Studying transnational (media) events

Some experiences

Elisabeth Eide & Risto Kunelius
From Cartoons to COPs

The Mohammed Cartoons story (2006-2008)
- Event emerging in a medium addressing a national debate
- Local to global: transnational research, contrapuntal readings

MediaClimate (2008- )
- About a global crisis (from global to local?)
- Concentrating on transnational top-organized events (COPs)

Both
- Media actors, civil society actors, state and business actors.
- About the commons (resources; transnational media commons)
What is an “event”, anyway?

**Ritualistic**
- Planned (but with a sense of contingency)
- Prescheduled
- Recognized by participants as an event
- Scripted – by designated parties
- Offering stable roles for participants
- (Structurally) reproductive

**Transformative**
- Contingent (but with a sense of familiarity)
- Unexpected
- Recognized by participants as meaningful while ongoing – or after
- Scripted by multiple stakeholders
- Suggesting role changes
- (Structurally) transformative potential

The COP-process as reproductive and scripted on the one hand .... but transformative and productive on the other??
Which COPs are "events"?
Historical events (Sewell, 2001)

- Rearticulation of already dislocated structures
- Transformation of culture: re-signification
- Particular conditions
- Heightened emotions
- Collective creativity
- Punctuated by ritual
- Rearticulations need authoritative sanction
- Spatial and temporal

Durable transformation of structures: real and symbolical)
What makes an event a “media” event?

- Coproduced by media and other institutionalized actors, planned for media consumption
- Performative preparation by participants
- Scripted: expected “dramatic” moments and episodes inside the event
- Roles for participants:
  - at the stage
  - Between stage and audience
- Reproduction of identities, communication as confirmation
- Unfolding (partly) in the media
- Performance driven
- Scripted by mediated interaction
  - Strategic use of episodes and the “sub-events”
  - Mediated opportunity structure?
- Role changes, improvisation?

Performed for somebody? Who performs for who in the COP?
Actors to each other, imagined national audiences, imagined global public(s)
What about the “global” in “global media events”

- **Domestication**
  - Links to local actors/fields
  - Links to local structures of meaning and routines
    - Political field, culture, civic epistemologies
  - Mass media legacy: the "nation" as the audience and key concept of legitimacy

- **Global/ transnational**
  - Global /transnational actors and networks
  - (Emerging) transnational structures of meaning and shared experiences
  - New media landscape

What makes global media events "global" is the co-existence of the both dimensions? Every "move" or performance has multiple audiences and dimensions? Increased complexity? Increased contingency of mediated events?
Preconditions for transnational research on media covering climate

- Point of departure: a variety of research traditions (common denominator: content analysis)
- Access to which media (archive access, comparability): which media are dominant/trustworthy in each country?
- Choice of newspapers (leanings, print vs online),
- What to measure, reliably, how?
Transnational research methodology: triangulation, intersectionality

- Content analysis, newspapers.
- Framing analysis, theme analysis
- Participant observation – Durban Summit 2011
- Conferences with journalists and media researchers (Bangladesh 2013): Field Dialogues.
- Genre studies (editorials), discourse analysis
- Interviews with IPCC scientists, journalists, communicators
- Drawing on some national projects
- Contextualization. Grouping of countries.
Division of labour – cross-fertilization

- Content analysis: all
- COPs: visuals (Germany, Norway, Pakistan)
- COPs: «Saving rain forest»: Brazil, Indonesia, Norway
- COPs: Gender (Indonesia, Pakistan etc.)
- COPs indigenous (Sweden, Canada)
- Networking: Bangladesh, Russia, USA
- Developing country narratives (IPCC, COPs)
- Best practices IPCC (some, few)
The COPs, then
Globalizing "public sphere" /publicity?

- National imagined communities
- Focused, hierarchial (mainstream)
- Newspapers, broadcasting
- Professional gatekeepers
- One-directional

- Transnationalized
- Networked spaces (plural)
- Multimodal
- De-professionalized
- Interactive

......Newspaper coverage still a valid ENTRY POINT for analysis...
  • ATTENTION: Public agenda setting, locally and globally.
  • ACCESS: Recognition of relevant actors and stakeholders?
  • INTERACTION: Dialogic potentials and pitfalls of publicity?

• CONTINUOUS COUNTERFACTUAL POTENTIAL of "PUBLIC SPHERE"
  =>Empirically anchored debate about the quality of media performance
Access: stable roles

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- National political system
- Transnational political system
- Civil society
- Business
- Science, expertise
- Other
Access: diversity in place/domestication
The great demonstration in Copenhagen a good-spirited festival

A two kilometer long line of over 50,000 demonstrators

The climate march demanded big deeds

"The atmosphere here is just amazing"

HELSINGIN SANOMAT 13.10.2010
Taking a Call for Climate Change to the Streets

By LISA W. FEDERMAN

Legions of demonstrators flooded by international headlines on global warming descended on New York City on Sunday, Marching through the heart of Manhattan, a momentum of action for world leaders set out to galvanize the momentum at climate meetings in Copenhagen. The march turned into a movement, as people of all ages, races, and backgrounds joined to make their voices heard. The march was a powerful reminder of the need for action, as the world faces the challenges of climate change. The march attracted millions of people, and the message was clear: we need to act now to address the urgent issue of climate change and its impacts on our future.
Domestication in time

COPENHAGEN

DURBAN
## Domestication in time

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**VOICES AND ACTORS / STORY ORIGIN**
Domestications

- China and India consented to participate in any future agreement limiting emissions and play by the same rules as everyone else. Those nations are huge, and until now, have disclaimed responsibility for reducing them. Latest figures show that China and India each had emission increases of about 10 percent since 2009. Since 1999, China's emissions have tripled; India's nearly so. "Along with all other developing countries, China and India refused to sign on the legally binding reduction targets agreed to by industrial nations at the Kyoto conference in 1997" (New York Times, Dec. 16, 2011).

