Editorial perspectives on the public debate on immigration

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A key responsibility of the news media is to facilitate the public debate; thus newspaper editors have traditionally wielded a good deal of power in regard to the selection and rejection of texts for publication. However, the dominant position of the editorial driven news media as an arena for public discourse has been altered dramatically as a result of the growing number of arenas where ordinary citizens can express their opinions. As a result, the role of the editor as a gatekeeper has also been transformed, and new forms of editorial mechanisms have come into use. In this chapter, we investigate editorial perspectives on boundaries by using debates on immigration as a point of departure. The study is based on qualitative interviews with opinion editors in national and regional newspapers carried out in 2014 and 2016. We focus in particular on how editors talk about the management of the reader section of the newspaper, including letters

to the editor, comment sections, and social media. We argue that immigration as a topic represents an interesting entry point for studying editorial attitudes because, as societies become increasingly diverse and multicultural, such debates have become more prevalent and demanding. These discourses are often described as heated, emotional and polarised, and they are frequently accompanied by discussions about the normative boundaries in the public sphere.

Introduction

In recent years, the role of the editor as a gatekeeper has been transformed, although editors in the news media still represent a form of authority grounded in the professional codes of journalism. This form of authority, we argue in this paper, is manifested in the idea that we still need qualified gatekeepers to filter information and help us to 'make sense of the world' (Barber, 2004, p. 44). However, as recent public debates have indicated, trust in how the media execute this form of authority has regularly been questioned (see also chapter 4), and the news media have to defend their legitimacy by pointing out the professional ethics and norms that guide their work.

Thus, this chapter will investigate editorial perspectives on the public debate on immigration. The focus is on how editors discuss the management of the reader section of the newspaper, including letters to the editor, comment sections, and social media. As mentioned above, the topic of immigration represents an interesting entry point for studying editorial attitudes because, as societies become increasingly diverse and multicultural, such debates have become more prevalent and demanding (Balch & Balabanova, 2011; Brochmann, Hagelund, Borevi, Jønsson, & Petersen, 2012; Horsti, 2008). Furthermore, such discourses are often described as heated, emotional and polarised and they are

frequently accompanied by discussions about the normative boundaries in the public sphere (Bangstad, 2013; Eide & Nikunen, 2011; Figenschou & Beyer, 2014; Midtbøen & Steen-Johnsen, 2016; Thorbjørnsrud & Figenschou, 2016).

This study uses two rounds of interviews with newspaper editors responsible for managing the debate section of the newspaper. The first round of interviews was conducted in 2014 and focused on general issues related to freedom of speech and the administration of public debates on multiple platforms. The second part of the study was conducted in 2016 in the aftermath of the migrant and refugee crisis that escalated during the autumn of 2015. This dramatic situation gained comprehensive media coverage and produced heated public debate about how this situation should best be handled. While migration and related topics like integration, religion, Islam and terrorism are regularly discussed in the media, the situation in 2015 can be described as a peak moment when attention to such topics was particularly prominent in newsrooms around the world (Askanius, Linné, Berry, Garcia-Blanco, & Kerry, 2015).

Theoretical perspectives on gatekeeping

The news media have traditionally played an important part as an arena for public debate. This perceived obligation has been part of what has been described as a 'social contract' between democracy and journalism, indicating a certain dependence. The news media should serve the public by providing reliable information, act as a public watchdog and function as an arena for public debate, while, at the same time, journalism requires a democratic system that secures such principles as freedom of information, freedom of expression and freedom of the press, which are necessary to fulfil these tasks (Christians, Glasser,

McQuail, Nordenstreng, & White, 2009; McQuail, 1992; Steel, 2012; Strömbäck, 2005). This interdependence has, in the Norwegian context, been met by political measures like press subsidies, tax reduction and strong public service media, which are meant to ensure a well-functioning and diverse national media sector (Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Syvertsen, Enli, Mjøs, & Moe, 2014).

