

# **MEDIA AND DEMOCRACY IN THE NETWORK SOCIETY (MODINET)**

## **Project Proposal**

**Project Leader: Professor Ib Bondebjerg**

The purpose of this project is to develop a new research agenda for – and an innovative mode of interdisciplinary interaction between – the humanities and the social sciences, between media theory and social theory. In a globalizing world and in a media culture which is being reshaped not least by the Internet, there is a strategic demand for theories and methods of research which will be able to integrate the analysis of two different, but interwoven social and cultural processes. On the one hand, the nation state and representative democracy are challenged by globalization in general and by the mediatization of political communication in particular, as the forms and functions of the public sphere are being transformed, and as entrenched elite networks of political communication are being undermined by both virtual networks and other participatory forms of communication. On the other hand, the traditional mass media, established cultural institutions, and the journalistic profession are challenged by a different media culture in which the principles of convergence and digitalization are taking a deregulated, but still national media culture into a global market, thus enhancing both the possibilities and the potential threats to the development of networks involving media as well as media users.

These two interrelated processes have created a new context for media and democracy – what sociologists and media researchers have recently defined as ‘the network society,’ and what political scientists and theorists refer to as a change ‘from government to governance.’ The term ‘network society’ (Castells, 1996/2000) refers to that historical configuration of technology, economy, politics, social structure, culture, and media which has followed in the wake of the transformation *from* industrialized mass societies, as rooted in nation states and other local-regional communities and institutions *toward* an information society in which virtual communities (relying on computers and the Internet as well as on combinations of old and new media) connect the global, the national, and the local levels in new ways. The term ‘governance’ (Rhodes, 1997, March & Olsen, 1995) refers to social practices of sustaining co-ordination and coherence among a variety of actors with different purposes and objectives. The MODINET research group joins these two notions in a common research question of how the network society connects expert systems and ordinary people in relations of mutual autonomy, dependence, and trust across old boundaries, potentially creating the conditions for increased connectivity, reflexivity, and interactivity. We wish to focus on the challenges and new possibilities, but also on the dangers that are associated with this new, simultaneously more globalized and more localized democracy, and with a new, more socially interactive media culture. Furthermore, we will analyze the emerging conflicts, but also possible connections between the traditional forms of democracy and political communication, the traditional mass media, and the digital media culture. MODINET, thus, will mobilize interdisciplinary methods of analysis and a combination of theories in order to investigate the profound changes currently taking place in democratic processes generally, in political power games, the empowering of individual citizens via the creation of new cultural identities and lifestyles, the forms and genres of both traditional and digital media, all of which amount to a restructuring of the social order as such.

### *The interdisciplinary challenge: main themes and dimensions*

Previous research into global challenges to media and democracy has tended to describe the situation from the point of view of the expert and the ‘old’ society, assuming clear separations between state, market, and civil society. The ongoing declines in both party membership and newspaper circulation, for example, have been approached as problems to be solved by expert systems in order for democracy and a free press to survive. These developments are mostly regarded as a process of decay that replaces democratic processes and enlightened understanding with a new populism of ‘spectatorship’ and ‘infotainment’. Although reception studies, for a long time, have challenged any simple notion of the audience as gullible

individuals, some previous studies seem to have been blinded by the apparent powers of highly globalized markets, monopolized media, and undemocratic subcultures to allow, for example, single issues or violence to dominate over common concerns, public reason, and the building of political and social capital.

The MODINET group does not consider these narratives of decay convincing, certainly not as the only or even most important approach to media and democracy in the network society. We do not deny that globalization and the contemporary media culture pose a threat to the traditional key organizations and media of modern industrialist society. We do argue, however, that the existing research into the place of politics and communication in everyday life has already proven its importance and should be expanded, in particular to understand how new public and private management strategies can be designed to care for ordinary individuals and to enable them to literally make themselves into subjects who assume the responsibility of governing themselves and the systems of which they are a part. The positive prospects that are being opened up by new types of political and other mediated communication, which leave their imprint on social, political, and cultural institutions, are a necessary component in any open-minded and critical research enterprise taking on the network society and its communicative structure.

