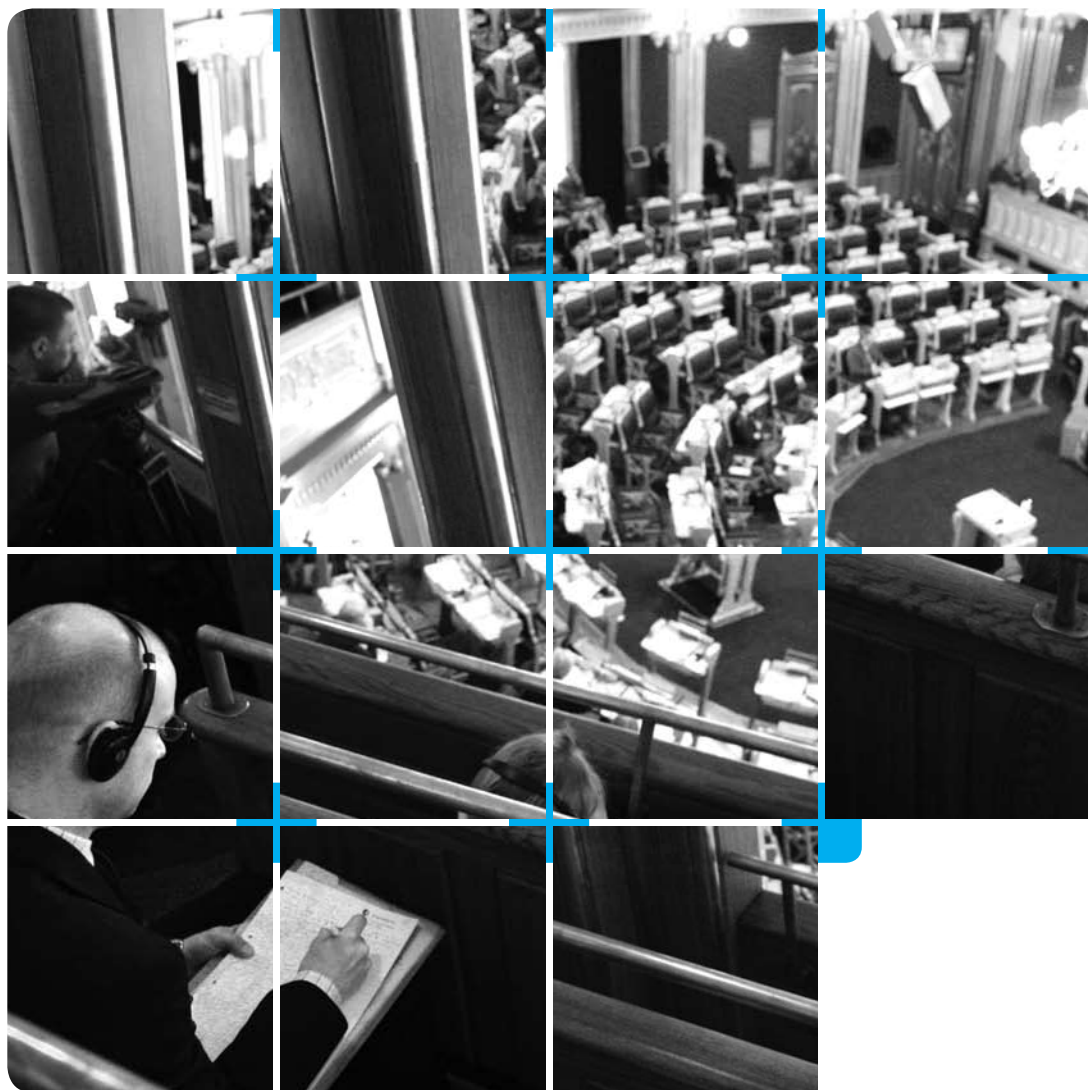




COMMUNICATING POLITICS POLITICAL COMMUNICATION IN THE NORDIC COUNTRIES

Edited by Jesper Strömbäck, Mark Ørsten & Toril Aalberg

NORDICOM

NORDICOM's activities are based on broad and extensive network of contacts and collaboration with members of the research community, media companies, politicians, regulators, teachers, librarians, and so forth, around the world. The activities at Nordicom are characterized by three main working areas.

- ***Media and Communication Research Findings in the Nordic Countries***

Nordicom publishes a Nordic journal, *Nordicom Information*, and an English language journal, *Nordicom Review* (refereed), as well as anthologies and other reports in both Nordic and English languages. Different research databases concerning, among other things, scientific literature and ongoing research are updated continuously and are available on the Internet. Nordicom has the character of a hub of Nordic cooperation in media research. Making Nordic research in the field of mass communication and media studies known to colleagues and others outside the region, and weaving and supporting networks of collaboration between the Nordic research communities and colleagues abroad are two prime facets of the Nordicom work.

The documentation services are based on work performed in national documentation centres attached to the universities in Aarhus, Denmark; Tampere, Finland; Reykjavik, Iceland; Bergen, Norway; and Göteborg, Sweden.

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At the request of UNESCO, Nordicom started the International Clearinghouse on Children, Youth and Media in 1997. The work of the Clearinghouse aims at increasing our knowledge of children, youth and media and, thereby, at providing the basis for relevant decision-making, at contributing to constructive public debate and at promoting children's and young people's media literacy. It is also hoped that the work of the Clearinghouse will stimulate additional research on children, youth and media. The Clearinghouse's activities have as their basis a global network of 1000 or so participants in more than 125 countries, representing not only the academia, but also, e.g., the media industries, politics and a broad spectrum of voluntary organizations.

In yearbooks, newsletters and survey articles the Clearinghouse has an ambition to broaden and contextualize knowledge about children, young people and media literacy. The Clearinghouse seeks to bring together and make available insights concerning children's and young people's relations with mass media from a variety of perspectives.

Communicating Politics

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Political Communication in the Nordic Countries

Jesper Strömbäck, Mark Ørsten & Toril Aalberg (eds.)

NORDICOM

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ISBN 978-91-89471-63-4

Published by:
Nordicom
University of Gothenburg
Box 713
SE 405 30 Göteborg
Sweden

Cover by: Daniel Zachrisson
Cover photo by: Magnus Fröderberg / norden.org
Printed by: Livréna AB, Göteborg, Sweden, 2008
Environmental certification according to ISO 14001

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Preface

The idea of this book was born in 2005, following the renewed interest in comparative political communication research that was sparked by influential books with titles such as *Comparing Political Communication* and *Comparing Media Systems*. In the latter book, Daniel C. Hallin and Paolo Mancini identified three different models of media and politics among Western democracies, and the Nordic countries were characterized as almost indistinguishable cases of what they referred to as the Democratic Corporatist Model. While the Nordic countries certainly appear similar from an international perspective, it raised the question as to whether there really is a Nordic model of political communication. One purpose of this book is consequently to address this question.

Another reason for why we thought that the time was ripe for a book on political communication in the Nordic countries is the fact that political communication research has become more prominent within these countries during the last ten years. However, most scholars still publish most of their research in their native language, with the end result that this research does not reach or influence the international scholarly community. Another purpose of this book is thus to present Nordic political communication research to an international audience of scholars and practitioners.

Yet another reason for why we decided to edit this book is related to the fact that American and to some extent British theory and research dominates the international literature on political communication – as well as many other fields of research. While there are many reasons for this state of affairs, the downside is that political communication theories tend to suffer from an Anglo-American bias and that the extent to which they are valid in other settings is uncertain. Hence, another purpose of this book is to expand the empirical and analytical database internationally available and through that to combat the tendency to presume that research findings from one society are applicable everywhere.

We thus hope that *Communicating Politics. Political Communication in the Nordic Countries* will not only influence the international political communication literature, but also encourage political communication scholars in the

PREFACE

Nordic countries to publish internationally and to focus more on comparative research.

As editors we would like to thank Nordicom for publishing this book, and Ulla Carlsson and Karin Poulsen at Nordicom for their support during the production process. We would also like to thank all the authors for their efforts and contributions to this book; without all of you, this book would have remained just an idea.

Sundsvall, Roskilde and Trondheim, June 2008

Jesper Strömbäck Mark Ørsten Toril Aalberg

I
Political Communication Systems
in the Nordic Countries

Chapter 1

Political Communication in the Nordic Countries

An Introduction

Jesper Strömbäck, Mark Ørsten & Toril Aalberg

From a social systems perspective, political communication can be described as a continuous relationship between political institutions and actors, media institutions and actors, and people as citizens, voters and media consumers. Thus, according to Blumler and Gurevitch (1995, p. 5), the main components of a political communication system can be located in a) political institutions in their communication aspects, b) media institutions in their political aspects, c) audience orientations to political communication, and d) communication-relevant aspects of political culture. Hence, as long as there are communication aspects of political institutions, or political aspects of media institutions, or as political power and legitimacy are won through open and democratic processes, then politics and the media will be inextricable linked together. Furthermore, as long as this is the case, it is necessary to include studies of the media in order to understand political phenomena, and to include studies of politics and political processes in order to understand media phenomena. In the end, any theory with regards to political phenomena is half-blind if it does not include the media, and vice versa. The same is true with regards to theories of democracy: they are necessarily incomplete and by definition unrealistic if they do not take the media and communication processes into consideration (Strömbäck, 2005).

Observations such as these form the underlying reason for the increased interest in and prominence of political communication research during the last decades, particularly on an international level and in the United States. In fact, in 2008 it is exactly 35 years since the International Communication Association (ICA) first recognized the Political Communication Division (PCD) as an official division, thus symbolically "giving birth" to political communication as a research field in its own right. 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*

International Journal of Press/Politics – devoted to publishing political communication research.

However, it is only during the last ten years that political communication research has become more prominent within the Nordic countries, and it is still only a small – although expanding – research area compared to its "parent disciplines": political science and media and communication science. Nevertheless, there are today numerous scholars in the Nordic countries that are doing studies on political communication from various perspectives, and using various methodological tools.

Against the background of such a large research agenda, and the interdisciplinary approach, it is hardly surprising to note that the boundaries of what exactly constitutes the study of political communication, in both the US and the Nordic countries, are not easily identified. However, in a bid to maintain a focus even in such a large field, Holbert (2005, p. 511) suggests that the central question of the discipline, at least in the Anglo-Saxon-tradition, is this: how do media aid citizens in becoming informed voters? This question, although far from being the only question dominating US research, does underscore the importance and prominence of studies focusing on elections and campaign coverage, voter behavior, media effects, and how political communication practices affect and shape democracy. In the emerging Nordic tradition, which is the focus of this book, the question of election coverage is also central. But not only national elections are important in the Nordic countries. With the increasing influence of the European Union, elections to the European Parliament are now also a central subject of political communication studies in the Nordic countries as well as across Europe. Questions of media effects, however, seem so far to play only a small role in the Nordic countries, where a social constructivist approach to the question of media influence often is preferred and researched using theories of image, framing or media discourse. A final Nordic focus may be found in research on the public service media and their role in an increasingly commercialized media environment.

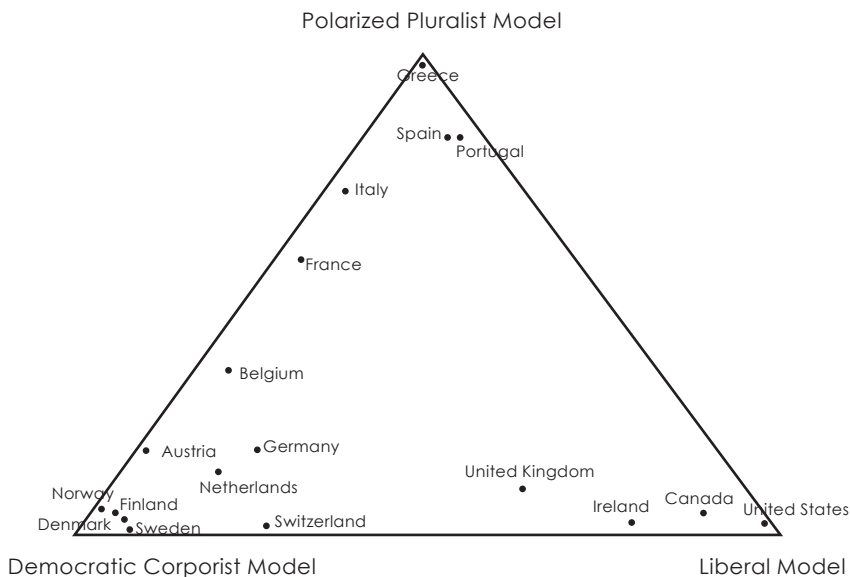
However, most scholars in political communication in the Nordic countries publish most of their research in their native language, with the unfortunate end result that this research does not reach or influence the international scholarly community. This is one major reason for why we decided that the time was right to edit a book on *Communicating Politics. Political Communication in the Nordic Countries*, and we are delighted that Nordicom accepted our proposal to publish such a book. Stated differently, one purpose of this book is to present Nordic research on political communication to an international audience of scholars and practitioners.

A second major reason for why we decided to edit this book is the renewed interest in comparative political communication research, spurred by books such as *Comparing Political Communication* (Esser & Pfetsch, 2004) and *Comparing Media Systems* (Hallin & Mancini, 2004). For various reasons, the international literature on political communication is heavily dominated by American and to some extent British research. While this state of affairs should not be blamed

on the many scholars in these countries that focus on political communication research, the downside is that political communication theories tend to suffer from an Anglo-American bias. Comparative research is one strategy to combat such a bias; presenting research from countries that differ significantly from the United States and Britain is another strategy. Thus, a second purpose of this book is to combat what Blumler and Gurevitch (1995, p. 75) have labelled *naïve universalism*, that is "the tendency implicitly to presume that political communication research findings from one society (normally one's own) are applicable everywhere".

A third major reason for why we decided to edit this book can be directly linked to the already mentioned book *Comparing Media Systems* by Daniel Hallin and Paolo Mancini (2004). In this seminal book, to which we shall return shortly, the authors identify three different models of media and politics among Western democracies: A *Polarized Pluralist Model*, a *Liberal Model*, and a *Democratic Corporatist Model*. Although these models should be perceived as ideal types, the analysis is empirically based, and the authors also classify individual countries in the light of their comparative framework. In their classification, all the Nordic countries (except Iceland, which is not included in their analysis) are categorized as prototypical examples of the *Democratic Corporatist Model*. In their visual representation of individual cases to the three models (2004, p. 70), the Nordic countries are grouped so close together that they are almost indistinguishable (see figure 1).

Figure 1. Relation of Individual Cases to the Three Models of Media and Politics



Source: Hallin and Mancini (2004, p. 70).

While this might be reasonable from a global or international perspective, it still triggered the question as to whether the Nordic countries really are so similar to each other as suggested by Hallin and Mancini. Certainly, from an everyday Swedish, Finnish or Danish perspective, the differences between the own country and the other Nordic countries might often be as prominent as the similarities. This might, or might not, be an argument against the classification of the Nordic countries as almost indistinguishable examples of the *Democratic Corporatist Model*: The differences between the Nordic countries might be significant in a Nordic perspective while simultaneously being insignificant from a global or an international perspective. Only empirically based analyzes can tell. Thus, a third purpose of this book is to assess and evaluate the classification of the Nordic countries as prototypical and very similar examples of the *Democratic Corporatist Model* of media and politics.

In this introductory chapter, we will therefore describe and discuss the framework proposed by Hallin and Mancini in some detail. The rest of the book is divided into two parts. The first part includes five chapters, each devoted to describing and analyzing the political communication system in Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland and Iceland, respectively. These chapters are written by country specialists invited by us as editors.

The second part includes eight chapters, each presenting a case study of some aspect of political communication processes in a Nordic country. These chapters were selected through a process initiated by a *Call for Chapters* issued in early 2006. Scholars from all the Nordic countries were invited to submit an abstract, and the response was very positive. Unfortunately less than half of the submitted proposals could be accepted, due to space limitations. Nevertheless, we take the positive response as a sign that political communication research in the Nordic countries clearly is alive and well. When selecting the chapters to be included, our ambition was to make sure that the final selection was characterized by high quality research as well as pluralism with regards to country representation, studied aspects of political communication and methodology. The specific chapters in both part 1 and part 2 of the book will be further introduced at the end of this introductory chapter.

In the final chapter of the book, we will draw some conclusions with regards to similarities and differences between the Nordic countries, in light of the Hallin and Mancini framework, the country chapters and the case studies. Then we will be in a position to assess whether it is, in fact, reasonable to treat the Nordic countries as almost indistinguishable examples of the *Democratic Corporatist Model* of media and politics.

The Need for Comparative Research

As already noted, the interest in comparative political communication research has increased during the last few years. This development is more than welcome, not only to counter the Anglo-American bias that still is strong within

this field of research. More important is that comparative research in general has several advantages that should be taken seriously by anyone interested in generalizable knowledge.

The first advantage builds on the rule that an observation simply is insignificant without comparisons (Pfetsch & Esser, 2004). Making distinctions between different objects is, in fact, a fundamental part of the basic human cognitive processes, and such distinctions are always based on conscious or unconscious comparisons. Thus, we know that a girl is not a boy by comparing boys and girls, and that cars are not bicycles by comparing different objects of transportation, to take just a few examples. Within the realm of politics, we can locate left and right by comparing left and right, just as we within the realm of media can make a distinction between different media formats only by comparing them. Comparisons can thus be made across different set of objects or dimensions. Within political communication research, it is for example common to make comparisons between media content in different media, and between different voter groups and their characteristics. Less common, but equally or even more important – depending on our research questions – are comparisons across time and across countries or cultures. In this context, we are mainly referring to comparisons across countries or cultures when discussing comparative research.

The second advantage with comparative research is that it contributes to an expansion of the empirical database. This might be particularly important with regards to research fields which are dominated by theories and empirical research from only a few, perhaps even atypical, countries. Thus, through comparative research it is possible to assess whether results based on studies within one particular setting are valid also in other settings. This, in turn, means that comparative research facilitates more solidly established generalizations.

The third advantage with comparative research, as noted above, is that it is an essential antidote to naive universalism. Closely linked to this is a fourth advantage, and that is that comparative research "can serve as an effective antidote to unwitting parochialism" (Blumler & Gurevitch, 1995, p. 76). Stated differently, comparative research not only helps us understand other systems better, it also helps us understanding our own system. For example, research on the Norwegian election news coverage might find that it has a strong tendency to frame politics as a strategic game rather than as issues (Waldahl & Narud, 2004). Some might find this acceptable, as politics is about power as well as about issues and policies, whereas others might find it worthy of strong criticism, as it might contribute to political cynicism (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997). However, comparative research might find that this particular framing of politics is even more common in other countries; it might even find that it is common to frame politics as a strategic game in all advanced postindustrial democracies, although to varying degrees. Such research findings certainly cast a new light on the issue at hand. If this particular framing is common in many or all countries, then the basic problem – if it indeed is perceived as a problem – can hardly be solved solely by criticizing the Norwegian media. However, further

comparative research might find that this kind of framing is more common in countries with, say, very commercialized media systems or with first-past-the-post electoral systems (Strömbäck & Dimitrova, 2006; Strömbäck & Shehata, 2007; Strömbäck & Aalberg, 2008). Thus, how politics is framed might follow certain patterns – but such patterns can never be discovered in absence of comparative research.

Hence, the fifth advantage with comparative research "lies in its capacity to render the invisible visible. It draws our attention to imperatives and constraints built into the very structure of political communication arrangements, which, though influential, may be taken for granted and difficult to detect when the focus is on only one national case" (Blumler & Gurevitch, 1995, p. 76).

Doing comparative research can be difficult, however, for both practical and theoretical reasons (Wirth & Kolb, 2004). This is why comparative research on political communication still can be said to be in its infancy, although it also appears poised for maturity (Gurevitch & Blumler, 2004).

Comparing Media Systems

There are several reasons for why comparative research appears poised for maturity, but one of them is the publication of *Comparing Media Systems* by Hallin and Mancini (2004). Although it is not the first attempt to provide a framework for comparing political communication systems (see Siebert et al., 1956; Blumler & Gurevitch, 1995), it is arguably the most comprehensive and empirically based attempt.

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. Briefly, the four dimensions directly related to media systems are:

1. The *structure of media markets* and the development of a *mass circulation press*. Some societies are more newspaper-centred whereas other societies are more radio- or television-centred, historically and today. Moreover, in some societies the newspapers are mainly addressed to an elite, whereas in other societies they are mass circulated.
2. *Degree of political parallelism*, that is the extent to which the media system is rooted in and reflects political or other social divisions in society. One component, and perhaps the most important one, is the degree to which the media content reflects political orientations in their news reporting. Other components include, but are not restricted to, organizational connections between media and political organizations, the tendency for media personnel to be politically active, and the partisanship of media audiences. Systems with a high degree of political parallelism are also characterized by external diversity, that is pluralism achieved through different media offering different viewpoints. Systems with a low degree

of political parallelism are characterized by internal diversity, that is pluralism in viewpoints achieved within each individual media outlet.

3. *Degree of journalistic professionalism*, a concept which primarily refers to the degree of journalistic autonomy, the existence or strength of distinct professional norms and of a public service orientation among media workers.
4. *The role of the state*, in particular the degree of state intervention in the media system. Such state interventions might include subsidies to newspapers in order to stimulate a plurality of newspapers, the existence and governance of public service media, and laws enabling or restricting journalistic gathering and presentation of news.

The five dimensions related to the political context of media systems are:

1. *The role of the state*, most importantly the scope of its responsibilities and activities within different societies. Here a basic distinction can be made between welfare state democracies, in which the state is seen as having a responsibility for the welfare of the society, and thus has a right to intervene in various sectors of society, including the media system, and liberal democracies, in which the role of the state is more narrow (Hallin & Mancini, 2004, p. 49). In the latter type of countries, more faith is usually put in the capitalistic market and the capacity of the "invisible hand" to coordinate resources in society, whereas in the former type of countries, there is usually a stronger scepticism towards the market and its capacity to strengthen the common good.
2. *Consensus versus majoritarian democracy*, which refers to and includes type of government as well as electoral system and political culture. Majoritarian democracies usually employs a first-past-the-post electoral system, where the winner in each voting district takes all, usually leading to a two or few-party system and clear distinctions between the governing and opposition party or parties. Consensual systems, in contrast, usually employ proportional electoral systems, leading to multiple parties, coalition governments and compromise and cooperation between the parties (Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Lijphart, 1999; Norris, 2004).
3. *Individual versus organized pluralism*. This dimension refers to whether political representation mainly is conceived and organized in terms of the relationship between governing institutions and individual citizens and a plurality of special interests groups (*individualized pluralism*), or in terms of collective and highly organized social groups which enjoy advantaged positions in the relationship to the state (*organized pluralism*).
4. *The development and strength of rational-legal authority*, as opposed to clientelism. By rational-legal authority is basically meant "a form of rule based on adherence to formal and universalistic rules of procedure"

(Hallin & Mancini, 2004, p. 55), whereas clientelism refers to a system in which access to social and economic resources is controlled by patrons or powerholders which deliver them to clients in exchange for deference and/or different kinds of favours and services. Decisions in such systems are not guided by universal rules and procedures, but instead made at the discretion of those who have the power.

5. The distinction between *moderate versus polarized pluralism*, that is the extent to which there are many or few political and social cleavages in a particular society, and how deep these cleavages are. For example, societies where there are deeply rooted conflicts between religious or ethnic groups, or between different regions, are characterized by polarized pluralism, whereas societies where such deep divisions either do not exist, or are not politicized, are characterized by moderate pluralism.

By analyzing 18 countries along these dimensions, Hallin and Mancini find that there are some patterns and correlations which make it possible to identify three families or models of media and politics. Moreover, they also find some geographical patterns, which is why the *Liberal Model* also is called the *North Atlantic Model*, whereas the *Democratic Corporatist Model* also is called the *Northern European Model*, and the *Polarized Pluralist Model* the *Mediterranean Model*. Briefly, they summarize these as follows (2004, p. 11):

The Liberal Model is characterized by a relative dominance of market mechanisms and of commercial media; the Democratic Corporatist Model by a historical coexistence of commercial media and media tied to organized social and political groups, and by a relatively active but legally limited role of the state; and the Polarized Pluralist Model by integration of the media into party politics, weaker historical development of commercial media, and a strong role of the state.

Although the conceptualization of these models depends on the differences between and the similarities within them, space does not allow us to delve deeper into all three models. The *Democratic Corporatist Model* is however of special interest to us, since all the Nordic countries are described as prototypes of this model. Thus, in the next section we will focus exclusively on features which are central to this type of political communication system.

The Democratic Corporatist Model

Hallin & Mancini also calls this the north/central European model, as the Nordic countries as well as Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, Austria and Switzerland all are linked to this model. Figure 1 however, demonstrated how it especially is the Nordic countries that are classified as the most typical examples. To provide an overview, we have listed some of the most important

media system characteristics and the political system characteristics of the *Democratic Corporatist Model* in table 1.

Table 1. Media System and Political System Characteristics: The Democratic Corporatist Model

Media System Characteristics	
Newspaper Industry	High newspaper circulation and early development of mass-circulation press
Political Parallelism	Traditionally external pluralism, especially in national press, and a strong party press; during the last decades a shift toward neutral and commercial press and internal diversity; politics-in-broadcasting system with substantial autonomy for the media
Journalistic Professionalization	Strong professionalization, and with institutionalized systems for self-regulation
Role of the State in the Media System	Strong state intervention but with equally strong protection for press freedom; Press subsidies; strong public service broadcasting
Political System Characteristics	
Political History; Patterns of Conflict or Consensus	Early democratization, moderate pluralism, patterns of consensus
Consensus or Majoritarian Government	Predominantly consensus, especially in the Nordic countries
Individual versus Organized Pluralism	Organized pluralism; history of segmented pluralism; democratic corporatism
Role of the State	Strong welfare state; significant involvement of the state in economy; limitations on capitalism
Rational Legal Authority	Strong development of rational-legal authority

Source: Hallin & Mancini (2004, p. 67-68).

What also distinguishes *Democratic Corporatist* countries are three "coexistences", which in other systems do not appear simultaneously and which even, perhaps particularly from the perspective of the *Liberal Model*, might be perceived as incompatible (Hallin & Mancini, 2004, p. 144-145).

Firstly, a high degree of political parallelism has coexisted with a strongly developed mass-circulation press. In other countries, forming part of the other models, the more normal pattern is either a high degree of political parallelism, or a strongly developed mass-circulation press. For instance, in *Polarized Pluralist* countries there is a high degree of political parallelism, but in these countries the press is mainly aimed at and read by social and political elites, whereas most citizens follow the news through radio or TV. On the other hand, in *Liberal* countries the mass-circulation press has been strong, but there has simultaneously been a low degree of political parallelism. Only in *Democratic Corporatist* countries has a high degree of political parallelism coexisted with a strongly developed mass-circulation press. The fact that political parallelism has declined does not change this fact.

Secondly, a high degree of political parallelism has coexisted with a high level of journalistic professionalization, that is, with strong journalistic autonomy, a consensus on professional journalistic standards, and a commitment to a common good. Thus, political affiliations and journalistic professionalism has not, historically speaking, been perceived as contradictory. Although this also has changed, and it is nowadays significantly less common for journalists or news media to be affiliated with political orientations, this historical coexistence has not appeared in other countries.

Thirdly, a significant involvement of the state in the media sector has and continues to coexist with strong protection for press freedom and a deeply held respect for journalistic autonomy. For example, although public service broadcasting is relatively strong in *Democratic Corporatist* countries, especially compared to most (though not all – Britain is an exception) *Liberal* countries, it would certainly be misleading to think about public service media as controlled by political actors. Public service media has not equalled state media – despite claims from some neo-liberals – as there has been and continues to be systems in place intended to shield the public service media from political influence.

As noted, these coexistences are not as apparent today as they used to be, due to declining political parallelism. This might be an indication that there is a tendency towards convergence with the *Liberal Model*, as suggested by Hallin and Mancini (p. 301):

[The global] process of homogenization involves, most notably, a weakening of the connections that historically tied the media in the Polarized Pluralist and Democratic Corporatist systems to political parties and organized social groups, and a shift toward the commercial structures and practices of neutral professionalism that are characteristic of the Liberal system. There is, in this sense, a clear tendency toward the Liberal system.

