"COMPARING MEDIA SYSTEMS":
A RESPONSE TO CRITICS

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Abstract

This paper comments on the critical reception of Hallin and Mancini's *Comparing Media Systems*. It focuses on three issues: (1) Classification of media systems, including both the way specific systems are classified in Hallin and Mancini's analysis, and the broader issue of the use of media system models; (2) the question of whether the Polarized Pluralist Model Hallin and Mancini use to characterize Southern European systems is essentially negative, both analytically and normatively; and (3) the issue of whether media systems are converging. The paper includes discussion of Hallin and Mancini's analysis of the Portuguese case.

Keywords

Comparative Analysis; Media Systems; Convergence.

Since *Comparing Media Systems* first appeared in 2004, it has been widely discussed, and the framework we propose there has been taken up widely in both theoretical reflection and empirical research. One manifestation of the wide attention the book has received is the large number of translations. The publication of the Portuguese translation in 2010 marks the eighth translation. This response is certainly very gratifying; at the same time, however, many issues have arisen about the ideas we have put forward in this work, and many points require clarification or additional discussion. In this paper we would like to address some of the issues that have arisen in the reception of our book. We will inevitably have to be selective, as it is impossible in this limited space to cover them all.[1]

Our objective here will be not so much to defend ourselves as to deepen the discussion about the topics addressed in the book. In fact many observations about the limitations of our book, which are advanced as criticisms, are points we are happy to endorse. Our

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1   This article is adapted from Hallin and Mancini (forthcoming) and Hallin & Mancini (in press b). Other issues are also covered in those texts.

book does have limitations – many of them. Some of them we intended, some reflected the limits of our own knowledge, some reflected the state of the field; but we consider it important to clarify them, and in some cases we have been as much troubled by endorsements of our book that push our analysis beyond what it can reasonably be expected to do, as by critical comment on its limits. In what is probably the most critical commentary on the book we have seen, Pippa Norris (2009: 331) concludes that "the Hallin and Mancini framework suffers from several major shortcomings that need to be addressed before we can conclude that this provides an appropriate conceptual typology for the subfield." This is a conclusion we can certainly endorse: we never intended our book to be taken as providing a comprehensive conceptual framework for the comparative analysis of media systems, most obviously because it dealt only with a narrow range of cases – eighteen wealthy capitalist democracies in North America and Western Europe – but also because that would be too much for a single work to pretend, particularly in an emerging field where there is a limited literature, both empirical and theoretical, on which to build. We intended our book to begin a process of developing an adequate framework for comparative analysis in this area, not to end it.

We will discuss three main clusters of issues here: (1) problems related to classification of media systems according to our three models; (2) the question of whether our Polarized Pluralist Model is characterized negatively; and (3) the issue of convergence or "homogenization."

Classification

Starting with the first discussions of *Comparing Media Systems* (Couldry, 2005; McQuail, 2005; Patterson, 2007) reviewers have in many cases raised questions related to the classification of media systems using the typology provided by our three models. Three kinds of criticisms have been raised: the first, and in our view the most important, is related to the fundamental question of whether classification of media systems according to such a typology is really a useful way to approach comparative analysis. A second set of criticisms has to do with issues about whether we correctly classified particular cases we were analyzing, and a third with the applicability of our typology to cases outside the scope of our original analysis. We will take these issues up here in reverse order.

"Non-western" systems

we recently completed an edited book, tentatively titled *Comparing Media Systems: Beyond the Western World* (Hallin & Mancini forthcoming), in which we and a number of scholars who study media systems beyond the scope of our analysis explore the relevance of our ideas to other systems. They find, for the most part, that the ideas we propose

would have to be extensively rethought and much new theory would have to be introduced to deal with a wider range of systems, and that is very much consistent with the original intent of our book. *Comparing Media Systems* was based on a "most similar systems" design. The adoption of this approach was motivated by two kinds of concern. One was practical: we did not feel we could learn enough about a wider range of media systems to be able to analyze them competently, particularly given the fact that there is limited systematic research on media systems in many parts of the world, and ours was a study based more on the synthesis of existing research than on primary research. Second, most similar systems designs, as Lijphart (1971) has argued, are useful for "reducing the property space of the analysis," that is, for limiting the number of variables an analyst is forced to deal with. In some studies, this is done to facilitate causal analysis, as the analyst tries to match cases on all but a small number of variables whose effects can be isolated. Our study was oriented toward theory-building rather than hypothesis testing; for us, "reducing the property space of the analysis" was important because we wanted to think through certain concepts and relationships, and we could only do this coherently if the number of concepts we were dealing with was limited.

