider, anonymous audience. Mediation can also remain only as a potential. An individual blog may stay unnoticed by others, contrary to the intentions of its author. The initial promotion is always needed, and it requires more effort than publishing alone. To become known, a blogger mobilizes some kind of symbolic capital. This capital can be based on expert knowledge, or access and ability to effectively communicate unique information. Previously recognized authority, like being a celebrity or a publicly known political figure can also be transformed into initial attraction. To establish a network of initial support, most non-celebrity internet users, however, must start with the social capital of first readers. This initial capital can include social ties with family members, friends, and colleagues. Out of that emerges one crucial distinction: at an early stage, individual efforts to launch a journalistic blog are closer to interpersonal communication than they are to mass communication.

Journalism cannot exist without an audience. Commercial television channels compete for higher ratings (viewer’s attention) which are in turn sold to advertisers. State institutions or political parties can support mass media to get access to people’s minds and cultivate political and national identities. Public mass media are subsidized by the public in order to serve the general interests of citizens. Special taxes or license fees support public media and keep them independent from the direct influence of the state and the market. In different national contexts, media play different roles prioritizing the purposes of their sponsors and adhering to specific kinds of journalistic traditions. Nevertheless, it is crucial everywhere to maintain communicative ties between the media and the audience. Without an audience, the ability of media to generate profits, to provide a sphere for public deliberation, nation building, or ideological propaganda becomes meaningless.

As pointed out above, in Russia the main television channels are state controlled, and the reach of the national newspapers is incomparably low. However, as the Internet gradually comes to be omnipresent in Russian social life – Russia has one of the fastest growing internet penetration rates – new forms of online media, especially so-called social media, create a promising alternative media space by reconnecting journalism and audiences in new ways. Of course, most people do not have the time or knowledge to write a blog and many internet users do not even read blogs. But journalists do read blogs and often act as bloggers themselves. Thus the
newsmaking potential of blogging raises a question of quantitative and perhaps qualitative transformations within the journalistic field, where traditional roles may be challenged and news values redefined.

Social media is not only about blogs. Russian analogues of Facebook, such as Vkontakte and Odnoklassniki, have also become increasingly popular. Yet, as I showed before, the LJ blog service is still among the ten most visited sites in Russia. Social networking sites like Facebook are great for communication whereas typical blogs are better for creating original content (see e.g. Fenton 2012:125ff). Information published in a blog can be further communicated through social networks, but it has to be located somewhere first. In Russia LJ presents an example of a content-centered media platform that contrasts with the more interaction- and sharing-based social media platforms like Facebook and the microblogging services of Twitter.

However, LJ blogs do not offer a clear distinction between citizen and professional variants of journalism. Today professionals may be telling their news stories on multiple platforms. On a daily basis, professional journalists go to various places and interview people with something important or interesting to say. After gathering the news, they deliver it live on television or write a newspaper article. There are strict rules governing how to appear on camera and what is the proper language to use. In addition, journalists may condense a news story into a short Twitter message or present it (possibly with new details and in a highly subjective manner) on a personal blog. The order of actions may be different and involve other kinds of media but the point here is that the same news story could be behind all these forms of communication. This is how blogging redefines the idea of journalism itself and provides multiple ways for audiences to participate more actively. There is, however, also a downside to this diffuse communicative space – it becomes less feasible to maintain the traditional standards of journalistic ethics.

The ethical issues of blogization

In periods of uncompromising political struggles and rampant corruption it is hard to expect high moral standards from media professionals. The diversity of opinions and individual styles in blogs has the potential to contribute to the volume of unethical reporting and also influences traditional media ethics. In the aftermath of the terrorist attack in the Moscow subway in March 2010, media reported on numerous cases of xenophobia and ethnic clashes. One MK article directly quoted a random blog that described one of the street conflicts as a fight between ethnic
Russians and “people from the Caucasus” (Pichugina and Grekova, MK, March 29, 2010). Terrorism in Russia is often perceived as coming from the Caucasian republics of the country’s Southern region. Therefore public opinion often stereotypically blames “Southern-looking” people for acts of terror. The professional media community has long discussed whether journalists can name ethnicity in stories like these. References to blogs partly relieve journalistic responsibility for the improper wordings since they can use unedited quotations from blogs. In this sense, journalists can use blogs to step over the line of traditional ethics more often.

An important debate is taking place inside the professional media community with regard to the degree of openness in journalistic expressions of personal opinion. Rem Rieder (2011:np), an editor for American Journalism Review, urges journalists not to stick with pure facts but to make tougher judgments and draw conclusions in the same way as this often occurs on blogs where “the emergence of so much punchy point of view <…> underscored the fact that too much journalism was too mushy, and unnecessarily so.” Rieder argues that the tendency of many journalists to maintain balance creates “a false equivalency” between opposite sides in clearly defined bad guy stories. This came as a response to a dispute within the American media community about the appropriateness of one remark that a CNN journalist made about the Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak. The reporter very bluntly called the foreign head of state a liar. Even though most media practitioners agreed that the statement was true, taking sides in a complicated foreign policy issue was still considered by many to be too controversial. Rieder, however, advocates in favor of a more straightforward blog-like approach in such cases. The problem is how one distinguishes between “obvious” bad guy situations, personal bias and pure misunderstanding.

Thus, a new set of questions appear. How do journalists create their stories in terms of moral decisions concerning what is good and what is bad? Which facts of social life are important to mention and which are not? Whose opinions should appear in journalistic materials? There is no simple universal answer to these questions, since professional norms and habits vary with time and across nations. For example, Denmark has some of the world’s most liberal legislation on freedom of speech, which affects the national journalistic culture and sometimes causes controversial situations and international scandals. On September 30th, 2005, the publication of the prophet Muhammad cartoons by the Danish newspaper Jyllands-Posten resulted in a wave of furious resentment among Muslim communities and had some life-threatening consequences for the journalists. The cartoons also caused violent and deadly protests in many other countries. This scandal intensified the
ongoing debate about multiculturalism. But it also left a lot of media workers worried and unsatisfied. Flemming Rose, Jyllands-Posten’s culture editor, justified the publication as “a response to several incidents of self-censorship in Europe caused by widening fears and feelings of intimidation in dealing with issues related to Islam” and an attempt to “push back self-imposed limits on expression that seemed to be closing in tighter” (Rose 2006:np).

This sensitive topic was also vigorously discussed in the Russian blogosphere. Blogger Adagamov (February 1, 2006) posted a picture of the French France Soir newspaper with the cartoons on the front page. In the same post, Adagamov also hyperlinked to the German Die Welt and emotionally allied with Norwegian bloggers who started a campaign circulating the cartoons in response to the attempts to prohibit their publication in the media. Many bloggers copied the original cartoons, and some even added their own drawings on the topic. In one of the commentaries, blogger Oleg Kozyrev\(^{18}\) pointed to the vague limits of appropriateness:

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I’d prefer if the attitudes [of a cartoonist] were kind and not evil… a series of three cartoon drawings of Muhammad with a bomb were obviously evil. I don’t like it when people are evil, neither those who draw [cartoons] nor those who explode [bombs]. (Kozyrev, February 9, 2006)
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The quote suggests that drawings can be justified on the basis of subjective judgments of morality. Exclude one picture with a bomb and the rest of the cartoons become appropriate. The argument disregards the religious contexts that forbid any depictions of the prophet. The blogger draws on a simple emotional distinction between violent (bad) and non-violent (good) images. The problem, however, remains and it is about deciding whether bombings could be explicitly linked to certain religious contexts or it is inappropriate for responsible journalism.

How are dangerous cultural allusions avoided when a journalist or a blogger wants to say something about bombings in an unfavorable way? When is it that freedom of speech ends and turns into abuse? These questions lie at the heart of the journalistic ethics that originates from moral philosophy and examinations of what constitutes the good (Plaisance 2009). While the functioning of traditional media organizations includes the ethical codes of professional associations and is regulated by media laws, the blogosphere may fully enjoy freedoms and abuses of speech, potentially causing more conflicts.

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\(^{18}\) Oleg Kozyrev is a professional scriptwriter and a political activist, who has been blogging since 2005. Kozyrev was born in 1972. He has worked in the television and advertising business. He lives in Moscow and actively participates in political protest movements. In addition to his mostly textual blog on LiveJournal, Kozyrev is known for his video-blogging. As of August 26, 2013, his LJ blog contains 18,042 entries with almost 250,000 comments.
Ordinary people learn about the ways journalism is done by reading, watching and listening to various media. Schools of journalism and the respective educational literature teach proper practices to those who chose the profession. Journalistic training focuses on professional skills and competence, explains legal liabilities, and outlines an ethical framework. Practical work in the newsroom adjusts and further shapes the professional identities of journalists. There are plenty of journalists, however, who work successfully and ethically without specialized education. Such journalists learn by doing and by copying others, their knowledge of ethical norms stems not from formal education but is internalized as a particular culture. By blurring the lines of this journalistic culture, blogging can also pose challenges to dominant understandings of ethics.

Occasional discussions in the Russian media and in the blogosphere demonstrate that there is a common belief in the necessity of ethical regulations. In September 2009, journalists from radio Eho Moskvy (Echo of Moscow) invited bloggers to talk about the self-regulation of the blogosphere. Cases of public offence and libel on blogs have led to a growing number of legal prosecutions. This topic served as a pretext for the radio program. The hostess Ksenia Larina, who is both a journalist and a blogger, said in many cases officials use prosecutions to get even with bloggers for their criticism. She adds that “unless the blogosphere becomes organized from inside, it will be organized from outside” (Echo Moskvy 2009:np). In this discussion, Oleg Kozyrev, a blogger mentioned above, has promoted the idea of a bloggers’ trade union that would function as an organizing body.

As of the end of 2013, the plans for a regulatory mechanism with a unionized structure of self-organization have not been fulfilled. However, beginning in 2009, several attempts were made to organize courses and even short educational programs for bloggers. For example, Glasnost Defense Foundation launched a fourteen-week course in investigative journalism and blogging. The course is meant for “civic activists who want to be professionally recognized in the mass media space” (Glasnost Defense Foundation 2008:np). According to the official announcement, no previous journalistic education is required, the age is limited to 20-35 years old, and there is no tuition fee.

This course and the others that followed focus on activism (often politically motivated) more than on journalism in a traditional sense. Therefore, it was not surprising that the Russian state also started paying attention to educating its own loyal groups of internet users. One pro-regime project is known as the “Kremlin school of bloggers.” It has been promoted by the leading United Russia party. The pro-Kremlin youth organization Nashi also launched the “School of the Young
Another example of a blogging course is the educational community on LJ that was initiated by the blog hosting service itself in June 2012. “Shkola Zhe-Zhe” (LJ School) encourages participation in a blog-based community where one can learn the secrets of self-promotion and popularity in the blogosphere (School-lj 2012). This is a service development strategy, an instrument for the popularization of a particular blogging platform, rather than a socially orientated educational program to train new types of journalists or civic activists. Hence, in Russia, different interest groups have come to an understanding of the need to work systematically with active social media “produsers.” In most cases, the ideological aspect of this work is dominant, evidencing the growing political tension concerning the functioning of blogs. Thus, the final dimension of blogization involves institutional politics and the juxtaposition of the state and the civil society.

4.4 The state politics and blogization

The previous discussion demonstrated that journalism in Russia is closely connected to the national political system (Bourdieu’s field of politics). Journalists either protect so-called national interests and the interests of elites (mainly traditional journalism), or challenge existing injustices and flaws in the system (oppositional media or journalism of many blogs).

There are more than eight hundred legislative acts regulating the work of journalists in Russia. Many of these acts are highly specific, such as a special law that prohibits photography and video recording onboard Aeroflot airlines. From these countless legal norms, one can clearly distinguish some of the bigger trends in media regulation. Since Vladimir Putin came to power and took control of the political agenda in mainstream mass media, he has gradually increased the pressure on the so-called extremist tendencies of media content. Beumers, Hutchins and Rulyova (2009) analyzed a speech the President gave at a party gathering on December 10, 2006. The speech became the main subject of the television news programs. According to the study (Beumers et al. 2009:7), Putin’s statement that “propagating national, religious and race hatred will be met with adequate resistance” came as no surprise. More important and consequential was his obscure definition of extremism “in all its manifestations.” The speech and a broad interpretation of extremism have had a serious impact on freedom of speech in the years that followed.
The legal restrictions of media freedoms

The Federal law on the prevention of extremism was developed in the early 2000s as a measure to tackle terrorism and a separatist movement in the Northern Caucasus. The first edition of the law appeared in 2002 and served primarily to cope with the consequences of the war in Chechnya. Later it became a basis for a much broader interpretation of extremism. It could also be applied to put pressure on journalists criticizing or exposing the state decisions (Larionova 2013). In April 2008, the government made significant changes and additions to the law, which has since then included a long and ambiguous list of what could be considered extremism. The law considers some practices directly related to the sphere of mass media extremist. These practices include: public appeals to participate in acts of extremism (street protests for instance); production, storage and circulation of extremist materials; incitement of social, racial, ethnic or religious hatred. It is also extremism to publicly accuse state officials of extremism when the accusations are false and premeditated. The important ambiguity of all these prohibitions is that in many cases only the state authorities themselves decide whether a certain practice falls into the category of extremist or not.

It is useful to look at statistics related to changes in legal proceedings after the implementation of the new legislation. In 2008, a state agency Roskomnadzor, armed with the new legal prescriptions, filed twenty eight warnings on the pretext of extremism to different mass media. This contrasted with the seven warnings issued in the previous year. As a rule, official notifications concerning extremism in the mass media materials are used as preventive measures. These are meant to reproach wrong practices and not to press charges immediately. According to the anti-extremism law, the elimination of a license and the closure of a media company only becomes possible after two violations have been detected over a twelve months period.

On Roskomnadzor’s list of lawbreakers there are very few large mass media. Most registered violations happen in small regional and local newspapers. One explanation is that small local media cannot afford legal advice and editorial control is less strict than in larger companies. In my sample, the oppositional NG was only on the list once for alleged extremist content after the newspaper published an article entitled “A gang, an agency, a party. ‘Legal nationalists’, who are they?” (NG, January 20, 2013).

Roskomnadzor, short for Russian Federal Surveillance Service for Mass Media and Communications, monitors the general compliance with media law in the country, receives formal complaints, and takes measures in cases of violations.
The article focuses on an ultra-right organization, quoting excerpts from the political program of this “gang.” More importantly, it claims that the authorities are known to cooperate with “ultras” to intimidate liberal and leftist activists.

The controlling agency Roskomnadzor does not perform formal expert evaluations of media content. The actual examination and decision about the level of extremism is done by formally independent specialists in linguistics. But the agency has a right to warn a media organization about the legal consequences they face when certain materials are deemed extremist. It is unclear whether some media content automatically falls into the extremist category or whether it is defined as such during a court proceeding. Many mass media find it easier to remove the content that is allegedly extremist after the first notice to avoid going to a trial with the federal agency. The combination of this preventive regulatory mechanism and a vague definition of extremism imposes strict limitations on the journalistic field and thereby prevents it from radicalization.

The blogosphere is not formally regulated by Russian mass media law, unless of course someone decides to register a blog as a mass medium. But there are other laws that apply to blogs. For example, the anti-extremism law mentioned above is often used in sorting out violations on the Internet. There have been numerous examples of the criminal prosecution of bloggers on suspicion of extremist activities. In 2007, Savva Terentiev, a blogger from Syktvykar in Northern Russia, commented on someone else’s blog post with a text that later was defined in the court as an “incitement of hatred against police officers.” Terentiev was found guilty because of a phrase in which he emotionally suggested that he would burn the police officers. The case ended with a one year suspended sentence setting an important precedent in Russian judicial practice. One lesson that bloggers and internet users in general should have learned from that story is that online discussions also take place in public space, and thus require some degree of responsibility. Still, many human rights activists, journalists and fellow bloggers were shocked by this unprecedented trial. People were not accustomed to constraints of that sort being applied to internet forums and blogs.

The media community’s reaction to the trial was rather mixed. Online media, the liberal Lenta and pro-regime Vz, quite expectedly paid a lot of attention to the case. There was less coverage in the press, and almost nothing on television. 1TV did not mention the case at all and NTV only reported twice during the trial. After the sentence was announced, an NTV news story mentioned that it was the first case in Russia where someone was punished for leaving a message on the Internet (NTV, July 7, 2008).
In most cases, the mass media disapproved of how blogger Terentiev used offensive language in public. But many were also critical of the trial. The popular daily MK called the case ambiguous, contradictory and only based on the prosecutor’s argumentation. The court refused to consider the results of the linguistic analysis done by “the only expert with 27 years of experience” (Eliseeva, MK, July 7, 2008). The expertise is said to be inconsistent with the general line of accusation. The oppositional NG posed a rhetorical question “May one at least think?” as a title for its article on the case (Prusenkova, NG, July 10, 2008). The governmental RG (Gorodova, July 9, 2008), in turn, was more defensive of the court’s decision. The newspaper reminded readers that the blogger initially refused to testify and that the final sentence was softer than expected. Thus the political orientation of the media caused diverse interpretations of the case – demand for unrestricted freedoms of speech for internet interactions on one hand, and responsible and orderly behavior on the other.

Terentiev’s case is a valuable reference point to observe journalism-blogging relations. Because it was a first incident of its kind media followed it with increased interest. It also became more common for legal authorities to try to block access to unlawful content instead of finding and prosecuting individual bloggers. The disruptions of access to LJ and the sanctions of Roskomnadzor are regularly mentioned in online news media. Just as in the case of Terentiev’s trial, the federal television channels (1TV and NTV) rarely focus on such incidents. Interestingly, coverage of national issues in Kommersant and RG have tended to avoid subjects relating to blocked access to blogs, while local and regional versions are more willing to report these stories.

Another common way to restrict the freedom of journalists and bloggers is to consider their political critique as libelous provocations. Accusations of libel and defamation can disrupt the work of media and lead to prosecutions with even stricter legal consequences than in the cases of suspected extremism. The threat of libel charges disciplines the responsibility of public statements, but can also be used to put pressure on particularly zealous journalists and bloggers.

In Russia, the number of legal disputes between different mass media, between the media and state institutions, and between media and individual plaintiffs have grown significantly since 2000 (FAPMC 2010:92). After 2005, the Russian Supreme Court followed the directive of the European Court of Human Rights and prescribed to distinguish between opinions and facts in the mass media texts so that the private reputation of citizens and media freedom were equally respected. The decision caused the number of libel cases to decrease substantially. In 2000, there were over
5500 thousand of such legal actions in the country. The number dropped to 1626 and 755 in 2008 and 2009 respectively. After the period of political protests in 2011-2012, the libel legislation received a new impetus targeting the most critical voices of the regime. In short, the new legislative initiatives criminalized libel and made it easier to prosecute the authors of critical and investigative publications.

The politics of media action

Theoretically, in democracies media are supposed to strengthen the development of civil society. The logic is simple – a better informed individual makes wiser political choices and finds solutions for socially important issues. This is not always the case, however, in non-democratic or quasi-democratic societies, where media most of the time protect the interests of elites and manipulate public opinion in favor of the dominant ideology. In Russia, there have also been expectations that journalists, influenced by the broader freedoms of the blogosphere, will grow bolder and reinstate their critical assessment of political life. Alternatively, one can expect that in authoritarian regimes bloggers will become co-opted, intimidated or persecuted by the power elites. In such conditions, journalists that are loyal to the regime can be expected to serve as tools of the reactionary strategy.

There is a growing conviction among some Russian scholars (Grinberg and Deikin 2003) that mass media should not only facilitate public expression of opinion, but that journalists should be able to directly influence the course of events in the country. According to Grinberg and Deikin (ibid:np), the journalistic task to inform can be sufficient for “developed democracies” in which civil society and the separation of powers complement and balance each other. However, in Russia, scholars argue that media must also advocate and act as civic institutions. This is because in a society with only formal democratic institutions and authoritarian tendencies one cannot expect proper competitive politics without at least some form of media activism and criticism. Blogging provides the space for such initiatives. Indeed, on the Internet there are plenty of materials implicating numerous wrongdoings and violations, frauds and conflicts of interest among Russian elites. Still there is a gap between the facts revealed by the public and the respective legal decisions. In more democratic political systems such data normally leads to formal investigations, whereas in Russia even well-documented exposures and compromising materials do not have direct and immediate consequences.
The closer interaction between blogging and journalism (blogization) can create situations where it is impossible to silence political scandals. Depoliticized mainstream news programs will be compelled to say at least something about issues that stir up unsettling debates in the blogosphere. It is especially effective when declarative discussions on the Internet develop into practical actions and decisions. This is exactly what happened during the first large-scale protests in Moscow in December 2011. Dissatisfaction with the results of the parliamentary elections generated a wave of evidence exposing the fraud in blogs and social networks. Then, a second wave of indignation swept over into the streets. Why it did not become the “Russian winter,” a form analogous to the Arab spring, is a question related to differences in the socio-economic context, but also a question of historical memory in a context where people are tired of revolutions and prefer evolutionary changes instead.

Another political aspect of blogging involves increased opportunities for participation in public debate and realpolitik. The Internet is at the moment the least controlled and regulated medium and citizens enjoy an unprecedented level of self-expression. This is vital for countries like Russia, where problems with freedom of speech and diversity of opinions have been recognized. However, based on the accessibility of digital networking, the idea of participation does not necessarily imply ethical and responsible behavior. The increased independence of blogging from traditional institutions of power – business and the state – and a diminished level of accountability may lead to a lower standard of common journalistic culture. This in turn may produce a dead end for hopes of deliberative democratic communication and the rise of radical democratic projects, where journalism-blogging duality would play the central role.

A particularly relevant example of the political effects the blogosphere has on media space is a citizen movement called “Blue buckets” that grew from a protest against transport privileges.

On the road, a beacon of blue light is a sign of emergency vans, police cars and cars for high ranking state authorities. The beacon allows these vehicles to move through heavy congestion regardless of the status of the traffic lights. In Russia, this attribute of exceptional status on the road turned into a prestigious commodity for an extended group of elites. In the 2000s, those who could afford to pay for this privilege bribed the police or lobbied parliament for the right to use the beacon on the crowded streets of large cities, particularly the capital Moscow.

Using the beacon helps to travel faster, but does not always present a safe alternative. Stuck in a traffic jam? Just switch on the blue light, the siren, and move
to the wrong side of the road to proceed. The privilege quickly spread among impatient upper class. The beaconed cars were consequently blocking traffic on main streets and aggravating the whole transportation system by irritating other drivers and causing numerous accidents. Public discontent with the excessive rights to use the beacon without urgent reasons has grown since the 1990s. While the topic often remained underrepresented in traditional news media, it came to be widely discussed on blogs with the rise and spread of the Internet.

The debate re-emerged with a new wave of public upheaval after a tragic car accident in Moscow in February 2010. The incident occurred when a luxurious Mercedes carrying Lukoil’s vice-president Anatoliy Barkov hit an oncoming Citroen, killing two women inside. The top manager of the oil company and his driver suffered minor injuries. Witnesses claimed the Mercedes had moved over to the wrong side of the road in order to bypass heavy traffic. There is no clear evidence of whether a beacon was installed and activated on the Mercedes at the moment of the accident. But some bloggers discovered pictures of the same car in other places illegally using the emergency lights. The accident caused a large-scale discussion in the blogosphere, and eventually generated some mainstream media attention following the highly politicized debate.

Eventually, the civic organization “Car Owners’ Federation of Russia,” actively supported by bloggers, launched a campaign against the misuse of the blue beacons. In a protest movement car owners attached blue buckets to their vehicles imitating emergency beacons. This campaign against unlawful traffic privileges evolved into a broad movement largely due to the initial publications in blogs. Previously, the Russian blogosphere had played a role in mobilizing and communicating small-scale initiatives at the civic level. However, the movement of car owners, known today as “Sinie vederki” (blue buckets), became the first large-scale civic movement organized and coordinated by using of blogs.

A simple plastic bucket of blue color placed upside–down on top of a car became a symbol of protest against cases of widespread misuse of the emergency beacons by a cast of “privileged” cars. Since 2010, when the movement emerged, it grew into a wide network of activists throughout the country. Bloggers collected and shared video and photo evidence of violations. They also initiated independent investigations, and brought the topic to the attention of mainstream mass media. “Sinie vederki” would eventually lead to some changes on the legislative level. The use of emergency lights was restricted exclusively to a small number of government cars and emergency services. The difficulty of controlling the implementation of the ruling did not resolve the problem completely. Nevertheless, the blue buckets
movement became a successful social protest using the blogosphere to politicize certain issues, make them public, and influence decision makers. LJ blogs played the role of a media bridge connecting civic voices to the larger public space in which mainstream mass media were already unable to remain silent.

Parallel to the politicizing effects of blogization, the journalistic field in Russia also experienced depoliticizing applications and media representations of blogging culture. The following section highlights two of these instances.

**Depoliticizing the image of blogs**

There are different ways to consciously or unconsciously depoliticize the blogosphere. I discuss several throughout this research. Two particular examples are worth mentioning at this stage as they are less central to the analysis in the following chapters but important for a broader understanding of the political conditions of blogization. Here I present, firstly, a depoliticized snapshot of the blogosphere that can be found on the pages of a print magazine and, secondly, the depoliticized representation of blogging in a governmental daily newspaper.

While borrowing news content from the blogosphere has come to be a usual practice for traditional media, it remains a novelty for a print newspaper or a magazine to only consist of blog postings. The example of *The Printed Blog* offers an exception. This full-color glossy magazine publishes blog materials exclusively. The first issue of the magazine came out in Saint-Petersburg in July 2011 as a licensed version of a similar American project that existed since 2009. *The Printed Blog* is an international project with separate editions in English, Russian and Portuguese. In the U.S. it started as a daily publication that people could pick up for free at the local train stations and find news about their neighborhoods. This strategy, however, was later transformed into a subscription-based model, with monthly editions and more general content, as opposed to the initial hyperlocal (cf. Schaffer 2007:9) focus of the news. The U.S. edition of the magazine (www.theprintedblog.com) mentions that the authors-bloggers are paid for their contributions.

The editors of *The Printed blog* select stories from Russian-language blogs and sometimes translate them from other languages. The overall content for each issue covers from sixteen to twenty pages. Published stories normally marked with hyperlinks or bar-codes referring to the source on the Internet. *The Printed Blog* in Russia is formally independent from its foreign counterparts. It keeps the original free model without subscription fees and the profit comes from advertising.
According to the magazine’s Russian web site (www.theprintedblog.me), the magazine comes out twice a month. The total circulation of about seven thousand copies is freely distributed on stands in public places like restaurants and coffee shops. Another fifteen thousand copies, according to the magazine’s promotional kit, are given out to the business class train passengers travelling between Saint-Petersburg and Moscow. Thus, The Printed Blog in Russia is targeted at elitist upper middle-class audiences: senior managers, business executives, and other high-income categories.

An important feature of The Printed Blog is that it intentionally avoids political themes. Denis Ivanitskii, one of the founders and the editor-in-chief of the magazine, aims to keep The Printed Blog apolitical and says “it is better creating something new, rather than complaining about something that already exists” (Fazletdinova 2011:np). Such an ideological argument conceals the pragmatism of uncritical commercial orientation that we saw in other examples of statist commercialism. The magazine follows the generally apolitical editing policies of most other printed magazines and many newspapers in contemporary Russia. In recent years, especially magazines successfully developed due to the strategic non-interference with the sphere of state politics and a general focus on entertainment or business issues (see e.g. Koikkalainen 2007). As a supposed mirror of the blogosphere, however, the magazine distorts and depoliticizes the image of politically engaged citizen journalism of blogs.

The issues generally open with a short digest, reflecting the “most discussed and popular articles in the Russian blogosphere,” though the editorial choice is always explicitly apolitical. There are often stories featuring people who have succeeded in some kind of hobby or business enterprise. Sometimes bloggers share their knowledge and experience in what they have achieved, not only as bloggers but as artists, entrepreneurs, and designers alike. Other frequently published stories are posts from travel-blogs showing exotic places, extreme touristic routes, or scenic landscapes. In the magazine, there is no place for issues of national or international politics, as well as any kinds of conflicts and social problems are almost never mentioned. The only “political” part is the “Blog vs. Blog” section, in which bloggers, for example, express different opinions about the tradition of marriage or argue about positive and negative sides of Twitter.

A journalistic column “Blogosphere” in the state-owned RG is another example of depoliticized rendering of the Russian blogosphere. In a series of articles Dmitry Belyaev explains to an unprepared reader what blogging means and how to become a blogger (RG, June 28 and July 12, 2012), what to write in a blog (26 July and 9
August 2012), and how to become popular by attracting new “friends” and “followers” (30 August 2012). The initial article in the series states that blogs are “popular in Russia like never before” and that blogging is an art that requires twofold skills: communicative ability to interact with readers and technical knowledge to wisely design and present one’s blog (Belyaev, RG 28 June 2012). A sidebar note introduces the author-journalist, explaining that Dmitry Belyaev is a “26-year-old entrepreneur and creator of web sites with twelve years of work experience in the field” (yes, it means, he has been doing that since he was fourteen). He “recently received his master’s degree with distinction” and, according to the note, he also has a blog “read by 100,000 people a month <…> and ranked in the top hundred most popular blogs out of 55 million Runet blogs.” The short biographical note concludes that Belyaev is the founder and host of Saint-Petersburg blogger’s club Blogopiter. The column comes out with the author’s photo on the side – a sign of personification and a relatively high journalistic status.

What is this example about? To a critical reader, some of the presented details about the columnist seem like overstatements. It is possible that Belyaev was a talented 14-year-old teenager when he got involved in his first internet start-ups. But a hundred thousand readership of his blog is a doubtful number. Such numbers would make any blogger a celebrity, which he is not by any means. At best Belyaev’s stand-alone blog Cuamckuykot.ru, mentioned in the newspaper, is average as is seen from the statistics of the blog’s LJ version and Yandex blog ratings.20 By the end of 2012, the blog was ranked seventh hundredth and had less than three thousand subscribers. The original web site, looks rather professional and stylish, but contains very few comments.

The possible exaggeration of readership size and the claimed high rating can be a result of nominal (perhaps even artificially generated) traffic rather than real audience visits. Figures concerning the number of Russian blogs (55 millions) are more likely a rough generalization that includes all kinds of social network accounts, which indeed have blog-like features but strictly speaking have nothing to do with blogging. For the average reader, however, these contradictory facts are not self-evident.

Such a hyperbolic presentation of a staff writer by the state-owned RG seems unnecessary. A “reputable” blogger takes on the role of an opinionated journalist and teaches the “art” of blogging to RG readers. The plausible explanation is that the newspaper aimed to present its “blog expert” as having sufficient authority and

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20 LiveJournal ratings are available on the homepage of the blog hosting. Overall ratings of the Russian-language blogosphere can be retrieved with Yandex’s “blogs” section (blogs.yandex.ru/top).
competence in the subject which would later be re-invented for audiences who are not familiar with blogging. This re-invention has been devoid of critical politicized discussions and the role many Russian blogs play in that. As a result, the “Blogosphere” column in RG appears only in 2012 and serves as a kind of “introduction to blogging,” while citizen activism and the citizen journalism of blogs have already became an influential force and a political challenge. One should bear in mind, however, that this attempt to depoliticize the perception of the blogosphere has been targeting more traditional audiences that are not active internet users.

Summary

This chapter presented an overview of the Russian journalistic field from the point of view of the concept of blogization. Conceived of in this way, the journalistic field can be viewed as a common space where professional journalists can co-exist with citizen journalists (bloggers). The diverse positions taken by both social groups represent a complex and dynamic phenomenon with multiple dimensions or conditions that affect the overall structure of the field. I base my argument on a model that allows for an interpretation of blogization as a potential broadening or narrowing of the field of journalistic practices along the axes of: 1) technological innovation and convergence, 2) economic growth and profitability, 3) the emergence of produsage culture with its advantages and ethical problems, and 4) political control on one hand and democratization on the other.

The spread of new media has transformed the established relationships between political institutions and citizenry, media professionals and audiences. There are two important aspects of this transformation – liberation from dictates of traditional journalism and the advent of innovative forms of interaction (Bentivegna 2002:50). So, what does it take for different news media, and consequently for the journalists and bloggers affiliated with them, to succeed in the game they play? And what are the criteria for success? The co-existence of traditional journalism and the journalism of blogs within the common space of news production (blogization) can be explained by those conditions under which such practices take place. The underlying conditions include technologic solutions employed by different media types, the economic characteristics of media businesses, the political orientation of journalistic roles, and the scale of media output. These conditions lead to the following four points.
Blogization varies across media types. Television is different in many respects from print news, and the Internet offers completely new conditions for journalism. It should not be a surprise that the websites of media companies include blogging sections on their pages as a kind of opinionated journalism, but television newscasts only occasionally refer to blog content. Thus, the first self-evident condition of blogization is the type of media. This proposition is related to a broader discussion about the role of technology in shaping modern media systems.

Blogization is part of the media economy. Information about the corporate strategies of media organizations illustrates whether one medium is part of a bigger corporation with more economic capital than others. This data is the easiest to find. But it is also important to evaluate the relative share a media company holds within the organizational structure of a larger corporation. By contrast, numerous examples of the journalism featured on blogs are not commercial, are not the product of any organization, and thus distort, if not challenge, the foundations of the market-based media system.

Blogization is driven by the audience. Blogging is part of participatory journalism culture that encourages non-professionals to make contributions to news production. Consequently, the growing media references to blogging provoke a chain reaction; the more people get to know about blogs, the more chances there are that participation will grow. But the growing participation has natural limits and the potential for a boomerang effect; having too many sources of news information will not dissolve the hierarchies of media but at best will restructure them.

Blogization politicizes journalism. In the context of the Russian journalistic field the coverage of political competition is marginalized, and blogging plays a role of relatively unconstrained public space. Along with the abovementioned technology, economics and audience, the condition of politics is equally important for the development of journalism-blogging relations.

Figure 12 summarizes these four points in the form of contexts that influence the expanding journalistic field. The dashed circle represents the hypothetical sphere of journalism expanded under the influence of blogization. The level and rate of expansion varies depending on the resistance of respective conditioning fields (politics, economy, technology, and audience).

Informally, blogs are already omnipresent as side products of various online media and also often feature as content for traditional print and broadcast media. This happens due to the mutual interconnectedness of journalistic roles and the roles performed by a growing number of social media participants in general and bloggers in particular. Online environment in the Russian context provides evidence that
some of the traditional news media are lagging behind web-based services and social media. Traditional media forms are more vulnerable to economic fluctuations and more dependent on state interventions into the journalistic field.

Figure 12. The Conditions of Blogization

The journalistic field in Russia is rather sensitive to changes in the global economy. We can see that internal affairs and political stability are more important for the ruling elites than the sustainable market development of media organizations. The state media policies prioritize tight control over large-scale mass media (television), perhaps to the detriment of economic profits. Alternatively, some mass media organizations choose to follow the model of statist commercialism – pursuing profits without intervening with the authorities. In these situations, the informal ties between media owners and the ruling political elites constitute a meta-field of power and play the role of a natural delimiting mechanism.
Blogization, or the growing quantitative and qualitative influence of blogging, poses some challenges to the statist commercialism of journalism. However, the scope of these challenges should not be overestimated, since they are stronger in digital media and weaker in traditional journalistic forms. It is too early to talk about general societal effects. Blogization is easier to observe at the level of journalistic culture and in terms of the sub-culture of citizen journalism of blogs. In this sense, blogization can have far-reaching consequences for the common journalistic field.

The blue buckets movement shows how collective civic actions can partly politicize the journalistic field. In addition to political alternatives, blogization challenges journalistic culture from an ethical standpoint. Evolving as largely unregulated space, the blogosphere recognizes the necessity of ethical norms, self-regulation, and training for citizen journalists.

The Russian state has reacted to the politicizing aspect of blogization in two ways. The more subtle strategy includes practices of blogger co-optation and support for projects that depoliticize the image of blog culture. The Printed blog demonstrates a more formal transformation of blogging formats into conventional media forms that avoid political subjects. The strength of this strategy is that it is almost invisible and appears as a natural commercial development of media projects. The more straightforward strategy is to organize pressure on seditious parts of the combined field of journalists and bloggers. Hacking and disruptions of access to online sites (DDoS attacks) are common ways this is practiced. Thus, the advantages of new digital media forms can at the same time serve as weaknesses. The practice of repressive cyber-attacks on independent and politicized websites mirrors the disruptive and subversive logic of blogization which challenges the norm of mass media submission to the political power of the ruling regime.
5 Symbolic capital in blogization

The four conditioning spaces of the previous chapter can be further conceptualized in terms of power relations, or the symbolic capital that defines these relations. Bloggers entering the journalistic field become involved in competition for this abstract resource against professional journalists and against other bloggers. Similarly, journalists must now face new competitors in addition to keeping themselves in good standing in terms of the older, established hierarchies.

The focus of this chapter is on practices at the micro level. Focusing on details helps to explore hierarchical principles, moments of tensions and patterns of mutual benefit within the common journalistic field. Such a micro field perspective answers the following question: How do journalists and bloggers make use of each other, reproducing or challenging the existing hierarchies?