On the other hand, there are countertendencies, and although systems change, sediments from earlier periods continue to exist and shape the present (Petersson et al., 2006). The rise of the partisan *Fox News* in the United States might also be an indication of that country – the prototypical example of the *Liberal Model* – converging in some respects with the *Polarized Pluralist Model*. What is interesting, though, is that both tendencies toward convergence might be explained by the same underlying factor, which is growing commercialization. In *Democratic Corporatist* countries, and perhaps also *Polarized Pluralist* countries, commercialization is undermining political parallelism, whereas increasing political polarization in some *Liberal* countries explain why it has become commercially more attractive for at least certain media companies to become more strongly affiliated with certain political orientations. If this interpretation is correct, then it follows that commercialism – no matter how consequential it is for media around the world – is not necessarily at odds with political parallelism and external pluralism.

What is clear, though, is that there are some, more or less global, changes with regards to both political systems and media systems, which have implications for political communication practices. With regards to media systems, commercialization is one such tendency. Increasing number of media outlets and audience fragmentation are two other changes taking place. With regards to political systems, increasing electoral volatility, decreasing party identification and increasing political distrust are some examples. Thus, to understand political communication practices, in the Nordic countries and beyond, it is necessary to take into consideration the political system and the media system, changes related to both, as well as the citizenry and how their behaviour in their roles as voters and media consumers are changing.

Outline of the Book

Against this background, the first chapters in this book will be the country chapters focusing on the political communication systems in Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden, respectively. These chapters are important in themselves, and they also provide a background for the case studies that will follow. When we invited country experts to write the country chapters, we specifically asked them to address the following issues and aspects:

- The political system, including the party system and electoral system;
- Trends with regards to peoples' political behaviour, including, for example, party identification, electoral volatility, political interest and political distrust;
- The media system and its configuration, including the importance of different media (TV, newspapers, radio, internet) on different geographical levels (national vs local), and also including issues regarding media consumption, media ownership, political parallelism and journalistic professionalization;
- A background explaining the historical roots of the current political and media systems;
- A brief overview of laws and regulations which are important with regards to the media system and political communication practices, including whether paid political advertising on radio and TV is allowed, laws regulating media ownership and subsidies aimed at helping newspapers to survive economically;
- A discussion and analysis of the interaction between media and politics on a macro-level;
- New directions and trends which have had or might have consequences for the political communication system in respective country; and, finally,

- An assessment of the Hallin and Mancini framework, and whether there are tendencies implicating a change from the *Democratic Corporatist Model* toward the *Polarized Pluralist* or *Liberal Model*.

In the first part of the book – *Political Communication Systems in the Nordic Countries* – these aspects will be described, discussed and analyzed in one chapter for each Nordic country. These country chapters will be presented in alphabetical order, thus starting with Denmark and finishing with Sweden.

The second part of the book will focus on *Cases in Nordic Political Communication*. The first chapter of this part is written by Tom Andersson, and it is titled *Conflicting Representations in the European Parliamentary Elections*. In this chapter and with a focus on Sweden, the author argues that elections to the European Parliament lack rationality, mainly due to the conflicting representations of the EU, and of its institutional, democratic and economic performance. As long as there is public and political disagreement on the *raison d'être* of the EU, there will be a tendency for elections to the European Parliament to be treated as second-order elections with nationalistic rather than European representations and policy appeals being dominant.

Chapter eight is titled *Visualizing Egalitarianism: Political Print Ads in Denmark*, and it is written by Jens E. Kjeldsen. In this chapter and from the perspective of visual rhetoric, the author investigates the aesthetics of power as represented in political print ads from the 1998 and 2001 Danish elections. This is followed by a chapter on political campaigning on the Internet in Finland, entitled *Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose? The Evolution of Finnish Web Campaigning 1996-2004* and written by Tom Carlson and Kim Strandberg. The focus of this chapter is on the web presence amongst candidates, the adoption patterns regarding candidate web campaigning, and changes in the features of the candidates' web sites.

Longitudinal comparisons are evident also in chapter ten, written by Bengt Johansson: *Popularized Election Coverage? News Coverage of Swedish Parliamentary Election Campaigns 1979-2006*. The author investigates a number of hypothesis with respect to changes in how the media cover election campaigns, and find that the Swedish election news coverage indeed has become more popularized during the last decades.

The Swedish media and comparisons across time are the focus of chapter eleven as well, in which Monika Djerf-Pierre and Lennart Weibull analyze regimes of political journalism in Swedish public service broadcasting between 1925 and 2005. The main title is indicative of their results: *From Public Educator to Interpreting Ombudsman*.

In chapter twelve, Iben Have and Anne Marit Waade investigate one kind of media genre that usually do not receive much attention from political communication scholars, namely television documentaries. In their chapter *Aestheticising Politics*, the authors focus the empirical analysis on non-verbal communication in two Danish documentaries on politics. Among other things, their findings explain and nuance the growing of political backstage communication as well as emotional and social intentions in political communication.

Chapter thirteen make use of one of the most widely used political communication theories during the last decade or so, namely framing theory. In *This is the Issue: Framing Contests and Media Coverage*, Øyvind Ihlen and Sigurd Allern focus on the dynamic contests between different frames and their reception in the Norwegian media. The question guiding their analysis is what kinds of frames typically prevail in mediated conflicts where various actors present competing frames.

This is followed by a chapter by Kjersti Torbjørnsrud, entitled *Organizing Audiovisual Campaign Coverage. Influence on Power Relations Between Media and Politics in Norway*. In her chapter, the author discusses how audiovisual campaign coverage is organized in Norway, and then, based on a production study and interviews with editors and political actors, proceeds to analyze how the organization of this news coverage influences power relations between media and politics in Norway.

In the final chapter, we summarize and analyze the findings from both the country chapters and the case studies, and make an assessment of the classification of the Nordic countries as forming part of the *Democratic Corporatist Model* of media and politics. As editors, we hope this will give the reader not only a number of chapters that are interesting in themselves, but also a better understanding of differences and similarities between the Nordic countries.

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Chapter 2

Media and Politics in Denmark

Anders Esmark & Mark Ørsten

As noted in the first chapter of this volume, Hallin and Mancini's work on media systems define Denmark, as is also the case with other the Nordic countries, as an exemplar of the Democratic Corporatist model. We shall now probe this image with respect to the political and democratic tradition in Denmark as well as to the evolution and current state of the Danish media system. In so doing, we refer to most of the variables used by Hallin and Mancini in their discussion of both 'the political system' and 'the media system' (see the introduction for an overview), although not rigidly so. Even though we find no reason to fundamentally challenge the notion of Denmark as a case of democratic corporatism, we shall however try to highlight a more constitutive duality between traits in both the political system and the media system of Denmark drawn from liberal representative democracy, or more specifically parliamentary democracy, and traits that can be associated with corporatist structures of interest mediation.

Hallin and Mancini are by no means inattentive to this duality. In their discussion of the 'role of the state', they draw a clear distinction between the 'liberal democracies' archetypically represented by the U.S. and the 'welfare state democracies' that dominate in Europe – in particular in the Northern European countries. However, they also recognize that the distinction is neither 'absolute', nor a sharp 'dichotomy', opting instead for the many 'shades of difference' that characterize different countries (2004, p. 49). Similarly, Hallin and Mancini repeatedly note that the Nordic countries are all characterized by the early consolidation or even 'triumph' of liberal institutions (2004, p. 74, 145, 160), even though the notion of a 'democratic corporatist' model clearly gives priority to the development of corporatist structures of interest mediation developed in conjunction with welfare state building.

However, Hallin and Mancini's elaboration of the dual influence of liberalism and trends associated with welfare state building is more or less limited to discussions of the level and forms of state intervention in the media system, i.e. the combination of constitutional freedom for the press and strong public service traditions, public media subsidies etc. Against this background, we suggest that the less than seamless combination of liberal democracy and wel-

fare state democracy, or 'social democracy', should also be considered more fundamental to the political history and current system in Denmark. Obviously, such a claim does not oppose Hallin and Mancini's recognition of this duality in the area of media regulation, but it does propose to explore the notion that media regulation is '(...) rooted in more general differences in the role of state in society' (2004, p. 49) in somewhat more detail. Indeed, we will go one step further and suggest that parliamentary democracy and welfare state democracy constitutes two archaeological layers of Danish history, which have to given rise to fairly distinct forms of political communication rather than just a particular media and paradigm of media regulation.

The Political System

Referring to the well-established distinction between presidential and parliamentary systems of rule, liberal democracy has decidedly come to mean *parliamentary* democracy in the Danish case. The advent of parliamentarism, however, has been no easy matter. Although the constitution of 1848 marks the formal transition from absolute monarchy to a constitutional or 'limited' monarchy, substantial traces of the 'ancien regime' remained intact until the constitutional revision of 1953. The revision saw the end of bicameralism and the upper chamber of parliament ('Landstinget'), which had a long history of restricted eligibility and adherence to royal power. Parliamentarism had been more or less thwarted in the first fifty years after the constitution of 1848, but the so-called 'system change' in 1901 consolidated the principle of negative cabinet responsibility and is generally held to be the decisive turning point towards parliamentarism. A constitutional revision in 1915 introduced voting rights for women accompanied by a thorough revision of the electoral system.

Since 1953, the Danish Parliament has consisted of only one chamber: the 'Folketinget'. Elections to Parliament are held at least every four years, but it is within the power of the Prime Minister to call elections sooner. Using Lijphart's widely acknowledged distinction between majoritarian politics and consensus politics, Hallin and Mancini highlight the latter as predominant in countries under the label of democratic corporatism, whereas majoritarian politics dominate in what they consider liberal systems (2004, p. 51, 68). A key aspect of consensus politics is the adherence to proportional representation rather than plurality voting and the 'winner takes it all'-approach of majoritarian politics. Elections to Danish Parliament are based on proportional representation, although parties do need to receive at least 2% of the total number of votes cast to gain representation. There are 179 members of Parliament, four of which are elected in Greenland and the Faeroe Islands, with whom Denmark shares a commonwealth ('Rigsfællesskab').

The remaining 175 members are elected in regional constituencies and local administrative constituencies in Denmark 135 of these are constituency mandates and 40 are so-called 'additional mandates' ('tillægsmandater') that

are redistributed every five years according to population density and the number of voters in the different regional constituencies. The distribution of mandates among candidates on the different party lists of a given election can take place according to three different principles: distribution of candidates on local constituencies within a regional constituency, in which case party votes as well as preferential (personal) votes determine the outcome, a hierarchical running order within a regional constituency in which case an exceedingly high number of preferential votes for a particular candidate are required to cause deviations from the running order determined by the party, and finally 'equal chance' for all candidates on a particular list within the regional constituency in which case the number of preferential votes are the most important.

Turning from the electoral system to the party system, Denmark also fits the image of a multi-party system of consensus politics, as opposed to the dominance of two-party systems in majoritarian politics. The oldest parties are the Conservatives (originally called 'Højre') and the Liberals (now called 'Venstre'), which were formed among members of Parliament in the decades following the ratification of the Danish constitution. In the 1880's, the Danish Social Democratic party obtained its first seats in Parliament, having been founded 1871. In 1905, the Social-Liberals broke away from the Liberals, completing the list of the four usually considered the 'grand old parties' in Denmark. The 'four-paper system' highlighted by Hallin and Manicini as one of the foremost historical examples of organized political parallelism in the press (2004, p. 27) was based on these four parties. The four parties also demarcate the epitome of party organization in early industrial society, each channelling relatively distinct societal classes into parliamentary politics at the turn of the century and well into the 1900's: the Conservatives included landed proprietors, industrial capitalism and civil servants, the Liberals was the party of the farmers, the Social Democrats organized the workers and the Social Liberals the small landowners and the urban petite bourgeoisie. All though this correlation between parties and distinct classes has long since vanished, as we shall discuss below, all four parties have remained represented in Parliament.

New parties have obviously been added to the picture. The Danish Communist Party was founded in 1919 and gained representation in Parliament 1945-1960 and again from 1973 until 1979. Following a turbulent history of disruptions and competing communist and socialist factions, two left wing parties are currently represented in Parliament: the Socialist Peoples Party and the Unity List (the 'Red-Green Alliance'). At the opposite end of the political spectrum, the Progress Party was formed in 1972 primarily as protest party with respect to heavy taxation and later also with respect to immigration. The protest party gained representation in parliament from 1973. In 1995, the Danish People's Party broke off from the Progress Party, aiming to become parliamentary salonfähig, although retaining much of the protest profile of the Progress Party with respect to immigration. The Progress Party has since been voted out of parliament while the Danish People's Party has become a major factor in Danish politics. No other parties are currently represented in Parlia-

ment, but more recent political history has seen centre-right parties such as the Christian Democrats and Centre Democrats elected. The results of the four most recent elections are summarized in table 1.

Table 1. The Danish Elections and Governments 1994-2005 (percent)

	1994	1998	2001	2005
The Liberal Party (V)	23.3	24.0	31.2	29.0
The Social Democrats (S)	34.6	35.9	29.1	25.8
The Conservatives (C)	15.0	8.9	9.1	10.3
The Social-Liberals (B)	4.6	3.9	5.2	9.2
The Danish Peoples Party (O)	(-)	7.4	12.0	13.3
The Socialists (F)	7.3	7.6	6.4	6.0
The Red-Green Party (Ø)	3.1	2.7	2.4	3.4
The Christian Democrats (Q)	1.9	2.5	2.3	1.7
The Centre Democrats (D)	2.8	4.3	1.8	1.0
The Progress Party (Z)	6.4	2.4	0.5	-
Others	1.0	0.4	-	0.3
Turnout	84.3	85.9	87.2	84.5
Parties in government	S+B+D (94-96) S+B (96-98)	S+B	V+C	V+C

Source: Election Reports of the Danish Ministry of the Interior, various years.

In a Nordic context, an important aspect of Danish politics is the fact that the Social Democrats have not been as dominant as in the case of Sweden and to some extent of Norway. Thus power has shifted back and forth between centre-left and centre-right in post-war Denmark. In recent history, a coalition of Social Democrats and the Social-Liberals headed by the Social Democratic Prime Minister Poul Nyrup Rasmussen formed the government (accompanied by the Centrum Democrats for a brief period of time) between 1993 and 2001. The 2001 election saw power shift back again, and the end of the Social Democrats era as the nation's biggest party. The honour now goes to the Liberals, who have successfully marketed themselves as a broad and inclusive party beyond old lines of conflict, not unlike New Labour's third way. Another important trend in comparison with the other Nordic countries is the high level of influence wielded by the Danish People's Party since 2001 due to its position as support party of the minority government.

No single party has been able to muster a majority on its own in recent Danish political history. The years between the end of the Second World War and 1973 were marked by overall parliamentary stability based on governmental coalitions that were able to muster a majority by itself or with the stable parliamentary support of specific parties outside the government. Adding to the image of a Denmark as a case of consensus politics, however, is a tradition of shifting minority governments and coalitions since the so-called 'land-slide' election of 1973 (Skæveland, 2003). The election of 1973 saw the number of

parties represented in Parliament doubled from 5 to 10, the share of combined votes given to the four 'grand old parties' reduced from 84% to 58.3%, and it introduced a period of highly unstable minority governments and frequent elections. A higher level of parliamentary stability prevailed under the different minority governmental coalitions led by Conservative Prime Minister Poul Schlüter in the years 1982 to 1993. The new government formed (without a new election) in 1993 by the Social Democratic Prime minister Poul Nyrup Rasmussen was the first majority government since 1973, but it lost its majority in the election of 1994. The current government is also a minority government, but musters a majority with the parliamentary support of the Danish People's party. Indeed, Danish political history is in some sense a long list of the power sharing, compromising and corporation typical of consensus politics. However, it remains an open question whether these trademarks of consensus politics are currently as pronounced as they have been.

The Corporatist Tradition

The label of democratic corporatism chosen by Hallin and Mancini actually refers less to the particulars of parliamentary democracy than another aspect of Lijphart's model: the role of interest organizations or in more general terms the mode of interaction between state and civil society. Elaborating on Lijphart, Hallin and Mancini distinguish between individual pluralism in which civil society is seen as composed of individual citizens and organized pluralism in which '(...) social groups are more central to the political process' (2004, p. 53). The former is held to be typical of the liberal model, whereas the latter is proposed as typical of democratic corporatism as well as the pluralist model. As is widely accepted, the dividing line between organized pluralism and fully-fledged corporatism can be seen as a matter of the level of formal or quasi-formal integration of social groups into the political process, and to some extent the level of functional differentiation or 'pillarization' of the political system (Schmitter & Lembruch, 1979).

The more conventional term for such corporatism is not democratic corporatism, but rather 'neo-corporatism', which is used in the political science literature in order to distinguish between the classic corporatism of more or less authoritarian regimes and the forms of corporatism developed in 'open' societies (Schmitter, 1989; Dunleavy & O'Leary, 1987). Neo-corporatist structures of interest mediation however, are not necessarily democratic in themselves. Although the term neo-corporatism was coined in order to avoid the decidedly negative connotations of classical corporatism, the democratic value of neo-corporatism remains an essentially contested issue: Should neo-corporatism be seen as the advancement of 'associative democracy' (Hirst, 1994) in conjunction with liberal democracy or as an altogether undemocratic practice in otherwise democratic societies? Either way, the vital empirical point made by studies of neo-corporatism is that we are dealing with structures of interest mediation

developed on the basis of, or at least in relation to, already existing institutions of liberal democracy – in contrast to the marriage with authoritarian system of rule characteristic of classic corporatism.

In this sense, Denmark clearly has a solid history of corporatism. Drawing mainly on Katzenstein's seminal work on 'Small States in World Markets', Hallin and Mancini offer three general trademarks of the particular form of Northern European corporatism: an ideology of social partnership, centralized and concentrated interest group formation, and voluntary and quasi-formal bargaining and coordination between state bureaucracy, interest groups and political parties (2004, p. 54). Rudimentary forms of corporatism can be found very early in the areas of agricultural policy and industrial policy in the Danish case, but the historical core of corporatism, as is generally the case, is to be found in the area of labour market policy and wage formation. In Denmark, a system of negotiation between organized labour and capital sanctioned by the state has been in place since 1899. Indeed the system has been raised to the status of a particular 'Danish model' considered essential to the Danish political system and culture.

The area of labour market, employment and wage formation is also key to the historical relationship between corporatist structures of bargaining and welfare state formation. The development of the Danish welfare state has to a large extent been based on corporatist bargaining as a means of solving political conflicts forging mutual commitment to the overall project of welfare state formation across political cleavages. Although the area of labour market policy and wage formation takes up a special position, various degrees and forms of corporatist bargaining can be found in most policy areas of the fully developed welfare state: social policy, education, consumer policy, health etc. Obviously, the number and type of interest organizations as well as their level of penetration into the political process vary within these areas, but in general they conform to the overall image of regular and quasi-formal bargaining between relatively strong organizations and the state bureaucracy. As such, the significant involvement of the state in the economy required by welfare state formation has to a large extent be accomplished through structures of corporatist bargaining in the sense noted by Hallin and Mancini.

It is important to note, however, that corporatist bargaining in the Danish case almost never involves the direct participation of politicians. Corporatist bargaining generally takes place through informal meetings, ad hoc groups or formally established commissions that include civil servants, representatives from relevant interest organizations and very often also independent experts. Politicians are, however, more or less absent from these forums. Political involvement in corporatist bargaining takes place rather through the formulation of more or less specific mandates by the ministers of the department in question or more seldom the government as such. On an organizational as well as a discursive level, corporatist bargaining is to a large extent coupled only indirectly to the world of parliamentary politics. Rather, corporatist bargaining is embedded in the 'rational-legal authority' of the administration that, although

not always the spitting image of Weber's bureaucracy, emphasizes expertise, policy solutions and scientific or at least quasi-scientific knowledge. As noted by Hallin and Mancini (2004, p. 55), the presence of a strong rational-legal authority in the Nordic countries can be seen to have effects on the paradigm of media regulation as well as the degree of journalistic professionalization. On a deeper level, however, the embedding of corporatist bargaining in rational-legal authority provides a framework for political communication that is decidedly different, and at least quasi-autonomous, from the world of parliamentary political communication.

Recent Trends in the Political System

Having established the basic features of the Danish political system and its historical background, we now turn to the question of the most important current trends and developments that have led to challenges and changes of these fundamental traits in varying degrees. The first of these trends to be considered is *Europeanization*. Denmark has been a member of the EU since 1973, and following the deepening and widening of European cooperation from the 1980s and onwards, membership of the EU has had undeniable effects in terms of legislative procedures. It is, however, a contested issue whether Europeanization has led to fundamental changes of the Danish political system in terms of institutional change or 'polity change'. On the one hand, membership of the EU has led to an elaborate procedure for the coordination of Danish EU-policy that aims to preserve fundamentals such as parliamentary control and the tradition of consensus policy. On the other hand, parts of the Danish political system has become highly specialised in dealing with the EU, creating a more transnational and more corporatist public administration (Esmark 2008). With respect to the issue of political communication in particular, the most generally voiced proposition is that the level of influence of EU on Danish affairs is not countered sufficiently by attention to EU matters in Danish media. However, recent empirical research has challenged this claim (Ørsten, 2004; Esmark & Ørsten, 2006).

The second important trend is *decentralization*. Since a substantial reform of regional and local governance in 1970, Denmark has had fairly autonomous regional and local authorities with democratic elections, quasi-independent taxation rights and substantial service delivery tasks. However, Denmark is in the middle of a second reform of regional and local governance (called a 'structural reform') that has already changed this image substantially and will continue to do so in the foreseeable future. The most apparent effect of the current structural reform is a considerable reduction of the number of regional authorities (from 13 to 5) and local authorities (from 275 to 98). Moreover, the reform implies a weakening of the regional level of governance and a strengthening of local authorities. In this sense, the structural reform can be seen as a case of further decentralization. According to some observers, however, the

structural reform will also strengthen the level of control and state intervention. Given the fact that the reform is very much a work in progress, it is too early to judge decisively on its effects, but it is the most monumental reform undertaken in recent Danish political history and will clearly have implications for political communication, especially with respect to the role of local media vis-à-vis national media.

Europeanization and decentralization cut across the distinction between parliamentary democracy and corporatist structures of interest mediation. Other trends are more specifically related to one side of this distinction. With respect to parliamentary democracy, the most important is the *policy-orientation* of political participation and identity. In Denmark, as well as in most other advanced liberal democracies, loyalty to political parties based on ideological orientation and concepts of class interest is more or less a thing of the past. The turning point in the Danish case is usually taken to be the 'land-slide' election of 1973, which saw the Progress Party elected to parliament and the first major example of high voter volatility (Andersen, 2002). Recent research has confirmed a relatively high level of volatility (Andersen et al., 2007). Similarly, Denmark has experienced the same drastic reduction of membership numbers in political parties (from 672.000 in 1948 to 202.000 in 1995) and the average percent of voters organized in political parties (from 28,8% in 1948 to 5,5% in 1995) that can be found in many other countries.

Disagreement persists as to how to interpret the underlying dynamics of this transformation, but it seems fairly certain that Denmark has not simply been struck by 'political fatigue'. Voting figures remain very high (see table 1), the level of trust in politicians and overall level of satisfaction with 'democratic performance' has been increasing in contrast to the decreasing tendency found elsewhere (Andersen et al., 2007). Even the level of identification with political parties seems stable across the last 35 years (Borre, 2007).

In the terms of electoral research, the underlying transformation seems to be trend towards 'issue voting', which implies that voters tend to decide on an election-to-election basis, based on evaluations of how well the parties represent the current set of issues (or policy areas) that currently interest them the most (Borre, 2001, 2007). Moreover, it has been suggested that the tendency towards issue-voting has been framed by an over-arching and fairly stable distinction between traditional 'distribution politics' and increasingly important 'value politics' such as immigration, globalization etc. (Andersen, 2007; Borre, 2007). An important implication of issue voting is the potentially more pronounced effects of political campaigns and mediated political communication, although decisive conclusions on the capacity of recent campaigns to sway voters have yet to be offered.

Outside the narrow realm of electoral calculus, other observers have found the same transformation of political orientations and participation from the field of ideology and programmatic politics to specific policy issues and ad hoc political projects. These projects can be rooted in the practical and 'every-day' experience of the individual citizen and change accordingly (Bang, 2005;

Sørensen & Bang 1998), but can also assume the form of identity politics in which the fight for recognition of highly particular rights to specific political groups, as opposed to the broad and inclusive 'classes' of conventional politics. On a more fundamental level, this transformation points towards a re-orientation of political communication from politics and polity to concrete policy, or, in other words, a public sphere increasingly driven by 'policy resonance' and 'output legitimacy' in contrast to the politics of early industrial society (Bang & Esmark, 2007).

With respect to the corporatist structures of interest mediation, the most important development can be subsumed under the notion of a transition from '*government to governance*'. The proposition that a number of advanced liberal democracies is undergoing a transition from government to governance (more or less related to Europeanization and decentralization) has become a topic of intense debate in political and administrative science (for recent overviews, see Sørensen & Torfing, 2007; Bevir, Rhodes & Weller, 2003; Pierre, 2000). For pragmatic reasons, we can clearly not engage governance research and its core questions in much detail. In general, however, the notion of a transition from government to governance simply denotes a multiplication of the forms and instruments of steering and coordination used by state organizations (or public authorities in general) to provide collectively binding decisions and solutions to societal problems. In particular, the transition from government to governance implies that state organizations come to rely less and less on instruments of sovereign rule and legal instructions and increasingly on reflexive and network-based forms of coordination and steering. Such network-based forms of governance can indeed be seen as a modification of neo-corporatist structures of interest and behaviour towards a model in which networks of public and private actors are given increased responsibility not just for policy formulation, but also for service delivery, monitoring and control. Network governance, in this sense, is both more open and more pervasive than conventional corporatism.

The Media System

We now turn our attention to the evolution and current state of the Danish media system. According to Hallin and Mancini the core features of the media system are the national laws regulating press and television, the history and use of different media, the degree of journalistic professionalization and the degree of political parallelism that exists between media and political parties.

With respect to laws and regulation, the parsimonious constitution of 1848 does not specifically mention freedom of the press as is famously known from its American counterpart. In the original text only freedom of speech was addressed, which was later revised in 1953 so as to include the freedom to print (paragraph 77). Obviously, such a provision says nothing about media and journalism as such, but simply ensures that Danish citizens not only have the

right to say what they want, but also to put it in print. Both the freedom of speech and the freedom to print are, however, subject to the control of the courts, meaning that both oral and written opinion must abide to the laws of libel action. A recent and very important example of this was the cartoon crisis in 2006. The largest Danish morning paper, *Jyllands-Posten*, had published a number of cartoon sketches featuring the prophet Mohammed, an action that coursed major political crises of relations between Denmark and large parts of the international community, especially, of course, the international Muslim community. *Jyllands-Posten* specifically argued that the Cartoons were a reaction to religious 'intimidation' of the freedom of speech and print. When Danish Muslims later sued *Jyllands-Posten* for libel, the courts ruled that the publication of the cartoons were indeed within the boundaries of the freedom of speech and print as protected by paragraph 77 of the Constitution.

Regulation and Media Use

It was only after the Second World War that the question of media laws and regulation became a central issue to Danish politicians (Kjær, 2000). Influenced by British and American tradition several books and political debates of the late 1940s and the early 1950s introduced the press as a fourth estate, although in Denmark it is translated via Montesquieu's power division as the fourth 'power' or the fourth branch of government. In Denmark, however, the idea of the press as a fourth power is coupled with the notion that the social and democratic function cannot be left to the market alone, and that the state therefore has a responsibility to secure and support the media's democratic function (Hallin & Mancini, 2004). This of course makes the role and regulation of the press and other media a central political issue.