One other aspect of the methodology of *Comparing Media Systems* is also important to stress here. Our approach to social theory is an historical one. Our analysis was intended as a concrete, historical analysis of a particular group of media systems, not as a set of general categories for understanding media systems regardless of time and place. Our three models, especially, were intended as ideal types which would summarize distinct patterns of media system development among particular groups of countries, and they should be thought of as bound to the cases from which they were generalized. We did, to be sure, suggest that they could be of some relevance to the analysis of other systems. But we underscore in the closing line of our book that "substantial modifications would need to be made to our models to apply them [to cases outside Western Europe and North America], and indeed that they would be useful primarily as inspirations for creating new models based on detailed research into specific political and media systems" (Hallin & Mancini, 2004, p. 306).

The conceptual framework of *Comparing Media Systems* consists of two main elements, the three models we use to organize our discussion of particular cases – which we call the Polarized Pluralist, Liberal and Democratic Corporatist Models – and a set of variables, or dimensions for comparison – two sets, actually, one set of media system dimensions and one set of variables which identify aspects of the political system which we believe have relevance for the understanding of media systems and their relation to the world of politics. The three models are very strongly tied to the concrete cases we cover in *Comparing Media Systems*. Some cases outside the scope of our analysis can be understood, up to a point, as variants or combinations of the three ideal types we propose – this is true of

Australia (Jones & Pusey 2010), for example, Israel (Peri forthcoming), and to some extent Eastern Europe (Dobek-Ostrowska forthcoming; Hallin & Mancini 2010; Goban-Klas 1997). Eastern Eurpoean systems can be seen, up to a point, as similar to our Polarized Pluralist Model, though with important mixtures of Liberal, and in some cases of Democratic Corporatist inflluence. They have often been compared with the Italian case, though the Spanish case might be a closer comparison (Hallin & Mancini in press a). For the most part, however, to try to "apply" our models to other systems does not make much sense as a means of advancing theory in the comparative study of media and politics.

   The four dimensions we use for comparing media systems "travel" more easily. These are, briefly, the structure of media markets, the degree and forms of political parallelism, the degree and forms of journalistic professionalism, and the role of the state. These concepts seem to be relatively robust, at least in the sense that one can ask about any media system, "What is the role of the state?" or "What is the degree and form of journalistic professionalism?" and get a coherent and interesting answer. At the same time, however, it is clear that the particular conceptualizations of these dimensions that appear in *Comparing Media Systems* are tied to the 18 cases of our original study, and often need to be reconceptualized to apply to other cases. The scholars participating in our project on "nonwestern" media systems, for example, observed that the discussion of "political parallelism" in *Comparing Media Systems* – which has to do with the extent to which the structure and practices of the media system reflects the structure and practices of competition among political factions – reflects a very particular Western history of political divisions centered around mass political parties, strongly rooted in social and economic interests and competing in a pluralist political order. Once we expand the range of cases, we clearly have to deal with a wider range of party systems, including non-competitive party systems, and with political systems in which parties are weak or non-existent, or in which contending political, social and cultural forces are organized in very different ways, according to factions of an authoritarian elite, for example, or around racial or ethnic groups. As this last point suggests, the political system variables employed in *Comparing Media Systems* are, again, very closely tied to the particular cases covered in that book.

