

## Radical Transparency in Journalism: Digital Evolutions from Historical Precedents

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***Abstract:***

This paper argues that transparency projects retain a political hue from the social-technological context from which they are created. Thus, radical transparency is considered as an opportunity to evolve both journalistic and democratic practices. Transparency in practice reveals diverse expectations of how journalists reporting should be used, and these expectations in turn, seem dependent on specific worldviews. This paper presents a comparative analysis of the effects of the current exemplar of radical journalism, WikiLeaks. It compares Wikileaks to its historical equivalents, including Hansard in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and the reporting of open diplomacy in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. This analysis shows how journalism evolves along with radical transparency projects, and how the current context of networked radical transparency can, and will, be made into news with specific political effects. In conclusion, this paper argues that practitioners should be aware of the political hues that new transparency mechanisms afford. Being cognizant of context and design choices can increase the degree to which new initiatives can have a deep systemic impact—as well as acknowledge the qualities and repercussions of that impact.

***Keywords:*** Democracy; Digital Revolution; New Media; Radical Journalism; Transparency; WikiLeaks

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**Résumé:**

Cet article considère que les projets de transparence comportent des tendances politiques issues du contexte socio-technologique duquel il émerge. Il estime que la transparence radicale contribue à l'évolution des pratiques journalistiques et démocratiques. La pratique de la transparence révèle les différentes attentes journalistiques. Ces attentes divergent selon les visions du monde issues des milieux dans lesquels elles sont pratiquées. Cet article compare le journalisme radical, les WikiLeaks, les équivalents historiques, incluant Hansard au 18<sup>ème</sup> siècle, au reportage d'Open Diplomacy au début du 20<sup>ème</sup> siècle. Il présente comment le journalisme évolue avec les projets de transparence radicale et comment ce contexte de transparence de réseau peu, et devra, être conçu en des nouvelles journalistiques avec des effets politiques précis. En conclusion, cet article soutient que les praticiens devraient être sensibles aux tonalités politiques que les mécanismes de la nouvelle transparence impliquent. Cela signifie que les praticiens doivent connaître le contexte, le design des choix pour augmenter le degré d'impact profond et systémique des nouvelles initiatives, ainsi que reconnaître les qualités de cet impact.

**Mots-clés:** Démocratie; Journalism radical; Nouveaux médias; Révolution digitale; Transparence; WikiLeaks

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**Introduction**

This paper considers the implications of radical transparency in ongoing evolutions of journalism and democracy. It explores how radical instances of transparency that are exploited and reported by journalists, become institutionalized in democracy. The main focus is a comparative analysis of the effects from the recent form of radical journalism: WikiLeaks. It compares WikiLeaks to its historical equivalents, including Hansard in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and the reporting of Open Diplomacy in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The paper argues that each transparency project retains a political hue from the social-technological context from which it was created. Radical transparency is considered as an opportunity to evolve both journalistic and democratic practices. The paper employs the framework of “media ecology” to explore how new media in each of these instances contributed to transformations in journalistic practices. To conclude, the paper argues that practitioners should be aware of the political hues that new transparency mechanisms afford. Being cognizant of context and design choices can increase the degree to which new initiatives can have a deep systemic impact and acknowledge the quality of that impact.

The paper is structured as follows. First, the conceptual section clarifies the scope of this paper. Second, this paper presents the three dimensions of radical transparency: mechanism, position, and democratic assumptions. Mapping transparency literature fleshes out the third dimension of political assumptions by falsifying the objective concept of transparency with evidence from transparency practice. Transparency in practice reveals diverse expectations dependent on worldviews which influence how transparency data, including journalists' reports,

are used. In this paper, the methodology section describes how the politically diverse paradigms of transparency can exist without over-stretching the concept and reducing its utility. The paper discusses the reporting of Hansard, as well as Russian and American open diplomacy, methods and effects of these politically distinct cases of radical transparency journalism. Each of these historical cases encountered varying degrees of democratic institutionalization. The discussion is concluded by comparing these historical cases to WikiLeaks' derivatives in the current networked world. The cases build toward an analysis of how journalism evolves vis-à-vis radical transparency projects; and how the current context of networked radical transparency media can, and will, be reported with specific political effects.

### **Conceptualizing Radical Transparency through its Journalistic Frame**

The current fervor that surrounds involuntary transparency mechanisms, such as WikiLeaks and other radical forms of "journalism", has stifled informed debate on what radical transparency is, what it has accomplished, and what it can still do. States have reacted to WikiLeaks as a national security threat (Clinton, 2010) and, in the case of America, seem to offer judicial, and extra-judicial prosecution of the leakers (e.g., Bradley Manning) and their publisher (e.g., the financial blockade) (see Koh, 2010; Greenwald, 2013). Journalists involved with WikiLeaks publications have written them off as mere "sources" or a besmirched imitation rubbing against reinvigorated boundaries of journalistic profession (Coddington, 2012; Leigh et al., 2011; Star, 2011). On the other hand, proponents of a networked and irresponsible fourth estate (Benkler, 2011; Bruns, 2011) assume emancipatory socio-political relations within the networked media upon which WikiLeaks is built. Further, Dave Sifry (2011) claims that distributed transparency projects decentralize power/knowledge, and afford not only progressive journalism, but democratic efficacy.