Thus, from a macro perspective on the conditions of blogization I move here to specific moments of symbolic struggle between journalists and bloggers in Russia. The chapter starts with a brief outline of the concept of symbolic capital and its applications to journalistic practices. The following analysis consists of two parts. First, with the help of quantitative tools I present the idea of peer-recognition as an important aspect of symbolic capital. The second analytical part qualitatively illustrates two significant cases of blogization: 1) the evolution of Aleksey Navalny from an investigative blogger to a federal level politician; and 2) the symbolic revolt of prominent television journalist Leonid Parfenov against the dominance of the state and its meta-capital in the journalistic field.

5.1 Entrance to the field

Forms of capital to pay the entry fee

In journalism, as in other sub-fields of cultural production, it is necessary to possess special instruments and knowledge to become part of the field. The same rule should apply to blogging. To access the work of bloggers and to interact with them, one
needs both a computer and an internet connection (although even that can still be an obstacle in some contexts) as well as some basic knowledge of where to find a blog of interest and how to participate technically. Even higher than that are the requirements, in a sense the “entry fee,” for becoming a recognized blogger and, more specifically, a citizen journalist. However, these baseline requirements are insignificant compared to the price of establishing and running a traditional news organization. Indeed, the accessibility of modern technologies is overwhelming in societies with high levels of internet penetration and computer literacy, and a decent standard of living. Hence, it is intuitively clear that being an active blogger is easier than entering institutionalized journalism with limited amount of job places and a tough daily workload.

Tremayne (2007:xvi) argues that the growing influence of amateur citizen journalists comes from their status as outsiders. It is the same status that television reporters possessed in the 1950s when, compared to journalists representing established publishing houses, they seemed less corrupted by power. Today, this image of uncorrupted outsiders is a potential source of symbolic power for blogging. It is something that the institutional media cannot accumulate as successfully as newcomers to the field. Becoming an opinionated blogger, however, is not an easy task. It takes certain skills and spare time, especially if one wants to attract large audiences. It is typical for prominent bloggers to be good at something related to journalism. The work of a popular news blogger can be similar to the work of a freelance journalist. Though, there is one exception – bloggers publish their stories themselves. The key issue here is that such a do-it-yourself journalism needs to appear credible enough to compete with established media institutions.

So, what are the sources of journalistic power? In the logic of field theory, a successful mechanism of cultural production, such as journalism, is determined by a complex of valuable assets, or different forms of capital, specific for that type of social practices. There is always the external pressure of state policies and the market logic. In cases of national media politics we can talk about the power of the symbolic meta-capital (Couldry 2003) of the state. The state regulates (and in countries like Russia directly controls) the system of traditional mass media, and hence it distributes symbolic meta-capital of political importance among strategic media organizations. The capitalistic system of production (to which Russia undoubtedly belongs) assigns primary importance to values of economic capital. Media economy encourages the accumulation of economic capital through commercial earnings or by relying on subsidies. Naturally, most of the mainstream mass media are essential to that system. However, given the previous arguments of this research, it is clear
that state power has overwhelming superiority in Russia. It means that the meta-
capital of the state controls the accumulation of economic capital to such an extent
that the reverse exchange (buying political capital with money) seems less crucial. In
short, traditional journalistic power in Russia is mainly constituted by the meta-
capital of the state and to a lesser degree by economic capital.

On the other hand, as normative media theories (Christians et al. 2009) suggest,
journalists play various social roles that can be different from the interests of the
market and of the state. The social orientation of journalism has been grounded in
ideas of morality and the common good (Rossi and Soukup 1994; Wilkins and
Coleman 2005; Christians 2007). Although the exact meaning of these ideas is
disputable, they still provide a sense of non-market and non-state forms of symbolic
capital. Perhaps, even in opposition to the market and state such a form of socially-
bound capital, or social capital, constitutes another external source of journalistic
symbolic power.

Bourdieu (1986) vaguely defines social capital as “the aggregate of the actual or
potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or
less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition” (p. 248).
Journalists, of course, normally do not know every single reader (viewer, listener)
personally. But the ability of journalists to appeal to the public generally and
accumulate reputation creates the basis for closer social ties. The necessity to deal with
an increasingly fragmented audience and the ability to mobilize public opinion also
require social capital of trust and recognition. Since blogging and similar social media
tools enable stronger connections with the audience and can be more effective for
building up social capital, the significance of this asset increases in the process of the
blogization of journalism.

Therefore, in the context of blogization it is possible to apply Bourdieu’s concept
of social capital in a more concrete way. Higher social capital for journalists means
more favorable audience recognition and public perception of journalism as a social
institution. As I pointed out in Chapter 2, a general conviction among Russians is
that journalism is a corrupted, dangerous, but paradoxically prestigious profession.
The strength of the authoritarian political system is dialectically connected to the
weakness of civil society. This state of affairs makes the “exchange rate” of social
capital into political or economic capital relatively low. And, on the contrary, the
state meta-capital that directly or indirectly controls most of the television programs
can make some journalists seem reliable and socially responsible in exchange for
their political loyalty.
At the same time, the development of media technologies stimulates the growth of cultural capital in the special form of technical knowledge, computer skills and competence in multi-tasking. Cultural capital is also important when based on some kind of expert knowledge and communicative skills or what is sometimes called media capital (Davis and Seymour 2010). In journalism, it is important to produce media content at a standard that is negotiated within the field. Thus, it makes sense to consider cultural capital as an important aspect of internal struggles between, firstly, the journalists themselves and, secondly, between professionals (journalists) and amateur newcomers (bloggers).

In the end, a combination of these various forms of capital constitutes so-called journalistic capital (cf. Willig 2013). What choices do journalists and, eventually, bloggers have as modes of practice? The choices can be pursuing economic profit, legitimizing and protecting the existing political system, or serving the interests of larger or smaller social groups, including contributions to the development of the institutions of civil society. In other words, the journalistic field could be seen as ultimately structured by logics of a business enterprise, a state agency, and a social institution. However, the same applies in the opposite direction; journalism sometimes appears as a non-commercial practice that may challenge the authorities in power, and serve mainly individual rather than social interests. Ultimately, journalistic capital is required in order to enter the journalistic field and become a part of it. The important question is how blogization redefines (if at all) this journalistic capital.

Bourdieu’s (1998a) reflections on French television of the late 1990s suggested that large scale media tended to level the news with the interests of the general public: “this homogenization, which smooths over things, brings them into line, and depoliticizes them” (p. 45). Would small-scale media such as blogs with limited and highly specialized audiences not politicize things then? In this regard, Benson (2006) conveniently offers a new approach to understanding the journalistic field. He adds to Bourdieu’s cultural and economic dimensions a political dimension and regards the journalistic field “as largely structured around an opposition between a state-cultural/civic pole on one side and a state-market pole on the other” (Benson 2006:196). Distinction like that provides a better view of the blogization as a process driven by civic initiatives in newsmaking and redefinitions of journalism.

In Bourdieu’s writings the idea of political power is often the same as recognition within a particular social group, a group that believes, trusts and obeys its representative: “Political capital is a form of symbolic capital, credit founded on credence or belief or recognition or, more precisely, on the innumerable operations of
credit by which agents confer on a person (or on an object) the very powers that they recognize in him (or it)” (Bourdieu and Thompson 1991:192). Bourdieu further distinguishes forms of 1) personal political capital, based on categories of “fame” and “popularity,” and 2) the delegated capital of political authority embedded in institutions and organizations, especially ones that have apparatuses of mobilization (ibid:194-6).

This broad interpretation of political capital in a narrow journalistic sense corresponds with the concept of journalistic capital. In other words, the political capital of journalists is their journalistic capital. I will use this formulation to avoid ambiguity and conceptual overlaps, although I recognize there also exists a broader interpretation of the journalistic capital. As I previously established, the struggles for symbolic dominance in the Russian journalistic field occur mainly along the axis of political autonomy, more substantially than along any other potential spaces, like economics or technological knowledge. And only the social capital of the audience’s trust and approval constitute an alternative source of power for bloggers and journalists. Yet, blogization has a somewhat limited commercial effect, which I need to consider here as well.

The commercial capacities of blogs

Traditional mass media have learned to use blogs as a source of low-cost information, borrowing pieces of original news content, opinions and expert knowledge. This practice sometimes allows for vague references to “some blogs” and can reduce journalistic responsibility to ensure an accurate and verified selection of information. For example, it is possible to find the following generalizations in media texts: “the majority of bloggers associate the traffic collapse with the preparations for a high-speed train launch…” (Buranov, Kommersant, July 8, 2010). Journalists may also refer to collective opinion without naming anyone specifically. When in 2008, there were rumors about the possible denomination of Russian currency, journalists rejected the rumor because it was considered by “the overwhelming majority of bloggers as a falsification” (Lenta, February 5, 2008).

Blogs can also serve as tools for expanding the space of public relations, image management and promotion. Preparing for the 2012 Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit in Vladivostok, the Russian government planned to spend about half a million euros on publicity campaign in blogs and social media. The national television news reported on this decision by saying the money would
go toward “the creation and promotion of the summit’s Facebook page, publications on popular blogs, and counteraction to negative news about the summit on the Internet” (NTV, September 9, 2011). This television report makes it seem natural to pay for materials in social media, and, along with the state officials, it recognizes the importance of new public spaces. In a way, the traditional journalism influenced by the political field spreads the kind of relations that are already natural for professionals in the realm of new social media (and blogs). Such policies and media attitudes bring the value of the economic capital into the process of blogization.

In recent years, a new commercial activity developed in connection with various social media and blogs. One can find numerous job announcements for specialists in social media marketing, also known as SMM-managers. This offers a great commercial opportunity to active bloggers who can be paid to promote business interests in direct contact with different categories of internet users.

Bloggers, however, also learn to generate their own economic capital. Some of the most prominent bloggers can become popular enough to attract commercial and political advertising. Companies are ready to pay for advertising inside blog posts, which may vary from a short mention of certain products or services to a full-fledged ad campaign, describing, for example, the benefits of an “advanced” fitness club, an “efficient” cough medicine, or “up to a seventy percent increase” in sales at a shopping mall. In the networked environment of blogs, it can be difficult to camouflage such a product placement and avoid reputational risks and loss of credibility. To be safe, bloggers use tags to mark “advertisements” or “promotional” materials. It also looks more natural and beneficial for advertisers, if a blogger openly supports something and acknowledges the commerciality of the deal.

There is a difference between journalists occasionally updating their blogs and journalists who systematically build up blogger profiles and become part of the blogging elite. At the forefront of blogization there are moments of almost complete interpenetration of professional journalism. This could be classified as a kind of journalistic blogging (Robinson 2006) that sometimes makes it difficult to say objectively whether a person is more of a journalist or a blogger. In the sample of bloggers (see Chapter 3) Natalia Radulova is an example of that. Her LJ blog has many examples of commercial advertising. One of her blog post advertises a company that helps promoting internet sites. It presents audiences with a combination of commercial advertising, a blogger’s self-reflection, and expert opinions. She writes:

If you wish, you can have your own blog, make your own site, you can sell online (if there is something to sell), and even in your hyped-up wretched
Twitter it is possible to make some money. The most important is to find in this huge [virtual] space your own audience. With no audience – things are sad. With an audience – you are the king. (Radulova, November 21, 2012)

Such a perspective challenges the monopoly of the traditional mass media to sell audiences to commercial organizations. Advertising in blogs, and other kinds of digital networks, seem better targeted and personified which affects the overall reliability. Advertising in blogs also cost significantly less than in the larger mass media.

As a separate mass medium with its own advertising capacities, Radulova’s blog must be pulling the advertising money from other media. One can speculate about the commercial losses she causes to her primary job organizations. But on the other hand, Radulova’s blogging also popularizes the media companies she works for, as many of her blog stories are summaries of the journalistic tasks and contain links to the originals. This alone draws additional audiences to the sites of her employers.

Radulova seems to be known as a prominent blogger due to her active cross-postings on multiple platforms. Such cases also present an example of hybrid journalism (Chadwick 2013). The content, though usually copied from a professional media site to a personal blog, does not exactly match the original source. In blogs, journalists may be more expressive and reflexive in their work. Especially informative can be various alternative narratives and unpublished impressions that journalists experience while creating the original story. The hybrid character of such journalism contributes to the overlapping sub-fields: the cultural journalistic capital helps bloggers like Radulova to make their blogs attractive for broader audiences, while the social capital of closer interpersonal contacts within blogosphere generates more trust in what a blogger makes as a professional journalist.

For many journalists, the blogosphere is not only a regular source of valuable information, it is also part of their personal publishing space, a kind of extension of their creative journalistic work. This extension varies from republishing the results of the full-time work to producing entirely original content. There are also moments of self-reflection when people use blogging to say something about their media work, thus adding an entirely new perspective to that work. The new perspective can be called meta-journalism, or journalism about journalism. Consequently, one of the qualitative outcomes of blogization is that there is more information than before about the ways journalism is practiced.
5.2 The symbolic capital of peer-recognition

The process of entrance to the field can be described as a dichotomy between symbolic peer-recognition on one hand, and misrecognition on the other. One way of locating the moment of entrance is to track journalistic stories and see when and how bloggers are mentioned. Especially relevant are those cases when bloggers are mentioned as sources of news or explicitly called “citizen journalists,” authors, or producers of media content. The raw numbers, however, can also explain general levels of recognition, regardless of whether it is a case of acceptance to the field or radical rejection.

The recognition of peers expressed in citation indexes is symbolically important for mass media. Just as the academic market encourages scientific publications in journals with higher impact factors and citation ratings, news organizations and advertisers take similar aspects into account to evaluate the relative media power in the journalistic field. As part of the common space of news production, mass media and blogs use information from each other in the form of citations, syndicated materials and mutual projects. Therefore, we can explore the structure of the common space of Russian media, understood as a field of relational positions, from the perspective of mutual references.

In February 2012, an analytical report by Medialogia ranked the Russian media companies according to their citation ratings. The first three positions were taken by the news agencies RIA, Interfax, and Itar-tass. Their citation ratings were at least twice as high as the ratings of the next most cited news medium. It is natural that the news agencies provide the bulk of the first-hand information for other media. After the agencies, the next media company on the list was the publishing house Kommersant. Figure 13 shows the relative positions of authority that some of the other media in my sample occupy in relation to each other.

The symbolic capital of Kommersant, measured by Medialogia is a citation rating equal to 6016.42 points. This is more than two times higher the capital of the next media conglomerate Gazprom-Media (2978.49 points) and one of its main resources, the television channel NTV. Thus, in the overall rating of the Russian mass media, Kommersant and NTV occupy third and fourth positions respectively. The distances between subsequent positions get smaller further down the list, and the next most cited mass medium in my sample is the 1TV television channel. As part of the National Media Group (2757.96 points) this channel is number eight among all the mass media organizations and number three in the sample.
Figure 13. Citation Ratings of the Major Russian Media Holdings in February 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Media Organization</th>
<th>Citation Count</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kommersant</td>
<td>6016.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gazprom-Media (NTV)</td>
<td>2978.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Media Group (ITV)</td>
<td>2757.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RG</td>
<td>2119.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prof-Media (Lenta.ru)</td>
<td>1705.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NG</td>
<td>832.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MK</td>
<td>468.68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Medialogia (February 2012)

Figure 13 also summarizes the positions taken by other media of my sample. Vz is the only media source in the sample that Medialogia did not include in its list of the twenty most cited Russian news media. Based on this chart, one can argue that inside the journalistic field Kommersant, for instance, is twice as important symbolically as NTV, or that the popular MK is two times less significant than the oppositional NG.

Recognition inside the blogosphere can be based on a similar kind of referencing mechanism. Some bloggers are cited more often than others, their symbolic capital thus depends on who cites them and how often. In a way, bloggers gain dominance and authority through a network of fellows who can connect (with hyperlinks) their own audiences to a certain blog.

The basic sign of interaction between journalists and bloggers are references to each other in media and blog texts. To demonstrate this point, in what follows I present two samples of quantitative data. The first provides evidences of the rapid growth of “blogger” references in traditional mass media texts starting from the very first instances in 2002 until the end of 2012. The second reflects the popularity of these media among LJ bloggers during the same period.

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21 Figure lists only those media organizations that were selected in the research sample. The respective places in the full rating are: 4 – Kommersant, 5 – Gazprom Media (NTV), 8 – National Media Group (ITV), 10 – RG, 13 – Prof-Media (Lenta.ru), 15 – NG, 19 – MK.

22 The sample of traditional mass media remains the same as the one discussed before. I continue to use abbreviations for most of the media sources as follows: the television Channel One (ITV);
The growth of references to bloggers

In the Russian mass media the amount of references to blogs has grown from zero in 1999-2001 (the first three years after the first blog services opened) to hundreds of mentions a day during the second half of 2000s. The first Russian-language media references to bloggers date back to 2002. However, there were very few examples until the end of 2005. During this initial period, journalists talked about blogging as a hobby popular among advanced internet users and intellectuals. The earliest examples were published in online media and framed as technology news. At that time online media was more eager to report about bloggers than their competitors in print or on television channels. Different technological and social conditions could have had an effect on that, but also political and economic circumstances.

Table 4 shows how the number of “blogger” stories in the sample of eight media has grown in recent years. In six years the amount increased exponentially from less than one hundred stories in 2006 to over two thousand in 2012. The table clearly shows bloggers appearing in the media more and more often, especially in the period after 2010. The year 2012 is somewhat different from the previously observed trend – the growth has slowed down significantly. Print media in particular seem to have reached a saturation point in the use of blogger references. Or, the former “bloggers” were referred to by other words, such as “activists.” The overall increase, however, is still present in 2012. Another “low” year is 2009, the only time period when the total was lower than in previous years. The reasons for such variations can be complex. A reasonable explanation for the 2009 downturn is related to the consequences of the global financial crisis when many people lost their jobs. Perhaps fewer journalists worked at that time and produced fewer materials, at the same time as bloggers were busy searching for new jobs.

According to the numbers for different media in the table, television channels were less likely to mention bloggers, who are often the fiercest critics of the state. And it is the state that controls television far more than the press and most online web sites. The way various media produce the news can also influence these numbers. There are several newscasts on television almost every day. Most daily newspapers have non-publication days during the week, and the space available for journalistic materials is naturally limited by the number of pages and column sizes.

Newspapers Moskovsky Komsomolets (MK), Rossiyskaya Gazeta (RG), Novaya Gazeta (NG); news websites Lenta.ru (Lenta) and Vzglyad.ru (Vz).

23 The figures were retrieved using the services of the Integrum database.
The nature of online media allows for the production of news in a 24 hour format in a publishing space that is practically unlimited. The online environment also allows for the updating of materials throughout the day. The same event may have a continuation in the form of newer stories thus piling on the number of stories. This is one of the reasons why online media generally produce more materials than television or newspapers.

Table 4. Number of “Blogger” Media Mentions (2006-2012)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1TV</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NTV</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>359</td>
<td>556</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kommersant</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>351</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RG</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>399</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NG</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>427</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MK</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>585</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vz</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>445</td>
<td>648</td>
<td>1595</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lenta</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>277</td>
<td>278</td>
<td>389</td>
<td>531</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>2287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>277</td>
<td>562</td>
<td>554</td>
<td>930</td>
<td>1753</td>
<td>2167</td>
<td>6337</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Integrum data base (accessed 2 January 2013)

Naturally, the numbers vary across media and media formats. It is obvious that the largest number of “blogger” stories appeared in online media (Lenta and Vz), whereas television news programs had the lowest rate. Among the printed newspapers the popular MK and oppositional NG have slightly more blogger materials than the elite dailies Kommersant and RG. The data, divided for each year and for each mass media, explains how different media have appropriated the use of bloggers over time. Online news media have been more inclined to refer to bloggers, but they are also more consistent in terms of the gradual increase. Television remained a blogger-free media space longer than any other platforms. In contrast to an almost linear tendency for online and print media, television changed from a very low interest to fast increase in the last two years – consider, for instance, NTV numbers for 2011 and 2012. The sudden leap in the number of mentions on NTV can be explained by a campaign to discredit protesters, many of whom became popular due to their blogging practices.

But the total number of references is not a sufficient indicator. Higher absolute numbers could simply mean that there are more journalists in the newsrooms, more journalistic materials in total, or more issues or newscasts in each day, month, or year. This could all have an effect on the higher or lower probability of blogger materials being published. Therefore, one should compare it to the overall media
output, that is with the total amount of news items produced annually. To partly overcome the limitation of the absolute measurements and to make the media in my sample more comparable, I calculated an index of the relative frequencies of bloggers’ appearances in the media texts.

Table 5. Number of “Blogger” Stories in the Media per 1000 News Items (2009-2012)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1TV</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>2.51</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>1.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NTV</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>8.59</td>
<td>9.60</td>
<td>5.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kommersant</td>
<td>1.44</td>
<td>2.82</td>
<td>5.04</td>
<td>4.65</td>
<td>3.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RG</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>6.02</td>
<td>4.88</td>
<td>3.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NG</td>
<td>8.52</td>
<td>25.23</td>
<td>34.53</td>
<td>23.49</td>
<td>22.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MK</td>
<td>2.54</td>
<td>7.02</td>
<td>13.13</td>
<td>13.60</td>
<td>9.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vz</td>
<td>1.27</td>
<td>2.18</td>
<td>5.88</td>
<td>11.26</td>
<td>5.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lenta</td>
<td>4.32</td>
<td>7.87</td>
<td>10.83</td>
<td>12.95</td>
<td>8.99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Average 2.52 6.44 10.82 10.39

Source: Integrum database (accessed 2 January 2013)

Table 5 compares the number of blogger stories with the amount of all the news items that appeared in the chosen mass media. It displays an index of the number of blogger stories per 1000 news items. The numbers for each media represent the four-year period between 2009 and 2012.

The table provides a somewhat different picture of the use of blogger references in the mass media. Whereas in absolute numbers the most favorable media space for bloggers was online, in the relative indexes this initial finding is corrected by the total outcomes of the different media. It is typical for online media to have more separate news items. But we can see that the relative volume of blogger stories in Lenta is in fact less than in MK and a bit higher than on NTV. 1TV is still the media where one is least likely to find news about or involving bloggers. Contrary to that, oppositional NG, with its investigative journalism, and a rather small audience, demonstrates the highest ratio. In 2009, NG already had 8.52 blogger stories per 1000 news items, and peaked in 2011 with a very high 34.53.

This is the quantitative side of bloggers’ representations in Russian mass media data. The qualitative explanations of these numbers will now help to expand this preliminary understanding of the process of the blogization.
Behind the growing number of media references to bloggers there is a rich qualitative material that qualifies and defines the “newcomers” in many different ways. The full range of references spans from generic depersonalized mentions of “bloggers” to anonymous and nicknamed quotations to moments of celebriﬁcation.

For a long time, news media was introducing blogging in very general terms. Broader audiences required an explanation of the new phenomenon, and the shortest approach was to describe blogs as personal diaries that some people publish on the Internet. Thus, early mentions of bloggers in media publications were mostly generic: “an emergent army of bloggers” (NG, November 21, 2005), “average Russian blogger” (Gagin, RG, September 27, 2006), “bloggers as ‘real writers’” (Novikova, Kommersant, August 25, 2006). At that time, it was also quite common to give definitions: “Bloggers are predominantly young internet users, who act as amateur story-tellers and they like describing events of their own lives” (Vz, July 19, 2006). More speciﬁed references portrayed bloggers as a homogeneous social group, and this journalistic tendency to generalize various aspects of blogging is quite common. In 2005, during the disastrous hurricane Katrina in the U.S., President George W. Bush was far from the devastated region visiting a naval base in California. Someone took a picture of him playing guitar, and this photo eventually sparked a ﬁre of criticism and accusations of inaction. The Russian media picked up this story. The popular daily MK speciﬁed the place where the picture was taken, but did not say anything about its author or about the source where it was ﬁrst published, just “bloggers uploaded the picture” (MK, September 12, 2005). Of course in that article there was no point in questioning the authenticity of the visual evidence presented by “bloggers,” as no-one denied the facts and the story simply appeared as an awkward accident. But the example testiﬁes to a whole range of non-speciﬁc, depersonalized references to bloggers and blog contents that the media has been adopting more and more routinely. Journalists without hesitation include unspeciﬁed references to “some bloggers” even when quoting them directly, as in this example:

And some bloggers jokingly threatened to ﬁle a complaint to the consumer protection agency, if some kind of an art installation “would not be a pleasure to the eye” (NG, February 7, 2011)

Another level of depersonalization is not so much due to journalistic generalizations and unspeciﬁc references, but due to the virtual nature of the Internet that stimulates anonymity. Despite the development of social media that encourages the use of real
identity and authentic personal information, many blog services, including LJ, permit fake names, nicknames and fictional avatars - visual representations of users.

This blurred identity means even some of the most prominent bloggers are known by their usernames. In the Russian blogosphere, there are two notable examples. The blogger Fritzmorgen\textsuperscript{24} had long been hiding his real name, causing endless rumors about his personality, age and profession. After it became clear that his name is Oleg Makarenko, he was still almost always referred to as Fritzmorgen. The second example of a depersonalized blogger, who rushed to the top of the LJ ratings within several months in the guise of a street prostitute, calls herself Prostitutka-Ket.\textsuperscript{25} Her identity remains unknown even after she received a LJ “Breakthrough of the year” award in person while hiding her face behind a scarf (\textit{Only4}, October 15, 2012).

Therefore, the blogosphere allows people to play roles similar to a kind of puppet show, where only some details of the actors’ individuality appear in public, while their physical bodies are deliberately hidden. Mass media, however, often take advantage of the public space created by blogs and talk about the “show,” either referring to only the visible attributes of these “actors” or using the word “blogger” to abstractly designate the collective identity of those inhabiting the blogosphere.

In contrast, there is also a celebrefication tendency which overemphasizes the individual characteristics of bloggers in news media publications. After drawing a certain amount of media attention, a popular blogger can become a new celebrity. After that the importance of blogging activity in an individual’s portrait may be replaced by other occupational talents and merits, whether that person is viewed as an expert, a respected opinion leader, political activist, or even a journalist. The latter case, though, would point to the confluence of two identities – blogger and journalist – rather than a split or departure from the generic category toward celebrity status.

On the other hand past celebrities, that is, those public figures whose popularity has already been established in the news media (politicians, actors, athletes), may use social media to generate additional publicity. This reverse transformation of celebrities into “bloggers” leads to even higher publicity and a heightened degree of celebrefication, but never encloses the resulting identity solely in the realm of blogging.

\textsuperscript{24} As of \textit{27.11.2012}, Fritzmorgen was number 23 in LJ rating.

\textsuperscript{25} LJ account Prostitutka-Ket was created in May 2011 and quickly proved to be extremely attractive to readers. The manifested frankness of her “whore’s notes” based on a description of a woman’s personal daily life experiences brought the blog, as of \textit{27.11.2012}, to the 9th position in the LJ ratings. At the beginning of this sweeping rise many suspected the blog was a side project of some distinguished blogger who helped to promote it.
The blog of Dmitry Medvedev, who started his “blogging career” in the position of the Russian president, offers an example of celebrification. Medvedev’s blog mostly plays the role of an image making tool that a political celebrity uses in order to generate public consent and approval among hostile online audiences (Yagodin 2012). Medvedev is not a conventional model of a celebrity figure, but exemplifies how popularity gained outside blogging practices can be reinforced through active participation in blogosphere. Medvedev’s intervention into blog culture was an attempt to re-articulate the generally oppositional sentiments of the blogosphere. The blog created a precedent that can be called “state blogging” – participation of state officials and political leaders in blog-type activities. It was Dmitry Medvedev’s video blog that paved the way for many other state representatives (cf. Toepfl 2012).

A closer look at one of the video stories in Medvedev’s blog tells of his visit to the school where he studied many years ago. This video became an important experiment and a memorable moment in Medvedev’s blogging. In the video, he meets his teacher, makes several pull-ups in the school gym and plays football on the school playground (Medvedev, June 3, 2009). The video is done professionally, though it is longer than typical news packages on traditional TV news programs. The editing does not hide the presence of the production team, and still looks more like home video than most of Medvedev’s other informal appearances on television.

Consider the following four examples of mass media (1 and 2) and blogging (3 and 4) reactions to this video. Two of them are from mainstream media, the other two from blogs. The second media example also includes citations from the blogosphere.

1) When Dmitry Medvedev finished school, the Internet was something unrealistic. Today, however, the President regularly discusses different topics with his fellow countrymen via the global computer network. (Bobrov, 1TV, June 3, 2009)

2) Dmitry Medvedev’s video blog has a new, and perhaps, most private entry (and the longest one – 21.5 minutes) <…> by the way, the country was exposed for the first time to what Medvedev uses for transport <…> On the whole, LJ commentators liked the video. One of them noted: “I can see that DA has come down-to-earth after one year at the top. Even if it is PR, it is not a common form. Usually from above we are presented with a tsar, but this smells like a human being”. (Prihodko, MK, June 5 2009)

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26 DA, or else DAM, is a common abbreviation for Dmitry Anatol’ievich Medvedev.
3) Look, how funny Medvedev looks when visiting his school in *Piter.* Such photos are rare in our press. (Vestar, June 4, 2009)

4) Yesterday, when it was my birthday, Russian president D. Medvedev visited my place to say congratulations. He also visited my school, which is his former school. He spent there a great deal of time, doing pull-ups in the gym, taking a short walk on the football pitch, looking at a jigsaw in Rashid Saidovich’s class. It was nice to see familiar faces. (Big_mux, June 4, 2009)

The television news report (1) portrays Medvedev as an open-minded and sociable leader in close contact with citizens. The popular daily MK (2) recognizes elements of public relations by making reference to a blogger, but in a positive sense which obviously contributes to a form of presidential communication aiming for general approval from the people. The blogger Vestar (3) offers another level of mediated reflexivity, which opens a new dimension in the story – we will not see our president like that in the mass media. Finally, Big_mux (4) mixes events of his personal life with the president’s visit, and does it in a friendly tone that allows unceremoniousness and ultimately breaks the symbolic distance. The examples each offer immediate reactions to Medvedev’s unusual video clip. This video is exceptional in that most of the previous and later video posts in the blog are based on formal speeches and governmental protocol footage.

The irony of Medvedev’s case is that according to the 2009 nationwide survey, 49 percent respondents knew that President Medvedev had a “blog,” however only one third of the population knew what the word “blog” meant (Lebedev 2009). This was a result of the constant media attention and the numerous reports mentioning Medvedev and his active use of the Internet. 1TV (October 8, 2009) once referred to Medvedev’s blog as “allowing for the effective solution of problems.” This statement reached a much larger audience than the blog itself, which explains the paradoxical results of the survey.

In the meantime, examples like the story of an American blogger who was invited as journalist to the White House (Lenta, March 8, 2005), are good illustrations of successful entries – bloggers simply do the same job as journalists and this becomes news in itself. The following journalistic example shows how some early bloggers were able to “enter the field” through invitations to cooperate with traditional mass media:

27 “Piter” is a slang word for Saint-Petersburg.
28 In informal, digital writing culture the use of strikeout typing font simulates the existence of another not fully expressed subjectivity, since crossed phrases bear signs of the texts’ previous versions or the authors’ inner thoughts.
Reuters made a contract ("came to an agreement") with bloggers at the Harvard coordinated blog site Global Voices Online. From now on Reuters will include bloggers’ comments in its regular news. Some blog entries might invoke separate publications by the agency, opening the service for “alternative points of view.” (Lenta, April 14, 2006)

However, in this story, the news agency’s choice to include an organized group affiliated with a high ranking and elite academic institution, despite references to alternative views, shows how narrow the entrance is to the field sometimes. Moreover, the signing of a contract clearly establishes a commercial relation, similar to relations with any other non-staff media professionals that Reuters occasionally uses. In that sense the intellectual and elitist collective properties of Global Voices Online transforms its members into professionals.

But the citizen journalists among bloggers can also become “professional journalists” by declaring and formally register their blogs as mass media. Indeed, it is media organizations and newsrooms that give the people working for them the status of journalists. According to the Russian media law, any web site or a blog can be registered as a mass medium, and technically an author of blog-related media can be recognized as a journalist with all the legal rights and responsibilities that the status imposes. In December 2008, Sergei Mukhamedov, known as Ottenki-serogo on LJ, wanted to prove the absurdity of such a hypothetical transformation and registered his blog as a mass medium. Mukhamedov’s experiment, as he called it, ended in February 2009, following some looming contradictions with LJ administration. This episode stirred a lively discussion in the journalistic community and among lawmakers. Had it continued, the experiment may have had unpredictable consequences for the legislative regulation of the Russian blogosphere. Meanwhile, there is no a law requiring compulsory registration of blogs.

**Bloggers’ uses of media**

Blogization implies a growing integration of news media with blog services. Almost with no exception, media references to bloggers are connected to the use of the LiveJournal (LJ) blog platform. A 2010 study (Etling et al. 2010:29) showed that Russian-language bloggers often refer to other online media, and the most widely quoted is the Lenta website.

Bloggers can hyperlink to news sites or quote media as a contribution to their own original content. This form of integration entirely depends on a blogger’s initiative, efforts and creativity. Alternatively, it is becoming common for news sites
to integrate web tools that allow automatic postings of selected materials directly to individual pages of various social media platforms. In this case, mass media encourages content sharing and distribution. This second form of integration is usually based on standard templates in the structure of media websites and therefore allows for greater control over the resulting copies in blog posts. Of course, in both cases it is solely a blogger’s decision to quote one or another text and hereby increase its media impact. This gives the blogosphere the power to generate and distribute symbolic capital within the journalistic field.

After looking at the media uses of “blogger” references, it is useful to trace whether and how bloggers in turn refer to mass media. This reversal of the observation angle can be a tool for finding the relations of reciprocity. So I monitored LJ postings referring to the media in my sample. For practical reasons I only considered references to media websites, because these usually entail the publication of exact hyperlinks and cannot be misrecognized.

I used the Yandex blog search to count the number of cases of direct linking to mass media websites by LJ users. I made several search requests, specifying them by dates limited to the period between 2002 and 2012, which gave me eleven timeline marks. I also tuned the searches to retrieve information about blog entries with imbedded links to the specified mass media site from my sample. These settings made it possible to retrieve numbers for each media in consecutive time periods, so that I could see changes in time and distributions within the sample. I discovered that just as the mass media has increasingly referred to bloggers (see previous section), bloggers themselves are becoming more connected to mainstream news resources – the amount of links grew from slightly over a thousand in 2002 (and close to zero in the two years prior) to almost two hundred thousand in 2012. This information makes it possible to estimate how LJ users have been interacting with mass media and very roughly how basic hierarchies of preferences have evolved.

There is a clear trend of diversification in the sources that LJ bloggers refer to in their publications (see Figure 14). Apart from Vz, which was launched in 2005, all the media in the sample were well established by 2002. Yet it was not until 2007 that Lenta, a company that had outstandingly dominated the chart, decreased its share of links to less than 50 percent. Although, Lenta remains the largest source with an average of 30 percent of the links in 2011 and 34 percent in 2012, its position is less powerful than it was a decade ago. Kommersant has always been among the top-cited news media and maintains the second position. As of 2012, the company had accumulated about 19 percent of the LJ links in the sample. The governmental RG evoked a surge of interest in 2007 peaking at 17.62 percent that could be partly
explained by a wide promotion campaign.\textsuperscript{29} By 2012, however, the share of LJ links to RG decreased to 7.7 percent, lower than a 12.5 percent share that each of the eight media could have reached in circumstances of equilibrium. Thus a relatively strong position in the blogosphere (over 12.5 percent), according to the latest observations of 2012, are taken by Vz, NG, Kommersant, and Lenta. Television channels remain to be marginal sources of references in the blogs. Although, there must be some problems with missing data in the case of NTV during 2006–2008, the years before and after that show no sign of significant differences with 1TV channel, and could not substantially distort the overall picture.

\textit{Lenta’s} shrinking share is due to the belated rise of two other strong referents in the sample. The first of them Vz was launched in 2005. Its swift leap from nothing to a tenable position, surpassing television channels and newspapers such as MK and RG, can be explained by a powerful external promotion rather than by a genuine

\textsuperscript{29} That year the newspaper signed an agreement to supply news leaflets as additions to some of the major international newspapers. It was around the same time that RG, sponsored by the federal budget, launched a free weekly publication for low-income households. Perhaps, because of these widespread and costly measures the newspaper moved to a position of one of the key news sources in the country in 2009, as noted in the report by TNS (2009).
interest among bloggers. The abnormality of this state-sponsored project can be also seen from a strange fluctuation from 11.39 percent in 2005, to 20.9 percent in 2006, and back to 11.92 percent in 2007. Despite the retreat after the first two years of rising popularity, Vz managed to maintain a relatively high level of referencing among LJ bloggers. The strategy of quantitative presence in the virtual space employed by pro-Kremlin online media is important, in as much as it modifies, at least to some extent, the habitual flows of information, introducing alternative voices to a generally oppositional blogosphere. The situation is close to the case of the former President Dmitry Medvedev whose LJ video blog, albeit ridiculed by many prominent bloggers, influences less critical audiences (see Yagodin 2012).

