

Radical Imaginaries

Moving Toward Public Ownership and Control of Media Infrastructures

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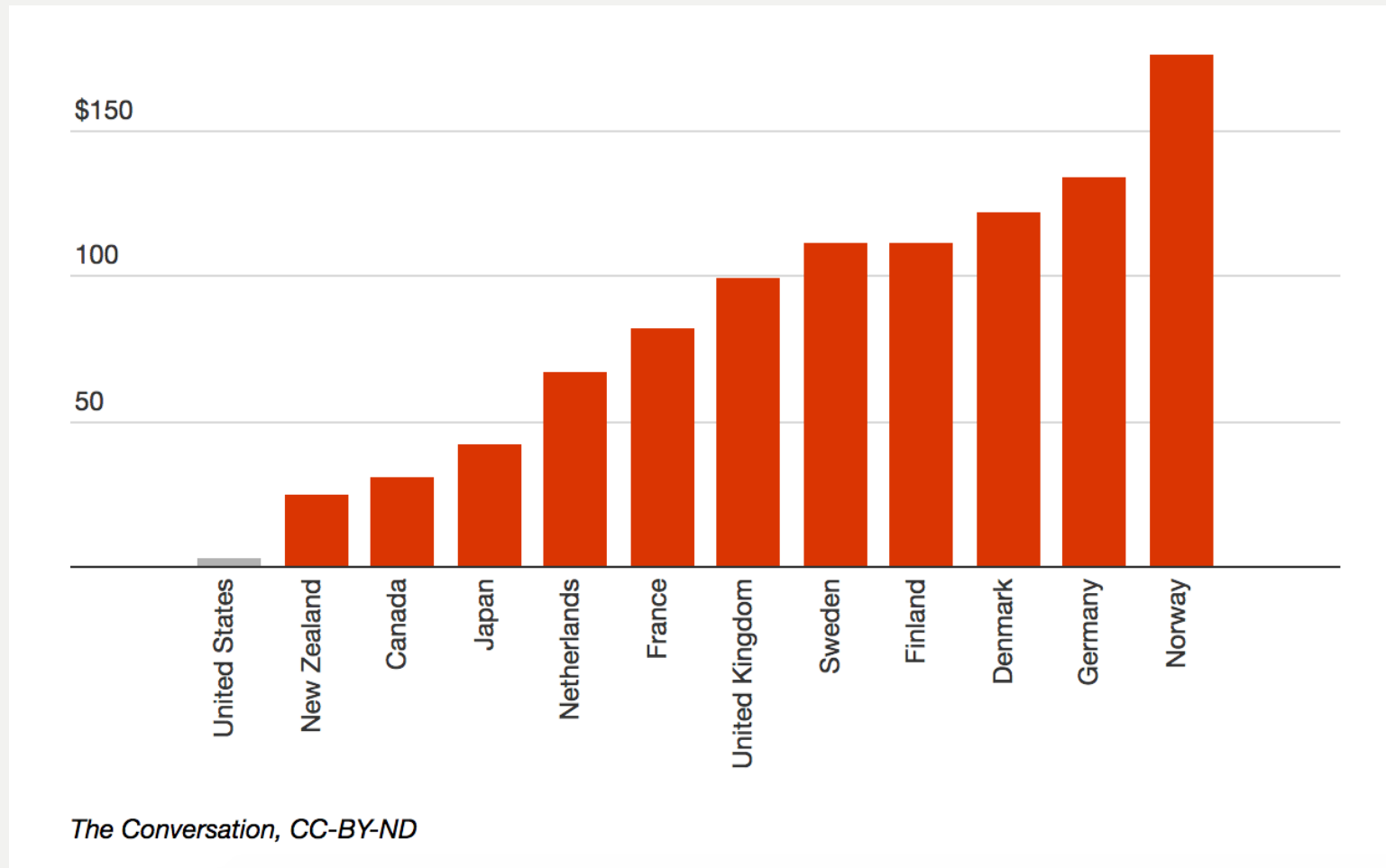
General Approaches to Contesting Concentrated Media Power

