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WISSEN  
VERANTWORTUNG

**GESELLSCHAFTSWERT**

VIELFALT  
ORIENTIERUNG  
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EUROPA-INTEGRATION  
GLOBALE PERSPEKTIVE

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INNOVATION  
TRANSPARENZ  
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Auf [zukunft.orf.at](http://zukunft.orf.at) und im „Public-Value-Bericht“ werden die Leistungen des ORF in diesen Kategorien dokumentiert.



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[zukunft@orf.at](mailto:zukunft@orf.at)

# WER IST DAS VOLK?

Populismus und neue nationalistische Stimmungen machen lautstark auf sich aufmerksam: in den USA, in Polen, in Ungarn, aber auch in Deutschland und Österreich. Doch was steckt hinter den Parolen der selbsternannten „Volksvertreter“? Geht es tatsächlich „nur“ gegen Establishment und Elite, oder verbirgt sich hinter der populistischen Empörungskultur ein neuer, autoritärer und demokratiegefährdender Zeitgeist? Wie reagieren die Medien, insbesondere die öffentlich rechtlichen Medien darauf?

Mit den Zusammenhängen zwischen Populismus, Demokratie und Medien befassen sich renommierte Wissenschaftler/innen in der aktuellen Ausgabe der „TEXTE“:

W. Lance Bennett von der Universität Washington geht in seinem Beitrag „Who Are The People“ den (medialen) Ursachen für die Wahl Trumps nach. Josef Seethaler und Maren Beaufort von der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften spannen einen Bogen zwischen der Entwicklung unserer Gesellschaft und den „Social Media“. Bernd Holznagel (Universität Münster) analysiert, was sich aktuellen Herausforderungen folgend aus dem Integrationsauftrag ergibt, und Christian Fuchs von der University of Westminster thematisiert die Entwicklung öffentlich-rechtlicher Medien im digitalen Zeitalter.

Diese und über hundert weitere Beiträge internationaler Fachleute und Wissenschaftler/innen zu öffentlich-rechtlichen Medien finden Sie ebenso wie weitere Informationen zu Public Value und dem ORF zum Download auf [zukunft.ORF.at](http://zukunft.ORF.at). •

KONRAD MITSCHKA      KLAUS UNTERBERGER  
ORF PUBLIC VALUE

# TOWARDS THE PUBLIC SERVICE INTERNET AS ALTERNATIVE TO THE COMMERCIAL INTERNET

UNIV.-PROF. DR. CHRISTIAN FUCHS  
UNIVERSITY OF WESTMINSTER

The search engine Google went online in 1998. Together with Facebook it became the symbol of social media and a new generation of Internet platforms that are organised dynamically and enable online information search, online communication and online communities. “Don’t Be Evil” has been Google’s corporate philosophy. But in practice, realising this aim proved difficult. Google and Facebook have been criticised for avoiding to pay taxes in Europe, for advancing commercial surveillance, creating monopolies in online search and social networking, supporting and enabling state surveillance of citizens, violating users’ privacy, the lack of unambiguous, specific and explicit informed user consent to the processing of personal data, the complexity of terms of use and privacy policies, etc.

With annual profits of US\$ 19.5 billion, Google was in 2016 the world’s 24th largest transnational corporation (TNC)<sup>1</sup>. Facebook was with profits of US\$ 9.5 billion in the same year the 119th largest TNC<sup>2</sup>. The share of online advertising in global advertising revenues increased from 20.7 percent in 2011 to 33.1 percent in 2015 (Ofcom 2016). In 2016, Google controlled 55.2% of the world’s online advertising revenue, Facebook 12.3%<sup>3</sup>. The Internet is dominated by digital monopoly capital. Google and Facebook have become the world’s largest advertising agencies and big data corporations that make huge profits and avoid paying taxes.

Transnational corporations’ avoidance of paying taxes poses problems for the continued provision of public services. The introduction of an online advertising tax is one of the feasible political responses to this crisis. How could the likes of Google and Facebook be properly taxed? In Austria, there is an advertising tax. It amounts to 5% of an advertisement’s price. It, however, excludes online advertisements. Given that online advertisement’s share in total advertising continues to grow, such exclusion undermines the credibility of an advertising tax. Some observers argue that the advertising tax does not result in sufficient state income, is a “bagatelle tax”, and discriminates against those who provide advertisements outside of the Internet. The logical conclusion should, however, not be that one abolishes the advertisement tax, but rather that it

is extended to the realm of online advertisement. How much income is achieved by a tax depends on what is taxed to which degree.