The case of NG is another example of a strong competitor making an unusually rapid rise. Bloggers almost ignored the existence of the newspaper’s web site before 2007. It is worth mentioning here that the murder of Anna Politkovskaya, one of NG’s leading investigative journalists, happened in October 2006. The murder drew worldwide attention to issues of press freedom in Russia. This was one of the possible reasons of increased popularity among bloggers. In addition, it has become particularly apparent, during last several years, that NG has been playing one of the central roles in generating an oppositional news agenda and thus diversifying the scope of resources for bloggers. In sum, a series of changes between 2005 and 2007 – the introduction of new voices and the activation of old voices – has resulted in a kind of dispersed news sourcing in the blogosphere. The one-sided, predominately liberal orientation on Lenta in the early 2000s, has given place to a more pluralist model.

The sample of eight media only includes some of the main mass media actors, and does not therefore allow for any sweeping generalization to be made on the overall character of Russian media space. However, taken as mainstream indicators of distinctive political and economic trends, the relational comparison between these media provides valuable clues about the hierarchical changes occurring within the journalistic field. One can observe what types of mass media bloggers value more than others, and hence what hierarchical structures are being produced in this respect. The websites of television channels are the least attractive for bloggers, although both 1TV and NTV contain extensive multimedia news sections. It seems that Maksim Kononenko’s claim (Vz, November 30, 2010) about internet users’ indifference to television watching makes sense even with regard to online versions of the most powerful traditional mass media. It come as a surprise that the tabloid MK has limited appeal among bloggers as well, though LJ is not entirely an elitist platform and many blogs discuss popular topics, rumors and the lives of celebrities.
From the diagram one can see, however, that the character of linking is mostly critical elitist rather than popular statist.

5.3 The blogger Navalny against the meta-capital of the state

The conspicuous whistleblower

Aleksey Navalny is currently the most frequently mentioned blogger in the Russian media. His name appears in about thirteen percent of all news stories that mention the word blogger in the sample of mass media discussed here. The large percentage of references to a single individual inevitably influences the dominant articulation of what “blogger” and blogization mean. Thus, as part of the journalistic field Navalny possesses a significant amount of symbolic capital both within and outside the blogosphere. In just a few years (between 2009 and 2011), his image evolved from a professional lawyer and active blogger into one of the leaders of oppositional protests and a well-known anti-corruption campaigner.

Navalny gained popularity during his anti-corruption investigations that exposed some of the largest Russian businesses and state agencies. The scale of Navalny’s investigations can be, perhaps, compared with American examples: the investigative journalism of so-called Muckrakers, who challenged state institutions and corporations in the U.S. a century ago, or the work of Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein uncovering details of the Watergate incident. It is difficult to say how much of his popularity is the result of the snowballing media attention (celebrification), but a great deal of it originates from the symbolic and social capital accumulated in the blogosphere.

Gradually Navalny has become symbolically more important than the content of his blog. His activities grew beyond private investigations and their condensed description in the blog. He initiated several civic projects aimed at monitoring various spheres of public life in Russia, including such whistleblowing services as RosYama (public control of road conditions), RosPil (control over budget spending), RosVybori (electoral monitoring) and some others. Consequently, the mass media used Navalny’s blog and sometimes direct contact with him to report on these unprecedented projects. For political reasons not all media, of course, could publish

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30 The time span for this data includes the very first “blogger” mentions and the most recent as of the end 2012.
materials about Navalny and his work, but those who did seemed to have rather friendly and informal connections with the blogger. One can find traces of this informality in what Navalny ironically writes about his relations with journalists:

The sly reporters [pronin] from the newspaper “Vedomosti” found out everything about our “Anti-corruption fund” before we were ready to announce it. Any attempts to negotiate/explain/intimidate the journalists and to postpone publication for a couple of weeks have failed. A surprise, a solemn announcement and a fund-raising strategy have been ruined, and thus I send my beams of indignation to “Vedomosti” <….> Also, new exposures and unmasking are present in the article. Well, it is ok, the fewer secrets you have, the better you sleep. (Navalny, February 13, 2012)

In this citation, there are small traces of the struggle between journalistic doxa and the heterodoxy of blogization. In Navalny’s case, blogging lays open more space for meta-journalistic elements – self-reflections of citizen journalists about their own experiences preceding certain publications and a more explicit character of relations with peer-bloggers or peer-journalists. This relates to the patterns of extreme journalistic subjectivity (e.g. gonzo and New Journalism) discussed in Chapter 2. But at the same time this explicit transparency creates additional conditions for the accumulation of trust that traditional forms of journalism usually derive from the institutional status of their media organizations (cf. Bock 2012). In the contemporary information chaos, with all sorts of facts and opinions available in the media, issues of transparency and trust seem to be at the core of newer forms of journalistic symbolic power. On the other hand, one can notice the high level of symbolic capital that the newspaper grants Navalny by paying increased attention to his work. Vedomosti is one of the leading national newspapers for business elites in Russia. The tone with which Navalny writes about journalists is mostly friendly and only slightly disappointed by the early discovery.

The reasons for the increased value of transparency are not only to be found in matters of subjectivity. The next example is a citation from Navalny’s blog where he responds to the publication of his emails, which had been stolen by hackers and widely distributed on the Internet. Not surprisingly, the cybercrime itself was not a hot media topic as much as the discussion of the content of the stolen correspondence. In response to this obviously unpleasant incident, Navalny chose the tactic of “overexposure” by posting hyperlinks to archives containing the stolen pieces of his correspondence:

Just read it. I allow it. You better read it by yourself, rather than get it interpreted by those brigades of bloggers that post rubbish everywhere and all over. (Navalny, October 27, 2011)
“Navalnyleaks,” as the blogger called the incident, did not have any significant consequences for Navalny’s reputation. Apart from some bad language that could be embarrassing in public use, there was nothing in the emails that could seriously compromise the blogger or implicate him in unlawful activities. The cyber-attacks and attempts to find evidence discrediting Navalny’s symbolic power can be seen as a defensive reaction of the state meta-capital that controls the general journalistic field.

The prominent blogger consciously resisted that pressure. Navalny recognized that most people in the country use state-controlled television channels as their primary source of the news, and called this television news monopoly the “evil machine of propaganda” (Navalny, March 12, 2012). In contrast Navalny suggested and developed the idea of a “good machine of propaganda” that was later changed to the label “good machine of pravda (truth),” abbreviated as DMP, to bear more positive connotations than the word propaganda. His goal was to build a communication system to counteract the mainstream television media’s information monopoly.

The DMP project is based on www.mashina.org, a website that collects information leaflets exposing violations and silenced facts about local authorities and the federal government in different Russian regions. These leaflets are usually very specific about local problems and mention concrete responsible officials. Active internet users across the country are invited to print out as many copies as they can and disseminate them (“put it into the mailbox of your neighbor,” “stick it to an announcement board at the bus stop” etc.) The following MK article, “Navalny launches a good machine,” describes the logic of relations between the initiatives of the blogger and the state security agencies.

Aleksey Navalny gets down to action to reject all accusations that showed protest movement leaders as passive chatterboxes. At the 5 March rally he announced the idea to create a propaganda machine and started bringing it into practice. The next day after Navalny announced the new project on his blog, he and all the members of [his] “RosPil” received [warning] letters from E center – the anti-extremism center of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. (Rodionova, MK, March 14, 2012).

Naturally, Navalny’s level of creativity and productivity irritated the state authorities. He is an example of a charismatic blogger with political ambitions. And unless the “evil machine of propaganda” succeeds in discrediting his civic activity or finding something repulsive in his biography, the more neutral journalistic attention will continue uplifting his symbolic assets to make him a competitive political figure. Meanwhile, however, his prominence must be considered in the context of a broader
journalistic perspective. As it follows from the metaphor “evil machine of propaganda,” the recognition of Navalny’s authority has not been equally successful across different mass media.

The journalistic capital of Navalny

Navalny is building his symbolic capital as an investigative blogger at the same time as journalistic investigations are becoming an extremely dangerous media genre in Russia. Notably, Anna Politkovskaya and some other journalists who were killed in recent years specialized in investigative reporting. Therefore, there are very few mass media companies that choose to sniff around the most sensitive topics.

The state’s overwhelming control of the mass media and the dominance of informal ties in relations between media owners, local authorities and business elites (these are often the same people) prevent proper journalistic investigations from taking place. Self-censorship among editors makes any serious exposures of the power elites improbable from an early stage of the journalistic work. The blogosphere, however, is a place where whistleblowers can feel the support and solidarity of an active citizenry. Bloggers are also less connected institutionally and informally with those who can demand that they stop investigating possible injustices and violations.

But most importantly, bloggers very often investigate and write about topics that directly affect their lives. Aleksey Navalny, a minority shareholder of several large Russian corporations, started his investigations because he felt that top managers were stealing money instead of paying dividends or investing them. It is difficult to tell what motivated Navalny most of all. Was it a resolution to expose alleged crimes that moved him to buy small packages of shares and hence be able to access the classified commercial documents? Or was it the reaction of a disappointed investor who decided to get to the bottom of corporate mismanagement? As a third alternative, it was rumored that Navalny was part of a business rivalry – one big company paid him to inquire and destroy the reputation of the others.

The amount of media references to the “blogger” Navalny and his investigations skyrocketed at the end of 2010. This is when the blogger published arguably the most well-known investigation into Transneft (Navalny, November 16, 2010), a monopolist company responsible for pipelines and oil transportation inside and outside Russia. The famous blog story revealed and analyzed documents that proved the state company had embezzled approximately four billion dollars during the
construction of the East Siberia-Pacific Ocean (ESPO) pipeline. There were many other investigations, but this particular story quickly reached the limits of LJ commenting capacity (10 000 comments per blog entry). As is often the case, the story did not result in any formal investigation nor was Navalny ever sued for libel, or punished in relation to the episode.

The story, however, became a major media event, that was mentioned in all the main newspapers and online news sites. Perhaps only the main television channels neglected the story. Symptomatically, 1TV and NTV remained insurmountable barriers for Navalny’s investigations throughout the period covered in this book. Rather, in most cases his appearance on these channels is connected to several criminal proceedings against him or his relatives, which have coincided with the blogger’s growing political influence. But the blog story is still available on LJ, symbolically demarcating one of the crucial reference points of Russian blogization. A simple blog search, conducted in 2013, reveals that the original title of Navalny’s investigation “Kak pilyat v Transnefti” (“How they embezzle in Transneft”) reappears in about eight thousand different Russian blogs and twitter accounts.

Six out of eight mass media in the sample mentioned Navalny’s investigation. There were no data for 1TV and NTV. By looking at the media coverage one observes moments where Navalny’s journalistic capital is either recognized or denied. A specified search limiting the results to those containing both “Navalny” and “Transneft” was further reduced to the earliest article for each medium. The final set of six texts thus forms a natural timeline of the media reaction to the investigation. Here are these examples:

1) Aleksey Navalny, the author of one of the most high-ranking socio-political and business blogs, has conducted his own investigation of the spending of budget money which Transneft received for ESPO pipeline construction. Navalny does not disclose the source of this discrediting evidence. ‹…› The published story has caused a stir on the Internet. On Navalny’s blog there are presently over two thousand pages of comments on this story. (Marandi, MK, November 16, 2010)

2) Navalny has published part of a classified report about embezzlements in “Transneft.” <...> The document signed by the senior managers of “Transneft” describes violations made during the ESPO construction. <...> The official reaction of "Transneft" to Navalny’s blog post has not yet followed. (Lenta, November 16, 2010)

3) Sergey Mironov, the chair of the [Parliament’s upper house] Federation Council, believes it is necessary to verify the statements made by a blogger Aleksey Navalny. <...> “We can react only to facts.
As of now, there is just an opinion of a well-known blogger. If even a small part of these statements proves to be true, the authorities will react to that…” – Mr. Mironov responded to journalists after being asked whether he intended to react to the information in Mr. Navalny’s blog. (Kommersant, November 17, 2010)

4) Referring to the Account Chamber documents, internet blogger Aleksey Navalny said the construction of the Transneft’s Eastern Siberia - Pacific Ocean pipeline caused billions of dollars of damage to the state. Navalny specializes in corporate violations. <...> When asked to confirm or refute the published facts, [the head of the Account Chamber] Stepashin said: “There is no theft of four billion dollars whatsoever.” (Vz, November 18, 2010)

5) What do [Siberian] people living by the [Transneft] pipeline think about the revelations made by Aleksey Navalny? <...> It is clear that the documents Navalny has published caused no stirring response here. The stealing happens in Moscow, not here. And this does not mean that there is no news at all. This is just a story about a different country, about a different life, about some other dimension. (Tarasov, NG, November 19, 2010)

6) Russia’s Prime Minister Vladimir Putin says he does not know anything about the embezzlements during the construction of the “Eastern Siberia - Pacific Ocean” (ESPO) oil pipeline. But he is confident the police will verify the allegations. <...> Some time ago, a Transneft minority shareholder Aleksey Navalny published information on his blog about alleged grand larceny during the ESPO construction. This information has not yet been officially confirmed. (RG, December 29, 2010).

Within a few days, almost all the mass media had reacted to Navalny’s investigation. MK and Lenta were the first in the sample. Their short news stories (1) and (2) came out the same day as the blogger’s material. MK’s journalist Olga Marandi already noted then how much feedback the story had generated. The reaction of the state-owned RG (6) was the only one that came over a month later, obviously misrecognizing the significance of Navalny’s publication.

In each case there are moments where the trustworthiness of the exposed details is questioned. Some journalists pose this question as an issue of sourcing – where the information comes from (1), while others expect official confirmations (2), (4), and (6). The tone of RG is also rather skeptical. The newspaper writes about the private blog investigation with an emphasis on the authority of the official
investigators. This is close to the position expressed by a state official in Kommersant (3).

In contrast to this cautious skepticism, the investigative NG (5) is confident that Navalny’s conclusions are correct. Aleksey Tarasov points out, while reporting from a distant location in Siberia, that “the stealing happens in Moscow.” But this opinion goes even further by assessing the significance of the investigation for ordinary citizens. People live next to a pipeline built with huge embezzlements. The journalist argues the crime of stealing, in fact, can have direct consequences for these people. The improperly financed construction work is often of poor quality and can thus cause future environmental disasters. According to the article, the local Siberian population does not care about the corruption and budgetary theft that happens far away in the capital. The more valuable information for these people is about their local problems. In contrast to MK, this particular reaction in NG somewhat tentatively guides us to the borderline of the journalistic field on a national scale. What is crucial and important for a Moscow audience\(^{31}\) (1) does not necessary attract that much attention somewhere else (5). This distinction is important for understanding the symbolic capital of blogization, because it shows how unevenly it has been distributed in terms of geographical and social division.

Several senior governmental officials commented on the story (examples 3, 4, 6). This means that the journalistic field took Navalny’s investigation very seriously. Such high-profile exposure is therefore the main source of his symbolic significance in this particular episode of his investigative blogging-journalism. The elite daily Kommersant (3) quotes legislator Sergey Mironov who suggests to carefully draw the line between facts and Navalny’s opinion. Such an attitude plays down the role of private blogs in triggering real legal procedures.

The blogization driven by Navalny expands public awareness of certain issues otherwise underrepresented or unnoticed in traditional media. But it still faces the counter-power of meta-state capital which determines many political decisions in the country. It seems that it is only by further interventions into the field of politics that blogization can make journalism more democratically effective. The Navalny phenomenon provides examples of that as well.

\(^{31}\) MK’s primary audience is concentrated in the capital region. Also, as previously mentioned Moscow is the largest centre of blog users and active internet audiences.
Challenging the field of politics

The next several citations are pieces of mass media texts reflecting on the path of Navalny towards more active intervention in the field of Russian politics. These examples are meant to demonstrate what happens when blogization extends beyond the limited, though also contested, space of journalism. The examples proceed in chronological order to recreate the flow of evolution of the Navalny phenomenon. Many of the contexts are already familiar to us at this stage.

1) Alexei Navalny is a symbolic figure. His wars against state corporations and accusations of Russia on the pages of the Western press attract much attention but are puzzling for ordinary people. (...). Using the access [as minority shareholder] to operational information of the major state corporations, Navalny deploys large international media campaigns that expose embezzlements and corruption among the top managers of Russian corporations. (...) But, as often happens, the opposition needs resources for their struggles. Understanding the risk of his activity, which in essence is probably unlawful, Navalny has a “shield”: he officially works as an advisor for his old companion Nikita Belyh, the current governor of the Kirov region. (Degtyarev, RG, June 11, 2010)

2) The most surprising of Navalny’s investigations into Transneft is that the details published in his exposing materials have already partially appeared in the newspapers where they went completely unnoticed. Such low publicity is a result of the political uselessness of newspapers (should my colleagues forgive me – it is not their fault) that are being fenced off from the television and real politics. Meanwhile the incredible success of the same exposures in Navalny’s [Live] journal has been caused, firstly, by a complete absence of [ambiguous] Aesopian statements and omissions in texts, and, secondly and most importantly, by the fact that the consumption of information in that case has been connected with the ideology of action and participation. (Rogov, NG, November 22, 2010)

3) Internet users are increasingly growing tired of the loud brand “Navalny,” because there is too much shouting and little result in it. To fight against “United Russia” on the Internet is honorable. But Navalny received the mass support to fight corruption and not to build his political career, which he has been trying to bring to a decent standard for the last nine years. “Project Navalny” is pure politics and PR before the elections. (...). Navalny usually presents his thoughts as evidence and continues to see his audience as superficial and unable
to sift facts from emotions. Well done. Nothing can match the
cynicism of Navalny and co in the genre of media scandals and
internet provocations. (Kovalev, Vz, May 3, 2011)

4) In 2011, street protests ceased to be the job of the professional
opposition. Authorities lost control over the endless protest against
Vladimir Putin and Dmitry Medvedev inside social media. Serious
electoral violations moved thousands people from their computers to
the streets. It is these people who are now changing Russia’s political
reality. … The most popular in the country, political blogger Aleksey
Navalny, has been promoting his slogan “United Russia is the party
of crooks and thieves” so that by December the whole country knew
it, and some members of the party even agreed with this statement.
(Kozenko, Kommersant, December 12, 2011)

5) During the past year Aleksey Navalny has grown from an online
corruption fighter and high-ranking blogger to a real politician,
political prisoner and even tried to become a presidential candidate.
… His wife, however, became known to the press after some
perpetrators hacked Navalny’s email box. It is still unknown who
initiated this electronic attack. Someone says it “smells” like the
Kremlin, while others, on the contrary, keep wondering how is it
possible that, based on the correspondence, the oppositional blogger
turned out to be so blameless. No one expected such a harmless
intimacy from the emails. One would expect at least to find that gosdep
[US state department] sponsors preparations for a kind of Orange
revolution and other compromising facts. Skeptics may suspect that
Aleksey himself staged this leak for self-promotion and branding. This
issue remains unclear. … From the emails it follows that Navalny’s
wife Yulya loves her husband, but she feels upset that he is often too
busy and excessively dedicated to political struggle. Honestly, after the
first few lines I don’t want to go on reading. Not because of
squeamishness and reluctance to go into someone else’s life, after all
this is one of the most unpleasant, but necessary components of the
journalistic profession. I don’t want to because there cannot be any
shocking details in these emails. It is obvious after a quick overview.
Such problems are so simple. But at the same time they are incredibly
important for a life of almost every married woman. But despite the
innocence of these women’s complaints it is hard to imagine a
husband who for the sake of self-promotion, the victory of the
revolution or business success would make such revelations by his
wife public. (Rodionova, MK, February 24, 2012)

The example of the state-owned RG (1) reconstructs the image of Navalny in July
2010. The story alludes to a mystery of Navalny’s political activity, especially unclear
for “ordinary” people. The newspaper delegitimizes the blogger by stressing several points. First, Navalny fights not just against corporations but against Russia at large. Second, he does it through foreign media, and therefore RG dissociates itself, and the Russian journalistic field, from being accomplices in Navalny’s exposures. Finally, the newspaper places Navalny outside the legal field by suspecting the criminal nature of his investigations.

Vz online is another medium loaded with obligations to protect the state meta-capital of political power. Vz example (3) accuses Navalny of disguising his real motivations. The story came out in May 2011, when the famous Navalny’s slogan “United Russia is the party of crooks and thieves” had just begun generating reputational damages to the ruling party. The result of this labeling is in the focus of the Kommersant article (4) that came out after the fraudulent parliamentary elections. “United Russia” has won the elections but with too many scandals and without the sweeping support they enjoyed in previous years. Journalist Kovalev from Vz fiercely attacks Navalny, thus recognizing his political ambitions and symbolic strength. However, linking the political struggle of Navalny to the internet environment only has been a recurrent theme of such attacks and a strong delegitimizing moment. This argument underscores the marginality and the limited scope of blogization.

NG (2), which has referred to Navalny more often than most other mass media, presents a view radically different from the view of the state-controlled RG and Vz. In late 2010, the newspaper already recognized the crucial positive shift in media-politics relations introduced by Navalny. The citation emphasizes the ability of Navalny to produce simple and effective reports about complicated investigations (cultural capital). NG sees the secret of that efficiency first of all in the mobilizing power of the blogger and the capacity of his journalistic capital to enable social and political changes.

Similarly, the daily MK (5) assigns considerable symbolic value to the political capital of Navalny’s bloggership. The journalist Anastasia Rodionova, in character with the usual practices of the popular mass press, draws attention to Navalny’s private life. The long citation gradually leads the reader to believe the hacked emails incident is most likely the work of the state agencies and not the blogger’s own self-promotion. The main focus of the article, however, is not the blogger but his wife and the details of her life. Although, the journalist starts with the moral dilemma of reading the private correspondence, she only uses it in the introduction. The rest of the text is based on the interview with his wife Yulya. The intimate closeness and openness of the private life of the blogger and his family sharply contrasts with the general secrecy of many Russian politicians, including perhaps the most closed
information about the private life of Vladimir Putin. This seems to be a new and very important asset of social capital that contributes to the overall political significance of prominent bloggers in general, and bloggers with political ambitions in particular.

To sum up, the Navalny phenomenon is a new type of journalistic, civic and political activity in contemporary Russia. The example of Navalny, his projects and public behavior attests to an increased significance and necessity for transparency in the new journalistic forms. In a way, the phenomenon presents a possible alternative to the dominance of the meta-state capital that structures the work of many Russian journalists. This is an example of the movement from the bottom of the blogging subculture to new horizons of what journalism may look like.

5.4 Journalist Parfenov against state meta-capital

Another notable example of the struggle against state meta-capital is the figure of professional journalist Leonid Parfenov. He is listed in the research sample of bloggers (see Chapter 3), although his blogging practices have been very moderate compared to others on the list. The choice of selecting him, however, can be explained by the role he played in exposing the faults of contemporary Russian journalism, thereby becoming a symbol of journalistic rebellion against the doxa and embeddedness of state structures within the mainstream mass media. To demonstrate the phenomenon of Parfenov in the context of my blogization argument, I chose one particular media event that involved live coverage, and numerous commentaries and reports written by journalists and bloggers. The event was a ceremony where Parfenov received another (he had won many before) journalistic award for his work on Russian television. The ceremony and its coverage can tell us something specific about the category of symbolic capital as a form of peer-recognition.

The symbolic power of awards

As Ida Willig (2013:380) has pointed out, journalistic capital is a form of cultural capital that is also associated with the idea of peer recognition. One of the ways to observe the distribution of journalistic capital is through the analysis of trade awards that are formal signs of peer-recognition. An award ceremony is also a publicly
expressed form of peer-recognition, which yields broader social recognition and additional sources of symbolic capital.

But the awards are not a value-free source of symbolic capital. An important question of any kind of award is not only whose work is appreciated but who are the judges. Here is one notable example. The Pulitzer Prize is a globally renowned journalism award and that is highly respected in the U.S. It is the result of a big fortune and commitment to the mass media business of Mr. Joseph Pulitzer, whose last will was to establish a fund in his name. It was a private initiative fulfilled by his successors in 1917 and maintained since then at the premises of Columbia University, a rich Ivy League institution that hosts one of the most prestigious journalism schools. Thus, the prize comes from the elite stratum of American society. It is in this elitist context that the Pulitzer Prize must be understood. There is no doubt that behind the seemingly neutral slogan, “for the encouragement of public service, public morals, American literature, and the advancement of education” (Topping N.d.), there is always a specific vision of public service and morals that determine the winning examples of journalism and other nominations. Another aspect of such award ceremonies is that the prizes are usually given out by individuals who have already achieved high recognition in the trade and whose assessments are based on the doxic understanding of the field.

Perhaps with the exception of the recently launched Vz, all the other media in my sample are rather distinguished in terms of the various journalistic awards they have received. Simple comparison is hardly possible, since many awards are not exactly journalistic and some are given out in narrow segments of the media industry. In 2005, the newspaper MK received the “Most read daily media” prize at the national “Product of the Year” ceremony. The prize recognized the status of the most read daily, though the ceremony is not a journalistic one and not even in the general area of mass media. Commercial success is the main focus of “Product of the Year,” as the ceremony highlights some of the popular national brand names, most of which represent food industries and the like.

Also, it is not surprising that one of the oldest and most read online news media Lenta has been recognized five times as the best information resource of Runet in an annual ceremony ROTOR. The ceremony is organized by a group of internet developers and entrepreneurs. The award does not provide insights on the symbolic significance of Lenta in a broader media context and we cannot compare it to a medium like MK, for instance. These are just two examples. So far, there is no comprehensive statistics on various journalistic awards, which nevertheless have been given out nationally in hundreds of nominations and specializations year after
year. This data set would be a fruitful resource for a general picture of recognition criteria in the journalistic field.

Studying the distribution of all the possible trade awards across the media landscape deserves a separate research project. In the context of blogization, however, such a project would have to take into account even more awards covering journalistic achievements in the blogosphere. But because the process of blogization generates an especially fast and vast influx of newcomers to the common journalistic field, drawing a comprehensive, statistically supported picture of peer-recognition becomes increasingly laborious. Therefore, I suggest an alternative way to look at journalistic awards and peer-recognition – a kind of meta-assessment of a particular award by a media community. One can take an example of a specifically journalistic award and study media reactions to this event as qualitative data.

In this respect I could not find a better example than a famous speech given during a prestigious awards ceremony. It is a speech by Leonid Parfenov. The speech was meant to give praise but ended up being accusatory of the professional media community.

**The awards speech**

In 2010, the Russian television academy in cooperation with *Channel One* (1TV) established a new professional award in honor of Vladislav Listyev, one of the founders and developers of television in post-Soviet Russia, who died tragically after being shot in 1995. His short but brilliant career made him a legendary professional, and the award in his name seemed reasonable. The organizers decided to only have one nomination awarded for outstanding service annually. For the first ceremony in November 2010, the jury selected another prominent television figure, anchorman and journalist, Leonid Parfenov as the hero of the day.

At the time of his nomination, Parfenov already had many years of popular performance on *NTV* and later on 1TV. This choice, as I will show, had proved to be extremely important and ironically symptomatic of the continuous decay and moral degradation of Russian television. Retrospectively, it now seems that the jury consciously selected the best professional they could find among one another, but they did not likely expect his professionalism to go beyond the traditional words of appreciation and commitment. Parfenov used his moment of glory to give a highly explosive speech. Many media later called it a testimonial obituary or an epitaph to Russian journalism in general and television in particular. When Bourdieu writes
about the importance of the relationship between the political field, the social scientific field, and the journalistic field, he emphasizes the processes of either conservation or transformation of these invisible structures (fields). Social actors, however constrained they may be by the forces intrinsic in each field, still enjoy some degree of freedom. This means journalists are only partially determined by a respective journalistic field. The example of Parfenov is a manifestation of freedom stretching beyond an internal conservation mechanism.

The following long piece is the full citation of Parfenov’s speech. The text is important as a rare example of a public statement addressed first of all to fellow colleagues, high ranking media managers and state officials. It is also a message to the broader society, arguably the only genuinely journalistic speech that has reached a large-scale Russian audience since media freedom restrictions were implemented in the early 2000s. The speech quickly circulated on the Internet, as its video record was uploaded to YouTube. Parfenov himself posted the text and the video in his LJ blog, attracting nearly two thousand comments.

Without being controlled or orchestrated by anyone except for the author’s own consciousness, the speech is meant to demonstrate the idea of media capital momentarily mobilized by Parfenov to counter the power and influence of state meta-capital. I use this text as a reference point for subsequent discussion on this issue. Here is the speech divided into paragraphs.

1) I was invited to deliver a seven-minute speech on an issue that I find most pressing. Since I’m so nervous, I won’t try to deliver the speech from memory. I’m going to read my text out loud, which is the first time I have done so in a studio.

2) I visited Oleg Kashin at the hospital today. He has undergone another surgery, and the face of Russian journalism has been literally and metaphorically restored. The brutal beating of the “Kommersant” correspondent has caused much more of a stir among the public and professionals than the other attempts on the life and health of Russian journalists. However, one could suspect the federal channels reacted only because they received permission from above. It looks like that, considering the tone of the immediate statement of the country leader, a tone that differs from that taken after the murder of Anna Politkovskaya.

3) However, there is more to it. Before Oleg Kashin was attacked, he had been ignored by the federal channels, which couldn’t be otherwise. He had recently been covering the radical opposition, protest movements and street youth leaders. It is impossible to
imagine these topics finding their way onto TV. Those who are seen as outcasts are starting to gradually change society; a new trend is taking shape. However, there are basically no other journalists who hold the same views as Kashin. Andrey Loshak was the only one, but now he’s switched to online.

4) After the real and imagined sins of the 90s, national television broadcasting has been put under state control at the beginning of a new millennium. This happened in two steps. First, media oligarchs were removed. Then, television channels were asked to join ranks in the war on terror. News and everyday life were categorized as suitable and unsuitable subjects for TV broadcasting. One could get an idea of the authorities’ goals and objectives, their moods and attitudes, their friends and enemies, by watching any significant political program. Legally speaking, this isn’t news but rather government PR, or anti-PR, if you look at the case of media propaganda against [the former Moscow mayor] Luzhkov before his sacking. The government is doing self-PR as well, of course.

5) Federal channel reporters don’t see officials as newsmakers but rather as bosses of their boss. Legally speaking, in this case a reporter is no longer a journalist but rather a state employee that worships submission and service. Thus, you can’t interview the boss of your own boss: it’s like an attempt to uncover somebody who doesn’t want to be uncovered. If we look back at the interview of a “Kommersant” reporter Andrei Kolesnikov with Vladimir Putin conducted in a yellow “Lada Kalina,” we will feel Putin’s self-assurance, his plans for 2012, as well as his complete ignorance on uncomfortable issues. But can we really imagine a Russian television journalist asking the same question as Kolesnikov did: “Why have you cornered Mikhail Khodorkovsky?” Can we imagine that question being broadcast nationwide? This was the example of “Kommersant.” I’m sometimes under the impression that this leading social and political newspaper of the country, which is by no means oppositional, and the national broadcasting channels are telling us the stories of two different Russias. Moreover, the Duma speaker Gryzlov named the leading business daily “Vedomosti” a supporter of terrorism.

6) The president and prime minister enjoy ratings of about 75 percent. National broadcasters don’t dare throw critical, skeptical or ironical remarks to them. So, up to a quarter of the public opinion is suppressed. Supreme authorities seem to be the dead of whom you should say good things or nothing at all. Still, other opinions are clearly in demand among the audience. Just look at the commotion
created by a single exception – broadcasting the talk of Yuri Shevchuk
with Vladimir Putin on TV.

7) These tricks are known to everyone who has witnessed Central
Television in the USSR. Reports are replaced by protocol shootings
from the Kremlin, the reporter’s intonation sounds supportive of the
officials and basic broadcasting models show the country’s leader
receiving a minister or a governor, the leader reaching out for the
masses or conducting a summit with a colleague from abroad. This
isn’t news; this is an old record that repeats the already established
pattern of broadcasting. Even a news hook isn’t a must. Anyone will
go for something just to get some airtime when there is no real news
anyways.

8) Having worked 24 years for Ostankino alone, I’m really feeling bitter
about having to say all that. I have no right to shift the blame on any
of my colleagues, I’m no fighter myself and I don’t expect others to
commit heroic deeds. But let us at least call things by their proper
names.

9) It hurts twice as much to speak about television journalism, because
of the evident success of large-scale television shows and Russian
serials. Our television is getting more and more sophisticated at
exciting, captivating, entertaining and amusing the audience, but it can
hardly be called a civil socio-political institute. I’m convinced that this
is one of the main reasons why the most active part of the population
has drastically cut their TV watching down. People like us say: “Why
should I turn on the telly, it’s not producing for me!”

10) Much worse is the fact that the majority of the population doesn’t
actually need journalism any more. They don’t care about the deaths
of journalists. They say: “So what! It could happen to anyone, what’s
all the fuss about?” Millions of people don’t understand that
journalists take occupational risks for the sake of their audience.
Journalists don’t get beaten up because of what they have written, said
or filmed; it’s because people have read, heard or watched what they
have produced. Thank you! (Parfenov, November 25, 2010)

The ultimate irony of the event is that this courageous and breathtaking speech was
televised live on the 1TV website and performed in front of dozens of television and
state bosses, responsible for what was suddenly revealed by a prize winner whom
they selected.

32 Ostankino is a metonym for Russian national television. It stems from the name of the main
broadcasting television tower in Moscow.
Parfenov’s speech and his courage was widely discussed in the media and could be considered the biggest event in the journalistic field of 2010. I examined the coverage in the media from my sample. The 2010 Listyev award was one of those rare events that all the media in the sample reported. Hence, it is an opportunity for comparison and the mapping out of media positions on an imaginary axis of journalistic roles, moving from examples of political clientelism via the tradition of balanced reporting to a radical role.

As I mentioned earlier, the ceremony was broadcast live on the Internet, but those viewers who learned about the event from traditional TV-news watched a much shorter version. In the news, as an organizer and a host of the ceremony, 1TV proudly drew the attention of millions of its viewers to the “famous television studio number one, the most modern in Russia and one of the biggest in Europe” where the ceremony took place (Vernitsky, 1TV, November 25, 2010). The reporter stressed the importance of the procedure, interviewed several members of the jury and explained the criteria for selection. According to the news report, the jury consisting of fifteen television professionals (top managers of the main television channels and several famous presenters) were asked to select “a professional with his or her own opinion and a unique theme… who would be a unifying figure for the whole Russian television at the moment.”

1TV said less about the winner himself, though his numerous achievements were mentioned. The report only included a couple of opening irrelevant sentences of the actual speech and it did not mention anything about the critical tone and sarcastic revelations of Parfenov. Viewers of this particular television report had no idea about the content of the speech. This particularly careful treatment of the situation, which had the potential to become an ideological embarrassment and create confusion for the wider audience, is a characteristic feature of propaganda. Television in that context is more suitable for strategies of PR silencing and suppression of certain facts in order to keep favorable representations.

Polarized reactions to the scandal

There is no doubt that, being a strategic asset of the state, 1TV could not allow for negativity. Another close political ally of the state, the newspaper RG, only wrote about the ceremony briefly in its Moscow edition. What is fascinating is that the newspaper without saying much about the scandal concluded with an intriguing ending:
After that [introductory part] Leonid read out the speech he prepared in advance, which may be considered a manifesto on the state of contemporary Russian television. Vladislav Listyev33 would have been proud of such a speech. (Alperina, RG Moscow, November 26, 2010)

I have italicized those parts that were published in the printed issue, but omitted in the online version of the newspaper. So, for the larger audience the words hinting to a special character of the speech were not available. Again, it was just a Moscow version of RG that managed to save its face by hinting that there was something special about the speech. The national edition did not mention the ceremony at all. It could be accidental, but the Moscow audience is less likely to be surprised by the speech and more likely to use more diverse sources of information than just the state-owned newspaper and 1TV. Therefore, cutting out the speech story from the national version of the newspaper can be seen as a purposeful decision reducing the overall publicity of the scandalous ceremony.

Parfenov started his speech with a formal introductory part, where he thanked the organizers and the jury for their decision. This part was more actively used by television channels as it did not contain any critical remarks. The first details of the actual speech were televised by NTV channel at night on the day of the ceremony. NTV journalists mentioned that the speech was unconventionally “bitter” for such an event. Parfenov was directly quoted (see paragraph 9 of the speech above) on the general decline of television watching in Russia (NTV, November 25, 2010).

Lenta (November 26, 2010) titled the speech story “Parfenov certified the death of Russian television journalism.” The title suggests that it was not exactly news that television journalism was dead and that the audience already knew it. Rather the news was that Parfenov had confirmed a well-known fact. Lenta’s coverage differed from the previous examples in that the underlying information for each paragraph in the article was based on the details of Parfenov’s speech. Also, the nature of online media enabled the inclusion of a web link to the full version of the speech that had been uploaded on YouTube. Lenta did not say anything new that was not already in the video that the newspaper linked to. Thus, the role of Lenta in that case was mostly intermediary, a network hub redirecting people to the original message. After the catchy title, the audience would read until the hyperlink in the end of the first paragraph and jump to another resource. This enhanced hypertextuality of online

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33 Vladislav Listyev, in whose memory the award was established, was a Russian journalist and one of the first media managers in post-Soviet Russia. He was the head of Channel One and a prominent television host in early 90s. Listyev was murdered on March 1, 1995. The investigation did not find the killer and the case remains unsolved. Financial and political motives are discussed as the possible reasons of the murder.
media can be seen as continuation of what Tuchman (1972:661) has called the strategic ritual of journalists claiming objectivity by simply saying “this is what the source said.” The organizational role of Lenta in a complex and rich media space helps to understand changes in news distribution in the age of digitalization and convergence. Such an organization of news content gives us two options: read what journalists find valuable in a certain event or guide readers to the event itself.

