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Abstract

Title: Public service media engaging in fan-based social networked practices

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This paper is exploring how public service media is engaging in fan-based social networked practices. The purpose is to describe and contribute to a deepened understanding of articulations and re-negotiations of the public service media ideal of being in the public interest taking place in activities based on the involvement of 'fans'.

The theoretical underpinnings are twofold: building on the argument from Beck (2005), to start from networks to understand institutions, and from Jenkins (1992, 2006) to relate fan-culture to participatory culture in media development.

A case study is made of a campaign 2009, from the Swedish public service television company Swedish Television, called Dear Steve Jobs (<http://dearstevejobs.com/>). The campaign was directed towards the CEO of Apple, Steve Jobs, to make him approve the application SVT play for iPhone. The campaign was started by a PR-agency and spread in social media. A qualitative analysis is made of the material in social media (blogs, Twitter and Facebook), what was written about the campaign in Swedish daily press and an interview with the project leader for the campaign.

Results show that the socio-material aspects of social networked media include being an arena where interest and admiration (fans) creates a space where democratic values becomes intertwined with commercial efforts.

Paper

Public service media engaging in fan-based social networked practices

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Introduction

This paper is exploring how public service media is engaging in fan-based social networked practices. The purpose is to describe and contribute to a deepened understanding of articulations and re-negotiations of the public service media ideal of being in the public interest taking place in activities based on the involvement of 'fans'. A case study is made of a campaign starting December 16th, 2009, in the name of the Swedish public service television company Swedish Television ([SVT](#)), called *Dear Steve Jobs*. The campaign was directed towards the CEO of Apple, Steve Jobs, to make him approve the app [SVT play](#) for [iPhone](#). The social media campaign was made by a PR-agency. A qualitative analysis is made of the material in social media (blogs, Twitter and Facebook), what was written about the campaign in Swedish daily press and an interview with the SVT project manager for the campaign.

Theoretical underpinnings

The theoretical underpinnings are twofold: building on the argument from Beck (2005), to start from networks to understand institutions, and from Jenkins (1992, 2006) to relate fan-culture to participatory culture in media development.

Beck (2005) claims that we need to start from networks to understand institutions, by using Mann's (1986) argument on identifying socio-spatial networks of power leading to possibilities of cosmopolitan democracy. A way to accomplish cosmopolitan democracy is 'self-critical cosmopolitanism', where democracy is said to secure self-criticism: encompassing new and transgressing organizations and normative frameworks, involving democratizing of human rights administration, being a scenario

of citizens' rights against states and the presence of a global citizens' parliament. Beck wants states to become the agents of cosmopolitan law in protecting the rights of world citizens. I understand Beck as trying to promote global collective action and perform a democratization of global governance. Critique towards Beck is the claims being grounded in political commitments rather than empirical observation, and underestimating connections between communities and forces for national and local solidarities.

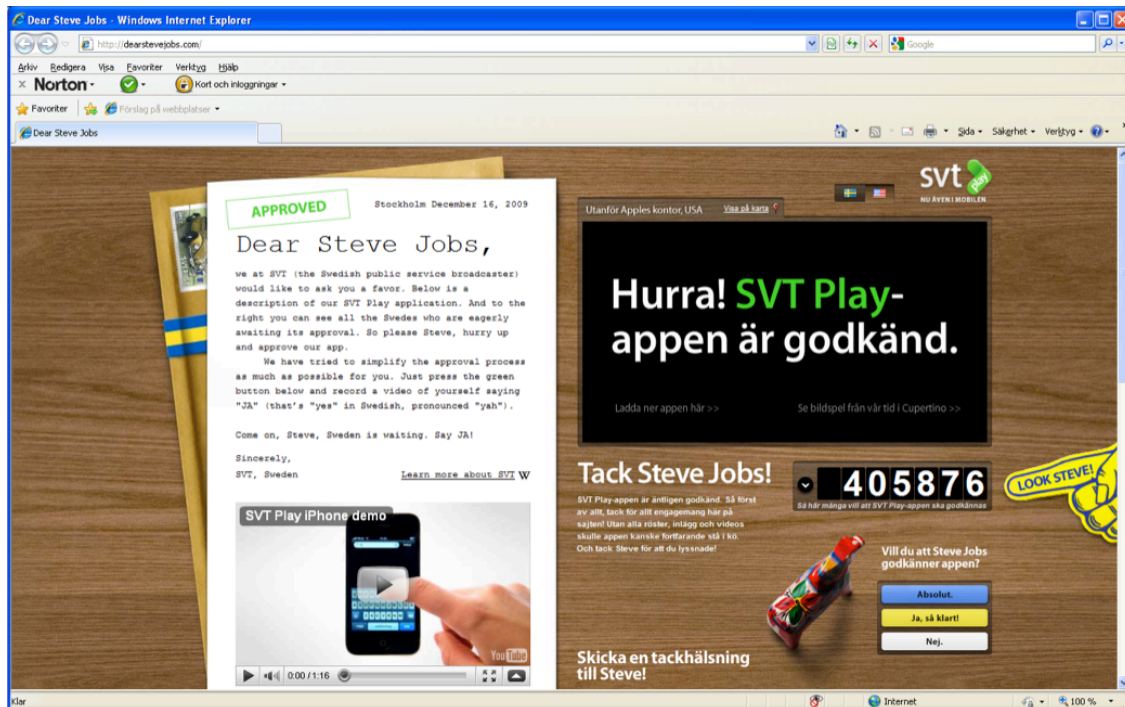
A way to relate Beck's claims to more empirical observation and to interconnectedness between and within national and local communities is Jenkins (1992, 2006) work on fan-culture and participatory culture in digital connected media.