There are more than two ideological "sides" to the story of WikiLeaks, each of which serves to reestablish claims of knowledge to power. Robinson and Karatzogianni argue that the diverse debates on WikiLeaks reflect "different subject-positions in relation to the eventual effects, both of the WikiLeaks affair itself, and of the broader redistribution of social power that it expresses" as viewed from specific disciplines (2012: 15). Building on this, this paper is focused on acknowledging the historical precedents of radical journalism and their political effects, and relates these cases to transparency-journalism projects post-WikiLeaks. For instance, the creation of the Hansard Reports and the concept of Open Diplomacy suggest that radical and involuntary transparency mechanisms have previously been utilized by journalists to open governments and change power relations. This paper considers how these historical journalistic-democratic practices emerged, and whether their lessons can be applied in new media and journalism.

The paper uses a specific lens of media (ecology) theory to show how media create specific affordances that imbue political ideologies, even within transparency. Instead of a narrow definition of empty "vehicles" that carry information (e.g. telegraph, newspapers, and parchment paper), media are understood to encompass an ecology of "infrastructures" that make and distribute content in forms that carry particular contexts with them (Couldry, 2012). These contexts can be thought of as cultural-technological affordances. A useful reference point to understand affordances is Allan Costall's (1995) argument that social relations are inseparable from materiality. These material-social relations allow social objects to afford specific uses and subjectivities, as well as have a part in directing and constraining action.

With regards to journalism, we can think of relational apparatuses created out of mediums, actors, structures, and value-rich objects. These all work in conjunction to produce specific affordances from a specific context of time, place, ideology and technology. Similar methodology has a history within critical media studies (Baudry, 1986; de Certeau, Giard & Mayol, 1980) that built from Foucault's (1980: 194-195) discussion on apparatus/dispositif. However, the empirical study of online politics that analyzes "soft cultural determinism" (Howard, 2006) and the mediated communication rights of democratic practice (Cammaerts, 2008) offer similar methods of accounting for the constitutive materiality of media and society. This brief detour into media theory is meant to frame the creation of journalistic practice as being constituted as part of ecology of social actors and objects that, in conjunction, create certain affordances. Further, diverse affordances can occur even when seemingly pure concepts like transparency materialize in the media ecology.

### ***Radical Transparency***

The next task is to define transparency as it relates to radical changes in practices of public accountability through publication. Basic definitions of transparency convey a concept that makes an organization's data public where it was previously not (Mitchell, 1998). However the reality of the term's usage for democratic ends complicates that ideal. Radical transparency in the digital age is defined as an act or approach that uses rapid and abundant networked information flows to access data that was previously confidential (Hammond, 2001; Sifry, 2011). However, this definition points only to the mechanical "medium" dimension of radical transparency. For instance, the mechanics of being informed through letter based freedom of information requests, or reading cloth bound parliament reports, involve different dissemination patterns than networked digital connectivity. Media have certain affordances that shape how their message is shared, interpreted and implemented. The "mechanics" of radical transparency, is meant to question the machinery of disclosure as a subject—the engineering of specific mediations between human and data. This dimension of radical transparency asks to what extent "new" media (whether printing presses, telegraphs, or the Internet) provide a radically different mechanic through which transparency functions. Note that radical transparency as a mechanism is still assumed to be reported through the voluntary disclosure from within an organization.

There are at least two additional dimensions that must be considered to understand the impact and diversity of radical transparency: position and the subtle political assumptions that are imbued in transparency.

Transparency can also be termed radical via a dimension of position, and this is critical for the "watchdog" functionality of the press. Radical position is defined through "involuntary" transparency projects that operate from outside of the targeted organization. Researchers argue that transparency works through voluntary disclosure from within organizations or by the state indirectly compelling that disclosure (Florini, 2003; Fung, Graham & Weil, 2007; Heald, 2006; Holzner & Holzner, 2006; Hood, 2010; Lord, 2006; Stiglitz, 1999). However, journalists have long been dependent on "leaks" to publicly disclose data that would otherwise remain secret. This muckraking journalism is not new, but its radical mechanics from new elements within the composition of muckraking projects, can be understood as radical to what came before.

Hammond (2001) gave an early example of journalist conduct and information dissemination that required both mechanical and positional radical transparency. The Global Forest Watch was a network of journalists and activists that combined satellite imagery and

detailed on-the-ground data collection to compare actual forest practices with lease agreements. They posted their results online, shining digital light on the discrepancies they found (Hammond, 2001: 104). The mechanism of transparency in the Global Forest Watch case (a decentralized network) opened access, verified performance and disclosed its data from a position outside the organizations it was making transparent. Historical evidence of Hansard and Open Diplomacy suggests that it is analytically shortsighted to discount the value of radical transparency-journalism. There is strong evidence of historical transparency projects, radical in both position and mechanism, becoming institutionalized into journalistic—and democratic—practice. However, before a fruitful comparative analysis of journalistic transparency projects can occur, a third dimension of radicalism must be understood.

Transparency can also be deemed radical in a political dimension if it uproots one expected set of democratic assumptions for another. Giri (2010) demonstrated this dimension of radical transparency when he argued that knowing the truth through “established groups engaging with states through established procedures and legal battles is one thing” (Giri, 2010). However, from the standpoint of those in power, “knowing, in terms and conditions that are themselves illegitimate . . . radicalises the very meaning and significance of the ‘right to know’” (Ibid). Giri is not only talking about position, he is speaking to assumptions of political order. For instance, Roberts acknowledges that transparency does not function as a “single commodity, and an unalloyed good” (Roberts, 2006: 194), but contends disparate political assumptions. He contrasts the usage of the term transparency to ensure profit through global economic liberalization, and the rights-based usage that ensures protection from the very effects of that liberalization. For Roberts, these two “doctrines” are tied to assumptions of liberal and deliberative democracy. A review of transparency literature will make the diverse expectations of these worldviews clear while hinting at their adversarial nature.