### **Taxing Online Advertisements**

But how can online ads of the likes of Google and Facebook be properly taxed? Wouldn't they simply continue escape taxation by offshoring their financial operations to tax havens? Dallas Smythe's theory of the audience commodity helps us in this respect (cp. Fuchs 2017): He argued that the commodity that advertisers sell is their audience's attention. He therefore speaks of the audience commodity that is produced by audience labour. On Facebook and Google, there is a big data commodity that users' digital labour creates (Fuchs 2017). In return for receiving money from ad clients, Google and Facebook allow targeting of their users with personalised ads. Online advertising is based on real-time surveillance of personal data, prosumption (productive consumption), targeting, personalisation, predictive algorithms, and algorithmic auctions. The use of big data, however, also provides precise data about what share of Google's and Facebook's advertising clicks take place in a particular country per year. Requiring online ad platforms by law to publish this data would enable jurisdictions in nation states to tax the likes of Google and Facebook according to the share of value-generating ad clicks in particular countries. Introducing such an online ad tax can be undertaken in single countries, but should best be extended to an entire range of countries, such as all EU member states. Also fines for not paying online ad taxes as well as adequately resourced financial authorities are needed in order to tax the likes of Google and Facebook.

### **The Californian Ideology's Limits on Public Service Media**

The online services provided by European public service media (PSM) have thus far by and large remained guided by the broadcast paradigm. This is not PSM's fault. They have legally been kept from providing public service Internet platforms that could challenge the power of Californian online corporations such as Google and Facebook. The specific legal provisions have been guided by the Californian ideology of wanting to create the European equivalents of Facebook, YouTube, Google and Twitter on the private, for-profit digital market. The EU's Lisbon Strategy formulated the goal that by 2010 the EU would become the "most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable

of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion”. 2010 has long passed. There is no European Google, no European Facebook, and no European Twitter. It is time to realise that the European media landscape is different from US capitalism and that public service media is one of its strengths. It is time that European governments give up the Californian ideology and enable European PSM to provide public service Internet platforms. In Austria, paragraph 4(f) of the Austrian Broadcasting Law prohibits the Austrian Broadcasting Corporation (ORF) to create 28 types of online services, including user-generated content platforms. If public service alternatives to Google and Facebook’s power shall be created, then such legal provisions have to go. Such provisions, including the market test of public service tests, have served to extend digital monopoly capital’s control of the Internet. It is time for alternatives. The long and strong tradition of European public service media is an excellent foundation for helping to realise an alternative Internet.

Given that corporation taxes tend to be much higher than 5 percent in most countries of the world and that transnational digital corporations tend to pay no taxes at all, an online ad tax could certainly be set at a higher level than 5 percent and reach up to a level of 20 or 25 percent of ad prices. At the same time, it is ineffective to lower the ad tax for other types of advertisements. Just like many countries have special taxes on alcohol and cigarettes because both harm citizens, taxing advertisements is feasible because they try to manipulate human needs. Going this route means that implementing online ad taxation would result in additional state revenue that could be spent for expanding public service media’s operations. Taxing online advertising could fund public service Internet platforms.

### **Public Service YouTube**

There is a lot of potential for innovating the Internet. Public service media could make a difference that makes a difference to the Internet. The Internet is dominated by the logic of speed, big data, superficiality, celebrity, entertainment, and tabloidization. The tabloid logic of the Internet has contributed to the rise of phenomena such as Donald Trump, fake news and Breitbart. Public service media’s public service remit could make a difference. The online public service remit could set out to advance political communication, political education and political engagement. How could this be achieved?

Think of a public service YouTube, in which a network of European public service broadcasters (ORFTube, BBCTube, ARDTube, ZDFTube, etc.) makes all of their self-produced archived radio and television content available on an audio-visual platform that based on Creative Commons licences allows Internet users to remix and reuse the material and to publish such remixes that integrate the users' own content on the same platform. The public service remit would thereby be extended to user participation. There could be special weekly programmes on public service television and radio that broadcast the best user-generated remixes of public service content. YouTube is a de-facto monopoly in online video. A network of European public service media has a real chance of challenging Google and providing an alternative that is more engaging, demanding and creative.

## **Club 2.0**

Dominant media are high-speed spectacles focused on superficiality and lack of time. They erode the public sphere and political debate. They leave no time and space for exploring the complexity of society and arguments and for political controversy. We require the combination of the de-commodification and the deceleration of the media. We require slow media.

Slow media and slow political communication is not new. Club 2 in Austria and After Dark in Britain were prototypical examples of slow media. The journalists Kuno Knöbl and Franz Kreuzer conceptualised the format of Club 2 for the Austrian Broadcasting Corporation (ORF). It was a debate programme that usually was broadcast on Tuesday and Thursday evening. The first episode was broadcast on October 5, 1976, on ORF's second channel. The final episode was broadcast on February 28, 1995. The programme was aired around 1,400 times. Club 2 returned between 2007 and 2012, but used a different concept that did not adhere to the original ground rules. In the United Kingdom, the media production company Open Media created based on Club 2 a similar format called After Dark. After Dark was broadcast once a week between 1987 and 1991 and thereafter until 1997 occasionally on Channel 4. In 2003, After Dark made a short comeback on BBC.