   Classification of european cases

   our three models were conceived as ideal types; we were well aware that individual cases didn't fit them exactly, and that scholars in particular countries might raise issues about the classification of particular cases. As Norris notes, the classification was not based on "standardized indicators or a set of explicit decision rules," since, as we noted in the book, the field has not developed and collected such indicators, nor is there an agreed-upon

theoretical basis for weighting them.[2] We proposed what we described as "tentative judgments about the similarity [of the eighteen cases] to the ideal types represented by our three models" (71). In the absence of the kinds of indicators Norris refers to, we sent the manuscript to distinguished colleagues in all countries involved and asked if the classification of the particular cases they studied seemed reasonable. No criticism was raised at this regard: of course, this evidence for the correctness of the analysis; we bring it up only to make clear how conscious we were about the risks involved in this kind of classification. Despite this procedure we fully expected issues to be raised after the publication of the book, both because it is difficult to do justice to so many cases and because there are tensions inherent in the kinds of generalizations we were putting forward, which can never do justice to all the specificities of particular cases. We have actually been pleasantly surprised that the objections have been relatively limited. Introducing an edited collection in which scholars from the Nordic countries debate the extent to which our framework can illuminate the media systems of their region, Strömbäck, Ørsten and Aalberg (2008) focus on this tension, arguing that, "while it might be reasonable from a global or international perspective," our classification of those cases as relatively pure exemplars of a single Democratic Corporatist Model "triggered the question as to whether the Nordic countries really are so similar to each other as suggested by Hallin and Mancini. Certainly from an everyday Swedish, Finnish or Danish perspective, the differences between the own country and the other Nordic countries might often be as prominent as the similarities" (15). Nevertheless, they concluded that "the individual country chapters suggest that the Nordic countries, including Iceland, in many ways do fit Hallin and Mancini's description of the democratic corporatist model (268)."

  Our inclusion of Britain and the U.S. together under the heading of the Liberal Model has probably provoked the greatest criticism. Norris (2009) and Humphreys (2009) both complain that we lump Britain and the U.S. together under the category of the Liberal Model despite obvious and important differences like the existence of strong media partisanship and strong public service broadcasting in the Britain, and their absence in the U.S. In our view, though, the criticisms on this point ignore our plea that the grouping of cases in relation to models "is not meant to substitute for the more complex discussion" we introduce in the second half of the book (71). In introducing our three models we write "although the United States and Britain… are often lumped together – with good justification up to a point – as liberal systems we shall try to show that they are very different in important ways and that the common idea of an "Anglo- American" model of journalism is in part a myth" (Hallin & Mancini, 2004, p. 69). We reiterate this point in the first paragraph of our chapter on the Liberal Model, and go on to describe Britain as a mixed case combining elements of Liberal and

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2   We make this point in relation to the placement of points on our "triangle diagram," Hallin & Mancini: 71.

Democratic Corporatist Models; we considered this point about the heterogeneity of the countries we grouped under the Liberal Model as a central point of that section of our book. Still the claim of Norris that media systems in Britain and the United States seem to have "almost nothing in common" seems hyperbolic. Couldry (2005: 308) asks a related question: "is the liberal norm the US (low 'political parallelism,' minimal public broadcasting) or Britain (partisan press, strong public broadcasting)?" Since our definition of the Liberal Model as an ideal type centers around the dominance of commercial media, we have no hesitation in saying that the U.S., with its weak public service broadcasting, is a more "pure" and Britain a more mixed case. That doesn't mean the U.S. is more the "norm" either in the sense of a value judgment or in the sense of being a more common pattern; only that the U.S. fits the ideal type more closely. As for the question of partisanship, there is no clear "Liberal norm": commercialized media can be either highly partisan or not, both have historically been part of the Liberal pattern of development. This is one of the points we want to make about the Liberal Model, that it can encompass varying levels of political parallelism.

Questions have also been raised about our classification of Portugal under the Polarized Pluralist Model, and our location of Portugal as a case closely proximate to that of Spain. The main defining characterization of the Polarized Pluralist Model is the politicization of the media system, and seems clear that Portugal was at one time a strong example of the Polarized Pluralist Model. It still seems to have at least some important characteristics of the Polarized Pluralist Model – a continuing role of the Catholic Church in the media system, for example. Prof. Traquina raises the question in his Preface to the Portuguese translation of *Comparing Media Systems*, however, whether the kind of media partisanship that still strongly characterizes the media systems of Spain, Italy and Greece no longer does characterize Portugal. We do not know enough to venture a conclusion here; we would very much like to know more about recent developments in the Portuguese case. If in fact political parallelism has declined significantly in Portugal and it has diverged from the pattern of Spain and other Southern European countries that is quite interesting and calls for explanation.