### ***Mapping the Political within Transparency***

Transparency literature shows numerous political roots to the concept’s underlying utility for democracy. Journalists in the digital age are confronted with “process journalism” (Jarvis, 2009) and the collaborative turn of crowd-sourced content (Bruns, 2011; Wilson, Saunders & Bruns, 2008). To understand these changes, journalists must acknowledge where their “product” fits, and whether it represents a radical departure from hegemonic democratic assumptions. If it does diverge, and uproot presumptions, its politically radical nature may be disruptive.

There are unabashedly liberal conceptions of transparency present in modern literature. Liberal transparency assumes a precise definition of reducing asymmetries of information to allow market discipline (Michener & Bersch, 2011; Newbery & Stiglitz, 1987). This definition suggests that transparency is instrumental to efficiency. This liberal conception parallels a form of government that obviates political contestation with market-orientated efficiency. An updated neo-liberal claim on transparency is made through “second generation” targeted disclosure. Here targeting disclosure elicits individualized self-care from rational actors that expect “revelation to regulation” (Florini, 2003). Second generation transparency occurs when the state mandates specific disclosures from targeted private actors (e.g. forcing companies to publicize pollution levels that affect local residents). In the language of Fung, Graham, and Weil (2007), the innovation of targeted communication as a regulatory vehicle “purposefully does not provide clear guidance to target organizations concerning what actions they should take” (Fung, Graham & Weil, 2007: 16). Proponents believe this is policy without politics. In second-generation

transparency policies, transparency is instrumental to self-care. The press as watchdog continues to function here in the muckraking traditions, finding stories with the muckrake, yet at the same time, allowing the ousted information to speak for itself, correct preconceptions, and inform self-care.

Meanwhile, transparency that allows for openness of both vision and voice explicitly breaks from liberal individualization through a deliberative paradigm (Holzner & Holzner, 2006; Roberts, 2006). Here, transparency is a deliberative rationalizing value within information culture. In this sense, organizational openness affords both vision and voice to citizens (Meijer, Curtin & Hillebrandt, 2012). This paradigm of transparency contributes to the typology by suggesting transparency is instrumental to deliberation. The deliberative paradigm is critiqued when viewing deliberative democracy as requiring a rationalizing endpoint of consensus to evoke control. Opening discussion to include more actors can be designed to normalize docility (Miller & Rose, 2008) or create pseudo-participation (Cammaerts, 2008). However, for the press, new processes are introduced in the process of telling the story and letting the rational public decide. Those elements include those “formerly known as audience” becoming involved in any finding by way of reflexive discussion. Here, journalism is a process at work. Sue Robinson’s (2011) expansion of Jeff Jarvis’ (2009) blog post on “process journalism” argues that news has become a transportive, transactional object of professional, social and civic work for both journalists and audience members. Robinson calls for an end to thinking about news as a discrete product and considering news production as a shared, distributed action with multiple authors. Process journalism shifts institution-audience relationships and alters labor dynamics for everyone involved. It has uncertain authorship, and the work is forever unfinished.

Yet another paradigm of transparency evokes the innate generosity of the “wealth of networks” (Benkler, 2006) towards solving the non-rational puzzles of society. This paradigm understands the power of transparency as something different to a hierarchy of accountability, control and domination. Sifry (2011) argues that a new age of transparency will construct networks that build solutions together, instead of monitoring problems apart. In his view, a collaborative and productive transparency has representatives and institutions working with citizens on identifying problems, methods for solving them, and creating networks to do so (Sifry, 2011: 187). The journalistic work represented in this paradigm of transparency is the collaborative turn that Axel Bruns and others have suggested (Bruns, 2011; Lewis, 2012; Powers, 2012; Wilson, Saunders & Bruns, 2009).

This paradigm contrasts with the logic of hierarchy and control that is imbedded in liberal and deliberative paradigms of transparency, however it is not without its own frictions. For Sifry (2011), the wealth of networks makes horizontal surveillance reciprocal rather than disciplinary. Further, decentralized resources create non zero-sum endeavours, where new actors bring new resources. However, these collaborations are not without friction as user-generated content, and their “prosumers” (Bruns, 2011) and “preditors” (Wilson, Saunders & Bruns, 2009) work out the boundaries of professional journalism. According to Sifry’s (2011), collaborative surveillance makes transparency for mutual benefit, while decentralized resources invite collaborative creation. This type of transparency mechanism is instrumental to reciprocity in creating public goods, including journalism.