The key research question will be articulated with reference to the two overarching social and cultural processes of change, mentioned above, which will be differentiated into four processes and problem areas. These four processes of change will serve as the foci of research in the four teams in the project. This organization will allow each group to benefit from the interdisciplinary range of theories and methods that is represented in MODINET, and it will allow the project as a whole to examine common cases and empirical data from several different perspectives – cases which involve the role of both old and new media, and which relate centrally to the state of democracy under the influence of the globalization and digitalization of politics and culture. Thus, rather than asking broad questions about the media and democracy in the network society, the MODINET group will address a set of well-defined case studies which can promote a better understanding of four fundamental processes of change in the unfolding network society:

- ❖ *The changes in politics and democratic processes* and the development of new organizational forms and discourses, as the existing public sphere is transformed.
- ❖ *The changes in media and cultural institutions*, as interactive media and the Internet demand new communication strategies, new policies, and, indeed, a whole new agenda in relation to both the public at large and the individual citizen.
- ❖ *The changes in everyday life and media use*, as seen from the perspective of the individual user and as witnessed in new digital discourses, understood both as aesthetic forms and as a new political resource.
- ❖ *The changes in journalism and information strategies* in a more integrated media culture, in which the practices both of gathering and distributing information will change the forms of journalism and ultimately the production of meaning.

The structure of the MODINET can be illustrated in a figure in which the research themes of each of the four teams described below are depicted, first, in relation to the types of empirical cases to be employed in the project and, second, in relation to the theories which are used as a common frame of reference by all four teams (see MODINET research model). As the model suggests, the four teams will investigate, through collaborative as well as individual research, different aspects of the four processes of change described above – the four processes roughly correspond to the main foci of the four teams. Each of the teams will have a close affinity to one or two of the four theoretical dimensions (as indicated by the circles in the model), which will be a common ground for the whole project, and which will be examined in depth in a number of joint seminars. In the work of each of the four teams, a number of cases will be studied. Some of these cases will be specific to the work done in that particular group, while others will be employed by two or more of the groups. Finally, a full-scale electronic media and social experiment has the potential to serve as a common case for all of the teams. In this experiment, an ‘electronic town hall’ will be established in three separate locations in Denmark. The case, which will be carried out in a collaboration between MODINET,

Danmarks Radio and various local media, is described in more detail below.

One of the aims of the project is to demonstrate that social and political matters – culture, communication, and media – constitute strategically important areas of research for an understanding of democratic processes, political governance, and indeed for the whole infrastructure of the network society. The content element and the user dimension of democracy and media will have a high profile in the governance of the society of the future; culture and media are some of the fastest growing sectors in the global economy; knowledge about human processes of meaning-making and their interaction with media are becoming increasingly important for culture and governance, for interactive networks as well as individualized media use. Culture is politicized by ordinary citizens as well as by the media, and is becoming a target area for community building in both European and global politics. Especially the new digital media are changing the entire institutional framework and the discursive arenas in which the nation state, the EU, and global expert systems engage each other in strategic action.

The relations between the empirical cases, the theoretical dimensions, and the research themes of the four groups is explained below in a short synthesized description of each of the four teams which form the core of the project.

#### *Theme 1 – Democracy, Governance, and New Public Spheres*

Already in the 1970s and 1980s, utopians drew a picture of a future democracy in which democratic dialogue and decision-making took place through modern communication technology (Etzioni 1975, Toffler 1982, Naisbitt 1982). In the 1990s, these utopias were, with the arrival of the Internet (World Wide Web), made topical, and the possibilities of electronic democracy or cyberdemocracy were widely discussed (Rheingold 1993, Dyson et.al. 1994, Porter 1995). However, serious empirical studies on the way in which digital information and communication technologies (ICT's) have become a part of different political practices did not really take off until the last half of the 1990s, at which time also a more balanced view on the

possible "Athenian" or "Orwellian" aspects of the new technology came to the fore (van de Donk et. al.(eds.) 1995)

The researchers working in relation to this theme will continue and renew this 'tradition' of empirical studies about the way in which especially ICT's, but also other media have become an indispensable part of political practices at all levels of society – locally, nationally, and globally. The various projects will focus especially on politically and democratically innovative uses of ICT in different contexts, and on the different discourses on society, community, and citizenship which are part of, but also actively create, democracy in the network society. The following topics are central to the projects:

- New public spheres exceeding old limits of time and space
- New forms of (multi-level, transnational) governance and organisation
- New types of everyday political practices: new 'common understandings', new relations of social trust, new political cultures and identities
- New relations between public administrations and citizens/users, corporations, voluntary organisations, etc.