The awards ceremony occurred on Thursday, November 25, and ended late in the evening. Both daily newspapers, elite Kommersant and popular MK, only reported on the event in their Saturday editions on November 27. Both placed lead paragraphs on the front pages and continued inside. Kommersant published its story as a reportage by Arina Borodina (Kommersant, November 27, 2010). The reporter emphasized a contrasting atmosphere before and after Parfenov’s speech, and did this with subtle bits of irony. First, a top-notch interior, classy waiters serving champagne and a strict black tie dress code – arrangements “never seen at the Russian television awards before, though exactly the way they do it in America.”

Before the ceremony, it all looked like high society. Many television bosses were arriving in pairs, talking to each other very nicely and friendly, a situation that can be rarely seen among people of such statuses during other public events. And they departed from the studio <…> mostly one by one, quietly, without being noticed and barely talking to each other. It looked like Leonid Parfenov had spoiled their newborn television celebration. (Borodina, Kommersant, November 27, 2010)

The reportage cites those parts of the speech that spoiled the celebration. During a five minutes talk, Parfenov had accused media professionals of silencing much of the public opinion.

Popular MK started its article by claiming that “Leonid Parfenov said what all television workers know but don’t say.” A journalist, also puzzled by the friendly atmosphere among competing media managers who are usually hostile to each other, compared Parfenov’s speech with Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn’s Nobel prize acceptance speech, as if it was a turning point in the professional ethics of Russian television. There were several interviews in the article, one of them taken with Parfenov’s wife, who seemed proud but also anxious as is demonstrated by the following quote.

You saw many of them didn’t even applaud after his speech, they sat casting their eyes down and left depressed and sad looking. When the speech was over, there was a pause; people, especially officials, didn’t know how to react. Many of them, by the way, came up afterwards saying: “[Leonid] how great you said all that!” But if anything happens, no-one will help. That is the horror of our society. (Melman, MK, November 27, 2010)
In the two articles described above, Kommersant and MK invited their readers to access a full transcription of the speech on their websites. In these cases the Internet gave media an opportunity to expand its publishing space. But unlike the stories already published in online newspapers like Lenta, the links which, in normal circumstances, would go directly to the source page, went to the own home pages of the print media outlets instead. In other words, interested readers would have to spend more time to find the original video. This is a distinction between two communicative models that define positions in the journalistic field. Online media demonstrate an open-handed, decentering position with regard to the originals. The more traditional media still adhere to a self-centered position and structural rigidity.

In my analysis, I noticed that the farther media is from the grip of state meta-capital the more time or space that Parfenov’s extremely critical speech receives. The range is from virtually nothing on television (local Saint Petersburg NTV news are incomparable to the federal newscast) to full textual or video versions on the Internet. Kommersant and MK provided access to the speech on their websites, but were also rather free to quote some parts of it in paper versions. In this respect oppositional NG is radically different. The story came out on paper (and on the Internet of course) with the full text of the speech formatted as actual journalistic material with Parfenov’s name as the author. On the same page, there is a short comment by the NG staff writer. The commentary looks like a small addition to the main text, like a background that among other things assures its readers:

Reading from the notes, Leonid Parfenov helps us to understand: his speech is not impromptu, but a position formulated in advance (Taroshchina, NG, November 29, 2010).

The delivery of the news by NG resembles reactions to the event in the blogosphere. There was a lot of response – almost eight thousand LJ entries mentioning Parfenov during five days following the awards ceremony. Naturally, one could find very diverse opinions. One can get a sense of the reaction by focusing on bloggers with the most followers and highest ratings. Many just posted the text of the speech and the video later when it appeared on YouTube. A blog entry by Rustem Adagamov is in some ways similar to the NG publication, though in addition to the textual transcription it starts with integrated YouTube window that allows users to link to the original video while staying on the blog. Several sentences by Adagamov explain what the speech is about. He claims to respectfully admire Parfenov’s courageous, ruthless but also self-destroying act (Adagamov, November 26, 2010).
On the other hand, the blogosphere is the space where, due to extreme autonomy and the unpredictable background of bloggers, opinionated genres may add nontrivial twists to any media event. Take the following example.

No need to ponder too much in order to understand that Leonid Parfenov said almost nothing that wasn’t known before his speech. But it is necessary to understand the important thing is who said it, where and when. Importantly, it wasn’t a politician who said it, but a journalist, one of the most prominent in his profession. If an oppositional politician had said it, he wouldn’t be as nervous, because such speeches are not new to him. However, a person capable of making such a speech, would have unlikely made his way to central television and would have hardly received a prestigious award. Therefore, it all came back to where it was stated: indeed we already knew what Parfenov had said before his speech. (Grigorian, November 26, 2010).

This piece was posted on LJ by Armenian journalist and blogger Mark Grigorian, who wrote a doctorate in the USSR specializing in Russian language, taught and practiced journalism in post-Soviet Armenia, immigrated to London after surviving an attempted murder in 2002. Grigorian continues his thought to a point where he says that Russian journalists are afraid to admit to themselves how deep they have fallen into a crisis. And that Parfenov, in spite of being part of the old structure, overcame the fear, probably to pave the way to a new beginning. This is what Hannah Arendt (1958:26) defined as a pure form of political action, “finding the right words at the right moment, quite apart from the information or communication they may convey.”

Despite being an online newspaper, the pro-Kremlin Vz was the latest to publish anything substantial on the awards event. The reaction was delayed until November 30 and, since the news was not so new anymore, the site offered a rather long opinionated column by Maksim Kononenko.

Like Mark Grigorian, Kononenko also recognizes the doxa of journalism for what it is. He argues there was nothing new in Parfenov’s speech, because we already knew it all a long time ago. In contrast to Grigorian, however, Kononenko shifts the focus from the problems of journalism in general to the problems of traditional forms of journalism. He argues that journalism in fact flourishes in the new media.

Yes, [newspaper and television journalism] died. So what? Did actual journalism, as process of searching and distributing information, die? No, it didn’t die. Furthermore, hundreds of thousands more journalism have emerged in recent years. Instead of a hundred newspapers we have millions of bloggers now, and each of them participates in searching for and distributing information. (Kononenko, Vz, November 30, 2010)
What Kononenko surely understands but neglects to mention is that new media only reach a small, although a very active, part of the Russian population, whereas mass audiences still get most of their news from television. But as long as Vz is an online publication, such a purposeful misrecognition may prove to be satisfying for some internet users.

One can also connect Parfenov’s speech with an increased self-consciousness of journalists and bloggers. It has been manifested in an unprecedented dissent and demand for free speech as part of the general political protests in the end 2011 and beginning of 2012. This self-consciousness turned many journalists to more radical positions with regard to the political regime and media policies in the country. As a result, in the sensitive period of parliamentary and presidential elections, we could see many prominent journalists, including Parfenov, participating in spontaneous civic initiatives and street protests side by side with bloggers and leaders of the opposition. Whether coincidental or not the Listyev award did not took place in the years that followed the scandalous first ceremony.

If we consider the boundaries of common journalistic space, or the journalistic field, to stretch across the blogosphere, it is a valid question to ask where exactly the entry points are. In the section on Parfenov’s speech I had two bloggers, Adagamov, a graphic designer living in Moscow with the largest audience in the Russian blogosphere, and Grigorian, a professional journalist in emigration with an average readership of approximately one thousand subscribers. The former acted more like a news reporter, while the latter contributed to the news as a media commentator. This does not mean the two bloggers could not have done it the other way around. The only available criteria to define whether both perform journalistic roles, therefore, is the potential impact of their publications, and in this respect Adagamov’s social and networking capital allows for higher immediate publicity.

On the other hand, Grigorian, who is obviously endowed with significant cultural capital, may bring about an indirect cumulative impact on the journalistic field as part of a certain discursive formation, but this is already the subject of the next chapter.

**Summary**

This chapter shows that a common field of journalism and blogging exists. It exists because the mutual interactions between professional journalists and bloggers follow a certain pattern (rules) of cultural production and co-production. This pattern can
be described as a struggle for the type of symbolic capital relevant to the field’s hierarchical structure.

At the same time, this chapter demonstrates that the journalistic field is not homogeneous. It is differentiated according to the amount and, more importantly, the composition of symbolic capital specific to the field. One of the signs of this differentiation has been the indicator of references to bloggers, which creates a continuum of professional journalistic organizations ranging from those most “unfriendly” to blogging, the largest television channel (1TV), to the most “friendly” at a relatively small investigative newspaper (NG).

The heterogeneity of the Russian journalistic field can also be seen at the level of the media preferences of bloggers. The scope and diversity of media sources quoted by bloggers has extended significantly in recent years. This fact does not allow for discussion that only focuses on the liberal or oppositional agenda of the blogosphere. Just as blogization empowers the politically weak periphery of traditional journalism, it also forms conflicting groups of actors inside the blogosphere.

Blogging and bloggers become part of everyday journalistic routine in the same way as other social phenomena and social actors (politics and politicians, culture and artists, sport and athletes). On the other hand, media references to bloggers may have a more professional meaning for journalists, similar to situations where news agencies rely on insights from colleagues at other mass media. What kind of recognition do bloggers receive from media professionals? Empirical examples suggest that journalists demonstrate two modes of recognition.

1) The first mode defines (constructs) bloggers generically as social groups or depersonalized individual actors (anonyms) rather than as recognized equals.

2) The second mode of recognition moves far beyond the level of peer-recognition in another direction – the media makes the most popular bloggers into a new kind of celebrity (celebrification).

What is it that in contemporary Russian circumstances strategically benefits journalists and bloggers most? According to the evidence I discuss in this chapter,

1) it is a specific form of social capital constituted by close ties of trust with peer-bloggers and professional journalists; this capital redefines the established positions within the common space of news production;

2) also economic capital becomes devalued in light of the symbolic power of political clientelism.

In a way, blogization develops a new type of journalistic field that was previously almost completely absorbed by the political field. In the Russian context, blogs re-
establish the uniqueness of a journalistic capital that is more or less independent from external political and economic pressures.

With the example of blogization, a key principle of social differentiation in contemporary Russia can be explained by the unequal distribution of political capital; that is, the meta-capital of the state, which in turn defines other types of capital. This finding matches the observations made in relation to previous periods in Russian history. Political capital has been seen as particularly important for the structuring of Soviet society (Bourdieu 1998b:16-17). This was the major difference, for example, from the non-Soviet European countries in which economic capital was the dominant differentiating asset. The social transformation in the late 80s and early 90s, according to Bourdieu, was the result of a split of political apparatuses – the holders of larger academic capital (technocrats and intellectuals) challenged the holders of larger political capital (“nomenklatura”).

With this hindsight, this chapter suggests that the more recent developments in Russia resemble the late Soviet transformations. This time, the restored importance of the political meta-capital of the state faces challenges from the holders of what can be called the symbolic capital of blogization – an influx of citizen journalists (or the same kind of technocrats and intellectuals) who shape the public agenda.

In a situation dominated by state meta-capital, employed journalists are more cautious about radically criticizing the authorities. Because of the political clientelism model, journalists can simply be fired for not abiding by the rules of clientele. When it happens, the general public may see it as a purely economic necessity or an ethical issue – economic and cultural capital is at stake. Although bloggers cannot be fired in the same way as journalists, they are still vulnerable to the external pressures of intimidation, reputational scandal, legal action, and technical disruption. These are all pressures that apply to journalism as well. However the important difference that blogization introduces is that social ties (social capital) with or within the blogosphere enable mechanisms of resistance directly opposing state meta-capital. Therefore, individuals like Navalny and Parfenov endowed with substantial social capital and the symbolic capital of peer-recognition can be more “brave,” straightforward and critical.

Part of the journalistic field is relatively weak in terms of autonomy from the control of the state-meta capital. This is especially true for traditional media: large-scale television channels and state-sponsored news media like the newspaper RG and online website Vz. On the other hand, those with symbolic capital based on other sources of power are more autonomous from the state media actors. The journalistic capital of the blogger Navalny is shaped by a complex composition of
social and cultural capital. The autonomy of the journalist Parfenov is a result of his cultural dominance, recognized by peers. The dominant positions of both Navalny and Parfenov enable further transformations of their journalistic capital into political capital, opposing the influences of the meta-capital of the state. But the scale of this transformation is rather limited since the state still largely dictates the rules of the game.

One of the crucial questions, especially in relation to Parfenov’s speech and reactions to it, is how to explain the journalistic doxa when there is such a diverse continuum of polarized practices? What are those unspoken aspects of Russian journalism that function to define the field’s integrity after being challenged not only from the periphery (blogs) but also from its rebellious core (mainstream award winner)? I address these questions with the help of discourse theory in Chapters 6 and 7.
I have already established that blogging culture has an important symbolic effect on news journalism in Russia. The purpose of this chapter is to find the underlying constructivist logic behind this effect and thus to answer the following: What logic does the discourse of an increased media role for blogs (blogization) have in the context of Russian news journalism?

The term “logic” has a very specific meaning for post-structuralist discourse theory. Therefore, the chapter starts with an overview of the relevant theoretical vocabulary. To understand discourse and its logic in terms of Laclau and Mouffe’s theory, it is important to take into account several key concepts. I analyze blogization as a discourse consisting of various subject positions or pieces of meaning, which can be called either elements, moments or nodal points depending on the degree of their involvement and centrality for the overall meaning construction. Elements are the least central, almost non-related to the construction of discourse, whereas moments are building blocks for larger nodal points and thus loaded with various meanings. Discourse becomes a whole entity, though not completely stable and unbreakable, due to a mechanism called articulation that “glues” subject positions together. In order to be “glued” (articulated) discursive moments need to find equivalences in their internal meanings, otherwise they form differences and weaken the strength of ties within a given discourse. Because all these equivalences and differences are possible, the formation of any discourse has a political character – another crucial premise of discourse theory. This resembles institutional politics where members of a newly elected parliament need to find common ground to build coalitions and fractions. What parliamentarians try to define as a common political agenda is a politically negotiated policy. This research argues bloggers and journalists are members of a new “journalistic parliament” where they search for a common “politics” through conflicts, negotiations and alliances.

This chapter analyzes the discursive logic of struggles between journalism and blogging by focusing on examples taken directly from the everyday practices of content production in traditional mass media and in blogs. I take two broad themes – the 2008 Russo-Georgian war and the 2010 forest fires – as points of departure. The coverage of the war in 2008 represents a discursive stage in which bloggers were
groping after equivalences and comparisons with traditional mass media. The case of the 2010 forest fires demonstrates the potential of a blog to establish essential differences and politicize the journalistic field. Finally, in the last section an array of diverse examples broadens the perspective towards some full-grown alternatives (journalistic and more generally political) that shape the discourse of blogization.

### 6.1 The notion of discursive logic

#### Differences and equivalences

Blogization viewed from the standpoint of post-structuralist discourse theory presupposes that the symbolic values of the common journalistic field are socially constructed. Discourse theory also presupposes that this construction is contingent rather than necessary, and that it is naturalized rather than natural. The building blocks of this construction are subject positions that struggle over the dominant configuration of the discourse. Different subject positions constitute the plurality of meanings regarding the process of blogization. In the context of this research the primary representatives of such subject positions are journalists and bloggers themselves.

The way I draw on the concept of discourse in my work has a specific meaning. In general terms, the concept can be explained with the help of the notion of language. There are key points that connect discourse and language. These points are common for many theories of discourse, and are of particular relevance to post-structuralist interpretations of discourse:

> Language is not a reflection of a pre-existing reality. Language is structured in patterns or discourses – there is not just one general system of meaning as in Saussurian structuralism but a series of systems or discourses, whereby meanings change from discourse to discourse. These discursive patterns are maintained and transformed in discursive practices. The maintenance and transformation of the patterns should therefore be explored through analysis of the specific contexts in which language is in action. (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002:12)

Discourse as a theoretical concept, then, differs from commonsensical references to the processes of conversation, discussion or more general communication acts. From the point of view of discourse theory, one cannot argue, for example, that the popularity of some bloggers can be explained by natural mechanisms that are
same in Russia, China and elsewhere in the world. On the contrary, post-structuralist thinkers would argue that the shifts of power and redistributions of symbolic dominance (e.g. the popularity and public value of certain kinds of blogging) in a given journalistic field are always a result of contingent struggles within a particular, hegemonic discursive formation. Presenting Laclau and Mouffe’s theoretical perspective as one of the “new theories of discourse,” Torfing (1999) has briefly defined the concept of discourse as “a differential ensemble of signifying sequences in which meaning is constantly renegotiated” (p. 85). Because any discourse can be seen as an attempt to control meanings, “to arrest the flow of differences, to construct a centre” (Laclau and Mouffe 1985:112), the field of discursivity is thus a broader concept, as it includes subject positions that can both be included in and excluded from a given discourse.

Understanding the “blogization of journalism” as a discourse implies that the dominant meanings of journalism that had been partially fixed are set into motion by the interventions of the blogging culture. Therefore, the contingent and contested space in which certain subject positions (meanings produced by particular social actors) of journalism and blogging are being redefined (re-articulated) constitutes the discourse of blogization. In discourse theoretical terms, blogization refers to a redefinition of journalism triggered by the new meanings blogging has introduced. According to Laclau (2005), the process of redefinition or discursive struggle, follows one of two fundamental mechanisms. Firstly, through the assertion of particularity that always emphasizes differences between subjects and secondly, by stressing shared similarities in the identities of some subjects. The first mode of identity construction is based on the logic of difference, while the second designates the so-called logic of equivalence (Laclau 2005:78).

Laclau and Mouffe (1985:130) understand the logic of difference as an “expansion and increasing complexity” and the logic of equivalence as a “simplification of political space.” To simplify means finding some common interests or a common denominator among subject positions that form “unified chains of equivalence.” As Dahlberg and Phelan (2011:19) have further elaborated, the logic of difference describes elements of discourse through their difference from other elements, whereas the logic of equivalence divides the social into antagonistic camps in which the differential elements of one camp can find a shared commonality in relation to another camp.

Theoretical distinctions between these two discursive logics – difference and equivalence – can be used to deconstruct the emerging ideology of a common journalistic field as a result of blogization. In a simplified way, this means
determining whether subject positions on journalism and blogging are being perceived in terms of differences or whether there are also moments of equivalences. Moreover, if there are such moments of equivalence, what are they and in what ways do they “simplify” the complexity of journalism-blogging identity struggles?

The political in blogization

There is another aspect of the concept of logic: the political dimension of blogization is constituted by differences and equivalences, with the political being understood broadly and not as institutional politics alone (Mouffe 2005). According to this broad definition of the political, journalistic values are not finally fixed making their meaning flexible. Carpentier and Cammaerts (2006:969) connect this political perspective to Stuart Hall’s distinction between internal and external news values. In a news media organization the inner journalistic discourse defines the “politics” within the newsroom. But because of the public character of journalism products, the internal discourse becomes connected to the external discursive field, or “the ideological universe of the society” (Hall 1973:180).

Therefore, the politicizing effect of blogging on journalism in Russia has a double meaning. “Political” in journalism can be viewed in the context of the conventional politics of state institutions and agencies of civil society. This view emphasizes the role of journalism, generally speaking, in political life. The previous chapters illustrated how blogization has politicized journalism in this everyday sense. However, according to discourse theory, the “political” also has an internal meaning as something that is being contested within a field of discursivity. In Russia it is a coincidence – or a particularity of the Russian context – that the political inside journalism (struggle concerning what journalism is or should be) has a direct link to the political outside journalism (struggle over the political landscape and control of the society). In this contingent context changes in internal ideology can lead to a shift in the broader, social role of journalism. In other words, blogization politicizes Russian journalism on both these levels. Therefore, some of the clearest examples of internal discursive struggles can be found in moments when blogization, somewhat unexpectedly, turns reporting practices, which are normally applied to “apolitical” issues, into issues of institutional politics.

Discourse theory suggests that dominant ideologies may incorporate opinions that are fundamentally contradictory by means of “articulation,” as if forgetting the contradictions and thus changing them into appropriate forms.
[We] will call articulation any practice establishing a relation among elements such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practice. The structured totality resulting from the articulatory practice, we will call discourse. The differential positions, insofar as they appear articulated within a discourse, we will call moments. By contrast, we will call element any difference that is not discursively articulated. (Laclau and Mouffe 1985:105)

Therefore, discourse is the totality structured as a result of this practice. Laclau and Mouffe distinguish two types of positions involved in articulation – moments and elements. Moments are differential positions articulated within a discourse, and elements are those differences or antagonisms not discursively articulated.

Let me project this idea into the world of mass media. For instance, journalistic ethics restricts the publication of private correspondence without the permission of the persons involved. However, when a third party uploads this type of information to online forums, the ideological wall is suddenly broken and the media begins to savor the quirky details and quoting the original source without hesitation. This does not necessarily cause instant changes in the dominant journalistic ideology; on the contrary the initial misconduct is criticized as it was before. However, the stolen information incident is articulated into journalistic discourse as a news leak. In the language of discourse theory this means that the element of “privacy” previously excluded from the discourse of journalistic ethics has been re-articulated into a more appropriate moment under the name of a “leak.” Leaks become part of journalistic work and the journalistic discourse of ethics.

We can think of numerous examples of how this transpires in practice: scandals with WikiLeaks and Climategate. In Russia, LifeNews.ru, a notorious news website that specializes in sensational journalism, frequently publishes information leaked from various law-enforcement agencies. In December 2011, the site published records of the intercepted phone calls of oppositional politician Boris Nemtsov. This led to serious allegations that the illegal interception was sanctioned and likely carried out by the secret police. The subsequent news hysteria scrutinized the content of the private phone calls and rarely questioned (with a few exceptions) the obvious criminal footprint of the wiretapping. Nor did any Russia’s largest mainstream media outlet stress what should have been considered unethical journalism. When asked about the sources of the leaked phone calls, LifeNews.ru refused to disclose any information following the ethical obligation to protect confidentiality. This is usually a sufficient excuse. But in that case it turns the journalistic ethics upside down. The phone calls as such did not contain any indication of criminal conduct or vital and socially relevant information. But they were obtained illegally and it is the privacy of
the oppositional politician that should be protected and not the confidentiality of the criminals.

In stories about information leaks, ethical considerations that would be deemed extremely political from the point of view of journalistic integrity and media law in other contexts, lose their political dimension and become naturalized. This is a result of the discursive equivalence established between publicly available sources of information on one hand and the stolen pieces of a private correspondence on the other. This is not to suggest that journalistic ethics encourages stealing, but rather that information already stolen by someone else seems to no longer constitute ethical concern.

Subject positions become explicitly political whenever their meaning is debatable. The meaning of journalism taken outside the discourse of blogization has remained *sedimented* for the most part and in this sense apolitical. When contrasted with the idea of blogging and citizen journalism, the meaning of journalism is thrown into motion and turns into a subject of political significance. In discourse theoretical terms, this condition of lost or non-fixated meaning is called a floating signifier.

To return the previous stability (and stop floating) one of the strategies of professional journalism has been to exclude blogging from the realm of media production, placing it within the realm of media consumption instead. For example, viewing the Russian blogosphere as a disperse network of several million users who generate volumes of media content can be contrasted with the argument that the overwhelming majority of these contributions are made by a small handful of active participants. Meanwhile, the vast majority of LJ users maintain accounts to read and occasionally comment on content produced by their more active “friends.” From this perspective the identification of “bloggers” as a social group relates to the notion of an active audience rather than towards large-scale participation in media production. This position is recognized by journalists who tend to view bloggers as consumers rather than producers of media content:

In this ocean only one out of eight diaries and one out of six communities are active, we are talking about a huge audience: there are 30 times more people who read blogs than there are active bloggers (Kostiukovsky, Kommersant 25 September 2009).

The articulation of blogization as an enhancement of active audience culture rather than as a productive advancement of journalistic culture reflects the general role and place of blogs in Russian society.

These contextual variations in the use of the word “blogger” show that identity of the social actors hidden behind this signifier is debatable, unstable, and thus in
the broadest sense political. It is precisely because of the commonsensical meaning(s) associated with blogization that make it nothing more than a hegemonic construction that takes for granted some unified attributes of blogger identity while excluding others that tend to undermine this established consensus. The difficulty with identifying blogging is that bloggers often engage in practices associated with journalism. There is a paradox here. One is recognized as a journalistic blogger when a certain degree of audience popularity makes this recognition possible. However, this is a discursive practice that does not immediately conflate the identities of journalists and bloggers into a new signifier, whatever this could be, though the use of “citizen journalist” (grazhdanskii zhurnalist) expression is one option.

In the discourse of blogization, “blogger” is a good example of a floating signifier, or a signifier “overflowed with meaning” (Torfing 1999:301). The first difficulty with blogger identity is that this social group is rarely defined without additional references to more specific, occupational characteristics. The meaning of the signifier “blogger” is sometimes explicated through references to civic culture and political activism, IT proficiency and general “intellectuality.” Hence, in the Russian socio-historical tradition, the social identity of a blogger takes on properties that are more commonly ascribed to the so-called “intelligentsia,” a small but culturally significant social group that often opposes the ruling elites.

At the same time, other view describes bloggers as more than simply the marginal producers of small-scale cultural forms. The signifier “blogger” has clearly expanded its meaning toward the roles and ideas of mass communication and journalism. This position has even been fixed in practical arrangements, for example when prominent bloggers are invited to major press conferences and press tours. In the Russian context, the social status of individuals involved in large-scale cultural work has been equated with that of powerful political elites or elite social actors. As Aleksey Mitrofanov, head of the Russian parliamentary media committee, puts it, the Russian audience, especially in remote provinces, perceives the journalistic voice of the main television channels as the voice of the Kremlin (Tsibulskaya 2012). Journalists, therefore, should be careful in expressing their own opinions since they may be mistakenly understood as official state positions. In an interview with the online newspaper Gazeta.ru, Mitrofanov explained that such journalistic precautions should be part of editorial policies and not confused with censorship (ibid.). One cannot expect such honesty from interviews with the president or the prime-minister, and thus Mitrofanov’s statement would be unlikely to appear in prime time newscasts. The reason is that such potentially critical ideas are not meant for the ears of the general audience.
In identifications of “bloggers,” there is an emphasis on marginality and radical political protest on one hand, and elements of elitist and statist significations on the other hand. This discrepancy creates instability in any attempts for discursive closure. But more important and ideologically consequential are moments that set in motion the more sedimented meanings of journalism, making it an object of struggle. In these instances, the signifier “journalist” also becomes a floating signifier. This undecidability of meaning certainly existed before as examples of the Soviet samizdat press, dissident literature, and the golden age of almost completely autonomous news media in the early 1990s demonstrate. However, the growing popularity of Russian blogging in recent years has made these distinctions more visible. This makes it particularly important to study the blogization of journalism at instances characterized by highly fluid meaning constructions.

In terms of self-identification, blogization can be seen as a discourse that combines elements of signification that are simultaneously specific to traditional journalists and bloggers. There is a project of “new” journalism at the center of these discursive struggles with an immediate core that consists of the floating signifiers “blogger” and “journalist”. These signifiers in turn are determined by struggles over dominant meanings that can be analytically divided into several nodal points.

The nodal points of blogization

What are the possible nodal points that define blogization? Carpentier (2005) notes that the professional identities of traditional media workers are often discursively structured by organizational affiliations, by the values of social responsibility, by occupational autonomy, and by objectivity confronted with more subjective practices. Blogization in Russia adds a strong emphasis on credibility to that set of nodal points. Thus, based on the observations made in previous chapters and further elaborated in this chapter, there are at least four crucial points of contestation.

First, one of the central themes in a discussion of professionalism touches upon the degree of subjectivity that journalism and a journalist can afford to express. This issue involves questions about the limits of being objective and balanced in reflecting on the reality of events or experiences. Individuality and personal opinion, self-realization and a unique communicative style also determine the meaning of subjectivity.

Second, the role blogs play in journalism raises a question of responsibility that has been widely discussed, especially when it comes to the ethics and accountability of
independent bloggers. It is also relevant for the discourse of blogization to distinguish between the responsibility to act in the interests of civil society (civic activism and radical role), to pursue mostly individual interests or to be part of the state ideological apparatus.

This automatically leads to the third important theme of blogization: the question of the autonomy of social actors in practicing journalism. We have seen how this aspect of blogization underscores corruption and clientelism on one hand, and emancipatory empowerment on the other.

The fourth and final, a notable theme that pertains to blogization is the question of trust, or credibility, raised in the theoretical and empirical accounts of the previous chapters. The notion of credibility is closely connected to practices that enhance the transparency of journalists and bloggers. The clearer the picture of how journalism is done, the more trustworthy it becomes for audiences and peer journalists or bloggers. This also means that credibility is defined by perceived levels of reputation and recognition.

Thus, the discourse of blogization in the Russian context can be understood through at least four key nodal points. These points are: 1) Subjectivity, 2) Responsibility, 3) Credibility and 4) Autonomy. Discursive struggles pertaining to each of these nodal points influence ongoing changes in Russian journalistic ideology. To make sense of these nodes they must be considered in conjunction with their oppositions. For example journalistic responsibility implies that irresponsible practices are also possible. Similarly subjectivity can be contrasted with objectivity, lack of trust with credibility, and autonomy with dependence.

The basic conceptual framework of blogization discourse can be visualized in a manner analogous to abstract representations of molecules in school textbooks, with atoms of different chemical elements held together by chemical ties (see Figure 15). Just as water molecules are formed by a combination of hydrogen and oxygen with specific character ties between them, the discourse of blogization is formed by nodes of meaning. The four peripheral nodes – responsibility (R), autonomy (A), subjectivity (S), credibility (C) – are grouped around the journalism-blogging (J/B) floating signifier at the center.

Any of the four nodes can be marked as primarily positive or primarily negative manifestations of their meaning. For example, blogging may be discussed as deserving readers’ trust based on the open and transparent media practices of some bloggers (positive credibility). On the other hand, a blogger can be criticized for manipulating facts or for a lack of competency (negative credibility). Formal independence and the freedom of speech ascribed to the blogosphere is evidence in
favor of (positive) autonomy, but it is also possible to disapprove of autonomy
(negative) when freely expressed opinions are offensive or incompatible with social
norms. Similar positions can turn various aspects of subjectivity and responsibility
into positive or negative statements. I do not consider possible neutral evaluations
as relevant for my research.

Figure 15. The Nodal Points of Blogization

How do these nodal points work in practice? It is probably impossible to find cases
exemplifying only one nodal point and not touching on others. Yet, it is often
possible to define one or another dominant point that the journalism-blogging
controversy is focused on.

Responsibility represents one of the central ideas or nodal points of blogization.
Locating responsibility makes it possible to talk about the logic of the key meaning
fixations (nodal points) that constitute the discursive field of blogization. The
distinction between blogger identities and the identities of journalists is based on
these nodal points. The impossibility to fixate the meanings of any nodal point once
and for all creates a situation or a field of discursive struggles that attempts to merge
bloggers and journalists into a single phenomenon, on one hand, and differentiate
them on the other.
As I argued before, the blogization of news production affects some of the crucial aspects of journalistic practice, increasing the importance of symbolic forms of signification and decreasing the role of cultural and economic meanings. But these effects, observed over a short time period, are not necessarily final and irreversible. Post-structuralist discourse theory assumes that in the long run we may witness an infinite number or structural variations. It is like comparing a photographic image with a video clip of the same social reality. The former would offer clear evidence of static structures, with possible signs of dynamism, whereas the latter would bring those structures into movement. This “structural undecidability” (Laclau and Mouffe 1985:xii) is particularly important when one wants to understand a phenomenon as dynamic as those turbulences at the crossroads of journalism and blogging. The relatively established professional cultures of the former need to take into account the emerging cultures of the latter, and a resulting common and stable journalistic ideology is unlikely.

Bloggers have more freedom than professional journalists to say what they want. In the case of tight state-control over the work of media, this aspect underlying the nodal point of autonomy may prove to be decisive. Due to blogization, journalists may be able to say more in their social media accounts and blogs than in their mainstream news platforms. But the lack of regulations and unrestricted freedom of individual blogging may cause controversial outcomes both in terms of responsibility (and eventually accountability) and credibility. Ultimately, this leads to a fundamental differentiation between trust and distrust in what media and blogs can tell. Media organizations have legitimized their authority which is automatically passed on to their journalists, whereas bloggers need to start from scratch when it comes to creating and maintaining public trust. As I discussed earlier, the state’s capital and its role in providing mainstream journalism with its basic “authority” can only be countered by bloggers with the capacity to mobilize social capital and peer-recognition. In terms of content delivery format and prevalence of opinion, blogging may be offering unconventional individualized styles and thus articulating the nodal point of subjectivity in new ways. These are preliminary hypotheses and observations that I further elaborate in empirical examples.
6.2 Steps towards equivalence

The bloggers’ war

The war in Georgia in 2008 was one of the most controversial and dramatic events in Russia’s recent foreign politics. The conflict broke out in South Ossetia, a separatist region on Georgian territory where many local residents, however, had been granted Russian citizenship in preceding years. South Ossetians demanded independence from Georgia for several years, and ethnic tensions were quite common in the region. In the summer of 2008, there had been numerous provocations between official Georgian and separatist South Ossetian military forces. In addition to this, Russia deployed a small group of peacekeepers in the capital of the rebellious region Tskhvinali. It was difficult to tell which side initiated the main conflict due to ongoing incidents and confrontations between them. It turned out both sides were prepared to take military action. Russia claimed it was protecting its own citizens from a Georgian military operation. By contrast, Georgia claimed to be planning to restore its territorial integrity. A relatively short Five-Day War raised many geo-political questions and diplomatic tensions, but the most dramatic consequences were the human tragedies caused by reciprocal nationalistic sentiments. Here, I do not pass judgments on the conflict as such. Rather, my task is to examine it as a media event and look at early stages in the hegemonic struggles of blogization.

In 2008, the exponential growth of the blogosphere’s influence on media processes in Russia had already begun, but the overall politicization of journalism was not yet a central theme of blogization. In Russian media space, news reports about the conflict were predictably emotional. The war coverage naturally encouraged a surge in patriotic feelings, while the lack of reliable information and endless rumors caused confusion and inconsistencies both in the mainstream media and among bloggers. The war also taught us the first lesson of blogization – borderless media space brought together Russian-speaking bloggers from both sides of the conflict, geographically and ideologically. This represented an important determining moment in the discursive formation of the nodal point of autonomy and it corresponds with the off-shore strategy of the alternative media tradition discussed in Chapter 2.

The online newspaper Lenta (August 13, 2008) called the war “Pervaya blogerskaya,” literally meaning “the first blogging [war],” which is a language play referring to a
precedent in the Russian linguistic tradition “первые мировая война” (The First World War). Thus, Lenta accentuated the scale, historical significance and central role of the blogosphere in the mediation of the war events. The article’s lead paragraph reads “Thousands of RuNet users volunteered to go to the front, the information front” (ibid.).

According to mass media publications, a blogger known as Tarlith became one of the most active soldiers on the information front. During the war, his rating jumped more than one hundred positions to the 34th rank in the list of Russia’s most popular bloggers. The blog aggregated information from various sources, including news agencies and other blogs, which Tarlith usually supplemented with short commentaries and forecasting on future developments. The blogger, however, was criticized for posting too hastily at times and for spreading unverified news. On 12 August, for example, he bragged about being faster than the official news agencies:

I wrote about Shamanov’s appointment [as commander of the peacekeepers] yesterday at 14:09. The first news about this appeared today on RBK [news agency] at 10:22. Guys, this is my personal best! (Tarlith-history, August 12, 2008)

However, the fast working blogger did not admit that the information was officially refuted the same day, making him the fastest disseminator of misinformation. This was a common problem even for journalists and bloggers who reported from the site. The greatest concern of the mass media was the lack of accurate factual information from the conflict zone. Although many Russian journalists were present in Georgia and used blogs to send first-hand information and describe personal experiences before delivering materials to their media organizations, reports on their blogs “were not very comprehensible and conveyed emotions, rather than facts” (Lenta, August 13, 2008). The speed of news delivery appears to be an important consideration for these bloggers, despite possible inaccuracies and misinterpretations. The mass media do not generally brag about being the first to break news as decisively as this occurs on blogs, where the increased value of subjective opinion outweighs traditional journalistic values of objectivity.