Still other paradigms of transparency offer revolutionary stances to overthrow or ignore the secrets from which Capital(ists) controls the masses. As shown in the case study below, Marx (1867) used transparency and the press as an instrument of revolt, providing a mechanism instrumental to antagonism that shifted revulsion “of the state of things” to revolution. In version

2.0 of this paradigm, autonomist-Marxists, disregard for secrets of private property enables labor power to obviate capitalism by creating autonomous production through a transparent commons (Kleiner, 2010). At issue here is covertly exploiting private informational property that is productive (capital), in a non-transparent fashion for the benefit of capitalist production. Transparency for digital autonomist-Marxists is instrumental to autonomy and recognizes the resistance of autonomous production. It differs from collaborative journalistic endeavours in political ideology and offers many of the same processes. Journalists in this space side step not only “mainstream” media, but also the capitalistic models of “liquid” (Bauman, 2000) production and consumption. These autonomist journalists offer new resistances, through disclosing secrets in ways that disrupt the structures of production, consumption and the subjectification of labour.

**Table 1: Configurations of Assumptions**

Transparency	Political Paradigm	Journalism Instrumental to
	Liberal	efficiency / self care through choice
	Deliberative	consensus
	Collaborative	reciprocity
	Autonomist	autonomy
	Marxist	antagonism

In summary, assumptions of worldviews, positional-context and available technologies refract hues of transparency that are instrumental to specific political configurations and their journalistic equivalents. The configurations of assumptions are summarized in Table 1. The political assumptions of one concept might vie to radically “uproot” another if it affects expectations of conduct in a manner that is adversarial to former expectations of conduct. Heald and Hood (2006; 2012) have notably shifted debates from the single metric of too much or too little transparency to one that acknowledges designing desirable and undesirable mixes of the varieties of transparency for democratic effectiveness. This paper’s review of transparency shifts the terms of the debate once again to decipher the consequences of multiple desirables created within transparency and the reality of reporting these now “transparent” data. It extends the logic of political hues of transparency to journalistic practice by asking how political assumptions and processes are transfigured and materialized in reporting apparatuses.

## Approach and Method

Describing transparency through multiple political paradigms creates methodological challenges. First, coding the literature to political categories is, although informed with textual evidence, a hermeneutical exercise for the researcher. Relatedly, the above map of transparency does not represent a complete set of political paradigms. While an attempt has been made to theoretically saturate available paradigms of transparency, new techno-cultural contexts will continue to create new practices of creating and reporting disclosure.

The more pressing issue is how the above literature may stretch the concept of transparency past analytical utility. Approaching the concept of transparency through multiple paradigms runs the risk of diluting the utility of the original concept through “conceptual stretching” (Sartori, 1970). Hood (2010) attempts to minimize this risk by utilizing a neo-Durkheimian analysis to reduce available paradigms to “elemental” sociological worldviews. However, the analytical merits of neo-Durkheimian dimensions are rooted in a sociological approach rather than normative political claims of organization. Journalistic ties to political and democratic forces inform this paper’s methodological.

Politically democratic “worldviews” that resonate with political-transparency claims and networked information dissemination require dimensions different than those of Durkheim. For instance, Bart Cammaerts’ (2007: xii; 2008: 94) maps communication rights that are mediated through the Internet on two dimensions spanning from consensus to conflict and centralized to decentralized decision-making. Inductive research on online democracy by Peter Dahlberg (2011) forms four paradigms of online democracy that closely align with Cammaerts’ deductive heuristic. Dahlberg (2011) identifies liberal individualist, deliberative, counter-public, and autonomist paradigms of guiding conduct. These paradigms have unique democratic subjects, related understandings of democracy, and specific democratic affordances that digital media feed back into the first two elements. Dahlberg (2011) and Cammaerts’ (2007) work resonate with the liberal, deliberative, collaborative/autonomist, and Marxist paradigms. The variety of transparency paradigms map more accurately to the political analytics of Cammaerts (2007) and Dahlberg (2011) than they do to the sociological categories employed by Hood (2010). However, even with reductive categories of transparency paradigms strung within a heuristic device, the risk of conceptual stretching remains.

This paper builds upon the analysis of Ball (2009) to mitigate the risk of conceptual stretching. Ball re-situates transparency as a cohesive concept that is able to acknowledge varieties of irreducible political thought. The concept of transparency for Ball is relayed in metaphors that convey the ways “organizations and nations are expected to conduct their day-to-day activities” (Ball, 2009: 303). For Ball (2009), transparency makes conduct visible, while also setting expectations towards its conduct. As shown above, expectations of journalism when actualizing transparency differ along political dimensions. These differences in the literature have been explained in this paper through liberal, deliberative, collaborative, Marxist, or autonomist-Marxist labels.

The arguments considered here now move on to ask to what extent the transparency projects of journalists build not only “forward”, away from secrecy, but also “sideways”, on planes of politics, culture, and technology. Further, it considers whether unique paradigms of journalism create unique democratic effects. To decipher the “sideways” motion of journalistic transparency practice within an ecology of media practice, the following three lenses frame analysis: specific cultural-technological *contexts*, the *methods* in which they are prosecuted, and

the *effects* they create. These allow for media-rich analysis of historical cases of radical transparency and its current materialization. Breaking up media practice to context, method and effects allows commentary on how value-rich media have a role in creating ideologico-political transparency projects, and explains how this is reflected in the reporting of the time.

## **Historical Cases**

Case studies of historical radical transparency help illustrate the methodological framework that shows the importance of understanding cultural-technological contexts, methods and effects. Research on the institutionalization of Hansard and the move for Open Diplomacy, show how these historical transparency projects were situated in certain contexts of ideology, culture and technology, employed certain methods, and brought about certain effects. This section begins to illustrate how projects move away from secrecy and “sideways” to ideologico-political constructions that affect their institutionalization. The historical data also help comparatively situate current radical transparency journalism that involves digital media.