Each project will typically cover one or two of these themes. The projects are informed by theories on democracy, governance, organisations, discourse, learning and self-identification processes, and everyday practices and 'ordinarity'. However, a common denominator is a social-constructivist approach to the processes studied, and thereby a high degree of methodological sensitivity towards the role played by language and discourse in these new political practices.

More concretely, *one cluster* of projects looks at new forms of transnational organisation and regulation in order to understand the new ICT-mediated forms of globalized governance. The projects will look at networks created 'from above', by elite configurations in various countries and organisations, but also on opposing movements or types of organisations 'from below', as for example the 'anti-globalisation movement' ATTAC.

*Another cluster* of projects looks at these processes in a local perspective. What changes do we see in local government, communities, and neighbourhoods, and to what extent does ICT play a role in creating new possibilities for political communication, participation, and influence? And related to this question: is ICT instrumental in the creation of new types of political cultures and identities? *A third cluster* of projects focuses on the national level, analysing national ICT policy, and examining the uses of ICT-based tools by political elites and decisionmakers. Central questions are whether ICT plays a role in the changing flow and content of information between these groups, and what effect this may have on the policymaking process. Finally, a few projects related to the theme of this group are of a more fundamental theoretical and methodological character. One is a project on society's self-description as a 'network society', and includes an analysis of how digital media (in particular the Internet) are used for society's learning and self-identification processes. The other is a project on the relationship between 'communication revolutions' and conceptions of democracy, where the idea is to study especially how different conceptions of democracy have influenced and shaped the way in which different media (radio, TV, and Internet) have been formed and are used.

The coherence of the theme, and the integration between the subprojects, is established through their bottom line, namely, questions of what these several developments mean for democracy. Among the relevant questions are:

- How do the new public spheres and the new forms of transnational organisations function as discourse communities, creating or spreading ideas on political steering, democratic values and norms, sovereignty/territoriality, and social order and disorder? How shall we understand the political rationalities of new 'glocal' political actors? And what is the role of the traditional central political institutions in the network society?
- What is the importance of new types of everyday political practices and new relations between public administrations and its users in terms of political participation, influence, competence, and reflexivity? Is political steering better informed, more transparent, and considered more legitimate than before? And finally, are these 'traditional' measures of democratic

performance still the most relevant and useful in the network society?

*Team 2 – Internet Strategies of Public Broadcast Media & Institutions*

In the course of the 1990s, the Internet has become one of the main pillars of society's communicative infrastructure. To a rapidly growing segment of the population, the net has become a daily tool, whether as a source of news, a work of reference, a library and knowledge archive, a public debate forum or postal system – it is used for occupational purposes as well as for communication between national/local authorities and the individual citizen, and between individual citizens, both publicly, semi-publicly, and privately. Most institutions, public and private, and most companies have now established themselves on the net. Thus, the Internet is now a medium for the public, the marketplace, and for civil society. It is a place where one seeks news, information, knowledge, art, entertainment & amusement; where one does business, participates in all sorts of discussions, and meets other people. The Internet is both a new communications system and an archive/library - both historically well-established institutions.

What is unique about the net is the integration of the electronic media's speed of communication with the storage and retrieval functions of the library and the archive. We have had global electronic communication since the end of the 1800s, and we have had archives and libraries since antiquity. The Internet is one big coupling of these functions. This coupling touches on both communication and content, and on institutional functions and organizational structures, as well. Originating from the universe of a number of parallel nation states, the various public institutions and media are now confronted with far-reaching changes a) in the configuration of possible audiences, since both their global and local reach is extended, and b) in the communicational patterns, as indicated by the competition and/or coexistence between existing broadcast and newly developed on-demand services (possibly user generated and individualized), and by the notions of interactivity and hypertextuality, and changes c) in national and international obligations – in short, a complex set of communicational changes which are referred to in various theories as a new, emerging network society.