The concept of Club 2/After Dark seems rather unusual for us today because we are so used to short formats, high speed and lack of time in the media and our everyday lives. Open-ended, uncensored, controversial, engaging live debate differs from accelerated media in terms of space

and time: Club 2 and After Dark provide a public space for guests to meet and discuss, where they have unlimited time available for public communication about topics that are important for society. Space and time are two important dimensions of the public sphere's political economy. But a social space with ample time does not guarantee an engaging, dialectical discussion that transcends one-dimensionality and gives focus to arguments and the exploration of commonalities and differences. The public sphere's space and time need to be organised and managed in a smart way so that the right kind of people are present, the atmosphere is suitable, the moderator asks the right kind of questions and makes sure that the guests all listen and speak, the debate can go on in an uninterrupted manner, etc. Unlimited time, dialectical controversial and engaging space, and smart organisation are three important characteristics of a public sphere. They are preconditions for slow media, non-commercial media, de-colonised media, and public interest media.

Is a new version of Club 2 possible today? How could Club 2.0 look like? Speaking of a second version can on the one hand mean that the Club 2 concept could be revived in order to help strengthening the public sphere. On the other hand, one has to take into account that society does not stand still, develops dynamically and has created new realities such as the Internet that has become a key part of public communication. Club 2.0 therefore also means a somewhat updated concept of Club 2 that sticks to its ground rules, but also extends the concept. If Club 2.0 can turn from a possibility to a reality is not simply a technical question, it is a question of political economy. It is a political question because it requires the decision to break with the logic of commercial, entertainment-oriented TV that is dominated by reality TV and comparable formats. Club 2.0 requires a political choice in favour of public service media and public interest media. Club 2.0 is also an economic question because realising it requires breaking with the principles that shape the media today, such as high speed, superficiality, brevity, the algorithmization and automation of human communication, post-truth, the spectacle, etc. Club 2.0 is a question of resources and changing the media system's power relations.



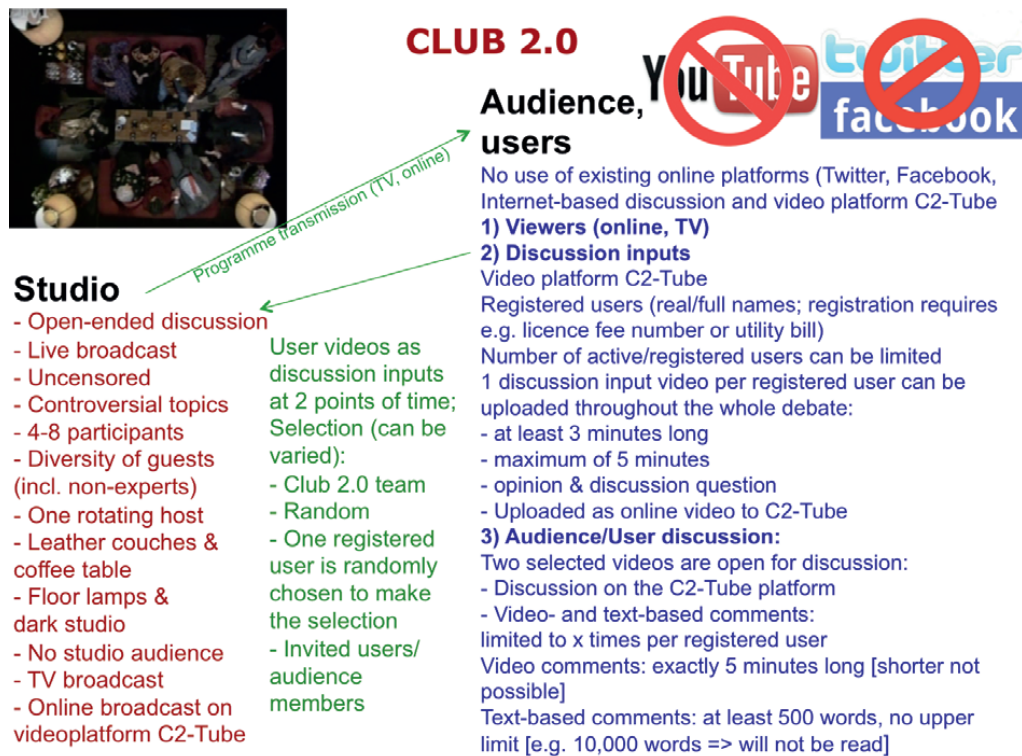


Figure 1: Concept of Club 2.0

Figure 1 visualises a possible concept of Club 2.0. This model is a basic idea that certainly can be varied in many ways and so is just one of many possible versions. The key aspects are the following ones:

- **Cross-medium:** Club 2.0 is a cross-medium that brings together live television and the Internet.
- **Online video:** Club 2.0 live broadcasts are available online via a video platform.
- **Autonomous social media, no traditional social media:** Existing commercial social media platforms (YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, etc.) are not suited because they are not based on the principles of slow media and public interest. Broadcasting Club 2.0 over YouTube would for example result in frequent advertising breaks that would disrupt and disable discussion.
- **Autonomous video platform C2Tube:** Club 2.0 requires its own video platform that we can provisionally call C2Tube. C2Tube poses the possibility for viewers to watch the debate online and via a diversity of technical devices.
- **Interactivity:** C2-Tube also allows interactive features that can be used to a certain degree.

- **User-generated discussion inputs:** There is the possibility for discussion inputs generated by users. Such a feature requires that users are non-anonymous and register on the platform. Anonymity encourages Godwin's law that says that "as an anonymous online discussion grows longer, the probability of a comparison involving Hitler approaches 1". Setting an upper limit of registrations or activating only a certain number of users during a specific debate allows limiting the number of registered and active users. The selection of active users can for example be made randomly. Or all users can be allowed to participate. User-generated discussion inputs should best have video-format. The number of user-generated discussion inputs that can be generated should best be limited (ideally to just one per active user). User-generated discussion inputs can be uploaded to the C2-platform.
- **Interfacing the studio debate with user-generated videos:** At certain points of time during the live broadcast, a user-generated video input is chosen and broadcast and informs the studio debate. Users in such videos formulate their own views and can also provide a question for discussion. Ideally during a two to three hour-long debate, about two user-generated videos could be broadcast. Inevitably a selection mechanism is needed for deciding which user-generated videos are broadcast. There are several principles such as random selection, selection by the Club 2.0 production team, random choice of a registered user who is enabled to choose the video, special guests who make the selection, etc.
- **User discussion:** Club 2.0 also enables discussion between users. Discussion could take place simultaneously to the live broadcast and/or after it. The two selected user-generated C2-videos can be opened up for discussion on the C2-platform. Ideally, video- and text-based comments should be possible. There should be a minimum length for text-based comments and maybe a maximum length for video comments. In order to stick with the principle of slow media and to avoid the Twitter-effect of accelerated standstill, the number of video- and text-comments a single user can post per debate should be limited.
- **Forgetting data:** Videos are fairly large and storage-intensive. Therefore the question is what should happen to all those videos that were uploaded, but not broadcast and not opened for discussion. Given that they have no practical use, they could be deleted. This means that the users must be aware of the fact that uploading a video means loss of data. Contemporary social media store all data and meta-data forever. Forgetting data can therefore be used as a counter-principle. The online

debates that feature text- and video-comments could either be preserved or deleted after a certain period of time.

- **Privacy-friendliness:** Contemporary social media use data and user surveillance for economic and political purposes, i.e. for making monetary profits by selling targeted advertisements and for implementing a political surveillance society that promises more security, but undermines privacy and installs a regime of categorical suspicion. Club 2.0's way of dealing with data should be privacy friendly, only store the minimum amount of data necessary for operating the platform, not sell user data, and in general use good practices of data protection and privacy protection. This principle is also called privacy-by-design, which means that privacy is designed into the platform and the format. This does however not mean that users, who debate publicly, are anonymous. Privacy rather relates to the way user data is stored and handled.
- **Social production:** Contemporary social media are highly individualistic. The production of user-generated Club 2.0-input videos could in contrast take on the form of social production that transcends individualism and creates truly social media content by integrating Club 2.0 into educational institutions, in which individuals together learn by co-creating video-content as input for discussions. For doing so, the topic of a specific Club 2.0-evening needs to be known in advance, which can be achieved by publishing a description. Groups of individuals can get together and prepare videos that they can n on the evening of the broadcast upload to C2Tube once the uploading possibility is enabled.

## Conclusion

The Internet is today dominated by for-profit logic, tabloidization, and the Californian ideology. Alternatives are urgently needed. In Europe, there is a long public service tradition that could be extended to the Internet. Formats such as a public service YouTube, Club 2.0 could contribute to strengthening the public sphere. Public sphere communication is part of society's critical capacities. An alternative, public service Internet is possible and urgently needed. •

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<sup>1</sup> Data source: Forbes 2000, 2017 list, <https://www.forbes.com/global2000>, accessed on May 29, 2017.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.emarketer.com/Article/Google-Still-Dominates-World-Search-Ad-Market/1014258>



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