- Break Up
- Regulate
- Create Public Alternatives

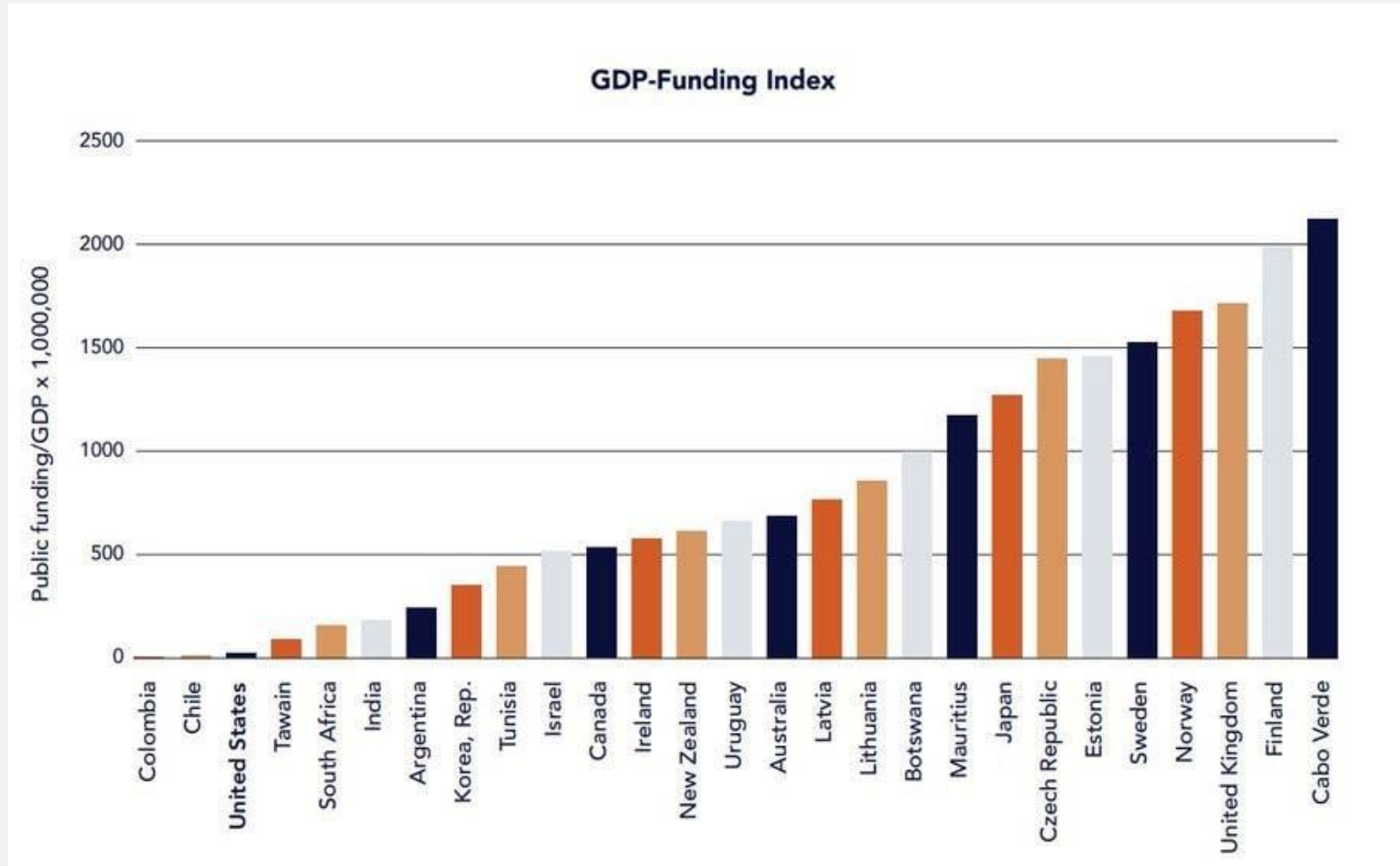
American Media Exceptionalism

- Dominated by oligopolies
- Lightly regulated
- Predominantly commercial
- Weak public alternatives

Amount Spent on Public Media on a Per Capita Basis (in U.S. dollars)