Jenkins (1992) approach fans as a complex subculture involving commercial culture as well as democratic aspects. Media fans are seen as active producers, nomadic poachers, and an alternative social community. The power of fans is ascribed as embodied in Michel de Certeau's model of poaching: remaking professionally produced material. Continuing this work, Jenkins (2006) expands his discussion in different ways, especially the growth of participatory culture on the web, with blogging as example of how consumer participation impacts mainstream media, and also debating the public policy implications surrounding participation and intellectual property. These involve new theories of participation and collective intelligence. For Jenkins main focus is how popular culture operates. In this context Jenkins argue that fan politics could be acknowledged and accepted as a valid contribution to the debates about mass culture. Critique towards Jenkins concerns lacking of critical theory, overemphasizing creative participatory aspects and more implicit than explicit relating to democratic theory.

I link Beck and Jenkins mainly triggered by Jenkins writings on pop cosmopolitan (2006), situating participatory culture and media convergence in a global context. A pop cosmopolitan can be a young American involved with Japanese manga, partly to escape the confines of local American culture: "someone whose embrace of global popular media represents an escape route of the parochialism of [their] local community." (Jenkins, 2006:152). According to Jenkins, pop cosmopolitans can become more tolerant of others through getting to know their cultures from afar: "pop cosmopolitanism is generating its own intelligentsia, its own critics, historians, translators and educators." (Jenkins, 2006:170). In this setting it is difficult to see who is dominating whom.

The case study

On December 16th, 2009 a campaign called *Dear Steve Jobs* was launched by the Swedish public service broadcasting company Swedish Television. The campaign was directed towards the hardware and software company [Apple](#), CEO [Steve Jobs](#), to make him approve the app SVT play for iPhone, a smartphone with Internet browsing and networking capabilities:



(Source: www.dearstevejobs.com , screen dump March 2010)

The campaign was created by a PR agency, [Forsman & Bodenfors](#). The campaign was launched in social media, first appearing on the site <http://dearstevejobs.com/>, where linkage to [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) was possible along with several interactive features.

A qualitative analysis is made of the material from data-gathering in following ways:

1. Starting with Twitter December 16th 2009 and following the different links for digital material both in my Twitter flow (then appr. 200 people combining academics, journalists, entrepreneurs, politicians, students).
2. Doing strategic searches in general google-search results from keywords especially focusing on:
 - a. High status national and international blogs

- b. National daily press
 - c. Material on websites from organisations involved: Swedish Television and companies involved in the making of the campaign.
3. Doing Twitter-searches for gathering all tweets on the campaign using search words [dearstevejobs](#) and [#dearsteve](#)
 4. E-mail conversation and a telephone interview with SVT project leader for the campaign.

Presenting material

After the campaign the marketing company, PR agency Forsman & Bodenfors, describes the campaign in the following way as one of the examples of their work:

SVT is Sweden's public service broadcaster, and SVT Play is their on demand web service. When we were asked to launch the SVT Play app for iPhone, we faced a problem. We had no idea when Apple would approve the app. But instead of seeing this as a setback, we turned it into our advantage. We invited all the SVT Play fans (there are quite a few) to participate in a campaign, trying to get the app approved as quickly as possible. And we addressed the campaign directly to Apple's CEO Steve Jobs. To be honest, we didn't do that much of the job ourselves, most of it was done by the Swedish people. But then again, it is Swedish Television." ([Forsman & Bodenfors site](#))

In a video embedded under this text a voice says that it was "A campaign *from* the Swedish people" ([Forsman & Bodenfors site](#)). Forsman & Bodenfors situates the campaign as brought into being from fans to the public service broadcasting company. A link between fans as the people in the nation is established through the argument that the customer is Swedish television.