- (.. ) the lack of developed countries' political will will hinder cooperation on addressing climate change by the international community, Chen added.

- (...) In contrast, China, which does not have mandatory emissions cuts obligations under the protocol, has been making efforts in energy saving and emissions reduction, even though China's economic growth will certainly means more energy consumption. (Xinhua News, Dec. 14, 2011).
...Australia is now out of step with the global climate change mood. (...) 

Australia contributes only a tiny amount of human caused carbon dioxide output. (...) 

According to Climate Change Minister Greg Combet, for example, the outcome was “historic”. And then the there’s Greens’ deputy leader Christine Milne, who criticized the outcome as an unhelpful compromise. Milne took matters further by complaining about the numbers of Australian media representatives in Durban. A larger press contingent, Milne suggested, could have forced Australian delegates to aim for a bolder outcome.

Milne, not for the first time, misunderstands media’s role. Durban had delegates and cheerleaders by the thousand. It didn’t need more media (The Daily Telegraph, Dec. 13, 2011).

The passage of the Gillard government’s carbon tax last month leaves Australia well-placed to deal itself into any outcomes from Durban. The opposition’s reaction sounds woolly: that it will be 2020 before any international carbon market emerges, five years after Australia’s tax becomes an emissions trading scheme. Does that really matter? As the rich world’s biggest carbon emitter per person, Australia can claim some kudos for relaunching climate action just as the rest of the world has rediscovered its nerve (Sydney Morning Herald, Dec. 13, 2011).
Domestications

It is not right if people from thinly populated areas [periphery in Finland--RK] are made to pay for the fact that Finland was forced to accept further costs in order to save a global deal. This is a national burden which should not be made to be born only by one part of the population (Helsingin Sanomat, Dec. 16, 2011).

A Sweden that would dramatically raise carbon taxes and cause its industry to have a higher cost level that its competitors in other countries would primarily force the activity to move abroad. This would make it possible to lower the national carbon emissions while the global emissions would remain the same or even increase (Dagens Nyheter, Dec. 12, 2011).
The most important achievement of the extended summit was that the US and the developing countries which the Kyoto protocol did not include are now set to participate to the negotiations of the next climate pact (Helsingin Sanomat, Dec. 16, 2007).

However, many already brought to mind on Saturday that a complete deadlock was, despite everything else, avoided. And that now it can be said that there is a world-wide consensus that climate change is a threat and has to be stopped. In this respect, the change compared to the time let’s say a year ago, is a big one. Climate change negotiations are a process which proceeds step by step (Helsingin Sanomat, Dec. 20, 2009).

The long awaited Copenhagen climate summit two years ago failed badly, and last year’s meeting in Cancun was not able to repair the damage. This is why the climate negotiations ‘roadmap’ agreed on in Durban is an important achievement (Helsingin Sanomat, Dec. 16, 2011).
# Dialogue in the news

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**Voice combinations in news stories from Copenhagen**
There is no sign that any government is heeding these warnings. (..) Instead, the annual UN climate summits have become a game of brinksmanship, where every country holds out on making any promise at all to the last possible moment, while NGOs fret and fume and the world’s media watches in despair. One journalist who was covering his fifth summit this year asked hopelessly, “In how many ways can you write that nothing’s happening?”

(Joydeep Gupta, Thethirdpole.net, Dec 15, 2011).
So, not exactly really good news but...

- Resources of critical journalism abundant
- New alliances are possible
  - Journalists and civil society
  - Journalists and science
  - Journalists across borders
- Global-local fields and their complexity offers resources
- The events as a process of “learning” and doing differently?
- The role of research in all this?
Key question: Why so slow/little mitigation?

- Paradox: political field dominating journalism, but lack of political leadership (COPs: dominant politicians)
- Under-estimation of citizens' willingness and abilities
- Other-ism (blaming others for inaction)
- Journalist conventions/doxa preventing process coverage
- Field struggle: Media commercialization, individualization/intimidation
- Cognitive dissonance (among the privileged)
Ulrich Beck’s questions/theses (2010)

- Discourse of climate politics is an expert and elitist discourse – most people (poor) neglected.
- Will the support for ecological changes come from people whose life styles will be undermined?
- Social inequalities and climate change are two sides of the same coin, but climate change is both hierarchical and democratic
- The power of risk definition – risk politics.
- ()When staged in the media, global risks can become ‘cosmopolitan events’ (cosmopolitan solidarity)
- Does modernity stand for sin against nature, or possible to pioneer an alternative, green modernity: new vision of prosperity which will not be on economic growth held by those worshipping at the altar of the market
- Cosmopolitanism is a power multiplier (see the world through cosmopolitan eyes)
Reflections?

- What impact from different research traditions? (Reliability, validity issues). Plus: contextual knowledge
- Missing TV/radio and content analysis of social media (increasingly problematic). But historical comparative research
- The global vs. the regional (local media, Le Treut).
- Disconnecting climate from other areas of struggle? (Beck, Hulme)