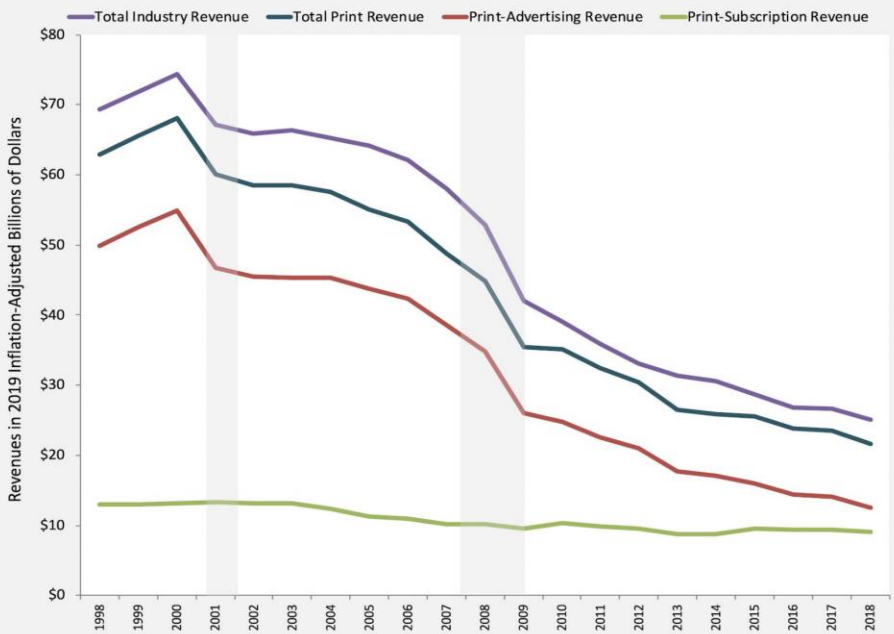
Public Media Funding By GDP



Benefits of Public Media

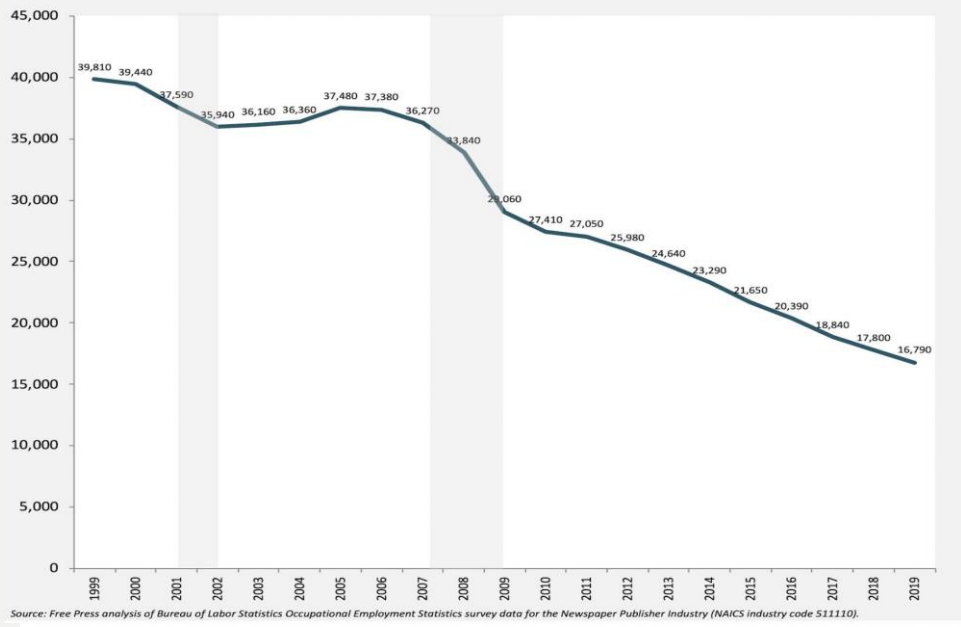
- Correlated with higher levels of political knowledge and civic engagement and lower levels of extreme views.
- The world's strongest democracies, such as Norway, Sweden, and Finland, also have the best-funded public media.
- Generally committed to a “universal service” mission.
- Can serve as a “safety net” for when the market fails to support certain types of media.