The common theme of the group will be the development of Internet strategies in a variety of public broadcast media and cultural institutions, including national broadcast media (DR, TV2 and others) and libraries (The Royal Library). One project focuses specifically on the developments within national radio (DR-Radio) in the period 1983-2001 (from broadcasting to webcasting). The director of the DR-Radio has guaranteed full and unlimited access to the radio archives. Another project focuses on the development of digital TV in Denmark. Both projects embrace institutional and strategic aspects as well as the development of genres and new formats and the relations between broadcast-webcast, interactivity, and on-demand services. A third project focuses on the general development of public service functions across the various media-platforms, also including the printed press. A fourth project is concerned with the digital challenges to libraries, museums, and archives. This project has been initiated by the Royal Library, Copenhagen, and will take as its point of departure a case study of the Royal Library's Department of Maps, Prints, and Photographs. A fifth project is concerned with the overall function of the internet as a new backbone in the communicative infrastructure, especially focusing on the role of the internet for and in public and national institutions. The group also plans to organize a national hearing on 'public service' in a digital network society. The projects differ as regards the specific goals and aims of the various institutions, but at the same time they also share a set of common questions – how to define challenges and risks, questions of copyright, the need for organizational and institutional changes, new patterns of demand, the need for a renewed legitimacy – and further into questions of how to identify and exploit the new potentials of digital representation and communication, both at the institutional level and at the level of materials and services offered to the public(s).

*Team 3 – Everyday Life -- Digital Discourses as Aesthetic Forms and Political Resources*

The network society holds the potential to involve ordinary citizens, employees, and consumers in political and cultural processes, which traditionally have been organized around centers, and in hierarchies – for example, in the representative system of political government

or within elitist cultural establishments. However, the various institutional, technological, and aesthetic conditions under which people might find themselves empowered and participating in innovative networks of social interaction are not yet well understood. This group of projects within the MODINET program addresses and assesses the promise of the network society *from the perspective of the individual media user and the concrete digital discourses that s/he encounters in everyday life.*

The empirical focus will be the 'interface' between digital media and their different communities of users, as increasingly studied by both social sciences and humanities. On the one hand, political and other social theory has, in part, shifted its emphasis away from the formal institutions of power and toward everyday practices and discourses. On the other hand, the humanities have, in recent decades, included popular culture as well as daily life and artifacts among its objects of analysis. A common ground, thus, has emerged for studying digital media as both aesthetic forms and political resources in a variety of social contexts. One shared research question is the complex relationship between 'politics' and 'aesthetics' in the social development and practical uses of IT.

The scope of the research group is suggested by the following capsule summaries of the participating projects under five main headings. Each project combines an empirical focus on digital media with theoretical perspectives on particular sectors of the network society, from the local and national, to the transnational and global level.

- *Micro-politics and 'everyday making'*. The roles and identities of reflexive lay-actors and the implications of their local activities and initiatives for macro-society.
- *Corporate and military communication networks*. The rhetorical strategies of business firms as well as military organizations such as NATO in communicating via the World Wide Web and other media.
- *Responsibility and trust in social services*. Narratives about, and conceptions of, responsibility in social networks involving different interested parties, as exemplified by the case of Danish public health care.
- *Music as communication and culture*. The changing place of music (and other sound) in digital media environments – as means of political expression and as a growing component of 'audiovisual' communication on the Internet and in mobile computing.
- *Digital arts*. The new means of artistic expression in digital discourses, and the potential for explaining these art forms as complex networks in and of themselves.

Examining these several aspects of the network society (including joint cases) from an interdisciplinary perspective, an important purpose of the working group is to contribute to theory development at the intersection between social sciences and humanities. The following key concepts and conceptual shifts, as recognized in several disciplines and research fields, will guide the planning of research and initial analyses within the group:

- ❖ From single 'works' to discourses, hypertexts, and 'networks'
- ❖ From audiences to users and participants
- ❖ From technical to social 'usability'
- ❖ The distribution and individualization of politics
- ❖ The politicization of the network enterprise
- ❖ A mobile culture.