### ***Hansard***

The first case of institutionalized reporting is the current norm of transparent debate in representative legislatures. Sweden claims it was the first to pass a Freedom of Information Act, which among other mechanisms, made the debates of its Parliament transparent to enquiring “journalists” in 1766 (Mustonen, 2006). However, a more radical approach to publishing the—then secret—debates of parliament was in play in England five years prior: Radical journalists and their publishers printed leaked debates of Parliament in the emerging public sphere.

The complex context of 18<sup>th</sup> century England afforded a new socio-technological mechanism of transparency. David Stasavage (2005) suggests that new fears of legislator bias and poor representation encouraged interest in expanding publication of parliamentary debates in the 1700s. However, Stasavage’s analysis does not account for the changes to cultural and technological contexts. Ideas of “the enlightenment” were being experimented with in the hopes of improving human life. Also significant were the expanding intellectual property rights in late 18<sup>th</sup> century England that helped create a market for the co-evolving printing capabilities (Briggs & Burke, 2009: 46). These contexts helped create a specific radical materialization of journalism that challenged legislative secrecy in a specific way. Competing groups of illegal pamphleteers saw a social and market opportunity to leak the debate of members of Parliament. Proceedings of the Houses of Parliament were leaked as fictional political clubs and caricatured quasi-fictional MPs. Some pamphleteers were fined, but most escaped serious charges for such “fictitious” accounts (Hansard, 1829; CHEA, 2006).

In 1771, a publisher did not redact the names of House members and “nakedly” published transcripts of parliamentary debates. The (extra) legality of the issue swiftly came to a head. The House issued a warrant for the publisher. In response, radical parliamentarian John Wilkes devised a plan to end censorship of the Parliament via the offices of the Lord Mayor of London. Agents of the Mayor intervened and prevented the arrest of the publisher (Hansard, 1829). The House was outraged and called in Mayor Brass Crosby so he could be sent to the Tower of London (Namier & Brooke, 1985: 278). After a (Wilkes’ inspired) provocative speech by Crosby, the vote to send him to the Tower carried 202 to 39. When Parliament ended six weeks later Crosby was brought to parliamentary trial, but his judges refused to hear the case. The

judges' decision was based on Wilkes' parries in Parliament and the low level riots that had spread through London on Crosby's behalf. That same year, Wilkes guided the House to officially open a market for journalists and publishers to print impartial accounts of parliamentary debate (Thomas, 1960). With the legality of the issue decided, newspaperman William Cobbett began to incorporate the *Debates* of Parliament as a supplement to his paper the *Political Register*. Cobbett's printing of the *Debates* commenced the institutionalization of the recording of the proceedings of the Parliament of Great Britain (CHEA, 2006). Thomas C. Hansard<sup>1</sup> and his family were among the publishers that perused this market, and after acquiring Cobbett's printing contract for *Debates*, the Hansards created a virtual monopoly in the market. Years later, out of habit and familiarity, the Hansard brand still adorns official institutional records of parliamentary debates.

The effects of publishing debates in this social-technological context and method reflect classic "liberal" desirables of transparency. The utility of publishing the debates limited arbitrary power of the members of the House via new discursive accountability. At the time, examples of the effects of publishing the debates were explained through decreasing asymmetries of information for the betterment of constituents' own individual situation (Crosby, cited in Hansard, 1829). This classical liberal typology of transparency was in tension with some of Wilkes' libertine personal actions and heavy-handed radical political endeavors, including bribing and vote buying his way into Parliament (Cash, 2006). However, for Wilkes, the journalist and the politician, "liberty" was a key driver of his transgressions, codifying and controlling the reach of government while extending to many the availability of information, and the franchise with which to make use of it.

### ***Secret Treaties & Open Diplomacy***

The hue of transparency of 18<sup>th</sup> century parliamentary debates stands in stark contrast to the next example of a radical transparency project: the Open Diplomacy that was created by Lenin and Trotsky in 1918 and then appropriated by Woodrow Wilson. As part of the Russian revolution, an unprecedented corpus of secret treaties were leaked by the Bolsheviks and disseminated to international publics. The November 23, 1917 editions of *Izvestia* and *Pravda* printed the first secret treaties, which were eventually reprinted in Britain, Central Power countries and across the Atlantic in the United States (Hudson, 1925). The telegraph in the 20<sup>th</sup> century provided a different context from the embryonic intellectual property and printing markets of late 18<sup>th</sup> century England. Nickles (2003) describes the telegraph's effects on diplomacy through diplomats' autonomy becoming constrained "under the wire". Along with new modes representing and reporting on demarches for diplomats, the news industry was undergoing a related transformation. The public sphere was literally electrified with wire services that could transmit new messages to *national* publics around the world in a fashion that challenged the orthodoxy of secret diplomacy. The context of the news-hungry public sphere, technological pressures of the wire, and Soviet desperation in wartime, combined for a specific effect of releasing secret treaties.

The Soviets' political hue of transparency is made quite clear through their rhetoric. The November 8 Soviet Peace Decree called to "abolish secret diplomacy" and expressed Russia's "firm intention to conduct all negotiations absolutely openly before the entire people" (cited in Degras, 1951: 2). Trotsky and Lenin thought similar disclosures to the treaties made around the

world would spur global revolution amongst workers. For the Bolsheviks, transparency afforded revolution through revulsion “at the state of things at home” (Marx, 1867).