U.S. Newspaper-Industry Revenues by Source (\$ billions, 1990–2019)



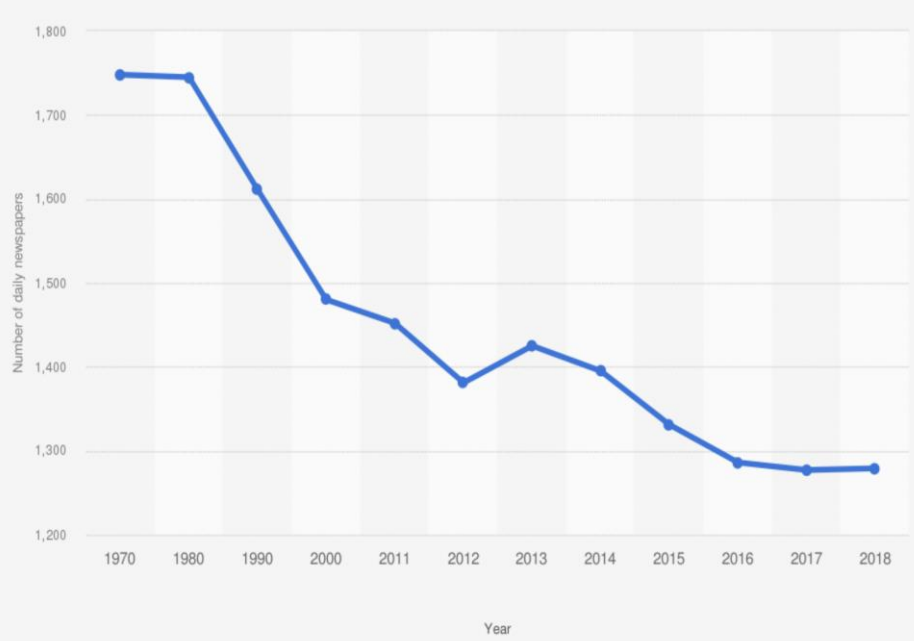
Source: Free Press Analysis of Census Service Annual Survey data for the Newspaper publisher industry (NAICS industry code 511110), CPI-U.

U.S. Newspaper Industry: Reporters & Correspondents (1999–2019)

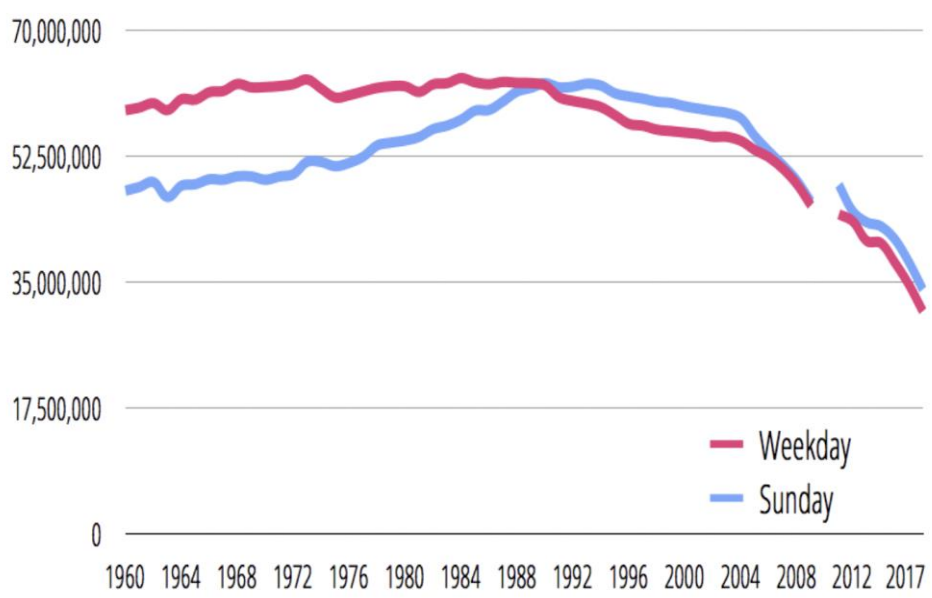


Source: Free Press analysis of Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Employment Statistics survey data for the Newspaper Publisher Industry (NAICS industry code 511110).

