

CHAPTER 17

Media concepts as a tool for analysing changing media

1	Introduction: New techno-economic paradigm and media	498
2	Media concept	500
2.1	First component: purposes, values and needs of publishers, audiences and journalists	503
2.2	Second component: Architecture of the whole and its parts.....	504
2.3	Third Component: Daily work practice	505
3	Building blocks of a media concept.....	506
3.1	Strategy and business models	506
3.2	Design and innovation research	509
3.3	Organisational learning	511
4	Media Concept Laboratory	513
4.1	Media Concept Laboratory in The Paper	514
5	Implied reader as a tool for the newsroom	519
5.1	The slippery concept of audience.....	519
5.2	Constructing the implied reader	521
6	Discussion.....	523
	References	525

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1 Introduction: New techno-economic paradigm and media

The media field has changed radically following innovations in information and communication technologies (ICT) and digital media. To understand this development and the production and use of new media products we need new models and concepts to analyse the complex and intertwined fields of media business, technology, media production, journalistic culture and audiences. We propose the notion of a media concept as a tool for analysing and developing media products and understanding their use. A media concept represents the logic that ties together the different perspectives, purposes and values of the participants involved in producing and consuming media products. A media concept can be used as an analytical tool for research or as a model and discursive tool for developing media products such as magazines, websites, newspapers and mobile media services. A media concept is unique for each media product and constructs the characteristics by which it differs from other media products.

A media concept is composed of three mutually constitutive components:

- the societal situation, purpose and values of a publisher, audience needs, journalistic culture and technology
- the organisational structure and division of labour and the architecture of the media product, e.g. a page plan of a magazine or newspaper
- the daily work practices and journalistic tools for addressing the reader's needs and interests.

Media concepts focus increasingly on the interests and needs of audiences or users and therefore the notion of an implied reader is a central concept in developing media content. The implied reader (e.g. Mary 32 years, single, lives in the city, managing position, travels and goes jogging) is a concept for journalists to help them understand the lifestyle and interests of their readers and plan the content and its form to fit audience needs and interests.

Several technological revolutions can be traced in the development of modern industrial societies. We have moved since the 70s from the age of oil (the automobile and mass production) to the present age of information and telecommunications. This technological change shapes society but society is also shaping technology.

Not all technological innovations are turned into commercial products and everyday use. What is technologically feasible may not be economically profitable or socially and culturally acceptable. Technological innovations do not just bring new products or services for consumers. Each technological revolution provides a set of generic technologies, infrastructures and organisational principles — a new techno-economic paradigm — which is capable of gradually modernising and increasing the productivity of the whole economy¹.

According to Perez^{1,2}, technological revolutions begin with an innovation and installation period and gradually mature into the deployment period until new radical innovations begin to challenge existing technologies and the techno-economic paradigm. The innovation period is characterised by constant innovation forced by investor expectations and fierce competition. Target markets are small and sophisticated and industry structures fluid. The established industries are pushed to modernise or they become obsolete and many companies disappear.

The media business is at present gradually moving into the deployment period in which the new digital media innovations are being developed into sustainable commercial products. Audience and media users become central in business models and new organisational structures and practices emerge. The deployment period is characterised by product and market expansion, successful business models relying on new technology-based products and services, stability of industry structures and wider target markets. In the deployment period business models focus increasingly on understanding audience needs and practices. Innovations change from high-risk technology push to innovations and services that are pulled by demand (ibid). Process innovations³ are necessary to keep the production functioning and to improve the ease of use of products.

The process of technological change depicted by Perez and others⁴⁻⁶ can be observed also when analysing the media industry and the challenges it faces. ICT is transforming the whole landscape of the media business, especially the business models as well as ways of production and consumption.

There are several technology-induced transformations emerging⁷:

1. More efficient ways for journalists and other media professionals to do their work.
2. New technologies that can transform the nature of storytelling and media content in positive and engaging ways, especially with younger audiences or with experiments with news story telling.
3. Transformations with implications for the management, structure and culture of media organisation.

4. Technologies that can transform the relationships with news organisations and their many publics, in particular their audiences, sources, funders, regulators and competitors. With the emergence of blogs and websites a fundamental question has emerged: what is journalism and who is a journalist.

In this chapter we describe the use of a media concept as a tool and model for researching and for developing a Finnish newspaper (called ‘The Paper’) whose editor-in-chief had decided to transform The Paper’s media concept from a traditional printed newspaper into a web-to-print publishing concept in 2006–2007. News would first be published on the revised website and therefore a new role for the printed Paper also had to be constructed. To help in the transformation we were asked to conduct a developmental research intervention called Media Concept Laboratory in The Paper.

In Section 2, the media concept and its three components are presented in more detail. In Section 3 we present theories from business, design, innovation, organisational learning research and activity theory which we have used to develop our notion of a media concept. In Section 4 the Media Concept Laboratory in The Paper is presented and in Section 5 we show how the concept of an implied reader was used to develop the content of the website and gain new readers. Section 6 summarizes our research and discusses future research challenges.

2 Media concept

“In all productive activities in the market economy there is a fundamental inner contradiction between the use value of a produced commodity and its exchange value in the markets. Each technological revolution profoundly changes the conditions of balancing these contradictory demands by enabling the creation of new kinds of use values, the reduction of costs, and a broadened exchange”^{8, p.158}.

To understand the ongoing complex changes in the media field we need new concepts and research approaches. We propose that it is fruitful to conceptualise organisations as activity systems which have historically and socially developed goals and purposes. In activity theoretical terms every organisation has an object of activity which materialises in some outcome — either as products or services^{8–10}. The focus on the object of activity has important implications for organisation studies as it “focuses attention on the organisation’s work, uncovers practices rather than beliefs, and draws attention to transitions and possibilities”¹¹. Object and outcome represent the social values behind an activity.

We have developed the notion of the media concept by combining input from different research fields (see Section 3 in this chapter) and our own experience as interventionist researchers of media organisations and work processes (See Chapter 1 in this book). Our notion of a media concept is based on the work of Virkkunen on “the concept of activity”^{12,45}, which can be defined as the purpose and values of an activity system, e.g. an organisation, the artefact or service produced and its production in the daily practice. A commonly shared concept of activity like a media concept makes it possible to better coordinate individual actions as the concept is “embedded in the structures and daily practices of the activity”⁸.

A new concept of activity can be difficult to create and implement successfully in a top-down manner¹³, because to accomplish the desired concept individuals must integrate their actions into the concept. Individuals should have an opportunity to influence the concept so that they have a possibility for creative input¹⁴. This tension between organisational coherence and individual freedom is also one of the main tensions in journalistic work.

Media concept is unique for each medium, e.g. a newspaper or a magazine. It combines the goals and values of the publisher and audience needs, journalistic culture, the principles of production, such as management practices, organisational architecture and division of labour, as well as the content and outlook of the product, the daily work processes and journalistic tools for addressing audiences. The media concept also includes the technological tools and publishing platforms as well as the historical and societal situation of the medium in question. The media concept is manifested in the object and outcome which exists on two levels: the individual level, e.g. writing a story for a magazine by a reporter, and the collective level of a media product, such as a newspaper which the activity system produces.

