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A political scientist's contribution to the comparative study of media systems in Europe: a response to Hallin and Mancini

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Abstract

The chapter provides an overview of the development of theoretical approaches to comparing media systems since Siebert, Peterson, and Schramm's classic Four Theories of the Press (1956) and in particular provides a critique of Hallin and Mancini's Comparing Media Systems: Three Models of Media and Politics (2004). The paper accepts that their typology makes a very important scholarly contribution to the systematic comparative study of the relationship between media systems, society and politics. However, it identifies some key weaknesses. In particular, it argues that media systems are not so easily fitted into identifiable models, arguing that they are often more 'sui generis' than Hallin and Mancini have allowed. The paper suggests, therefore, that rather than expend time and energy on producing neat typologies, it is better to explore in depth a more comprehensive range of salient political, legal and economic variables that bear on the media system. It applauds Hallin and Mancini's history-informed approach but suggests that historical institutionalist (HI) theory from political science might be more explicitly employed for the study of the relationship between often highly idiosyncratic national media systems and the socio-cultural and political system in which they embedded.

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Hallin D.C., Mancini P. (2012) Comparing Media Systems Beyond the Western World. Cambridge University Press. Hardy J. (2008) Western Media Systems. New York: Routledge. Hardy J. (2012) Comparing Media Systems. In: Esser F., Hanitzsch T. Handbook of Comparative Communication Research. London: Routledge, pp. 185–206. Hepp A., Couldry N. (2009) What should comparative media research be comparing? Towards a transcultural approach to 'media cultures'. In: Thussu D.K. (ed.) Humphreys P. (2011) A political scientist's contribution to the comparative study of media systems in Europe: a response to Hallin and Mancini. In: Just N., Puppis M. (eds.). Trends in Communications Policy Research. 1st ed. Bristol, UK and Chicago, USA: Intellect. Comparing Media Systems: Three Models of Media and Politics (2004), by Daniel C. Hallin and Paolo Mancini, is a seminal study in the field of international comparative media system research. The study compares media systems of 18 Western democracies including nine Northern European countries (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, and Switzerland), five Southern European countries (France, Greece, Italy, Portugal, and Spain) and four Atlantic countries In 1990, the political scientists established a similar division at the American Political Science Association (APSA). Before this political communication research was seen as part of American politics, electoral or opinion studies. Today there are officially recognized political communication divisions in most major research organizations, and there are several scholarly journals – for example Political Communication and The. According to Hallin and Mancini, there are four major dimensions according to which media systems in Western democracies can be compared,

and five dimensions according to which the political context of media systems can be compared.

Part I. Concepts and Models 2 Comparing Media Systems 3 The Political Context of Media Systems 4 Media and Political Systems, and the Question. of Differentiation. Part II.Â We connect ourselves to the developed capitalist democracies of Western Europe and North America. We attempt to identify the major variations that have developed in Western democracies in the structure and political role of the news media, and to explore some ideas about how to account for these variations and think about their consequences for democratic politics. We place our primary focus on the relation between media systems and political systems, and therefore emphasize the analysis of journalism and the news media, and, to a somewhat lesser extent, media policy and law. Comparing Media Systems: Three Models of Media and Politics (2004), by Daniel C. Hallin and Paolo Mancini, is a seminal study in the field of international comparative media system research. The study compares media systems of 18 Western democracies including nine Northern European countries (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, and Switzerland), five Southern European countries (France, Greece, Italy, Portugal, and Spain) and four Atlantic countries