Number of daily newspapers in the United States from 1970 to 2018



Newspaper Circulation (USA) - Total



Source: Pew Research Center - Newspaper Fact Sheet (June 2018)

America's growing news deserts

As local newspapers have closed across the country, more and more communities are left with no daily local news outlet at all. Here are the number of audited daily papers per county, according to research from Ohio University and the Alliance for Audited Media.

THERE ARE ABOUT

65,000

local news workers in the US. That's one for every 5,000 Americans.

Hollowing out

Rural America isn't the only place local news is disappearing. It's also drying up in urban areas around the country.

585

is the population of Loup County, Nebraska, the ninth-smallest county in the nation, and the least populous county with a local newspaper.

BOSTON, MASS.

Peter Kadzis was a staffer at the *Boston Phoenix* for almost 25 years until the paper closed in 2013. Kadzis says social justice, political, and investigative stories took a hit, as did coverage about the city's minority communities: "What it did is it removed from the scene, effectively, a political voice for their interests."

DENVER, COLO.

The *Rocky Mountain News's* February 2009 closure, plus the *Denver Post's* continued layoffs and dropping circulation, have "deprived [Denverites] of an understanding of and ability to make informed decisions about issues of local government," says former *Rocky* editor, president, and publisher John Temple. "The current world does not lend itself to supporting the economy of local news."