How the media fulfil their democratic responsibilities has been of pivotal concern to media scholars. In the following we will in particular explore perspectives on the media's gate-keeping power when facilitating the public debate, and how their concept of boundaries in the debate is influenced by pro-fessional norms and ethics. Studies of boundaries are about ana-lyzing power, in other words how boundaries are drawn, sustained, negotiated, contested and changed by different stake-holders (Abbott, 1995; Carlsson & Lewis, 2015; Gieryn, 1999; Lamont & Molnár, 2002; Lewis, 2012). An important dimension in how boundaries in the public debate are drawn by journalists and editors is through their role as gatekeepers. On the most general level, gatekeeping studies have been concerned with information control and how and why some kinds of informa-tion become news (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009; Shoemaker, 1991). Since the iconic gatekeeping study carried out by White (1950), in which he observed how an editor he called 'Mr Gates' filtered information for publication, several studies have explored indi-vidual as well as organisational and institutional mechanisms at play in the news-making process (Gans, 1980; Reese & Ballinger, 2001; Shoemaker & Vos, 2009; Shoemaker, 1991; Tuchman, 1978). While earlier gatekeeping studies have focused predomi-nantly on journalistic processes, the gatekeeping metaphor is also relevant when studying how the news media orchestrate and facilitate the public debate (Bruns, 2008; Ihlebæk, 2014;

Ihlebæk & Krumsvik, 2015). The editors responsible for such content have the power to select and reject texts based on particular criteria. Studies have, for instance, explored how professional norms like relevance, quality, novelty and originality are commonly used to explain why some letters to the editor get published and some don't (Kleis-Nielsen, 2010; Wahl-Jorgensen, 2001; Wahl-Jørgensen, 2002). In addition, editors can take a more active role and order articles and commentaries from people they want to partake in the debate.

In more novel forms of debate formats like comment sections, blogs and social media sites, new forms of editorial control mechanisms have been developed with the aim of maximizing the participation from the audience, but minimizing uncivil behaviour (Carpentier, 2001; Carpentier, 2009, 2011; Goode, 2009; Holt & Karlsson, 2011; Hujanen, 2016; Ihlebæk & Krumsvik, 2015; Larsson, 2011; Lewis, 2012; Mitchelstein, 2011; Ruiz et al., 2011; Singer, 2006; Singer, Paulussen, & Hermida, 2011). Editors have, for instance, experimented with different forms of design, levels of identification, rules for participation, limiting access through closing the comment fields at night or by restricting the type of newspaper articles users can comment on, as well as by using moderators who can delete inappropriate comments and throw people out (Ihlebæk, 2014).

Economic, ethical and legal factors come into play when editors manage the debate and decide on appropriate control mechanisms. First, the news media are commercial enterprises and as Doyle (2013) points out, most decisions in the media industry are influenced by economic factors either explicitly or implicitly. In the context of managing the public debate, the available resources (allocated staff, technical solutions etc.) at any given time is of course of importance (Ihlebæk, 2014). Furthermore, the need to attract readers and advertisers might impact editorial

decision-making concerning what kind of content that is publis-hed or not, and in the online environment news organisations gather extensive knowledge about what kind of content that is successful in generating clicks, shares and likes. In relation to the management of comment sections, studies have indicated that news organisations have been reluctant to impose stricter control in such formats partly because they feared it would lead to less activity and traffic (Ihlebæk, 2014). However, the motivation to enhance participation in quantitative terms, had to be balanced against the need to take into account the effect certain forms of control, or lack of control, had on the quality of the content in these kinds of formats, which leads us over to the second dimen-sion. The news media are democratic institutions guided by par-ticular normative ideals. The idea that journalism serves the public, constitutes an important part of journalistic ideology and allows journalists and editors to legitimize their own position and authority as gatekeepers (Deuze, 2005; McQuail, 1992). Furthermore, media professionals defend their autonomy based on the adherence to professional norms and ethics that guide their work, and that separate them from other publishers and debate arenas. Such norms could be independence, balance, neu-trality, factuality and accuracy (Alexander, 2006; Alexander, 2016; Carlson, 2015; Singer, 2015).