For historical and geographical reasons, many Georgians speak Russian and there is moreover a large number of Russians living in Georgia. Both these groups were faced with the difficult moral dilemma of choosing which side of the conflict to support. Cyxymu34 is a Russian-speaking blogger living in Georgia. During the

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34 Cyxymu is a hybrid word that is written in the Latin alphabet but also uses resemblance between Latin and Cyrillic letters to render the spelling of Sukhumi, the capital city of Abkhazia, a disputed
conflict, he took the position of the home country supporting the actions of the Georgian army, whereas his symbolic fight with Russians took place on LiveJournal pages which do not recognize national borders. Cyxymu mostly referred to Georgian sources of information. The example below contains several important discursive moments:

The Georgian defense ministry says it has shot down another Russian bomber which fell in some (don’t remember) South Ossetian rural settlement. According to media reports, this is already the seventh aircraft that has been brought down, but I think the actual number will be around 2 or 3. (Cyxymu, August 9, 2008)

This example shows how a blogger can legitimize the subjectivity of his own statement. It is not necessary to remember the name of the village where the plane crashed. In the traditional journalistic value system, it would be highly unlikely for a journalist to make a statement like this without knowing the details of where it happened. Just like in the example with Tarlith, the practice as such is more important for Cyxymu than the message itself. The citation also demonstrates how the blogger overrules the mass media’s authority, he claims to be more aware of how many planes were shot down, and suggests we will eventually learn the exact number. Thus, the independent and highly subjective practice of blogging permits combinations of vaguely formulated information with insider-like, top secret details.

What generates the main differential logic here is the nodal point of autonomy. Negative interpretations follow from the inability to control the discursive field which remains open for “friendly” journalists and bloggers, as well as for the subject positions of information “enemies.” The situation of war between historically close neighbors generates dramatically contrasting subjective expressions from both sides, and blogization allows them to develop in the same discursive field.

“Fake” evidence of the war

In situations of crisis, we expect journalism to be responsible for interpretation and for paying close attention to accuracy and fact checking. It is easier to lose credibility by doing the opposite than to build it. The sensitivity of crisis reporting can be a distinctive moment of crisis for journalism itself (see e.g. Koljonen 2013). During the Russo-Georgian war, manipulations of facts were a notable information weapon.

republic formally located in the territory of Georgia. Thus, while Russian-speakers would notice the font differences, this blogger’s nickname is still easily recognized as the name of this city.
A perceived lack of reliable information caused speculations and the propagation of false rumors. Some bloggers questioned the journalistic behavior of “anti-Russian” news media, including the photographic evidence that Rustem Adagamov posted on his blog (August 10, 2008). On the other hand, journalists themselves remained confused with proper sourcing and the collection of evidence. Information battles, for example, evolved around the proper portrayal of two towns: South Ossetian Tskhinvali which was bombed by the Georgian army at the beginning of the war; and the Town of Gori, located within the main Georgian territory, which was bombed by the Russian army at a later stage in the war. While no one denied that the two towns were under attack, journalistic and blogging communities had serious arguments about right and wrong practices in their common work of media coverage.

Vadim Rechkalov, a special correspondent for popular Moskovsky Komsomolets (MK), went to the war zone and reported from the scene by dictating texts via phone. His LJ account, nicknamed Voinodel, became a popular source of information and inspired several threads with active discussions about the war. However, the most intriguing issue in this double journalism-blogging coverage was a revelatory discovery that Rechkalov made about the newspaper which changed one of his reports to portray the South Ossetian side of the conflict more favorably than it was in the original text and to maintain the image of Tskhinvali utterly ruined after being bombed by the Georgian army. In the text Rechkalov sent to the newsroom, he emphasized that speculations about the town being “wiped off the face of the earth” were a lie. Editors omitted this sentence in the published version, along with a part explaining why South Ossetian soldiers were burning down abandoned Georgian villages.

Think of it! I didn’t expect it. Today I returned to Moscow and read my news story in MK, which I sent yesterday from Tskhinval. A fucking awful news story, I don’t even want to put a link to it. They cut out just a couple of paragraphs, but without them the whole text becomes pointless… I cannot post the original story here, because I did not write it down, just had been sending over the phone what I saw. There was no time to write it down. MK has an early deadline. (Rechkalov, August 14, 2008)

The original text of this citation is now only available in the cash memory of search engines. By naming the blog entry described above “I just realized now why I need ZbZb [LJ],” Rechkalov, somewhat self-reflexively, made an explicit observation about his professional identity, claiming it had been influenced by what I call the discourse of blogization. In addition to the criticism of editorial policies, the full version of this blog entry provides some valuable first-hand details of the war that
were not available to MK audiences. It is hard to estimate if the alternative journalistic account in the blog reached an audience comparable to that of the newspaper. Most probably not, though it had been reposted by other bloggers at least fifty times, according to a Yandex blog search. In terms of the audience quality, however, this entry was widely discussed in the blogosphere and thus contributed to the general discourse of distrust of media institutions among the Russian cyber intelligentsia.

The war coverage demonstrates the limitations of the self-made media coverage of blogs. Prominent bloggers, attracted considerable audiences, but remained dependent upon original sources, whether that would be news agencies or “eye-witness” accounts of dubious origin. The realities of military conflict presuppose physical fights as well as information battles, pushing the categories of credibility and accuracy to unprecedentedly low levels of relevance in both discourses.

The credibility of blogization becomes limited to more traditional sources of information. During the war, the blog posts of Adagamov (Drugoi) mostly consisted of AP and Reuters photographs. The blogosphere failed to produce reliable first-hand evidence of the war. Adagamov, likely sitting in Moscow, remained helpless. He followed and republished mainstream sources and repeatedly asked his audience to send alternative materials. His blog entry from 9 August shows the results of a Russian air strike on one of the Georgian towns. It received over 2500 comments and raised critical questions about the absence of similar pictures showing the ruins of Tskhinvali attacked by the Georgian army the day before. Adagamov posted:

Sites of Norwegian newspapers and photo agencies published the photographs of the bombing aftermath inside the Georgian town of Gori. <…> P.S. For those concerned about the lack of similar photographs from Tskhinvali, I can only advise you to contact news agencies and inquire about why they have no photo materials showing the destruction and victims from that place. So far, I could not find anything apart from that [picture, barely having any signs of war]… I will appreciate links to similar photographs. <…> UPDATE: I received a link to photographs of the South Ossetian news agency “Res,” which is part of the State Information and Press Committee in the Republic of South Ossetia. Authorship of the photographs is not known to me. (Adagamov, August 9, 2008).

The war coverage and the blogger’s war for subjective, yet accurate coverage, testifies to the logic of equivalence that bloggers find themselves adhering to. Dependence on experienced and established sources of information also exemplifies the tendency to define the journalism of blogs in terms of the values of credibility similarly understood in traditional journalism.
6.3 Bloggers make a difference

Politicizing the forest fires

During the 2010 summer, the Russian media were preoccupied with reports about the disastrous consequences of large and persistent forest fires. Thousands of civilians were affected and several villages burned to the ground. People lost their relatives and their homes. The fire also destroyed a military airbase in one region and came close to reaching a radar station responsible for the country’s air defense in another region. Many stories on the fires were done by non-professionals. Much of the mainstream media production also relied on blogs as original sources. Many activists and ordinary citizens helped to fight the fire and documented the situation in ways that were unconventional for traditional journalism. Interactive geolocation web services, thousands of photos and video images of the fires, eye-witness reports by local residents and the online coordination of grassroots activists complemented the work of professional journalists, who relied heavily upon these citizen media forms.

The period of unusually severe forest fires lasted from the end of July until the middle of September 2010. On July 29, a group of bloggers had already organized a LiveJournal community called Pozar_ru (pozar meaning “fire”) to collect data on the fire locations and to coordinate rescue actions and assistance for victims who had lost everything, including their homes, to the fires. The community consisted of over one thousand members, who posted approximately 1600 blog entries during the active period of the firefighting operation. These civic projects grew in numbers with many mainstream journalists using the platforms as information sources. It was a moment that blurred the boundaries between media professionals and citizens journalists on a mass scale. In other words, the two sets of subject positions, representing professional and citizen-driven journalism, overlapped.

The combined efforts of journalists and bloggers highlighted the flaws of traditional model of crisis news coverage. The case of the forest fires demonstrated the inefficiency of traditional media to handle vast information flows and geographical spaces without the active assistance and input of citizen journalism. Because officials, who are usually informants, initially tried to hold back the information, professional journalists sourced from the blogosphere. Eventually, it turned out that the long-lasting disaster carried political risks for local officials and federal ministries. This resulted in a somewhat unexpected consequence of
blogization – bloggers politicized traditional journalism to a certain extent. State officials were compelled to act decisively to name those responsible for the poor emergency measures and appease the growing public anger. A notable example of the former was a criticism of the Moscow mayor, who continued his vacation at a distant resort with a situation of emergency reigning in the capital city.

Nevertheless, during the fires, the conventional journalistic practice was to continue emphasizing the positive role of the state authorities in coping with the disaster. The most memorable story was the personal participation of Prime Minister Vladimir Putin in the struggle with fires. Television reports showed – along with the images of destructions and human sufferings – Vladimir Putin in the cabin of a fire plane participating in an extinguishing operation. The Prime Minister visited one of the most seriously impacted locations in the Ryazan region and sat in the cockpit as a second pilot of the special fire plane. Every traditional news outlet in Russia showed pictures of Putin steering the plane, flying above the burning forest and discharging water:

Vladimir Putin went up in the air… today he personally joined the efforts to put out the fire. (Kobyakov, NTV, August 10, 2010)

Vladimir Putin was putting out fires and talking to the victims. (Bobrov, ITV, August 10, 2010)

Putin dropped 24 tons of water on the Ryazan forest. (Lenta, August 10, 2010)

Putin has put out two forest fires onboard a Be-200. (Vz, August 10, 2010).

These examples follow the lead of a public relations strategy that promoted the image of Putin as Russia’s ultimate celebrity, a macho-man (Goscilo 2013), the father of the nation (Mikhailova 2013) and an all-round man of action. Such consistency in reporting corresponds with the discursive logic of equivalence in so far as at a certain level of journalistic content (these examples are opening sentences in their respective news stories) the differences between media yield to a common pattern of storytelling. This unanimity also constitutes the dimension of institutional politics, in which all major media follow the actions of political leaders. By taking such a position, mainstream journalism shows its dependency on the agenda set by actors within the political field. This also points to their inability to choose a reporting angle that differs from the one suggested by officials. Hence, journalistic autonomy appears limited to official policies and the “objective” delivery of top-down messaging.

Not bound by the journalistic conventions of mass media institutions, the blogosphere was less eager to fall into this PR trap. Some examples render exactly
the opposite reaction from what Putin’s administration would have expected. Journalist and blogger Oleg Kashin posted a short summary of the news of Putin taking control of the plane, but added a reference to a story about a 1994 plane crash that occurred after the pilot let his 15-year-old son sit in the pilot’s seat. The blog post only includes original extracts from the two stories and links to them. Two sentences written by Kashin himself help to uncover his attitude: “I cannot help but mention <…> that both stories suggest that just about anyone can be at the steering wheel” (Kashin, August 10, 2010).

Other bloggers were even more scathing, claiming that Putin had violated aviation laws. Indeed, bloggers had found that Putin did not have the right to be in the cockpit, especially in the seat of the second pilot, since this is against regulations. This short blog-driven investigation, however, did not grow into a serious scandal, partly since most traditional media did not question the legal side of Putin’s flight. The official bodies that received the blogger’s complaints about the violation refused to formally investigate the case. Blogger Navalny (August 11, 2010) wrote a critical commentary saying “let’s hope that VVP [short for Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin] will not get interested in surgery and will not start posing in front of the cameras making heart operations as a second surgeon.”

There was only one exception among the traditional media in my sample. Lenta broke the silence reflecting upon those most critical remarks: “Bloggers doubt the legality of Putin’s flight on an emergency airplane” (Lenta, August 11, 2010). Thus, Lenta challenged the dominant journalistic attitude of non-reporting about possible legal aspects. It did so, however, not by turning something entirely different from other mass media, but by partly opening the discursive space for the subject positions of blogging. Lenta did not establish relations of equivalence between itself and bloggers’ investigative treatment of the event, which was the key difference between traditional and citizen journalists. That would only be the case if Lenta had also explicitly questioned the legality of the flight. Without parting with its own subject position, Lenta at the same time demonstrated an undecidability between differential positions.

The reaction of the blogosphere to the forest fires was thus radically different from the reaction of most of the traditional news media. This difference shows how the overall meaning of a news event can be reversed.

The concerted journalistic treatment of the story reminds us of a kind of “pack journalism” described by Timothy Crouse in “The Boys on the Bus” (1973). Traveling with other journalists on a bus of political candidates, Crouse observed the birth of journalism on political campaigns in the U.S. Crouse observed that these
reporters had limited access to alternative interpretations. The news stories that appeared in different media looked very similar. This resembles what happens today with many traditional news media in Russia. The media had the potential to be more critical or to present a more original perspective on Putin’s fire-fighting practice. In that case, the controlled political image-building strategy would have been vulnerable to more diverse interpretations, including ironic and possibly negative assessments. However, “the boys on the plane” were limited in their autonomy and incapable of providing opinionated accounts of the news story. Perhaps, even the use of the blogosphere as a source of different opinions can be seen as *Lenta’s* strategic ritual for maintaining balance and following the values of journalistic objectivity from within its own field rather than the objectivity imposed from without (the political field).

Borrowing subjectivity from blogs, *Lenta* remained “objective” and not driven by the pack at once. Hence, the politicizing effect of blogization introduced a new approach to subjectivity in news media. As I demonstrated before, *Lenta* has been a pioneer in the regular borrowing, appropriation and citations of blogs with many other media following that pattern afterwards. Today it is no longer unusual to find statements and longer pieces of blog content featured in different news media.

The “little man” equivalence

Another notable storyline in the forest fires news coverage was an incident referred to as “*Rynda*” (Ship’s bell). This story is similar to the previous example as it was co-opted to become part of the public relations practices of Vladimir Putin’s office. It is different, however, in that the story originates from the blogosphere. This time, then, the logic of equivalence encompassed a much broader range of journalistic subject positions.

A random blog publication by a provincial internet user served as a preface to the media snowballing effect. The blogger wrote a sharp letter with a lot of swearing addressed to Vladimir Putin. The letter, though, was not sent anywhere beside the blog. In the letter, the blogger complained that the good old bell that warned people in cases of emergency, like forest fires, was no longer in the village because local authorities took it away without creating a warning system to replace it. This would have just been another angry scribble on the Internet, if journalists had not noticed the letter and sent it to the Kremlin, where it reached Putin to whom it actually was addressed. At this point the story would have also been forgotten as small talk.
between some journalists and the Kremlin boss, had Putin, who was probably convinced by his assistants, not decided that it would be best to reply. Putin’s answer to the letter turned the whole episode into a major media event on the national scale.

“The word of the week – Rynda” was the title in the oppositional Novaya Gazeta (NG, August 9, 2010). Lenta reported on how “Putin promised to return the rynda to the angry blogger” (August 5, 2010). This was something utterly unexpected, because the answer elevated the “little man”\textsuperscript{35} story to the highest level of media attention, and also automatically made the unpleasant content in the original letter public. This opened the eyes of a broader audience to problems that many had been discussing privately but would not dare to voice in public.

State-owned RG also wrote about the ship’s bell story, titling one of its publications “For whom the ship’s bell tolls,” which clearly referred to the famous Hemingway novel, in which the answer to that statement/question had been, as we know, “it tolls to thee”. “Thee” (you) here implies every single person as being an important part of the whole. The newspaper article does not fully disclose this theme, mostly reporting on what the blogger said and how the president replied. Still, the following quotation illustrates the subject position more or less clearly:

Vladimir Putin answered to an angry blogger... Although the blogger expresses himself with obscenities, his [blog] post deals with a literally vital topic. (Sidibe, RG, August 5, 2010)

Many news stories mentioned that the blogger’s message was chosen by a prominent journalist, the editor-in-chief of an established radio station who decided to wake the attention of the presidential administration. But that gesture only made part of the contribution to the story’s stunning popularity. Another crucial step was to draw the attention of the administration so that the message reached the president himself and was not left unanswered.

A message of the blogger, a dacha owner in Tver region, was passed to Putin by the editor-in-chief of the radio station “Echo Moskvy” Aleksey Venediktov through the government web site... Putin’s spokesman Dmitry Peskov said to Interfax [news agency] that the ministerial staff, given the difficulties with fires, informed the head of the government about the message. And, due to acuteness of the situation and taking into account the emotional character of the blogger’s message, [Putin] replied personally with a handwritten answer, which was passed back to Venediktov. (Vz, August 4, 2010)

\textsuperscript{35} “Little man” is an important literary metaphor in Russian culture that dates back to the 19th century writings of Nikolay Gogol, who admittedly was the first writer in Russian literature to discover the magnitude and at the same time purposelessness of an ordinary human being and the role of such a character in the social structure.
The blogosphere discussed the subject vividly for obvious reasons. For example, the blogger Navalny positively assessed the presidential response. Navalny’s “Not bad, by the way” blog post quoted Putin’s answer in full. But he would not be a famous investigative blogger and a successful lawyer, if he did not tease his political opponent to the point. The blog entry ends with the following question:

With what money will this ship’s bell, which the Tver region governor would give out “without delay” to an unknown blogger, be bought? A ship’s bell here – a ship’s bell there. Well then, this is how we deal with the budget spending. (Navalny, August 4, 2010)

The blogger Oleg Makarenko (Fritzmorgen), however, reacted more sarcastically to the story, calling his blog post “Every blogger gets a rynda”:

When the Prime Minister does not have the authority to simply dismiss the responsible officials from their offices … and has to personally send the rynda… I myself feel the pain of seeing our government so helpless. There is more than enough money, equipment and volunteers in our country. The problem is the officials, since they are mostly worried about remunerations for giving out permissions to build cottages on places designated for fire ponds. (Makarenko, August 7, 2010)

Makarenko expresses his displeasure with the political system. One can notice, however, a distinction between the abstract “officials” and the sole decision maker in the country – Prime Minister Vladimir Putin. Makarenko implicitly places Putin outside the domain of corrupted local authorities. On the contrary, it is Putin who handles the problems created by others. This is a relatively simple rhetorical construction. Normally you would expect Makarenko to give a long argumentation with the goal of smoothing over heated contradictions raised by sensitive issues and to draw the online audience’s attention away from the most critical conclusions. The following example shows how the blogger completely refutes the existence of censorship in Russia:

Freedom of speech in Russia today is close to absolute…We can say anything, and nothing will happen to us. Still, it is sometimes unbearable to read in the comments that allegedly there is no freedom of speech in Russia… Everyone can speak out in Russia, even someone who would have been definitely brought to justice in the “civilized” countries… The USA has been ranked sixth in the world according to the number of imprisoned journalists. The only countries with more are China, Cuba, Eritrea and Ethiopia. However, in the rating of press freedom, America is only ranked 21st while Russia is ranked 153rd … Note that I do not mention anything about the blogosphere and print media. Even lying “dissenters” do not risk claiming that we have censorship in the blogosphere or in print media any longer. (Makarenko, June 29, 2011)
This blog post is unrelated to the bell story, though it also falls into the context of the “little man” discussion. The ability for ordinary people to speak out, like the blogger with his letter to Putin, is presented as evidence of the absolute freedom of speech. Makarenko contrasts the idea of (legal) responsibility, presumably strictly controlled in the U.S. (as well as in China, Cuba etc.) with unlimited freedom as an advantage of the Russian media system, where people can say whatever they want. The full version of the post (over 1200 words) includes a dozen hyperlinks to various media stories that support this thesis. But in terms of discursive practices it becomes visible straight away that Makarenko manipulates (articulates) different expressions of journalistic autonomy and responsibility into one node – to create a positive interpretation of unlimited freedom.

6.4 The full-grown alternative

Difference as indifference

In media and blog stories one can easily find examples of genuine belief that the journalistic mission is to protect the stability and sovereignty of the existing socio-political order and thus demonstrate allegiance to the political system. On the other hand, there are numerous examples of journalism that radically contrasts with the perspectives of state institutions and stresses the need for more critical attitudes toward official policies. In the Russian context, these two alternatives sometimes appear as mutually exclusive, laying the ground for undecidability and hegemonic dislocations. According to Konstantin Remchukov, a CEO and editor-in-chief for the daily newspaper Nezavisimaya Gazeta, “the journalistic community and the state power are absolutely parallel worlds” in Russia (Kommersant, September 26, 2012). This opinion is quite neutral, yet it underlines the same problem from another angle – journalism that avoids taking sides on political issues exists in a different dimension, standing aloof from the social life in spite of the fact it cannot be separated from political life. Such a disengaged model of journalism loses its meaning as a social institution and becomes something different. Indeed, even the purely instrumental role of mass media as an ideological tool of the ruling elites or business class makes the existence of journalism somehow meaningful. This is how one of the columnists at Novaya Gazeta sees it:
Official journalism of the past times had been a synonym for propaganda... Today journalism is being diligently turned into a stepsister of PR. (Pumpyanskiy, NG, September 9, 2012)

The mass media portrays bloggers as less bound by the requirements of accuracy and competence than journalists. It is considered natural for bloggers to miss certain details, allegedly announced before, that journalists would be criticized for overlooking. Compare, for example, how both are represented differently in the same context:

Although this was already known before the main trial, bloggers and those journalists who failed to study the subject have made it into their news. (Fedotova and Panchenko, MK, August 22, 2012)

Though, this is somewhat unclear in the English translation, the example suggests that journalists are responsible for learning the necessary details and contexts of their news stories, whereas bloggers are not expected to follow such a strict protocol. The question of journalistic responsibility has been of higher priority to professionals than to amateur citizen journalists (Brown 2005). Bloggers, in other words, are somehow, able to deviate from journalistic standards of accuracy. As Brown has argued, while journalists should be accurate and checking the facts, bloggers should be interesting and provocative in individual crusades and exposures of journalistic flaws.

This permission to behave differently naturalizes the distinction between bloggers and journalists. Some bloggers do not like to associate themselves with the very idea of journalism. Radical rejections of the “Other” can actually demonstrate the impossibility to establish one’s own identity. If one has to persist a lot in being different, is not this a sign of being too dependent on the identity of the “other”?

At first sight, Artemy Lebedev (Tema) is a radical anti-journalism blogger. He constantly makes fun of journalists and prefers not to have any personal contact with media people. At least this is the view that Lebedev promotes in his blog. Here is one vivid example of that attitude:

Attentive readers know that I hate journalists, and especially TV people. I don’t give any interviews or even comments to anybody. Yet, they still call me five times a day, bastards. I have you, my darling readers of this ujtnaja zhezheshechka [homey LiveJournal account]. You are my vitamins and microelements, I don’t need anyone else. Therefore, to all the newspapers,

36 In the language of blogosphere ujtnaja zhezheshechka is an affectionate diminutive expression to convey the comfort and long time that people spend reading and writing blogs.
magazines, television and radio stations I say fuck you. (Lebedev, March 21, 2012)

Lebedev uses this paragraph to open a blog report on one of his touristic expeditions to East Siberia. During the expedition, he organized a meeting with the readers of his blog. Because the event was open, local television journalists came to make a news story. Unhappy about the journalists, on his blog Lebedev describes how he asked the television crew to stop filming the event. Later he realized that the journalists had still produced a report that was aired on the evening television news. But, surprisingly, the report was made out of photographs taken during the event. The journalists were prohibited from using their video camera. The news story consisting of still pictures and a voice-over appeared on YouTube.

Discontent with the work of traditional journalism, Lebedev, however, posted this YouTube video on his blog. This time he did not intend to make fun of journalists. His brief remark “Glory to the television craftsmanship!” can be a sign of respect. Despite all the hatred towards “TV people” that Lebedev expressed in the beginning, he borrowed the results of the television news work in his blog post.

What kind of journalism/blogging dialectic is this? Lebedev, who hates the mass media, readily accepts media contributions. He does it with a justifying explanation as if saying “they did it my way,” probably referring to the unconventional way of content production. However, the television piece contains an interview with Lebedev’s colleague and fellow-traveler Sergey Dolya, another prominent blogger, who is not as reluctant to appear in journalistic stories.

The simple three-fold narrative – enmity towards journalism, imposed limitations on the work of journalists, and appropriation of the final journalistic product – reveals a complex discursive process. The blogger refuses to accept traditional journalistic practices and even manages to influence them, but ends up contradicting himself by paying attention to the television report and even deciding to publish it on his blog. This example demonstrates the impossibility of separating even such a radical, blog-centric anti-journalistic subject position from positions embedded in journalism itself. Furthermore, as demonstrated by the example below, Lebedev makes it clear that it is not journalism that compels people to behave “disgustingly,” but people themselves who are not competent or suitable for a high-standard profession:

Still, journalists are disgusting people. Most of them are not very different from bloggers. They are just showing off too much. And understanding of problems along with feeling of language is generally no different from that of random people in the street. I can’t stand journalists, because they are all complete morons with an inferiority complex. But those, who write well for
newspapers and magazines, I don’t call them journalists. (Lebedev, April 30, 2010)

Interestingly, Artemy Lebedev only mentioned the topic of forest fires once on his blog. It went as justification of complete silence and, at the same time, as an illustration of what traditional journalism cannot afford to say, but a blogger can easily get away with.

If one is to judge me with a moral yardstick, the result will be insignificant… It is because I don’t write about forest fires, don’t go to photograph them, don’t go with a shovel to put them out, don’t tell stories about burning peat, don’t curse [Minister of Emergency Situations] Shoigu, don’t talk about Putin and amphibian aircrafts, don’t ask him to build me a fire extinction pond and to return me the alarm bell. Forests are burning? Well, fuck them. (Lebedev, August 16, 2010)

This quote exemplifies a moment of displacement from the common media agenda and it may seem shocking and irresponsible in terms of journalistic ethics. The message does not only radically reject fundamental values of news making, such as caring about the world around us, it overthrows them by suggesting the opposite – extreme impartiality bordering with negligence, where moralizing lessons are reduced to a minimum. In some perverse interpretations of journalistic ideals of objectivity this would be the right thing to do. This is objectivity at its purest form – the blogger does not want to tell us what news is important, he is beyond the rituals of the journalistic pack covering all the same stories.

In the eyes of the Tema’s readers, such treatment of the subject may even be perceived as attractive due to its sincerity and plain dealing. This is how one of the blog commentators, whose nickname is Izvrashenez which ironically means “pervert,” puts it:

As a media figure Artemy is very interesting, as an individual he is great, as a designer he is a genius, and undoubtedly as a human being he is crap. (Izvrashenez, August 16, 2010)

At the same time, the style Tema uses in his blogging is the moment when the objectivity of the impartial observer reaches its peak and turns inside out to become a manifestation of individual subjectivity with a distinct reportorial style. The rejection of moral obligations makes the blogger for a moment himself and not someone else, someone who he is supposed to be as a kind of (citizen) journalist.

By refusing to talk about subjects that most mass media and other bloggers pay attention to, the blogger demonstrates indifference to the dominant idea of journalism (the way he understands it). He simply criticizes it and offers a different view of journalism. Thus, the negligence of journalism is still defined by what is
neglected. In a way this negligence of the moral obligation to act responsibly
becomes re-articulated into the responsibility to be honest with a highly appreciated
audience (“my vitamins”). But presented, somewhat ostentatiously, as an honest
confession of one’s own amorality, this message at the same time recognizes the
existence of norms. Furthermore, summarizing the key details of forest fires
coverage in one sentence, Tema demonstrates full awareness and involvement in the
general media process. Finally, if it was a case of complete indifference, there
probably would not be such a message at all. What kind of discursive formation does
the example of Artemy Lebedev’s blogging construct and maintain? Most visibly it
accentuates difference in relation to the meaning of “responsibility” in journalism
and blogging.

Lost and found credibility

Much of what constitutes journalistic credibility stems from the authority of the
media companies where journalists work (Hayes, Singer, and Ceppos 2007).
Accordingly, citizen journalists are rather independent and thus more likely to
express their own opinions and be selective with the choice of facts. However,
sometimes poor quality of evidence and a lack of opportunities to quickly verify
information causes controversies around news stories by citizen journalists (Lowe
2012). During anti-government protests in Syria in 2011, the official state media
disputed over amateur YouTube video showing the violence of the army in one of
the protesting villages. The official position was that the video was a fake produced
outside Syria in Iraq. In response to media distrust two Syrians went to the village to
prove the authenticity of the first video and interviewed an alleged witness of those
events. They said afterwards: “We’re not claiming to be journalists but when the
media doesn’t do – or cannot do – its job properly, it is up to us to do it for them”
(Grira 2011:np).

The state-controlled media rejected the citizen evidence as unreliable. But it could
be just a pretext to silence the protesters and to hide the truth about acts of violence.
While restoring the credibility of the initial amateur report, the group of citizens
played a role of citizen journalists and, in a way, challenged the credibility of the
mainstream media.

Russian media space is full of similar examples. Critical bloggers have constantly
questioned the trustworthiness of television news while searching for ways to
establish an alternative communicative space. This is an example of Navalny’s strategy to spread the results of his anti-corruption investigation:

Using video clips as a method of internet agitation is a powerful thing. Let’s use this method more actively. Let the Kremlin swindlers [kremlezhuliki] choke with their television. We will reach the same size of audience. (Navalny, November 23, 2010)

This citation from Navalny’s blog reproduces the negative image of the television channels that must be opposed by more “truthful” agitation through the Internet. The credibility of television is undermined with moral judgment in regard to its implied bosses. But television reports have also been part of the inverse reaction – the authorities criticized and formally accused Navalny’s kind of journalism as not only deceptive but socially irresponsible and dangerous. NTV reported about one such case:

Public prosecutors recognize the leaflet of Aleksey Navalny as extremist material. The leaflet, that has recently made some members of United Russia feel angry, contains “false information”… [and] “stirs up hatred…” In recent months, Navalny has been the focus of law-enforcement authorities on almost a daily basis. (NTV, August 8, 2012)

The reputational competition between Navalny and traditional state-controlled news media has been increasing proportionally to the blogger’s growing popularity. However it is noteworthy that the same kind of tension happened earlier too. In 2004 during the so-called Orange Revolution in Ukraine, the official Russian mass media mostly portrayed protesters in negative tones, as if anticipating similar anti-governmental rallies in Russia and protecting the pro-Russian ruling elites of the neighboring country. 1TV, for example, went as far as comparing protesters with Ukrainian nationalistic organizations of the Second World War that were, according to journalists, allied with Hitler and participated in executions of Poles and Jews. Already then, bloggers responded fervently. Again, Rustem Adagamov, normally easy-tempered in statements, allowed himself a rare obscenity:

What whores they are at Channel One… What a nasty thing it is to put such a text over a video where some young guys stand in the square holding orange flags (Adagamov, November 23, 2004).

The next day, another Adagamov’s blog post included the unkind sarcastic remark that “Channel One refuses to lie.” Then, towards the end, the narrator unveils the contradiction, disclaiming “Don’t get startled [by the news], it is about Ukrainian television; the Russian [television] is as usual” (Adagamov, November 24, 2004). The first lines of this second post refer to a true account of what happened in the
neighboring country during the Orange Revolution: journalists of the Ukrainian Channel One went on strike because of political pressure. As a continuation of the plot, two days later Adagamov asked his readers from Ukraine whether the demonstrators that gathered in Independence Square in Kiev received payment for their participation. The blogger was particularly suspicious of Russian coverage of these events: “Russian television Channel One claims they are getting paid and it even shows how it happened. What can you tell?” (Adagamov, November 26, 2004).

In 2011 and 2012 Adagamov became an eyewitness and active voice in political protests caused by controversial Parliamentary and Presidential elections in Russia. From the point of view of the mainstream mass media he occupied a position labeled as an “orange threat” to Russian national security and integrity. His ideological rivals claimed to have found the strongest evidence of this in his (acquired) Norwegian citizenship (Kandelaki, Vz, March 12, 2012), as it is convenient to forget that he is first of all a Russian citizen. In a way the whole discursive strategy of the Kremlin ideologists and pro-Kremlin elites tended to undermine the credibility of oppositional journalists and bloggers by articulating their subject position with moments of alienation and otherness.

The consolidation of pro-regime bloggers and professional media forces inside one camp is symptomatic of these currents. Kristina Potupchik, then the press secretary of the Kremlin youth organization Nashi, attacked representatives of the “orange threat” in her LJ blog and republished the attacks in Vz in order to reach larger audiences. Here is a quick overview of one such discursive struggle. On the Presidential Election Day, (March 4, 2012) bloggers began collecting evidence of violations at the polling stations. Hundreds of videos and photographs were circulated on the Internet, including a link from Adagamov’s twitter that allegedly exposed an instance of ballot staffing. Adagamov admitted on Twitter, less than two hours later, that this was a false alarm since the video he linked to only showed the testing of an electronic ballot box (@adagamov, March 4, 2012). Meanwhile, the vigilant Potupchik reacted by exposing this misunderstanding on her LJ blog several minutes after Adagamov’s initial tweet. She described his mistake and guessed that Adagamov would soon correct himself. Still she was concerned that his link to the video could mislead lots of other people in the meantime. She turned this seemingly harmless mistake into an aggressive counter-attack:

Do not lie, do not indulge in wishful thinking and do not misinform and pump your hamsters with hatred. Otherwise each new stage of misleading

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37 In conservative media discourse (see Chapter 7) the pejorative expression “networking hamsters” refers to oppositional bloggers.
information will be perceived as a purposeful, conscious and manipulative lie. You are not “fighting for fair elections,” but rather trying with all your strength to announce the elections illegitimate, so that you would have a reason to hang out at the next rally. (Potupchik, March 4, 2012)

The active civic stand of Adagamov brought him into a position of one of the loud voices of the protest movements and an influential one-man mass medium. In autumn 2012, he was elected to the Opposition Coordination Council, the first body in recent years to successfully unite ideologically different groups that shared a unanimous opposition to the regime. Thus Adagamov in a way turned from a citizen journalist into an oppositional politician. But the new status also influenced the intensity of reputational struggles. Sensing a severe legitimacy crisis the state ideological apparatus made a lot of effort to curb the growing and consolidating protest. Defensive of the regime, television channels and authorities launched attacks on oppositional leaders by forging various criminal charges, reviving (or simply inventing) long-forgotten facts and rumors from the past. In January 2013, Adagamov was suddenly confronted by the accusations of his ex-wife. She recalled an episode from twelve years ago when, as she claimed, Adagamov was engaging in acts of pedophilia.

The Investigative Committee is examining pedophilia accusations against the blogger Rustem Adagamov, who writes on the Internet under the nickname Drugoi. His ex-wife Tatiana Delsal testified with exposures in an interview to television channel Russia Today… Adagamov’s supporters on the Internet immediately accused his ex-wife of lying and claimed the video was fabricated. But in a new interview Tatiana gave a detailed account of everything. (Vernitsky, ITV, January 11, 2013)

This example has the main argument (truthful story of the wife) facing the counter-argument (internet users opinion). The rhetorical opposition of opinions becomes solved with “a new interview,” which the skeptics should consider real and honest. The fact that the “scandal” ended up in the media and not in the court room can mean its only purpose was informational – to destroy the reputation of Adagamov or to at least ruin his credibility for some readers of his blog. It is also a relevant condition that news seeking audience’s trust is evaluated not only in terms of content. The context of where a story appears – television or an online blog – influences the overall credibility of the content (Thorson, Vrags, and Ekdale 2010). If a general audience trusts television, they are more likely to believe in whatever story is being told to them. On the other hand, critical blog readers and bloggers themselves will be more skeptical of television information than about the same information published in a source they trust.
Blogger Oleg Makarenko (Fritzmorgen) once pointed out, however, that the Internet has a built-in verification mechanism:

The Internet is not suited for a blatant lie. You can lie to people through television, but it is impossible to lie to them through the blogosphere. Since the “hive mind” [collective consciousness] instantly exposes any outright lies made by a public person. (Makarenko, September 10, 2010)

The information warfare completely disregarded any inconsistencies and argumentation flaws for the sole purpose of negative representations. Control over the strategic media allowed for one-sided campaigns. By definition, opposition could not succeed in the mainstream media agenda, but also on the Internet they had to respond to unpleasant accusations and compromising evidence. I had difficulty separating facts from pure fiction myself. This cacophony of accusations and counter-reactions, an ultimate symptom of antagonism and not deliberation, undermines the credibility of individual voices on the Internet. Reputation becomes very unstable in so far as it may turn an extreme negative into an equally extreme positive.

Summary

The analysis of discourse and discursive logic in this chapter explored some of the expressions that describe either the differences or commonalities between the citizen journalism of bloggers and the professional journalism of traditional mass media. It was important to identify the relevant constitutive elements of the discourse of blogization and to define the constructivist logic of that discourse. By the term logic I refer to a specific analytical category within discourse theory that understands meaning construction as a process taking place according to the principles of contingency and as a process that cannot always be explained by reason. Instead of reason, it can be explained by the concepts of articulation and nodal points.

The chapter questioned the logic of blogization in Russian journalism from the point of view of four key nodal points. These points - autonomy, responsibility, subjectivity, and credibility - serve as four battlefields of discursive struggles. By answering the question of logic, I implicitly raise new questions that correspond to these nodal points. What is it that journalists or bloggers are able and willing to do as producers of news content? Where do journalists and bloggers draw moral lines of responsibility and social obligation in their practices? How much of their individuality do journalists and bloggers express? Why is it that some journalists and bloggers are more trusted than others? These questions underscore the importance
of always referring to “journalists” and “bloggers” together since both signifiers taken separately are not able to encompass the meanings of the “other.” Journalists need bloggers to point to professional ethics (responsibility), bloggers need journalists to stress their own independence (autonomy). Both terms are floating signifiers that determine each other and are simultaneously determined by the field of discursivity.