1926 saw the introduction of Danish state a monopoly on the airways. With the emergence of TV and the creation of Denmark's Radio (DR) in 1959 as a national public service broadcast institution financed by a licence fee broadcast institution both state monopoly and state regulation continued, but not without constant debate and constant changes (Kjær, 2000). This debate, which also included government considerations on press regulation, journalistic education and press subsidies, can perhaps best be understood and summarized in light of the previously stated particular Danish combination of liberal democracy and welfare state democracy. In this view radio and television are regulated more from the standpoint of social democracy and the welfare state, whereas the press is regulated more from a standpoint of a liberal democracy. This point is also made by Hallin & Mancini as a general characteristic of the Corporatist Democratic model (2004, p. 164)

By and large this means that the laws and regulation concerning DR's institutionalized state intervention in the name of the greater public good, but also on the simultaneous need to "insulate public broadcasting from control by the political majority (and) give broadcasting professionals fairly high levels of autonomy", as Hallin and Mancini (2004, p. 165) state. The laws and

regulations regarding the privately owned press on the other hand tend to focus on securing the autonomy of the press by keeping state intervention at a minimum. However, from the sixties and onwards the role of the state in radio and broadcast has been continuously reduced.

Today DR and the more commercial TV 2, introduced in 1988, are headed by government appointed boards, thus securing the arms length principle of keeping the state out of the news rooms. And while DR is still financed by a licence fee, TV 2 is also a commercial business, with planes of going completely commercial in the future. Public service is, however, still very much in focus and both public service institutions sign public service contracts with the state that regulate both the overall content and the overall goals of public service radio and TV broadcasting. The question of more or less government involvement or control over the day to day business of DR, and to a lesser degree TV 2 has, however, not receded completely, but still surfaces from time to time in both media and The Folketing. A recent debate showed a great mistrust by the government of DR coverage of the Iraq war. Rumours and some evidence of political pressure on the board of DR surfaced, but in the end the prime minister, as well as his cabinet, stated that the government of course fully recognized and supported the editorial autonomy of DR and its journalists. Finally, it should be noted that public service is still the number one choice of Danish viewers. Even though a number of commercial channels have entered the Danish market in recent years, DR and TV 2 together had a 73% share of the market in 2005 (table 2).

Table 2. Some Key Figures of the Danish Broadcasting Markets 1995-2005

	1995	2000	2005
Total daily radio listening (%/min.)	79/153	89/192	85/186*
Total daily TV viewing (%/min.)	75/157	71/149	71/152
Public Service Radio audience share (%)	78	65	66
Public Service TV audience share (%)	70	68	73

*Refers to 2004.

Source: Nordicom Media Statistics (2007a). The table shows the share of the population listening to domestic radio channels or viewing domestic TV channels on average day and the market share of public service radio and TV channels among the whole population. TV 2 is listed as a private station in the Nordicom data-base. However, TV 2 is listed here as a public Service station since the station, as DR, is regulated by the public service law and sign public service contracts with the Danish state.

Government regulation of the press has changed less during the same period. From early on state intervention with regard to the press was seen as a democratic problem, echoing the liberal call for a free press. Regulations concerning the press have therefore mostly pertained to journalistic education and indirect press subsidies. The question of indirect subsidies concern tax exemptions and reduced postal rates. In addition, the Finance Institute of the Press provides loans and direct financial support on a special needs basis. In 2006 money were given to two newspapers that were both in financial crisis. The money was given as

support to help the newspapers reorganize in order to survive in an increasingly competitive market. But looking at Denmark in a Nordic perspective, it is clear that the indirect subsidies afforded the Danish press are more liberal in spirit than social democratic. Large direct subsidies to the press have been part of social democratic government policy in both Sweden and Norway since the sixties, and even though the subject always comes up in times of crisis, there is no sign that Danish government will change policy on this issue. On the contrary, owners and journalist retain a very liberal attitude towards state subsidies, namely that they will eventually lead to state control of the press

Two other aspects separate Denmark from the other Nordic countries: the number of daily newspapers and the number of people who read a newspaper on a daily basis. Historically Denmark stands very high when it comes to circulation and readership. Hallin and Mancin quote Sølling (1999) for saying that at the height of the party press Denmark had 100% readership. This, however, has changed dramatically from the fifties when there were 127 dailies in Denmark. Whereas the number of dailies in Finland is 205, in Norway 226 and in Sweden 156, the number of dailies in Denmark is just 30. There is also difference in circulation and readership according to numbers (from 2005) available from Nordicom statistics. In Denmark the largest daily newspaper, *Jyllands-Posten*, has a circulation of 148.654 and a readership of 610.000. In Norway the circulation of the largest newspaper, *Verdens Gang*, is 343.703 and the daily readership is 1.097.000. Finland and Sweden also have more newspapers and higher circulation and readership than Denmark. As in the case in Sweden Denmark has a rather large number of free newspapers that enjoy a large readership. The largest free newspaper is the Danish version of Metro. Metro has a daily circulation of 250.595 and a readership of 661.000.

Table 3. Some Key Figures of the Danish Newspaper Market 1995-2005

	1995	2000	2005
Titles	38	31	30
Daily reading (%)	78 *	75	76 **
Total circulation in thousands	1634	1480	1245

*Refer to 1997. **Refer to 2004.

Source: Nordicom Media Statistics (2007b). The table shows the number daily newspapers produced five days a week or more, the share of the whole population reading a daily newspaper an average day, the total circulation figure of daily newspapers in thousands. For Denmark there are no numbers on the amount of press subsidies in fixed prices nor on the share of daily newspapers without any political or/and ideological reference or affiliation.

Two final central points regarding laws and regulation concern the question of paid political advertising on TV and radio and laws regulation media ownership. Paid political advertising on television is banned by law in Denmark. In a recent adjustment of the law in 2004 the ban was widened to include advertising for unions and religious movements. Turning to the regulation of media ownership, a recent report from the EU Commission offers an overview of the many different models of regulation that exists throughout the 27 member-

ship countries (Commission on the European Communities, 2007). The report shows that very different rules exist in this area throughout countries under the Democratic Corporatist label. Austria, for instance, have clear ownership restrictions on broadcast media, cross ownership restrictions and foreign ownerships restrictions on both print media and TV. Denmark, on the other hand, has only normal competition rules when it comes to broadcast ownership, no ownerships restrictions on print media, foreign or otherwise, and no specific rules for cross ownership.

Journalistic Professionalism

In Hallin & Mancini's view, the question of state law and state intervention in the media is closely linked to the question of journalistic professionalization. Their claim that the level of professionalization in Denmark is high is very much in accordance with the Danish studies on the subject (Kjær, 2000; Esmark, 2007). Professionalization is here largely understood as the organization of journalistic unions or association, and as a question of journalistic education. Hallin and Mancini (2004, p. 170) state that "the Democratic Corporatist countries are characterized by an early and strong development of journalistic professionalism." This is also true of Denmark, where the first association of journalists, *The Association of Copenhagen Journalists*, was founded in 1880. This first association, however, was not only solely for journalists in Copenhagen. It was also politically exclusive, meaning that only journalists from the right-orientated newspapers were allowed to be members. However, from the late 1800s and onwards an increasing number of journalist unions and associations were founded, but it wasn't until 1961 that all the smaller unions and associations merged into The Danish Union of Journalists. Likewise the education of journalist began early in Denmark. The first courses in journalism were offered in 1908, but journalism education did not become formal or large scale until the 1960s and 1970s. In 1970 a School of Journalism was opened that offered a four year education. In the 1990s the professionalization of journalistic education was taken one step further as journalism became a university subject at the Danish Universities of Odense and Roskilde. This early professionalization resulted, in Hallin & Mancini's view, in a relatively high level of journalistic autonomy in the Democratic Corporatist countries. Danish studies on the subject tend to highlight that in many cases there are limits to this autonomy (Schultz, 2006), but that theses limits often have more to do with journalistic routines, deadlines and market competition than with the political pressure or state interference.

Political Parallelism

Another important aspects of the democratic corporatist model is political parallelism i.e. "the degree to which the structure of the media system paralleled that of the party system." (Hallin & Mancini, 2004, p. 27). This parallelism can

be located across a number of dimensions; ownership, affiliations of journalists, readership and media content (p. 156). Denmark and the 'four paper' system of the early twentieth century are seen as the prime example of this. At that time there were four major newspapers, corresponding to the four leading parties, in each of larger Danish city (Søllinge, 1999). However, the creation of the 'omnibus' newspaper – a newspaper for everybody and not just the members of a particular party – along with the raise of the tabloid press that also took place in the early part of the twentieth century, slowly undermined of the position of the party press. This development continued after the Second World War, when many of the more party oriented dailies in Denmark closed down. Studies tend to disagree about the exact time the demise of the party press. Some studies claim it happened in the 1930s (Hjarvard, 1995), others claim that the party press survived well into the 1970s (Søllinge, 1999). However, it seems sensible to claim that the 1970s, the decade that also marked an increased journalistic professionalization in form of a formal School of Journalism, did indeed mark the definitive end of the party press. Indeed newer studies (Hjarvard, 1999; Pedersen et al.; 2000, Ørsten 2005) tend to speak of the mid-seventies or early eighties as the time when a new 'independent political journalism' was born in Denmark – a political journalism that followed professional journalistic norms and ideals instead of party lines or party programs.

Lately, however, some studies, particularly Hjarvard, Kristensen and Ørsten (2004), have claimed that the press in Denmark is perhaps undergoing a process of re-politization. The study analyzes the coverage of the early stages of the Iraq war, and finds evidence to suggest that two of the three large morning papers did indeed seem to cover the war along clear, but opposite, party lines. One paper, *Jyllands-Posten*, seemed to favour the war like the Danish government, another paper, *Politiken*, seemed to oppose it like the opposition in the Danish Folketing. The cartoon crisis in 2006 showed the same papers covering that story in much the same way. However, a study done on the public service TV-stations coverage of the Iraq war in the same period (Ørsten, 2006) showed no signs of re-politization, and no larger empirical study has, as of yet, been done to support the thesis of re-politization. Indeed, if re-politization is taking place it may be mostly on a media-content basis, and only on issues that are already highly politicized by both government and opposition.

A Note on Internet Journalism

Unlike Norway where the Internet is playing an ever more important role, Internet journalism is still a somewhat underdeveloped area. Lately, however, both newspapers and public service broadcasting institutions have begun an aggressive expansion on the net leading to major investments in the development of new web sites and web services and the hiring of journalists to work exclusively on the net. A recent 2006 (Pedersen & Jacobsen) survey of online newspapers showed that, when it came to net readership, the two Danish tabloids were leading the way, with the traditional morning papers coming

in second and the smaller local papers picking up the rear. Daily readership on the Internet is on the increase, but still significantly fewer people read an online paper than a traditional paper edition.

Trends Regarding the Relation between Politics and Media

Having discussed the political system and the media system, we shall now briefly discuss some key aspects of the interplay between politics and media in the Danish case. As we have already noted, we find the distinction between parliamentary politics and corporatist structures of interest mediation to be important to the understanding of this relation. In general, these dimensions of the political system can be said to constitute two fairly distinct modes of political communication rather than simply two potentially conflicting sources to paradigm of media regulation. Thus, we can distinguish between parliamentary political communication and corporatist political communication.

Parliamentary political communication conforms to the conventional notion of the parliament as the institutional focus point of political communication, reflected in journalistic reporting on the strategies, tactics and programmes of parliament members and political parties, conflicts between government and opposition, public opinion, political mobilization directed at parliament etc. Corporatist political communication, on the other hand, is institutionally anchored in the forums of interplay between the bureaucracy and interest organizations, and with the transition from government to governance in 'governance networks', increasingly open to other non-state actors than the largest and most dominant interest organizations. Indeed, the issue-orientation of political communication has contributed to the partial transformation from conventional corporatism to a situation of network governance in which more inclusive – but clearly not strictly representative – networks function as mediated and unmediated 'issue publics' or 'policy publics'. The more general parliamentary public dominated by elite politicians of government and opposition and parliamentary journalists, works according to its own logic, but picks up issue from the series of smaller policy publics dominated by administrators, organizations, 'expert citizens' and specialized journalists. For example, political communication about EU issues can clearly be found in both kind of publics, but is framed differently by the rules of parliamentary political communication and the predominantly rational-technocratic nature of governance networks.

Whereas the distinction between parliamentary communication and the political communication of corporatism and the 'advanced corporatism' of governance networks concerns specific modes of interaction between political actors and the media, another important aspect pertains to the differentiation between politics and media. According to Hallin and Mancini, such differentiation is most apparent in countries within the liberal tradition, but has also become more pronounced in countries under the label of 'democratic corporatism'. A core aspect of this differentiation is the establishment of autonomous journalistic

profession. What may be added to this picture is the fact that media and communication professionals working in the political parties and the administration have also recently become subject of professionalization. Although not a process of professionalization in the strict sense of term used by the sociologists of professions, a set of norms and standards has recently been developed to guide the actions of media and campaign professionals working in the political system. The first set of these guidelines concerned the political parties and were embedded in a more general attempt to strengthen the analytical and communicative capacities of party organizations. More recently, special provisions have been established for 'special advisors' (including spin-doctors) and communication professionals working in the Danish administration, which otherwise adheres to a strict principle of party neutrality (Betrækning 1354, 1443).

As recognized by Hallin and Mancini, journalistic professionalization has co-existed with political parallelism in most of the countries under the label of democratic corporatism – this is indeed one of three peculiar 'co-existences' that define the model. Much in line with this proposition, it remains a distinct possibility that increased differentiation in terms of professionalization is currently taking place in conjunction with increased political parallelism. Thus, as noted above, researchers have recently proposed that Danish media is undergoing a process of re-politization. Such re-politization does not take the shape of the formally organized political parallelism of the party press, but rather the incorporation of a distinct political profile in the editorial line of the print press. Thus, the political profile is seen to overflow the boundaries of editorials and opinion pages and frame the reporting of the conventional news reporting. To many observers, the Cartoon crisis was a decisive event in this respect. However, as noted above, empirical content analyzes remain inconclusive with respect to the level of re-politization.

Conclusion

How well does Hallin and Mancini's analysis of Denmark as typical case of democratic corporatism fare, then? As stated, we find little reason to contest the fundamentals of their analysis, nor the usefulness of Hallin and Mancini's highly valuable framework. In the spirit of productive criticism, however, we shall conclude by briefly offering some remarks that call for slight revisions of the Danish case and may even give reason to consider further elaboration of the general framework of analysis provided by Hallin and Mancini.

Our first remark concerns the emphasis on corporatist structures of interest mediation suggested by the notion of democratic corporatism. As stated, Hallin and Mancini do recognize the influence of liberalism in the countries included in this group, but nonetheless we suggest that the framework tends to downplay the more constitutive duality between liberalism and welfare state democracy as paradigms of political communication. Put differently, countries under the heading of democratic corporatism may be more liberal than suggested by this

label and the contrast to a purely liberal model. Indeed, one might suggest that Denmark is becoming increasingly liberal, although this development is subject to important differences between types of media as clearly noted by Hallin and Mancini. Conversely, one might also consider whether countries grouped under the liberal model are completely purged of welfare state democracy and corporatism. At least the U.S., the quintessential representative of the liberal tradition, did go through a 'New Deal' (although it might have been 'rolled back') and gave rise to some of the earliest discussions about agency capture, iron triangles and segmentation of the political system that display more than a little resemblance to the European experience with neo-corporatism.

Secondly, the notion of 'democratic corporatism' is potentially at odds with the conventional debate on neo-corporatism. In general, Hallin and Mancini offer very little explanation as to the democratic nature of corporatism, which begs the question of whether the notion of democratic corporatism is indeed intended to designate structures of interest mediation substantially different from, and most importantly more democratic, than the neo-corporatist structures, which is generally taken to be democratically ambiguous at best. Hallin and Mancini rely mainly on Katzenstein's analysis of corporatism as the key trademark in the Nordic countries. Katzenstein's analysis is, however, largely an argument about corporatism as the main explanation for the relative success of the Nordic countries in an increasingly global world economy, which obviously paints a very positive picture of corporatism focused on economic performance. Contrasting this image with more critical discussions as well as more recent analyzes would, however, clarify the concept of democratic corporatism.

Finally, we would welcome a discussion on the extent to which the three models can be conceived as more general models of the interplay between politics and media. After all, Hallin and Mancini's have labelled their work a comparison of *media* systems. Although the book does include the political system, it does so mainly as context for the media system, or more specifically as a paradigm of media regulation. Indeed, Hallin and Mancini call the 'political system variables' the 'independent variables' of their analysis (2004, p. 47). This, however, raises questions about the extension of the three models. Should they be perceived rigidly as paradigms of media regulation, referring to the way politics influence the media, or can they be conceived more broadly as models of different political communication cultures that pertain to the dynamic interplay between politics and media on different levels of analysis? Currently, Hallin and Mancini seem to suggest the former, but it would be highly interesting to discuss the possible application of the models in the latter sense.

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Chapter 3

Media and Politics in Finland

Tom Moring*

Particularities of the Finnish Political System

If there has ever been a ‘Scandinavian party system’ or a ‘Nordic model’ (Berglund & Lindström, 1978; Petersson, 1994), Finland has always been among the odd cases. Yes, there is a shared history under Swedish rule from the early 2nd millennium until 1807, during which time Finland was ruled by a Swedish-speaking elite. During the ensuing Russian rule, until independence in 1917, the Swedish constitution remained in force in Finland. And, yes, the Finnish party system at some point resembled the five-party structure found in Sweden, Denmark and Norway. In the Finnish case we could find a relatively moderate conservative party on the right, a small liberal party, a large centrist party, a (at times splintered) social-democratic party, and a relatively large communist movement, organized as a popular front, with a core party leaning towards Moscow. Furthermore, during the 1970s a populist party appeared, though in Finland it mainly collected votes from frustrated town-settlers with agrarian background and soon fell back in size. And also in Finland a green party emerged, starting from grass-root movements in the 1970s and formally becoming a party only in the latter part of the 1980s. And, indeed, Finland is usually included in comparative studies on Scandinavian welfare state model(s), although Finns prefer to talk about Nordic, not Scandinavian, comparisons (Kosonen 1993; Kautto 2001).

These similarities are, however, followed by many more ‘buts’. Whereas the constitution in Sweden was reformed in an emerging liberal tradition, the old Swedish constitution that was characterized by enlightened despotism modelled by the Swedish ‘enlightened monarch’ Gustav III, wintered in Finland (Stenius & Turunen, 1995). This constitution formed the basis for a new Finnish constitution that gave the President considerable political power that was dismantled only in a constitutional reform in the year 2000. The position of the Swedish language started to gradually retreat in the latter parts of the 19th century, when under the Russian rule also part of the Swedish-speaking elite sided with the Fennoman movement in nationalistic efforts to form a Finnish

unitary state. Swedish has since maintained its position as an official language in Finland, and in absolute numbers the Swedish speakers have not decreased substantially, but the Swedish population has been gradually marginalized to a minority position (5.5% in 2005, see Liebkind et al., 2007). Finns speak a Finno-Ugric language that is quite remote from the Scandinavian varieties spoken in Sweden, Denmark, and Norway, and most Finns prefer to communicate with their neighbour nationals in English.

The party system in Finland was from the start rooted in language parties and in parties with different strategies of resistance towards Russian rule (Huxley, 1990). These cleavages left traces in the political system, as did the civil war in 1918. The Liberal People's Party has been totally marginalized from the late 1970s onwards. Whilst the Social Democratic Party (SDP) has been among the biggest political parties during the entire Finnish independence, the most frequent government coalitions have evolved around the Centre Party (Jansson, 1992). This has had consequences also for the construction of the Finnish welfare state model, which was not a construction of the united left but has been forming under balanced influence from the various parties in coalition governments and with a strong influence from corporatist interests.

Finland has no tradition of bloc-politics with alternating dominance of either the left or the right. On the contrary, governments have frequently been formed over the left-right border. Normally, two of the three biggest parties – the Centre Party with rural roots, the today moderately right wing National Coalition Party, and the Social Democratic Party – have formed the core of a government bolstered with smaller parties (among which the Swedish People's Party has most frequently been included). The third big party has been the leading opposition party. This has had a moderating influence on political confrontations in Finland, as each of the three big parties is aware of the fact that its ability to cooperate with any of the two other is decisive for its possibilities in government formation.

The constitutional role of the President in Finnish politics has, until recent years, been strong. In international comparisons, Finland has often been grouped in the same category as France, as a *semi-presidential* system (Noussiainen, 1991, p. 214). The President was the leader of Finnish foreign policy and the commander-in-chief. The President also had considerable political power in domestic politics. This included a decisive role in formation of governments: a key position in the government formation process, including the power to appoint a government without advance consent of the parliament. The President also had the right to dissolve the legislature and order new elections, suspend legislation by vetoing laws and a decisive role in appointment of the highest administration.

A constitutional change in 2000 considerably reduced the powers of the Finnish President. Since then the influence of elections on government formation has gained importance, as (according to an agreement between the parties), the biggest party now has the initiative to after an election start negotiations for a new government. The President has to appoint a Prime Minister chosen by the

parliament and the government members of the Prime Minister's choice. Thus, with respect to election results, the new constitution has added predictability to Finnish government formation, whereas in earlier times Finnish government formation was considered to be particularly unpredictable because of the influence of the President (Luebbert, 1986). Also in other fields, such as foreign policy, the powers of the President have been reduced. Foreign policy has become shared responsibility between the President and the government. The government, under the Prime Minister, has responsibility for Finnish EU affairs.

The Election and Party System

In addition to local elections and parliamentary elections every fourth year and EU parliamentary elections every fifth year, there are also presidential elections every sixth year. The Finnish Parliament is unicameral and comprised of 200 members, elected from 15 electoral districts. In the presidential elections and in the elections for the EU Parliament the entire country forms one electoral district.

As noted above, Finland has a multi-party system. The Finnish election system deviates from the election systems in many other European states particularly in the individualized character of the voting system. Votes are cast in direct proportional elections, where electors always cast their vote for individual candidates. In parliamentary elections, the country is divided into 15 such districts. In local elections, each of Finland's more than 400 towns and municipalities form a separate district. In EU-elections the entire country forms one district.

The proportional calculation system in Finland is based on a formula named after the Belgian mathematician Victor d'Hondt. The ranking order of candidates in a party is determined by the number of personal votes given to the candidates. The candidates are given a comparative index. The first candidate of each party has as his or her comparative index the number of votes given to this party, the second candidate has half of the votes cast, the third candidate will have a third of the votes cast, and the fourth candidate will have a fourth of the votes cast etc. (Election Act, 1998).

Compared to other calculation systems for proportional voting, this system gives a slight advantage to bigger parties. The Finnish election system, however, allows parties to form electoral alliances. Such alliances are frequently formed either as technical alliances – in order to increase the joint impact of the votes for the parties in the alliance; or – in districts where a party's own support is too small to achieve even one place – in order to secure the impact of votes for the party by an alliance with a nearby party. Where electoral alliances are formed in parliamentary elections, this tends to affect the campaign particularly of a smaller party in alliance with a bigger party. To win a place in the parliament, the smaller party tends to concentrate its campaign efforts around one main candidate in the hope that this candidate will get more personal votes than

the competing candidates of the bigger party in the alliance. By such methods, small parties have from time to time been known to successfully counter the effect of the d'Hondtian system.

The proportional election system in Finland is open (as opposed to closed 'list voting'), meaning that the ranking order of a candidate representing a party or an electoral alliance is directly determined by the number of votes cast for that candidate. The total amount of seats a party gets in parliament is the cumulative amount of seats that the party wins in each electoral district. Whereas there is no formal threshold requirement for a party to gain seats in the parliament (unlike, for example, Sweden and Denmark), in Finland the factual threshold in electoral districts with only few seats may be rather high.

In addition to bigger parties, in parliamentary and local elections, parties with a strong regional base are relatively favoured by this system. This may be seen in the outcome of the 2007 parliamentary election. The small but regionally concentrated Swedish People's Party achieved more seats than the Christian Democrats, irrespective of the slightly higher amount of votes cast for the latter party.

The Finnish election system has brought certain features to election campaigns that are not – at least to the same extent – characteristic of systems that apply list voting. In Finland the campaign of the individual candidate is an important feature of all elections, including parliamentary elections and local elections. Also candidates within the same party are in many cases competitors for seats within the same electoral district.

In research conducted in the 1990s, the candidates were found to invest ca. three times more than the parties in the campaign (Pesonen et al. 1993, p. 298; Venho 1999, p. 25). According to estimates presented by Borg and Moring (2005, p. 64) in recent elections, the candidates' share of the total campaign costs have further increased. In the parliamentary election in 2003, the candidates were estimated to have carried ca. 75 percent of the campaign costs. Candidates receive donations, and there are certain rules binding successful candidates regarding public accountancy of donations. But candidates also put personal resources into their campaigns. In this respect, there are no limitations. While the election budgets of the big parties are not significantly different (see Borg and Moring, 2005, p. 57), the candidates from different parties have been found to invest rather unevenly in the campaigns. The candidates from the bigger bourgeois parties have been found to use more financial resources for their campaigns compared to candidates from parties at the left or smaller parties (Broberg, 2004; Borg and Moring 2005, pp. 61-64).

Whilst the core of the political system evolves around three big parties, the Finnish party system is relatively splintered. Of the 11 registered parties¹, eight gained seats in the 2007 parliamentary elections (see table 1).

With the constitutional reform in 2000 an element of 'Prime Minister Elections' has entered the Finnish system. This has to some extent shifted the meaning of the 'personality factor' in parliamentary elections. Irrespective of the individualized election system in Finland, in parliamentary elections almost

Table 1. Results of the Finnish Parliamentary Elections (%) and Governments 1995-2005

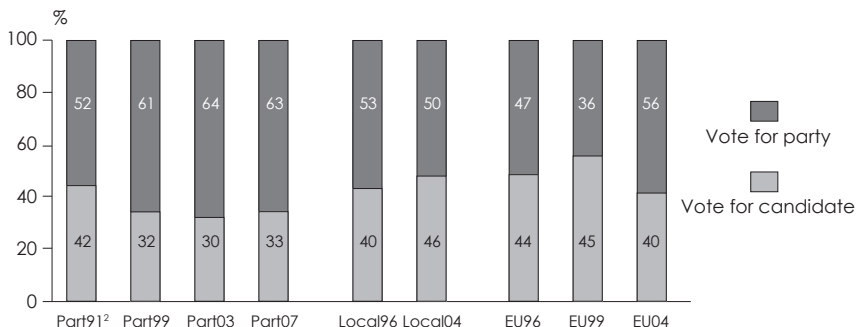
	1995	1999	2003	2007
Centre Party of Finland (KESK)	19.8	22.4	24.7	23.1 (51)
National Coalition Party (KOK)	17.9	21.0	18.6	22.3 (50)
The Finnish Social Democratic Party (SDP)	28.3	22.9	24.5	21.4 (45)
Left-Wing Alliance (LEFT)	11.2	10.9	9.9	8.8 (17)
Green League (GREENS)	6.5	7.3	8.0	8.5 (15)
Swedish People's Party in Finland (RKP)	5.1	5.1	4.6	4.6 (9)
Christian Democrats in Finland (KD)	3.0	4.2	5.3	4.9 (7)
True Finns (PS)	1.3	1.0	1.6	4.1 (5)
Others	6.9	5.2	2.8	2.3 (0)
Turnout*	71.9	68.3	69.7	67.9
Parties in government	SDP+KOK+ RKP+LEFT+ GREENS	SDP+KOK+ RKP+LEFT + GREENS**	KESK+SDP RKP+	KESK+KOK+ RKP+GREENS

*Percent of eligible voters living in Finland. ** The Greens left the government in May 2002.