#### *Team 4 – Journalism and the Production of Meaning*

Meaning production in any given society is always the result of a number of different social and cultural processes, involving both the public domain of institutions, communication, and media, and the more private domains of families and everyday life. Traditionally, news, documentaries, and other factual forms were very much governed by a public concept of meaning. However, since the 1990s, a number of documentary genres such as reality TV, talk shows, and new documentary forms have joined the journalistic discourses and the news genre in a move towards the representation of broader social discourses, more of an everyday-life focus, and new formats looking at politics 'from below'.

The development of the Internet as a medium for news and journalism has strengthened these tendencies, and both TV, radio, and newspapers are now developing

strategies for internet journalism. At the same time, the Internet, being an open and general network, makes it possible for people to create their own networks, communications, and meanings. In the converging media culture of the Internet and the network society, the distinction between public and private, and between top-down and bottom-up processes, is blurred. Rumors, gossip, and other forms of informal conversation in social networks have generally been underrated in previous research on journalism and meaning production. In the network society, however, discourses and genres that combine different spheres of talk on 'reality' almost demand a stronger interdisciplinary research effort, combining discourse and genre theory with theories of meaning, cognition, and reception.

This subgroup will contribute to that effort by applying grand and middle-range theory to a number of interrelated aspects of on-line journalism and the production of meaning in a wired society. We shall also establish a joint database, generated from quantitative mappings and qualitative case studies of these activities, not only in terms of news services and chat rooms on the internet, but also including studies of changes in genres such as talk shows and reality TV which involve an interactive combination of different discourses and different media (TV-Internet, Phone-TV etc), and which challenge the lines dividing entertainment from information, private from public.

The group will conduct the research from three interdependent perspectives:

- *Changes in the practices of information gathering by media professionals and lay consumers*
- *The transformation of genres that combine everyday experience and private talk with authoritative news and documented knowledge*
- *Changes in the concept of the public sphere as a bridge between democratic institutions, media, and citizens.*

The sub-themes of research in this group can be described in the following way:

- ❖ *Information, meaning production and Internet journalism.* The projects under this sub-theme focus on how professional journalists use the Internet, e.g., how traditional telephone conversations with external sources and peer-group interaction are supplemented by computer-assisted practices. The research will also focus on changes in news production following from the move from traditional 'push-broadcast media' (newspapers, television news) to 'pull-interactive media' (Internet), and toward to a stronger principle of 'news you can use' and toward a situation in which journalistic texts are produced for several distribution platforms and not just one single medium.
- ❖ *Discourse and genre in the new factual television culture.* Under this sub-theme, the focus will be on the mediation of everyday life through genres that are not just journalistic and factual, but which combine entertainment and more spectacular representations of social roles and more varied discourses of reality. Examples and cases include reality-TV, talkshows, debate programs, alternative news formats on TV and the internet, involving analysis of how the discourses of everyday life mix with media discourses and expert discourses.
- ❖ *The public sphere and new forms of cultural and political identity processes.* Research under this sub-theme investigates current changes in discourses on national identity and citizenship in the light of globalization and the shifting experience of belonging to a local, a national, and a global culture. European integration and European discourses play a still larger role in everyday life and mediated meaning production. Research under this sub-theme looks into cases that can give us a deeper understanding of democratic participation within small, non-institutional networks facilitated by electronic means and their linkage to the public opinion formation of larger audiences, and into the relationship between a non-existing European public sphere and a nationally conceived identity.

### *Research plan and research organization*

The research of the MODINET group is organized in four thematic groups (as outlined above), working with a select number of cases, with quantitative as well as qualitative data, and relying on a range of methods and theories in accordance with the interdisciplinary nature of the project. Together, the research themes and the four groups (each headed by a team leader) serve to operationalize the overall theme into a manageable research program. The Steering group (composed of the Project director, a co-director, and the four team leaders) is responsible for managing the research program and for coordinating the synergy between the four research groups. All groups are composed in such a way that the broadest possible interdisciplinary perspective is represented. Consequently, both the team groups and the project as a whole will provide a new collaborative platform for research of a type which has, in fact, never been seen before in Denmark, comprising media and communication research as well as research on political communication and democracy, and university departments as well as independent research institutes and private and public organizations.