From SVT the first project manager was Johan Grafström:

-The campaign has been a tremendous impact, now people are urging on blogs in Brazil and Spain, says Johan Grafström Project Manager at SVT.

The campaign has spread online and the Facebook group "Dear Steve Jobs please say YES to the SVT Play app" now has over a thousand members.

The aim of the guerilla campaign is that Steve Jobs will shoot his "yes" with his own webcam and post it on the campaign page. There you can also upload their own video to inspire Steve Jobs. ([SVT site](#), translated from Swedish)

In its own news on the campaign, SVT articulates the campaign as making an impact, using international references, and examples of how it is spreading online with "members". Naming the campaign as a "guerrilla campaign", SVT is performed as the small organization in relation to the big company, Apple, personified by its CEO. Participatory possibilities are told to be possible for everyone to exert pressure on the CEO.

When I contacted SVT in March 2010, the project manager was Mats Liljengren. I was referred to him by Johan Grafström, in a tweet when asking of contact persons for the campaign on Twitter. Mats role was according to himself having "been responsible for the project to develop the app, while others he was responsible for the communication part" (e-mail). Overall the material from SVT show that it was primarily the marketing company that was thinking and doing, and making the campaign happen. From SVT it was mainly an effort for the iPhone-app to be approved. This is especially visible in [Guldägget](#), the golden egg, a contest arranged by Swedish Association of Communication Agencies, where Forsman & Bodenfors won [a silver egg for the campaign](#). SVT is a customer and Forsman & Bodenfors is the company making the campaign.

There are more companies involved in the campaign. The digital design experience company Fi, collaborated with Forsman & Bodenfors: "SVT's ad agency Forsman & Bodenfors contacted Fi with an idea and together we set out to shake things up" ([Fi site](#)). Fi also include another company in California, that also was involved with the visit to Apple headquarters:

But that is not enough. We need to make sure Steve knows about the site and there is only one sure way to do that – someone needs to go to Apple in California and tell him. So with some local collaboration from the design

agency Knack Design we armed a group of Swedish activists (sent over by F&B) with picket signs, iPhone costumes, banners, folk dresses, flyers and a determination to get the app approved. ([Fi site](#))

SVT is portrayed as having an ad agency, and the company Fi is arguing for their role in the campaign as making it more exciting, involving both an American company and Swedish activists. Forsman & Bodenfors are in this relationship a customer.

In the daily press the campaign was not made part of daily coverage, rather it was present as niche news for economy and digital media. In [Dagens Nyheter](#), Daily News, a high rank daily newspaper, the campaign gets this comment in their media blog:

The whole thing is pretty fun, and also shows how difficult it has become to get ones application in Apple's famous iPhone. But doesn't it smell a little surreptitious advertising? Is this petition completely in line with SVT's public service principle of ad-free TV? The hope is that Apple will reward the positive attention by letting SVT Play in, in its system. ([DN site](#), translated from Swedish)

Emotive aspects of fun, is ascribed to SVT (not the marketing company), that also gets critique for the linkage between public service broadcasting and advertising.

In an international high status blog the campaign is referred to in the following way:

Swedish television station SVT Play has a problem. It, like so many other developers, has fallen prey to the App Store's notorious approval process. But rather than take their time in App Store purgatory sitting down, the Swedes behind the app have decided to pay a visit to Cupertino. They're now standing on a street corner near Apple headquarters with mock iPhone costumes, giant signs, Swedish flags, and even a pair of women decked out in traditional Swedish garb. And they've set up a live stream of their crusade at [DearSteveJobs.com](#) (scroll down to watch). Try not to giggle when they wave their tiny flags at the cars driving by. ([Techcrunch site](#))

For TechCrunch, the campaign is the event in California, which is noted for its activist parts and humoristic tone. SVT is seen as part of well-known irritation in media development that Apple has the gatekeeping power of deciding which apps are to be sold on App Store.