Source: Statistics Finland, Statistics on different elections (Retrieved August 12, 2007, from http://www.stat.fi/tk/he/vaalit/index_en.html); The web site of the Finnish government (Retrieved August 12, 2007, from <http://www.valtionuuvosto.fi/tietoa-valtionuuvostosta/hallitukset/en.jsp>). The number of seats in 2007 are in brackets. Party abbreviations are according to the abbreviations used by Statistics Finland.

two out of three voters first select party and then a candidate from the party list (somewhat less in local and EU elections). The strengthened role of the Prime Minister in Finnish political life and the clearer role of elections in the choice of Prime Minister has shifted the personality factor towards the party leaders of the three big parties, at the same time giving the 'party factor' more prominence in electoral districts where voters cannot cast their vote directly for the presumptive Prime Minister of their choice. The more direct role of the election results with respect to the selection of Prime Minister has, however, at least not yet brought a shift in balance of votes in favour of the three big parties that are competing for this 'pole position' in Finnish politics.

Figure 1. Voting for Candidate versus Voting for Party in Finnish Elections (% of voters)



Source: Various election surveys conducted by Gallup Finland³.

Contrary to popular beliefs, the interest for politics in Finland has not decreased. Longitudinal analysis based on different studies (Grönlund et al., 2005a) show that roughly half of the population expressed an interest in politics in 2003, the same proportion as in 1966. The composition of the interested part of the population has, however, changed. More women have become interested in politics. Generally, somewhat more men than women express an interest in politics, but in 2003 there were more interested women than men in the youngest age bracket (18-24). The intensity of interest has shifted somewhat from left to right. In 1978 persons with left-wing preferences signalled a clearly higher intensity than persons at the right, in 2003 this balance had shifted and the interest was somewhat more intensive among persons at the right, whilst consistently persons in the political centre have expressed less interest in politics. (Grönlund et al., 2005a, pp. 89-90, 92)

This may indicate that a development along the 'spiral of silence'-hypothesis (Noelle Neumann, 1984) would have affected Finnish politics during the last decade. With the downfall of communism and as globalization of the economy has strengthened a market adjustment-driven discourse, the right has gained initiative. As a consequence, people with radical left wing sympathies may have become more insecure and passive, whereas people on the right have become more convinced and active in their views. This change has, however, at least not yet had great effects on the distribution of votes between the major Finnish parties.

Detachment of party politics is, however, visible in many ways. The amount of people with a party affiliation has decreased from 61% (1991) to 47% (2003), and party membership has decreased from a total of 609,000 (1980) to 362,000 (2004).⁴ In spite of that, the party member share of voters is higher in Finland (9.7% in 1998) than in Norway (7.3), Sweden (5.5) or Denmark (5.1). (Grönlund et al., 2005a; Mair & van Biezen, 2001).

Voting turnouts have traditionally been somewhat lower in Finland than in its Scandinavian neighbours. Irrespective of the stability in interest for politics, and the relatively high share of party membership, turnout has also decreased faster in Finland than in other Nordic countries. Grönlund et al. (2005b, pp. 145-146) explain this development with different developments in two features behind the voting decision, the 'sense of duty' and the 'interest'. Whilst the level of interest in politics has remained more or less unchanged, voting as a sense of duty has abated. In the years of higher voting turnout, also people uninterested in politics participated, whereas they today more frequently stay at home.

A consequence of this change is that the social cleavage in voting behaviour has grown. People from higher strata and better educated people continue to vote whereas people from lower strata and less educated people more often than before tend to stay home. The group that never attends an election is, however, smaller than the group that abstains every now and then. A consequence of this type of a development is that election results in Finland – in comparison with other states – are relatively more affected by the parties'

capability to mobilize their voters than by the floating voters that move from one party to another.

This may be one explanation to the astonishing stability in Finnish elections (table 2); whilst the turnout in parliamentary elections has decreased from 81% (1983) to 67.9% (2007), the three big parties have maintained their cumulative share of the votes in parliamentary elections within a 3 percent-point bracket (64.8-67.8), and also the variance in the results of individual parties has been very low.

Table 2. Support for the Three Biggest Parties in Finland and Voting Turnout 1983-2007 (%)

	NCP	CP	SDP	3 big tot.	Turnout
Parliamentary election 83	22.1	17.6	26.7	66.4	81.0
Parliamentary election 87	23.1	17.6	24.1	64.8	76.4
Parliamentary election 91	19.3	24.8	22.1	66.2	72.1
Parliamentary election 95	17.9	19.9	28.3	66.1	71.8
Parliamentary election 99	21.0	22.4	22.9	66.3	68.3
Parliamentary election 03	18.6	24.7	24.5	67.8	69.7
Parliamentary election 07	22.3	23.1	21.4	66.8	67.9

Source: Statistics Finland, Tables on the subject area of: Parliamentary elections – Time series (Retrieved August 12, 2007, from http://pxweb2.stat.fi/database/StatFin/vaa/evaa/Eduskuntavaalit%20-%20aikasarjat/Eduskuntavaalit%20-%20aikasarjat_en.asp)

The relatively low volatility in Finnish party support is confirmed by survey research (Paloheimo & Sundberg, 2005). Pair-wise analyzes of parliamentary elections show that the share of moving voters has remained relatively stable (24% in 1974; 26% in 2003), whereas the share of persons abstaining has grown from 20% to 30 %, and the share of party-loyal voters has fallen from 56% to 44% in the same time interval. In other words: elections in Finland are mainly about activating the parties' own traditional voters, not so much about conquering support from other parties.

An exception from this rule is the presidential elections, particularly their second round.⁵ In these elections the voters are – for obvious reasons – more frequently shifting party preferences. Also participation in these elections has fallen from having been over 80% percent since direct presidential elections were introduced in 1988, to 77.2% in 2006. But from the late 1980s onwards the turnout has remained about 10 percent-points higher than in nearby parliamentary elections. The high level of participation is explained by individualization of politics, expectations towards political leadership and the out-dated Finnish history of semi-presidential rule (Paloheimo, 2007, p. 224). A further explanation could be an often more clearly politicised duel between presidential candidates, compared to parliamentary elections with their consensual constraints because of the 'government ability' factor mentioned above.

The Media System and Media/Party Parallelism

Finns are heavy media users. The daily consumption in Finland has risen rapidly; average media use per day has doubled since the early 1990s, and the cumulative use of media during a day has risen to 9 hours and 20 minutes (Intermediatutkimus, 2004).⁶ Finns spend most time with television (207 minutes per day) and radio (169 minutes per day). Other media come clearly behind (newspapers 48 minutes, Internet and periodicals 33 minutes each, books 29 minutes, other media 41 minutes). As in other Nordic states, television use is, however, relatively moderate and radio- and newspaper use is relatively high.

According to Eurostat statistics regular internet-use among Finns is clearly above the EU average, but lower than in Denmark and Sweden. Gender differences are small in Finland, but the differences between most frequent users (students) and most infrequent users (the unemployed) is higher than in the two other Nordic countries (table 3).

Table 3. Regular Internet Use in the Nordic Countries and in EU/25 According in 2005 (%)

	Total	Males	Females	Students	Unemployed
EU/25 average	43	49	38	79	32
Finland	62	64	60	79	37
Denmark	73	75	71	95	68
Sweden	76	80	72	95	80

Source: Offens, 2006. Note, that France, Ireland and Malta were not included in the EU/25 average figure.

To its outer structure, the Finnish media system resembles the systems in Norway and Sweden. These countries are among the leading newspaper-consuming countries in the world. The press is also regionally dispersed; in Finland 53 different newspapers (published 4-7 days a week). In circulation Japan is a world leader, with 634 daily copies per 1,000 inhabitants. Norway comes second (626 copies), Finland third (518 copies), and Sweden fourth (481 copies) – well before Denmark (294 copies) and Iceland (268 copies) (World Press Trends, 2006). Denmark and Iceland are, however, reading cultures; the difference is partly explained by the great share of free sheets distributed in these two countries. Free sheets are developing in Finland as well, but the leading national newspaper, *Helsingin Sanomat*, has so far been able to buy off competing free sheets in the most lucrative region.

Also the structure of electronic media follows the same pattern as in the other Nordic countries. Its history is in license-financed public service broadcasting, inspired by the BBC model, and fostered in cooperation with other European broadcasters. Until the mid-1980s, the Finnish Broadcasting Company maintained a monopoly in radio broadcasting. This was deregulated and commercial competition emerged in 1985, approximately at the same time when the Scandinavian neighbours deregulated their radio monopolies.

Table 4. Some Key Figures of the Finnish Broadcasting Markets 1995-2005

	1995	2000	2005
Total daily radio listening (%/min.)	85/219	81/201	79/197
Total daily TV viewing (%/min.)	71/140	77/168	76/169
Public Service Radio audience share (%)	69	60	51
Public Service TV audience share (%)	47	42	44

Source: Nordicom. Jämförande nordisk mediastatistik (Retrieved August 12, 2007, from http://www.nordicom.gu.se/?portal=mt&main=nord_stats_translate.php&me=1). The table shows the share of the population listening to domestic radio channels or viewing domestic TV channels an average day and the market share of public service radio and TV channels among the whole population (Age 9+).

Different from the Scandinavian neighbours, but similar to Iceland, Finland however developed its television system in the 1950s partly financed with advertising. The Finnish model developed to a mixed model combining public and commercial rationales within a single television system that to certain features resembled the system that developed in UK (Jääsaari, 2007, p. 5). In the Finnish case – differently from Iceland – the ads were not broadcast by the Finnish Broadcasting Company (Yle) as part of its own programming, but the private broadcaster (MTV) included the programmes in its own broadcasts. And different from UK, the private broadcaster operated on Yle's channels and license. For this, MTV paid a tribute to Yle. This duopoly remained intact until the early 1990s, when the private broadcaster (MTV3) was allowed to establish a channel of its own and was granted an independent license to broadcast (1993). At the same time, the rights and duties of Yle were laid down in a separate law (Salokangas, 1996, pp. 221-222). Soon after that a second commercial television channel (Nelonen) was started by the newspaper publisher Sanoma Oy (owner of Helsingin Sanomat).

Just before the shift of the millennium, the daily news scene in Finland was dominated by four groupings: The Sanoma group (SanomaWSOY) with a liberal background (dominated by one group of owners, the Erkkö family) owned Helsingin Sanomat, Nelonen and the tabloid Ilta-Sanomat; Alma Media (owned by private Finnish capital) together with Bonnier from Sweden owned MTV3, the national radio network Radio Nova, some strong regional newspapers with conservative background and the tabloid Iltalehti; the considerably smaller Välsuomen Media with a group of regional newspapers that had remained outside Alma Media, often with a Centre Party background; and the publicly owned Yle with two national television channels and four national radio networks.

This structure changed when Bonnier (together with Swedish Proventus) took over the entire broadcasting part of Alma Media in a defensive move towards a bid from Norwegian Schibstedt in 2005. Soon after that SanomaWSOY's unit for electronic media, SWelcom, received license for radio broadcasting. With digital broadcasting entering the scene, all groupings that were active in television broadcasting (Yle, MTV3, the Sanoma group) invested in new niche-services on the digital broadcasting network. Also Internet outlets have been added to

the pallet, though the use of newspapers and newspaper-maintained services on Internet has so far developed much more slowly in Finland than in Norway (Verdens Gang, Dagbladet) or Sweden (Aftonbladet). Financially, today, the newspaper business is still the leading media business in Finland with a bigger share of the advertisement market than the electronic media. All media (including Yle) are, however, looking towards expansion on broadband in the future.

Originally, the newspapers were predominantly formed during the late 19th and early 20th century, as part of a system with strong press-party parallelism with often nationalist and language policy (later political) orientations (Tommila & Salokangas, 2000, pp. 38-55). Newspapers with a leading market position gradually cut their ties to the parties. But until the mid-1980s, newspapers that were second in the market and many regional market leaders maintained their political affiliations. This structure was downplayed in the late 20th century and today the party press is almost totally marginalized. (Tommila & Salokangas, 2000, p. 264) Approximately at the same time, political parallelism decreased also among journalists in broadcasting. Earlier, good relations to politicians and even party membership were considered beneficial to political journalism within Yle⁷, after this shift journalists started to emphasize critical distance and independence in their relations to the political elite (Aula, 1991, pp. 204-205).

In Finland remains no parallel to A-Pressen in Norway (formerly also in Sweden, until its bankruptcy in 1990), with its social democratic-labour links; and the press subsidy system that exists in Finland has played a secondary role in the market. Traditional links between parties and their former affiliate newspapers may, however, still be traced in Finland – particularly in situations where a party's vital interests are endangered, and with respect to regional interests (particularly the former Centre Party press) (Holmberg, 2004, pp. 235-237). Also, the Swedish language press in Finland is still relatively big, with 9 dailies on a population of less than 300,000 people. This part of the press maintains a keen – though unofficial and often critical – link to Swedish institutions in Finland, including the Swedish People's Party (Moring & Husband, 2007).

Table 5 shows the number of daily newspapers produced five days a week or more, the share of the whole population reading a daily newspaper an average day and the total circulation figure of daily newspapers in thousands.

To Finnish media history also belongs a certain consideration of the country's geopolitical position (to be further addressed in the next section). This allegedly led to 'Finlandization' of Finnish media (Salminen, 1999). The term refers to favourable and uncritical news coverage of the Soviet Union as part of a support of 'national interests', expressed by the state leadership. Also institutional links to Moscow-lead organizations remained or were developed. When the international organization for broadcasting (Organization Internationale de Radiodiffusion et de Télévision, OIRT) was split after the second world war, Yle joined the new Western organization (European Broadcasting Union, EBU) but also maintained its relations to the (now East-European dominated) OIRT until its merger with EBU in 1993. Yle's role, as Finland's in international politics, has been pictured as one of a bridge-builder in the time of 'détente' (Salokangas, 1996, pp. 158-161).

Table 5. Some Key Figures of the Finnish Newspaper Market 1995-2005^a

	1995	2000	2005
Titles	56	55	53
Daily reading (%)	87 *	86	81
Total circulation in thousands	2370	2304	2240
Press Subsidies (in M€, no index adjustment)**	7.6/ 5.9	5.0 / 7.6	5.9 / 7.6

*Refer to 1996.

** Selective / Parliamentary support. In Finland the press subsidies have been divided into selective support (shared out to non-profitable newspapers that are usually number two newspapers in the market, and parliamentary support (given to the parties in support of party press according to the party's relative strength in the parliament). The parliamentary support includes support to the authorities in the Åland Islands for information activities (€37,800 in 200; €38,800 in 2005). In 1995, still, a separate news agency support was paid (€1M), and a price reduction in distribution costs was covered by a separate subsidy to the state post distribution system (€8.2M). These supports were ended in 1996.

Source: Nordicom. Jämförande nordisk mediestatistik (Retrieved August 12, 2007, from http://www.nordicom.gu.se/?portal=mt&main=nord_stats_translate.php&me=1); Finnish Mass Media 2002. Culture and the Media 2002:3. Helsinki: Statistics Finland; and Ministry of Transport and Communication (personal communication with Nina Pääkkönen 20.7.2007).

In the aftermath of the Second World War, the Union of Journalists in Finland (UJF) together with other national unions in Western Europe left the International Union of Journalists (IOJ). After some time, UJF joined the (Western) International Federation of Journalists (IFJ). But unlike the other Nordic journalist unions, UJF developed relations also to the (now Eastern) International Organization of Journalists from 1976 to 1991, with associate member status between 1981 and 1991 (Laine, 2006). Also the generational leftist radicalism among journalists – which was not unknown in other Nordic countries either – took a particular path in Finland as it partly was close to the communist movement with its strong links to Moscow.

The Finnish Business and Policy Forum (EVA) has followed the opinion climate in Finland since the 1980s through repeated surveys. A majority of Finns express disappointment in the political system – a lack of possibility to participate; that the political process lacks responsiveness; that the parties have drifted away from the life and problems of ordinary people. But most people, (57% in 2002), accept the power of political parties in Finland to be at an appropriate level, whereas a smaller part (39%) think the parties have too much power. A similar comparison shows that a majority of people (53% in 2002) consider that media has too much power; whereas almost as many (45%) think that the power of the media is appropriate. The influence of journalists on public opinion is considered to be too high by a slight majority of Finns, but this group has shrunk rather than grown since the early 1990s (59% in 1990, 51% in 2002). And whilst almost all respondents found that media are sensational at the cost of information (82% in 2002), an even bigger share of the respondents (87%) found the media to be a fast and effective means of communication (Haikonen & Kiljunen, 2003).

Against this background, it may not be a surprise that Finland has not become as medialized as some other states in Europe appear to have become (Moring,

2006a). There are several reasons to this. Some prerequisites of medialization related to the political system (Asp, 1990) have been poorly developed. The space of influence of the media that emerges as part of a more volatile electorate has, as we have seen, developed less in Finland than in some other similar states. The media system has remained structurally rather traditional. The tabloids sold by single copy have grown, but the regionally anchored subscribed-to press has maintained its grip of the newspaper readers. Public service radio and television maintain a strong position in the media field. The commercial television has not introduced a radically different news agenda, in spite of its growing role since the early 1990s.

As in other European countries, the journalists have developed a professionalized position that is quite independent of political parties or other similar ties. But Finnish journalism has predominantly remained serious in tone. Politicians have, to some extent, become more proactive in their media relations, but the 'spin doctors' that have appeared in other political systems are still absent in Finnish politics and political journalists generally have direct access to the political leaders, including the Prime Minister. The only political personae that maintains a more distanced role is, still, the President.

It is true that politicians in Finland have accused Finnish journalism of a tendency towards 'infocracy' or compared journalists to 'lemmings'.⁹ But, by comparison, Finnish politicians have generally survived critical and intimate surveillance from the media remarkably well. Recent examples are the downfall of Prime Minister Anneli Jäätteenmäki chair of the Centre Party and the winner of the parliamentary election in 2003. She was forced out of office after a heated public debate that was strongly driven by one of the Finnish tabloids (*Iltasanomat*) and extensively reported by all Finnish news media. She, however, had to resign only when it became apparent that she had lied to the Parliament. The current Prime Minister, Matti Vanhanen, has politically survived several periods of close tabloid media surveillance of his private affairs after his divorce, including intimate reporting of his love affairs.

Regulation of the Media in Election Campaigns

In comparison to most other European countries (and certainly all other Nordic countries except for Iceland) the Finnish election campaigns are surrounded by very little regulation. In combination with the personalized character of the voting system, this would be expected to invite American style politics. The relatively relaxed regulative features are, however, countered by the consensual tradition of the Finnish multi-party system rooted in the above-mentioned orientation towards external adaptation to a geopolitically sensitive position, and the internal requirement for a capability to cooperate between the big parties.

Regulations of the public service broadcaster's political programmes during election campaigns were lifted in the early 1990s (Moring & Himmelstein, 1993). Party presentations and debates are produced by professional journalists.

The journalists are tied to certain principles of fairness. These principles are, however, of a self-regulatory character decided by the broadcasters themselves according to what they define as “programming” or “journalistic” principles.¹⁰ With the deregulation of television, rules regarding the appearance of politicians on television during the election campaign also became more relaxed. Politicians frequently appear in talk shows and entertainment programmes also during the campaign, which had earlier been prohibited (Moring & Himmelstein, 1993; Rappe, 2004, pp. 176-182).

Contrary to many other European states, in Finland parties get no free advertising time on public or private television stations. Since 1991 however, parties can use paid political advertising on the commercial channels. In this respect, the Finnish system deviates dramatically from other Nordic states (except for Iceland) and many other states in Western Europe, though in recent years advertising rules have been circumvented for example in Norway and Sweden. Political advertising is not constrained by spending limits, time limits, or content limits. According to the Act on the Disclosure of Election Financing (414/2000), elected members and deputy members of the parliament, the European parliament and the council (in municipal elections), as well as parties which have nominated candidates in presidential elections are required to submit a notification of the financing of their election campaign. The value of each contribution and the name of the donor shall be stated separately, if the value is at least 1700 euro in parliamentary and municipal elections, and 3400 euro in Presidential and European elections. Party finances are followed up as part of a public auditing process. Parties receive party subsidy and support for election campaigns in accordance with the number of seats in Parliament.¹¹ The use of the subsidy is supervised by the Ministry of Justice.

The only content limits applied, in particular to paid political television advertising, are set voluntarily by the biggest commercial television station (MTV3). The station does not allow personal attack ads or mixed product/political ads. As MTV3 is the market leader on the commercial side, the standards set by this channel have consequences beyond the channel itself. Parties and candidates normally produce their spots to be broadcasted on this channel, and use the same spots on other channels (Moring, 2006b).

Recent Developments

We have found that the Finnish political development does not, at least uniformly, match developments that are expected in theories of medialization. It is also not easy to uniformly fit in Finland in models comparing media systems. In the light of the three models of media and politics, presented elsewhere in this volume (see chapter one), Finland would indeed historically have been closest to the ‘Democratic-Corporatist Model’, developed in Northern and Central Europe (Hallin & Mancini, 2004, p. 143 ff.). Finland meets some of the ‘three coexistences’ characterizing this model, such as strong mass-circulation

commercial media and media tied to political and civil groups, political parallelism and journalistic professionalism, and the coexistence of liberal traditions of media freedom and strong state intervention in the media which are seen – also – as a social institution (Hallin & Mancini, pp. 144-145 and 195-196). The media system has been – and still is – characterized by a strong privately owned printed press and a presence of public service media. There politics-media parallelism was in earlier years been strong, although different in character from similar parallelisms in many other North European states.

The Finnish media system does, however, not totally fit the model of Hallin and Mancini. Public service television was from the start developed in cooperation with commercial initiative and financing. This quite particular Finnish arrangement from the start gave commercial television a space on the publicly maintained television, whilst financially contributing to the maintenance of public service. With globalization of television, as part of the digitalization of Finnish broadcasting, the commercial companies have now been freed from obligations to participate in the financing of public service broadcasting. The development in Finland today appears to move towards a more clear division between commercial and public operations in broadcasting.

The ‘pillarization’ mentioned by Hallin and Mancini (most clearly developed in the Netherlands) never emerged in the same way in Finland. While Finland politically has been a corporatist state, the corporative features were not dominant in the media sector. Press-party parallelism has gradually abated. In Finland, press subsidies have not, different to some other states, maintained a party press with a wide-spread readership. The distinct party press has, since the mid-20th century, been relatively marginal and is now even further marginalized in spite of efforts to increase its financial support through a recent change in the system of press subvention. A distinguishing feature that has remained in Finland is a strong regional anchorage of the press. This would coincide with the features of ‘local patriotism’, mentioned as one feature characterizing the ‘Democratic-Corporatist Model’ (Hallin & Mancini, 2004, 149).

As has been described above, also in the fields of press and media freedoms, Finnish history is particular. Whilst Finland has hosted a system that is based on the right of access to official documents, typical to Nordic states, and also based on respect of the freedom of the press, Finnish politicians as well as media have been exercising a temperate policy in using these freedoms. Particularly, this has been visible in the way that the political elite and the media have behaved in relation to Finland’s eastern neighbour. At times, this has lead to something of a free card with respect to critical surveillance of the political elite. The ‘watch dog’ function of the press has been played down, and this has also reflected on the politics-media relationship in Finnish political life more generally. Particularly this has been apparent in relation to the Finnish President, who until recently has had a supreme position as the leader of Finnish foreign politics. In recent years, a more open debate also on foreign policy issues has emerged and the role and performance of the President has been openly challenged. There is still, however, a clear tendency within the political

elite to try to maintain this sector within a sphere of national consensus, and the media have not done very much to challenge this consensus.

The combination of personalized elections and deregulated media has not dramatically changed the nature of Finnish election campaigns. Voting is volatile in presidential elections, but the reduced powers of the president have rendered these elections less relevance for the governing of the country. Stability prevails in parliamentary elections. Bigger parties use approximately the same amount of money for the expensive television campaign. Single candidates have started to use television campaigns as well, and campaign costs have gone up. But there are no serious allegations regarding candidates buying themselves into office through election campaigns. Political credibility has in most cases maintained its position as a necessary, though not always sufficient condition for being elected.

There have been efforts to introduce negative campaigning in paid advertising campaigns on television both by parties and by the labour union, but available research (Moring, 2005) has shown that the television campaigns have not (yet) been of major influence in Finnish campaigns. In the parliamentary elections in 2007, for the first time, a meta-campaign debate on the negative ads of the labour union clearly had an influence on the election results (TNS-Gallup, 2007). However, this campaign clearly backfired, leading to more negative than positive response also among the left wing parties that it was supposed to support; and rendering up the initiative in the campaign to the conservative party.

The arguments presented above do, indeed, support the assumption that there is some movement towards medialization in Finland. There are also indications of a shift from a 'Democratic-Corporatist Model' towards a 'Liberal Model' of media-politics relations, along the (conditional) prediction presented by Hallin and Mancini (2004, p. 301). However, these changes are not clear-cut and there are countering tendencies as well. Apparently, models of medialization as well as the media systems model presented by Hallin and Mancini would gain from further refining. Two particular system features that could add to the understanding of the development in Finland would be to better take into consideration the relative size of the nation and the level of distinctiveness of culture and language. Taken together, these features bring particular features to politics as well as to commercial markets. A further feature that must be kept in mind when discussing Finland is the geopolitical position of the country.

It appears as if the Finnish electoral system and political communication culture maintains a balance that has so far lead to a 'status quo' in political life and the relations between politics and the media. This equilibrium could easily be disturbed as such a big proportion of the electorate is abstaining from voting in elections. But at least so far the system features have been flexible enough to maintain the balance. In a more conflicted and volatile climate, the outcome of the Finnish system could be quite different. This would put more stress on the media-politics relation. All types of media – including serious journalism, tabloid media, as well as paid television advertising in election campaigns – would certainly have much stronger impact. Maybe it would also

activate more Finnish voters. But would it produce more security and wealth for the Finnish citizens?

Notes

1. As of May 4 2007, see the Ministry of Justice web site <http://www.vaalit.fi/15485.htm>, consulted 8 July 2007.
2. In the parliamentary election in 1999 the question was phrased somewhat differently, which may explain the difference compared to elections in 1999-2007.
3. The data in Figure 1 and subsequent figures is based on a series of panel surveys. The first (1991) was conducted by Pesonen et al. (see Pesonen et al. 1993). From 1992 onwards the panel surveys were conducted by Gallup Finland as part of the project *Changes in Finnish TV Election Campaigns* (lead by Professor Tom Moring), through a system of computers placed in the homes of the respondents. The number of respondents was 1,326 in the 1991 panel survey. In the first electronic panel survey in 1992, it decreased to 680, but has since increased to between 1,000 and 1,600 in subsequent elections. In 2007, there were 1,172 respondents of which 988 voted.
4. The party membership was researched for all parties with members in parliament in 1999 and 2003. Due to the relatively stable Finnish party system, the figures can be considered representative.
5. The president is elected in a direct election in one or two rounds. If no candidate receives a majority of votes cast in the first round, a second round is arranged between the two candidates who received most votes. Before 1988, voters elected electors who elected the president in secret ballots.
6. This comparatively high figure is partly explained by the fact that it is not rinsed for simultaneous use of several media. The method of collection of statistics has, since the early 1990s, also changed from recall surveys to diary surveys, which may explain some of the increase in the figures over time). The Intermedia survey is representative for 12-69 year old Finns.
7. Yle had a news broadcast monopoly until 1981, when MTV3 started to broadcast their own news.
8. Note, that from 2008 onwards, the press subsidy system shifted its focus to become predominantly a parliamentary support (–90,000 for each Member of Parliament). At the same time the total sum of the support was raised from 14.3 M— to 18.5 M—A smaller sum of 0.5 M— remains as selective support. The selective support is shared to national minority language newspapers, including a support for news service in Swedish.
9. Finnish Prime Minister Kalevi Sorsa introduced the term ‘infocracy’ in the Finnish debate in 1984, supposedly meaning a state of affairs where the media seek to take over functions of the political system without legitimizing its role by elections. About the same time Finnish President Mauno Koivisto compared journalists to ‘lemmings’, indicating that they behave like these small rodents running in huge flocks, blindly following some opinion leaders in their midst. While the flock behaviour of lemmings apparently is not guided by leading individuals, the concept has remained alive in the Finnish popular debate, as an alternative expression for the chase journalism that in Sweden has been called ‘drevjournalistik’.
10. The politically elected administrative council of Yle, however, does approve the schedule of election programmes.
11. In 2007 the party support was 12,444,000 euro, and the support for the parliamentary election campaign costs was 2,489,000 euro, in total 14,933,000 euro.