The object (purpose and values) in activity theory has a dual nature: it is at the same time something imagined, strived for and a concrete outcome. Objects are both mental representations and concrete outcomes. So the object is not fixed but transitional: “The object is both something given and something anticipated, projected, transformed, and achieved. In the transformation of the object, also the tools, or the mediating artefacts, are transformed.”^{15,18}

The object is a multifaceted construction. It can be characterised simultaneously^{16,17}:

1. as epistemic; objects of knowledge are open, question-generating and complex, and they are processes and projections rather than definite things¹⁸
2. as practice or technical as opposed to epistemic¹⁹
3. as a commodity — contradictory unity of use value and exchange value¹⁷
4. as a heterogeneous system consisting of different material entities (functional complexity or heterogeneous engineering)²⁰
5. as rhetorical and discursive²¹.

Creating and analysing a media concept deals with all the above-mentioned aspects, from projections and rhetorics to technology and material products to customers. The creation of a media concept involves a joint practice, which is a heterogeneous field of interests and negotiations between e.g. the publisher/owners, sources, readers; journalists, marketing and technology²². The object is internally contradictory: for example, the issue of profit vs. quality is a basic contradiction affecting the everyday practice as well as the content of media products. The object takes different forms according to the perspective of the actors²³. Profit and market share characterise management and marketing perspectives, also in media organisations. Providing “important” information is a typical perspective of newspapers and their journalists while many magazines also aim to provide useful everyday knowledge, interesting stories and entertainment and their object is to create lasting reader-ship contracts.

The media concept as a concept of activity is a form of collective knowledge. It helps to connect the parts and individual outputs of an organisation into a coherent whole. It helps individuals and groups to perceive the object of common activity and create commitment to the goals and values of the organisation. Understanding what the media concept is also makes it easier to create bridges between different parties involved in its production and consumption and their perspectives. For management, one of the central issues is how managers can fit together planning and steering which oscillates from the whole to parts and from parts to the whole¹⁴.

Compared to the notion of genre, a media concept as a specific magazine or newspaper can belong to a genre like women's magazines or consumer magazines, but the main difference is that genre definitions are fairly general descriptions of characteristics of media types. In comparison, a media concept defines the specific character of each individual media product and the ways they differ from each other, e.g. the numerous but different women's magazines²⁴.

Genre categories rarely have clear boundaries. Media products can also belong to simultaneously different genres. For example, magazines can be defined into genres according to their topics like fashion, cooking, child care or politics. The literary style is also one basis for genre definitions, e.g. an essay magazine or modern multi-voiced magazine. Another genre characteristic can be the visual style and material aspects, like the size or quality of the paper in the so-called glossy magazines. The financial foundation like that of a circulation-based consumer magazine or Zines (low budget publications funded by private individuals or groups), or the delivery channel like free urban magazines or internet publication, can also be used for genre categorisations²⁴.

Media concepts often have some common characteristic and can be classified according to the above-mentioned different broad genre categories. But the content and audience relationship makes each media concept unique within a genre. The choice of topics and their framing, visual form and style, financial basis, technological solutions, ways of addressing readers etc. distinguish different media concepts from each

other. For example, women's magazines have different media concepts, as audiences are targeted, according to age group, place of living and family obligations (married, single, with children) and lifestyle. In the rapidly changing media field, genre definitions are problematic because genres develop gradually and before some media type can be called a genre it has to be an established product so that the genre category e.g. a western movie can be agreed on²⁵.

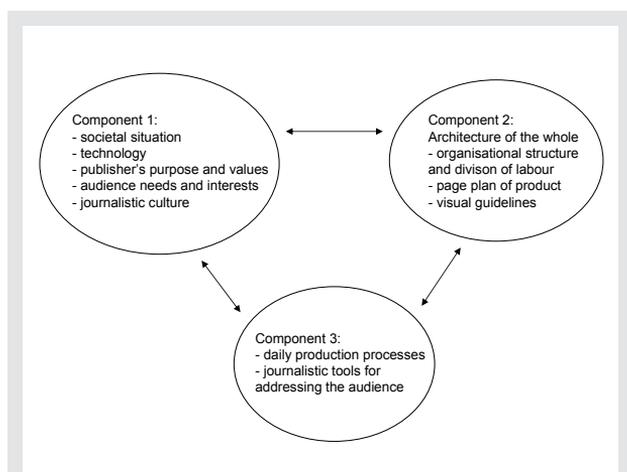


Figure 1. Components of a media concept.

A media concept has three components which are closely intertwined. To understand any media product — business, content, production and audience — we need to analyse all of the three components and their interactions. The three components are presented in Figure 1 and explained in more detail in their respective subsections. For discussion of media use research see Chapter 13 in this book.

2.1 First component: purposes, values and needs of publishers, audiences and journalists

To understand media in their historical and societal context, one needs to analyse the societal situation, the competitive field of media products, the varieties of audience needs and interests and changes in media use. The first component of a media concept includes the object — purposes and values — of the publisher, the needs and interests of the audience and the journalistic culture as well as technology. The publisher's values can be financial or ideological, or both. The publisher can have different and contradictory objects, like those concerning profit and quality and low newsroom costs. The object may also change over time — e.g. becoming more profit-centred as the ownership structures change. The values of the publisher co-exist with the values of the journalists and journalistic culture as well as those of the audience. These different perspectives and their meaning for the everyday journalistic work practices are constantly negotiated.

The business model of a media concept is a crucial part of any media organisation's continuous existence. The revenue can originate from a subsidy from the state, political parties or other interest groups or can be completely market-based, relying on subscription fees and/or advertising. The form of income also has a direct impact on the content of the medium.

The first level of a media concept is rarely discussed in the newsroom^{26,27}. The goals and values of the publisher are often more or less black-boxed in the news policy, content and outlook of the medium, as well as in its organisational structures and resource allocation. The societal meaning of the medium, audience needs and changes in society are also seldom discussed in newspaper newsrooms. They are hidden behind the professional values and rhetoric of objectivity and public service^{28,29}. Journalistic culture holds deeply ingrained ideas about what is good or bad journalism and normative conceptions about what is right or wrong for society.

Besides the publisher's goals and values, the journalistic values and goals are often not well understood. Rules about what to write, why and how become ambiguous over time and several historical layers of news policies and values can co-exist in the newsroom.

Audience knowledge and demographic statistics are diligently gathered by media companies for the purposes of advertising and circulation departments. There is increasing interest in knowing more about the lifestyles of the audience and methods like the RISC monitor³⁰ or Value Graphics have been widely used. However, the knowledge gathered does not always reach the newsrooms and journalists. Or it may be difficult to use in the daily practice when trying to decide what to write about and how. It often seems that journalists are in fact producing their own newspapers and each for a different audience — even within a single news department³¹. The journalistic culture and its heterogeneity^{32,33} deserves more analysis in media studies.

Table 1. First component of a media concept.

Component 1 of a media concept	Focus of analysis
Object of activity: Values and goals of the publisher(s), audience, journalists Societal context Technology History of the media concept	How the medium in question is situated historically in society and in the media field Strategy and business model: competition, revenue model, costs Journalistic culture Audience lifestyles and needs — implied reader Targeted audience for advertisers Technology: media platforms and convergence

We use the concepts of targeted audience and implied reader (see Section 5) to make a distinction between the audience as a target group for advertising and circulation and an implied reader as a concept helping journalists to think about the lifestyle and needs of their readers and to plan the content and ways of journalistic presentation to fit these needs.

2.2 Second component: Architecture of the whole and its parts

The second component of a media concept includes the architecture of the media organisation. It includes the organisational structure and the management and production principles that tie together the different elements of the organisation.