Other public service broadcasting companies are also very positive to the campaign, like from the Norwegian PSB company NRK:

It encourages the Apple Chief Steve Jobs to approve new SVT Play application as soon as possible. Ingenious marketing move, where 90 000 has "signed" in just over a day. Even big sites like TechCrunch have passed the test. After a while, they had to come up with a patch where they acknowledge that this is just marketing and that SVT Play application had only been in the queue for approval in a day. Applause for the marketing and applause for SVT Play as such. ([NRK beta](#) site, translated from Norwegian)

What NRK brings attention to, is the fact that the campaign was not a consequence of a long waiting process for SVT, instead it was "just marketing". But no critique towards the intertwining of public service broadcasting and marketing are made part of the coverage, it is rather something to applaud.

Social media was the actual platform for the campaign, and there is established considerable linkage for viral marketing between social media and the campaign site. On Twitter most tweets on the campaign are effects of the site's automatic tweet function, if you participated in voting by linking it to your twitter account. This function exists both in Swedish and in English:

- In Swedish: Käre Steve Jobs, godkänn SVT Play-appen på www.dearstevejobs.com! #dearsteve
- In English: Dear Steve Jobs, approve the SVT Play app at www.dearstevejobs.com/en! #dearsteve

Beside automatic tweeting there are only appreciating tweets:

- Examples of Swedish tweets:

- @saraherring Cute SVT, I love public service :D \ " Dear Steve Jobs, approve the SVT Play app at www.dearstevejobs.com! #dearsteve. (translated from Swedish)
- @aspelund A pretty fun way to tell me that they have sent in their iPhone app.... <http://dearstevejobs.com> #svt #dearstevejobs (translated from Swedish)
- @viktorcalmen Can not stop admiring SVT over their campaign for SVT Play app on, <http://dearstevejobs.com> - fantastic!". (translated from Swedish)
- Examples of international tweets:
 - Norway (in English): @zarkoh help the folks from the swedish national TV reach to Steve Jobs and the iPhone appstore. Say JA! #dearsteve <http://www.dearstevejobs.com/>
 - Netherlands (in Dutch): @brambalk Sweden besiege the Apple HQ in Cupertino to their app pass inspection to get approved. See also: <http://tinyurl.com/ybanbn3> #dearsteve
 - Germany (in English): @xinsight (Also looks like a great app for learning Swedish!) Dear Steve Jobs, approve the SVT Play app at <http://www.dearstevejobs.com/en>! #dearsteve

SVT is Swedish, it is public service and the campaign is funny and makes SVT worth loving and admiring. For international Twitter users, the campaign becomes the Swedish people that needs help to win against Apple, and also something awakening thoughts on learning Swedish.

The few present negative tweets in the material touch upon the power issues involved in App store, and also an insight that it is not possible to vote "no" on the site:

- @atmoz And people wonder why I don't want an iPhone? It's kinda obvious: <http://www.dearstevejobs.com> #dearsteve
- @ewean17 Hmm, I may not vote no on <http://is.gd/5qPd0> #dearsteve (translated from Swedish)

This rather powerful critique on the campaign does not have a place in the sharing in social media. The distribution structures for apps make an argument for why iPhones

might be the best choice for SVT. And the campaign structure of not letting people vote no, creates a disappointment in authenticity.

Beside Twitter, Facebook was made part of the campaign in starting and linking to the Facebook group "Dear Steve Jobs please say JA to the SVT Play app". This group does not exist today. The traces on Facebook from this group only exist internationally, [here](#) with referring to [an international web site](#) as [example of best marketing](#). Otherwise no Facebook traces, which is the same with the campaign site that today is replaced by a Japanese site for certain water.

Presenting the material sketches a scenario of two interwoven projects: SVT Play as an iPhone app, and the campaign Dear Steve Jobs. The link between PSB and technology as including social networked media and commercial aspects in different ways are characteristic for PSB and the online sphere.

Analytical remarks

So far the presented material illustrate that fans can be and are engaged in media development through social networked media practices, by a PSB company in collaboration with other companies. In the case, the campaign Dear Steve Jobs, the fans are said to be part of the process as resources in commercial culture while also serving PSB, as an institution based on democratic values.

In the campaign fans are made active producers, mainly as part of making viral marketing work. The power of fans as being nomadic, remaking professionally produced material, is structured by companies as part of the possibility to create videos on and for the site. Fan activity seems not to impact mainstream media, rather it seems to *serve* mainstream media. When it comes to fans as pop cosmopolitans, being part of a global Apple community (sharing hashtag #dearsteve) is base for getting to know Swedish cultures from afar, and being more interested in it. But they are hardly their own intelligentsia, its own critics, historians, translators and educators. Instead they are more or less linked to either the Apple community, or digital media developers cutting across boundaries of media, marketing, design, journalism, looking for best examples on and in social networked media. Overall there is tolerance in that there is almost no critique. In this setting it is difficult to see who is dominating whom: SVT or Apple, Swedes or Americans, etcetera. The presented material in relation to Jenkins, seem

therefore to show an overemphasizing of creative participatory aspects, where the democratic aspects are not easily distinguished.