In the Norwegian context, the notion of editorial responsibi-lities can be found in *The Rights and Duties of the Editor*, and ethical guidelines are outlined in *The Code of Ethics of the Norwegian Press*. These standards have been developed by the industry as a self-regulatory measure, which is central to the Northern European Democratic-Corporatist media system (Hallin & Manchini, 2004). The *Code of Ethics* is not a legally binding document, but it is supported by all editorial-driven news organizations in Norway. If a newspaper breaks the *Code*

of Ethics a complaint can be made to the *Norwegian Press Complaints Commission* and if found guilty the editor needs to publish a public apology. The self-regulatory system, in other words, represents a particular framework for the established editorially driven media (both online and offline) that differs from their non-editorial driven competitors. In the guidelines, the social responsibility of the press is stated as advice on how to conduct their work. In relation to their role as an arena for public debate, the code of ethics emphasizes the need for diversity which is stated in point 2.1: 'The press has important functions in that it carries information, debates and critical comments on current affairs. The press is particularly responsible for allowing different views to be expressed' (point 1.2). Furthermore, norms like factuality, fairness, respect and truthfulness are emphasised. The *Code of Ethics* also states that those who are subjected to strong accusations or attacks shall have the opportunity to reply (points 4.14 and 4.15).

A third factor that is relevant in regards to how editors manage the debate is based on legal boundaries (Amos, Harrison, & Woods, 2012; Bing, 2008; Steel, 2012; Wessel-Aas, 2013). As in most countries there are limits to free speech in Norway (see chapter 2). According to *The General Civil Penal Code*, editors-in-chief can be held legally responsible for what is published in their newspaper. While illegal forms of expressions are easily avoided in texts that have been through an editorial pre-editing process, post-moderated forms represent a different risk. Bing (2008) argues that the law implies that the publication must ensure that they have good routines and control mechanisms for detecting potential violations. While questions concerning the editorial responsibility of news organisations' online services remain largely untested in the Norwegian legal system, a point of reference is the case against the Estonian newspaper *Delfi* in

the European Court of Human Rights, which held the newspaper responsible for anonymous and defamatory statements in the comment section.

Method

The study rests on twenty-two qualitative interviews with editors who are responsible for the debate.[i] Qualitative interviews are useful, in the words of Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) when the goal is to 'understand the world from the subjects' point of view, to unfold the meaning of their experiences, to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanations' (p. 3). In the context of this article where the aim is to gain insight into editorial perspectives on the management of the public debate, it was necessary and helpful to apply this method and to get as much information as possible on the topic of concern.

The informants can be categorised as 'elite informants'. There is no clear definition of what constitutes an elite, but the term is often used to define informants who, through their profession or role, exercise some kind of power or authority that non-elites do not have (Harvey, 2011; Hertz & Imber, 1995). In our study the informants have been chosen because they represent a powerful position in guarding the public debate, even though many editors don't necessarily see themselves this way, particularly as the public debate expands onto a multitude of platforms. A general challenge with elite interviews is that the informants might want to control the interview, and that they use standardized phrases to

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i   Newspapers included in the study: 2014: Aftenposten, Bergens Tidende, Dagbladet, Dagsavisen, Drammens Tidende, Klassekampen, Nationen, Nordlys, Stavanger Aftenblad, Vårt Land og VG. 2016: Aftenposten, Agenda, Bergens Tidende, Dagbladet, Dagens Næringsliv, Drammens Tidende, Klassekampen, Nordlys, Stavanger Aftenblad og VG.

portray their work or organisation in a favourable way. While this is hard to avoid, we have tried to counter this by probing for specific examples and dilemmas that they experience in their work.

The newspapers in the sample are predominantly national and regional. Twelve of the interviews were carried out in 2014 and then ten more in 2016. The first round of interviews focused on general issues relating to freedom of speech and the administration of controversial debates on multiple platforms. The study identified immigration as one of many challenging topics to manage. The second part of the study focused specifically on the immigration debates and explored issues like polarisation, boundaries and the inclusion and exclusion of voices.