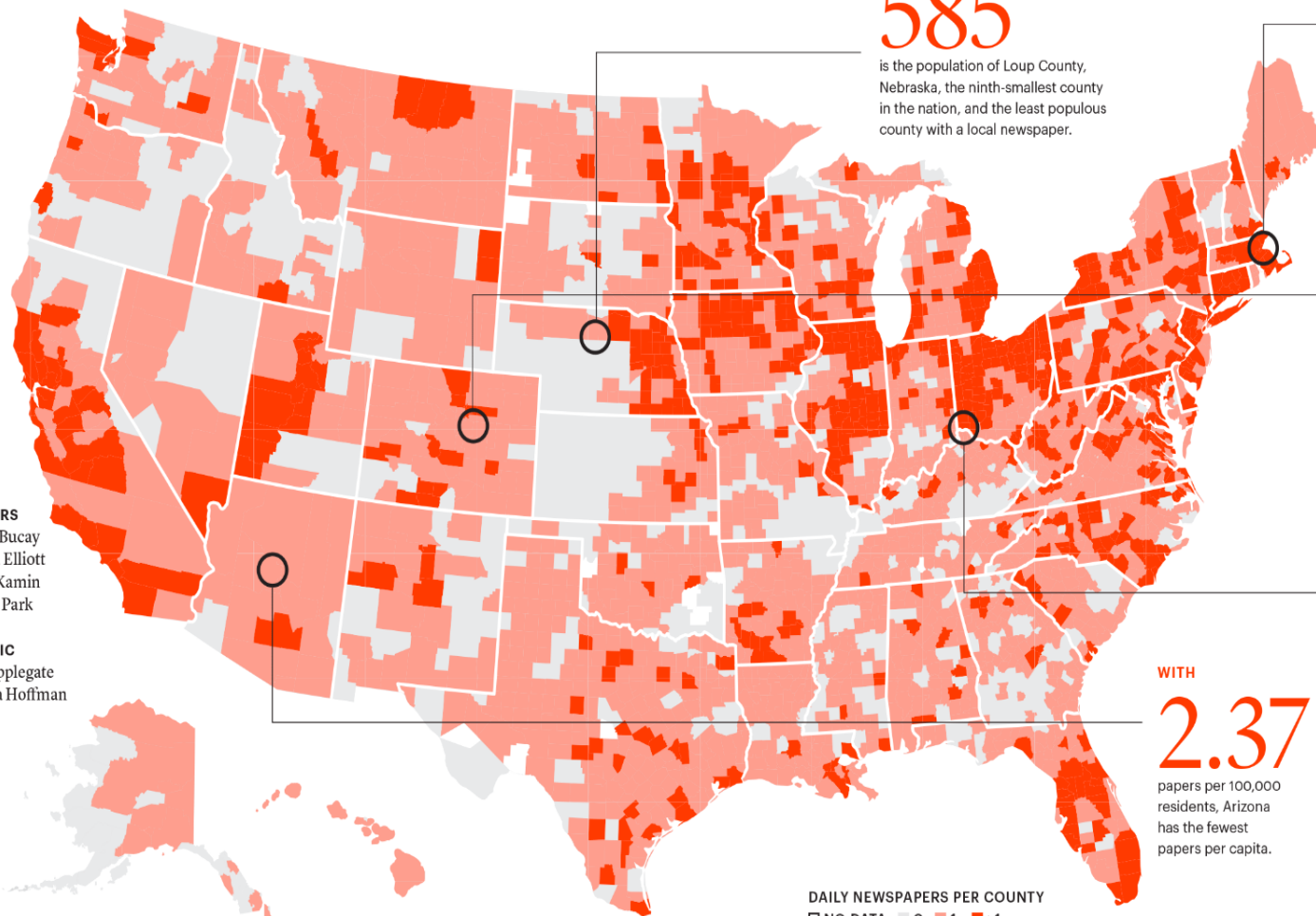
CINCINNATI, OHIO

After the December 2007 closure of the blue-collar *Cincinnati Post*, news coverage went hyperlocal, though much of that coverage focused on affluent suburbs. For instance, the online-only *Fort Thomas Matters* extensively covers a Northern Kentucky suburb just outside Cincinnati.

WITH

2.37

papers per 100,000 residents, Arizona has the fewest papers per capita.