A key issue concerns if fans can be considered as part of networks in a democratic way? Jenkins sees fandom as inhering to democratic values of participation and creativity. van Zoonen (2004) argue that the understanding of the role of entertainment and fandom in politics is not detrimental to democracy but is necessary and useful in contemporary culture. Fan practices and political practices are to be seen as “an equality that facilitates an exchange between the domains of entertainment and politics that is commonly thought to be impossible” (van Zoonen, 2004:46). Wilson (2011) argues for democratic aspects as linked to politics where political engagement as political fans “use the output of the elite public sphere as raw material for their own creative output and social ties”. Wilson exemplifies this argument by referring to that “is beginning to be reincorporated into mainstream political broadcasting” (Wilson, 2011:451).

Becks notion of cosmopolitan democracy can further this discussion on fans as part of networks in a democratic way. In the campaign there is an involvement of equalising voice among plural actors, in the function of when voting an automatic message was sent. The complexity starts in linking this to dialogue among plural actors in a deliberative way to do better decision-making. The configuration of the campaign was to address a clear statement of “yes” to only one person (the CEO Steve Jobs), not to invite to a dialogue. In the measurement from Forsman & Bodenfors, no indicators for dialogue and decision-making is set forth. Initiating a discussion on arguments from both sides – yes and no – are not part of the normative framework. There is common risk consciousness present linked to the human right of access: the SVT Play app needs to be available on App store including iPhone users as SVT Play users.

Concerning cosmopolitanism of global civil society, the campaign involves alliances of users and companies rather than of illegitimate and parliamentary forces. Connections exist within communities, between communities and also in national and local solidarities. One example is identified as connected around media professionals with a professional ethics based in a “good” campaign. Solidarities go across PSB as well as Apple. Being Swedish is made as a centre for solidarity. Concerning the presence of a self-critical cosmopolitanism, where democratic aspects are fundamentals for self-criticism, self-critique is absent. The global collective action promoted and performed as democratization of global governance is limited to small actions of sharing. It is clear

that actual global governance is made by Apple. It is also clear that democratic aspects are accessibility and implicit PSB values: does the state, taken form as Swedish Television, become agents of a cosmopolitan PSB law in protecting the rights of world citizens focusing on access to media content for public debate through the iPhone?

It is interesting in this context to approach public service in relation to the dream of cosmopolitan democracy, especially looking into PSB and EU. EU states that the PSB mandate is to “be consistent with the objective of fulfilling the democratic, social and cultural needs of a particular society and guaranteeing pluralism, including cultural and linguistic diversity”. PSB is attached to values of being a reliable source of information and represents, enriching public debate ensuring citizen participation in public life. PSB is to be independent, and be guided by freedom of expression. Access is important. “broad public access, without discrimination and on the basis of equal opportunities, to various channels and services is a necessary precondition for fulfilling the special obligation of public service broadcasting”. PSB is also to benefit from technological progress and be organised to be transparent and in an accountable manner. Commenting on context, EU states that "the coexistence of private and public audiovisual media service providers is a feature which distinguishes the European audiovisual media market." ([EUR-Lex, Communication from the Commission on the application of State aid rules to public service broadcasting](#)).

It seems that the campaign show that public service media engaging in fan-based social networked practices, can involve PSB values mainly in the aspect of access, guaranteeing technological pluralism and benefiting from technological progress. What is not achieved in PSB as being a customer to marketing companies, and involving collaborations of more companies, is a transparent and accountable process. What the campaign also illustrates is the coexistence of public and private, that transgress the ascribed boundaries of audiovisual media service providers. Finally accuracy is something that is played with and downplayed in the campaign.

Ending this paper, means continuing the work of participating in the conference and after that the remaking of the paper to an article. What can be said so far is that the socio-material aspects of social networked media include being an arena where interest and admiration (fans) creates a space where democratic values becomes intertwined with commercial efforts. Both cosmopolitan and community social relations explain the changing configuration of power politics. A deepened understanding of articulations and

re-negotiations of the public service media ideal of being in the public interest can take place in activities based on the involvement of 'fans'. Complexity exists. Several issues remain.

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