All the interviews have been transcribed and analyzed using the analytic software *NViVO*. The software helps to systematically categorize the data through coding the material by particular 'nodes'. The nodes were inspired by the research question and developed by thorough reading of all the interviews. In the end six main nodes were used: debate culture, debate platforms, immigration, racism/hate speech, editorial practices, challenges/dilemmas. The nodes overlapped and the same text could be coded several times. In the analytical process, we could then read texts relating to one of the nodes across all interviews.

It is necessary to point out that we do not analyze change over time, even though changes in editorial perspectives might occur; Rather the interviews complement each other with insights on how editors talk about the management of public debates and how they practice boundary work. Finally, using qualitative interviews as the main method limits the possibility of saying anything about how actual *practices* develop. Instead this paper contributes some insight into how editors *talk* about the debate, based on the professional ethics of journalism.

Managing the debate in a fragmented public sphere

To be able to understand editorial perspectives on the immigration debate, it is first necessary to gain more insight into the kind of portfolio editors are responsible for, and how they talk a about their own role in a fragmented public sphere.

As referred to in the theoretical section, editors are responsible for many kinds of debates in the newspaper domain, and most newspaper have an active online strategy apart from one newspaper in the sample that on the contrary focused mainly on the printed paper. In terms of editorial management, a general distinction can be made between formats subject to pre or post forms of control. The first category involves formats like letters to the editor, commentaries and op-ed-articles that are commissioned by the editor, or submitted by a person or organisation, and either accepted or rejected by the editor based on particular criteria. The latter category consists of post-moderated forums, like comment sections in the newspaper or on Facebook, online forums or blogs where anybody can participate without going through the scrutiny of the editor.

These pre and post formats fulfil different functions in the newspaper and are guided by different principles of editorial management. Pre-edited formats are meant to set the agenda, and the editors have much higher expectations as to the quality of such texts than for the post-moderated ones. Pre-edited debate formats are by some editors referred to as the 'elite debate' or 'top division' that the readers can then react to. It is important, according to the editors, that the authors manage to present their points clearly, with civilized language and ideally that they have something original or newsworthy to say. Furthermore, it is important that the pre-edited pages represent a diverse range of opinions. It is common that editors from national newspapers actively

commission op-ed articles to achieve such goals, while editors in regional newspapers more often select from the texts that are sent in to the newspaper. Some editors claim that up to fifty per cent of published op-ed articles have been commissioned.

Comment sections and online forums are, on the other hand, meant to facilitate spontaneous reactions and debates that resemble everyday talk between ordinary people. Editors consequently accept a different form of language and type of argumentation in such formats than in pre-edited debates. Most newspapers have developed some kind of ground rules for participation in the comment fields that participants have to follow. Such rules often promote civility and respect, as well as prohibiting racism, hate speech or defamation. Participants who break the rules can be thrown out by the moderators. While many editors claim that they do not experience this as a major problem, comment sections are nevertheless regularly criticised for being uncivil and sometimes also racist or xenophobic. However, editors defend (with a certain ambivalence) their existence based on ideals like democratic participation and inclusion. Recently though, many newspaper have, or are thinking about, shutting down the comment section of the newspaper altogether and moving such services to Facebook. Editors in the study argue that they have to be on Facebook because it is where their audience are. However, they are also aware of that when they outsource the comment fields to Facebook, they at the same time become more dependent on the algorithmic power of the platform and the technical solutions it provides for moderating practices. This is a double-edged sword as one editor bluntly put it:

> On Facebook, it is not possible to turn off the comment section, and it is not possible to delete the entire comment section unless you delete the whole post. And if you delete the whole post you get punished by Facebook's algorithms... Facebook gives us limited opportunities to be the kind of editor we would like to be.