Our knowledge of the Portuguese case is quite limited, but let us offer a few thoughts about possible kinds of explanations. One might be that, although Portugal shares with Spain, Italy and Greece a history of dictatorship, the Salazar dictatorship more radically interrupted the development of a culture of political partisanship, and that party divisions and identities are less strongly rooted in Portuguese political culture today than they are in the political cultures of other Southern European countries. We were influenced by the analysis of Colomer (1996) who analyzes both Spain and Portugal as systems in which the political sphere is strongly dominated by political parties. Perhaps this analysis misses differences between these political systems, however, or perhaps other factors change the way the political systems articulates with the media. Yet another explanation might be that the transition to democracy took a different form in Portugal – perhaps that the

strong character of the politicization of the media in the immediate aftermath of the Portuguese revolution left legacies that have diminished political parallelism in the form of a strong aversion to instrumentalization of the media and a strong desire to consolidated journalistic professionalism. Another explanation might focus on international influence, in particular a greater influence of French models than one finds in contemporary Spain, Italy or Greece. If we understand correctly, Portugal seems to have tried to follow the French model to some extent in broadcast regulation, at least. The French media system is certainly characterized by a high degree of political parallelism in the national press, but it does diverge in important ways from the clientelism and instrumentalism that characterize other Mediterranean media and political systems; it has a more consolidated tradition of journalistic autonomy, though only in very specific media, and moved earlier toward autonomous systems of broadcast regulation and governance.

Finally, it is possible that the explanation lies not so much in political culture and history as in market structure. The low level of political parallelism historically in the U.S., for example, is due, in our view, not simply to political culture but to the fact that the U.S. media were dominated by monopoly local newspapers, a market structure which discouraged partisanship. In general, media partisanship thrives in markets with many competitors, where a partisan identity serves as a means of creating a market niche. Perhaps the small size of the Portuguese newspaper market compared with that of Spain accounts for the divergence in the direction of the press in those two systems – though one would still have to account for the difference between Portugal and Greece.

Classification, in general

Beyond the question of whether we have classified particular cases correctly, there is a more general question about whether typologies of the sort represented by our three models are really the way forward in comparative analysis of media systems. Humphreys (2009: 11), for example, argues "[R]ather than spend time and energy on producing neat typologies, it is much more important to explore in depth a more comprehensive range of variables that bear on the complex media-politics relationship." We proposed our three ideal types as a way of pointing out what seemed to us broad patterns in the development of the relation between media and political systems, which seemed to us an essential step in a field in which most scholars were still confined within the specificity of particular systems they studied. We suspect that other scholars are likely to propose other such ideal types that prove useful in identifying other patterns that may characterize significant numbers of cases.

We must confess, at the same time, that we are not happy in important ways with the use that has been made of our three models, and we think that Humphreys' fear about

"neat typologies" substituting for detailed analysis is a legitimate one. Our three models were intended to illustrate the results that could be accomplished through the application of the suggested interpretive schema based on the proposed list of variables. Instead many scholars have taken our models to be, in themselves, the interpretive framework. We believe this is a reductive reading of our book, and we think it is in part because of this "preferred" reading that many scholars have found our classifications unsatisfactory and limited. We have noticed, for example, that our typology is often used for selecting cases, that is, scholars will do a study of some phenomenon related to political communication and pick a case corresponding falling in each of the three groups of cases we discuss under our three models. To some extent, this makes sense – at least it is an advance that the field is more aware now that systems do differ, and that one may get different results picking cases that belong to different categories. Often, however, it seems to us that relatively little thought has been devoted to the question of how systems belonging to our different models could be expected to differ with respect to the particular phenomenon in question, or to the ways the specific cases chosen might or might not be distinctive with respect to those phenomena. We do not think that classification is an end in itself, and we did not intend our three models to be used mainly as a classification system. We intended them to be used to think about patterns and why they exist, and, precisely, for comparing, that is, for asking, how does a particular case fit or not fit a pattern that characterizes other cases, and why. But we certainly do not advocate that comparative analysis be built primarily around such typologies.