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GRAPHIC

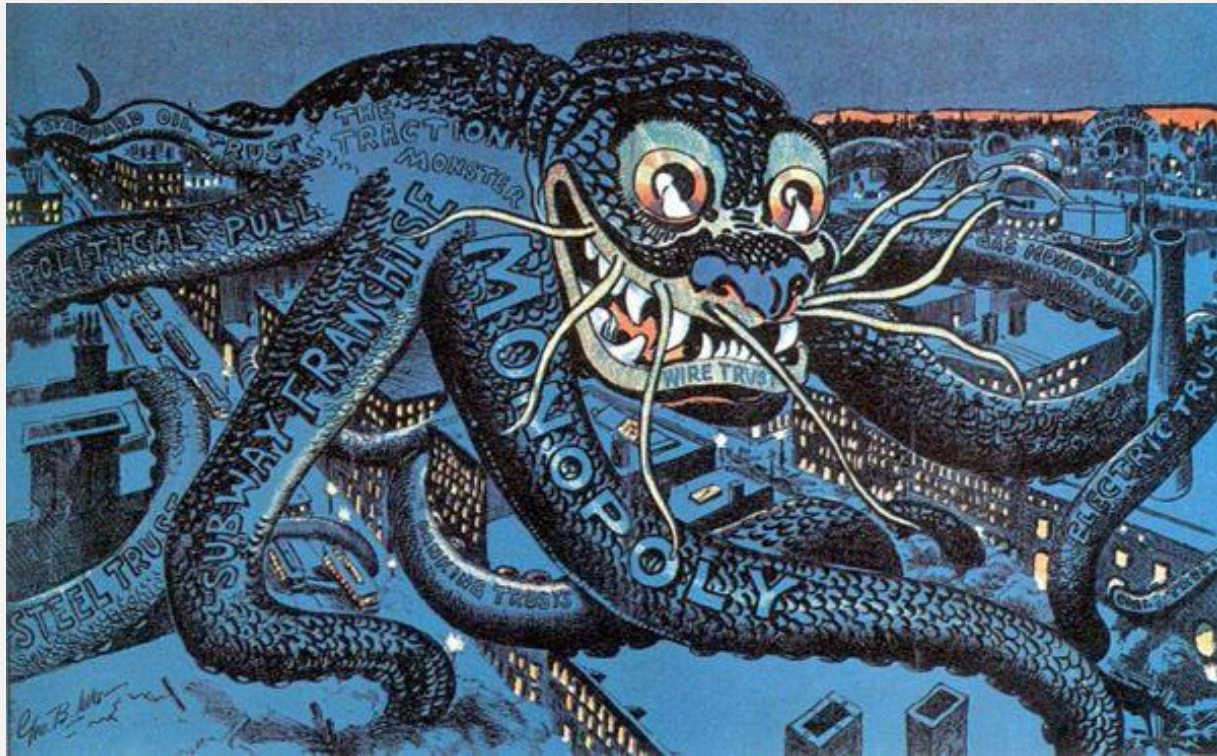
Evan Applegate
Cynthia Hoffman

DAILY NEWSPAPERS PER COUNTY

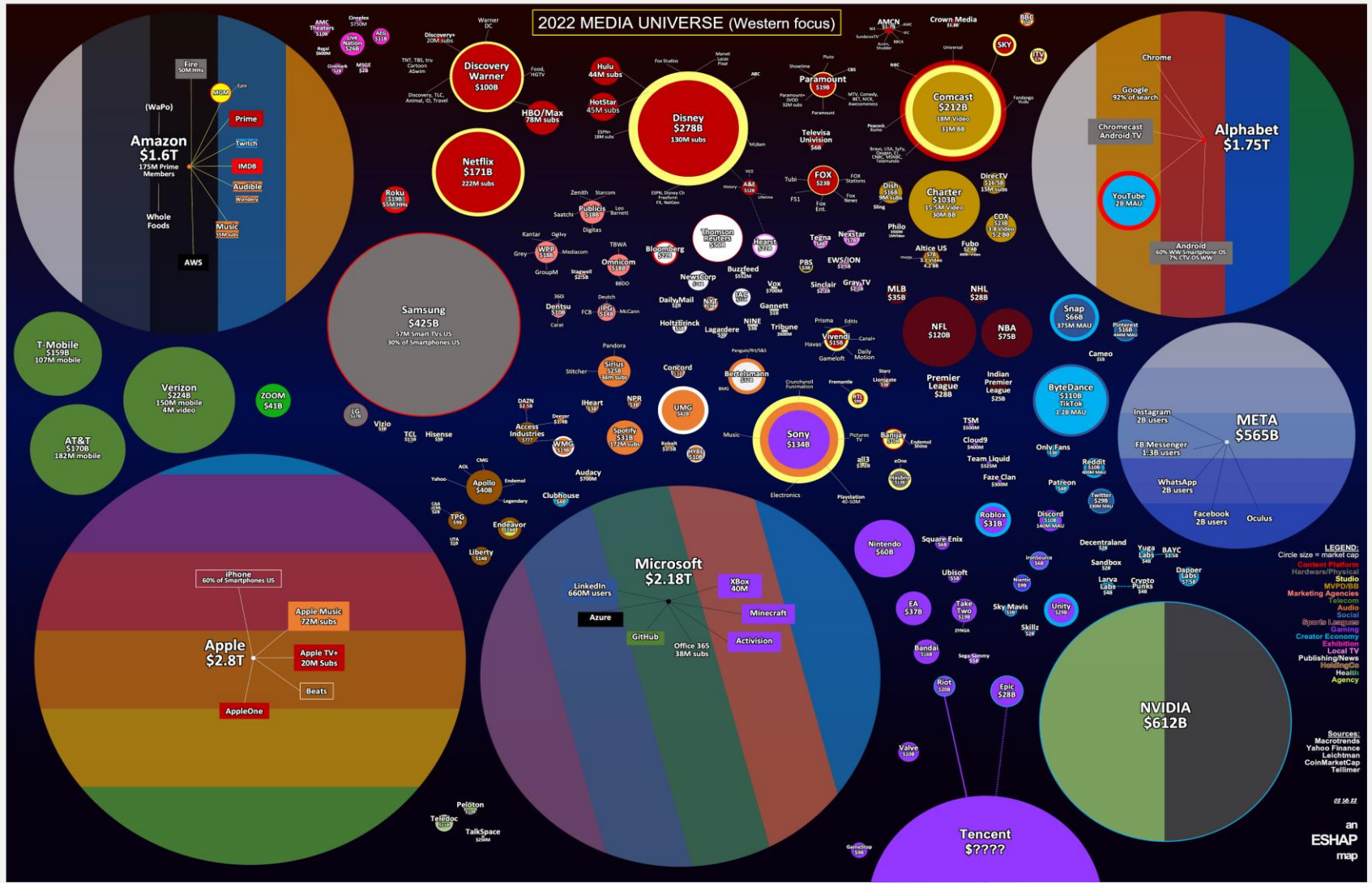
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DATA: DR. MICHELLE FERRIER, SCRIPPS COLLEGE OF COMMUNICATION AT OHIO UNIVERSITY, ALLIANCE FOR AUDITED MEDIA BECAUSE THIS CHART TRACKS ONLY DAILY NEWSPAPERS AUDITED BY AAM THAT MEET A MINIMUM PENETRATION LEVEL IN THEIR MARKETS, SOME PAPERS MAY BE EXCLUDED.