This leads us to the final point. In a fragmented and hybrid media landscape where public debates take place everywhere all the time, editors have become more dependent on utilizing social media services to be able to defend and maintain their role as agenda-setters. Many editors in the study explain how they use Twitter and particularly Facebook not only to invite audiences to comment, but to attract new voices and to pick up on interesting debates. It is a major advantage for editors, then, to gain the skills and knowledge necessary to exploit such platforms, as this editor explains:

> I personally have between 1500 and 2000 friends. I use Facebook professionally, so I monitor debates and public voices through my personal Facebook profile… and we have been trained to search effectively so that if there is a story trending in a particular geographic region we can search for people who have been posting something about it, in that specific area.

In relation to the immigration debate, the editors who emphasise the importance of an active social media presence, have to be constantly aware of particular people who are active in such debates. Editors can then try to include them in their network, or invite them to write something for the newspaper. However, this is sometimes a complicated task, as this editor explains:

> On Facebook, you don't always know where the most interesting debates are. Is it on the page of Kjetil Rolness[ii]? Is it somewhere else? Are you friends with that person? Have some of the participants blocked you? Can you read everything that is there?

The growing dependence on Facebook, in other words, creates some extraordinary opportunities for editors to include new

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ii   Rolness is a commentator who writes for the tabloid newspaper Dagbladet. He also has a very active Facebook-page where immigration is frequently debated.

and original voices, while at the same time the increased importance of global intermediaries creates some dilemmas. Facebook, for instance, operates with its own rules for participation including the right to delete posts that contain certain forms of nudity, hate speech or violence. While these kinds of norms to some degree coincide with the normative foundations outlined in the rules for participation in the comment sections of the news media, the differences can also sometimes lead to conflicts in terms of what is understood to be legitimate boundaries. Such disagreements became apparent when Facebook deleted the Pulitzer Prize winning photograph of the 'Napalm girl'. This move was highly criticised by newspaper editors who viewed it as an unacceptable form of censorship and it led to international discussions about the consequences of changing editorial power and responsibility.

Diversity and deviance

It is an overall goal for editors working in the news media to facilitate and to stimulate a diverse and fact-based debate on immigration, mirroring the professional norms outlined in the *Code of Ethics*. Editors also generally defend a liberal stance on free speech, stressing the importance of arguments being confronted with counter arguments, and advocating the need for controversial and original opinions in the public conversation in the news media. This view is by some informants defended in terms of the 'pressure cooker' discourse, claiming that it is better to let 'deviant' voices participate in the wider public debate (particularly in the comment sections), rather than pushing them into smaller forums where their viewpoints are not challenged, and which consequently could work as echo chambers. A competing perspective, which editors also take into account, acknowledges the potentially negative effects

of allowing certain viewpoints or forms of argumentation into the general public debate. While such considerations can of course be difficult to navigate between, they are a natural part of the professional role of an editor.

What is meant by 'deviance' in the immigration debate is not given, but rather a part of the ongoing struggle concerning what is evaluated as acceptable or unacceptable at a given time and in a given context by different people. Hate speech or other kinds of illegal forms of utterance are of course not allowed in any format in the news media (see chapter 2). Furthermore, editors do not generally accept crude generalisations of minority groups, particular not in the pre-edited formats, and they are wary of insulting or offensive language. At the same time, boundaries are often not clear-cut and editors sometimes face difficult choices as to whether or not they should publish a controversial text, and that might push the boundaries for what is understood to be legitimate to express in public. Of course, such viewpoints might be raised elsewhere, on blogs, online forums or alternative media sites that operate with their own boundaries for what is deviant or not. Editors in the news media have to balance between pushing and protecting the boundaries in the public debate to stay relevant - and can consequently be criticised for both strategies.

One example provided by an editor in a national newspaper illustrates this kind of dilemma. The blogger, 'Fjordman', became well-known to the wider public after the terrorist, Anders Behring Breivik, claimed he was inspired by Fjordman writing. Fjordman later wrote a book sponsored by the Free Speech Foundation to present his side of the story, and both the decision to finance the book as well as the book itself were highly criticized by commentators in the media. In the

aftermath of the book's release, the editor in question published a text by the blogger, but was unsure about whether or not it should have been:

> Sometimes I think it is difficult to draw the boundaries. For instance, when Fjordman published a book, it was obvious that we had to write about it, and when he received a lot of public criticism he had to be given the chance to reply. But one of the texts he wrote and that I chose to publish at the time, I would perhaps normally not have published. I let him use his form of rhetoric to show what he actually stands for, but it was on the borders of being racist.