What, then, is the discursive logic of blogization? On a general level, it is possible to say that blogization tends to emphasize differences rather than equivalences between journalists and bloggers and thus increases the complexity of journalistic ideology. In the case of the Russian-speaking blogger Cyxymu, who reported from Georgia during the 2008 conflict, blogization did not only generate multiple identities in the national context, it also facilitated the expression of intra-national journalistic differences. The intra-nationalism of blogization can have equivalent effects by bringing together international media and blogging communities in certain discussions. However in these cases both logics – the potential for differentiation or equivalence – are limited to linguistic and other cultural factors.

This chapter provides additional evidence that it is impossible to define the proper boundaries of journalistic practices, especially due to the presence of the blogosphere. Likewise, it is impossible to reconcile the citizen journalism of blogs with the institutional framework of mass media organizations. The logic of blogization manifests the undecidability of a journalism/blogging unification and opens up opportunities for hegemonic articulations. Accordingly, these findings help to draw a broader picture of the dominant hegemonic discourse of blogization and the emerging resistance of counter-hegemonic discursive practices examined in the next chapter.
7 Hegemonic struggles

This chapter continues the study of blogization as discourse. Previously, I outlined some key features of blogization in Russia. From the structure and conditions of the common journalistic field, I narrowed down my analysis to the question of symbolic capital in blogization. I also defined some specific moments of contestation (nodal points) between journalism and blogging. These steps helped to highlight the dynamics of blogization mainly from a journalistic perspective. This chapter returns to the broader question of my project – the implications of journalism-blogging relations for understanding the role of news media in society at large. The purpose of this chapter is to describe the attempts to fixate (hegemonize) the discursive field of blogization in the macro context of contemporary Russia. I rely on the concept of hegemony that Laclau and Mouffe developed in their book “Hegemony and Socialist Strategy” (1985). In practical terms, this chapter answers the question: How do some meanings of blogization become dominant over others, and what does this dominant project say about journalism?

There are four analytical steps here. First, I describe a major split in the discourse into two formations that can be called the conservative and liberal poles of blogization. Second, I analyze the ways in which conservative hegemony is being constituted. Third, I look at the counter-hegemonic practices of the more liberal or resistance-based side of blogization. Finally, I discuss the overall construction of meaning with regard to blogization and its implications.

7.1 The discursive split

Hegemony and hegemonic struggles

Theorists usually use the concept of hegemony to explain power relations of particular social formations. According to Laclau and Mouffe (1985), hegemony emerges “in a context dominated by the experience of fragmentation and by the indeterminacy of the articulations between different struggles and subject positions”
This means the complexity of a system like journalism-blogging relations can be controlled or partially fixated by means of hegemony. Media and communication studies have adopted the concepts of hegemony and articulation as relevant categories of research (see e.g. Hall 1980; Slack 2005). Similarly, in this chapter, the concept of hegemony can be viewed as communicated hegemony (i.e. packed in media texts) and can be applied along with the concept of articulation to the study of blogization.

In contemporary Russia, in order to understand the functioning of hegemony in the context of blogization it is worth considering earlier historical examples. In fact, this is how post-structuralist discourse theory developed. In a retrospective manner, Laclau and Mouffe examined early Marxist discourse searching for interpretations of hegemony. They traced the origin of the concept in nineteenth century ideas of Russian social democracy. Georgi Plekhanov and Pavel Axelrod were the first Marxist theoreticians to apply the term hegemony “to describe the process whereby the impotence of the Russian bourgeoisie to carry through its ‘normal’ struggle for political liberty forced the working class to intervene decisively to achieve it” (Laclau and Mouffe 1985:49). The possibility of the working class taking over political initiatives is theoretically explained by the specificity of Russia’s historical development at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth century:

[W]eakness of the bourgeoisie and urban civilization; disproportionate growth of the State as a military-bureaucratic apparatus becoming autonomous from classes; insertion of advanced forms of capitalism resulting from the ‘privilege of backwardness’; freshness of the Russian proletariat, due to the absence of traditions tying it to a complex civil society… (Laclau and Mouffe 1985:52)

This historical context resembles the current state of Russian society and the development of journalism in particular. The state ideological apparatus dominates and controls the mainstream journalistic agenda. Part of the middle class consisting of educated and affluent city dwellers (today’s bourgeois class) is limited to engage in civic actions on the Internet and in marginal oppositional news media. There also remains a missing tradition of political involvement and civic consciousness among the majority of the provincial, working class population. The difference today is that, unlike a century ago, the contemporary proletariat is less mobilized in opposition to authoritarian hegemony. Counter-hegemonic strategies are more actively evolving among the intelligentsia and consumers of online news media.

In the Leninist tradition, hegemony implied political leadership within a class alliance, and the whole class struggle was seen as a “representation of interests.” Laclau and Mouffe (1985:55) point to the ambiguity and contradictions of Leninist
discourse which was able to include (articulate) authoritarian and democratic tendencies at the same time. They also show how Leninist discourse endowed the proletariat with the status of a universal class which “must abandon its class ghetto and transform itself into the articulator of a multiplicity of antagonisms and demands…” (ibid:58). This historical reconstruction explains the mechanism of hegemonic formation. However, the centrality of class logic in Leninist Marxism has pressed the theorists of hegemony to look for less structural explanations. Laclau and Mouffe offer another approach to hegemony which they discovered in the works of Antonio Gramsci. Gramsci described hegemony as:

[t]he “spontaneous” consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group; this consent is “historically” caused by the prestige (and consequent confidence) which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production. (Gramsci 1971:12)

In the early twentieth century, Marxists argued about whether necessity or contingency define social transformations. While some theorists (Lenin and Trotsky) were convinced of the necessary class character of social agents, others (for example Georges Sorel) introduced the idea of the indeterminacy of the identity of social agents. Identities depend on social struggles and are therefore contingent. In this respect, Laclau and Mouffe (1985) point out that “[o]nly with Gramsci did the two traditions converge in his concept of ‘historical block’, where the concept of ‘hegemony’ derived from Leninism meets in a new synthesis with the concept of ‘bloc’ derived from Sorel” (p. 42).

Gramsci went beyond the Leninist category of classes. He used the concept of hegemony to demonstrate a shift from the sphere of purely political to the sphere of intellectual life and issues of morality. Moral and intellectual leadership, according to Gramsci, requires an ensemble of ideas and values (subject positions in Laclau and Mouffe) as a form of what he called the “collective will.” Laclau and Mouffe’s (1985) reading of Gramsci convinces them that political subjects make up complex collective wills rather than classes, and “the collective will is a result of the politico-ideological articulation of dispersed and fragmented historical forces” (p. 67).

Discourse theory describes hegemonic struggles as constant re-articulations of identities. The constructive units of a discourse have two basic forms – discursive elements and discursive moments. While moments designate meanings already actively involved in discourse construction, elements only have the potential to join the process and to thereby influence overall meaning. As soon as any social identity or meaning (element) encounters another, the identity or meaning of both changes
(elements transform into moments) influenced by the “other.” In an articulated discursive totality, according to Laclau and Mouffe, all identities are relational. Using an example from my research, one may say that a certain understanding of journalistic values is formulated to some extent by a presence of contrasting views on the same subject. In other words, without clearly subjective accounts of social events facilitated by social media, there would not be as much stress on the value of impartial storytelling in conventional journalism. In other words, the differential views need each other in order to better formulate themselves. This illuminates a crucial implication of discourse theory: that “no discursive formation is a sutured totality and the transformation of the elements into moments is never complete” (Laclau and Mouffe 1985:106-7).

How, then, do some social constructions achieve dominance while others fail to do so? Applied to communication, discourse theory explains this with the classic formula of sender and receiver. Stuart Hall (1980) brought the concept of hegemony to bear on cultural and media studies by suggesting that hegemonic discourse exists as a set of codes, and that the communication (dissemination) of discourse follows a model of encoding and decoding. The context described by Hall as the dominance of television parallels the current hegemonic position of Russian television. According to Hall’s model, television content is encoded as hegemonic but can potentially be decoded in three ways. First, the audience can accept the dominant-hegemonic position as it was coded. The second way is a negotiated decoding that involves partial acceptance and a moderate possibility of conflicting interpretations. Finally, the audience can entirely resist the hegemonic code, applying an oppositional code instead and thus forming counter-hegemonic interpretations.

Westernizers and slavophiles

Two main discourses emerge from relations between journalism and blogging in contemporary Russia. These discourses can be called conservative and liberal, though the names only partly reflect the complexity of the articulations that constitute them. Conservatism and liberalism should not be viewed here in the same way as they are understood in Western contexts. While in the U.S. both political philosophies exist irrespective of (and can be equally critical of) the state, the Russian analogues at the moment are more distinctly associated with a predominantly conservative authoritarian regime on one hand, and liberal opposition to this regime on the other hand (cf. Prozorov 2005). Thus, by conservative journalistic discourse
I refer to the predominantly statist orientation of the news media, whereas liberal journalistic discourse broadly encapsulates any discursive moments that are critical of the political regime. The importance of these two discourses lies in the long historical tradition of national identity building in Russia and the role of journalism in this process.

Conservative discourse has historical roots in ideas of nineteenth century slavophilism (slavianofil’stvo) – a set of beliefs in the uniqueness of Russian culture, and the supremacy of an Orthodox spirituality that delegates indisputable authority to the monarchy, in contrast to Western liberal values and individualism. As Yale Richmond (2003:65) summarizes, slavophilism “preferred Russian mysticism to Western rationalism.” Liberal discourse can, in turn, be labeled as westernism (zapadnichestvo) that stands against the ideas of slavophilism. Westernizers were the people - political reformers, liberals and socialists – who believed that Russia should follow West-European ideas and values more actively. They argued that Russian society needed modernization based on enlightenment, the rule of law, and rationalism. The westernizers also claimed that technological changes and the development of manufacturing would stimulate the growth of a middle class. Both ideologies existed in the form of an intellectual debate, which was flourishing in the nineteenth century literary field.

The same dialectics divides contemporary Russian intellectual life in ways that closely resemble what happened in the nineteenth century. The period of Soviet state ideology had interrupted these intellectual traditions, though they successfully re-emerged in post-Soviet Russia. Consequently, what we witness today in the discursive elements of blogization are the same ideological struggles for dominance between conservative and liberal conceptions of journalism and its place in Russian society.

The conservative discourse of blogization is mainly directed and imposed by the state. It is part of the state’s attempts to monopolize the public space in general and the mass media in particular (Kryshtanovskaya 2008; Arutunyan 2009). Political and business elites are part of it because they are the primary beneficiaries of the conservative mass media ideology. Regional elites use the news media to promote an uncritical conservation of the social order and demonstrate their loyalty to the regime. In exchange, they gain access to budgetary funds and political power. This conservative discourse is also widely supported by the tacit consent of larger segments of the population due to a persistent tradition of patrimonialism and belief in a strong leader. The strength of the conservative discourse is that the upper class is hegemonically allied with the lower classes through the mainstream media agenda.
There is also a competing liberal discourse of blogization which originates from networks of dissidents and intellectuals. These networks in modern Russia usually consist of middle class social groups who are not as rigidly associated with the governing political system as the upper classes, and thus not as susceptible to state-propaganda as the lower level of working classes. Furthermore, due to the proliferation of blogging and other social media, dissidents and intellectuals have made themselves into a source of alternative media agenda.

Between these conservative and liberal discourses there are constant struggles for legitimation. The conservative forces try to protect their political interests through the hegemony of news media and journalistic practices. The opposing liberal views act as counter-hegemonic discourse. It is not be surprising, for instance, to find liberal discourse often recognizing the blogosphere’s agenda setting capacity and news making authority, while the conservative discourse seeks to deny and delegitimize blogs as reliable sources of information. Consequently, there are visible tensions and antagonistic relations between these competing viewpoints.

The possibility for bloggers to become legitimate sources of journalistic information is restricted by conservative media discourse. Stemming from the ruling political class, conservatism does not recognize the value of public criticism nor the radicalism of blogging in news making. Instead, conservatives have relied on the power of traditional news media, especially television broadcasting and related formats. The video blog of Dmitry Medvedev offers a good example of how conservatism relies on traditional media but also resists the pressure of alternative practices. Liberal journalistic subject positions in turn are either entirely grounded in blog practices themselves (the Navalny phenomenon) or forced out of traditional media space into the blogosphere and social media (the Parfenov phenomenon). These positions tend to undermine traditional media authority and challenge conservative ideology.

The examples discussed in this research show there is no clear borderline between journalism in its traditional sense and the journalism of blogs. The identities of journalists and bloggers frequently overlap. The majority of mainstream journalists maintain a relation of political clientelism with the state, whereas most of the blogosphere’s citizen journalists oppose such collaboration. This segregation goes unnoticed for a large part of the Russian society that perceives journalism from the mainstream point of view. However, it is not just a simple division between the journalism of traditional media and new forms of journalism such as blogs. Rather, there is more complicated division with underlying conflictuality that cuts across specializations, media platforms and institutional forms of journalism.
Discourse theory explains this dialectic as an inability for a subject position to “consolidate itself as a separate position” resulting in constant interaction among opposing positions, a “game which makes hegemonic articulation possible” (Laclau and Mouffe 1985:122). These relations are described by the concept of antagonism. According to Laclau and Mouffe, this means that “the presence of the ‘Other’ prevents me from being totally myself,” the antagonistic relations arise “from the impossibility of their constitution” (ibid:125). The journalism of the blogger Navalny prevents traditional television journalists from feeling their full legitimacy, at least in some contexts. But even more so, Navalny himself recognizes the limits of his transparent journalism, in contrast to the limits imposed by the more rigid and non-transparent yet dominant agenda setting capacity of television news. The differentiation line runs in the political sphere, that is, according to fundamental disagreements about the common discourse of journalism. And one possible explanation of such differentiation can be drawn from the broader ideological conflict between “liberal” westernizers and “conservative” slavophiles.

Journalism, dead or alive?

Decline is a recurrent theme in discussions of the state of Russian journalism. It is as if the medical experts had gathered in the hospital emergency room to decide whether the patient is recovering from an illness, has lapsed into a coma, or should be pronounced dead. The only consensus most actors share is that something is wrong with journalism. The undecidability of a common ground for diagnosing Russian journalism stems directly from the split between westernizers (liberals) and slavophiles (conservatives). In terms of institutional politics, these labels appear simply as oppositional and non-oppositional. The following example from Rossiiskaya Gazeta (RG) portrays the reality of a news media torn into two camps:

1) Our journalism, like our critique [genre], is politicized throughout… Analysis, as such, has disappeared. Oppositional media knows that oppositional public actors are always right, non-oppositional media is convinced that the opposition is always wrong. The yellow press is busy entertaining both. (Maksimov, RG, 21 May 2012)

Interestingly, this opinionated article by Andrey Maksimov, a member of the Russian television academy, excludes the entertainment function of journalism completely. In that sense, only serious and critical journalism can be counted as a properly functioning (alive), social institute. This vision of journalism simplifies a plurality of subject positions to only two antagonistic discourses. Maksimov suggests a solution
to partly overcome the general antagonism is to restore the analytical function of journalism. Without this, journalism can only reflect the major ideological divide and cannot be seen as real journalism.

Aleksandr Prokhanov, an editor-in-chief for the newspaper *Zavtra*, emphasizes the unifying power of the Russian state. His words in the example below epitomize the statist rhetoric. The journalist legitimizes state control of the mass media by constructing equivalences between “state” and “order” and rearticulating the media’s principle of moral responsibility into the media-induced animosity:

2) The state had been squeezed out of culture, media, economics, and finances. We had chaos instead. And now the state gradually returns and introduces order. I support that in every way, because the mass media are able to multiply the destructive effects of the chaos, to push people towards aggression and anger. (Kommersant, September 26, 2012)\(^{38}\)

Prokhanov places the order of the state policies against the chaos of unclear nature and origin. What he may be referring to is the common (mostly conservative) justification of the state policies of the 2000s as opposed to the political instability of the 1990s.

The subject positions expressed by Maksimov and Prokhanov draw a line between the state political system and the forces that resist it. Even though the piece by Maksimov seems less bound to conservative state-centered ideology, the overall argument focuses on criticizing the oppositional media. However, the distinction between the state and the opposition is not sufficient to explain the discourse of blogization. There are not only struggles along the lines of westernism and slavophilism, but also internal journalistic struggles that introduce other dimensions into the discourse of blogization – that of tensions between traditional and new media forms. It is through this two-dimensional perspective that I address the discursive field of Russian journalism. The second dimension emphasizes the “dying” of traditional news media and the “revitalizing” effect of the new social media.

Aside from these proper politics, the discursive split between liberal and conservative variants of blogization can be associated with the “political” of journalism itself. In an article entitled “Journalistic death,” Ilya Baranikas, a journalist for the popular daily MK, criticizes the common belief that today everyone can be a

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\(^{38}\) This citation was removed from Kommersant website and from the print version too. But it was quickly republished by other online media. For example, it can be found on the page of Russian-language news site in Kazakhstan (I-news.kz 2012). The original version is also available in newspaper databases such as Integrum.
journalist. According to Baranikas, there are currently many media professionals who need better training and preferably additional specializations, such as knowledge of law or economics. In the era of digital technologies and the proliferation of the Internet, journalism has become especially vulnerable to an influx of amateurs:

3) Is the Internet destroying the journalistic profession? Yes. The Internet is the great good, but it also has negative features. The Internet is freedom without responsibility. <…> It is too open for unprofessional and poorly educated people who parade themselves as authoritative individuals. <…> The Internet and the free access it provides to information is killing journalism. (Baranikas, MK, October 20, 2012)

Blogging is not mentioned, but implied here. Without clear references to either conservative or liberal discourse, all four nodal points of blogization (see Chapter 6) are touched upon. The credibility of amateur citizen journalists is undermined due to their lack of professionalism and education. The nodal point of responsibility faces the same criticism. In the conditions of excessive freedom that the Internet supposedly provides to its users, responsible journalism is no longer possible. The autonomy of journalism is reversed in this example. It is not about being economically self-sufficient, but it is about “natural” requirement of profitability. Baranikas understands that cheap content and its circulation on the Internet is damaging for the profession. The reference to the self-proclaimed authority of individual content producers is part of the nodal point of subjectivity.

Natalia Radulova’s combination of active journalistic work with regular blogging exposes another perspective on the growing influence of the Internet. Her position is more complex and eventually optimistic about the future of journalism. Radulova’s interpretation is dialectical – one journalism is dying at the same time as a newer version of it is emerging. The following lengthy citation on the subject is taken from her blog, which is no less important for her journalistic identity than a traditional journalistic job.

4) I think journalism will not stay alive for long. What sense does it make at all to keep the staff employed, when the Internet is quicker, fiercer and funnier in the production of all news, commentary, or analysis? Every day, some twenty people working in the newsroom try hard to make something brilliant, while there are millions of others who try hard on the Internet. And on each day someone will surely succeed – becoming the first to take a picture of a burning tower or a funny cat, to upload the best video of a falling meteorite, to tell the world about a village named “Filth” and its inhabitants, to find an undeclared property belonging to the Duma deputy, to come up with an anecdote
or a poem about the fear of death, to make fun of a celebrity, to draw a caricature, to poignantly write about love or about politics, to publish a thoughtful, serious text that one has been working on slowly for half a year, to end up with a mobile phone in the place that the whole world will be talking about today. ... Here you are, the [newspaper] issue is ready – the Internet will always bring the best, the most recent and talented to the top. <…> Yes, some merely technical staff will stay in journalism – to aggregate, to sort and to deliver the news. PR people will stay to serve some big shots. The rest of the distinguished authors [zolotie per’ia] will fall into oblivion. Indeed, how can twenty journalists, exhausted by the constant “urgency to print!,” oppose the powerful collective mind? Why are they prattling about opinion journalism, they are poor things, whom nobody reads anymore with aspirations as it was before? Why do they grieve so much about closing newsrooms? The end has come, accept it brothers and sisters. Nowadays, the whole world is a big newsroom. (Radulova, April 12, 2013)

This piece sharply contrasts with the journalists quoted previously (Maksimov, Prokhanov, and Baranikas). Radulova is a representative of a more liberal and progressive pole of blogization discourse. Her vision breaks with many conventional (hegemonic) positions. It also suggests a new kind of universalistic logic that attempts to fixate the meaning of journalism that can be applied everywhere in the world, not only in Russia. The Internet, and her definition encompasses blogs and other social media, is a self-regulating system. In that sense, the autonomy of individual content producers becomes corrected by the collective consciousness of web users who themselves decide what stories are important. This complements the value of individual subjectivity with the subjectivity of the collective mind not limited to professional judgment. Life itself plays the role of a newsroom, where all kinds of observations and self-expressions can constitute the news. Love stories, poems and funny pictures are as important as political discussions. In contrast to what Maksimov said above about analytical genres, Radulova’s model does not privilege the authority of expert opinion in this new journalism.

The weakness of this formulation is that it lays open the nodal points of responsibility and credibility. The merely technical sorting out of the news content, according to Radulova, does not imply moral and ethical considerations. Similarly, there is no answer as to whether the powerful collective mind is able to determine the credibility of eye-witness reports. Credibility based on accumulated reputation and expert knowledge is untenable in that framework, it can only be established post factum and hence creates opportunities for manipulations. The ultimate incompleteness of Radulova’s optimistic tone stems from the inability to fixate the
meaning of journalism. The dying form of journalism, according to Radulova, is becoming increasingly mechanical – monitoring and organizing the growing volume of material produced by citizen journalists. At the same time, her key argument is that the internet audience will do the sorting itself. As a result, Radulova leaves the discursive puzzle of blogization unsolved. The chain of equivalences fails to overcome initial differences between professional journalism workers and active bloggers among citizens.

The analyzed examples try to capture the essence of changes in journalism. There is evidence of a discursive split in each of them. In some cases, it is a distinction along the lines of institutional national politics and national identities. In others it is a more general opposition between the old order (conservatism) and its modernized version (liberalism). In the Russian context, the former is the dominant position of power elites and can be viewed as conservative hegemony. The latter in turn functions as a counter-hegemonic liberal or progressive movement.

7.2 Conservative legitimation

Many empirical examples in this study illustrate the dominance of the conservative discourse of blogization. The key role of television in upholding this dominance is supplemented by conservative strategies stretching as far as the blogosphere itself. The blogs of Burmatov, Medvedev, and Makarenko (Fritzmorgen) implicitly and explicitly advocate for the ideology of preservation of the existing social order, generating conflicting meanings among online audience.

However, among the general public this ideological warfare does not even exist. According to a 2013 national survey, 26 percent of Russians had never heard the word “blogger” and 29 percent of the respondents had no idea what it meant (WCIOM 2013). This means that more than half of the population has no idea about blogging. The same survey showed that 33 percent of respondents named Dmitry Medvedev as the most well-known blogger. It is the mainstream media that played an important role in making these numbers possible. In one of his “Blogosphere” columns, journalist Dmitry Belyaev explains that bloggers are becoming more popular than journalists. As an example, Belyaev mentions the blog of Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev, who “began publishing video posts on LJ in 2009 during his Presidency, and continues to receive over one million monthly visits” (Belyaev, RG, June 28, 2012). It is not surprising, however, that presidents and even prime-ministers are more popular than journalists. But the main point of the column was
to present an important moment of articulation, fixating our attention on ideas concerning who bloggers are, especially those that are popular.

According to the survey, the second national “celebrity” was Vladimir Putin with 8 percent. Since Putin does not have a blog account, the survey organizers assumed that people had mistakenly referred to his official web page. What about Navalny? The blogger, who is famous within the blogosphere and arguably in many non-Russian contexts, is only known by 2 percent of the Russian population. There are two faces to these results. On the one hand, this is an eye-opener for proponents of the quick transformation of Russian society. “Blogger Putin” is a more convincing construct than “blogger Navalny” in the overall picture. On the other hand, such sociological reports have been criticized for being part of the same conservative system of signification. This political demand for favorable statist sociology raises many questions among educated people. But even if these doubts are true, the production of such public statistics still demonstrates the hegemonic dominance of a particular discursive formation. In what follows, I describe two conservative strategies that have been depoliticizing the hegemonic meanings of blogization. These strategies exclude the political dimension either by putting it outside the national journalistic field or by normalizing the limitations of press freedom.

Foreign contexts and external threats

The conservative discourse of blogization often recognizes at least some elements of the journalistic authority of blogging by connecting it to foreign contexts. It has been quite common for state-controlled media to portray bloggers as legitimate actors in various foreign conflicts. Covering the political crisis in Georgia, in 2007, Russian television (1TV) reported on how a state of emergency had been imposed by the Georgian authorities, which made transmitting and receiving information complicated. The Emergency Decree introduced temporary restrictions not only on participation in rallies and demonstrations, but also on the work of the press. Without providing any details or mentioning anyone specifically, the news report called Georgian bloggers a valuable source of news (Robakidze, 1TV, November 8, 2007). This would not be a moment of conservative articulation, if similar stories about the Russian context were portrayed in the same way. But since the mainstream media tends to limit this type of news to foreign contexts, the field of discursivity becomes open for radical re-articulations. Recognition of the foreign bloggers implicitly shows the political significance of the phenomenon in Russia, precisely
because it is not mentioned. An important point here is that blogging deserves credit (nodal point of credibility) during crises and emergencies. But because subjectivity of bloggers’ journalism is externalized, the discourse of blogization appears in the mainstream television detached from internal Russian situations. This discourse tells us that bloggers are not sources of information about conflicts in Russia, there are other sources for that.

A similar logic of credibility was stressed when 1TV reported from a war zone in the Gaza strip, explaining how in a situation of “extreme censorship,” ordinary people use blogs to tell their own stories about the war. A Russian woman, who had been living in Gaza for many years, made notes on paper and passed them on to friends who published them on blogs. The reporters claim she writes what she sees in the streets. The report emphasizes that people surrounded by war use the Internet to communicate with relatives in other countries, and it is this communicative behavior that makes a news story rather than the content of the communication itself (Sandro, 1TV, January 11, 2009). This mode of portraying blogging is different from what we saw in the previous example. Both examples positively assess the value of the independent and practically unrestricted communication of blogging (autonomy). However, the second example widens the articulation of subjectivity, giving a concrete identification to the blog author and constructing a basic association with the national context. The choice of the Russian-speaking actor is hardly a coincidence.

The conservative mass media use international examples to demonstrate the “dangers” of subversive behavior on the Internet. In 2011, during the Arab uprisings, Russian television channels condemned protesters who challenged the regimes. The news also criticized Western countries for their active encouragement of the protests (see e.g. Hill 2011). The conservative Russian media also claimed that Western rhetoric and interference had misled many young Arabs to propagate and organize protests with online social media. These actions were depicted as a danger to Russia itself:

5) Networking blog paraculture spilled out into the streets, first in the Middle East with catastrophic consequences for the region, and now in our country. At such moments a counterbalance to state despotism emerges: the despotism of public opinion. Any disagreement is labeled collaborationism. (Novoselova, RG, December 26, 2011)

When Putin returned to office after the 2012 presidential elections in Russia, television news continued to criticize the civic protests. The Sunday prime time news program on 1TV reported on the misery and sufferings of Egyptians, who had to
elect a new head of state following the violent overthrow of Hosni Mubarak. The report described in passing the profound remorse former cyber revolutionaries felt for what they did:

6) “We called ourselves the children of Facebook and were incredibly proud of how we summoned people to the protests. I cannot get rid of the feeling that I had just been taken advantage of. And I also took advantage of those who believed me,” - says Sharif. “Forgive us, President” is the name of a social network page with almost 9000 subscribers. Sharif doesn’t want to show his face. Just recently, he had been one of the bloggers, who through the net demanded to overthrow the tyrant. Now, every evening in his small blog he talks about regret and excuses. (Zeynalova, 1TV, June 3, 2012)

In this news story, the negative social experiences described in a foreign context create a chain of equivalences which leads to allusions to the Russian protest movements. Conservative-minded news reports could say that bloggers and political activists are public enemies. Instead, the journalistic narrative establishes equivalence between cyber activists and the manipulative influence of unknown “others” who mislead young people into wrong actions and beliefs.

These examples show the construction of the discourse of blogization indirectly, from outside the Russian national context. In a situation where hegemony nevertheless has to deal with domestic contexts of blogization, somewhat different articulations of exclusion are mobilized. A common conservative strategy of pro-Kremlin bloggers and journalists is based on the construction of equivalencies between political opponents and imaginary threats to society as a whole. One way to rearticulate the established oppositional discourse of the blogosphere is to reduce subversive elements to a marginal group of public enemies found either inside or, even more effectively, outside Russia. These journalists will also sometimes associate the political critiques that exist on blogs with external threats, as if Russia were surrounded by foreign actors involved in the plotting of anti-Russian conspiracies. The governmental daily RG actively played along this discursive line:

7) Many bloggers too often simply block commentators whose opinion differs from their own. This happens, for example, with the blogger Avmalgin, who “struggles against the regime” from Italy. (Belyaev, RG, August 30, 2012)

The same discursive approach was applied by journalists at 1TV television channel, during the period of 2012 presidential elections when the blogosphere actively criticized public figures who supported Vladimir Putin’s campaign. Television news reports had to respond to numerous internet “provocations.” According to national
television, one of the provocations was organized by Lev Vershinin. The news described him as “a blogger from Spain with the nickname Ramzai, which is the same as a pseudonym of the famous [Soviet] intelligence agent Richard Sorge” (Brainin, 1TV, February 19, 2012). Allusions to espionage and subversive motivations have become a useful strategy to counter so-called “provocations.” And, once again, the opposing subject position is excluded from the discourse by locating it outside Russia.

In other cases, Russian television uses negative moments in foreign politics to criticize the domestic blogosphere. The war in Georgia, for example, was used by some television journalists as a source for compromising arguments against bloggers criticizing the Kremlin. One report by 1TV turned scandalous information about the neighboring country into subtle equivalences with the critical blogosphere:

8) In July, Georgian authorities invited Russian bloggers to join a press tour visit to the exemplary Gldani prison as part of a PR initiative. Bloggers were delighted and enthusiastic about the [conditions in] the prison. It turned out that this was the same prison where inmates had been tortured for months. (Vernitsky, 1TV, September 30, 2012)

The report talks about the start of an election campaign in Georgia and portrays internal political struggles in the country. The mention of Russian bloggers, who happened to visit one of the scandalous sites long before, did not seem necessary. And yet the story appeared on Russian television at times when the state responded aggressively to a wave of domestic protests, making dissident bloggers one of the obvious targets. The report suggests the bloggers, whose names are not mentioned, are allied with an allegedly controversial regime, if not financially encouraged by it. In this instance, the credibility of bloggers is shattered. The apparent autonomy is actually closely tied to enemy regimes and other abstract threats. These are some of the mechanisms of conservative legitimation that externalizes the discourse of blogization. Journalism for domestic use is mostly limited to traditional forms where media authority stems from the shared interests of political elites.

The limits of political appropriateness

From the conservative point of view, the ongoing changes in journalism cannot be articulated with political freedoms, and the autonomy of journalists cannot be understood as independent from state institutions. This is because the state is the primary source of conservative articulations of blogization. Journalism, in this context and the citizen journalism of blogging, if possible, is meant to protect the
national (state) interests. In this vein, conservative narratives have been emphasizing the collaborative role of journalism. For example, working closely with state institutions, journalism can contribute to national identity building or strive for more autonomy from the market mechanisms. In 2012, Russia’s presidential human rights council was extended to include several prominent journalists. Then, television news reports were used to demonstrate how new council members discuss the negative impacts of commercialization and not the freedom of speech. This is exemplified as follows:

9) Now, in the presidential council there are many journalists. Some of them are critical of the function of mass media, particularly electronic media… “In other countries ratings are also important, but there is an agreement about restrictive barriers. There they believe it is wrong to let the market entirely shape the worldviews of citizens,” – member of the council Daniil Dondurey has noted. (Lipatov, 1TV, November 18, 2012).

The main task of the council has been to advise the President on issues pertaining to the development of civil society and the protection of human rights. The invitation for journalists to work on these issues is a sign of collaboration between these media actors and the authorities. On the other hand, what this television report finds interesting about the work of the council is an economic concern rather than one that concentrates on the political autonomy of the media. Thus, in the conservative discourse of blogization, the nodal point of autonomy has been articulated with mainly economic rather than political discursive elements.

Indeed, the question of political censorship is a rare discursive element of these conservative articulations. The following example is a fragment of a 2012 television interview with President Dmitry Medvedev. During the live broadcast, journalist Aleksey Pivovarov39 asked a careful question concerning the political autonomy of television journalists.

10) Pivovarov: As a journalist of the federal television channel I regularly face restrictions that do not quite allow me to fulfill my professional obligations… These restrictions are connected to what has been commonly referred to as political appropriateness… As I think, it restricts my ability to exercise my professional journalistic duty to

39 Pivovarov is one of the leading television news hosts from the NTV television channel. He is known as one of the journalists from the old news team of Leonid Parfenov, whose award speech was discussed above. This reference is crucial for understanding why Pivovarov and not some other journalists present at the interview asked the question about censorship.
inform the audience about current events. What is your opinion about that, Dmitry Anatolievich [Medvedev]?

Medvedev: My opinion is different from yours, because I am not a journalist… The question of political appropriateness is a delicate subject. Let me remind you that censorship is prohibited by the Constitution. If it happens, there is a need for state intervention. As for appropriateness, this is in fact a question of the responsibility of media administrators, a question of falling into the mainstream… (ITV, April 26, 2012)

The journalist recognizes a problem of limitations that some abstract idea of appropriateness dictates him to accept as normal. The journalist does not mention the word “censorship” at all, nor was it mentioned in previous questions or answers during the interview. Nevertheless, the President immediately identified the problem as relating to the formally illegal practice of censorship. So, both interviewer and interviewee understand each other, but have different views on the subject. Their dialogue is polite. The question is not aggressive enough to antagonize the discussion. The answer is balanced enough to underscore the potentially applicable legal framework and, at the same time, divert the criticism towards the individual, allegedly autonomous decisions of media professionals themselves (editors and owners). If there are restrictions, according to the President, they are often not related to violations of the constitution.

The re-articulation of political censorship into political appropriateness is completed by Medvedev’s final remark concerning the necessity of journalists to follow the dominant agenda (mainstream). With respect to the main television channels – mainstream at its best – this remark is controversial. It literally means that journalists should know what is right, based on what they already do right, and never deviate from this established “appropriateness.” In a way, this is an attempt to exclude from the nodal point of autonomy the moment of political dependency of Russian journalists. Medvedev’s answer switches the focus from political autonomy to the idea of political responsibility.

Political autonomy generally resides in the conservative discourse and is most commonly articulated as an economic category. Accordingly, the image of a corrupted journalistic field driven by financial incentives has been commonly applied to describe the lack of autonomy experienced by some journalists and bloggers. This is common within the blogosphere where informal exchanges of information frequently lead to open accusations of corruption from ideological opponents. A critical opinion in a blog or in a journalistic story can always be rebuffed as a paid
campaign to discredit someone or something. Blogger Makarenko brings this idea to its extreme suggesting that journalists are naturally and universally corrupted:

11) It turns out that the “independent Western press” is deceitful and biased. <…> But this is what the journalistic job is like: to lie for money, whether journalists are ours, German, or American. And if a journalist writes that he is “independent” and “impartial” – well, no need to believe this obvious nonsense. Take, for example, some old issues of the Soviet “Pravda” newspaper. It also claims that the Soviet press is the freest press in the world. (Makarenko, September 3, 2008)

The key moment in this quotation is the reference to Western journalism. Readers of the blog may have encountered striking differences between domestic and foreign (Western) media. Makarenko normalizes journalistic bias as universal and similar everywhere. On this pole of blogization discourse, the conservative articulations offered by Makarenko deprive journalism of any autonomy and objectivity. The nodal point of subjectivity only makes sense as an individual commercial interest of media actors.

The audience and discourse of the state-sponsored website Vz is similar to those of the blog of Makarenko. It produces symmetrical meanings about blogging. An article by Aleksey Tihonov opens a discussion about the credibility of blogs. Like Makarenko, Tihonov uses quotation marks with the phrase “independent Western press” to insinuate skepticism toward the credibility of bloggers. The valid criticism is based on known facts of the advertising contracts that some bloggers have with commercial organizations as part of their media professionalization.

12) Now blogs are becoming a popular distribution channel for “honest” information. Consumers are more inclined to trust private opinion than paid commercials. Though, popular bloggers have already begun selling their “honest” private opinion to advertisers. (Tihonov, Vz, June 19, 2009)

The commercialization of popular blogs undermines the formerly strong emphasis on the market autonomy introduced by blogization. But it also frees discursive elements for further articulations. The example demonstrates how the high value of individual subjectivity (private opinion) becomes open for re-articulations toward decreasing credibility. Neither the position of the blogger Fritzmorgen nor journalist Tihonov makes references to politics or journalism’s political limitations. Therefore, conservative legitimation bypasses this aspect of blogization. There is instead a discursive moment of political appropriateness that conservative media actors take for granted in most cases. It is because of the missing meaning of institutional politics that counter-hegemonic liberal tendencies have developed.
7.3 The emergence of the liberal discourse

Laclau and Mouffe (1985:131) in their discourse theory emphasize the centrality of the contexts in which a counter-hegemonic articulation may happen. They differentiate social struggles and respective subject positions according to the nature of the political system itself. While democratic societies are characterized by a multiplicity of struggles and thereby unable to enter into equivalence with each other, less democratic societies with “centralized forms of domination” tend to become unified against “a single and clearly defined enemy.” Subject positions, in the first case, are democratic. In the second case, they are called popular subject positions.