The *empirical* component of the project will be centered around the data collected by the groups, and will be supplemented with and compared to available cultural statistics, time use studies, and other relevant surveys on media, media use, life style, political activity, etc. A number of these *cases*, covering both the local, national, and global dimensions, and involving different types of media, will be used by 2-3 of the groups, but from different perspectives, and the cases will, further, be discussed in seminars involving the whole project. In addition to data and cases from the four groups, the project will also engage in a *large-scale media experiment* in collaboration with Danmarks Radio, some local newspapers and radio stations, and with the Nellen group, who has specialized in these kinds of experiments.

The project is called *The Digital Town Meeting: Three media experiments*. This full-scale social media experiment (consisting of three separate cases) will be carried out in collaboration with local, regional, and national media, and may develop into a common empirical ground for researchers from all four teams. Each experimental case will address specific problems of great social relevance for a group of citizens (social service, town planning, change in local government principles, etc.), starting with hearings, succeeded by electronic and newspaper-facilitated debate for some weeks or a month, ideally leading to concrete action and change. Each experiment will be observed and documented by several MODINET researchers, thus providing an opportunity for interdisciplinary exchange, and promoting intersubjective validation and reliability. Observation and documentation will be take place at three levels, from micro to macro, each with a limited number of informants. The experiments will be carried out in sequence, and will be designed with the greatest possible flexibility so as to benefit most fully from the experience gained during previous phases. Two of the experiments will occur locally in collaboration with two local and regional media and portals, using a website as a link for communication and information. The ideal will be to develop a Digital Town Meeting. One experiment in collaboration with Danmarks Radio will use a series of digital television programs (linked to a dedicated website) also addressing a specific social problem of great relevance for a specific segment. The participating media will contribute in the form of journalistic and technical staff and facilities, and the budget will be a joint venture between the participating media and collaborating partners and the MODINET project.

The whole project will, thus, be grounded in cases and empirical data, and the collection, structuring, comparison, and analysis of these cases and data will be undertaken from an interdisciplinary methodological perspective. The most important *methodologies and analytical tools* in the research project will be:

- ❖ Quantitative and qualitative observation studies and reception studies
- ❖ Content analysis using both qualitative, discursive, and aesthetic methods of media text analysis as well as more quantitative methods
- ❖ Sociological methods of institutional analysis
- ❖ Methods for analyzing human-computer interaction
- ❖ Case study methodology
- ❖ Interview methodologies.

The methodological dimension of the project will be developed through interdisciplinary



cooperation within the teams. Media studies methodologies on, for instance, text and content-analysis, reception studies, and institutional analysis, will join social-science methodologies where textual analysis is rarely a strong element (apart from new forms of discourse analysis), and the different forms of sociological analysis developed in both main research traditions will also contribute to a cross-disciplinary synergy of media studies and political science.

In theoretical terms, the combination of humanities and social sciences will significantly strengthen the discussion and development of a number of important media theories, social theories, theories of politics, democracy, and globalization, and of the concept of the network society itself. The theoretical framework can be described through *four theoretical clusters*, as already indicated in the figure above:

- ❖ Theories on the historical development of the public sphere (Jürgen Habermas, Niklas Luhmann, Joshua Meyrowitz, John B. Thompson etc), and theories on democracy and political governance (Rawls, Held, Hirst, Elster, Mouffe, Barber and Rhodes, Stoker, Mayntz, March & Olsen, Kooiman, Klijn, Pierre, Guy Peters etc.)
- ❖ Theories on the network society and globalization (Daniel Bell, Manuel Castells, Bruno Latour, Anthony Giddens, Steve Woolgar etc), and on the changing forms of national and cultural identities and the role of national media and cultural institutions (Arjun Appadurai, David Held, Michael Billig etc.)
- ❖ Discourse theory and media theory related to rhetoric, aesthetics and genre (Norman Fairclough, Teun van Dijk, David Harvey, etc) and theories on digital communication, virtual communities, interactivity (Jay David Bolter, George P. Landow, Kathrine Hayles, etc.)
- ❖ Theories on the social uses and reception of digital media (Nancy Baym, Steve Jones, Janet H. Murray, etc.) and on the active production of meaning by media users in context (James Lull, David Morley, Margaret Morse, Roger Silverstone, etc.)