The question concerning whether or not to publish a text that might be considered deviant, as alluded to in the quote, then, is considered in relation to the particular context. The evaluation in this case was based on the normative ideal that the blogger should be able to respond and defend himself to public criticism as well as stimulating a public debate about his viewpoints. The editor explains that the risk of publishing such texts is that the boundaries for what is defined as legitimate might be stretched or even normalised at one side of the spectrum. In other debates about immigration, the editor explained, it is important that different perspectives are presented and that there is some kind of balance between opposite viewpoints over time. However, the concern is that in a polarized debate a kind of 'false balance' might develop if the more extreme views, in this context representing the radical right-wing side of the political spectrum, is allowed to represent one of the poles in the debate, while more moderate liberal viewpoints represent the opposite pole. Of course, what constitute 'radical' or 'extreme' is again a matter of negotiated boundaries.

Another point is that it is sometimes difficult to draw the line between acceptable forms of scepticism and criticism in the

immigration debate and unacceptable forms of racism, because such boundaries are often blurry, as illustrated by this editor:

> I sometimes find it hard to define when something can be considered racism. What is racism? I do not think it is easy to define. That is why I call it 'muddy'. Because there is something there, but you cannot put your finger on it and call it pure racism either.

This editor further points out that it might be the totality of the opinions raised in a particular debate, across platforms - and particularly non-editorially driven ones - that might in sum turn out to be racist or interpreted as racist. Of course, editorial gatekeeping takes place within a fragmented public sphere, and editors can only influence and control the debate that takes place within their own newspaper and their own comment sections. Furthermore, some editors also point out that terms like 'racism' or 'racist' are challenging because they have been used in the debate not only to pinpoint actual xenophobia or hate speech, but also to silence opponents. People defending strict immigration and integration policies have claimed that it has been difficult to raise such perspectives in the public debate, and that critical viewpoints against immigration often have been denounced by a left-wing, politically correct cultural elite for being uncivil or racist (for a more thorough discussion, see chapter 9). 'Cultural elites' in the debate, the argument goes, is motivated by the need to be perceived as 'good people' and consequently they base their arguments on humanitarian grounds rather than political and economic challenges and solutions (Brox, 1991; Brox, Skirbekk, & Lindbekk, 2003). This kind of reasoning was again part of the public discourse in 2015 when a large number of refugees and migrants fled to Europe. Sylvi Listhaug, the Norwegian Minister of Immigration and

Integration, argued that those who promote restrictive and realistic immigration policies are labelled as 'awful people' and that those who defend a liberal position are viewed as 'morally good' (NRK, 03.11.2015). The minister also characterized the discourse on immigration as 'the tyranny of the good', referring to how liberal voices belonging to the left on the political scale have dominated the immigration debate in Norway.

Several editors acknowledge that it used to be difficult to present critical arguments against immigration, particularly in the elite debate, due to the potential stigma of being labelled a racist. However, many editors claim that there has been a significant shift in such dynamics after the refugee crisis in 2015, as expressed in this quote:

> During my time in the newspaper, there has been a distinct change. I wouldn't say it was a taboo, but people were met with a lot of condemnation if they defended critical perspectives on immigration. Now it is almost the other way around, you risk getting get ridiculed if you present a liberal point of view. So, I think the hegemony in the debate has shifted.

Why such hegemonic shifts occur, is of course difficult to explain. Editors in the study point to how the political climate changed in the aftermath of the migrant and refugee crisis. As chaos occurred at the national border in the north of Norway as well as other places in Europe, the situation seemed out of control and the rhetoric changed across the political spectrum. The focus moved from the humanistic frame of helping refugees, to the shortcomings of the political system, as well as concerns about how high levels of immigration would impact society economically, socially and culturally. In particular politicians from the Progress Party that historically has defended strict immigration policies, including the Norwegian Minister of

Immigration and Integration, used strong words to describe the situation and the challenges the migrant and refugee crisis represented to the Norwegian society.