New social movements are just “secondary struggles,” and to be truly radical a struggle has to divide the political space into two camps. Although multiple disconnected struggles are unable to effectively succeed, there is an alternative way for that: through “a chain of democratic equivalences” (Laclau and Mouffe 1985:133). Furthermore, the democratic struggles are fundamental whereas the popular subject positions are “merely specific conjunctures resulting from the multiplication of equivalence effects among the democratic struggles” (ibid:137).

It is in this field of articulatory practices criss-crossed by antagonisms where the emergence of counter-hegemony can take place. Articulation itself is not enough to speak about hegemony, there must also be an antagonistic confrontation and effects of equivalence forming a new ideological frontier. The conditions of a counter-hegemonic articulation include both “the presence of antagonistic forces” and “the instability of the frontiers which separate them” (ibid:134-36). Hegemonic formation (ibid:142-43) cannot be referred to by the specific logic of a single social force. Instead, it is “an articulated totality of differences” and is constructed “through regularity in dispersion.” The political moment that best summarizes the emergent counter-discourse of the liberal pole of blogization is the wave of popular dissent and nationwide protests that began in December 2011 and lasted for several months.

The December 4th parliamentary elections in Russia caused an avalanche of unprecedented civil protests. According to many witnesses, the elections were staged and manipulated in favor of the dominant United Russia party and its informal leader Vladimir Putin. The widespread view of Russian society as passive and unwilling to struggle for its rights got a sudden rebuke when over 30 000 protesters gathered in Moscow to demand re-elections. On his blog, Rustem Adagamov (December 11, 2011) posted a photo report of the event and described the day as “one of the most remarkable in his life.” The protest movement was largely predicted and mobilized by another blogger, Aleksey Navalny, whose well-known slogan “The United Russia
is the party of swindlers and thieves” (Navalny, February 15, 2011) turned into a popular internet meme and flooded online and offline discussions. Navalny was arrested the day after the elections and sentenced to fifteen days of imprisonment for resistance to the police. His contribution to the movement made him an internationally popular figure. People felt deceived and dissatisfied with the elections. They had heard exit polls were showing a smaller percentage for United Russia than the official numbers. They also saw violations with their own eyes and documented them in dozens of videos aggregated online. But most mainstream media tried to downplay the scale of the protests and in some cases misrepresent them.

After the first wave of street protests, Kommersant cited the opinion of Yuri Saprykin, a journalist who helped organize the street protests in late 2011. Saprykin called the protesters “Russian Europeans” and as a journalist he could be considered responsible for setting up a “fashion for protest.” This is what he said:

13) The amount of European-[style] rationally thinking people increases at the same time as the Soviet-style mode of political system rises. The difference between the two poles has led to an explosion, while the Internet served as conductor between the two poles and people have been quickly getting all the news and shaping it into a frightening picture. <...> Almost all the oppositional leaders spoke at Bolotnaya square, but the mass media and blogs mostly quoted the speeches of writer Boris Akunin and TV anchorman Leonid Parfenov – even though these people have never spoken publicly at the political rallies. (Kashin and Chernyh, Kommersant, December 15, 2011)

This story explains the relative success of the protest movement. Quoting Saprykin, the newspaper emphasizes the power of online communication and draws our attention to the qualitatively new forces involved in the protest – the mass culture personalities. The totality of cultural actors (writers, journalists, bloggers and many others) are articulated into a single chain of equivalence that the author names European rationality. This is the same argument that has been historically used in the philosophy of westernizers as an opposition to the conservatism of slavophilism.

The hegemonic construction of the “liberal”

Liberal discourse, as I previously mentioned, is not my term. I borrowed the language from those actors who consciously construct an image of all public critics of state power by labeling them “liberals.” Therefore, liberal discourse is not independent from the conservative discourse and should be seen as a challenge to its hegemony.
In the Russian context especially, the word “liberal” is a powerful discursive tool for hegemonic formation. It conveniently invokes multiple connotations, ranging from the trauma of unpopular liberal reforms in the 1990s to the maintenance of myths about Western enemies from liberal democracies. It may sound shocking to people not familiar with the Russian context, but at times the way some conservative-minded or defensive proponents of the regime use the word liberal inside the country comes very close to swearing. This unifying hegemonic construction makes it easy to articulate certain qualities (while downplaying others) of the opponents into one dominant counter-patriotic and hence dangerous social group. Below I have selected several examples that demonstrate these discursive strategies in relation to blogging and journalism.

14) The even more famous blogger Aleksey Navalny, also known as pravdorub\textsuperscript{40}, who currently resides in the USA, receives a hyperlink from his friend Oleg Kozyrev… <…> Liberal bloggers, driven into ecstasies by Aleksey Navalny, write a collective letter to… (Rykov, Vz, November 11, 2010)

15) Soon after the [United Russia party] convention, top LiveJournal blogger Rustem Adagamov posted a questionnaire and suggested that the audience decide which party they will vote for in next week’s elections. <…> Konstantin Rykov responded to the devastating [for United Russia] results, saying that all these people were “turned into zombies by the liberal propaganda,” that is why they did not vote like all the rest. At the same time, Rykov had nothing to say against Adagamov (though he eagerly stigmatizes other “liberal” bloggers). He only complained that he could not understand why Rustem moved from Norway to Russia, with which he has now become dissatisfied. (Lenta, November 28, 2011)

16) The important role in the spread of Russophobic myths is being played by liberal bots and teams of bot masters\textsuperscript{41}. Some bots are used to promote the pro-Western bloggers, others work “each on their own territory” creating Russophobic background information on the comments pages of thousands of small forums and in the mass media.

\textsuperscript{40} Pravdorub is a wordplay and portmanteau mixing Russian words pravdoliub (“truth-seeker”) and lesorub (“woodcutter”) or alternatively ledorub (“ice-axe”). It can thus be roughly translated into English either as “truthcutter” or “truth-axe”.

\textsuperscript{41} A “bot” or a “chat bot” is a software program that imitates a real person or artificial intelligence in video games. Multiple fake accounts in social media and digital networks can be called bots. These are often used to produce “noise” and disrupt online discussions. The real person who stands behind such fake identities and empty accounts is called botovod (“bot master”).

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Ironically, most of these journalist Russophobes play dirty tricks on us for free, without any financial support from the West. It has developed historically that 95 percent of the journalists and editors more or less share a Russophobic point of view. The owners of the media, however, do not always share the same attitude as journalists. But as a rule, owners do not have enough determination to ride roughshod over the staff; even if for no other reason than that Russophobia is a relatively easy way to keep the ratings high. (Makarenko, February 12, 2013)

17) Russian consciousness has a stunning feature – complete unacceptability of any other opinion besides one that prevails within a particular social group. Take the example of a social group of advanced, educated, intelligent, liberal, and affluent people. That is “our friends” and “normal” from my point of view. Let’s say some girls [Pussy Riot] organize a performance in a church. This stirs a wave of discussions and the world-famous trial. All “our friends” and “normal” outrageously react against the way the secular court judges, as if it is a shariah court and the church is not separated from the state. That’s OK. Then there is someone with another opinion… in favor of orthodoxy and spirituality. And here it begins. All “our friends” and “normal” start yelling at the top of their voices so that I feel shame at those people… We must get used to the fact that there are different opinions… It is curious that the most intolerant of pluralism are those who are on the good side, on the side of democracy, liberal values, “our friends” and “normal.” (Lebedev, August 29, 2012)

The first two sentences from a Vz news story (14) contain the following chain of signifiers: “Navalny,” mockery stunt “pravdorub,” “lives in the West,” mockery about “ecstatic influences,” “bloggers,” and “liberals.” These all lead the readers to a negative conclusion about Navalny and his “liberal” followers. It comes as no surprise that such a construction appeared on the Kremlin-sponsored news website. There is no need to question the authority of Navalny as a blogger with the citation recognizing him as “even more famous.” From the point of view of the hegemonic construction of meaning it is more productive to re-articulate Navalny’s popularity into notoriety.

Symptomatically, those media that are politically independent from the Kremlin do not mind citing critics of the opposition. For example, Lenta (15) mentions Konstantin Rykov, a pro-Kremlin media figure. Here again, the sense of alienation produced by Rykov connects the unfavorable results that United Russia received in Adagamov’s blog with the idea of liberalism into which LJ users were manipulated. Respondents of the questionnaire are compared with zombies and placed in
opposition to “all the rest.” The *Lenta* journalist finds it important that Rykov did not directly criticize Adagamov himself. Instead Rykov carefully attaches the idea of zombie-like liberalism to Adagamov’s previous residence in Norway. This discursive strategy is the same as in the first example (14). *Lenta* labels Adagamov as another “liberal” blogger, but in this case the quotation marks indicate that the label is externally imposed and not necessarily how these “other bloggers” may identify themselves. The delicacy of the communicative situation between Rykov and Adagamov is also shown in that the former is not risking an open confrontation with the latter. The “others” are not named here and instead identified as abstract subjects pliable to manipulations.

In this respect the example from Makarenko’s blog (16) plays the same card. Liberal discourse is immediately rearticulated into Russophobia – a subjectivity that is hostile toward all of “us,” Russians. But the subjects who cultivate this threatening ideology are almost dehumanized by Makarenko when he talks about computer bots and their mysterious masters. Like the previous examples, the liberal discourse is again associated with “pro-Western” bloggers. As a defense, on his blog, Makarenko bans posts from commentators who call him a sophist or demagogue.

The second part of the quotation explains why such comments are possible. Makarenko connects Russophobic liberal discourse with almost all Russian journalists and explains why their bosses do not do anything about it. He initially labels only some journalists Russophobes, but later claims they make up 95 percent of the journalists in Russia. Instead of saying that the majority of journalists are liberals, the blogger persists with his “Russophobic” articulations. Consequently, in the second part of the quote Makarenko delegitimizes most of the Russian public space that was, in the first part, only endangered by soulless machines. This creates an effect of hegemonic closure that should be understood as follows – liberalism in media is always hostile to “us” whether one finds it in the robotic comments or in the content of irresponsibly edited “normal” news.

The weakness of liberal discourse in the context of blogization is that it allows multiple truths. It happens that oppositional journalists and bloggers are often hostages of their own simplified deliberative democratic mindset (cf. Mouffe 2000). The example (17) from the blog of Artemy Lebedev (Tema), who sees himself as liberal and “normal,” calls for a complete openness for discussion (and counter-hegemonic re-articulations) despite the possible moral imbalances. These imbalances stem from the unequal moral weight of different legitimacy claims. I need to show how this works in the case of the famous Pussy Riot. If one wants to judge their punk performance in the church, one has the full right to do that. But that does not
justify the severity of the punishment. In Lebedev’s version, however, the rhetoric defense of the girls, who, according to Russian legal standards, should not have been found criminally liable, becomes equivalent to the rhetoric of those who support the verdict. That is why journalism has been criticized for at times being erroneously balanced and misleading (Boykoff and Boykoff 2004), especially when two opposite opinions get equal attention despite scientific evidence of one and the dubious origin and intentions of the other.

In his blog, Artemy Lebedev lays open his own subjectivity, disarmed by universalistic remarks about the equality of opinions. The field of discursivity that surrounds and brings meaning to these two opposing discourses (liberal and conservative) appears relatively loose and vulnerable in its liberal corner. The conservative corner by contrast seems much closer to the state of hegemony. Moreover, liberal intellectuals like Lebedev openly question their own identity. In the example (17), Lebedev uses quotation marks for the signifier “normal” as well as for “our friends.” Hence, he clearly recognizes the impossibility of fixating these constructions once and for all since they are contingent and contested. The blogger partially explains that here “normal” relates to a small group of “advanced, educated, intelligent, liberal, and affluent people.” This is already an account of the liberal discourse from within, as it is being constructed in opposition to the conservative discourse. The set of signifiers very concretely demarcates some of the key discursive elements.

The counter-hegemony of the Kremlin critics

The cases of blogger Navalny and journalist Parfenov (see Chapter 5) represent particular moments where conservative discourse is destabilized in constructing the identities of the “liberal” version of blogization. The main liberal criticism of conservative ideology has been to target journalists working for the main television channels. Based on this criticism it is possible to deconstruct the liberal discourse as it appears constructed by “liberals” themselves. There are two types of constructions operating here: the definition of “self” through opposition to the “other” and through positive assertions of one’s identity. Parfenov’s speech in particular illustrates how counter-hegemonic discursive elements question the autonomy of the “other” journalism, that is “state journalism:”

18) [N]ational television broadcasting was put under state control at the beginning of the new millennium. This happened in two steps. First,
media oligarchs were removed. Then, television channels were asked to join ranks in the war on terror. News and everyday life were categorized as suitable and unsuitable subjects for TV broadcasting. One could get an idea of the authorities’ goals and objectives, their moods and attitudes, their friends and enemies, by watching any significant political program. Legally speaking, this isn’t news but rather government PR… (Parfenov, November 25, 2010)

This perspective either denies journalistic autonomy entirely or turns it into the autonomy of the state institutions capable of defining the media agenda without any “unsuitable” interference. Moreover, public relations specialists who were once journalists are held accountable to officials. This makes both responsibility and subjectivity two additional nodal points articulated with the interests and interpretations prescribed by the client, that is, the state. Reference to the law in the last sentence grants conservative hegemony the right to exist not as part of journalism but as part of the state information apparatus. This is also to say that in terms of credibility such information policy should be considered from the point of view of state and government trust and not as trust in journalistic work. Parfenov ends this long speech by pointing to the weakness of his own criticism – the lack of demand for reliable and trustworthy sources of news in the society:

19) [T]he majority of the population doesn’t actually need journalism anymore. They don’t care about the deaths of journalists. They say: “So what! It could happen to anyone, what’s all the fuss about?” Millions of people don’t understand that journalists take occupational risks for the sake of their audience. (Parfenov, November 25, 2010)

The theme of national pride surfaces in Parfenov’s other critical remarks. Labelled as one of the modern “westernizers,” he associates proper journalism with the “European model,” which assumes journalism should provide for itself through market mechanisms and not as a nationally subsidized industry. This vision is contrasted with the “Soviet model” which did not allow private property. Such an interpretation sets free the political freedoms of journalists, but positively articulates the nodal point of autonomy with the economic field. Parfenov puts it as follows:

20) It is easy. Those [television] channels that we have just need to be denationalized. The state shouldn’t be in the media, as it writes and reports about itself wasting the money of taxpayers (most of the state-run mass media are unprofitable, in the provinces – almost all of them). This is an absurdity in Europe that in addition to Russia exists only in Belarus. Why not bring back the [Soviet-style] state-run cafeterias, or else private owners will poison the population. (Parfenov, April 23, 2012)
The “liberal” signifier is imposed and included in the discourse of blogization mostly by hegemonic discursive practices. The counter-hegemony of the Kremlin critics rarely articulates the common ideology of journalism and blogging as liberal. Instead of referring to the labels of institutional politics, oppositional bloggers and journalists draw on the “politics” of moral argument. These politics are based on articulations which involve such signifiers as “justice,” “truth,” and “free will” contrasted respectively with “injustice,” “lie,” and “coercion”. The launch of Navalny’s Good Machine of Truth illustrates this point. This was one of several media projects aimed at challenging the conservative hegemony. The Machine revealed that blogization was capable of going beyond the limited online media forms:

21) The Good Machine of Propaganda [the word “propaganda” was later replaced with the word “truth”] are people, its participants who have voluntarily accepted a commitment to take part in the distribution of truthful information. They do this in a format and to the extent they find comfortable … Members of DMP [GMP] can communicate with each other extensively on the Internet in any of the 50 largest cities. Traffic costs have dropped. Printers have become cheaper. Paper, cartridges, mobile networks, compact discs, sms – technology is now available on a mass scale. This needs to be used. (Navalny, March 12, 2012)

In this example, the crucial moments that define the liberal discourse are the signifiers mentioned above. Besides that, there are moments that supplement the discourse with meanings of geographical space (concentration in the cities as opposed to rural areas) and increasing technological dependency of both online and offline citizen journalists. Lower costs, however, raise the level of economic autonomy. The subjectivity of the forms and styles deemed “comfortable” by the distributors is justified with claims about the truthfulness and sincerity of the counter-hegemonic information. The overall tone of Navalny’s plan has been to shift the focus from general social responsibility (or national interests as it is more commonly referred to by conservatives) to localized responsibility (inform your neighbors, enhance awareness in your local community).

Furthermore, the ideological rejection of totalizing national interests expressed by the ruling elites has become the driving force of the liberal (oppositional) movement. Liberals in turn tended to totalize the emancipatory effect of new nonconventional media. For example, the basis for establishing equivalence with the broader journalistic community included the liquidation of corruption (with the famous political slogan of Navalny against the “thieves and swindlers”). In February 2012, when Aleksey Navalny needed a personal press-secretary, because “journalists
write and call, but I don’t have time to answer,” he made a job posting in his blog with requirements that shed light on the character of relations between the blogger and professional mass media organizations. The candidate for the job needed:

22) To hate swindlers and thieves and be willing to help Russian people…
   To have a university degree: not necessarily in journalism which would be even less suitable than a degree in law, economics, statistics and so on… To understand mass media and to be able to spot journalists who know what they are doing and those who need a half hour explanation…To perfectly understand how social networks work…To be competent in politics and to like reading the news. (Navalny, February 6, 2012)

This discursive construction unequivocally places the abstract, ideological requirement to hate criminals in the first place. The least antagonistic articulations, however, cannot avoid discursive constructions as well. Artemy Lebedev (Tema), as we saw, resists any authority and coercion and avoids alliances with conservative hegemony or with liberal counter-hegemony (or, actually, with any other distinctive ideology). Still he explicitly places himself in the liberal camp and acknowledges the right of the “other” to promote opinions that many critics of the political regime would contempt and attack with emotions and without reason.

Tema is a good example of a self-proclaimed liberal identity without strict antagonistic oppositions. But even in his case the identity of “us” as “advanced, educated, intelligent, liberal, and affluent people” (Lebedev, August 29 2012) immediately projects “them” as primitive, ignorant, unintelligent, and less affluent. This self-assertive intelligence does not prevent him from frequent swearing and a nonchalant style. He always resists formalities. For example, the next quotation illustrates his style in the context of formal political procedures. The law prohibits any public campaigning and agitation the day before political elections. On the eve of the 2011 parliamentary elections and the 2012 presidential elections in Russia, Tema ignored this prohibition and invited readers of his blog to do exactly the opposite. In both situations he posted the same message:

23) Agitation is allowed! Since LiveJournal is not a mass medium and not a [telegraph] pole in the courtyard, no one can prohibit agitation here. Who to vote for tomorrow? What to do with the ballot? Who gives a fuck about elections? State your position. Agitate for your choice. (Lebedev, December 3, 2011; March 3, 2012).

This short blog entry posted in December 2011 and in March 2012 received close to two thousand comments in each case. Even though the election law was unclear with respect to the cases of agitation in blogs, last-minute campaigns online is a potential
cause to accuse blogosphere of being an excessively autonomous and irresponsible public space.

The fighting dogs of the regime

The online environment has been more hostile to the conservative discourse than the traditional media space of mainstream journalism. In a way, the hegemonic conservative ideology turns into a counter-hegemony narrative to resist the prominence of liberal discourse prevalent on blogs. Despite the limited impact that the blogosphere has on the overall population, it is still important for the state to partially disrupt those politicizing moments that blogging introduces to journalism. Thus, a kind of political protectionism, generally known as the ideology of ohranitelstvo (guardianism), has been widely mobilized to disrupt the “liberal” consensus of online networks. The Obraniteli or ideological bodyguards of the Kremlin are not always easy to recognize for an average web user. On the other hand, paranoid anxiety may lead some critics of the Kremlin to suspect ohranitelstvo in almost everything that contradicts the predominant critical attitude of the blogosphere.

The discursive complexity of ohranitelstvo is well represented in the Novaya Gazeta (NG) article titled “The fighting dogs of the Ru zone” (Tsepnie sobaki zoni Ru) – a double-page spread on the phenomenon of disruptive blogging, known as “trolling” in internet slang, that has been allegedly encouraged by the state propaganda machine:

24) Their posts are the same old scribbles on the walls – boldly written in a uniform and rude way. The Internet is like a kitchen in a communal apartment, a perfect place to break off. There is a category of users that deliberately “shit talks” on forums, websites and ZhZh. They are not anathematized for that, and Nashi do not protest with flags at their front doors (by the way, Nashi played a “vital role” in the persecution of Alexander Podrabinek)42. On the contrary, nowadays “shit talking” is lucrative and “especially talented” bloggers are getting paid for it. (Balashova, NG, October 23, 2009)

LiveJournal tools encourage the creation of blog communities – collective blog accounts with predetermined publication themes and the possibility to include multiple authors. Many such communities are open for everyone, though there are

42 Nashi (“Ours”) is a pro-Kremlin youth organization. Alexander Podrabinek is a dissident journalist.
sometimes formal mechanisms of acceptance and blocking. In popular communities, these publications may help bloggers who have a relatively small audience to start building their networks of contacts and readers. But achieving this increased publicity through participation in a collective blogging community may also be destructive to one’s own reputation, because for some the “inadequate” views presented by one user may be rejected and denounced by a majority of the community members. An outcast eventually becomes a mockery and the target for insults and aggression.

Vladimir Burmatov is an example of a notorious and controversial blogger. His blog was launched on 31 March 2006 and the last update was made on 12 December 2010. It has 1,605 mutual LJ friends, 3,518 subscribers, and participates in 61 communities. The most recent message on the home page announces that Burmatov switched to use Twitter as his main blog service. His brief but intensive LJ blogging illuminates the most distinctive features of political propaganda and manipulation. As a member of many of the political blog communities, he played a role of agent provocateur, defended Kremlin politics, and criticized those who opposed them. Some of his methods are entirely fraudulent. For example, he was once accused of forging a fake photo depicting members of the pro-Kremlin youth organization putting out forest fires (Burmatov, August 4, 2010). Watchful bloggers found that the picture published on Burmatov’s blog had traces of digital editing. In the picture the fire smoke was laid over with the help of a computer program, and according to the properties of the photo file, it was created two years before the actual event (Malgin, August 5, 2010). Burmatov aimed to portray the active role of the state in fighting the forest fires by inventing a story with visual “evidence” to support it. The scandal caused quite a stir in the blogosphere and some of the traditional news media.

During the period of escalating political crisis, news media drew attention to the methods that United Russia used to fight political opposition and to promote its own interests on the Internet. In 2011, Kommersant found out that the party’s strategy was to infiltrate social networks and other online forums with aggressive “counter-propaganda.” In an interview Vladimir Burmatov, one of the creators of such projects, explained that “United Russia can be successful on the Internet only in attack, and not in defense, especially since there are many reasons to attack the opposition.” However, the newspaper did not forget to mention that Burmatov had been in an awkward situation when a party PR action turned into a scandal. The following piece is from the same article and it shows that the journalist places trust in the revealing statements of a collective “blogger”:
25) When the “Young Guardians” posted a picture on Twitter where they were shown allegedly fighting the fire in Ryazan region, bloggers found out that the picture was staged: a couple of trees, that the party activists tried to save, were deliberately put on fire, “neither the uniform with party symbols on it, nor the shoes got dirty”. (Tirmaste, Kommersant, May 6, 2011)

Vladimir Burmatov has played the role of the regime’s “fighting dog” for several years. In the blogosphere one can find ample evidence of how Burmatov whitewashes governmental initiatives, promotes the positive image of the United Russia party and vehemently attacks anyone on the other side of the political struggle.

On 6 November 2010, Oleg Kashin, a journalist and blogger known for his critical reports about pro-Kremlin youth organizations, was attacked and beaten on a Moscow street not far from his home. The journalist, injured with multiple fractures, stayed unconscious at the hospital for several days. This tragedy became one of the main narratives in Parfenov’s famous award speech (see Chapter 5 of this volume). Kashin eventually recovered from the injury and continued his work as a journalist and political activist. Before the attack, Kashin was known primarily for his work for Kommersant newspaper, though he also cooperated with several other media organizations.43

The brutal assault on Oleg Kashin was another shocking incident proving the dangerous character of journalistic work in Russia. Public figures expressed their concerns and regret about the assault and President Medvedev called for a fast and thorough investigation (which has not been finished yet). What is particularly interesting about this story is the reaction of the media and blogging community. Quite naturally it was mostly defensive rhetoric emphasizing the outrageousness of any attacks against journalists. Even the news media most loyal to the regime saw nothing else but the tragedy of human life in the incident. The topic of media responses to physical violence against journalists deserves separate research and cannot be fully covered in this study. However, the incident with Kashin provides a

43 Kashin came to Kommersant for the first time in 2003. After that, there were periods when he worked for the newspaper Izvestia, magazines Expert and Bolshoi Gorod, and contributed to numerous news websites. In 2009 Kashin returned to regular work at Kommersant, where he gained popularity. In November 2012, Kommersant terminated his employment for reasons officially announced as the low amount of publications, which perhaps was a result of the journalist’s active participation in political protest movements at that time. The latest known information is that he continued his career as columnist with online media Openspace.ru. It is ironic that one of the best newspapers had to fire Kashin, while he was very active cooperating with multiple news media, updating his Livejournal blog, and participating in political protest and practically turning into activist.
vivid example of how these untethered “fighting dogs” may go too far in asserting the dominance of the conservative hegemonic project.

Burmatov was among the online commentators who reached levels of unexplainable hatred and utter cynicism, displaying excessive zeal in the assertion of their political ambitions. For online “fighting dogs,” like Burmatov, the beating of Kashin presented a good reason to make rude and mocking remarks:

26) Journalist Kashin turned a little bit oppositional at the wrong time. That is to say, oppositional to the extent that it is possible while working for Kommersant newspaper. <…> Oleg was lucky to stay alive. <…> Harmful to one’s health is not exactly WHAT a person writes, says or sings, but the very fact of flirting with forces that are more interested in having this person dead than alive. (Burmatoff, November 9, 2010)

Burmatov wrote this while Kashin remained unconscious and it was not yet clear whether the journalist would fully recover. Apart from his own page, Burmatov reposted this text in four political blog communities. In each case, the publication received a few comments with each of them sharply rebuking Burmatov’s text. People did not even try to argue with him reasonably – a clear demonstration of antagonism with no sign of deliberation whatsoever. Thus, there are moral limits on blogs as well, not just in the ethical codes of traditional journalism. Gloating over the innocent person’s life threatening conditions seems to be above all criticism.

One of the commentators on this Burmatov’s blog post described the parasitic lifestyle of individuals like him who act without regard for moral issues. The full comment reads as follows:

27) Ah, how sweet it is to be a man loyal to the state. Easily and graciously. No need to have civil courage. One just has to be able to lick the giver’s boots or maybe even his ass. No need to earn money and apply for grants. The whole country’s budget is at your service... Finally, how sweet it is to watch someone moving upward on the social ladder. The tiny human nobodies are left far below along with your conscience and integrity. Indeed, for a modern man loyal to the state these are already atavisms. (Segriko74, November 9, 2010)

Justifying brutal physical violence perhaps is not the strongest articulatory moment of conservative discourse. Such utterly controversial behavior cannot be recognized as normal even by the most loyal and aggressive advocates of the conservative logic. Therefore, reactions like Burmatov’s (26) are rather exceptional, as they stretch beyond the more or less protected discursive terrain and open the space for counter-hegemonic rearticulations (27). The morality claim thus becomes a weak point of
conservative discourse. This makes the whole episode rather unusual in the context of blogization. Burmatov did not respond to the comment nor did he delete it from his page.

If we return again to Parfenov’s speech at the awards ceremony (See Chapter 5), the journalist makes several relevant points to this discussion:

28) Before Oleg Kashin was attacked, he had been ignored by the federal channels, which couldn’t be otherwise. <…> He has undergone another surgery, and the face of Russian journalism has been literally and metaphorically restored. <…> There are basically no other journalists who hold the same views as Kashin. Andrey Loshak was the only one, but now he’s switched to online. (Parfenov, November 25, 2010)

Although these points are taken out of context here, this condensed construction helps draw the line between conservative and liberal discourses. The federal television channels represent conservative forces, and Parfenov deprives them of the status of the journalistic face of the nation. The face was beaten and destroyed by the forces themselves. The restoration of the face becomes possible in online media space – the symbolic headquarters of the liberal movement of blogization, or using the logic of Parfenov, the space of the only proper journalism.

At the same time, discursive collisions between conservatives and liberals are more often a struggle over the nodal point of responsibility. One of the key issues has been the moment of justification of the use of violence. As opposed to the incident with Oleg Kashin, Pussy Riot became an object of less brutal violence – legal prosecution and imprisonment. The story of the trial presents a particularly rich data on such contestations. The following two examples represent two radically different opinions. The blogger Makarenko (29) has taken the position of the church in this controversial case. First, he published a blog post that was later republished in the conservative online site Vz. Journalist Maksim Ivanov (30) wrote an article for Kommersant drawing on an interview with a human rights activist.

29) In real life, alas, we don’t have a choice between “Orthodoxy and freedom.” It takes very little to put Orthodoxy aside, as it will be replaced with something else… Traditional religions, and I mean not only Orthodoxy, but Islam and Judaism too, somehow gradually and without declaration of war happened to be involved in a lethal fight with the main religion of XX century, with Western democracy… Right now, in 2012, a large-scale religious war against Russia is going on. Its goal – to destroy Orthodoxy in Russia (along with the rest traditional religions) and to propagate instead the religion of democracy… Since the beginning of my blog I have met no more than
5-10 orthodox psychopaths, while I have to ban everyday a huge amount of democratic psychopaths spouting curses. (Makarenko, Vz, March 14, 2012)

30) The Pussy Riot trial shows that the church and state power are increasingly “shifting towards the most conservative, most uneducated segments of the population,” Lev Ponomarev, the leader of the movement “For Human Rights” said to Kommersant. “The educated part of society, which clearly condemns the Pussy Riot trial, has been put in opposition to a population of brainwashed people,” – the human rights activist says. All this, according to Mr. Ponomarev, could lead to “the transformation of Russia into an Orthodox Iran.” (Ivanov, Kommersant, August 17, 2012)

How do these examples construct the idea of responsibility? On the one hand, Makarenko refers to the values of Russian spirituality (strictly in line with the ideas of slavophilism and conservative ideology in general). The responsibility to protect national identity in terms of religious integrity, according to this position, is a sacred duty of journalists and bloggers. It is more important than to protect some abstract democratic values. On the other hand, liberal counter-strategy emphasizes the irresponsible and dangerous character of the fusion of secular and religious consciousness. Using the words of Lev Ponomarev, the Kommersant article argues exactly the opposite of spiritual responsibility – attacks on Pussy Riot lead to religious fundamentalism and contradict the logic of democratization. For Fritzmorgen, democracy is just another kind of religion and not the proper one. For the (elite) daily Kommersant, the frontline is between the rationality of educated and the irrationality of non-educated people.

7.4 The meanings of blogization

Dominant articulations

The discursive formation of blogization, understood as hegemonic and counter-hegemonic projects, manifests the closing stage of my argumentation. I conclude by a general discussion about the lessons of Russian blogization for a broader understanding of news journalism.

The discursive split on conservative hegemony and liberal counter-hegemony presents two images of blogization. Blogization from the point of view of traditional (statist) and mainstream journalism is different from blogization seen from within
the oppositional online-based journalism of alternative media. These two points of view shape competing discourses of blogization. Each discourse tries to get control over the meanings of journalism-blogging relations through particular articulations. This chapter was designed to demonstrate some of the articulatory moments related to the four previously defined nodal points. It is now worthwhile to summarize the meanings of the nodal points of blogization itself, and to discuss what all this means for the more general, theoretical questions of transitology, modernization and democratization in Russian society.

Proponents of the conservative discourse have compared the idea of journalistic autonomy to chaos. We saw that moment in Aleksandr Prokhanov’s interview with Kommersant (example 2 of this chapter). In that discursive moment, the presence of the state mass media is not a threat to autonomy whatsoever but a firm guarantee of the social order. Journalists Elena Novoselova (5) and Irada Zeynalova (6) have also argued that the uncontrolled public opinion of blogs is no less harmful than the possible despotism of the state, but the latter at least does not lead to socio-political catastrophes similar to those in the Arab world. Some journalists implied that the autonomy of bloggers from the Russian “order” can make them agents of the “other order.” Examples by Dmitry Belyaev (7), Anton Vernistky (8), and representations of Aleksey Navalny (14) attest to that.

So, the hegemonic discourse of blogization affirms the negativity of political autonomy and alternatively prefers to treat autonomy as a positive aspect of the media economy. One television report (9) criticizes the excessive commercialization of the journalistic field in the same way that bloggers are portrayed as affected by commercial interests (12). To avoid discussions about political autonomy, the mainstream media also tend to re-articulate this nodal point into journalistic responsibility understood as political appropriateness. This theme appears in the interview with Dmitry Medvedev (10). Similar articulations of responsibility can be seen in Makarenko’s references to Russophobic attacks (16) and the religious integrity of the nation-state (29). The vague notion of political appropriateness serves as a guideline for media responsibility and covers up such issues as censorship and limited press freedom.

Meanwhile, in the liberal discourse journalistic autonomy has been positively articulated for the most part. The citations of Leonid Parfenov (18 and 20) highlight the problem of political dependency of traditional mass media explicitly. Navalny’s alternative propaganda project (21) demonstrates the ways blogization may be also leading to higher economic autonomy among grassroots media. And, of course,
Artemy Lebedev’s radical neglect of electoral law (23) reminds us of the most extreme cases of autonomy.

In terms of journalistic credibility, the conservative discourse relies on the established authority of media institutions. And it is strategically more important for hegemony to disrupt the credibility of counter-hegemonic discursive elements. The lack of responsible behavior on the Internet creates the possibility to undermine the credibility of blogging as insufficiently professional (3) at best, and at worst as the subversive campaign planned in the West to mislead Russian audiences – examples (16) and (29). Thus, the nodal point of credibility mostly privileges the authority of traditional mass media organizations. Although we have seen those denigrating remarks of Makarenko about the credibility of the press in general (11), it is clear that this example was meant as an attack on so-called Western journalism in the first place.

A survey (WCIOM 2013) shows that many Russians named Medvedev and Putin as two of the nation’s most well-known bloggers. This explains why conservative articulations of subjectivity over-emphasize the role of national leaders in the public space and in online media networks in particular. This is also a result of the exclusion of alternative voices from the discourse. It creates a falsified version of subjectivity. In Chapter 5, I discussed how the mainstream mass media frame the subjectivity of blogs by either stressing the elements of celebrification or by reducing the blogosphere to an abstract and anonymous community. In this chapter, the major articulation of subjectivity is subjected to the influence of other nodal points. Autonomy, responsibility, and credibility make the individuality of separate bloggers and journalists less relevant to the overall meaning of blogization. While subjectivity seems to be the least central nodal point for conservative discourse, responsibility is its strongest claim. Examples of Artemy Lebedev’s provocative blogging (23) are a good excuse for the hegemonic forces to delegitimize some of the most radical aspects of blogization and to resist “irresponsible” liberal counter-hegemony.

Strong in articulations of responsibility, the conservative discourse is at the same time vulnerable due to its rejection of subjectivity. Weakness in one discourse is strength in the other. The subjectivity of blogization has two dominant meanings in liberal articulations. First, the liberal pole of blogization has brought to the political scene new personalities and not just abstract ideologies. Navalny is an obvious example. But in the piece by Oleg Kashin and Aleksandr Chernyh (13) we can also see how journalism and blogging picked a previously apolitical writer Boris Akunin and journalist Leonid Parfenov as symbols of political protest in the end of 2011. Second, the discursive resources that empower the liberal discourse of blogization
are centered on the nodal point of subjectivity which privileges individual expressiveness as seen in the many examples of Artemy Lebedev. The liberal discourse also develops the idea of the collective subjectivity of social networks. We can see these moments in Radulova’s text (4) and in the Navalny’s media project (21). The emphasis on individualism and openness to all kinds of opinions (17), however, constitutes a serious weakness in the liberal discourse, as it encourages tolerating even conservative views that are the most aggressive towards liberals themselves.

Whereas an average Russian takes for granted the credibility of state-controlled mass media, the liberal counter-hegemony needs to make convincing arguments to prove its reliability. Thus, I found that the subjectivity and individualism of blogization seems to have a close connection to the nodal point of credibility based on the values of transparency and morality. The foremost criterion of Navalny’s morality is to be uncompromising towards injustices (22). Accordingly, a lack of “conscience and integrity” (27) is the reason for liberal attacks on conservative ideology.

