

succeed or fail, and how executives learn and unlearn in ways that influence innovation outcomes in unexpected ways. This study does not focus on new entrants to the mobile media market during the period of concern or on the way public policy influenced the strategies and actions of the incumbents. It nevertheless provides much insight into why developments in the 'new media' industries are so often accompanied by reactions that veer between shock and hope, and between visionary and practical plans and actions. It challenges any claim that innovation is always progressive, showing how it affects far more than the company bottom line. This thesis will be instructive for all researchers who seek explanations for how change happens in a particularly turbulent industry sector.

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### Note:

- 1 WAP is Wireless Application Protocol, an early standard for accessing information using a mobile wireless network.

## A Challenging Piece of Research

Andreas Ytterstad  
*Norwegian Climate Change Policy and the Media: Between Hegemony and Good Sense*  
PhD-avhandling, Det humanistiske fakultet, UiO 2012

Andreas Ytterstad has produced a very original, passionate, determined and intellectually challenging piece of research that seeks both to seize back the ideas of Antonio Gramsci for a militant media studies and to develop an approach to journalism that is neither fatalistic nor idealistic. Through an emphasis on the significance of 'good sense' as an ingredient in and engine of popular resistance to bourgeois hegemony, he deploys a range of epistemological and conceptual tools, through an analysis of media coverage of climate change, that insists on the importance of retaining an interest in 'truth' and 'objectivity', not simply as strategies or discourses to be employed in specific situations, but as guiding principles designed to assist the struggle for social change. The attempt to revive the use of 'good sense' (a concept somewhat underplayed in Peter Thomas' otherwise majestic book, *The Gramscian*

*Moment*) signals a serious engagement with Marxist cultural theory, an extensive analysis of science journalism, an original challenge to the propaganda model and a most unlikely example of optimism. His argument never shrinks from a focus on material forces as a driving force of both representation *and* reality.

The doctoral dissertation, which he defended robustly in Spring 2012, consists of two parts: the first is a theoretical exploration of key Gramscian terms and their relevance to media studies today; the second is a series of articles that use and develop the Gramscian method to make sense of and challenge the everyday practices of journalists in reporting on climate change.

The initial discussion of Gramsci both in terms of an exposition of the Italian Marxist's highly original ideas as well as his appearance in contemporary media and cultural studies is fascinating, very well researched and presented in a way that is designed to engage the reader fully in academic debates and their consequences. The dissertation displays a sophisticated understanding of the Gramscian corpus and also shows real sensitivity to the way in which Gramscian ideas have been taken up by figures such as Todd Gitlin, Stuart Hall and Raymond Williams. By seeking to develop an approach to 'good sense' as forms of knowledge and action related to understanding and transforming capitalist relations, Ytterstad expands on an often under-researched area of Gramscian thought, particularly in relation to media and cultural studies, but also illuminates broader debates around hegemony and 'common sense' in the contemporary world. The early theoretical chapters therefore present a detailed and provocative foundation for the rest of the dissertation in which he aims to test and expand these theoretical debates in relation to news coverage of climate change policy.

Methodologically, the dissertation is highly self-reflexive, honest and, at times, entertaining, a rare quality in work of this type. The section on methods contains important thoughts about the efficacy of qualitative approaches and practical and ethical questions concerning, in particular, interviews with journalists. It is rather light in discussing how best to tease out reflections on how to secure 'good sense' across the journalistic field and a fuller statement of how each article relates to the core research questions would have been extremely useful but these are relatively minor issues given the ambition of the research.

The articles themselves focus on news coverage of environmental summits and protests and investigate the approaches of both specialist correspondents and bloggers as they attempt to report on what they see as key issues. In attempting to assess just how close journalists are able to get to 'truth-seeking'—for Ytterstad, the hallmark of serious journalism—he makes the argument that blogs appear to be better suited to 'good sense' given their rebellious spirit and that they are closer to 'how ordinary people can express themselves'. This is a contentious, though not particularly unusual claim that perhaps exaggerates the ability of bloggers to avoid ideological incorporation or indeed to secure the resources necessary to deliver informed judgements and well researched observations. Truth, after all, does not necessarily come cheap (although, of course, wealth is even more likely to deliver 'common

sense' rather than 'good sense'). More significantly, Ytterstad's commitment to 'truth seeking' reveals an Enlightenment commitment to reason-based, dispassionate scientific discovery and journalistic endeavour that, at times, verges on a liberal Fourth Estate model before being rescued by his clear acknowledgement of how journalism is also skewed by questions of power, privilege and ideology.

The final articles are perhaps the most interesting in providing real insights into how journalists view objectivity in their professional lives and the extent to which they have a responsibility to ask tough questions about climate change, no matter the consequences. The last article focuses on the limitations of framing analysis in uncovering patterns of behaviour and power in a highly contested and constantly changing area like climate change and is especially stimulating. Overall, however, the articles are rather uneven in both quality and relevance to the central research areas and, at times, tend to overlap (and indeed repeat each other). While quite methodologically ambitious, they lack the confidence and originality of the more theoretical parts of the research though perhaps that speaks more about the quality of Ytterstad's conceptual grasp of Gramsci than it does about any flaws in his empirical analysis.

Strangely, there is not a single, comprehensive conclusion in which the different elements and foci of the research are discussed and in which an invigorated Gramscian perspective could emerge. Ytterstad provides a conclusion to the theoretical section of the dissertation but the reader is still left to make up her own mind as to what the case studies examined in the articles tell us about the operations of hegemony, contradiction, media power and 'good sense'.

So there remain important unanswered questions: is the form of 'good sense' identified in journalistic practice effectively the same as 'progressive' ideas? What are the material conditions that produce the rather romantic sounding 'flashes of insight' that we occasionally see in journalism? In particular, there remains the danger of a simplistic, or perhaps simply an underdeveloped, conception of 'good' and 'bad' objectivity (i.e. as *either* mystifying and ideological *or* as 'truth seeking' and therefore good). It might have been more productive to pursue objectivity as a strategy that is itself open to contest and subject to forms of contradictory consciousness that Ytterstad talks about so intelligently.

The dissertation covers a huge amount of ground in critical, political and media theory. Ytterstad investigates not just submerged elements of Gramsci but a range of journalistic debates concerning objectivity, framing, independence, balance, blogging, source power, shared agendas and many other issues. How to integrate these multiple areas of interest is no easy matter and while the dissertation is impressive in scope and ambition, there is a sense of 'unfinished business' at the end. But then this applies to all good work where, to put it bluntly, you simply want more.

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