It also includes the architecture of the product — like the page plan, story types and the visual guidelines of a printed magazine, newspaper or a website. The page plan is the main guideline for journalists in newspapers and magazines. Media products usually have a standard order of content, specific combination of story types and visual guidelines helping to navigate the content. The page plan is specific to each media product. The order and size of the story topics and their styles become familiar to the readers and they are the building blocks of any serial publication. The page plan is a central part of the architecture that ties together the varied interests of e. g. the publisher, journalists, marketing staff, graphical designers, visual artists and photographers involved in the production of the media concept as an artefact.

Table 2. Second component of a media concept.

Component 2 of a media concept	Focus of analysis
Architecture of the whole structure and its parts A. Structure of organisation Management and production principles Division of labour B. Structure of the media product: Page plan Visual guidelines	Organisation and management structure, division of labour Media content Targeted audience vs. implied reader Page plan Story types Visual guidelines Navigation tools

2.3 Third Component: Daily work practice

The third component of a media concept concerns the daily practice of producing media content. It involves constant negotiations between participants, e.g. between advertising and circulation departments negotiating with the newsroom about the size of the news hole or deadlines.

Change efforts often fail because the third component of a media concept is taken for granted. The important but often neglected issues concern e.g. how to organise the work process in newsrooms, what is the planning and selection process of topics and story types, how to address readers in the texts, how to create and sustain editing procedures to ensure that the content retains its quality and what are the new competences and skills needed in the newsroom.

The everyday practice should be a central part of any developmental effort but it is the least glamorous. It is like housework — it has to be done daily and it consists of recurring routine actions and their supervision. Without the constant presence and vigilance of news editors, subeditors and page designers, the media product and the newsroom will surprisingly easily lapse into their old ways. Therefore, a trend towards a more controlled production process in the newsroom is emerging. We call it a planning and editing way of working (see Chapter 1 in this book). However, all too often the skills needed to produce more interesting stories for different audiences and on different technological platforms are often not developed systematically and it is presumed that journalists somehow — almost miraculously — come to possess the necessary competence. This is a grave mistake and the need for organisational learning and training in individual skills should not be underestimated.

Table 3. Third component of a media concept.

Component 3 of a media concept	Focus of analysis
Daily practice of the newsroom Daily management of newsroom — planning, editing and feedback Textual and visual tools for addressing audience needs and interests	Ethnography of work Disturbances and contradictions Writing genres to engage the implied reader Topics and frames Layout and pictures Planning, editing and feedback practices

Creating, analysing or developing media concepts are complex processes and also demanding research projects. In order to help the reader understand our reasoning in constructing the components of a media concept, both as a theoretical concept and a practical tool, we present in the next section some of the approaches that have influenced our concept formation and research approach.

3 Building blocks of a media concept

Media management, researchers and practitioners agree at least on one thing: the media business, products, content and media use are in turmoil. But here the agreement ends. Print media managers and shareholders worry about the downward spiral of newspaper circulations and advertising revenues. However, comparatively few print media companies have made the development of media technology and new products a central part of their business strategy. Only in the last few years have newspapers begun to make serious investments into online publishing in order to catch new readers and keep the existing ones⁷. New strategy and business models are appearing and an interest in the needs and media usage of readers and users is emerging as a basis for value creation. In this section we focus on the main theoretical research fields used to develop the notion of a media concept. They include strategy and business models, design and innovation research, organisational learning, literary theory and activity theory.

3.1 Strategy and business models

Increasing interest can be observed in the business literature in the role of customers or audiences as sources of value and revenue and in the importance of developing production processes and practices needed to transform strategic visions or business models into material artefacts or services.

In commercial media a business model in its simplest form describes a group of activities, which are accomplished in certain ways at certain times to produce profit³⁴. What this basic description entails in organisational and management practice is not at all simple, but complex, paradoxical and contradictory³⁵. Business models and their research differ in how they take into account the systemic nature of the business, the role of customers or audiences and the importance of how the production is organised.

There are several competing approaches towards understanding and building business models which can be divided into two major categories: value/customer-oriented and activity/role-related approaches. Osterwalder et al. use business models as conceptual views of a particular aspect of a specific company, not as a generic model or an overarching concept that can “describe all real world businesses”. Research interests have moved from classifying and listing business model components towards modelling business model elements and their relationships. The latest phase in research highlights how companies are applying business models³⁶. The business model of a media organization and the way it is applied in practice is incorporated in a media concept.

Business models and strategy models are sometimes used interchangeably but often the distinction is made that business models are used as a system showing how the pieces fit together. Strategy models also include competition and the company's positioning in the market³⁷. Another difference is that strategy is seen as including execution and implementation, while a business model is more about how the business works as a system³⁶. An important point is made by Osterwalder et al.³⁶ when they emphasise that customers are especially in the focus of new strategy models. They also highlight the importance of thinking about how the strategy is to be implemented in practice and how

business models cannot be strong or weak per se. On paper, they may seem sound and coherent but proof is only obtained after implementation.

Osterwalder et al.^{38,39} have developed a comprehensive list of issues that a business model has to address. In the model combining elements from traditional strategy and business models there are four central pillars which a business model has to include:

1. Product: What business is the company engaged in? What are the products and the value propositions or offerings?
2. Customer interface: Who are the target customers? How to deliver the products and services to customers? How to build a strong relationship to the customers?
3. Infrastructure management: How to make infrastructure and logistics perform efficiently? With whom? What kind of network enterprise is involved?
4. Financial aspects: What is the revenue model? What is the cost structure? What is the business model's sustainability?

Business models are important because they help to capture, visualise, understand, communicate and share the business logic. Osterwalder et al. understand business models as “a building plan that allows designing and realising the business structure and systems that constitute the operational and physical form the company will take”. The organization “is constantly subject to external pressures, like competitive forces, social change, technological change, customer opinion and legal environment³⁶. The strategy and processes are bound together in the model by product innovation, customer management, economics and management of the infrastructure³⁹.

Media concept is close to Osterwalder's thinking of business and strategy models. We conceptualize strategy as something that all members of an organisation are involved in, it is viewed both from a micro and macro perspective and it is seen as a social practice^{40,41}.

With the emergence of new technologies, global conglomerates and a variety of possibilities to arrange production processes, strategic thinking has been changing since Porter introduced his influential strategy model in the 1990s⁴². According to Porter's model, there are only two main strategies for organisation: one is based to produce standard products for mass consumption and the other is to produce specialised and expensive products for smaller groups of customers. However, especially ICT and developments in product design, production and marketing have made it possible for a company to have a multi-headed strategy where products made for mass consumption and more exclusive or targeted products can be produced by the same company. The more exclusive products can later become part of mass production offerings. Cummings⁴³ takes an example from the automotive industry where the airbag was first only provided in the most expensive cars but is now standard equipment even in the low price range. The design and production of exclusive also goods generate learning and skills which can be transferred and used in mass production processes.

The concept of an ambidextrous organisation could also be useful for media companies confronted with ICT-based digital publishing and its relationship to traditional

printed media and the dilemmas and solutions related to flexible strategy: The creation of ambidextrous organisations has been recommended as a solution to firms that seek to enter significantly different markets (often using new technology) and yet wish to take advantage of their existing competences and assets^{44,45}. However, it is often difficult to combine strategic agility with traditional organisations to produce continuous innovation and improvement⁴⁶. Therefore, new organisational structures and tight management of both traditional and agile subunits in the same company are needed⁴⁷.

Understanding customers is becoming increasingly important in the creation and implementation of strategy and business models. Companies are more and more seen to exist to create value for customers in networked value constellations^{48,49}. Researchers have claimed that value creation for the customer is tied to value capture for the company and the discourse has been shifting from emphasis on production to customer management and lately into thinking that consumption is the source of value^{50–52}. Understanding customers' behaviour and their daily life has become increasingly important for successful business models. New ethnographic methods are also being used by media companies to gain a better understanding of customers. Industrial design is using what can be called rapid ethnography, short visits to the everyday life of consumers^{53,54}.