**Figure 16.** The Discursive Split in the Meanings of Blogization

To sum up, both discourses have at least one central node that they privilege as strategic. These nodal points are responsibility (R) for conservative hegemony and subjectivity (S) for liberal counter-hegemony. The examples discussed in this chapter and throughout this research demonstrate that, from the viewpoint of dominant
conservatism, responsibility is a positive aspect of blogization that should become part of blogging in the same way as it is part of traditional journalism. Less accentuated on responsibility, liberalism in turn positively evaluates the spread of subjectivity. In each case, the perceived influence of the opposing discourse on the competitor’s strategic node seems minimal, creating the most visible discursive split. Figure 16 represents this split as two halves of a sphere-shaped discourse. The key liberal articulations are in the upper part (above the dashed line) and the key conservative articulations are in the lower part (below the dashed line).

The other two nodal points – credibility (C) and autonomy (A) – are more contested and, therefore, shown on the border of the split. Whereas autonomy can be explained as mostly positive for the liberal vision of blogization and mostly negative for its conservative counterpart, the nodal point of credibility has complex articulations. In both discourses, credibility is a positive aspect that should be reinforced in the process of blogization. But at the same time the growing importance of this nodal point for one discourse automatically leads to the negation of credibility in the “other”. Therefore, credibility presents an interesting and complex case that can be further elaborated in future studies.

Implications of blogization

In “Misunderstanding the Internet” Curran, Fenton and Freedman (2012:179) argued that many of the previous optimistic expectations regarding the impacts of online technologies remained an unfulfilled utopia. The authors made three crucial observations: democratization fails in many authoritarian contexts, the so-called new economy is not new at all, and the expected renaissance of journalism is delayed (or, even worse, journalism is in decline). Scholarly optimism has been gradually replaced with more pessimistic and critical accounts of what the new media does to societies. The very participatory premises of the Internet are questioned (Cammaerts 2008). Instead of facilitating freedoms, the Internet becomes a tool for political oppression, surveillance and cooptation, especially in non-democratic contexts (see e.g. Morozov 2011; Oates 2013). Moreover, in developed democracies technological utopianism concedes its promises to the same rampant commercialism we saw in the traditional media (McChesney 2013).

How do the findings of this chapter and the whole study correspond to these criticisms? And how does blogization correspond to more abstract ideas of post-Soviet transitology and modernization? What else can be said in this regard about
the intellectual traditions of slavophilism and westernism as possible vectors of Russia’s development?

The hegemonic encodings (Hall 1980) of the mainstream mass media in Russia provide the large-scale decoding of blogization as needing more responsibility and compliance with the formalities of national legislation and national (state) interests. This vision reflects authoritarian tendencies and hinders the development of democratic institutions. At the same time, the demands for wider freedoms and individual rights that are prevalent in counter-hegemonic articulations of subjectivity have limited effect as it makes sense to a relatively small social group. This can be partly explained by the constant negations of credibility that hegemony constructs in relation to counter-hegemonic forces. Hegemony persistently denies the credibility of political opponents and reinforces its own position.

In discourse analytical terms, the highly political status of credibility makes this nodal point a center of discursive struggles. We saw in the example of Navalny’s rise to politics proper how controversial these struggles can be. Apart from that, the counter-hegemonic resistance can benefit more from politicizing the nodal point of responsibility – its weakest point at the moment. The liberal movement in blogization can be paralleled with the ideas of westernism. What it is missing now is a solid ground in terms of self-regulation and ethical norms that could justify and reinforce the image of a socially relevant and responsible project for journalism.

As for hegemony, to avoid further disintegration it needs to stabilize the meaning of credibility by offering better solutions for media transparency and journalistic integrity. It seems that the hegemonic discourse tends to be constructed on the ideas of slavophilism – orthodoxy, spirituality and mythical resistance to chaos. If this path is to prevail it needs to somehow include broader articulations of individual values and issues related to subjectivity. Otherwise, this nodal point will be a stumbling block for the future development of journalistic ideology that cannot disregard individual bloggers and new forms of subjectivities. It also needs to offer a framework in which the responsibility of non-institutional forms of journalism can be not just excluded but legitimized.

As we were told, technology as such is not sufficient for social modernization and political democratization. Similarly, ideological choices such as slavophilism or westernism should not be considered unambiguously as leading towards a better or worse life. The more important implication of having more technological tools and competing ideological paradigms is in their counterbalancing each other. Journalism’s importance as a social institution becomes richer in many ways on account of blogization. This helps to see the existing differences within and between
societies. If the blogization of journalism still fails to eliminate conflicts, at least it brings them to a more open forum for discussion.

Summary

This chapter explored the discourse of blogization through the lens of the post-structuralist concept of hegemony. The theoretical distinction between discursive elements and discursive moments provides a framework for explaining how certain meanings become part of a larger cluster of meaning. Stuart Hall’s model of delivering hegemonic meanings helps to delineate those constructions that are accepted without changes, and those that are negotiated or rejected by recipients. To these conceptual tools, I added two important intellectual traditions that contain some relevant cultural codes. The two traditions known as slavophilism and westernism in many ways mirror the conspicuous ideological duality that divides the discourse of blogization into conservatism and liberalism respectively. The names, however, do not precisely reflect any specific political orientation, rather in the observed examples they serve as beacons, attracting particular discursive elements and articulating them into partially closed systems of signification. Simply put, the conservative discourse of blogization relies on the “old” order (the political as a prime target, but also the journalistic as a precondition for the political), and the liberal discourse aims to establish a “new” order (journalistic and, as its consequence, political).

Slavophiles and westernizers are not only grand-ideological categories that would describe different trajectories of Russia’s development. In the context of journalism, they also refer to traditional (old) news media and alternative (new) media. Discussions about the crisis in journalism are manifold and they conveniently lay over more fundamental questions raised by the theoretical traditions that focus on transition in the post-Soviet space. The findings of this chapter confirm the status of conservative discourse as hegemonic, with liberal discourse, accordingly, pursuing the task of counter-hegemonic resistance.

The legitimation of the “old” order is based on previously achieved levels of credibility that are nonetheless challenged by opponents. To repel these attacks conservative forces employ a discursive strategy of exclusion by presenting opponents as threatening foreign agents. To temper accusations of political clientelism and the statism of journalists, hegemony introduces the idea of political appropriateness. As long as the sensitive nodal points of autonomy and credibility
are taken under control, the conservative ideology foregrounds its dominant position as more responsible (protecting the society from chaos). Using Hall’s three types of hegemonic decoding, responsibility is the only accepted nodal point, while autonomy and credibility are still negotiated. Rejection of the hegemonic project occurs in articulations of subjectivity, which becomes a centre of resistance for liberal counter-hegemony.

As I showed, the label “liberal” is a hegemonic construction, but it is a useful signifier for making sense of many counter-hegemonic articulations. The counter movement emerged as a rejection of conservatism and apart from privileging subjectivity it has been successful in undermining the credibility of the state-controlled mainstream media and in exposing Kremlin agents (fighting dogs) on their own territory.

The numerous examples in this chapter illuminate some of the most interesting moments of meaning construction. Figure 16 summarizes them by creating a simplified picture which maps these different struggles against each other. But what can these struggles say about journalism in Russia? Will it finally become an engine for democratization or not? The final section avoids answering this question with a simple “yes” or “no.”

This was the main research question of this study and now it is possible to say, that there is no simple answer. The complex answer should emphasize the politicizing capacity of individual blogging. Bloggers consciously or unconsciously are able to destabilize journalistic practices. However causing an imbalance does not necessarily mean ruining the “old” order since it can also force the older structures to improve their efficiency and legitimacy. And, as many studies have already argued, journalists do indeed have new things to learn from blogging. They can learn about their own rigidity, about adopting more interactive styles and about the value of the collective mind. Blogization also raises serious concerns about journalistic responsibility.
8 Conclusions

This book is based on a premise that a new media phenomenon such as blogging blurs the boundaries of professional journalism. This process, labeled as “blogization,” can be studied in the contexts of several ongoing theoretical discussions and practical applications.

First, there is a broad discussion about journalistic professionalism and the roles of mass media in modern societies. Blogging presents an alternative approach or a potential turning point in journalistic development. Also, the notion of blogization opens a valuable framework in which one can study the ongoing symbolic struggles and identity constructions within the sphere of mass communication. I identify this sphere as a field – a shared space for individual journalists, bloggers, and media institutions. This perspective emphasizes the dialectical relations between social actors and structures of cultural production.

Second, the blogization of journalism can and must also be viewed as part of the larger context of socio-political modernization. In this respect, the case of Russia presents a timely and relevant example. Through the lenses of blogization, we can assess the theoretical premises of transitology – a research perspective that frames the recent history of Russian political and media systems as they transition toward democratization and modernization.

The main research question of this study focused on the implications of journalism-blogging relationships for a broader understanding of news media in Russia between 2001 and 2013. The main question was divided into four sub-questions. Altogether they reflect upon the implications of journalism-blogging relations, and help to answer the main research question as follows.

Chapter 4 looked at the conditioning of the common space occupied by journalists and bloggers. I suggested a model of structuring this common space (the field in Bourdieu’s terms) with the following conditions: 1) technological innovation and convergence, 2) economic growth and profitability, 3) emergence of “produsage” culture with its advantages and ethical problems, 4) political control on one hand and democratization on the other. Convergence and mass “produsage” culture dissolves boundaries between mass and interpersonal communications. The stability of traditional mass media in Russia is secured by the strategic control and
support of the state. At the same time, online media are less susceptible to the influence of the political field. Accordingly, blogization becomes a challenging factor for the otherwise prevalent journalistic models of statist commercialism. Though, blogization has a limited effect on the whole media system, it raises important questions about new conditions for media ethics. There is also (mostly) indirect evidence that the political system tries to co-opt, depoliticize, and at times disrupt the uncontrolled advances of the blogosphere.

Chapter 5 looked at the symbolic capital of journalism-blogging interactions and the reproduction of existing hierarchies within the journalistic field. The journalistic field is differentiated according to the amount and composition of specific forms of symbolic capital. There are two competing components of symbolic capital in the process of blogization. The political meta-capital of the state is a central asset for journalism that is state-controlled and loyal to the Kremlin. Journalists and bloggers less controlled by the state and thereby critical of the Kremlin rely on the dense digital networks of social capital and the journalistic capital of peer-recognition. The diversity of studied media allowed for the observation of a continuum in which state-controlled television channels are the least blogging-friendly, and oppositional \textit{Novaya Gazeta} (NG) is (predictably) more predisposed to write about bloggers and use blogs as a sources of information. Bloggers in turn broaden their media preferences. Though they still prefer an originally published online newspaper (\textit{Lenta}), bloggers are more likely to use news sites of the traditional mass media. Two central themes of this chapter are blogger Navalny and journalist Parfenov who exemplify blogization’s potential to create alternative centers of political capital.

Chapter 6 summarized some of the key discursive elements (nodal points) of blogization and described the logic of their articulation. There are contested meanings of blogization that are attached to ideas of journalistic autonomy, credibility, subjectivity, and responsibility. Analysis of mass media and blogs reveals that the logic of difference dominates the discursive field, in which the signifiers “journalist” and “blogger” serve as catalysts for undecidability. Nevertheless, the discourse of blogization does not provide a clear-cut distinction between the journalism of traditional news media and the journalism of blogs. This is caused by articulations constructed as equivalences when “journalists” and “bloggers” find common interests and maintain credibility despite the differences in understandings of responsibility and subjectivity. The important conclusion of this chapter is that blogization does not split the “new” journalistic space directly into journalists and bloggers, but this borderline cuts across the more complex structures of identification.
Chapter 7 discussed the formation and contestation of the discourse of blogization in Russia. The chapter puts the conclusion of the previous chapter into the cultural perspective of two intellectual movements – *westernism* and *slavophilism*. These two have a history dating back to nineteenth century philosophical and literary debates. They still have influence and are implicitly present in almost any public discussion about the so-called “Russian way” with rough references to conservative or traditionalistic tendencies (slavophilism) on one hand, and modernization and progressive openness to all kinds of innovations (westernism). In this final chapter, I argue that blogization as a discourse becomes divided along these two traditions, and forms two competing discourses: hegemonic conservative and liberal counter-hegemonic. Hegemony is secured by the conservative forces who control the mainstream mass media in ways similar to the ideas of slavophiles. Its dominance rests upon an image of responsible journalism that criticizes the credibility of some marginal blogging, and justifies the lack of media autonomy by equating it with chaos. Counter-hegemony is based on the ideas of westernism and often labeled as “liberal.” Westernism in blogization relies on the values of individual autonomy, freedom, subjectivity, and the diversity of styles.

These findings are the results of what is called abductive reasoning, which I found to be a fruitful approach. I have drawn these conclusions from what seemed the most plausible explanation in those conditions and contexts that I discussed in the early chapters of this book. It seems that the flexibility and fluidity of subject positions and identities inside the common field of journalism and blogging can be effectively addressed by means of exploratory abduction. What I learned about abduction is that in the process of research it helps to diminish reliance on possibly misleading categorizations and rather allows for a broader analytical perspective.

Throughout the data one could find the moments of discourse formation that contradict both slavophile and “western” agendas. Indeed, there are more possible paths to resist hegemony and disrupt counter-hegemonic articulations. Such instances seemed less significant than the two main discourses and did not become part of the analysis. This reduction is inevitable for a project that aims to cover the broader context and overlooks, for example, numerous non-elite blogs and even more radical patterns of alternative journalism and blogging. More attention to less popular blogs, less prominent clusters and communities of media actors, or even random sampling would be suitable for different research questions and attempts to generalize and conceptualize blogosphere as essentially objective reality rather than a social construct.
8.1 The lessons of blogization

The developments defined as blogization should not be conceived as emerging from scratch. The twentieth century professionalization of journalism bears much resemblance to the current theoretical and practical debates about the status, roles and values of journalists. In a sense blogging is yet another “new” journalism. The first university programs and journalistic training courses in early twentieth century are now paralleled by new media education programs and schools of citizen journalism. Blog hosts like Live Journal, the most popular in Russia, provide manuals and guidance on how to blog more effectively. Bloggers and blogging make up a new formation of media actors seeking their own structural identification, or recognized place within the system of social communication. Early journalistic associations, unions and ethical codes now have their functional equivalents in the format of grass-roots self-organization and open discussions about blog ethics. Bloggers like Rustem Adagamov (Drugoi) borrow a lot from traditional journalism: drawing on news agencies, use of professional photo equipment and a mostly formal traditional reporting style. Others, like Artemy Lebedev (Tema) deliberately avoid associations with the journalistic profession, constructing their own version of subjectivity and an informal communicative style (though not without considerable media skills).

The discursive logic of blogization

The role of discourse theory in this work was to question the logic of blogization in Russian journalism from the point of view of four nodal points. Autonomy, responsibility, subjectivity, and credibility are the points of concentrated discursive struggles. One simple example is that journalists need bloggers as “others” to point to professional ethics (responsibility), while bloggers need journalists to stress their own independence (autonomy). With the help of discourse theory, I was able to explore the key points of interaction between journalists and bloggers, whose discursive practices involved both the moments of differences and equivalences.

Chapter 6 illustrated how the discursive logic of difference is realized in the ability of bloggers to present alternative agendas. Professional journalists seem more inclined to a “pack” mentality when covering orchestrated media events such as the story featuring Putin on a plane. This is where bloggers can easily break with the pack and win over the nodal point of subjectivity by claiming a higher degree of autonomy. Furthermore, the subjectivity of Tema’s blog is reinforced through his
ostentatious display of autonomy in relation to literally everything except for his readers. This last point puts many popular bloggers in equivalence with traditional media – they all need audience. However, the audience on blogs becomes more concrete and differs from the idea of society as a whole. In this respect, subject positions regarding the meanings of journalistic responsibility are crucial for the discourse of blogization. On one hand, by articulating full contempt for any responsibility through indifference to the abstract social relevance of his blogging work, the only responsibility Tema assumes is to meet the interests of his readers. On the other hand, the subject of responsibility, or rather the lack of it, becomes a powerful argument for the blogger Fritzmorgan (Oleg Makarenko) to paradoxically articulate (in a manipulative way) an unprecedented level of press freedom in Russia.

Despite the prevalence of differences at the general level, some of the examples in Chapter 6 demonstrate the logic of equivalence that function at deeper discursive levels. The “simplification of political space” (Laclau and Mouffe 1985:130) presents evidence that partial equivalences happen too. This happens, for example, when there is a deficit of reliable factual information. Journalists and bloggers trapped in the military zones of South Ossetia relied on their own emotions and personal accounts of what had been happening. The controversy surrounding war events and the partial information blockade forced mainstream media and blogs to cling to unverified and one-sided news. Dependence on conventional sources of information exemplifies similarities in how bloggers and professional journalists understand and determine credibility. Moreover, while covering this distant event, bloggers like Adagamov, who was situated far from the action, were equally helpless in finding reliable and trustworthy accounts of military actions through their networks and connections with local citizen journalists. The best possible explanation for this is that people who would in a peaceful context take pictures and post them online did not have easy access to the Internet and may not be willing to risk running around with a camera in a war situation.

The findings concerning the discursive logic of credibility show symmetric articulations that roughly divide Russian media space not between bloggers and journalists but according to ideological rivalries that can be found in both identities. When the question of who to trust and why is raised, the discourse of blogization breaks apart for individuals and media organizations that support the existing political regime and those that criticize it. The credibility of those loyal to Kremlin media sources is justified by the dominant positions in the journalistic field. The credibility of oppositional bloggers and journalists has a more networked origin since it is reinforced by connections inside the media space (blogosphere or journalistic
community). Loyalists attack the credibility of critics by articulating their identities with illegal contexts and discrediting characterizations. The critics respond with factual exposures and moral judgments.

The common field of journalism

In “blogization,” the citizen journalism of blogs has to assimilate into a field already occupied by hegemonically controlled traditional media forms. The process of assimilation cannot avoid tensions. Bloggers challenge the authority and monopoly of journalists by creating new standards of credibility (mostly based on transparency and on networking through the social capital of peers). Journalists in turn have more powerful organizational resources (economic capital), experience and often education (cultural journalistic capital), and enjoy an inherent institutional reputation. But more importantly many traditional media attain high symbolic positions due to their proximity to political power and the distribution of state meta-capital. From the distinction between mostly statist traditional journalism and mostly civic-oriented citizen journalism follows the major dividing line of Russian journalism.

Even though the media’s social responsibility is inscribed in journalism textbooks, among media workers it is commonly understood in terms of national state interests and not as the protection of the individual rights and freedoms of citizens. Accordingly, the (hegemonic) dimension of the journalistic field has often been playing the role of the state information and propaganda machine. The smaller (counter-hegemonic) part has claimed to be representing civil society.

The bloggers behind this new method of news production are not necessarily trained journalists representing media organizations. But to a degree they do need to be able to play this role in order to be recognized as belonging to the journalistic field. On the other hand, it seems to be up to a blogger’s judgment or at least to that of the editorial policies of institutionalized media, to decide on certain aspects of the form and content of the news. The ambivalence of that position creates discursive spaces for dislocations – being part of the system and at the same time articulating an alternative vision of it. Such a rather simplified distinction demonstrates the hypothetical potential of blogging to deviate from norms inscribed in journalistic textbooks, newsroom stylebooks, professional codes of ethics, and trade magazines, with which bloggers might not be familiar. But, is it also possible for blogging to challenge some commonsense practical principles of news journalism and radically
transform them over time? Perhaps, the transformation would not happen very fast. However, since the ideology of news is never fully established and has been constantly changing in history (see e.g. Barnhurst 2005), blogging may have some far-reaching consequences for the field or it will leave traces of slow transition.

**Double politicization**

In a discussion that combines such topics as journalism, blogging and democracy the theme of the “political” acquires double meaning. First, as I have argued, in countries like Russia, where the stability of the political system has been secured by tight control over large-scale traditional mass media, professional journalism is politically and to a lesser degree economically conditioned. A general growth of tensions between the collaborative (state collaboration) versus a more radical role (challenging official state policies) has been one of the most dramatic and vital developments underlying Russian journalism in recent years. Some media professionals explicitly (and proudly) serve the interests of the regime’s stability, many others are placed within certain constraints of “political appropriateness” and self-censorship practice.

In contrast to that, a radically different position that manifests itself in opposition to the political system is taken by a relatively small group of traditional journalists and some bloggers. These bloggers and journalists criticize the state and actively participate in blogosphere, emphasizing the value of political autonomy, transparency and the social capital of collective consciousness. This movement, however, lacks an institutional reputation and a mass audience, only reaching intellectual elites and those critics of the state who are predisposed to alternative modes of communication.

The second meaning of the political refers to a conflict in journalistic norms, ethics and agendas. New patterns of news reporting emerge from a practical conflict between professional and amateur forms of journalism. As journalism in Russia struggles to define its role and place in the society, more and more citizens create their own journalism in the blogosphere. Is this a genuinely different type of journalism, promoting new roles and redefining the overall media culture, or just another projection of the same national economic, political and cultural life? There is a substantial amount of evidence to suggest that blogization first of all triggers important changes in journalism itself and, as a consequence, changes in political communication. The diagram bellow (Figure 17) visually represents two meanings of the political as a result of blogization.
Figure 17. The Political Dimensions of Blogization

The right half of the diagram shows the tendency of journalism to *politicize institutional politics* by informing and encouraging civil society. The role of blogization here is shown through the example of Aleksey Navalny’s blog, which reinforces the politicizing tendency and occupies, in that sense, the same space (represented by the vertically oriented dashed circle) as the oppositional *Novaya Gazeta*. The left half of the diagram, accordingly, represents the depoliticizing aspect of journalism manifested in political clientelism, statist commercialism and the like. It is worth noting that the blogosphere can also play a role in that process. Dmitry Medvedev’s blog provides an example.

The second meaning of the political is the tendency of blogization to promote alternative models of journalism (represented by the horizontally oriented dashed circle in the diagram). To an extent both blog examples politicize the meaning of traditional or mainstream journalism, but they each do so differently in terms of institutional politics.

Therefore, we can see how some media, like Navalny’s blog, can be political in both dimensions, whereas media such as television *Channel One* are apolitical. The
diagram, of course does not take into account the relative politicizing and depoliticizing weight of different media, otherwise this two-dimensional model should display much smaller spaces for its “state-alternative” and “mainstream-civil society” segments. It is obvious that the importance of Navalny’s blog in politicizing the struggles of the meanings of journalism is larger than that of Medvedev’s blog. Similarly, *Novaya Gazeta* is incomparably less mainstream than Channel One. But it is also important to note that before the process of blogization gained its momentum (somewhere between 2001 and 2006) both politicized dimensions were almost absent. The turning point should be undoubtedly seen in the diagram’s bottom-right corner (alternative and civil society), though not necessarily associated with Navalny. The growing activity in that quadrant on the one hand forced the state institutions to join the alternative media space, hence we have examples like Medvedev’s blog. On the other hand it reinforced more broadly the weak civic segment of mainstream media space (the upper-right corner).

The strength and authority of *Channel One* (the upper-left corner) symbolizes the hegemonic dominance of conservative discourse of blogization. As the analysis of discursive articulations showed, in terms of fairness and social responsibility, “good journalism” seems to be in exile in contemporary Russia. It is difficult to make serious predictions about the future effects of blogization, but we can at least describe the existing potentialities, although not without limitations.

### 8.2 Critical remarks

The subject of new media has been on the scientific agenda for decades. But the rate at which “newer” media have been emerging far outpaces theoretical and empirical accounts of them. There are few studies comprehensively explaining the relatively new journalism of blogs. The lack of cohesive theoretical grounds that would include the emerging social media in a broader context of media theory has been an initial obstacle in my approach to blogization. New media needs a new theory. But the rate of changes in this field and the necessary interdisciplinarity of the research subjects are limiting factors. To understand new media, as David Holmes (2009:687) has put it, “it is necessary to understand complex behaviors – of markets, individuals, and technologies – that have, in fact, a long process of evolution.” I tried to address the breadth of perspectives and interdisciplinary nature of blogization with an arsenal of general social theories. The research design presupposed a richness of empirical
materials, but also made it more demanding to stay focused and to draw simple conclusions.

Throughout the research, I relied on two vocabularies: the cultural sociology of Bourdieu and the political philosophy of Laclau and Mouffe. Both research traditions are challenging in terms of conceptual clarity and methodological procedures. This has caused some difficulties in handling and organizing empirical materials: a risk of doing merely descriptive analysis and the imprecise use of theoretical categories. For example, field theory has been criticized for its inability to show “how many fields there are” and “where exactly the boundaries between the fields lie” (Joas and Knöbl 2009:392). Surrounding the field of cultural production and closely interrelated with it are the fields of politics and economics, but some other relevant fields include science, education, and religion.

What this study of blogization suggests about field theory is that today networked digital environments are having a blurring or de-differentiating effect on field boundaries. Hypothetically this assumption can be relevant not only to the journalistic field, but also to other fields, especially if their constitutive structures are fundamentally dependent on rapidly evolving communicative structures. If it is valid to assume that the complete absence of differentiation is impossible, then it is more precise to talk about re-differentiation – the emergence of new types of differences and, in the longer view, the emergence of new classes of social actors. In this case, field theory should also be seen as historically informed and flexible.

As for Laclau and Mouffe’s discourse theory, David Howarth (1998:291) has pointed out that “the only clear methodological rule consists in a ‘non-rule’: rules can never be simply applied to cases, but have to be articulated in the research process.” Despite this lack of guidelines, however, such open-ended theoretical frameworks have an advantage in situations where research objects are elusive and dynamic. The novelty and ambiguity of blogization calls for unconventional analytical strategies, and both field theory and discourse theory encourage that.

The post-structuralism of discourse theory has also been generally criticized for being too relativistic and incapable of inferring moral claims. The viewpoint that every social phenomenon is discursively constructed makes any objective investigation with normative claims problematic. This book also risks falling into this trap. It is impossible to separate the researcher’s position from the studied discourse. Therefore, it is worth reflecting on this position and using it as one of the many possible entry points to the subject matter. In addition, a post-structuralist approach to discourse provides an understanding of the mechanisms of social construction, and reflexive remarks concerning the researcher’s role are equally important.
Furthermore, combining Laclau and Mouffe’s political theory of discourse with Bourdieu’s cultural sociology provides a more convincing overview of the relevant contexts. When applied together field theory and discourse theory help to cope with their respective methodological limitations. Thus, the discursive “radical contingency” of the social practices can be at the same time seen from the point of view of their “sedimentation” and “stickiness” (Phelan 2011:128) within the field.

Laclau and Mouffe’s discourse theory criticizes any universalistic promises for full freedom and equality for everyone because “political communities can never include everyone as they always build on an opposition between ‘us’ and ‘them’” (Jørgensen and Philips 2002:187). As an alternative to the unifying democratic discourse, Laclau and Mouffe offer a radical pluralist model of democracy based on the autonomy of different struggles, the multiplication of antagonisms, and the plurality of spaces. In regard to the concept of the “political” there is a tension between discourse theory and Bourdieu’s field theory. For Bourdieu it is mainly a characteristic of the political field, while it is a much more fundamental idea for Laclau and Mouffe’s discourse theory. However, applying a synthesis of the two can provide more coherent inquiries into the mechanisms of hegemonic articulations of collective identities inside a field (Phelan 2011:135-6).

Interpretative research strategy and abductive analysis of qualitative data also deserve a critical remark. Abductive conclusions as “inferences to the best explanation” (Harman 1965) tend to be less precise than conclusions achieved through deductive and inductive modes of reasoning. In that sense the explanatory strength of this research project is not in its categorical statements about blogization, but in presenting a sort of educated “guess” and a thick description that seem to provide the best available explanation of the subject. Another critical point of interpretation is that the evidence derived from the reflexive language of social actors may be missing other non-linguistic contexts of the studied phenomenon. I tried to partly overcome this limitation by introducing non-linguistic categories, such as measurements of media representations and the results of secondary statistical data, into the analysis and discussion. This is where Bourdieu’s focus on field structures complements Laclau and Mouffe’s discourse theory.

The main source of evidence in this work were the texts in media and blogs that I studied systematically for several years. My first immersion into the data followed the key word “blogger” that appeared in the selected media from the earliest case in 2002 until the end of 2012 (a few examples from 2103). I tried to locate and get a sense of the texts where the people who were blogging would be named, quoted, and interviewed. The overall sample of 6337 texts could be useful for a deeper
quantitative study on its own. I, however, relied on more qualitative characteristics of the material by trying to reduce the sample to a limited amount of themes and episodes. Later, I mirrored these themes with targeted searches in Russian blogs, so that I could reach both sides of my analytical focus with comparable material.

Qualitatively, I distinguished three levels of relations between media actors and selected empirical examples accordingly. First, I paid attention to materials where bloggers and journalists reflected on their own roles. Second, I looked through numerous stories where bloggers and journalists refer to each other to produce news content. The third level includes texts by bloggers and journalists where they make statements and evaluations of one another’s work. Eventually, each of these three levels generated textual materials (see the list in the end of the book).

While interviewing journalists and bloggers could significantly enrich this work, it would also multiply the overall complexity and feasibility of such a project. Instead, I relied on a broader contextualization amplified by longitudinal observations. My observations were unobtrusive, which in contrast to active participation or interviewing allows to note and gather more natural evidence without influencing the respondents and without unconsciously preparing their answers. Moreover, the discursive interactions between journalists and bloggers are easily accessible on various media platforms that they use. Their lives and actions are often better documented (web logged) than one can expect to find out through the interviews. Ethnographically speaking, I organized my systematic observations in such a way that I could develop thick description covering variability of topics, different actors and dominant structures of signification.

In this study, descriptive statistics and qualitative analysis of texts balance each other and cover multiple perspectives. While samples of quantitative data help to draw a partial picture of the more “objective” reality of blogization and to embrace its scope in the Russian context, the qualitative part provides valuable examples for closer interpretation. In sum, the research produces a local explanation and not a general picture, yet the final results may lead to questions of general relevance.

8.3 Practical and theoretical relevance

The findings presented in this book contribute to the literature on new forms of journalism (cf. Platon and Deuze 2003; Schaffer 2007; Briggs 2007; Beckett 2008, 2010; Russell 2011; Hermida 2010; Waisbord 2013:202-21; Chadwick 2013). More generally this research suggests an approach to theorizing the instability of
journalistic ideology. The process of blogization de-professionalizes traditional journalism. But at the same time it also introduces elements of professionalism to the citizen journalism of blogs. If a newspaper reporter gets his or her salary for regularly citing someone else’s blog, why not pay that blogger instead? And vice versa, a professional journalist with special skills, regular access to valuable news sources, and spare time for blogging can find this practice symbolically rewarding and make the blogosphere more professional at the same time.

Thus, this research contributes to knowledge about the dominant values that bloggers and journalists demonstrate and promote in their reflexive news making strategies. For example, the professionalization of journalism was, at a certain point in history, accompanied by the development of the code of ethics. At the same time, in social media inappropriate journalistic behavior and abuses are possible and often take place. However, there are similar attempts to generate ethical rules among bloggers. Today the process of negotiating issues like this involves bloggers and journalists. This process requires a redefinition of the journalistic profession as such along with some kind of self-organization (at least temporary) of the blogging community.

The evidence of blogization highlights the inadequacies of media self-regulation mechanisms and of media legislation. Russia’s journalistic community clearly faces reputational challenges (corrupted and somewhat unreliable). Without open dialogue and cooperation with new members (journalism bloggers) and without the critical reassessment of journalism’s normative basis, its reputation could deteriorate even further. Also bloggers, who perceive themselves as mass communicators, would benefit from working out some kind of code of ethical behavior. The examples in this book indicate that there is a need to correct the existing legal deficiency by clarifying the status of blogging, its rights and liability. For example, changes in media legislation could guarantee bloggers the right to file official information requests to public institutions and authorities. Legislators may also use the results of this book to make wiser legal decisions concerning the regulation of online media. Finally, knowing the rules of the new journalistic game might be supportive for politicians in their online campaigning and help facilitate their connections with citizens through blogging.

Some of the findings may be helpful to formulate a more general, expanded version of journalism ethics as one of the outcomes of blogization. Comparing the results of this research to similar studies in other cultural contexts could be valuable in an effort to define a set of emerging values articulated by bloggers internationally. The findings can also help bloggers to better realize their roles and to make the
blogosphere a more organized and responsible space. This does not necessarily impose a strict normative framework, but can be viewed as a way to affirm the authority of blogging as part of journalism and as a legitimate extension of civil society. Thus, a more organized and morally impeccable blogosphere can claim its strategic position of power in dialogue with the state.

This study provides new insights to the usage of political discourse theory in media and communication research. Many of the discourse analytical categories presented here mirror those of Nico Carpentier’s work (2005). In addition to the discursive aspects of journalistic autonomy, responsibility and subjectivity (objectivity), this work makes a new step to investigate the discursive role of credibility and trust. This is the main original contribution of my work to the studies of media and journalism. Whereas Carpentier found that more traditional journalistic forms are also determined by links to organizational structure of media institutions, the process of blogization puts forward the issues related to the trustworthiness and personified reputation of journalists and bloggers.

The accent on agonistic relationship in Mouffe’s tradition often seems problematic when studies are conducted in (and about) societies with developed deliberative and consensus-based cultures. However, the choice of Laclau and Mouffe’s discourse theory, not obvious in some contexts, works well in my investigation of practices and discursive struggles that are more visible in macro-contexts of Russian journalism. Beyond the Russian case, this research is also relevant as it points to intrinsic ambiguity of journalism-blogging relations, and the relations between new and old media more generally. Moreover, Russia is just an example of a country with controversial interplay between values of free speech, clientelism of media workers and dichotomy of the responsibility of the state and social responsibility. This work helps to fill the gap that has always existed in Western self-centered thinking and expands our vision beyond these limits (cf. Curran and Park 2000; Hallin and Mancini 2012; Waisbord 2013).

8.4 Suggestions for further research

Much of the data used in this book remained underused. I started with a large sample of more than 6000 news items, but chose not to perform a more detailed content analysis of this material. The explanation for this is that I only used this data to provide a brief introduction and background immersion. I also felt that more qualitative analysis was needed first to lay the groundwork for more specialized
research tasks. The handling of such a large amount of data, without a preliminary hypothesis (this is what this book is actually about) and a more developed understanding of possible coding categories, would have been too superficial at that early stage. Now that we have at least some theoretical understanding of blogization, more focused studies can be performed. Potential research subjects can further elaborate the role of symbolic capital in relations between professionals and citizen journalists. More can also be said about changes in journalistic habitus and hierarchies internal to the field. More accentuated discussions can follow concerning the ideology of new ways of practicing journalism and a more informed assessment of the democratic potential of journalism can be made.

The growing influence of various kinds of social media and blogs suggests that it is high time to think over and elaborate on the normative aspects of citizen journalism and to better understand the consequences of citizen news production. To what extent are the practices of bloggers as citizen journalists, and their respective identities, structured by mainstream media discourses? What are the limitations for agenda-setting capacities when it comes to the citizen journalism of blogs (and social media in general)? How convincing is the evidence of the gate-opening role of new forms of journalism as opposed to the well-documented gate-keeping role of traditional mass media? These are the questions that can further develop our understanding of blogization.

The Internet becomes a crucial medium for political communication. In countries hopefully moving toward democratization (like Russia), online media interactions have been mostly seen from the point of view of an emerging civil society. However, state attempts to gain control of this communicative environment is a no less promising subject for research. State-initiated social media projects (like Dmitry Medvedev’s blog in this research) are certainly worthy of more focused investigations. It is particularly relevant to describe and explain the state media strategies in an environment that explicitly privileges transparency and expressive subjectivity. In this respect, the phenomenon of blogization seems to suggest the existence of a double-sided legitimation platform. On the one hand, the voices of civil society get access to public space and opportunities to define their own visions of newsworthiness, credibility and non-institutional mediation. On the other hand, the ruling political regimes are seeking and will continue seeking opportunities to extend their legitimacy among the active and critical audiences of online news networks. In some national contexts, perhaps, the role of the state versus civil society can be in fact more effectively studied as the opposition between market forces and consumer society.
From the point of view of transitology, this research outlined a complex system of relations that seem to compensate for the model of “slow” democratization, in which the contingency of socio-political dynamics plays a more decisive role. This book focused on the practices and discourses associated with the journalistic production of media content in Russia. But as we have learned, numerous social media applications and social networking sites play a role in the dissemination of such content. Therefore, we can talk now not only about relations of production between journalists and bloggers, but also about the relations of distribution and mediation of content. This sheds new light on questions such as the economic basis of networking, the viral circulation of news, and the possibility of digital networks to promote transparent, responsible and democratic content as well as to resist the manipulative and disruptive modes of communication inspired by various ideological purposes.

Thus, this work poses a set of new important questions for transitologists. The past years of commercialization, political clientelism and media self-censorship have all but marginalized what remains of Russia’s independent and socially committed journalism; a view that has been increasingly talked about by media scholars. Can we talk today, in the context of blogization, about reviving the rhetoric of glasnost in its 2.0 version? Or, is it a more suitable point to mention the more rigorous police surveillance and the spread of censorship into digital networks? The difference between late Soviet glasnost and glasnost based on new media phenomena is that the former had been a top-down conscious decision, whereas the latter is mostly a bottom-up spontaneous movement. In the end, this difference is crucial.


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