* The author recognizes that this chapter has been written as part of the project Political Communication Culture in Western Europe – A Comparative Study, financed by the Academy of Finland (project 1118622).

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Chapter 4

Media and Politics in Iceland

Ólafur Th. Hardarson

In the last twenty years, the system of political mass communication has transformed in Iceland. This transformation corresponds to radical changes in Icelandic society, including the political and economic system. The old Icelandic system – which had developed in the 1930s – was characterized by political patronage and over-politicization: political parties dominated all spheres of society, including the media system. The political parties controlled political mass communication through the party-political press, while keeping independent political discussion and commentary out of the monopolized public service radio and television. The new Icelandic system is characterized by increased professional journalism and greatly increased independence from political parties, both in public and private media. Bearing in mind the very small population of 300,000 inhabitants in 115,000 households, the total quantity of media supply is amazing – even though Iceland is now among the very richest, most modern, and technologically advanced knowledge societies in the world. While concentration in private media ownership has caused some worries, there is little doubt that the impact of political parties and party leaders on media content has never been smaller in Iceland.

The Icelandic Political System

Iceland is a parliamentary republic, characterized by majority coalition governments. The legislature – *Althingi* – is a unicameral parliament. Iceland was settled in the 9th Century, mainly from Norway, but to a lesser extent from Ireland. The settlers formed a commonwealth in 930, in which *Althingi* was the central institution with legislative and judicial powers – but without a king or executive power. In 1262 Iceland came under the Norwegian king, and later became a Danish dependency when Norway and Denmark united under the Danish crown in 1380 (the Kalmar Union). *Althingi* gradually lost its legislative powers but retained judicial powers until it was abolished in 1800. In 1845 *Althingi* was re-established as a consultative assembly to the Danish king, who

had obtained absolute power in 1662. Danish absolutism in Iceland was finally abolished in 1874 (compared to 1849 in Denmark), when the king unilaterally granted the Icelanders a constitution, which gave *Althingi* legislative and financial powers, while the king retained an effective veto. With home rule in 1904, Iceland obtained full authority over domestic affairs with the establishment of its own central administration and an Icelandic minister, living in Reykjavík and responsible to *Althingi*. Iceland has thus been a parliamentary democracy for more than a century. Iceland became a sovereign state in 1918, but remained in a royal union with Denmark until 1944, when it adopted its present republican constitution (Hardarson, 2006).

The president is popularly elected every fourth year, and has mainly ceremonial duties. A sitting president, wishing to be re-elected, has usually continued unopposed in office without an election – only twice has a sitting president been challenged (in 1988 and 2004), winning easily both times. Due to the non-political role of the presidency, the political parties have not taken a stand in presidential elections since 1952. However, according to the constitution, the president can refuse to countersign a statute. While this right was for decades generally considered a dead letter, it was used for the first time in 2004, when President Grímsson refused to sign a controversial media bill, as will be further discussed later in this chapter.

Althingi consists of 63 members, elected in six multimember constituencies by two-tier proportional representation (*d'Hondt*). While 54 members are elected according to constituency results, the nine remaining supplementary seats are allocated on the basis of national results among parties obtaining at least 5% of the national vote, securing that each party's number of MPs is proportional to its national share of votes. Despite full proportionality of representation among parties reaching the 5% threshold, a major disproportionality between regions remains in the electoral system: around 46% of the MPs come from three rural constituencies, in which only about 1/3 of the voters live. A strong overrepresentation of rural areas has been a major characteristic of the Icelandic electoral system since the 19th Century (Hardarson, 2002).

Referenda have only taken place five times in Iceland – all before the foundation of the republic in 1944. All parties currently agree that an eventual Icelandic membership of EU should be put to a referendum – even though the constitution by no means demands this.

For decades, turnout in parliamentary elections in Iceland has been among the highest in the world – especially if we exclude countries with compulsory voting. From the 1950s to the 1990s, around 90% of voters turned out in *Althingi* elections, while turnout from 1991-2007 has fluctuated between 84 and 88 percent. Turnout in local elections was usually between 80 and 85 percent from 1950 to 2002 – but slipping below the 80% mark in 2006. Voting is easy in Iceland; registration is automatic, polling places are numerous and close late in the evening, and voters expecting to be absent on polling day can cast an absentee ballot in the eight weeks preceding the election.

This slight decrease in voting does not indicate less political interest or political activity in general. Election studies – carried out every four years since 1983 – show no decline in political interest: 20-30% of voters claim to have very great or great interest in politics, while around 30% state little or no interest; the rest saying they are somewhat interested in politics. Other surveys show that participation in more unconventional activities (signing a petition, taking part in a boycott or legal protest meetings) actually increased somewhat from 1984-1999 (Kristinsson, 2007, p. 57, 59). While party identification has declined (41% of respondents claimed to support a party in 2003, compared to 49% in 1983), membership of parties has remained surprisingly high, 16-18% during the 1983-2003 period. It should be noted however that Icelandic parties do not demand any activity from their members, and do not strictly collect membership fees. Primaries have on the other hand been extensively used in recent decades in order to select candidates for party lists in *Alþingi* elections. From 1983-2007, 15-30% of all voters claimed to have taken part in a primary before each *Alþingi* election.

Election campaigns are waged to a large extent on a national level. Candidates from all parties present their views in articles in the national newspapers and in discussion programmes, both on public and private radio and TV. Political advertisements are allowed in all media. Election campaigns (and individual primaries) – not least the political ads – have become increasingly expensive, with more professionalism, including PR-people and pollsters. Most of the parties' incomes probably consist of public grants, which are proportionally (per vote) higher than in the neighbouring countries (Hardarson, 2006, p. 573). Icelandic voters make extensive use of mass media for political information during election campaigns. The Icelandic Election Studies indicate that before the elections of 1995, 1999, 2003 and 2007, only 10-15% of voters never watched political discussion programmes on radio and TV. Between 40 and 50 percent claimed to have watched at least part of the party leaders' debate on TV the evening before polling day. Elections take place on a Saturday, so voters can stay up all night, widely partying and follow incoming results on TV – the results are often quite close and not clear until the early hours or even on Sunday morning. A Gallup poll showed that on election night 2007, 87% of the public watched some election coverage on TV. Of those, 56% watched only or mainly Public Television (*RÚV*), while 23% watched only or mainly the private channel, *Stöð 2*. The remaining 20% divided their watching equally between the two TV stations. Election night in Iceland is still a major event – characterized by widespread interest, celebrations and disappointments among the general public.

Results from an international survey, *Comparative Study of Electoral Systems*, also show considerable activity of Icelandic voters. Over 30% of voters claimed in 1999 that they had been in contact with an MP during the 12 last months, while in 2003 22% had tried to persuade someone to vote for a certain party, 16% had shown their support by showing up for a meeting or putting up a poster, and 28% said they had been contacted by a candidate or party worker trying to influence their voting decision.

In general, Icelandic voters do not seem to have lost their interest in politics, despite some loosening of the ties between voters and political parties, and a small decline in electoral participation. According to the Icelandic Election Studies, distrust in politicians did not increase in 1983-2007 period.

The Icelandic Party System and Government Coalitions

During the 19th Century, no political parties developed in *Alþingi*. Around the turn of the century, the first political parties emerged, as parliamentary democracy and the new ministerial post brought about by home rule in 1904, served as an incentive for political cliques to organize as potential majority parties in the legislature. Besides seeking for office, those early cadre parties differed – and sometimes radically altered their positions – on tactical questions concerning Iceland's independence from Denmark, and gradually withered away when Iceland became a sovereign state in 1918.

The modern Icelandic party system took form in 1916-30, consisting of four major types of parties, ideologically easily recognizable in terms of European party families: a conservative party (the Independence Party), an agrarian/centre party (the Progressive Party), a social democratic party, and a communist/left-socialist party. While restructuring has regularly taken place on the left side of the political spectrum, those four types of parties have dominated the Icelandic party system ever since. From 1931 to 1967, only two additional parties managed to have MPs elected to *Alþingi* (for one and two terms each). Since 1971, one or two additional parties have on the other hand been able to have MPs elected in most elections. Those new parties have however only survived one or two terms, with the exception of the Women's Alliance which survived four elections 1983-1995 and the Liberal Party, which obtained MPs in its third consecutive election in 2007.

The position of the four party-types, which form the core of the party system, has been exceedingly strong for most of the 80-90 years since their initial formation. From 1931-67, the joint share of the four parties in the electoral market exceeded 95% in most elections. In 1971 their market share went below 90% for the first time, but remained at 94-98% in elections from 1974-1979. In the 1980s the four-party format came under more strain than ever before – the joint share of the four parties was lower than ever; 86-87% in the elections of 1983, 1991, and 1995, and culminating in 1987, when the four-party share was slightly below the 75% mark. Since the 1999 restructuring of the left in the Social Democratic Alliance and the Left-Greens, the new four-party core has jointly enjoyed 89-95% of the total vote.

Electoral volatility has however increased. From 1942-1967, net gains made by the parties in elections commonly were below the 5% mark, compared to 10-20% in most elections since 1971. In most elections of the last twenty years around 1/3 of voters switched parties between elections. In 2007, 56% of voters made their final voting decision during the last month of the election campaign.

While the parties in the four-party Icelandic format were familiar in Europe, their strength relations deviated strongly from the Scandinavian norm. The conservatives (Independence Party 1929 to present) have always been the biggest party, usually obtaining around 40% of the vote. The agrarian/centre Progressives (1916 to present) came second for most of the 20th Century, with a norm of 25% at the polls. The Progressive following however has declined – from the 1980s the party usually obtained 18-19% in parliamentary elections, and suffered an electoral disaster in 2007 with only 11.7% of the total vote.

The socialist wing deviated from Scandinavia in two ways. First, the two socialist parties in Iceland usually obtained jointly only around 1/3 of the vote, compared to around 50% in Scandinavia. Second, from 1942 the Social Democratic Party (1916-1995) usually obtained only 14-16% of the vote, making it the smallest of the four parties – in most elections several percentage points behind the left-socialist party (Socialist Party 1942-1953, People's Alliance 1956-1995). In the 1930s, the rise of a strong Social Democratic Party – which had obtained 21.7% in the 1934 elections, compared to a Communist share of 6% – was halted when the left-wing of the SDP joined the Communists in a United Front in 1938, forming the Socialist Party. Subsequently, the SDP became for most of the 20th Century one of the smallest European social democratic parties, while the Icelandic left-socialists ranked among the strongest communist/left-socialist parties in Western Europe.

After decades of splits and unification attempts on the left, before the 1999 election the Social Democrats and the left-socialist People's Alliance joined hands along with the Women's Alliance and the People's Movement (a splinter from the Social Democrats in 1995) in order to form a large social democratic party, the Social Democratic Alliance. The new party managed to become the second biggest party in the elections of 1999, 2003 and 2007, obtaining 27-31% of the vote. The tradition of the radical left nevertheless survived, as the more traditional left-wing socialists from the People's Alliance – along with some environmentalists and former members of the Women's Alliance – formed a new party, the Left-Greens, which obtained around 9% in 1999 and 2003, and 14.3% in 2007.

Left-right is the most important ideological dimension for Icelandic voters – their self-ranking on a 0-10 left-right scale is clearly related to their attitudes and voting behaviour (Hardarson, 1995). In international comparison the relationship between left-right self-ranking and voting is strong in Iceland ($\eta^2 = .70$), just as is the case in the Scandinavian countries. The same holds true for voters' relatively strong agreement on ranking of the parties (Holmberg & Oskarsson, 2004, p. 106). In 2003, voters ranked the parties from left to right in the following manner: Left-Greens (2.3), Social Democrats (4.1), Liberal Party (5.5), Progressives (6.0), Independence Party (8.3) (Hardarson, 2006, p. 572). The wing party distance (WPD) is thus 6.0 in Iceland, similar to Denmark and Norway, but somewhat less than in Sweden. Nevertheless, there is consensus among all parties on a broad societal mix of democracy, market economy, and welfare system – their disagreements concern different emphasis in the mix.

Table 1. Icelandic Althingi Elections and Governments 1991-2007 (percent)

	1991	1995	1999	2003	2007
Independence Party (IP)	38.6	37.1	40.7	33.7	36.6
Progressive Party (PP)	18.9	23.3	18.4	17.7	11.7
Social Democratic Alliance (SDA)			26.8	31.0	26.8
Social Democratic Party (SDP)	15.5	11.4			
People's Movement		7.2			
Women's Alliance	8.3	4.9			
People's Alliance	14.4	14.3			
Left-Greens			9.1	8.8	14.3
Liberals			4.2	7.4	7.3
Others	4.3	1.9	0.8	1.4	3.3
Turnout	87.6	87.4	84.1	87.7	83.6
Parties in government	IP-SDP	IP-PP	IP-PP	IP-PP	IP-SDA

Source: Statistics Iceland www.hagsstofa.is

The Icelandic coalition system distinguishes itself from the Scandinavian ones in two important respects. First, the Icelandic coalition system is an open one in the sense that in principle all parties can form a coalition with each other. There are no party blocks. The Social Democrats and the conservative Independence Party have formed several coalitions, and the left-socialists have not been excluded from the coalition game. The Progressives have worked both with left and right parties in government coalitions. Second, majority coalitions are the rule in Iceland. The Icelandic parties have been very office-seeking – probably this is related to their strong patronage heritage (Indridason, 2005; Kristinsson, 1996). Party discipline in *Althingi* is almost as strong as in Scandinavia and stronger than in Finland (Jensen, 2000, p. 218-219) while the legislative role of the opposition parties in *Althingi* is very weak (Hardarson, 2005). Winner-takes-all is the rule of the Icelandic coalition game.

The Icelandic Media System

Newspapers served an important function in the development of Icelandic nationalism in the 19th and early 20th Century. While the first Icelandic paper carrying news – published monthly in 1773-76 – was printed in Danish, subsequent papers were in the Icelandic language, and many of them voiced Icelandic demands for increased independence from Denmark (Fridriksson, 2000). Freedom of the press was guaranteed by a royal decree in 1855, and confirmed in the first Icelandic constitution of 1874.

In the 19th and early 20th Century, numerous small newspapers emerged, even though many of them did not last long. These papers consisted mainly of news, literature, and political content. Many of the editors either supported individual politicians, or took part in politics themselves – several editors were

elected to *Alþingi*. Even though the circulation figures of those papers were low, they were widely read – the literacy rate in Iceland was high. When political parties emerged around the turn of the 19th Century, many papers supported the individual parties their editors happened to like. It has to be born in mind, that around 1900 Iceland was one of the poorest countries in Europe, and the population – which never had exceeded 80 thousand – was spread over a large geographical area (larger than Ireland) with no modern ways of communication. Most people still lived from agriculture. The inhabitants of the largest town, Reykjavík, were around 6,000. These were not the most favourable conditions for a modern press.

However, several attempts to publish daily newspapers took place around the turn of the century. The first daily papers to survive were *Vísir* (1910), and *Morgunbladid* (1913). In turn, when the modern four-party system developed, both of these papers became supporters of the conservative Independence Party. In the 1930s, the three other parties had succeeded in forming their own daily newspapers. Due to difficult communications, the dailies were however confined to Reykjavík and its vicinity well into the mid-of-the-century, while remote areas were served with special weekly editions and assortments of the dailies (Broddason & Karlsson 2004).

Party Monopoly of Political Communication (and everything else) from the 1930s to the 1970s

The socio-political and economic system which developed in Iceland in the 1930s and survived mainly intact until the 1970s was much more politicized than was the case in most neighbouring countries. The political elite – especially the party leadership – dominated most spheres of society and political patronage was widespread (Hardarson, 1995; Kristinsson, 1996). The Co-operative Movement became extremely strong in Icelandic business – closely tied to and protected by the Progressive Party. The economy was heavily state-regulated; imports were severely restricted and politically allocated, just as loans from banks and investment funds – which were almost exclusively publicly owned (Kristinsson et. al., 1992, p. 46-64). Political appointments were the rule in the bureaucracy and the public sector: even elementary school teachers in remote areas were frequently appointed on political grounds. The political parties had strong ties to interest organizations, and also tried to dominate the cultural sector, e.g. by operating politically oriented publishing houses. The press “did not constitute an independent sphere of influence; it was simply yet another arm of the party leadership” (Grímsson, 1976, p. 20).

In fact, the four political parties dominated political communication in the country. All newspapers were party-political and severely biased – professional journalism was largely absent and articles by political opponents were unheard of. The political debate in the newspapers was intensely hostile and vicious personal attacks were a major characteristic of political communication. The State Radio – founded in 1930 after an unsuccessful attempt at operating a private

radio station – was controlled by Radio Council, proportionally elected by the political parties at *Alþingi*. Commonly, editors of the party press served as the parties' representatives on the Radio Council. The major editorial line of public radio was to avoid political coverage, except for reading formal resolutions from conventions of the four political parties – and occasionally broadcasting *Alþingi* debates. By excluding political discussion and current affairs programs from the radio, the parties had *de facto* monopoly of all regular political mass communication through the party press. Viewpoints and candidates who were not supported by any of the four parties found it extremely difficult to get through to the public.

1970s: Slowly towards Pluralism, Professionalism and De-politicization

Increasing pluralism in Icelandic society – a trend that has continued to the present day – marked the 1970s. Considerable liberalization of the economy had taken place in the 1960s, when a government coalition of the conservative Independence Party and the Social Democrats (1959-1971) greatly relaxed import restrictions, acceded to the GATT agreement and joined EFTA. The strict control of political parties over society – *partiocracy* as it was sometimes called – was increasingly criticized and obviously on the defensive. The party leadership lost control over nominations for party lists in *Alþingi* elections, as primaries became common – sometimes not even restricted to party members (Kristjánsson, 2002). As electoral volatility increased and new parties managed to get members elected to *Alþingi*, elections became more risky for the established parties. Interest organizations and cultural activities became gradually independent of political parties. Professionalization in the public sector increased.

Similar changes could be observed in the media system. In the early 1970s, a notable change took place in State Radio and Television – the latter had been founded in 1966 – when critical discussion and current affairs programmes were introduced. Suddenly, the broadcasting media became an important arena for political communication – for the first time Icelandic politicians had to answer critical questions on radio and TV from independent and sometimes hostile journalists.

Professionalization of the party press could also be observed. Some attempts to distinguish between news and editorial comments had taken place in the 1960s (and even earlier), especially at the pro-conservative *Vísir* and *Morgunblaðið* – which always had carried more news and been more market oriented than the other newspapers (Broddason & Karlsson, 2004; Ásgeirsson, 2003, p. 425-429). In 1975, a new daily newspaper *Dagblaðið* – claiming to be completely independent of political parties – was founded under the leadership of a former editor of *Vísir*, who had moved that paper away from the party line, but lost an internal power struggle about *Vísir's* editorial policy.

Those important changes in the Icelandic media landscape took place without any significant changes in the legal framework for Icelandic mass media

– but corresponded to socio-economic and political changes that were taking place.

The Two Last Decades: Increasing Political Independence Despite (or because of) Convergence, Concentration and Commercialization

In the last twenty years, important steps were taken to remove the last remains of the over-politicized *partiocracy* from the 1930s – which still survived, albeit in much weaker form. Iceland joined the European Economic Area (EEA) with the European Union, and adapted to its four freedoms: free movement of goods, persons, services, and capital among the EEA countries. A good deal of privatization also took place – most importantly privatization of banks and investment funds – which meant that individuals and firms now had to deal with professional bankers rather than political bosses. European rules about competition and business practices also limited the room of maneuver that politicians had for old fashioned political patronage – at least in the economy. As a result, new aggressive business ventures started to thrive, especially in retail and in the financial sector. Those companies grew at a speed previously unknown in Iceland – and did not limit their activities to Iceland, but started buying banks and various companies in England, Scandinavia and other European countries. Among the most successful new businesses were *Baugur Group* and *Kaupthing Bank* – a great majority of those firm's activities now take place abroad. This new development was not particularly welcomed by the old business elites, who were used to a more relaxed atmosphere of political connections and protection. The old guard in the business community despised the new type of young, tough capitalists – the *novae rich oligarchs* as they were sometimes called – who did not play according to the old rules and ignored (to varying degrees) the old political network. This new class of super-rich youngsters also enjoyed showing their wealth by a lucrative life style – including private jets – something the Icelanders were not used to.

The Icelandic media system also completely transformed during the last twenty years. Three developments have been of major importance: first, the abolition of state monopoly of broadcasting by a change in legislation in 1986; second, the death of the party press in the 1990s; and third, the emergence – in the first decade of the new century – of strong independent newspapers with serious political content and news coverage, delivered free to most Icelandic homes.

Those developments have lead to a new media market in Iceland, which in the beginning of the 21st Century has three major characteristics: First, the supply of all forms of media is very high in Iceland. Most media are however national or largely national – local media are very weak (Gudmundsson, 2006). Second, the commercialization of the media system has lead to convergence and concentration in private media ownership. Third, private media have become largely independent of political parties, and professionalism among journalists has increased with the result that the media are no longer “yet another arm of

the party leadership” but has moved towards becoming a real “fourth estate” in a pluralistic society. While it has been argued that conservative party bosses have at times tried to influence both private media ownership and appointments in public broadcasting (Kristinsson, 2006, p. 26-27), political communication in Iceland is certainly no longer monopolized by the political parties.

When the Icelandic State Television was founded in 1966, it was commonly argued that the Icelandic nation was too small to afford even one national TV channel. Nobody envisaged that forty years later, Icelanders would be able to choose between 11 domestic TV channels, and 23 domestic FM radio stations, plus two Web radio channels. In 2006, “Iceland has an advanced and sophisticated communications infrastructure that has long secured universal access to radio and television and supports one of the world’s highest levels of broadband and Internet penetration, as well as a fast digital television take-up rate in homes” (Karlsson, 2006: p. 25). Beside domestic television stations, a “plethora of non-domestic channels are also on offer to subscribers relayed via broadband cable or terrestrially, with a subscription base of up to one-third of the country’s households” (Karlsson, 2006, p. 27-28).

Newspaper supply in Iceland has also greatly increased in the last two decades. In 1985, six newspapers had a combined circulation of 92 thousand copies – or 381 copies per 1000 inhabitants. Five of the six newspapers were party-political – their combined market share was 71 percent: the pro-conservative *Morgunbladid* was the dominant paper with 48% of the circulation, while the share of the four newspapers supporting the other three parties jointly constituted 23%. The only newspaper independent of political parties – *DV* (a merger of *Dagbladid* and *Vísir* in 1981) – enjoyed 29% of the total circulation.

In 2005, four newspapers were on offer to the Icelanders, with a combined circulation of 251 thousand copies – or 838 copies per 1000 inhabitants (213 copies by subscription, 625 copies of free papers). *Morgunbladid*’s share of the total newspaper circulation had gone down from 48% in 1985 to 21% in 2005. The fifth newspaper emerged in 2007, when the Icelandic business paper *Vidskiptabladid* became a daily. Information on the paper’s circulation is not available.

How has it been possible to provide a market as small as the Icelandic one with such a quantity in supply of mass media? As Karlsson (2006, p. 37-38) rightly points out, “small countries cannot afford the same diversity in media supply as larger countries”. However, in the last two decades private media in Iceland has enjoyed more liberalized regulations concerning ownership than has been the case in most other Western countries (Broddason, 2005, p. 79-80). This perhaps explains the emergence of few but successful media conglomerates in the small Icelandic market. Besides commercialization, convergence and concentration have been major trends in the development of the Icelandic media sector. “Acquisitions, takeovers, mergers and strategic alliances have become the overt features of the media markets in Iceland, showing the efforts of media companies to exploit the economics of scale and scope. New distribution technology and introduction of new services have encouraged horizontal and

diagonal integration and cross-ownership both within the more traditional media and between media and telecommunications” (Karlsson, 2006, p. 25).

It is not an easy task to analyze various kinds of direct and indirect ownership of Icelandic media companies and their ties to other businesses – the media markets have been elusive, and in less than a decade, all the main media companies have changed owners. However, Karlsson concludes that in 2006 there were effectively only three separate privately owned media conglomerates which – along with public television and radio – dominated the media sector (Karlsson, 2006, p. 32).

Most of the Icelandic radio and TV stations are however exclusively in the business of entertainment. Besides public television, only one TV station, *Stöð 2*, operates a national news service and ambitious current affairs programmes. Two radio channels broadcast news from the *Stöð 2* newsroom, *Bylgjan* and the talk-radio *Radio Saga*, which also broadcasts many programmes dealing with politics and current affairs. Most public political communication through mass media in Iceland goes through those three private channels of broadcasting, the public radio and TV, the five daily newspapers, and the lively activity in public websites with political content, operated by individuals and various groups and associations, including political groups and party organizations.

The ownership of the major channels of mass media political communication can be divided into five parts. First, the state owns the public service, *RÚV*, which operates one national TV station and two national radio channels, plus some local radio. Interestingly, from the beginning in 1930, *RÚV* has in addition to subscription fees had income from broadcasting advertisements – the public service radio and TV was always at the same time a commercial station (Broddason & Karlsson, 2004). Second, a media conglomerate connected to *Baugur Group* and known to the public by various names at different times (e.g. *Northern Lights*, *Dagsbrún*, *365 media*) owns the TV channel *Stöð 2*, the radio station *Bylgjan*, and two of the newspapers, *Fréttabladid* and *DV*. Third, another media conglomerate – *Árvakur* – operates *Morgunbladid* and *Bladid*. Fourth, the company *Exista* is the biggest shareholder in both *Vidskiptabladid* and the media conglomerate *Síminn* (formerly the state owned Icelandic Telecom) which owns the popular entertainment TV channel *Skjá 1*. Fifth, *Radio Saga* is owned by a small company independent of the three media conglomerates. Ownership of individual political websites is of course widespread.

Broadcasting and Political Communication in the 21st Century

Despite 11 domestic TV channels and 25 radio stations, the audience market in Iceland is highly concentrated. In the television market, a duopoly has developed between public television *RÚV* and the generalist-pay-TV *Stöð 2* which was founded already in 1986, and was among the very first successful terrestrial pay-TV television channels in Europe. While subscription fee for *Stöð*

2 is around twice as high as the compulsory licence-fee for *RÚV*, the number of *Stöð 2* subscribers has been around 40 thousand for some years. It is important to note, that *Stöð 2* transmits its news programmes unscrambled, open not only to subscribers but all viewers. This is also the case for some of the *Stöð 2*'s most important current affairs programmes, as well as its extensive election campaign programmes before both local and *Alþingi* elections.

In 2006, 73% of the TV audience market share was rather evenly divided between the public *RÚV* (39%) and the private *Stöð 2* (34%) – the two TV channels offering news service and current affairs programmes. The remaining domestic TV channels – exclusively transmitting entertainment – had a joint share of 27%; biggest was *Skjárr 1* with 15%.

In 2006, the two public radio channels and *Bylgjan* jointly enjoyed three quarters of the radio audience market. Somewhat surprisingly, the highbrow culturally oriented *Rás 1* (Channel 1) came on top with 27%. This “serious” channel operates its own news service – *RÚV*'s radio news are broadcasted simultaneously at both public radio channels – along with programmes concerned with politics, culture, science, literature and society – plus some music. The other public radio channel (*Rás 2*), and general private radio *Bylgjan* had 24% share each – both those stations mainly broadcast popular music, but also carry news and some current affairs programs (Karlsson, 2006, p. 25-30).

The news and current affairs programmes of both public television and the private *Stöð 2* are generally considered professional and largely politically unbiased – this also applies to coverage of elections and election campaigns on both stations. In recent years, professional journalists have frequently moved between stations – and for most intents and purposes the professional ethos and handling of news on both stations seem to follow the same principles.