Focusing on audience needs and creating a new understanding of the audience challenges the organisation's knowledge of the market and its customers' needs. This type of innovation can be contrasted with innovations challenging the technical capabilities of an organisation^{55,56}. ICT-based proliferation of media products, niche audiences and numerous publishing platforms seem to require both types of innovation.

Understanding the customers and media audiences — and their needs and media practices — is of crucial importance for media companies in the increasingly competitive media field. To be able to discuss audience needs, a common language has to be created in the organisation and newsroom. One such concept is the boundary object⁵⁷ which mediates between different views and participants. Boundary objects are created together e.g. as conceptual tools in a stepwise manner into more permanent devices of conscription⁵⁸.

Instead of relying only business or strategy models or journalistic news values in discussing audience needs and media products, we have developed the notion of a media concept as a boundary-crossing concept. The concepts of a targeted audience and an implied reader have also served as central concepts and tools in developing a common understanding of readers and their needs and interest and of what this implies for the medium in question (see Section 5).

Compared to business or strategy models a media concept covers a wider field. It encompasses strategy, business model, competition, customer relationships, revenue models, organisational principles, management, technology, daily production and the media product and its content. From the viewpoint of activity theory^{8,59}, a media concept is not a static description, but it opens up the historical development of the activity in question — the heterogeneous and complex relations between the components of the activity system, its internal disturbances and tensions and the historically developed contradictions (see Section 4).

3.2 Design and innovation research

A media concept can be used in analysing and understanding existing media products but also to develop new media concepts. In design literature the word concept is used in many different and even contradictory ways. Product design development usually refers to producing an object of exchange delivered to the market place⁶⁰⁻⁶². But one can speak of design concepts when design does not mean providing detailed documentation for production and delivering a product to the market. Design concepts can be simple sketches to study the appearance and structural alternatives or appearance of products being planned. A third use of the word concept in design is vision concepting, which outlines and communicates the company's brand and future strategy even though there will be no physical products in the near future. Concept design can also be used to create a shared vision, increase competence in problem solving or to improve brand image, influence consumers' acceptance level of future products and portray stakeholders' interests⁶³. According to Keinonen⁶³ improving an existing product does not fall into the domain of concepting.

Customers and users and understanding their needs play an important part in the literature on contextual design or use-centred design^{64,65}. The approach called conceptual design also emphasises need identification and analysis. Kroll⁶⁶ talks about "real needs" and thoroughly examined solutions to central systemic problems as opposed to perceived problems. Conceptual design can be implemented only after need identification. It is divided into technology identification, parameter analysis and concept selection. The design must also be realised as solid and concrete work configurations. The interplay from abstract thinking and generalisations to particularisation and realisation of technological objects and back is a key element of conceptual design. Parameters are critical issues of design. Parameters are used to describe in a general way "any issue, factor, concept, or influence that plays an important part in developing an understanding of the problem and pointing to potential solutions"⁶⁶. Concept design can come up with new innovations either at an abstract conceptual level or in the form of new technological solutions for creating new product and services to fulfil new needs of the customers.

Innovations have been described as either radical or incremental. The emergence of new digital technologies, web and mobile publishing as well as social media phenomena are forcing media organisations to rethink their strategy and come up with what could be considered radical innovations^{45,67,68}. Radical innovations open up new markets and possibilities but at the same time they threaten established institutions and organisations and give room for smart and agile upstart organisations and groups. Rapid changes in customer preferences, technology and products create a paradox for organisations: how to handle innovations like web-based or mobile publishing while maintaining the basic product and source of revenue like the printed newspaper. The difficulty is in handling both traditional and evolutionary processes and the different kinds of strategies and management involved.

Innovation and change in media organisations can be based on incremental as well as radical change, or both. New organisational and management capabilities are needed to compete both in the mature market and to develop new products and

services. In the mature market cost, efficiency and incremental innovation are central elements. In developing new products or services as radical innovations, speed and flexibility are critical⁴⁵.

Many media companies have ventured into web publishing thinking it was only a small incremental change of copying the content to the web and thus selling it twice. The practice of putting newspapers on the web as copies of the printed version is not technically or organisationally demanding. Print-based media organisations have been slow in taking advantage of the new possibilities offered by the developing media technology, and Boczkowski's assessment that media organisations entered the web only to protect their traditional markets⁶⁹ still seems accurate also in Finland.

Radical innovations force established organisations to reassess their business concepts, ask new sets of questions, draw on new skills, and solve new kinds of problems. New kinds of knowledge are needed and the value of existing knowledge can become severely undermined⁷⁰. Creating radical innovations and implementing them are challenging processes as illustrated by the automotive industry where structural and cultural inertia has come in the way of innovation. Resistance to change is "rooted in the size, complexity, and interdependence of the organisation's structures, systems, procedures and processes"⁴⁵. Cultural inertia comes from age and success and is not unusual in print media companies.

In the period of deployment, the mature phase of the new techno-economic paradigm, a useful concept seems to be the notion of an architectural innovation – meaning changes in the architecture of the product without changing its core components. It leaves the basic underlying knowledge of the components basically intact⁷¹. A core component is defined as a physically distinct portion of a product that embodies a core design concept. If we define page plan, story types and visuality as core concepts in media products, architectural innovation would mean e.g. different kinds of spin-off products and combinations of content from e.g. a printed newspaper or a magazine-like targeted niche media products delivered on different publishing platforms for different audience groups. Architectural innovation could mean web publishing, introducing newsletters for mobile phones and sending SMS messages for specific news topics.

In the case of *The Paper* (see Section 5), the new concept of web-to-print and the new website and mobile services are here regarded as an architectural innovation. The web-to-print model was a new media concept for the printed newspaper and its journalists. The content of the website was still mainly news and information, but the logic and timetable of publishing news instantly on the web to gain the interests of hundreds of thousands of readers changed the work processes in the newsroom, focusing on understanding the needs and interests of the reader's of the website and producing more engaging stories. In addition, the creation of web communities inside the website as well as blogs and instant feedback from readers challenged the journalistic identity and relationship with the audience.

3.3 Organisational learning

“There is reason to suspect that what we call cognition is in fact a complex social phenomenon. The point is not so much that the arrangements of knowledge in the head correspond in a complicated way to the social outside the head, but that they are socially organised in such a fashion as to be invisible. Cognition observed in everyday practice is distributed — stretched over, not divided among”⁷², p.1.

Creating a new media concept or developing an existing one challenges the existing knowledge and skills of an organisation. It also challenges the understanding of what knowledge is and how it is distributed and shared in the organisation. Successful architectural innovation requires two different types of knowledge: knowledge about the components of the product and architectural knowledge about how the components are integrated into a coherent whole^{71,73}. Central to architectural knowledge is also the need for updated information about the markets and customer needs and preferences.

The learning challenge for organisations is not only about developing individual skills or managing existing knowledge resources. It involves a transformation of work-related learning and creating new learning practices, with a close connection to the changing object of work and products. The learning practices of work communities need to change with the business and move from specific and fixed learning tasks to joint learning. This happens by first re-conceptualising the new object of activity and what it means for the joint learning of the work community. When the new object becomes stabilised, new learning practices need to be created to master the new object in the everyday work practices. This involves an expansion of the agency of work communities and involving them in the creation and implementation of the object of activity — products and services⁷⁴.