In the overall plan of the project, the research process will be based on *three workshops every year* for each team and *one major conference for all teams in each of the three years*. All the teams will be involved in the empirical component of the project from the first year, and the large-scale empirical experiment will also be a joint venture of several teams. However, the discussions both in the team-workshops and in the seminars will also single out *specific aspects of each of the four theoretical clusters*. This will take place in one of the workshops of each team during the first year, and at least one of the workshops each year will be organized in such a way that the teams can meet on the same days and in the same place, in order to secure in-depth theoretical debates involving several teams. In the yearly conference, cases, methods, and theories will again be in focus through presentations and reports from the teams, and, in addition, external researchers will be invited to participate in the conferences. Theoretical exchanges and debate will, thus, run parallel to the development of cases and empirical data. In sum, the synergy between the research groups is insured by the use of common empirical materials and by sharing a theoretical background across the several disciplines involved. It is the responsibility of the steering group to coordinate the individual team workshops with project seminars and larger conferences in order to ensure the interaction between teams and individual researchers.

#### *Internationalization*

The research agenda and composition of the MODINET research group is rather unique, also in an international perspective, because of its strong interdisciplinary base and the specific cooperation between a humanistic research tradition on media and a social science tradition addressing democracy. Moreover, both the individual members of teams and especially the team leaders and the two co-directors have an extended international network and are involved in other research projects with a related profile. Ib Bondebjerg is co-director of the 5-year European project *Changing Media – Changing Europe* (together with Peter Golding, UK), a project in which the humanities and social sciences are working together to undertake comparative research on the development and current role of media in a European perspective. The project involves 60 researchers from 16 European countries. Cooperation between MODINET and this research project would be of interest for both parties. Henrik Bang is the Danish participant in Nordic Governance Network (NGN), involving all

Scandinavian groups in governance studies, and many of the social science researchers involved in MODINET are organized in Government and Democracy in the Information Age (GaDIA) - a research network dedicated to the study of information and communication technology (ICT) in the 'political world'. In addition, most of the social science participants are already involved in interdisciplinary and cross-national research. One example of this is the collaboration in COST Action A14 on "Government and Democracy in the Information Age"; a European research network involving 51 research institutions in 16 European countries.

#### *Publication strategy and educational perspectives*

The most important results of the research will be published in peer-reviewed international journals and as scientific reports and books. Furthermore, each of the four teams will produce one anthology about their sub-theme for a broader international audience. The Steering group will act as an editorial board and supervising unit, so that each volume is edited around a strong, coherent idea, and so that the four volumes together will cover the research accomplished within the project in a substantive and coherent way. The four volumes in this series will appear under the overall title *Media and Democracy in the Network Society*, to be published under contract with a major international publisher.

The project will establish a *web page* with online publication of working papers and will, in line with the very object of research, dedicate substantial resources to maintaining an active and useful website. The project will also seek to promote and encourage debate and public hearings.

The research project can be expected to have a positive impact on cross-institutional education involving the humanities and social sciences. In particular, given its eight ph.d. students, the project will be able to contribute to and collaborate with two research education schools which are closely related to the two main subjects of the project: The Research School on *Media, Communication, and Journalism* (organizing all Danish university departments in this area, established 2001 with support from FUR) and the COS Research School (organizing the social sciences departments within political science). Finally, the project will also develop a *network of MA students*, bringing to light the hidden research resource of MA theses for the project and the research community. MA students working with relevant projects will be invited to participate in some seminars and conferences, and the plan is to organize separate courses and seminars for MA thesis students, as well.

#### *Outcome and further perspectives*

The research tasks undertaken in this project will contribute, in general, to an enhanced understanding of media and democracy and to the formulation of different scenarios and strategic choices facing media institutions in the near future. The research has great potential as a knowledge base to be integrated into future IT products and services, and could potentially contribute to a softening of conflicts between elite networks and everyday actors in the network society. On the one hand, as basic research, the theoretical, empirical, and analytical results will contribute to a better understanding of media and communication, discourse and democracy, in the network society. On the other hand, the various subprojects also will provide strategic and applied findings. Several of the case studies are designed to contribute to the development of political communication strategies on a national, regional, or global level, to local planning and development, to web and other internet strategies for companies and institutions, and to media programming and a media policy serving a future network society.