The legal obligations of public radio and TV are however much more stringent than is the case for private broadcasting, especially concerning news coverage, promotion of the Icelandic language and culture, and diverse programming. Private broadcasters are not obliged to operate news service (Broddason & Karlsson, 2004).

Private radio and TV stations are by law required to apply democratic principles, respect freedom of expression, and present different views on controversial issues. In addition, public radio and television are by law required to show total impartiality in reporting, interpretation and making of programmes. *RÚV*'s reporting “shall be impartial towards all political parties and policies. Different points of views in major disputes or controversies shall have similar amount of coverage. News on the *Alþingi* and political party activity shall be reported according to general news criteria. Major government actions and decisions shall be reported, as well as the views of the opposition parties on major issues” (Thorarensen & Hardarson, 2005, p. 159).

In 2007, *Alþingi* passed new legislation on public radio and television. *RÚV* was made a public limited company, with the Icelandic state as the only shareholder. This meant that laws on public employees and public administration no longer applied to *RÚV*. The Radio Council was replaced by a Board, formally

appointed by the Minister of Education, but however proportionally elected by *Althingi*. The Board has mainly general and financial duties, and hires and fires the Director of RÚV – who is the head of daily operations and hires and fires RÚV's other employees. The law also defines the role and duties of RÚV as public service media along similar lines as before.

The Death of the Party Press and the Rise of Free-of-Charge Home-Delivered Newspapers at the Turn of the 20th Century

In the 1990s, four party-papers died – only two newspapers still survived in the beginning of the 21st: the right-of-centre *Morgunbladid* and the independent *DV*. This meant that political parties did not any longer have their separate organs in the newspaper market.

Table 2 shows the circulation figures of Icelandic newspapers during the 20th Century. The table clearly shows that the pro-conservative papers always had much greater circulation than the party-papers supporting the Progressives, the Social Democrats, and the left-socialists. In the 1990s, the only real competitor to *Morgunbladid* (with 54 thousand copies in 1995) was *DV* (with 34 thousand copies). Both of those papers had become professional newspapers with extended news-coverage supposed to be non-partisan, and both papers frequently published articles by politicians from all parties. The circulation of the old-style party newspapers had on the other hand shrunk down to 1-5 thousand copies – it is an open question if those papers served their parties better than the party newsletters and political websites do in the 21st Century. An attempt to publish one professional left-of-centre newspaper, *Dagur-Tíminn*, failed in the late 1990s. At the turn of the century, the Icelandic newspaper market was characterized by a duopoly of *Morgunbladid* and *DV*, with the former enjoying 62% of the newspaper market circulation.

The first Icelandic election study in 1983 included a question on newspaper readership. The dominant position of *Morgunbladid* and *DV* was confirmed in the survey. 56% of respondents were daily readers of *Morgunbladid*, while 41% read *DV* daily. The other papers were far behind: The Progressive *Tíminn* (15%), the left-socialist *Thjóðviljinn* (11%), and the Social Democratic *Alþýðubladid* (4%). All the newspapers – except *DV* – had clear party profiles in readership (Hardarson, 1987). The small party-papers did not only have a very small readership – they were to a large extent preaching their gospel to people that were already true believers. Those papers relayed on direct and indirect state support which started in the late 1960s and continued in various forms until the 1990s (Fridriksson, 2000, p. 233, 299). Currently, there are no press subsidies in Iceland.

The duopoly of *Morgunbladid* and *DV* was radically challenged with the foundation of *Fréttabladid* in 2001. This paper was a new concept or a variation of the free metro-papers that had become popular in some neighbouring countries. *Fréttabladid* however distinguished itself from the metro-papers in two important aspects. First, the paper was delivered to Icelandic homes like

Table 2. Circulation of Icelandic Newspapers 1923-2005 (printed copies in thousands). Selected years

A. 1923-1995: Period of party-political papers							
Paper	Morgun- blaðið	Vísir	Dagblaðið /DV	Tíminn	Dagur (local)	Alþýðu- blaðið	Þjóð- viljinn
Political leaning	Con- servative	Con- servative	None	Agrarian (PP)	Agrarian (PP)	Social Democratic	Left- socialist
1923	2	4				1	
1928	4	4				1	
1933	6	4				3	
1940	8	5				6	3
1952-53	21	NA		5		2	NA
1960	29	24		10		8	6
1970	37	12		8		6	5
1975	40	14	8	10		2	7
1980	42	12	18	9		1	7
1985	45		27	7	6	1	7
1990	52		27	5	5	2	5
1995	54		34	3	5	1	

Source: Statistics Iceland www.hagsstofa.is

B. 1996-2005: Period of non-party papers					
Paper	Morgunblaðið	DV	Dagur-Tíminn	Fréttablaðið	Blaðið
	Paid-for	Paid-for	Paid-for	Free	Free
Political leaning	Right-of-centre	None	Left-of-centre	None	None
1996	53	31	8		
1997	53	32	8		
1998	54	32	9		
1999	55	29	7		
2000	56	28	7		
2001	55	24		70	
2002	54	22		86	
2003	53	18		97	
2004	52	10		99	
2005	52	12		102	85

Source: Statistics Iceland www.hagsstofa.is

the subscription papers. Second, the new paper was not a down-market tabloid, but a general-purpose paper with serious coverage of domestic and foreign news, science and culture, politics and social affairs. The new paper threatened the subscription papers by imitating their mode of delivery to homes and also by imitating their editorial style and content – but at no cost to readers. After some initial difficulties and change of ownership, it became clear that *Fréttablaðið* was here to stay – especially when it was finally revealed that it was

in fact *Baugur Group* that had decided to finance this experiment with a new type of newspaper.

In 2005, a new paper, *Bladid*, started a successful operation along the same lines as *Fréttabladid*. In 2007, *Fréttabladid* was clearly on top in terms of mean reading per issue – the paper was read by 63% of the population. *Morgunbladid* came second (44%), and *Bladid* third (36%), while *DV* trailed badly behind (7%) (www.gallup.is). Interestingly, some years ago *DV* made a short-lived attempt to experiment with British gutter-press editorial policy, characterized by down-market sensationalism to a greater extent than had been seen before in Icelandic daily newspapers. The attempt failed: many Icelanders were disgusted, and circulation was rock bottom.

The 2004 Media Bill: Taming of the New Media Capitalists or Political Vendetta?

2004 turned out to be one of the most dramatic years of Icelandic political history. The sequence of events and the roles of the various characters in the drama may seem odd indeed to the foreign observer. A conservative Prime Minister presented a media bill that would have transformed the Icelandic media market from being one of the least regulated in the Western world into a system in which broadcasting would be subject to “one of the most stringent ownership regulations known almost anywhere” (Broddason, 2005, p. 81). This media bill was strongly opposed by the left-of-centre Opposition parties, most journalists, and an overwhelming majority of public opinion. After heated debates, the bill scraped through *Althingi* with the smallest of margins – but then the President (a former leader of the left-socialists) refused to countersign the new Media Act. A constitutional crisis followed – and was only solved when the government gave in and withdrew the bill. Those events can only be understood in light of the radical changes in Icelandic society, economics, politics, and media that already have been outlined in this chapter.

The media bill was introduced in late April, a few days after the publication of a report by a government appointed committee, which had studied the Icelandic media market for four months. The Prime Minister pressed hard that the bill would be passed before the summer recess of *Althingi* in May – despite serious reservations from his Progressive coalition partners. While the content of the bill exceeded the recommendations of the government committee, the stated purpose “was to work against concentration in media ownership, which might threaten media diversity in Iceland. The final version of the bill prohibited allocation of television and radio permits to four types of companies: those whose main purpose was not media activity; those in which a large company in a dominant market position in any sphere of business owned more than 5 percent; those in which any one company owned more than 35 percent; and those that also published a newspaper” (Hardarson & Kristinsson, 2005, p. 1042).

Opponents of the bill claimed that it threatened the constitutional right of freedom of expression – and might in fact decrease political diversity in the

very small Icelandic media market, as it would prevent the operation of media companies large enough to be economically viable. It was argued that the real aim of Prime Minister Oddsson was to silence the media conglomerate in which *Baugur Group* was the main shareholder – a company which owned TV *Stöð 2* and both *Fréttabladid* and *DV*. Oddsson had for some years been quite openly critical of some of the new entrepreneurs in Icelandic business, especially *Baugur Group* and *Kaupthing Bank*. Before the 2003 election, Prime Minister Oddsson had accused *Baugur Group* of offering him a bribe for becoming friendlier towards the company. Many prominent Conservatives accused the *Baugur Group* Media for being unfair to the Independence Party in general and Prime Minister Oddsson in particular. Some commentators maintained that the real aim of the *Baugur Group* Media before the 2003 election had been to stage a *coup* as it was called – i.e. to replace the Oddsson government with a government led by the Social Democrats.

Opinion polls showed that 60-80 percent of voters opposed the media bill. “The opposition claimed that while there were in general good arguments for some kind of legislation on media ownership, a much longer time was needed to work out adequate proposals and achieve broad consensus on such legislation. The Prime Minister was accused of rushing the bill through the Parliament as a personal vendetta. Despite widespread and vocal opposition, the Althingi passed the Media Act on 24 May with 32 votes in favour, 30 votes against and 1 abstention” (Hardarson & Kristinsson, 2005, p. 1043).

On June 2nd President Grímsson refused to countersign the Media Bill. The Icelandic constitution states, that in such circumstances, the bill nevertheless becomes law, but shall be put to a referendum. No president had used this privilege before in the history of the republic. The refusal led to intense debate on constitutional issues. Prime Minister Oddsson doubted if the president had a personal right of refusal – or if this right was *de facto* with a Government Minister despite the letter of the constitution. While some lawyers had recently argued for such an interpretation, the conventional legal interpretation since the foundation of the republic had been that the president’s right of refusal was indeed personal. Soon it became clear that the Progressive Party – as well as the opposition parties – supported the traditional interpretation, and the government subsequently summoned *Althingi* to an extra session in order legislate on the procedure of the referendum. Just before the start of that session in early July, the government however decided not to hold a referendum, withdrew the act, and presented a new version of the bill. The new version included changes that the opposition considered minor, and faced with the possibility of constitutional deadlock if the president also refused the new version, the government finally gave in and withdrew the revised version, apart from some minor clauses. The Media Act of 2004 was dead.

In April 2005, an all-party committee appointed by the Minister of Education published a report, thoroughly analyzing the Icelandic media market, and making some unanimous recommendations on a new media bill. The committee recommended that public service broadcasting would be strengthened; that

ownership transparency would be secured; that rules on editorial independence would be introduced; and that rules on “may” and “must” carry would be implemented (*Skýrsla nefndar menntamálaráðherra* 2005: 193-203) Suggested limitations on ownership concentration were much more lenient than in the 2004 Media bill – for instance allowing cross-ownership between media sectors (Karlsson, 2006, p. 39). A media bill along those lines, introduced by the Minister in the 2006-2007 session of *Alþingi* did however not go through.

Conclusions

In this chapter we have distinguished between the old Icelandic system which prevailed from the 1930s to the 1970s and the new Icelandic system that has mainly taken form in the last two decades. Now we will try to relate those two systems and the Icelandic development to Hallin and Mancini’s (2004) three models of media and politics, outlined in the introductory chapter of this book.

Both the old and the new Icelandic systems have many features in common with the democratic corporatist or North European model. However, there are some deviations. Some aspects of the old Icelandic system seem to share features with the polarized pluralist model, while the new Icelandic system clearly has moved towards the liberal model in many respects.

Let us first examine Hallin and Mancini’s four dimensions, directly related to media systems.

- 1) Iceland developed *mass circulation press* in the first half of the twentieth century. Despite widespread penetration of other forms of media and death of the party-papers, newspapers are still widely read in Iceland, especially if we classify the free-of-charge home-delivered papers as real newspapers. Neither elite-oriented broadsheets nor down-market tabloids have developed in Iceland: Icelandic papers have been a combination of both types. An attempt to publish *DV* as a hard core tabloid recently failed – while the business paper *Vidskiptabladid* might be the first example of a successful Icelandic elite-newspaper.
- 2) The old Icelandic system was clearly characterized by *political parallelism*. The papers were strongly linked to the political parties – but much less so to interest organizations or societal cleavages. The newspapers were party organs: many editors and journalists (but not all) were active in politics – some of them prominent politicians. News coverage was usually quite biased, and the readership partisan. Some papers – especially the more commercially successful ones – however also tried to appeal to readers by non-political news and various entertainments. The external diversity of this system was however limited by the very strong position of the pro-conservative newspapers. Papers of other parties never managed to be as successful among readers as their parties were among voters. In

the new Icelandic system, political parallelism is largely absent. External diversity has been replaced by internal diversity – which was absent in the old system.

- 3) Iceland was a late-comer concerning *journalistic professionalism* – which was largely absent in the old system. While we can find examples of individual professional journalists earlier, the development towards professionalism did not really start until the 1970s. In the new system professional norms have become widespread among journalists. Education of journalists has greatly improved and many move between different media during their career. As all Icelandic media are small in international comparison, staff-shortages seriously limit Icelandic journalists' possibilities for high-class journalism.
- 4) *The role of the state* was limited in the old Icelandic system, as political content was largely absent in public radio and television, and there was no state support for newspapers. Since the 1970s however, public radio and television have been an active forum for independent political communication. Suggestions to privatize the public service broadcasting in recent years seem to enjoy little support and advertisements are still an important source of income for RÚV. While there is not enough research on the magnitude and importance of state support to the newspapers from the late 1960s to the 1990s, it seems clear that without such support the small party-papers would have died earlier – but it is also clear that those papers were a great financial burden for their parties despite state grants. In the present Icelandic system, state involvement is largely confined to providing a strong public radio and TV – the private media market is among the least regulated.

While Iceland resembles the Scandinavian countries in many respects on Hallin and Mancini's five dimensions of the political context of the media, there are also some deviations.

- 1) Iceland has a developed welfare system, even though the public sector has been somewhat smaller than in the Scandinavian countries. Despite a strong conservative party, the old Icelandic system was characterized by more state involvement in the economy and patronage than was the case in Scandinavia. While liberalization and privatization have been prominent features in Icelandic development during the last two decades, the public sector has continued to grow at the same time.
- 2) While Iceland clearly shares many features of consensus democracy – a proportional election system, multiple parties, and cooperation of parties in coalition governments – it also has some majoritarian features with strong emphasis on majority coalitions, little cooperation with opposition parties in parliament, and a winner-take-all attitude.

- 3) Class politics and class voting has been much weaker in Iceland than in Scandinavia. Corporatism has also played a smaller role in Icelandic politics.
- 4) Compared to other Nordic countries, many aspects of *rational-legal authority* were for a long time rather weak in Iceland, and political patronage was widespread. Universal rules and procedures have on the other hand greatly strengthened in recent decades.
- 5) *Moderate pluralism* characterizes Iceland. Religious and ethnic cleavages have been absent. Anti-system parties are largely confined to the 1930s and 1940s.

Finally we would like to make two general concluding remarks: First, we have seen in this chapter that in Iceland the development of the media system has been embedded in other parts of society – political, cultural, economic. The changes in the political communication system constitute a part of a more general development. Second, the development of the Icelandic media system raises important questions concerning democratic media in small societies. We will only mention two such questions: Is independent and professional public service radio and television an absolute prerequisite for diversity in political communication in small societies – even more important than in larger markets? Do small countries – if they want to sustain private media – have to be liberal concerning ownership of media companies: is their only choice perhaps between monopoly and duopoly – is the aim of a more diverse private oligopoly characterizing larger media systems too ambitious in practice for small nations?

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Chapter 5

Media and Politics in Norway

Helge Østbye & Toril Aalberg

The Norwegian parliamentary system emerged gradually out of a constitutional crisis in the first half of the 1880s when Parliament demanded powers from the Cabinet, which until then had been hand-picked by the king. The system of political parties emerged from the crisis, and the parties needed a channel where they could inform and have a dialogue with their voters (Høyer, 1969). This led to a political communication system where all the major parties had their own newspapers. These became mouthpieces for party interests, and for a long time there was a very strong link between politics and the media in Norway where the parties played the leading role. This is no longer the case. The interaction between parties, media and citizens has changed considerably during the last few decades.

The Norwegian Power and Democracy Project¹ (Østerud & Selle, 2006) found that the parliamentary chain of government is weakened due to several factors. One of these factors is the increasingly independent role of mass media. But the media's adaptation to economic forces and the quest for profit from invested capital has also influenced power relations and democracy in Norway. In this chapter we present the political communication system in Norway, and discuss whether new directions and trends are challenging Norway's position as a typical Democratic Corporatist Country (Hallin & Mancini, 2004).

The Norwegian Political System

Norway has a stable democratic tradition going back to the early nineteenth century. Following the Napoleonic war, Norway was forced into a union with Sweden in 1814, and the new constitution established one of the most democratic systems in Europe. Close to a third of the male population acquired the right to vote in elections to parliament (*Stortinget*). The union with Sweden was peacefully dissolved in 1905, and Norway gained full independence.

Today, like Sweden and Denmark, Norway is a parliamentary monarchy. There are 169 seats or members of the Storting and general elections are held

every four years. The Storting cannot be dissolved and there is no opportunity to call for new elections outside the year of the general election. There are no by-elections.² The Norwegian electoral system is based on the principle of **direct election** and **proportional representation**, where the electoral formula is based on Modified Sainte-Laguë.

The ballot is a vote for a list of representatives from a political party and the names on the party list are candidates representing that particular party. These candidates have been chosen according to the nomination conventions of each party. The parties rank the candidates, and can choose to list some of the candidates in boldface on the voting papers. Candidates listed in boldface are given an additional vote equal to 25 percent of the total amount of votes for the party. Voters may also give an additional personal vote to a candidate by placing a cross by their name. However, the effect of personal votes is very limited.

There are 19 counties in Norway which comprise the parliamentary constituencies and which are divided into polling districts. The number of seats in each constituency is related to the size of the county and its population. Each constituency has one seat reserved as an 'additional seat'. The additional seats are assigned to even out discrepancies between the number of votes received by each individual party and the number of seats given in the Storting. In order to compete for an additional seat, the parties must obtain more than 4% of the national vote. By comparing the actual distribution of seats with what would have been the case if the country had comprised one single constituency, one can determine which parties are underrepresented. These parties are awarded additional seats in the constituencies where they were nearest to win an ordinary seat.

When the Storting first convenes following an election, it elects one quarter of the representatives to serve as members of **the Lagting**. The remaining three quarters become members of **the Odelsting**. The two chambers have different roles in the process of legislation³. A bill is introduced by the government in the form of a proposition to the Odelsting. This proposition is the product of an exhaustive preparatory procedure. When a major item of legislation or an extensive revision of existing law is on the agenda, the government generally appoints an expert committee or commission to study the matter and submit a report to the ministry in charge of the bill. The ministry makes a draft bill and consults the organizations, other government bodies and institutions. This is referred to as **hearings**. When statements from the official consultations have been collected, the ministry prepares a Proposition to the Odelsting. The proposition is first submitted to the King in Council and after approval, the royal proposition is submitted to the Odelsting, which normally refers the matter to the appropriate committee.

The committee considers the bill and returns it to the Odelsting in the form of a **recommendation**. The recommendation is debated in the Odelsting. If the Odelsting accepts or amends the recommendation, it then goes to the Lagting in the form of an Odelsting **resolution**. The Odelsting resolution is deliberated

in the Lagting and if approved there, it is sent to the King in Council. When the King has sanctioned or signed the bill, it becomes law. Today the role performed by the monarch however, is merely symbolic.

Since the 1970s, minority governments have been the norm in Norwegian politics. There have been eleven single party minority cabinets and five minority coalitions. Majority governments have only been established on two occasions. In 2005 when Labour, the Centre Party and the Socialists Left formed a new so-called 'red-green alliance', and in 1983 when the Conservatives, the Centre Party and the Christian Peoples party formed a majority coalition.⁴ In multiparty systems as in Norway, the government formation process are often complicated and lengthy, but unlike Finland and Sweden, the Norwegian system has no formal or informal rules which constrains the government formation and resignation process (Rasch, 2004, p. 133). In Norway, there is also a system of negative parliamentarism which implies that the government has to be tolerated by the legislative majority, but it does not need to achieve active support of the majority.

The birth of the modern Norwegian party system is conventionally dated to 1884. This is the year when the first two parties, the Conservatives (*Høyre*) and the Liberals (*Venstre*), were established. From then on, and until the 1930s, the party system was subjected to a process of fragmentation. Rokkan (1966) explained the development and consolidation of the party system according to six historically-derived and relatively stable conflict lines: the territorial, the sociocultural, the religious, the moral, the commodity market conflict and the labour market conflict. These social cleavages are not independent, but overlap and interact in a way that has consolidated the Norwegian party system. The two first parties were established because of the territorial conflict between centre and periphery. The Conservatives were firmly identified with the centre, an urban culture, with Oslo as its stronghold. By contrast, the liberal alliance had its largest congregations in the peripheral and rural regions and among the moral and religious counter-cultures. But the Liberals also consisted of a broad alliance of heterogeneous groups and interests, and the party suffered from its brittle nature. Several fractions peeled off and established new parties, although many of these splinter groups later threw in their lot in with the Conservatives. Hence, some of these fragmentations helped the Conservatives which no longer consisted of a narrow grouping of elite civil servants. Today, the party can be characterised as a broader urban middle class party whose major issue concerns the last few years has been taxes, privatization and school policies.

As other cleavages became more politicized, it became difficult for the Liberals to balance the competing political claims. The Liberals were also challenged from movements outside the party (Urwin, 1997, p. 39). The embryonic socialist movement appealed to working class members and supporters of the Liberal party, and in 1887 the Labour Party (*Arbeiderpartiet*) was established. Controversy over Labour's withdrawal from the Communist International caused a radical fraction to establish the Communist Party in 1923. From 1927

to 1961, this was the only permanent splinter from Labour. The splintering of the Liberals, however, continued. In 1920, a fraction established the Agrarian Party (*Bondepartiet*). The larger and wealthier farmers saw how Labour appealed to smallholders and farm workers and became increasingly dissatisfied with the existing party alternatives. The Conservatives and Labour became the major protagonists in the labour market, while the Agrarians, who changed their name to the Centre Party (*Senterpartiet*) in 1957, politicized the commodity cleavage as the defenders of rural and agrarian economic interests (Urwin, 1997, p. 44).

A third major party fragmentation occurred when a dissident fraction of Lutheran fundamentalists formed the Christian Democratic Party (*Kristelig folkeparti*) in 1933.⁵ The religious and moral opposition was particularly important for the Christian Democratic Party. The breakaway fraction consisted of movements that challenged the supremacy of the official state church hierarchy, as well as a vigorous prohibition movement.

Today, the Liberals are seen as a social liberal party consisting of urban and rural academic voters, but they are struggling to maintain a high profile as other parties have adopted many of their traditional issue concerns. The Centre party is still affiliated with rural policies but also with their firm 'no' to EU membership. The Christian Democratic Party like to stress the importance of family values and moral, while Labour traditionally has been affiliated with labour rights and welfare issues, such as care for the elderly.

According to Lipset and Rokkan (1967, pp. 50-54), Norway experienced a freezing of party alignments so that the party system of the 1960s was more or less solidified by the 1920s. Lipset and Rokkan's freezing perspective emphasizes the stability in the party system that occurred after the 1920s and constant party support over time. But the electoral domination of Labour has also helped achieve the high degree of stability that characterized the Norwegian party system. Urwin (1997, p. 41) argues that there was a stability through hegemony, since there was no effective challenge to Labour. Internal conflicts and the cold war marginalized the communist party, and the four non-socialist parties, the Conservatives, the Liberals, the Centre Party and the Christian Democratic Party, were unwilling or unable to pursue much more than a minimal level of cooperation. Since Labour established their first government in 1935, the party dominated Norwegian party politics until the early 1960s. In 1961 however, internal dissention over Labour's foreign policy and NATO membership, led to the formation of the Socialist Peoples Party (*Sosialistisk Folkeparti*). Two years later this new socialist party together with the non-socialist parties agreed on a vote of no confidence, which resulted in the first bourgeois government in almost 30 years. From then on, Labour's majority position in Norwegian politics started to decline.

The next significant remoulding of the party system took place in 1973. In the early 1970s the question on whether to join the European Community caused a divisive and bitter controversy. The Socialist People's Party joint forces with a left wing fraction of Labour in what was to become the Socialist Left Party

(*Sosialistisk Venstreparti*). But the early seventies should also launch a new party to the far right. The birth of the populist Progress Party (*Fremskrittspartiet*)⁶ was not directly related to the EC issue, but the atmosphere and climate of frustration and alienation aided its development, since many voters had lost their traditional party loyalties (Urwin, 1997, p. 43). Today the Socialist Left party gains most support among public employees, and has been particularly preoccupied with policies concerning the environment, poverty, children and youth. The Progress Party used to achieve most support from young urban men, but as the party has grown their support base has become more varied. The Progress Party particularly stresses issues related to immigration, law and order as well as taxes.

Labour has maintained the largest share of the votes in general elections, but has experienced a significant decline in recent years, support having declined to around 30 percent during the last decade. The Conservatives have traditionally been the largest of the non-socialist parties and has attracted votes in the 14-32 percent range. From the late 1990s however, the Progress Party has challenged the Conservatives dominant position on the political right. In 2005, they received 22.5 percent of the votes, and became the second largest party in the parliament. As of yet, they are the only sizable party in Norwegian politics without government experience. Both the agrarian Centre Party and the Christian Democrats have inhabited 'small to medium' electoral space. The same goes for the Socialist Left party. The Liberal Party has, however, been a declining force in post-war Norwegian politics, and has been struggling to keep a toehold in parliament. They have nevertheless played a significant role since the late 1990s due to their membership in two minority coalition governments (1997-2000 and 2001-2005).

Table 1. The Norwegian Elections and Governments 1993-2005 (percent)

	1993	1997	2001	2005
Socialist Left Party (SV)	7.9	6.0	12.5	8.8
Labour (Ap)	36.9	35.0	24.3	32.7
Centre Party (Sp)	16.7	7.9	5.6	6.5
Christian Democratic Party (KrF)	7.9	13.7	12.4	6.8
Liberals (V)	3.6	4.5	3.9	5.9
Conservatives (H)	17.0	14.3	21.2	14.1
Progress Party (FrP)	6.3	15.3	14.6	22.1
Others	3.7	3.3	5.5	3.0
Turnout	75.8	78.3	75.5	77.4
Parties in Government	Ap	1997-2000: KrF + Sp + V 2000-2001: Ap	H + KrF + V	Ap + Sp + SV

Source: Statistics Norway, 2007a; Norwegian Government, 2007.

Over the years, election campaigns have become increasingly important for the parties due to several reasons. The importance of social structure and party

identification has declined, and electoral volatility has increased. The reduced importance of social structure is illustrated by the significant decline in class voting, both for workers, farmers and the middle class (Listhaug, 1997; Knutsen, 2004). However, this does not indicate that the effect of social cleavages has ceased completely. Social and geographical affiliation still explains a considerable amount of voting behaviour (Aardal, 2003). The effect of the territorial cleavage was for instance of great significance as late as the mid-1990s.⁷ Knutsen (2004, pp. 74-76) also argues that sector and gender have become important new cleavages in Norwegian politics. There is reason to argue that issue voting is becoming more important than structural cleavages in explaining Norwegians' voting behaviour (Aardal, 1999, p. 50).

The increased importance of issue salience during election campaigns can also be related to the sharp decline in party identification. Whereas 72 percent of the electorate declared that they identified with a particular party in 1965, this had declined to 48 percent in 2005. At the same time, an increasing share of the electorate postpones their decision on who to vote for until during the election campaign. While 15 percent decided during the campaign in 1965 this was the case for 56 percent of the electorate in 2005. Volatility has also experienced a major increase over the last 40 years. While 24 percent changed their voting behaviour from one election to the next in the 1960s this share had increased to 47 percent in 2005.