A media concept can be characterised both as an epistemic and practical object of activity. Creating media concepts is an exploration into an unknown area where the new concepts can be developed together with management, audience members and practitioners, e.g. in Media Concept Laboratories and then transformed into concrete products or services. The challenge is to create learning practices which can sustain the development of innovative products and ways of working.

In the turbulent markets difficulties in knowledge management and knowledge creation processes has increased in organisations. Individual and operative knowledge does not seem to provide enough tools for implementing change in times of deep qualitative changes in the strategies of organisations⁷⁵. To make strategy work in the everyday practice^{76,77} there is a need for a dialogue between management’s visions of the future and the everyday practices and its problems on the shop floor. In complex and fast-changing business environments the master-apprentice method or informal-formal learning distinction⁷⁸ does not bridge the need for a new kind of learning — what needs to be learned for the future. Knowledge should be seen more and more as connected to the present and future strategic targets of organisations and to be shared across organisation levels^{79,80}. Discussing, debating and understanding the strategic purpose and values and the business model need to be a part of the learning process also on the shop floor.

Organisational capability depends crucially on how it can combine knowledge and capabilities from different fields into a functioning entity, emphasises Virkkunen^{12,14}. In any business or production processes two different levels exist: functional levels and the principle which binds them together (ibid.). Henderson and Clark⁷¹ have called the binding principle architecture. The challenge for organisations is to recognise and understand the need for architectural knowledge. An organisation can have a lot of old, useful knowledge but the old knowledge and architecture can also harm an organisation in times of change. Stable architectural knowledge is embedded in the organisation's rules and routines and can be difficult to conceptualise, which is however a prerequisite for changing it. Henderson and Clark warn that if the core concepts of the design remain untouched, an organisation may mistakenly believe that it understands new technology⁷¹.

In the transformation of generalised types of work from handicraft to mass production to process enhancement to mass customisation and co-configuration, new kind of knowledge is needed. In mass customisation type of work there is a need to achieve product modularisation and rapid responses to market changes and this requires architectural knowledge⁷³. To be able to deliver products for mass customisation markets, both the modularity of products and the work process networks need to be understood at all levels of the organisation.

The digital revolution in the newsroom of old media companies is still often based on the historical structure and division of labour of the printed paper. According to Boczkowski⁶⁹, innovation patterns adopted by online newsrooms have been shaped by three main factors anchored in the world of print: the relationship with the print newsroom, the definition of the editorial function, and the representation of the public. Changing existing newspapers towards web-based publishing is thus more difficult than starting new websites or other digital media with new technologies and new personnel, without the backlog of old traditions and conceptions. On the other hand, "old" media organisations have an existing structure and a trained labour force for producing content as well the ability to harness technological resources and funding to enter the digital communication markets.

So how to manage change in situations where a fundamental shift in strategy occurs and the architecture of the organisational structure and knowledge begins to crumble? Often, responsibility is laid upon the shoulders of the management of existing knowledge and resources⁸¹. However, the key question is how to generate new knowledge and capabilities and how to distribute it through the different hierarchic levels of complex organisations⁸².

The media business is easier to see in relation to societal and human values than e.g. the production of nails and hammers, but strategic management should be practised everywhere as distributed practical wisdom, claim Nonaka and Toyama⁸³. They use the Aristotelian word *phronesis* to describe the importance of values and goals of business but also they emphasize the centrality of practical production of artefacts. According to them *phronesis* is the ability to understand what is considered good by individual customers during specific times and circumstances, but it also includes the ability to produce artefacts or services. *Phronesis* also entails involving all

levels of the organisation in the search for customer needs, problems and solutions.

Cultural-historical activity theory and the concept of expansive learning^{9,11,84} bridge the divide between the learning of individuals at work and organisational learning “beyond the skin of the individual, to examine collectives and organisations as learners”. The focus is not only on individual learning but on multi-organisational or inter-organisational networks. Expansive learning begins with questioning the present activity, its object and ways of working. In expansive learning⁸⁴ the outcomes are the expanded objects of work, new collective work practices, including practices of thinking and discourse and also learning.

Expansive learning needs time and space, concepts and models for analysing, problematising and discussing work. These have been provided in the developmental interventions of the Change Laboratory method. The Media Concept Laboratory is based on the Change Laboratory method created in the mid-1990s by Virkkunen and Engeström^{10,12,85–87}.

In the next section the basic concepts and an example of the Media Concept Laboratory method is presented and the way it was used in the Paper Fall 2006 to transform the media concept of the printed newspaper into a web-to-print publishing media concept.

4 Media Concept Laboratory

The media concept and its three components form the basis of the interventionist research methodology we call Media Concept Laboratory. In Media Concept Laboratories, solutions to complex problems are not expected to come only from the top management, as is common in many management theories (for a discussion, see e.g. Kaplan and Henderson⁸⁸). There are multiple solutions to problems and different paths to travel in the future. Therefore, in Media Concept Laboratory sessions, management, marketing, technology department, production and newsroom discuss together the three components e.g. competitive media field, publisher’s interests, business model, journalistic values and audience needs. The focus is on the rapidly changing media use and the needs of the audience(s).

The object (purpose and values) of a media organisation is often first articulated by the publisher — whether in a media company or by a non-commercial citizen’s group. It is acted upon, translated and transformed in the activity system and its daily practice into an artefact, like a newspaper, magazine, SMS message or a web-site aimed at fulfilling the needs of the audience. However, a media concept is not only a top-down concept — it is created in the daily practice of its production, in constant negotiations between the different participants of the media organisation and the audience. In trying to understand or develop media concepts one also needs to study the object and its outcome — e.g. a magazine and its content and the organisational principles (communities, division of labour, rules and tools) and the flow of the daily practice and its disturbances.

The Media Concept Laboratory is a room or space furnished with a set of instruments for analysing problems and bottlenecks of the work practice. A work unit or team uses the laboratory, initially with the help of an interventionist. The interven-

tionist plays an active role in chairing the discussions and planning the sessions^{85,87}.

The heterogeneous and complex process of producing a website and a printed newspaper in *The Paper* was studied with multiple methods like interviews, videotaping workdays, meetings and shadowing the participants. The results of the different data gathering methods were presented at the Media Concept Laboratory as “mirror” material to analyse and discuss ways of working and communicating and to design together new ways of thinking and working. The aim was not to produce a website in ways decided in advance by outside researchers or the top management but to debate and develop the new media concept in an open-ended discussion. In Media Concept Laboratories, together with the researchers and practitioners, a new object for the activity is constructed — what is to be produced, how and, most importantly, why. The object of the activity is a multi-voiced and socio-material construction. This complexity calls for a reflexive^{89,90} and participative ethnography with multiple methods and sites as well as multiple timescales in data gathering and analysis of the practice.

The first Media Concept Laboratory was conducted in *The Paper* facing challenges in transforming its web-publishing concept*. The second Laboratory site was the printed newspaper needing a renewal after daily news had been transferred to the web. The third Media Concept Laboratory was conducted in a magazine which was in a declining circulation loop and needed a renewal of its concept. The fourth Laboratory was conducted in 2008–2009 in a national third-sector organisation that was creating a new community-based website and at the same time also renewing its magazine.

In this section we describe the Media Concept Laboratory method used in the implementation of the new web-to-print media concept in *The Paper*. We discuss how the central concept of an implied reader was constructed and taken into use in *The Paper*.