The international reaction in the press to the leaked treaties was swift and public. An American commentator suggested that, the “consequent reaction of public opinion greatly influenced the current statements of the aims of the belligerents” (Hudson, 1925: 273). President Woodrow Wilson’s biographer admitted that “without question [the material the Russians published] was the chief reason why” the British Prime Minister shifted his war aims (Baker, 1923: 39). By leaking the treaties to the wired-public as they did, the Bolsheviks had opened the door to public debate on points of foreign policy. Representative democracies would have difficulty opting for anything else in the future. Woodrow Wilson’s own radical peace terms were made famous by the first of 14 points: open covenants, openly arrived at—diplomacy in public view. This first point was seen at the time as a divergent ideological response to the open diplomacy of the Soviets (Berridge & James, 2000: 193). Moreover, Wilson’s push to openness was crafted to persuade not only Americans, but also Russians and Socialist Germans, to side with Wilson’s peace terms (Mayer, 1959: 353). To this end, Wilson’s 14 points were published widely in Russia, with the editorial from *Izvestiya* commenting that Wilson’s policy “represent[s] a great victory in the great struggle for a democratic peace, and we may hope to find in the American people an actual ally in that struggle”. The specification of *people* rather than government is important to note as it hints a discussion between publics. However, from the Bolsheviks’ context, transparency only allowed abolition of the current regime—as premised by Marx (1863) and dictated by Russia’s war fatigue.

The Allies’ context, however, created a different radical method and effect for transparency. Journalists were able to create public opinion *as debate with* democratic rulers. This was unavailable before the speed of the telegraph, national democratic audiences, and the (involuntary) act of treaty disclosure. The representative national publics, speed of news dissemination, and free press afforded reforms of governing through rational deliberation. The “wired” public sphere before the Paris Peace Conference recorded varied preferences for open diplomacy that, as per Russian suggestion, shifted war aims, but developed these aims through the various national viewpoints (Mayer, 1959). The conference itself was described by commentators as creating a newfound deliberative space for “world opinion” (Baker, 1923) that was able to dismantle “old” diplomacy for the “new” era of diplomacy defined as “Publicity [over] Secrecy” (Kennedy & Salisbury, 1922). The publicity of diplomacy, reported and debated by the press, induced a deliberative model of transparency and journalism; democratic expectations shifted to include dialogue regarding international affairs. The distinct normative goals and explicit institutionalizations of the Bolshevik and Wilsonian “new diplomacy” shows both the political pluralism of expectations of transparency, and the unique cultural-technological contexts, methods of dissemination and governing effects of such reporting. Specifically, *Pravda* reported for a democratic global revolution, while news organizations in the Allied countries reported to shift the established way of doing diplomacy into a more deliberative model. Together, these instances connect radical mechanics and positions of transparency to eventual changes in governing.

**Table 2: Historical Evidence of the Various “Leaks”**

Journalism Project	Context	Method	Effect	Democracy Paradigm	Journalism Instrumental to
Hansard Debate Publication	Evolving Intellectual Property, Printing Presses & Market	pamphlet markets, protests, radical parliamentarians, printing press media.	for profit publication firms, legal adjustment	Liberal	efficiency / self care through choice
Lenin's Open Diplomacy	Cost of The War, Intra-Russian Soviets, Telegraphs	Centralised release of tomes over wire & national newspapers, broadcast media.	Shock & awe, ideological competition	Marxist	antagonism
Wilsonian Open Diplomacy	Cost of Old Diplomacy, reply to Bolsheviks, Telegraphs	Public Diplomacy over wire & national newspapers, broadcast media.	inclusion of new actors to debates on diplomacy	Deliberative	consensus
AfterLeaks: AnonLeaks' Hacktivism	Anarchy, Internet, extra-judicial justice from and to the state	Hacking firms, affective protest, decentralised ICTs.	arrests & closure of firms from vigilantism, congressional investigation	Autonomist / Radical Democracy	autonomy

As summarized in Table 2, historical evidence of Hansard, Lenin, and Wilson, suggests that in addition to moving away from secrecy, in practice, transparency is prosecuted through media apparatuses that create sideways movements on political and cultural contexts. Specific to the above historical examples, liberal, Marxist, and deliberative, expectations were apparent. Acknowledging these dual movements allows for an informed discussion to proceed regarding radical transparency in current and future digital journalism contexts. It also shows how the materialization of radical transparency projects is dependent on specific contexts, methods, and effects.

**Beyond WikiLeaks**

The debate on how WikiLeaks is related to journalism is complex and thoroughly engaged elsewhere (Benkler, 2011; Lynch, 2010; Peters, 2011). This section emphasizes the context, methods and effects of WikiLeaks as a radical transparency apparatus that shifted journalistic practice. Adding complexity to analysis are the paradigmatic shifts WikiLeaks went through from its inception in 2006 through to the major cable leaks of 2010 and beyond. Sifry (2011) identifies three models that analysts should be aware of: a wiki-fed conduit for information dumps (2006-2009), a tight editorial production (see *collateralmurder.com*), and negotiated deals with major media for “Cablegate”, the Afghan War Logs, and Guantanamo detainee files. In addition to Sifry’s three models, post-WikiLeaks mechanisms continue to evolve to offer distinct models of context, method, and effect for radical transparency. The scope of this paper allows for discussion of these post-WikiLeaks iterations of WikiLeaks-inspired journalism projects. Thus, the contexts, methods, and effects of journalism after WikiLeaks are discussed below. The discussion develops an argument for anarchical contexts, aggressive methods, and direct effects of a new mode of radical transparency.