There has also been a downward trend in voter turnout in Norway. This has been especially noticeable for participation related to the municipal and county elections, but also in the last four parliamentary elections turnout has been markedly lower than for several decades. However, although turnout has declined, the broader political engagement among citizens has increased. Overall, the measures for general political interest show an upward move across the span of the election studies data, and there is also a positive increase in political discussions during the electoral campaigns (Listhaug & Grønflaten, 2007).

There is also a mixed picture if we turn to Norwegian trends in political dissatisfaction (Listhaug, 2006). While the overall level of political satisfaction is relatively stable, and on a relatively high level compared to other countries, each sub-dimension seem to follow a separate path (Aardal, 2003, pp. 212-214; Listhaug, 2006, p. 240). Internal political efficacy seems to be edging upwards, indicating that Norwegians feel they are becoming more politically competent. Dissatisfaction with politicians and government institutions however, seems to move more cyclically. Low levels of confidence in the late 1980s and early 1990s are probably best explained by the economic downturn and the increase in policy distance between government and the governed in this period. Then there was a peak in the mid-1990s before political trust declined again in the new millennium. Listhaug (2006, p. 242) suggests that paradoxically the latest decline is due to good times rather than the bad. As Norway came out of the recession in the mid-1990s, revenues from the oil industry made it possible for the state to use money from the so called "national petroleum fund" to invested in foreign bonds and shares. The purpose of the fund was to avoid inflationary

pressures in the Norwegian economy and contribute to pensions for future generations. However, many voters expressed frustration with politicians who did not want to use a larger share of the revenues from the oil fund on current problems. Aardal (2003, pp 216-220) demonstrates how there is a positive but weak relationship between electoral participation and political dissatisfaction. More importantly, however, is the relationship between political dissatisfaction and support for the Progress Party.

The Norwegian Media System

The basic legal principles for the media system were established in the 1814 constitution: a general freedom of the press, which included a right for anybody to establish a newspaper, and a ban on advance censorship. There was a more vaguely formulated principle of freedom of expression. The first Norwegian *newspapers*⁸ had already been established in major cities in the 1760s, but growth was very slow and it took more than 60 years before ten papers were published throughout the entire country. It took another 40 years before newspapers readership started to spread into all segments of the society.

The development leading to the constitutional conflict in the 1880s that was described in the introduction of this chapter, polarised the debate and politicised the newspapers. Almost all the newspapers took a stand in the conflict and when political parties were established, the newspapers formed alliances with these (Høyer, 1969). The period between 1860 and 1920 is characterised by a strong expansion of the press. It was cheap to establish new newspapers and they could survive even with a small circulation. Most newspapers were oriented towards the party and spread within their party's group of supporters (Westerståhl & Janson, 1958). The newspapers were not *owned* by the parties, but formed a lasting alliance with the party for mutual benefit. In certain periods, the parties gave financial support to loyal newspapers with a poor economy. The parties also ran news agencies, supplying 'their' newspapers with everything from party propaganda to chess and bridge columns.

The newspaper structure which developed from 1880 to 1925 meant that all the major parties had their own newspapers in urban areas all over the country. This is the period when Norwegians in general became newspaper readers. Almost all newspapers had a geographically concentrated readership, and from 1900 and well into the 1950s almost all towns and cities had more than one newspaper, often three, four or more, each representing one party. This system continued into the 1960s, with an interruption from 1940 to 1945. The Conservatives, the Liberals and the Labour Party were represented with newspapers all over the country, while parties established after World War I were disadvantaged because they had to introduce their papers at a time when the newspaper market was already saturated. Only the Centre party had a limited success.

The reconstruction of the Norwegian press after World War II restored the ties between the newspapers and the parties, but local competition became

more intensive. The determining factor was the distribution of advertisements between local competitors. The largest newspaper in each market acquired a very large share of the local advertising. This newspaper tended to survive and increase its circulation, while the smaller papers in each local market tended to loose out in the competition. Newspapers with an ambition to reach outside their political supporters, tended to tone down their political profile. This way, the two processes – monopolization of the local market and depolitization – were closely linked: Most newspapers ended their formal ties with the parties during the 1970s. But the previous party colour is still visible, for instance in the coverage of election campaigns (Allern, 2007).

During the party press era, politicians were often recruited as journalists and editors and vice versa, and the same people were active simultaneously in both arenas. The depolitization of the newspapers coincided with a professionalization of journalism. Formal education at college or university level became the starting point for many journalists. The journalists' and editors' organizations had already established professional codes of ethics.

The increased competition between local newspapers leads to a reduction in the number of newspapers. In order to reverse or halt this development, state subsidies to the press were introduced in 1969. The subsidies slowed down, but were not sufficient to halt the local monopolization process. Since the introduction of the subsidies many small newspapers have been established outside major towns and cities.

Some of the Oslo based newspapers were read all over the country, but most of the papers were local or regional. Really national newspapers appeared for the first time in the 1960, when two newspapers started to use aeroplanes in order to disseminate the paper all over the country. This way, the two popular newspapers from Oslo, *Verdens Gang* and *Dagbladet*, developed as genuinely national newspapers. The national level of the newspaper market consists of these two papers and few more specialised papers, most of them with a small circulation. The national papers account for about 20 percent of the total national newspaper circulation. Four large regional or large city newspapers account for approximately one sixth of the total circulation. This means that local newspapers dominate the market with more than 60 percent of the circulation, and with approximately 200 out of a total of almost 230 existing newspapers (Høst, 2007, pp. 42-47). The local press represents a complex and varied group of newspapers, but altogether they cover local life and politics in minute detail. The national papers, the regional papers and some of the local papers also cover the national and international level. Especially compared to the British tabloid press, the two popular Norwegian newspapers have much higher proportion of serious content about culture and politics.

The total circulation continued to increase for the Norwegian newspapers until the mid-1990s, but during the last ten years there has been a decline of approximately 10 percent. Nevertheless, the total circulation per 1000 inhabitants still gives Norway the top position among European countries.

Table 2. Some Key Figures of the Norwegian Newspaper Market 1995-2005

	1995	2000	2005
Titles	218	218	226
– of which: daily (5+ editions per week)	85	81	74
Total circulation in thousands	3 160	3 110	2 950
Daily reading (%/min)	84%/40 min	77%/34 min	74%/29 min

Source: Statistics Norway, 2007b; MedieNorge, 2007a.

While the newspapers were embraced in party politics for more than a hundred years, the norm has always been that broadcasting should not become ‘politicised’. However, both radio and television play an important role in the political system.

Broadcasting in Norway⁹ started as local or decentralised services. Private companies in four cities (Oslo, Bergen, Tromsø and Ålesund) were given a five-year licence to broadcast – they were granted a monopoly in an area surrounding the city. The first of these companies, *Kringkastingselskapet* in Oslo, started in 1925. *Kringkastingselskapet* expanded outside its original territory, and established the framework for a national service (with the exception of the western parts of the country). The companies were financed by a licence fee, a stamp duty on radio receivers sold in their district, and commercials. The programme content was serious – close to what would be expected of a public service broadcasting company. *Kringkastingselskapet* did broadcast some talks on controversial issues of that time, but avoided party politics.

In 1933, the state was ready to take over responsibility for broadcasting in Norway. A minority government headed by the Liberal party was supported in parliament by the Labour Party in a vote in favour of state ownership. The Conservatives supported the Government in a vote on an integrated organization for the new broadcasting company. This was in opposition to a system with two companies, one with responsibility for technical production and distribution, and one company with responsibility for content. The Broadcasting Act of 1933 established *Norsk Rikskringkasting* (NRK) – The Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation – as a national broadcasting monopoly. High priority was given to the creation of a genuinely national network of transmitters (it took almost until 1960 before radio reached 100 percent national coverage). NRK created a genuinely *national* radio: there were no regional variations, but the radio programme was to reflect living conditions in all parts of the country and be relevant to everyone. Generally, NRK took its public service obligations seriously, with a focus on news, current affairs, talks (information in a broad sense), children’s programmes and classical music.

Radio became an important mass medium during the 1930s. The network of transmitters was extended, and the first transmitter in the northernmost county of Finnmark came into operation in 1934, and new listeners flocked to the radio. The number of licence fee payers increased from 123,000 in 1933 to 439,000 in 1940. World War II was a temporary setback for the development

of radio, but the growth continued in the postwar period. NRK had to rely on the licence fee and the stamp duty on radio receivers. The 1950s was really the 'golden age' for radio in Norway.

Norway was among the last countries in Europe to introduce television. The television service was officially opened by the king and prime minister in 1960 within the framework of NRK's broadcasting monopoly. As with radio, the main focus was on the creation of a national network of transmitters. Programme production was centralised, but the growth of the audience was steep despite limited transmission hours. In the 1950s, people had listened to radio for an average of 2½ hours per day. This declined by 30 minutes when television was introduced, and people watched TV for 1 hour 30 minutes, increasing to 1 hour 45 minutes as the broadcasting hours increased.

Table 3. Some Key Figures of the Norwegian Broadcasting Markets 1995-2005

	1995*	2000	2005
Total daily radio listening (%/min.)	64%/138 min.	66%/135 min.	70%/146 min.
Total daily TV viewing (%/min.)	73%/150 min.	72%/163 min.	71/164 min.
Radio listening (%/min.)			
– Public Service: NRK	45%/85 min.	50%/84 min.	48%/89 min.
– Hybrid channels: Kanal24, P4	21%/40 min.	28%/40 min.	- /40 min.
TV viewing (%/min.)			
– Public Service: NRK (share for NRK1 only)	63%/65 min.	60%/66 min.	59%/72 min.
– Hybride Channel: TV 2	57%/48 min.	58%/52 min.	54%/48 min.

* 1996 for television.

Source: MedieNorge, 2007b, 2007c.

In the late 1970s, the Conservatives proposed the dissolution of the broadcasting monopoly. This would require a change in the Broadcasting Act. In 1981, the party formed a minority government, and very soon after, changes were made to the Act in order to start experiments with local radio and television. Local radio soon became a success, and in 1988 commercial television was also permitted. Since 1982, cable networks were allowed to retransmit foreign television channels from satellites and in 1988, one Norwegian and one pan-Scandinavian satellite channel (TVNorge and TV3) were also disseminated via the cable networks. In 1990, most political parties agreed on a compromise which led to the subsequent introduction of private, nationwide radio and television channels.

The second terrestrial television channel, TV 2, commenced in 1992. This channel was regulated by a licence agreement with the Ministry of Cultural and Scientific Affairs, and was given some public service obligations. The following year, a similar structure was created for radio (P4). A second, private radio channel was licensed in 2003 (Kanal24). With the combination of profit-oriented owners and public service obligations, these channels can be described as *hybrid channels* (Syvertsen, 2006). Today, four owners dominate the Norwegian

broadcasting sector: NRK, TV2, MTG/Kinnevik (Swedish) and Scandinavian Broadcasting System (SBS – an American company based in Europe).

Table 4. Major Radio and Television Channels, early 2007

Company	Owner	Primary Channels (distribution)	Secondary Channels
NRK	The Norwegian state	Radio: P1, P2 and P3 Television: NRK1, NRK2	Several specialised radio channels SportN*
TV 2	Egmont (Danish) 50% A-pressen (50%)	Radio: Kanal24*** Television: TV 2	News channel, film channel , sports channel, Zebra
SBS	SBS (Scandinavian Broadcasting System)	Radio: Radio 1** Television: TVNorge	
Modern Times Group	Kinnevik (Swedish)	Radio: P4 Television: TV3	P4 Bandit ZTV, SportN *, film channels and other specialised channels

* The ownership of SportN is shared by Kinnevik and the NRK. ** Radio 1 is the largest chain of local radio stations. *** In 2008 Kanal24 was sold to SBS and was renamed Radio Norge.

The depolitization of the newspapers coincided with the first phases of private ownership of the broadcasting media in the 1980s. Profit-oriented investors entered into the media sector. Joint ownership of different media businesses could rationalise production and create positive synergies. Bulk purchase of newspapers took place. Three groups ended up with control of a large part of the newspaper industry: Schibsted (with its basis in *Aftenposten* and VG), A-pressen (with the trade unions as owner and a basis in the former Labour party press), and Orkla (originally a mining company, investing heavily in food and chemical production). The same companies also invested in other media. Schibsted (along with the Danish magazine publishing house Egmont) and Orkla competed for the licence for the first private television channel. Schibsted won, and later invited A-pressen in as a third owner (in 2006 Schibsted sold their shares in TV 2 to the two remaining owners of TV 2). Newspapers owned by these companies are also involved in local radio and television stations in their area. Orkla has sold their newspaper interests in Norway and abroad (mainly in Denmark and Poland) to the British company, Mecom.

The new owners tended to extract far more economic resources from the media businesses than the owners prior to 1980. There is also a strong concentration of ownership. This has been of concern to several governments since the mid-1990s (St.meld. nr. 92, 1992-93). In order to prevent further concentration,

a law was passed in 1997 (The Media Ownership Act). The Norwegian Media Authority can halt acquisition of ownership in media should such acquisition threaten freedom of expression, genuine opportunities to express one's opinions and a comprehensive range of media. The big test for the Media Authority came in 2007 when Schibsted (already by far the most dominant newspaper owner) wanted to merge the four newspapers *Aftenposten*, *Bergens Tidende*, *Stavanger Aftenblad* and *Fædrelandsvennen* and create a new company where Schibsted owned 50.1% of the shares. The Media Authority temporarily blocked the merger, but this decision has been overturned by an appeal tribunal in 2008.

The *Internet* has rapidly become an important media for information and entertainment. Because it is easy to establish oneself as an information provider, the Internet has been regarded as a medium with a democratic potential. But if we look at the most frequently used information providers on the Net, we find only well-established media actors. The dominant newspapers (like *VG*, *Aftenposten*, *Dagbladet*) and the national radio and television companies (NRK, TV 2) dominate completely. One independent Internet newspaper – *Nettavisen* – was established in 1996 and became an immediate success. But the independence lasted only for three years, when it was sold to the Swedish company, Spray, and finally to TV 2 in 2003. When it comes to Internet access and use, this is relatively high in Norway and has been increasing steadily since the early 1990s.

Table 5. Internet Access and Use in Norway 1996-2005

	1996	2000	2005
Computer access at home	43	71	83
Internet use last month	11	52	75

Source: MedieNorge, 2007.

Interaction between Media and Politics

As shown above, Norwegian media have always been closely integrated into the political system. The relationship between media and politics in Norway has however, changed substantially over the last few decades. The political role of the media has changed from being a passive channel closely tied to the political parties to a situation where it now plays an independent, yet active, role as a director of the political public sphere (Jenssen & Aalberg, 2007, ch. 11).

The period since the Second World War can be described in four phases. As stated in the previous section, the Norwegian newspapers were related to political parties for a long period during which we can recognize several phases. The first phase is characterised by such a loyal party press. The papers constituted important links of communication between voters and parties. During election campaigns, they served as heralds for the parties, but they were also important channels for the parties between elections. The rise and heyday of radio also

characterises this first phase. In this period, radio was synonymous with NRK and which had a non-partisan platform and a strategy of non-interference in the dissemination of party political messages. The role of the radio was to be a passive reporter and moderator. NRK left it to the political parties to decide the profile, form and range of election programmes (Bjørklund 1991, p. 283). In order to maintain its unbiased profile two strategies were used. For radio programmes that focused on one party, the normal procedure was that other parties constituted a cross-examining panel. If various parties or topics were to be discussed, it was important that any form of bias was avoided. This problem was solved by allotting the same amount of time to each party, and the role of the programme leader was to ensure that each of the parties was given the appropriate amount of time.

Table 6. Four Phases in the Relationship between Media and Politics in Norway

Period	Role of the Media:	Period Characteristics
Phase I: 1945-57	Channel	A loyal party press and the breakthrough of radio.
Phase II: 1961-69	Arena	A loyal party press under pressure and the advent of television
Phase III: 1973-89	Actor	Dissolution of the party press and the beginning of the television era. Increased journalistic professionalization with focus on independence.
Phase IV: 1993-	Director	Television dominates. Increased focus on subjective journalism. Media intervenes in and directs the political debate. Alternative public arenas are marginalized.

Based on Bjørklund (1991), Østbye (1997), Aardal (2004), Waldahl (2007) and Jenssen & Aalberg (2007). The start and beginning of these phases are related to years when national elections took place

Gradually this led to a system where collectively the media were seen as an *arena* for discussion among the parties. The radio had already started to play such a role in the first phase, but in the second phase this arena achieved new dimension when television was introduced to the Norwegian audience.

During the 1960s, television took over as the most important medium for dissemination of political information. By 1973, 82 percent of the electorate had watched one or more election programmes on television during the campaign (Bjørklund, 1991, p. 285). In this period, both radio and television coverage of politics followed the 'no-interference' strategy (Allern, 2004). The 1960s also saw the first trend of press depoliticization when the most dominant newspapers reduced the intensity of their partisan journalism (Østbye, 1997, p. 220). Although the larger newspapers kept their official political labels, they reduced their direct attacks on political opponents. Some parties had lost some of their newspapers during the Second World War, and this trend continued. The remaining papers tried to attract readers from all parties. Because of the close link between market position and revenues from advertising, the further expansion

of newspaper sales became increasingly important, and strong partisan views would not be of much help in extending the readership. Østbye (1997, p. 221) also argues that a more relaxed political climate may have contributed to the 'softer' political profile of newspapers.

During the latter part of the second phase, NRK was criticized for conducting an old-fashioned form of journalism and reducing professional television journalists to passive timekeepers. The media were no longer satisfied with being an arena for other actors. They wanted to play a part themselves, and gradually TV and radio journalists started to play a more active role in Norwegian politics. By the early 1970s, even the parties agreed that the programmes should be NRK's responsibility (Allern, 2004). This led to a programme format where journalists more aggressively questioned the parties about their policies or other issues which the programme leaders thought were appropriate. The split and collapse of the Liberal party in 1972-73 made many of the former liberal newspapers abandon their party-political affiliation. Most non-socialist newspapers followed suit and declared themselves independent. In this third phase, there is also an increased journalistic professionalization. The ideal is to be an independent actor based on investigative journalism. The journalists became *actors* in the political debate by demanding answers to their own questions, and questioning the answers given by the politicians.

A fourth phase in the relationship between media and politics in Norway commenced in the beginning of the 1990s. The increase in the number of national and local radio and television channels lead to a multitude of broadcasted election debates. In 1991, the last year with a television monopoly, NRK offered its audience only nine televised election programmes. In 1993, the Norwegian electorate was able to watch up to 32 different election programmes (Allern, 2004, p. 91). Television became the dominant medium and occupied a substantial amount of both politicians and voters' time. For the newspapers, this phase is characterized by a decline in readership. Much of the press coverage is also oriented towards how politicians perform in the various television programmes. During this phase newspapers lost their leading role as the most important information channel. The major aspect of this fourth phase, however, is that the media (and especially television) starts to play the role of a *director*. Journalists, programme leaders and editors are aware of their power, and are not afraid to use it. Rather, they perceive it as their right to decide which topics to discuss and whom to invite (Allern, 2004, p. 54). Thus in the fourth phase media intervenes in and directs the political debate. At the same time alternative arenas are marginalized as television companies spend more time announcing their own programmes than covering political debates organized by the parties themselves or other organizations. There also seems to be an increased focus on subjective journalism. The time and column space spent on commentaries and 'views' rather than 'news' increases. This does not however, indicate a return to a high degree of partisanship in media.

Bjørklund (1991, p. 283) describes the development from one phase to the next as *cumulative*; that is when a new role is taken on and the old one re-

mains. In other words, even in the fourth phase some newspapers functioned as important channels for the parties, in spite of the fact that these channels were no longer controlled by the parties as previously. In 2007, several newspapers still retain direct or indirect association with to certain parties, or at least a clear sympathy or preference. Although the Labour party sold its shares in *A-pressen* in 1995,¹⁰ this media corporation still has strong connections to the Labour movement: the Norwegian Federation of Trade Unions remains a major shareholder. The Labour press has always had a strong position in the northern part of Norway (Østbye, 1997, p. 218). Troms Labour party, for instance, still owns 12 % of the shares in *Nordlys*, the region's biggest newspaper. The two other left wing parties, The Socialist Left (SV) and the Red Electoral Alliance (RV) each had its own newspaper, the weekly *Ny Tid* and the daily *Klassekampen* respectively. The non-socialist parties no longer own their own newspapers, but sympathies and indirect links still remain (Allern, 2007). For instance, the previous Conservative press is now regarded as independent and newspapers in this conglomerate are based on liberal-conservative values. This holds for large newspapers like *Aftenposten* and *Adresseavisen*. Similarly, the Centre Party no longer has formal ties to any one newspaper, but *Nationen* which is owned by organizations and companies connected to the agricultural industry has a profile that is close to the Center Party. Likewise, the independent Christian newspaper *Vårt Land* shares the same value base as the Christian Democratic Party.

The degree of media-political elite integration is, and has for a long time, been high in Norway (Østbye, 1997, p. 219). People moved back and forth between the political sphere and the media. According to Allern (2001, pp. 280-281) this trend was particularly apparent within the Labour party. Several members of parliament had previously worked in the media. Press and broadcasting are important bases for the recruitment of political leaders, and several parliamentarians and cabinet members have 'retired' into leading media positions. Indeed, from the end of the Second World War until 2007, all NRK broadcasting directors were leading politicians. From 1948 to 2001 the director had always had links to the Labour party. John G. Bernander, who was Director General 2001-2007, was the first with a political career from a party other than Labour. In 2007, a new General Director was appointed. The new director did not have any party affiliation, and his qualifications were based solely on his long media career within NRK.

However, it is not reasonable to say that the broadcaster has been utilized for party political propaganda. Governments have appointed independent people with a clear and positive attitude to public service broadcasting ideas. The political system has had influence on the general direction of the development of NRK, but very little direct influence over programmes. In parliament, there were many heated debates, especially in the 1970s, when there were claims that the programmes were leaning towards the far left or against Christian values. Moreover, for the last ten or fifteen years, politicians more frequently 'retire' into lobbying or the PR sector than to the media. According to Allern (1997,

2001), the PR sector experienced a significant expansion during the 1990s. Allern estimates that the number of people employed in the PR industry in 2001 is approximately the same as those employed as journalists and editors in Norwegian news desks (Allern, 2001, p. 278).

The changing role of the Norwegian media from a passive channel to an active director also indicates that media has gained power at the expense of the political parties. Jenssen and Aalberg (2007, p. 255) describe the parties' new relationships with the media as a 'fear-based state of dependence'. Not only can they no longer rely on the party press, but other important links with the voters such as party membership and party identification have also been reduced. At the same time, the parties are very aware of the effects the media may have on the public. In a survey of Norwegian members of parliament, Aalberg and Jamtøy (2007) find that the vast majority believe that the media have too much power. An equally large proportion (76%) disagreed with the statement that 'The power of the mass media is overrated'. The same number stated that politicians often make use of journalists by leaking information to them, and that they have personal contact with a journalist daily or several times a week. The fear-based dependency is also illustrated by the fact that 50 percent of the parliamentary members declare that it is the media that determines which issues are important, and that politicians have little impact on this matter.

It is evident that the Norwegian political parties occasionally wish to avoid the 'journalistic filter' which regulates much of their current political communication so that they can regain some of the direct links they used to have with their voters. Several attempts have been made to establish such a link on the Internet (Hestvik, 2001; Krogstad, 2007). But there is nevertheless reason to discuss how efficient these attempts have been. The main political function of the Internet in Norway is probably that it gives the citizens access to a wide range of Norwegian and foreign media and other sources of information. Despite the relatively high Internet penetration into Norwegian society, political parties have not been particularly active in taking advantage of this new medium. During the local elections of 2007, Internet use by both parties and voters seemed to be increasing. Hence, there is reason to believe that the Internet may become a more important arena for political communication in the future.

Another more direct link, free from the 'journalistic filter', is political advertising. This is a channel the parties are using in various degrees partly based on financial resources (Karlsen & Narud, 2004; Aalberg & Saur, 2007). Political advertising on television is not permitted in Norway, but pamphlets, posters, boards and newspaper advertisements have been used for a long time. More recently, parties have also opened up to political advertising on the Internet. Radio advertising is also permitted, but few parties use this form of communication as they find it hard to produce good and efficient political advertising for this medium (Karlsen & Narud, 2004). There has also been a significant discussion about whether political advertising on television should be allowed. In September 2004, important changes in the constitution were made which opened for political and religious advertising on television. In 1996, a Freedom

of Speech Commission was formed to review and propose changes to the freedom of expression clause (Paragraph 100) in the Norwegian constitution. This paragraph had not been changed since 1814 when the Constitution was first drawn up. Among many recommendations from the Commission was a suggestion to allow political advertising on radio and television. This proposition was left out when the parliament adopted a change to the Constitution in 2004. After the parliamentary election in 2005, there was no longer a parliamentary majority in favour of political advertising on television, and the Minister of Culture and Church Affairs announced in May 2006 that he would refrain from implementing the work that his predecessor had not been able to finish.

Is Norway still a Democratic Corporatist Country?

There are several classifications of political systems (see, for example, Lipset & Rokkan, 1969) and some classifications of media systems (the most prominent being *Four Theories of the Press* (Seibert, Peterson & Schramm, 1956)). One interesting attempt to combine characteristics of the political and media systems is found in *Comparing Media Systems* by Hallin & Mancini (2004) (see Chapter 1). Norway is a north European state, and according to Hallin and Mancini (op. cit. pp. 67-68) operates within the Democratic Corporatist Model. In answer to the question whether this model fits with the description of the Norwegian politico-media system given earlier in this chapter, we can generally answer in the affirmative.

Hallin and Mancini (2004, p. 68 and chapters 3, 4 and 6) use five broad sets of indicators to distinguish between the three models of political features. All these indicators are in accordance with Hallin & Mancini's Democratic Corporatist Model, but in some cases there is a trend away from the ideals of the model. The (second) Norwegian Power and Democracy Project indicated that the corporative features of the Norwegian system have been diminished. The market has become more important and negotiations between the government and various organizations are less important than before. The number of boards, councils and committees has been reduced, and these very often functioned as meeting places for representatives of the government, political parties and organizations (Østerud, Engelstad & Selle, 2003, p. 101). Globalization and a general trend towards liberalistic economic ideas are reasons for this development. Perhaps the Norwegian political system is moving in a more liberal or liberalistic direction. But it still fits better into the Democratic Corporatist Model.

Hallin and Mancini (2004, p. 67, and chapters 2 and 6) also give a set of four indicators linked to the media system. The Norwegian newspaper industry and level of journalistic professionalism in Norway do fit the ideal description of a democratic corporatist country. For the other two indicators there are factors that somewhat distinguish Norway from the ideal type described by Hallin and Mancini. When it comes to *Political parallelism*, it took longer to sever the

links between parties and the press in Norway than in most other countries. It was not until the 1970s that newspapers became more politically neutral in respect of party affiliation, and subsequently more market oriented. Many newspapers can, however, still be linked to political ideologies, and some still have close connections to specific political parties. Hallin and Mancini describe the democratic corporatist model as a system where there is strong state intervention in the *media system*. The state plays an active role in the development of the media system, and a system of press subsidies was introduced in order to maintain diversity in the press. The broadcasting system is also based on public service broadcasting ideals. Since the early 1990s, clauses in concession agreements for national private radio and television channels also emphasizes the importance of diversity within each channel. However, there is a tendency for all media (including public broadcasters) to become increasingly commercial and market-oriented. This may jeopardise the diversity. Indeed, the final report of the Norwegian Power and Democracy Project pointed out that the parliamentary chain had been weakened during the last 15 to 20 years, and suggested that one of the reasons for this was that the media has become more important and independent.

This means that the media compete with the political parties in areas that were previously central to the parties: the media initiate new issues, come up with possible solutions, and muster support for their preferred solutions. They are also very active in the surveillance of all stages in the political process, and of the individual politicians. This development may have reduced the importance of the formal political system, but it is a matter for further discussion whether this weakens the citizens' influence over political decisions.