4.1 Media Concept Laboratory in The Paper

In *The Paper* the media organisation’s strategic shift into web-to-print publishing had been decided by the editor-in chief and the publishing company’s top management in late spring 2006. The new media concept as an artefact and service was to be created together with the newsroom management, practitioners and journalists, IT department and marketing staff, and the new web site was to be opened in October.

The Media Concept Laboratory began with a day-long seminar at the beginning of September 2006 with the newsroom management, journalists, technology and marketing staff. The editor-in-chief of the newspaper discussed the financial targets of the new web-to-print model (W2P) in which news would be published first on the website. At that stage, *The Paper*’s website consisted of just a summary of the main news of the paper and some material from news agencies. It was produced by a single person working from nine to four on weekdays.

* The research was funded by Helsingin Sanomat Foundation in 2006–2007. Satu-Mari Korhonen and Suvi Hämäläinen also worked as researchers in the project.

In our initial field notes from the September seminar we already listed several crucial challenges to be addressed during the change process. These were not typical only for the Paper but central issues in any effort to change media products and the way they are produced. The four crucial issues we thought need to be addressed in the Media Concept Laboratory were:

1. The newsroom did not have a shared idea of whom they were writing for nor what were the reader's interests, what level of expertise could be expected of the readers, what were the supposed differences between the readers of the printed Paper and the web site.
2. The newsroom did not have a shared vocabulary for discussing their work and the new media concept.
3. To accomplish the new strategy new tools and concepts were needed to make the vision a shared practice in everyday work. The journalists were used to talking only about the importance of news topics, not about reaching potential new readers and serving their interests.
4. The identity of journalists was focused on the traditional journalistic role of transmitting important news to the readers. There seemed to be only one major type of text for the journalists — the traditional news story. And the journalists thought that they knew best what is important for the readers and the society.

W2P was a new media concept in The Paper and meant changes also in the way journalists worked — everybody was expected to write both for the website and the printed paper during the day. The new website was expected to eventually attract hundreds of thousands of readers, about 10 times more than The Paper's circulation. This in turn meant that the content, the ways of writing and the layout of website would have to be redesigned to attract a much larger readership and engage them in the web community that the Paper was offering a platform for.

The hotly debated issue of starting a dialogue between journalists and readers was included in the new concept. It meant e.g. blogs written by the journalists, by outside experts or the readers, the possibility for readers to comment on the stories, journalists participating in online discussions etc. The change involved was so big that it can be called a new media concept, as it encompassed changes in the whole activity system — from the new object to new technological tools and rules for stories, division of labour and community, meaning also a new community between journalists and readers.

The tension between business values and journalistic values was not explicitly debated nor did it become a central topic in the laboratory sessions or other discussions. The financial motives of the owners were not questioned as it was thought to be reasonable that a The Paper should cover its costs. The main tension in the newsroom emerged between different conceptions of good journalism, how to attract new readers and the issue of the identity of news journalists.

The of web-to-print workshops and the consequent Media Concept Laboratory were conducted in The Paper from September to December 2006 as a set of 2- to 3-hour sessions every 1-2 weeks. Because of the time constraints before launching the

CHAPTER 17

new web site, we first arranged four sessions as media concept workshops. The reason for the workshops was that The Paper had only four weeks to finalise the website and start the daily real-time production. Workshops were a shortened version of the Media Concept Laboratory, mostly attended by people launching the new website. Six reporters, three managing editors, AD and technical site manager met in a laboratory session once a week for four weeks to plan the new media concept and once a week to accomplish the tasks between the sessions. The sessions were planned and the discussions led by the authors. Participants carried out developmental tasks between the sessions. The suggestions from the working group meetings were discussed every Friday at the weekly morning meeting of the whole newsroom.

The workshop sessions were structured in the same way as the later Media Concept Laboratories, but there were fewer participants and fewer sessions as well as less time for discussions and experimentation.

In the first workshop session we discussed issues of the first component of the media concept and started with the goals of the publisher and the values of journalists (component 1 of a media concept). The Paper and the new website were to bring in more revenues — this was an explicit demand from the publishing company.

During the first week, the discussion focused on the values and goals of the publisher and the necessity and ways of constructing a new implied reader for the website, with the aim being to gain 300 000 weekly readers instead of the 30 000–60 000 visitors of the present website.

The second week was devoted to the second component of a media concept — the architecture and visual guidelines of the new website and the specific characteristics of the implied reader (see Section 6). During the third week the group produced new story guidelines for the web and rearrangements in the work process and daily practices (levels 2 and 3 of a media concept). The fourth week was used to check that everything needed to launch the new website was in order.

During the first month, the content for the new website was produced by six journalists who worked on the website in morning and evening shifts, with 1-3 person per shift. A web news editor was in charge of the web and sat next to the paper's news desk and news editor. The rest of the newsroom was to be trained during the first month and to rotate after training in weekly shifts of three persons to produce stories for the web. Journalists were also expected to deliver content for the website and also write about the same topics for both the web and printed newspaper.

Media Concept Laboratory sessions were conducted for the whole newsroom after the launch of the new website in early October and they lasted until the end of 2006. They were conducted as a set of five 2- to 3-hour sessions, every two weeks. The newsroom and its management, the editor-in-chief and representatives of the advertising and circulation departments participated in the sessions. Between the sessions the newsroom worked with several developmental tasks which were then discussed in the laboratory sessions and weekly Friday meetings. The editor-in-chief participated in the sessions, discussing the newsroom's ideas for ways of building the website with the journalists. The final decisions on how to proceed were made by him and the representative steering group and were reflected upon in the subsequent Laboratory sessions.

First session: Disturbances, media concept and engaging the readers

At first we discussed the financial and journalistic reasons presented by management for changing the media concept. We also gathered a wall full of post-it notes of disturbances from the participants. The disturbances were then divided into six categories of content, visuality, work process, advertising and circulation, technology and skills/training. Three task groups were to propose solutions in the next session for solving disturbances in content, visuality and work process. These groups became permanent subgroups for the Media Concept Laboratory. As a developmental task for the next session, the newsroom members were asked to write down facts and their experiences about changes in the Paper during the last 10 years. Activity system and media concept were introduced as theoretical concepts.

Second session: History of the Paper

According to the participants, the developmental efforts of The Paper had been difficult to understand in the newsroom. The measures taken had changed once or twice a year and were not clearly communicated to the newsroom. The Paper had not been profitable and the workforce had been cut by half in ten years. There were several differing conceptions in the newsroom about the object of work and there seemed to be several historical layers of thinking, e.g. about content and audience. The task for the next session was to analyse in small groups what conceptions of the readers were visible in the stories of the newspaper and the web site.

Third session: Historical analysis of the object and negotiating a commonly shared concept of an implied reader

The conditions for creating continuous readership contracts were discussed in this session. We discussed and modeled changes in the journalistic work, moving towards fulfilling audience needs instead of just focusing on one's own story. It became clear that new kinds of stories and a new visual outlook were needed for the web.

The task group consisting of reporters proposed the new implied reader Rita, aged 31. This raised a lot of heated discussion about personal and journalistic values as well as quality journalism vs. tabloidization (see Section 5). The proposal to create a more dialogical relationship with the new web audience was also rejected by some journalists. A new visual outlook for the web was presented by the AD, and the editor-in-chief presented suggestions for new ways of organising news work for the web, based on ideas of the work process development subgroup of the newsroom. Participants were instructed to gather good and bad examples of web journalism from the web site for discussion in the next session.