### *AfterLeaks*

WikiLeaks' existence has spawned multiple experiments in involuntary radical transparency, some of which push the limits of claims toward journalistic legitimacy. As of 2012, at least 67 independent whistle blowing/leak websites functioned online, 26 of which mimicked WikiLeaks' model of openly publishing their data. Fourteen attempted to refine the concept, six were directly tied to mainstream press (e.g. drop-boxes for *Al-Jazeera* and *The Wall Street Journal*), five were for financial whistle blowing, and 16 allowed whistleblowers to directly contact criminal investigators and intelligence agencies (Leakdirectory.org, 2012). The available technologies of low cost (or free) cryptography, decentralized computing power, and ever-increasing global bandwidth, create the technological contexts to help create these new mechanisms. New paradigms of transparency and journalism for those who choose to publish and comment on leaked data are one example of context, method, and effect constituting an emerging norm. As Andy Greenberg (2012) says these "cypherpunk" technologies are *meant* to publish secrets. They are apparatuses that afford specific ways of doing journalism, and shift its role vis-à-vis democracy. However, the public acceptances, via cultural contexts, that relate to how these apparatuses materialize instances of transparency are not guaranteed. As of 2013, many of the above sites have not published anything or have fallen offline. There are, however, projects like the International Consortium of International Journalists (ICIJ), who in early 2013 wrote stories based on a leaked database 160 times the size of U.S. State Department cable data released by WikiLeaks and its partners. For the ICIJ, a new model of digital leaks journalism is supported through a network of over 38 media organization and 86 journalists across 46 countries (ICIJ, 2013).

The prospects of digital-leaks institutionalized in journalistic practice seem low when compared to their historical precedents of Hansard and Open Diplomacy. First, there is little evidence of political cohesion to a (known) paradigm of transparency in the *mélange* of leak sites. For instance, public whistle blowing and leaking documents straight to intelligence agencies serve disparate political purposes. Further, the digital cultures and technologies unique to each site are temporary alignments. WikiLeaks' tumultuous existence is the exemplar of iterating through new contexts, methods, and effects until its efficacy in both the journalistic and political avenues became questionable. These constant changes may not afford a consistent process of journalism or democracy that can become institutionalized. On the other hand, the fluid contexts, methods and effects of digital leak projects may represent a new form of "proto-institution" (Skelcher, Sullivan & Jeffares, 2013) or what Lovink (2011) understands as organizing networks. These projects may become socially accepted and routinized as they organize civic life in new ways. However, the effects of such a conjunction of technology, culture and ideologico-political agency have also led beyond democratic bounds.

AnonLeaks.org provides a lesson for context, method and effect of leaking for transparency that may be outside the limits of democratic practice. AnonLeaks.org can be understood as a response to extrajudicial pressures that, although not institutionalized, have had a certain form of acceptance within the United States Government. Bernadetta Brevini and Graham Murdock (2013) show that these pressures were meant to slow, discredit and shutdown WikiLeaks, as well as the methods of journalism WikiLeaks experimented with. However, AnonLeaks.org differed from WikiLeaks in a significant way. The cultural and technological context of WikiLeaks and its derivatives was always based on receiving leaks voluntarily from whistleblowers. Anonleaks.org on the other hand, represented a radically different model of

content capture unbound from the ethical norms of journalism. Members of Anonymous, a loosely affiliated online hacker collective, attacked and breached corporate email servers of two information security companies in Washington D.C. to publish everything they could find. Amongst troves of personal data, there was evidence of proposals to dissuade and damage liberal journalists tied to WikiLeaks (Anderson, Bright & Cheng, 2011). The results of this “transparency” were twofold: Anonymous hackers were identified and arrested, but Congress asked for investigations of the security firms exposed for possible violations of Federal law (Anderson, 2011). Regardless of the possibility of investigation, one of the firms shuttered its doors from the embarrassment of the hack, and possibly, the material it uncovered. These acts represent a radical decentralization of a transparency media apparatus that created, and then reported its own news in a problematic form of journalism.

The extent that AnonLeaks’ methods can be construed as democratic is not debated here. What is considered is the extent these leaks made democratically questionable processes visible to the public and lawmakers, and the effect that this has on future expectations of journalism. AnonLeaks ushered reflexive effects for both the target of its transparency and the democratic institutions that were required to respond. The probability of this type of activity becoming institutionalized within democratic society seems slim when compared to the cultural-political contexts that ushered in Hansard reports and Open Diplomacy. Yet these new types of methods may vanish.

A new iteration of Anonymous’ online transparency apparatus hints at continued public vigilance and vigilantism. “Par:AnoIA” (a rough abbreviation for Potentially Alarming Research: Anonymous Intelligence Agency, available at [par-anoia.net](http://par-anoia.net)) is a website that takes submissions from the Anonymous community (i.e., attack-based transparency) yet claims to act much like the original Wikileaks.org. One of the goals of Par:AnoIA is to make the data available in a user accessible format to promote widespread discussion to inform new findings (Various Anonymous members in Norton, 2012). The interest to re-engage with larger publics, notwithstanding the method of capture, speaks to a possible nudge to radical, but deliberative, public debate.