American Monopoly Problem



Media Oligarchy



Growing Public Scrutiny of Media Oligarchs



Journalism Competition and Preservation Act

- Modeled after the Australian News Media Bargaining Code
- Has both bipartisan support and bipartisan opposition
- My view: The JCPA privileges profit-driven media firms over the needs of news workers and communities

Political Economic Rationales for Public Media Infrastructures

- News and information are public goods
- Media organizations are subject to systemic market failure
- The market alone will not provide for all our information and communication needs

Radical Possibilities

- Manifestos are proliferating that call for various forms of public ownership
- Public utility regulation for platforms
- Expanding public infrastructures

Imagining the Public Media Center

- Multi-media hubs in every community
- Housed in already-existing public spaces (libraries, post offices, peg media centers, public broadcasting stations)
- Federally guaranteed, democratically governed
- Owned and controlled by local communities
- Inspired by the Independent Media Center (IMC) model of the early 2000s

The Indymedia Model

The screenshot shows the homepage of the Independent Media Center (IMC). The website has a dark blue and black color scheme. At the top, the URL 'indymedia.org' is visible in the browser's address bar. The main header features the 'imc' logo in large, bold, gold letters, with 'independent media center' written below it in white. To the left of the main content is a vertical sidebar with the IMC logo and a navigation menu. The main content area displays a news article with a red header and a photograph of protesters. On the right side, there are several blue boxes containing links to 'LIVE IMC COVERAGE', 'UPLOADING IMC COVERAGE', and 'CHOOSE A HEMISPHERE: LOCAL FEATURES'.

Independent Media Center

independent media center

LIVE IMC COVERAGE
Daily live IMC video coverage to the web
with IMC editors around the world in direct
engagement.

UPLOADING IMC COVERAGE
IMC offers Independent Media
Connectivity

**CHOOSE A HEMISPHERE:
LOCAL FEATURES
WITH YOUR OWNERS**

FEATURES Connecting local IMC editors
worldwide.

**Indonesian police use Shootings, killings, beatings, arrests
on West Papuan Independence rallies**

Indonesian police have opened fire on peaceful
protesters in Jayapura, with at least four gunshot
wounds and one death. West Papuan activists and
families have been forced to flee to the jungle for
safety. Indonesian security forces are conducting
scores of raids, sweeps and offensives against
West Papuan civilians. The attacks are happening
during the visit of National Police Chief General Subandono with over 200
people arrested across West Papua. Journalists have also been **attacked by
Indonesian police** according to Amnesty International... **See more at IMC
Farthest Day Asia Indonesia**. The Indonesian Police chief says any plans
to free Papua from Indonesia won't be tolerated, including flag raising
ceremonies on the West Papuan national Day, December 1st.

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Urbana-Champaign IMC



Six Layers of PMC's

- **Funding layer** (how will this public media system be financially sustained?);
- **Governance layer** (how will resource allocations and other key decisions be made democratically?);
- **Ascertainment layer** (how will information needs be determined?);
- **Infrastructure layer** (how can we ensure distribution of and access to information, including universal broadband service);
- **Technological layer** (how do we design algorithms that privilege public media in search and in news feeds?); and
- **Engagement layer** (how can we ensure that local communities are involved in making their own news and contributing their stories?).

Key Theses for Policy Approaches to Systemic Market Failure

- **Holistic** (multi-media; multi-layered)
- **Global** (sensitive to both commonalities and important differences across national contexts)
- **Radical** (pushing open the discursive parameters on what's possible, especially regarding post-capitalist models based on public ownership)

A Moment of Opportunity?