Fourth session: Journalistic and visual concepts of the website

The topics of this session were the implied reader, activity system and ways of creating readership contracts. A lively discussion developed around the examples of good and bad journalism in the web. Making interesting headlines and using different writing genres, besides the simple news pyramid of putting the most important facts at the beginning of a story, became important targets for developing the web (compo-

ment 3 of a media concept). These were also discussed in connection with the implied reader Rita and her assumed interests. Redrawn organisational plans were presented by the editor-in-chief.

Fifth session: Developing work processes

Readership needs and Rita's lifestyle were elaborated in more detail. The contradiction between the management's decision to produce a new kind of medium and the old values of factual news journalism in print media again resulted in some arguments from a group of older journalists. The contradiction was modelled with a four-square diagram depicting different forms of journalistic agency on the horizontal axis of flexibility vs. rigidity and on the vertical axis individual vs. collective production of the website.

A clear majority supported the collective and flexible mode of producing the website. This meant that everyone should rotate in the web shifts and also provide short news pieces of their stories meant for the printed newspaper. In the event of breaking news, task groups for the web would be formed from print journalists. Later in the spring the web journalists became a permanent group instead of rotating in shifts. The specialized web group consisted of two assistant editors and a group of about 10 journalists who worked from 7.00 to 22.00 in three shifts every day of the week.

The possibility to talk and debate was of extreme importance also outside the laboratory sessions from the start and it was decided to construct a new internal blog for the newsroom, where everyone could express their ideas, doubts and thoughts. It was also a forum where the editor-in-chief participated. Another tool for communication and discussion was also devised which worked as a repository of more permanent information for the newsroom as a Sharepoint data bank was taken into use. There we placed quite extensive memos from the Media Concept Laboratory sessions, up to 8–9 pages long, including our slides of concepts and models used in the discussion. The main phases and suggestions and conclusions of the lab session were also included. We wanted to ensure that everybody would keep track of what was discussed and when and how one could voice one's opinions. These auxiliary tools could be one reason why the attendance remained quite high in the weekly newsroom meetings and Laboratory session. 15–24 persons attended each session out of the newsroom staff of 35 persons.

One can see from the short description above that the discussion and its relation to the three components of a media concept intertwined in the Media Concept Laboratory sessions. Journalists were quick to jump from principles and structures into details and implementation, and vice versa.

In this Media Concept Laboratory the change seemed so fundamental that we created several subgroups to deal with the change. These subgroups, including a steering group, visibility group, technology development group, work process group, improving news room management group and web content group reported their ideas and proposals for discussion both in the laboratory sessions and weekly newsroom meetings as well as for the steering group leading the change effort.

One of the lessons of this Media Concept Laboratory was that more attention should have been paid to the management of the newsroom and its relations with

the rest of the organisation. So, in December and January we focused on developing a planning and editing way of working, which was implemented the following spring when a new set of Media Concept Laboratory sessions was conducted to transform the printed version of The Paper.

Audience and advertiser needs are an essential part of modern business models of media companies. Technology has made it possible to target even small niche groups in print and media, so it is essential to gain knowledge of how different media are used and why. The demographic data amassed by marketing departments usually addresses readers as target groups for marketing and seldom reaches the newsroom. Ethnographic audience research is only used by the biggest media companies as a means to produce information on the real life situations and choices made about media use in everyday life of the audiences. This information is then used to help fulfill the needs and interests of various audience groups.

To help the newsroom and marketing staff understand the lifestyles and interests of the readers we used the concept of an implied reader, which cuts through all the three components of a media concept. After some heated discussions the chosen implied reader began to influence the content and outlook of the website and the way stories were written and presented on the web pages. In the next section, we present the concept of an implied reader as a central concept and tool in the Media Concept Laboratory sessions and daily work.

5 Implied reader as a tool for the newsroom

5.1 The slippery concept of audience

The focus on the audience and its needs runs through the three levels of a media concept. Without creating content that interests the audience(s) there will be no revenue from advertising or circulation. Magazines have seen the interests of the audience as central issue in their business models from the 18th century. On the other hand, news journalism, in the language of news journalists, has been interested in delivering important information for citizens and the support of democracy, though most newspaper companies have also been commercial enterprises from the very beginning^{29,91}.

Audience is a slippery and multifaceted concept. The debate concerning the concepts of audience or public has raged since the 1980s in cultural studies and political communication (e.g. Colloquy in Critical Studies in Mass communication 1995⁹²). It has several implications for the content of the media, as readers are constituted either as consumers or citizens which are offered different kinds of content. Sometimes it seems completely forgotten in the heat of the debate that as readers/users exist in a variety of positions so they can be politically active citizens and still enjoy reading food recipes or celebrity gossip.

Management and marketing speak of segmented target audiences, meaning the desired audience — the predicted audience in Napoli's⁹³ terms. According to Napoli, when media organisations gather statistical information about its audience a measured audience emerges. More and more information is also gathered by ethnographic methods

CHAPTER 17

concerning citizens/consumers and their media behaviour in their everyday life. Napoli also uses a third concept — the actual audience — people who read or watch the media. However, the actual audience always remains unknowable to a certain degree. It is always a perception of an audience by media firms and advertisers. And also by journalists.

In the Media Concept Laboratories we have used the term implied reader^{94,95} as a concept and tool for thinking about the readers, their interests, levels of knowledge, lifestyle etc. that guide the selection of story topics and their framing as well as styles of writing. We propose that the creation of the implied reader and his or her needs is a concept that could unite the “architecture of the whole” in a media organisation.

We prefer to use the term implied reader from narrative research, instead of Napoli’s concept of a predicted audience — a forecast of the media product’s audience. We combine the term implied reader with tools from rhetorical analysis and discourse analysis to analyse and show how a readership position is built into media texts by journalists. The readership position is built into the content and outlook of media and e. g. in how the reader is addressed (as a woman, child, equal, in need of advice etc.) and in what topics and frames are chosen etc.^{96,97}.

Discussing the audience in the newsroom is hampered by different meanings of the word audience. Also, interest in the audience is not part of the news culture^{26,28,98,99}. The audience is often talked about in derogatory terms. The issue of audiences has become even more complicated with the arrival of internet publishing. Livingstone describes the complex audience problematic as becoming more difficult to solve:

“It seems that mediated communication is no longer simply or even mainly mass communication (‘from one to many’) but rather the media now facilitate communication among peers (both ‘one to one’ and ‘many to many’). Perhaps even this distinction — between peer-to-peer and mass or broadcast communication — is becoming outdated as new and hybrid modes of communication evolve.”¹⁰⁰

According to Abbot⁹⁴, the implied reader should not be confused with the real-life reader. It does not depict a reader in flesh but it describes a fictive reader at whom a story or narrative is targeted at. According to Iser “the implied reader embodies all those predispositions necessary for a literary work to exercise its effect — predispositions laid down, not by an empirical outside reality, but by the text itself. Consequently, the implied reader as a concept has its roots firmly planted in the structure of the text; he or she is a construct and in no way to be identified with any real reader”⁹⁵. This definition brings into focus e.g. the textual tools used by journalist (component 3 of a media concept). The basic facts of the story could be the same in different media but the structure, story line, language and metaphors used differ.

We propose that the needs of the readers and the goals of the publishers be discussed and combined into the concept of an implied reader, in other words, whom are the journalists writing for, what voices to portray in the text and how and what contradictions in the readers’ lives should the media in question strive to solve? Readers’ needs can be identified as including more than just information. The issues of identity, belonging to a group, being entertained, given options for what to think of different issues and forming communities are also important for people and part of forming lasting readership relations, which are at the core of a successful media concept.