Regardless, AnonLeaks attempted to decentralize control away from the structures of government and exert its own powers of autonomous governance. It created, and then reported a news story, in which it was as much of an instigating actor as any other. The typology of transparency that AnonLeaks’ and Par:AnoIA created afforded an autonomy independent of democratic institutions. The extent that these patterns of “transparency” can be integrated into traditional journalistic processes seems very limited. Journalists need to continue to interact with public institutions to foment public account, debate, or even rancor. Autonomist-transparency then might serve to map the (transgression of) boundaries of journalism as well as democratic participation.

Comparing the radical transparency of Hansard and Open Diplomacy to the current state of affairs of WikiLeaks’ inspired journalism, allows some informed speculation on probabilities of institutionalizing modern experiments of radical transparency. There are three general inferences available regarding the uptake of radical transparency into institutionalized journalistic practice. First, both mechanical and positional radicality seem to be necessary, but not sufficient to shift the terms of openness in democratic flows of information. In both the Hansard and Open Diplomacy instances, changes to hegemonic contexts of culture and society (a burgeoning intellectual property market and intractable war, respectively), were coupled with new available media technologies to create paradigmatic shifts to the logics of secrecy and

publicity. In the case of the derivatives of WikiLeaks, it is unclear if a hegemonic ideologico-political context is aligning with the new mechanical and positional realities of journalistic practice. While Par:AnoIA seems to remain radical, the activism of the ICIJ shows that some aspects of digital leaks journalism are being institutionalized. What journalistic/democratic modes of radicality remain in these new processes present interesting future research.

Second, regardless of acceptance of any proto-institutions of transparency, government (re)actions were unable to un-publish what the new mechanisms disclosed, or expunge future content. Through Hansard, Open Diplomacy and even to a lesser extent in WikiLeaks, states were forced to acknowledge and utilize the information that was disclosed when responding to demands of their publics. How states responded varied in culture, place, and to what extent the offending “new way of knowing” was radical to established norms. Retarding the current institutionalization of modern radical transparency reporting is a framework of democratic national interest that, since September 11, 2001, has become defined through securitization. For instance, the securitization of state interest is defined through “Top Secret America”, as a national value and industrial complex in its own right (Priest & Arkin, 2011).

Third, a strong tie between radical journalists and political leadership is not present in the current digital context. The equivalent to radical John Wilkes, Brass Crosby, or even the idealist Woodrow Wilson have not (yet) shown themselves in places of political power in the network age. Hackers, Cypherpunks, and radicals are virtually nonexistent in contemporary political representation. Whether a place for these types of radicals in developed democracies can be revitalized is a question that is currently being tested by pirate parties throughout Europe, and the WikiLeaks Party that is making a senatorial bid in Australia’s 2013 National election. However, thus far, these groups remain on the periphery of representative political engagement and power.

## **Conclusion**

Radical implementations of transparency require specific combinations of context and methods to create substantive and sustainable effects. Historical precedents suggest that the cultural technological context, methods of obtaining and disclosing information, and immediate effects of disclosure, create specific normative “ends” for transparency mechanisms. For instance, designing a transparency platform as part of a journalism project that reduces asymmetries of information to allow informed online voting along party preference, does not allow deliberation, and serves a specific political end. Likewise, transparency platforms that reject deliberation and instead create autonomous entities that are adversarial to traditional institutions, create different forms of journalism and represent an alternative mode of democracy. Becoming aware of these categories can help position transparency projects into appropriate circumstances. However, leadership buy-in may be a crucial piece for moving towards acceptance and institutionalization. This latter point seems to disregard current collaborative journalism trends that rely on decentralized new media and disclosure, as well as the logic of organized networks (Lovink, 2011). However, examples of successful institutionalization of networked radical transparency without leadership buy-in are lacking.

The limitations of the research presented here are real. Qualitative analysis that maps transparency on political terrain risks the effects of subjective coding, while the map itself remains incomplete. Further, attempting to compare the context, methods and effects of radical transparency apparatuses across culture, space, time, and medium compares, unlike variables, to relations and end goals. Any conclusions from that complexity must be tentative, and although

diverse, are non-generalizable. Likewise, the use of media ecology as a framework, and value rich media objects, has limits in terms of tracking genealogies and explaining outcomes. As such, any findings are not positioned as a general theory, but serve as useful guidelines for impacting future research in transparency and journalism in the digital, cryptographic, and user-generated age.

Those caveats acknowledged, the research presented here makes specific contributions to the study of transparency and journalism in several ways. First, it critiques what radical transparency is on the dimensions of media mechanism, position and political paradigm. Second, it opens the debate on what radical transparency does, by relating historical examples of how radical implementations of transparency become institutionalized in journalistic practice and shifts the terms of democratic governing. By doing so, this paper shows how transparency is a concept imbued with political assumptions that afford specific paradigms of journalistic practice. When journalistic practices move away from secrecy, they also move sideways on the political plane. That analytical frame creates opportunity for future research on emerging radical transparency mechanisms and the journalists that exploit them. Further, the networked terrain of contemporary journalism provides an expanding field of experimentations and iterations of transparency that has unique expectations. The moment of opportunity that now exists to research—and report through—radical transparency project is clear.

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## Notes

- 1 The known muckraker Hansard was later was found guilty of seditious libel for publishing a leaked internal naval dispute concerning mutiny, German mercenaries and a flogging (CHEA, 2006).

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