Is the polarized pluralist model characterized negatively?

in *Comparing Media Systems*, Southern European media systems are discussed under the rubric of what we call the Polarized Pluralist Model, adopting Giovanni Sartori's (1976) classification of party systems, and in particular his distinction between moderate and polarized pluralism. A number of commentators have complained that our discussion of the Polarized Pluralist Model is negative in character, and represents a "remnant" of normatively-tinged modernization theory despite our critique of modernization theory as a basis for comparative analysis and our stated intention to construct empirical, rather than normative models of media systems (e.g. Hardy 2008). We aren't surprised that these issues have come up; it seemed to us almost inevitable that they would, given the fact that Southern European media systems deviate from the dominant normative models, and even the research and media discourse within these countries is heavily influenced by a consciousness of that fact. Our intent, though, was certainly to understand Southern European media systems on their own terms, as systems with highly specific forms of interaction between media and politics that are deeply rooted in the specific historical

evolution of these countries. One reason we organized the book with the discussion of the Polarized Pluralist Model first, before the discussion of the other two, was to avoid the tendency to judge that model by reference to the others; and we tried to be very explicit in arguing that we could find no body of evidence in our research to justify a conclusion that Southern European media systems are in general deficient from the point of view of democratic performance. In fact, in the countries we discuss under the Polarized Pluralist Model there tends to be a very active democratic life, characterized by high levels of participation in community, and particularly in political life, high voting turnout and a very lively public sphere where different views meet and contend in various ways including through the mass media. The politicization of media in Southern Europe, though it may be seen as normatively problematic in some ways, is intimately related to this active democratic life.

There are actually two elements to the criticism of our conceptualization of the Polarized Pluralist Model as "negative." One is the argument that our discussion of Southern European media systems has a *normative* bias, portraying them as "backward" in relation to the other two systems discussed in our book. The other is that our analysis is *analytically* negative, that our Polarized Pluralist Model, as Albuquerque (forthcoming) puts it:

> is defined in a negative manner relative to the Liberal and the Democratic Corporatist Models. The prevalence of such a model would be a result of the absence of the circumstances that rendered possible the development of the other two (e.g. a solid mass press, a significant autonomy of media from the State and the political parties, and a tradition of professionalism among the journalists).

On the point raised by Albuquerque, we would respond that any system can be defined by its difference with others, which means that it can be understood in part by what it is not. This is in part what comparison is about, to see one pattern in terms of its difference from another. So, yes, when we compare our Polarized Pluralist Model with our other two, we can say that it lacks a strongly developed culture of journalistic professionalism, lacks a mass circulation press, lacks a strong tradition of rational – legal authority, lacks autonomous public service broadcasting, lacks effective public interest regulation of media industries in important ways, lacks differentiation between media and political institutions. (Of course if we compared these Southern European countries with other parts of the world, rather than with Northern Europe or with North America, these contrasts would in many cases be reversed.) Similarly we can say that the Liberal Model is characterized by a lack of pluralism and political diversity in media, by the absence of what could be called "representative media" – media that serve to represent parties and other kinds of organized social groups in the public sphere, by the lack of the positive role of the state more commonly found in Continental Europe, and by lack of differentiation between the media and the market. Both systems can be also be seen in terms of their positive characteristics – "positive" here un-

derstood in analytical rather than normative terms. What are the "positive" characteristics of the Polarized Pluralist Model? Pluralism, partisanship – which is certainly as significant a form of media agency as professionalism – a strong political role of the media, a close relation between the political and media fields, to use the terms of Bourdieu's field theory.