In The Paper, information about the target audience came from marketing research and it was used earlier as a basis for selecting news topics. The problem in The Paper was that the target audience did not seem to be interested in the content of the printed Paper, as its circulation had been decreasing for years. And for the website a much larger audience needed to be reached.

5.2 Constructing the implied reader

In the Media Concept Laboratory the issue of the implied reader and its implementation into the daily work was an essential part of building the new website and its content. A majority of the newsroom staff adopted the concept but it was quite difficult to understand for some news journalists. The sometimes heated debate centred at first on the characteristics of the implied reader and then moved on to the “eternal” issue of news vs. entertainment. In the first discussions, almost every opening about audience needs and making stories more interesting was labelled by the opposition as tabloidisation.

A task group consisting of reporters presented a suggestion for an implied reader for the website in the second workshop and also it was later discussed again in the Media Concept Laboratory sessions. The Paper’s target audience defined by marketing consisted of middle-aged, male managers driving a Volvo, but the journalists came up with a different suggestion. Their new proposed implied reader was Rita, a consultant in an international company, a little over thirty, living in the inner city, engaged to an architecture student. She liked travel and sports and dreamed of an Audi3. Her favourite hobby was Pilates, which was a completely new word for one of the male critics of Rita. He told his colleagues in a laboratory session that he had no interest in such frivolous pastimes. A female journalist quickly replied that the leisure industry is a growing business sector and could also be treated as a serious topic, and even if the emphasis was partly on Rita’s lifestyle, she was also interested in bigger issues such as global warming and the effects of globalisation.

The idea of Rita was presented to the whole newsroom in a Friday weekly meeting. Some scepticism emerged — also in the disguise of humour. One of the younger male reporters said he did not know Rita.

Male reporter 5: *I don’t know this Rita. How could we get acquainted?*

Female reporter 1: *Put an ad on the singles web site. (Laughter).*

Female reporter 2: *There are Pilates courses in the downstairs gym.*

Female reporter 3: *Rita might be sitting closer to you than you think. (Laughter).*

The second session of the Media Concept workshop was dedicated to assembling the web sites structure and headlines of the different departments. Also the discussion about Rita continued and especially her gender still raised questions. One of the men thought that choosing Rita would begin to dumb down the content of the web site. The reply from a colleague was:

Female reporter 3: *“If Rita gets interested in a story it does not mean that John won’t read it. He might be more inclined to read it, because the language would be clearer and the headline less boring.”*

After lively discussions all could agree that at least the level of knowledge of the implied reader was important also for journalists. Whether he or she was a decision-maker in a big company, an owner of a small service-sector company or an expert in some organisation would have a big effect on the daily work of the journalists. The topics and frames chosen, the level of specialised knowledge in the stories and the style of writing on the website depend on the characteristics of the implied reader.

The task group also wanted a bolder attitude in explaining what the news meant for ordinary people and efforts to create interesting topics for discussion, meaning news stories that even other media would pick up. This would mean giving up the printed Paper’s cherished principle of separating facts and opinions — the mythical foundation of objective journalism.

The group of six journalists that were to start the web site agreed readily on the need for an implied reader and also a variety of new interesting content from news to entertainment in the web. The change was more difficult for the rest of the newsroom and the group seemed to get tired of the ongoing bickering on the issue of facts vs. tabloidisation. One of them entered the discussion in a Friday weekly meeting:

Female journalist 5: *“We should avoid talking only in dichotomies, whenever we have this discussion people talk only about two extremes: only heavy facts or only entertainment. But we should not overlook and despise generally interesting stories. If someone can write a story that is read by half a million people, isn’t that proof of superb journalistic expertise — when you can write a story that interests so many people.”*

Rita raised heated debate at first, but was gradually accepted. During observation in the newsroom we found that the implied reader called Rita was used in discussions in the newsroom. References to Rita were used when a copy editor might say to a reporter: “Rita is not interested in that headline, please write another”. Or when the clicks (visitors) started to go up into tens of thousand for a news story someone would comment: “Hey, Rita really loves this story.”

Rita did not did not easily become a shared object for the whole newsroom and the issue was related to the identity of journalists. Many saw themselves as experts in certain fields who wrote to other experts and they wanted to retain that professional identity and professional standing inside a specialised journalistic community. They would not budge even on the style of headlines. Giving up on one issue seemed to mean giving up all of one’s professional identity.

The gender of the implied reader was a major obstacle for some journalists at first. One middle-aged male forcefully declared at first that he is not going to write about make-up and clothes for Rita. However, during the sessions he mellowed quite a bit and in the final session in December he described himself as Rita’s uncle, who

now writes for her extended family about how to manage their lives better.

The discussion of an implied reader and of creating more and lasting readership relations continued in the Paper the following spring, when the Paper's content and visual outlook was revised to comply with the new web site — which had reached almost 300 000 weekly visitors much sooner than anticipated.

6 Discussion

In this chapter we have presented the notion of a media concept as a theoretical concept and a practical tool for analysing how media products change and why. It can be used for analysing and developing media business and media products, understanding changing audience needs and media use as well as journalism and journalistic work processes. The business, production, content and audiences needs are intertwined in the daily practice of a media product, and need to be studied simultaneously if we want to understand the meaning that media have in modern society and how media are changing.

In the developmental intervention method called Media Concept Laboratory the three components of a media concept are analysed and their usefulness tested. The Laboratories start by analysing the historical development of the media in question and the problems and disturbances of its daily practice. The publisher's interests, the journalistic culture and audience needs, the architecture of the organisation and the media product, and finally also the daily practices of producing content, are discussed together with the practitioners and newsroom management.

The concept of the implied reader cuts through the three components of a media concept. Understanding customer needs and media practices is crucial for producing engaging content, creating lasting readership relations and revenue for the organisation. The media concept is realised in the everyday practices of the whole organisation and the newsroom. Therefore, attention is paid to the architecture of the whole: the organisation and management as well as the structure of the media content and its textual and visual style.

In discussing the practical aspects of developing media content and production processes in the Media Concept Laboratories or workshops, we observed how difficult it is to change the historically developed notions of "good journalism". Individual journalists commonly may have quite different perspectives of whom they are writing for and why. The education and identity of newspaper journalists in Finland is built on the idea of delivering societally important news, but the details of what this means for the selection of topics or frames and styles of presentation are negotiated on a daily basis in the newsroom, so the formation of a media concept can be characterised as a contested field of negotiations²². The ideal of journalistic professionalism still seems to include the capacity to know what is good for the citizens and democracy and too little thought is given to the form of news, let alone the interests and needs of the audience. Magazines and their emphasis on visuality and engaging audiences are almost forgotten in journalistic training and research.

In developmental and interventionist research one of the main issues is the applicability of scientific concepts and the sustainability of practical solutions. The concept

CHAPTER 17

of an implied reader, a new object of work in response to audience needs and interests, and a systemic view of the activity seem to work well as tools to construct the new media concept and to sustain change. However, in practical development and theoretical discussion the different theoretical background of the words or concepts used can cause some mix-ups or misunderstandings. For example, the word concept can be used in many different ways, as presented in Section 3. The theoretical terms of value and object can also mean different things in different scientific traditions.

To understand the role and change of media in modern societies, research done in different fields needs to be combined. We suggest that media change and its effects should to be studied in transdisciplinary research groups in different types of media. The different hierarchic levels, from top management to the shop floor, inside an organisation should also be taken into account and given a voice in research and developmental efforts.

More research is needed to apply the notion of a media concept in different kinds of media in different situations. Another challenge for research is to follow up the applicability and sustainability of the concepts and tools we have presented in this chapter.

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