Finally, many editors believe that the debate about immigration has become more diverse than it used to be. They point to the fact that new voices have joined the public conversation, and that this partly is a result of effective editorial strategies. Several editors in the study argue that they work hard to find moderate and original perspectives that can illuminate and enlighten the debate in different ways. Stimulating a fact-based debate is viewed as an important part of their professional responsibility in the fragmented media landscape, and particularly so because many editors believe the overall debate is highly polarized. Many editors argue that they work strategically to include certain groups who are less represented in the debate, like young people, women and minority voices, and that they believe this has contributed to the debite climate in a positive way, as this editor points out:

> With a few exceptions, we have managed to establish a relatively reasonable, not stigmatizing kind of debate in a field that is incredibly emotional. It has been one of my strategies and probably for others too, to include voices from different minority groups … This is something I feel has contributed positively to the discussion climate and to the way we talk about these things in Norway. We have many immigrants that I feel have strengthened the quality and made the public debate more concrete. There is a decrease in words such as "politically correct" and other meta-descriptions. We have managed to get closer on peoples lives, and younger minority voices have particularly contributed in a positive way. I believe this is a good and a very smart editorial strategy.

Recent studies exploring this from the perspectives of people with a multicultural background, support this claim: many feel

that editors in the news media are eager to get them to take part in the public debate (Midtbøen & Steen-Johnsen, 2016). In other words, access to the public debate is not necessarily an issue for minorities with a multicultural background. However, other challenges like 'ethnification' and ascribed identities might be prevalent (Bangstad, 2013; Eide, 2011), as well other kinds of repercussions (see also chapter 8).

Pushing and protecting boundaries

In this chapter, we have explored editorial perspectives on the public debate, with particular focus on immigration discourses. We have focused on how editors talk about their own role as editors in a fragmented public sphere and how they interpret their responsibilities as gatekeepers. We have argued that gatekeeping is most often *not* about guarding the boundaries of freedom of speech in the legal sense of the word. Hate speech, defamation and threats do occur, most often in comment sections, but this is not regarded as a huge problem by a majority of the editors, indicating that such forms of problematic expressions to a large degree take place outside the editorial driven media. Rather, editorial gatekeeping includes a varied set of practices, guided by the ethical norms embedded in professional journalism. Such norms are grounded in ideals like pursuing diversity, balance, originality, factuality and quality. The adherence to such ethical norms is an important part of how editors legitimize their position and authority in a fragmented public. Secondly, editors defend a liberal take on free speech, however, boundaries are of course drawn. Editors explain that it can sometimes be challenging to determine if an opinion crosses the line for what is understood as legitimate, because boundaries are blurry, dynamic and dependent on contextual factors. If editors opt to publish a text that they feel is

particularly controversial or deviant, they might follow up with a competing or supplementary standpoint the next day. Such practices illustrate how editors both push and protect the boundaries in the public debate at the same time. Furthermore, editors legitimise their position by highlighting their responsibility to stimulate diversity. Many editors, particularly from national publications, claim they actively seek out interesting and new voices in social media, and that they have been particularly concerned about getting people with a multicultural background to participate.

Finally, editors work in a rapidly changing media landscape and their responsibilities have in a relatively short time expanded from predominantly administrating the opinion pages of the newspapers, to managing a variety of services. Competition and collaboration with global intermediaries like Facebook have become even more imperative in the last couple of years. An important aspect of editors' work in the near future is how successful they will be in utilizing the social media logic where new forms of inclusion and exclusion mechanisms are at play. Novel forms of curation and navigation practices are necessary to detect interesting debates and to invite new voices to write for the newspaper. Such skills and knowledge are essential to protect their role as gatekeepers and agenda-setters in a fragmented public sphere.

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