Since *Comparing Media Systems* was finished, Mancini (2009) has published a new book assessing the significance of the Italian *lottizzazione*, the division of power, of jobs, of air time, etc, among political parties in the Italian state broadcaster. The *lottizzazione*, as Mancini points out, can be understood as a form of clientelism or "partidocracy," which we may judge as negative from a normative point of view (though they are certainly coherent forms of social organization with their own social functions). But this is too simplistic a way to understand the politics of Italian broadcasting: the *lottizzazione* was three things simultaneously – a manifestation of clientelism and partidocracy, an expression of the strong value Italian society placed on political pluralism, and a manifestation of consociationalism, of power-sharing, which was fundamental to the consolidation of Italian democracy. De Albuquerque (forthcoming) writes, "according to [Hallin and Mancini] one of the chief traits of the Polarized Pluralist Model is the absence of consensual values among the media and political actors. Thus, how could the absence of unifying values exert some kind of normative role." But absence of consensus does not imply absence of ideas, and in fact Southern European countries have generated plenty of ideas about media and politics and plenty of institutional achievements, which, though they might not have become dominant globally, either institutionally or as normative models, might be worthy of study. Often these are ideas precisely about how a democratic media system can deal with absence of consensus, and they may be of special relevance to media systems in periods of transition. These include the *lottizzazione*; the ideal of the journalist as an activist in the world of politics and ideas; the vision, strongly expressed in France after World War II, of a journalist-run press autonomous of political and economic control; and the French success in shifting from a highly "instrumentalized" public broadcasting and regulatory system to a more autonomous one.

Shifting to the question of normative bias, it is clear, of course, that there are indeed normative issues that come up in relation to clientelism, instrumentalization, lack of consensus on journalistic norms and other problems endemic to what we call the Polarized Pluralist system. These issues probably represent problems for the improvement of democratic life and for a more equal access to public resources. They are certainly seen so by many members of those societies, and we do not believe it makes sense for scholars to say, for example, "we don't want to speak about clientelism," because that might seem too "normative," or might seem like "smuggling in" modernization theory. We should not let fear of appearing judgmental push a critical perspective out of our analysis of Southern European media systems. As political scientists have observed (e.g. Diamond and Morlino

2005), however, the quality of democracy can not be understood as varying only along a single dimension, and democracy has many forms. Who has a better democratic life – the citizen who needs to call in a friend with political connections to get an improvement on his or her career, or the one whose daily paper is focused on sexual affairs of a star football player? Any normative judgment we may make about democracies, and about the role of media in them, is likely to be very complex.

On the question of convergence or homogenization

in the last chapter of *Comparing Media Systems* we observe that "in 1970 the differences among the three groups of countries characterized by our three models were quite dramatic; a generation later, by the beginning of the twenty-first century, the difference were eroded to the point that it is reasonable to ask whether a single global media model is displacing the national variation of the past, at least among the advanced capitalist democracies discussed in this book" (Hallin & Mancini, 2004, p. 251). We go on to offer an analysis of forces of change within European societies which have produced significant erosion of the national differences which are the main focus of our book, a shift that can be seen roughly as convergence toward the Liberal Model, in the sense that market forces have become more dominant in European media systems, and media forms rooted in the political world of parties and organized social groups have declined. This chapter has been a focus of criticism (e.g. Hardy 2008), particularly by scholars who study parts of the world beyond Western Europe (Hadland, forthcoming), and we have sometimes been characterized as putting forward a kind of "end of history" prediction of a global triumph of the Liberal Model (McCargo, forthcoming).

We were surprised at this interpretation, in part because the convergence chapter was added at the end of our book in response to early criticisms of our unpublished manuscript, which took us to task for focusing excessively on differences among Western media systems that may have been very sharp a generation ago, but were less so today. What we stated at the beginning of the chapter was simple, and we really meant it to be taken in that way: that the differences among the countries we studied had diminished over time. This seems to us clearly true. At one point in continental Europe party newspapers were dominant, now commercial newspapers dominate every where; at one time only Britain among the European countries we studied had commercial broadcasting, now commercial broadcasting has the largest market share across almost all of the region. Some elements of this process will be found in other regions; media have become more commercialized in much of the world, for instance, and journalistic practices rooted in the Liberal Model have had important influence (e.g. Waisbord 2000). One of the most fundamental premises of our book, though, is the idea that media practices take their meaning within wider

structural and cultural contexts; we do not believe that media practices or institutions can simply be transferred across contexts without being transformed, and we did not intend the discussion of convergence in Western media systems to be projected onto the rest of the world any more than any other part of our analysis. In the conclusion of our book, we make the point that of our three models it is the Polarized Pluralist Model that is probably most comparable to media systems outside Western Europe and North America. The countries of Southern Europe, with their more recent transition to democracy, and their history of sharp political polarization over the adoption of capitalism and liberal institutions, are closer to the political history of most of the rest of the world than are the countries of Northern Europe and North America (see also Hallin & Papathanassopoulos 2002). This point, of course, would clearly conflict with the claim that all systems were converging toward the Liberal Model. The participants in our project on "non-Western" media systems were unanimous in rejecting the idea that world media systems were becoming completely homogenized, or were all converging with the Liberal system. They found instead important processes of hybridization, as well as the consolidation of systems or practices very different from the Western ones that are the focus of *Comparing Media Systems*.

Even within the scope of our analysis, we did not mean to be taken as endorsing the idea that a "single global media model" would indeed displace all national differences. The subtitle of the chapter was "the forces and limits of homogenization," and we concluded that "differences among media systems remain substantial and are likely to prevent complete homogenization of media systems for the foreseeable future." Our own research (Benson & Hallin 2007) and research by others (Aalberg, van Aelst & Curran 2010) has subsequently confirmed the persistence of the kinds of differences that are the main focus of our analysis. We also observed that convergence was not a one-way street, and the Liberal Model was also in a process of flux, with journalistic professionalism declining in the U.S., in particular, information-centered journalism giving way to opinion-centered journalism, and political parallelism increasing[3]. Finally, we offered a critique of straight-line evolutionist conceptions of change in media systems, which assumes an inevitable movement toward differentiation of media from other sub-systems.

Conclusion

We are gratified by the wide use of our analysis, and at the same time well aware that it has many limitations. We have tried here to clarify our intent on several points. First, on the subject of classification, we want to underscore the point that our analysis is tied

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3   Hallin (1992; 2000; 2006) has written a series of articles on the crisis of the American model of journalistic professionalism, once widely seen as end-product of natural evolution of media systems.

to the eighteen cases we analyzed, and we did not intend it to be "applied" beyond those cases; we believe new theory to apply to other media systems will have to arise, as our framework did, out of concrete analysis of those systems. We did not imagine that our analysis provided a fully comprehensive and elaborated framework for comparative analysis of media systems. We saw it as a beginning, and we hope that other scholars will try to build on it, and not simple, again, "apply" it. Many commentators have expressed reservations about the use of our three models for classifying media systems, fearing that it leads to overly broad and general and hence simplistic analysis. And in truth we share that concern. We believe our models are useful as a starting point for thinking about similarities and differences in patterns of media system development, and the extremely wide use of those models seems to confirm that we were right about their heuristic power. But we share the concern that an overemphasis on these models and on classification of media systems as an end in itself is a potential danger. Related to this point also we want to underscore our plea in the book that the categorization of media systems under one of the three models was not intended to substitute for the more detailed discussion of their similarities and differences and the reasons for these.

On the issue of the Polarized Pluralist Model, we consider it almost inevitable that an account of systems close to this model will be seen as "negative," but we want to emphasize, first, that we believe the systems of Southern Europe need to be understood on their own terms, as systems with highly specific forms of interaction between media and politics that are deeply rooted in the specific historical evolution of these countries, and, second, we want to reiterate our observation that we know of no basis in the existing scholarshiop for making a claim that the media systems of Southern Europe are in general deficient from a normative point of view. This does not mean, of course, that there are no normative issues to raise about those systems.

Finally, we want to clarify that our chapter on convergence was not intended to be taken as a claim that in fact we were headed to a complete elimination of differences among media systems. If we had believed that the differences among media systems were actually on the verge of disappearing, however, it would not have made much sense to write the book we did. This chapter has been read, to some extent, out of the context of the book as a whole, it seems to us, as though it represented not a qualification of our central arugement but a reversal of it, and we welcome the chance to clarify this point.

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