Notes

1. In 1972, Prime Minister Trygve Bratteli appointed Professor Gudmund Hernes to head the first 'Power Study' (*Maktutredningen*). The final report was published in 1982 (NOU 1982:3). From 1998 to 2003 the second power study (actually 'Power and Democracy Study' – *Makt og demokratiutredningen*) was conducted under the leadership of Professor Øyvind Østerud. Final report: Østerud, Engelstad & Selle, 2003).
2. Local and regional elections are also held on a fixed day every fourth year, creating a system where there are elections and election campaigns every two years.
3. From October 2009 the Storting will no longer be divided in two chambers. This indicates a new arrangement where new bills will need to be passed by the plenary Storting twice. A new bill will be rejected if it does not pass the first voting. If the same bill is passed in two subsequent meetings the motion is carried. If the new bill is not accepted in the second parliamentary meeting it must be evaluated a third and final time. If the third voting is negative the new bill proposal is rejected, if it passes the third time the motion is carried. There should be at least three days between the voting's.
4. The initial plan was to form a majority coalition after the 1981 election, but due to disagreement over the abortion issue, the Conservatives established a single party majority government held power for two years, before the three parties resumed negotiations and established the Willoch II government.
5. At first, the party consisted only of a west-coast fundamentalist movement, and was not consolidated as a national party until after 1945.

6. First known as Anders Lange's Party for strong reductions of Taxes, Charges and Public Interventions.
7. In both the 1993 Storting Election as well as in the 1994 referendum on membership to the European Union, the territorial cleavage was a significant factor explaining voting behaviour (Aardal & Valen 1995, Ringdal & Valen 1998).
8. The description of the Norwegian newspaper history is to a large extent based on Ottosen, Røssland and Østbye 2002.
9. The Norwegian broadcasting history has been largely written by Hans Fredrik Dahl: Dahl 1975, Dahl 1978, Dahl and Bastiansen 1999; a shorter version can be found in Halse and Østbye 2003
10. A-pressen (a mediacorporation originally established to organize Labour newspaper) bought 20 percent of the shares in TV 2, and the Labour party did not find it appropriate that a political party should own a national television company.

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Chapter 6

Media and Politics in Sweden

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During the last few decades, the political communication system in Sweden and the patterns of interaction between political actors, the media and the citizenry have changed considerably. The changes are evolutionary rather than revolutionary, but are nevertheless significant.

The changes can be described as a continuous process of mediatization – a concept which refers to a process through which the mass media has gained both increased influence and importance in the opinion formation processes, and increased independence from the political system (Asp & Esaiasson, 1996; Hjarvard, 2004; Schulz, 2004). This is a process where four phases can be identified (Strömbäck, 2008):

1. The first phase of mediatization is reached when the mass media constitute the most important channel of communication between government and political actors on the one hand, and the citizenry on the other. This is also when politics can be described as mediated.
2. The second phase of mediatization is reached when the mass media has become semi-independent from government or other political bodies, and thus largely control their own content as well as the necessary resources that can be used in the "negotiation of newsworthiness" (Cook, 2005) by those trying to influence the news.
3. The third phase of mediatization is reached when the mass media has become so independent and important that political actors and others start to adapt to the predominant notion of newsworthiness and the so-called media logic (Altheide & Snow, 1979), in order to influence the news and manage visibility.
4. The fourth phase of mediatization is reached when political or other social actors not only adapt to the media logic and the predominant news values, but also *internalize* these and allow the standards of newsworthiness to become a built-in part of the governing process. Thus, if political actors in the third phase *adapt* to the media logic and the predominant news

values, they *adopt* the same media logic and standards of newsworthiness in the fourth phase.

Against this background, this chapter will describe and analyze the political communication system in Sweden. Briefly, the first sections will focus on the Swedish political system and the sections immediately following this will focus on the media system. Thereafter the interaction between media and politics will be analyzed and the applicability of the Hallin and Mancini-framework to the Swedish case will be assessed. Following this, there will be a discussion about some recent trends and conclusions will be offered with regards to the mediatization of Swedish political communication.

The Swedish Political System

Sweden is a parliamentary monarchy, where the parliament (Riksdagen) has one chamber with 349 seats. Universal suffrage was adopted in the 1921 election, and since 1994, the elections have been held on the third Sunday in September every fourth year. This includes national as well as regional and local elections. Thus, with the exception of referendums and elections to the European Parliament, Swedish citizens cast their ballots only once every fourth year. Elections to the European Parliament have been held in 1995, 1999 and 2004. National referendums are, however, rather rare. Although local referendums have become more common, only six national referendums – all consultative – have been held so far. The two most recent concerned whether Sweden should join the European Union (1994) and adopt the Euro (2003).

Despite or due to the low frequency of elections, voter turnout in Sweden is among the highest in the world for those democracies that do not have compulsory voting.¹ In the 2006 election, the turnout was 82%. However, it has declined over the last few decades, with the major drop from 88.1% to 81.4% occurring between the 1994 and 1998 elections. This led to a renewed debate about the problems associated with Swedish democracy, and the perception in Sweden is that the drop in turnout is a democratic problem that requires to be addressed (SOU 2000:1).

In a sense, the turnout rate is often treated as the most important indicator of the vitality of the Swedish democracy, whereas research indicating rather low political activity in other respects has not so far had the same impact on the political debate. This is somewhat paradoxical, as a parliamentary committee some years ago agreed that the guiding democratic ideal in Sweden should be a "participatory democracy with deliberative elements" (SOU 2000:1). From such a perspective, participation by citizens in aspects other than those concerning voting should be perceived as at least as important as voting.

The electoral system is strictly proportional. There is, however, one exception: To take part in the distribution of seats in the national parliament a party must gain at least 4% of all votes cast throughout Sweden, or at least 12% of

the votes cast in a single constituency. There are 29 constituencies, and the number of seats in each constituency is based on the number of eligible voters. People do not have to register to vote, and advance voting is possible. Thus, the high turnout can be explained by the relative ease of voting, due to postal voting, election day being held on Sundays, and automatic voter registration. The proportional electoral system as such also encourages a high turnout (Norris, 2004).

People vote for party lists set up by the parties in the different constituencies. Since 1998 it has also been possible to express a preference for a preferred candidate. However, in order for a candidate to be elected by means of the total number of preference votes, he or she must have received a number of preference votes equivalent to at least 8% of the votes cast for the party in the constituency in the election. For elections to the European Parliament and regional and local elections, the corresponding threshold is 5%. The relatively high threshold for the elections to parliament, in combination with the tendency for voters to express a preference for the candidates already placed at the top of the party lists, has contributed to the end result that very few candidates – seven in the 2006 election – win a seat through the share of preference votes. Consequently, the share of voters expressing candidate preference was only 23% in the 2006 national election.²

This serves to illustrate that the electoral system, and the Swedish democracy as a whole, is very party-centered (Petersson *et al.*, 2000). When deciding to introduce preferential voting, the parties deliberately created a system where the impact of this innovation would be limited (Petersson *et al.*, 1999). Moreover, party discipline in the Swedish parliament is strong, further contributing to a system where the parties are decidedly more important than individual members of parliament or candidates.

In this context, it is worth mentioning how Swedish politics is financed. Out of the four sources of revenues – member fees, public funding, lotteries and sales, and donations – the most important source in the Swedish case is public funding. At the national level, the parties with parliamentary representation receive about 360 Mkr (51.4 million US dollar) annually from the Parliament.³ To this, the public funding from regional and local municipalities should be added. In total, the annual figure for regional public funding (2004) was about 187.5 Mkr (26.8 million US dollar), whereas the local public funding (2005) was about 333.4 Mkr (47.6 million US dollar).⁴ With the exception of the Social Democrats, which receive substantial funding from the labour unions (Johnson, 1996), public funding accounts for the majority of the annual income for the parties (Petersson *et al.*, 2000).

The Swedish Party System

From the introduction of universal suffrage in the early 1920s until the 1998 election, the Swedish party system consisted of five significant parties. These were the Social Democrats, the Left Party (formerly the Communists), the

Centre Party (formerly the Agrarian Party), the Liberal Party and the Moderates (traditionally a conservative party). These parties were organized in a Left bloc, including the Social Democrats and the Left Party, and a Right bloc, including the other three parties. The Left bloc, especially the Social Democrats, had strong and highly organized links to the blue collar labour unions, whereas the Right bloc had some, although not organized and significantly weaker, links to the business world.

In 1988 changes started to occur, however. At this point, the Green Party became the first new party in parliament. It, however, lost its parliamentary representation in 1991, before returning to parliament in 1994. In 1991 two other new parties also managed to win seats in the parliament: the Christian Democrats, and the right-wing populist party New Democracy. Since then the Christian Democrats have remained in parliament, whereas New Democracy ceased to exist in 1994. Hence, since 1994 the Swedish party system has consisted of seven significant parties. In addition, there is one party in the European Parliament – the June List – and some smaller parties, which have seats in some regional or local parliaments.

Ever since the 1930s, the Social Democrats have been, and continue to be, the largest party. During most of this time it has also been the governing party. In fact, the Social Democrats have been in government during the entire period from the early 1930s until the 1976 election, always with more than 40% of the votes. For the majority of this time, the Social Democrats formed single-party minority governments, although they entered into coalitions on a few occasions before the late 1950s. Different coalitions of centre-right wing parties formed minority governments between 1976-1982 and 1991-1994, and a majority government after the 2006 election. Table 1 summarizes the outcome, turnouts and governments formed after the last four national elections.

Table 1. The Swedish Elections and Governments 1994-2006 (percent)

	1994	1998	2002	2006
The Left Party (v)	6.2	12.0	8.3	5.8
The Social Democrats (s)	45.3	36.4	39.8	35.0
The Green Party (mp)	5.0	4.5	4.6	5.2
The Centre Party (c)	7.7	5.1	6.1	7.9
The Liberal Party (fp)	7.2	4.7	13.3	7.5
The Christian Democrats (kd)	4.1	11.8	9.1	6.6
The Moderates (m)	22.4	22.9	15.2	26.2
Turnout	88.1	81.4	80.1	82.0
Parties in government	(s)	(s)	(s)	(m)+(fp)+ (c)+(kd)

Source: <http://www.val.se>; <http://www.scb.se>

The fact that minority governments have been the rule in Sweden, has fostered a political climate characterized by consensus and cooperation rather than conflict between the political parties. In fact, most of the time while the Social

Democrats have formed minority governments, they have had more or less stable and organized cooperation with at least one other party.

The political culture of consensus and corporatism (SOU 1990:44; Åsard & Bennett, 1997) is also evident in that all major parties were part of or supported the expansion of the welfare state in the 1950s and 1960s (Uddhammar, 1993). Even today there is a rather strong consensus surrounding the importance of retaining a strong welfare state; the differences between the parties are of degree rather than kind.

In this context it is important to note the significant changes that took place between the 2002 and 2006 elections. In 2002, the Moderates suffered a major defeat under their former leader Bo Lundgren. Although a major defeat such as that has many explanations (Holmberg & Oscarsson, 2004; Nord & Strömbäck, 2003), one of them was that the party went too far in emphasizing the necessity to reduce taxes, particularly as such tax reductions would necessitate cuts in welfare state services or benefits.

About a year later, in October 2003, Fredrik Reinfeldt was elected as the new party leader for the Moderates. Following on from this, the new leadership initiated several policy revisions, and in 2005, the "New Moderates" were launched. Although many from the Left bloc claimed that the "New Moderates" were merely a gimmick and a sales-trick, there is no doubt that the Moderates changed some of their policies substantially, including adopting a more positive stance towards the welfare state and less emphasis on the requirement to reduce taxes (Wiklund, 2006). Thus, the Moderates re-positioned themselves and moved towards the middle of the left-right ideological continuum, which in turn facilitated the creation of a formal "Alliance for Sweden" between the parties in the Right bloc. This Alliance eventually managed to win the 2006 election, and for the first time ever formed a non-socialist majority government. A prerequisite, however, was this move towards the middle, which illustrates that in Swedish politics, a party does not win by challenging the consensus surrounding the importance and prevailing notion of the welfare state. It wins by accepting and putting forward policies that can be framed or perceived as being improvements to it.

This does not, however, mean that the left-right continuum is of little importance in the minds of Swedish voters. In a world where much has changed, the importance of the left-right continuum is actually one of the persistent characteristics of Swedish politics.

Trends in People's Political Behaviour and Attitudes

At one time, most people identified themselves with a particular party, often the same party that their parents had identified with and voted for. People read newspapers affiliated to the preferred party, and for the majority of the time they trusted politicians to do what was right. Not much changed during election campaigns, and the relatively few voters who were undecided and wavering

were called "marginal voters". Although simplified, this brief description of the situation in the 1940s and 1950s is rather accurate, not only in Sweden (Holmberg & Oscarsson, 2004; Hadenius & Weibull, 2003), but also in countries such as the United States. For example, in the classic *People's Choice*-study (Lazarsfeld *et al.*, 1965), only 8% changed their voting intentions during the election campaign, a finding that led to the emergence of the "limited effects" paradigm.

Since then, much has changed, and the most important overall trend is that the former stability with regards to peoples' political behaviour and attitudes in Sweden has been replaced by volatility. To start with, the share of voters switching parties between two successive elections has increased from 11.4% in 1960 to 31.8% in the 2002 election. The share of voters switching parties during the election campaign – which in Sweden lasts 3–4 weeks – has increased from 5.1% to 19.1% during this same time period. Most people switch parties within the Left and the Right bloc, respectively, but 8.7% crossed the bloc line in 2002.

Moreover, in the 2002 election, fully 57% made their final voting decision during the election campaign, an increase from 18% in the 1964 election. Split-ticket voting has also increased sharply. In 1970, only 6% voted for different parties in the national and the local election. In 2002, the corresponding share was 26%.

Thus, all measures indicate increasing electoral volatility (Holmberg & Oscarsson, 2004, p. 83–99). This trend is furthermore strongly correlated with, and an effect of, decreasing party identification. Thus, in 1968, 65% said that they identified with a particular party, and 39% said that they strongly identified with a particular party. In 2002, the corresponding shares were 40% and 18%, respectively (Holmberg & Oscarsson, 2004, p. 258). One reason for this drop in party identification is that Swedish voters perceive the parties to be located closer to each other on the left-right ideological continuum.

However, it is also important to note that there is a strong correlation between party choice and voters' self-placement on the left-right ideological continuum in Sweden. In 1998, the correlation (η^2) was .77, which is a stronger correlation than in most other countries. For example, the correlation in the 1996 US presidential election was only .31. The perceptual agreement (PA), that is the extent to which voters agree in their placement of the parties on the ideological continuum, is also stronger in Sweden than in many other countries. In 1998, it was 0.65 in Sweden as compared to 0.37 in the US. The wing party distance (WPD) is 7.78, compared to 3.44 in the US (Holmberg & Oscarsson, 2004, p. 106). The left-right ideological continuum thus matters, more so in Sweden than in many other countries (Oscarsson, 1998).

One other clear trend with regards to the political attitudes of Swedish voters is increasing political distrust. Thus, in 1968, 46% agreed with the statement that "Those who are members of parliament and take decisions do not take what ordinary people think and feel into much consideration", whereas 37% agreed with the statement that "The parties are only interested in peoples' votes, but not in their opinions". In 1998, the corresponding shares were both 75%. Then political distrust decreased, for the first time since the 1960s, so in 2002 the

corresponding shares were 65 and 67%, respectively (Holmberg & Oscarsson, 2004, p. 249). Since then political distrust appears to again be on the increase (Holmberg & Weibull, 2006).

However, it is also important to note that there are no signs of decreasing political interest or levels of political knowledge. During the last few decades, around 50-60 percent have stated that they are very or at least somewhat interested in politics, which indicates that politics is still considered as relevant by most people. This is particularly true at election time, when people are mobilized politically. Here research has shown that an electoral cycle is at work, leading to higher political interest and stronger party identification in election years than in non-election years (Strömbäck & Johansson, 2007; Holmberg, 1994).

This mobilizing effect can be perceived as an agenda-setting effect (McCombs, 2004). When politics becomes more visible, politicians make greater efforts to reach out and the media coverage of politics increases, people respond by becoming more interested and feeling more affiliated to the preferred party (Petersson *et al.*, 2006). Research also shows that there is a rather strong correlation between reading about politics in newspapers and political interest, and close to 50% say that they read at least a good part of the political information that newspapers offer. About 60% also report watching or listening to the party leaders' debate which is traditionally held on TV on the last Friday before Election Day (Petersson *et al.*, 2006, p. 126-127). In this sense, at least, Swedes are politically active.

Taken together, the trends described above nevertheless indicate that the Swedish parties have lost much of their former anchorage among the voters. This is further underlined by the fact that they, taken together, have lost about half of their members between 1991 and 2004; in 1991, the total number of official party members was about 625 000, whereas it was only 330 000 in 2002 (Petersson, 2005; Petersson *et al.*, 2000).

Thus, political participation in Sweden mainly includes voting and following the news. This is further underlined by a study regarding the extent to which people in different countries during an election campaign a) showed support for a particular party or candidate, for example by attending meetings, or b) were contacted by anyone from a political party who tried to persuade them to vote for the party. The data were collected during 2002-2004, and in the Swedish case, only 3% were actively involved in the campaign whereas 7% were contacted by someone from one of the parties. Among the more than 20 countries included in this study, Sweden came in last or almost last (Petersson *et al.*, 2006, p. 135-136).

Thus, there is no doubt that from the perspective of the citizen, politics is something mainly experienced through the media. When asked to rank the importance of different media for information on the 2006 election, people ranked TV first, followed by newspapers, radio, internet, interpersonal communication, and personal contact.

The importance of the media in Swedish politics does not stop there, however. As shown by agenda setting research (McCombs, 2004; Weaver, 1980),

the degree to which people are susceptible to media effects is dependent on their need for orientation. The need for orientation is further shaped by two lower-order concepts, namely relevance and uncertainty (McCombs, 2004). Hence, the trends with regards to peoples' political attitudes and behaviour in Sweden indicate that politics remains as relevant or more relevant than it used to, but also that the level of uncertainty has increased. The end result is a stronger need for orientation and thus an increased susceptibility to media effects. This brings us to the Swedish media system, its evolution during the last decades and its current characteristics.

The Swedish Media System

Historically, the prospects for independent journalism could hardly be better than in Sweden. As early as 1766, Sweden became the first country in the world to include a Freedom of Information Act in its constitution, and since then the freedoms of expression and information have been embedded in the Swedish constitution. Ideologically, however, the Swedish media system could be described as a mixture between classical liberal ideas of the press as an independent 'fourth estate', and social responsibility ideas concerning the necessity for cooperative relationships between the political system and the media system in order to maintain diversity and public service. Thus, in reality the traditional liberal approach has co-existed with numerous state regulations of the media sector and with an active media policy.

Traditionally, the relations between political organizations and media companies have been very stable. The party press system, with different papers representing different political views, guaranteed an effectively working external pluralism with regards to the print media during the 20th century (Høyer, 2005; Nord, 2001). At the same time, the public service broadcasting system guaranteed an effective internal pluralism in programmes based upon the concepts of non-partisan and impartial reporting (Djerf-Pierre & Weibull, 2001).

In recent decades, the Swedish media landscape has however undergone considerable changes, as commercial radio and TV channels, free tabloid newspapers and the Internet have been introduced. The newly introduced media has contributed to a more competitive and crowded media landscape, both with regards to entertainment, news and current affairs (Djerf-Pierre & Weibull, 2001; Jönsson & Strömbäck, 2007; Harrie, 2006).

While the party press system and the public service broadcast media were the core concepts of the Swedish media policy during most of the 20th century, they have gradually lost some of their importance, challenged by the development of new media technologies, the subsequent deregulations of broadcasting media and the resulting increase in media competition and audience fragmentation (Ewertsson, 2004; Nord, 2007). The belief in and power of media policies appears to have declined, while the power and independence of the media has increased. The distancing of the media from former political affiliations is

one important part in the process towards increasing media independence and media influence in politics, that is, towards increasing mediatization.

The Fall of the Party Press

A mass circulated press, largely based on subscriptions and reaching a considerable number of readers on a daily basis, has been one main characteristics of the Swedish media system. However, the same trend towards declining newspaper readership that is evident in a global perspective (Norris 2000) is also discernable in Sweden. Although the changes are not very dramatic, statistical data show a downward trend over the last decade with regards to the number of published newspapers, the share of Swedes reading a newspaper on a daily basis and total circulation figures (table 2). Thus at present newspapers play a less important role both in people's lives and in the political communication processes, compared to what they did in the 'golden years' of the 1970s and 1980s.

Table 2. Some Key Figures of the Swedish Newspaper Market 1990-2005

	1990	1995	2000	2005
Titles	89	89	84	77
Daily reading (%)	84	82	85	81
Total circulation	4916	4496	4109	3998
Press Subsidies (MSEK)	674	495	553	495
Newspapers without political affiliation (%)	44	41	46	47

Note: The table shows the number of daily newspapers produced five days a week or more, the share of the whole population reading at least a daily newspaper an average day, the total circulation figure of daily newspapers, the amount of press subsidies in fixed prices, and the share of daily newspapers without any political or/and ideological reference or affiliation.

Source: Carlsson & Facht, 2007.

Less important does not equal unimportant, however. Analyzing the Swedish press in more detail, it is necessary to stress the importance that regional and local newspapers still have. Even if the overall trend is a decline in subscriptions, local newspapers continue to have large audiences. These newspapers, furthermore, play an important role in the local opinion formation processes as the leading producer of local news and opinion material. While a majority of the Swedish households subscribe to a local newspaper, the biggest national dailies have tended to become rather more elite papers whereas the national tabloids have had substantial problems in retaining their audiences (Carlsson & Facht, 2004). Comparatively speaking, local newspapers thus appear to have fared better than national newspapers and the tabloids.

The most remarkable single change in the newspaper market has been the introduction some years ago of *Metro*, a free newspaper in Stockholm which is distributed in the subway system and which has become a commercial success (Wadbring, 2003). Many other news media have tried to copy the *Metro* concept, but so far they have not been as successful.

Internationally, the most well known aspect of the Swedish press system may be the existence of selective and direct press subsidies, with governmental financial support given to newspapers with a second-ranked position within a particular market. These press subsidies were introduced in 1971 after a political deal between The Social Democrats and the Centre Party, who both owned many regional and local newspapers with economic problems (Borden, 1995). Although these press subsidies have gradually been reduced, they remain a controversial media policy issue in Sweden, with the liberal and right wing parties arguing in favour of heavy reductions or for their abolition (Nord, 2007). In practice, the press subsidies play a less important role in the Swedish press market than was previously the case. Even more significantly, these subsidies have not prevented significant structural changes in the regional press markets (Alström & Nord, 2003; Wadbring *et al.*, 2002).

National dailies in Sweden have traditionally had close affiliations to a particular political party. This party press system was originally based on three links between the parties and their newspapers: ownership, content and readership (Hadenius & Weibull, 1991). However, over the last decades the political affiliations have been reduced, and at present they are only visible on the editorial pages, while the news journalistic content is characterized by professional journalistic values (Nord, 2001). Content analyzes of the Swedish national media during election campaigns thus confirm that the election news coverage is not systematically biased. Although some party or parties receive more favorable coverage than others during each election campaign, there is no systematic pattern with regards to which parties are favored or disfavored (Asp, 2006). Instead, different parties are favored in different election campaigns, suggesting that the problem is not one of partisan bias. Rather, the problem appears to stem from structural biases, in that the media favor the party or parties – and frame them – according to their newsworthiness, the dominant story line in a particular election campaign, and based on the extent to which the parties meet the needs of the media for attention-grabbing news stories. Accordingly, the partisan press in Sweden has almost disappeared, and more or less market-driven, dramatized and popularized journalism has replaced politically biased reporting (Asp, 2006; Petersson *et al.*, 2006; Strömbäck, 2004).

Still a Public Service

The media system of Sweden has always been associated with strong public service radio (established in 1925) and TV (introduced in 1957). For a long time, public service media operated as a monopoly, with state regulations regarding impartiality and financing. Gradually, political decisions about media expansions followed and the public service broadcast sector increased, as new regional and local channels were introduced in the 1970s (Rahbeck, 2001; Nord, 2008). An overwhelming political majority defended public service as a decisive instrument for free information flows and fair reporting within Swedish society.

However, a changing ideological climate in the 1980s, coupled with the introduction of new media such as cable TV, imposed huge challenges for public service broadcasting, in Sweden as elsewhere (Katz, 2005). Consequently, the broadcasting media were deregulated and the Swedish public service terrestrial monopoly was abolished in 1991, when the commercial channel TV4 was introduced. Two years later, the non-socialistic government allowed local private radio stations to be financed by advertisements.

Accordingly, the former monopoly public service media are now facing strong competition from commercial broadcasting media. Sweden has thus adapted to the European standard from the 1980s and developed a dualistic broadcasting system characterized by competing public service channels, financed by license fees, and commercial channels, financed by advertisements (Siune & Truetzschler, 1992; Bardoel & d'Haenens, 2004). Table 3 illustrates the current audience shares of the public service media, measured as the share of total daily listening or viewing.

Table 3. Some Key Figures of the Swedish Broadcasting Markets 1995-2005 (per cent)

	1995	2000	2005
Daily PSB radio listening	62	55	51
Daily PSB TV viewing	60	61	56
PSB Radio market share	71	66	63
PSB TV market share	51	44	39

Note: The table shows the share of the whole population listening to domestic radio channels or viewing domestic television channels on average day and the market share of public service radio and television channels among the whole population.

Source: Lund, Nord & Roppen 2008.

The audience shares for the four public service radio channels in Sweden have been reduced, but it is worth noting that public service radio remains the biggest player in the market. At the same time, new and local commercial radio stations have been successful in reaching new audiences, especially among young people.

The Swedish TV market trends are similar. The public service TV channels have lost a remarkable part of their daily audiences since the introduction of commercial TV, and the main national and commercial TV station, TV4, now has the greatest share of the national audience on an average TV evening. TV4 is financed by ads, while its programme policy is defined by a legal act with significant similarities to that for the public service charter. The digitalization of TV was completed in 2008, while the parliament in 2006 decided not to continue with digital radio broadcasting on a large scale.

To conclude, the increased competition has had a considerable impact on the public service media. New commercial players have attracted sections of the audience, particularly among the young. Nevertheless, the public service channels have been rather successful in defending their market positions over

the long run. After an initial drop, when new actors entered the scene, the public service media have managed to defend their market positions. Thus, public service media in Sweden is still alive, although under strong pressure from commercial competitors.

This new media has also had an effect on the old media structures. Sweden has a relatively long history of Internet penetration and computer use and ranks among the leading countries in the world in this respect (Norris, 2000). Public use of the Internet has increased steadily, and in 2005, a huge majority of the population reported that they had a personal computer with Internet access in their homes (table 4). The figures for 2005 also show that on an average day, 42% used the Internet and spent an average of 75 minutes online. Young people were over-represented among the users, as well as men and those with higher education. However, these differences appear to be decreasing (Harrie, 2006).

Table 4. Internet Access and Use in Sweden 1996-2005 (percent)

	1996	2000	2005
Internet Access at home	8	52	74
Daily Internet Use	21	32	42

Note: The table shows the share of the households with Internet access at home and the share of daily users of the Internet.

Source: Nordicom-Sveriges Internetbarometer 2000; Carlsson & Facht 2007.

Faced with an increasing number of different media formats, the Swedish audiences also perceive the media's performances differently. National surveys show that public service TV and radio and commercial TV4 are the most trusted media in Sweden. Regional and daily newspapers maintain a middle-position, while tabloid newspapers and private radio stations are not considered as being especially trustworthy (Westlund, 2006).

The Swedish Media and Society

In addition to the legal system with its strong constitutional protection for freedom of information and speech, Sweden is characterized by a system of institutionalized self-regulation with regards to the press (Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Petersson *et al.*, 2005). The Swedish Press Council is a part of this corporatist structure. It is not affiliated to the government, but set up and regulated by the most important media organizations. The council makes decisions concerning ethics issues relating to the media and publishes regular reports with its considerations and explanations regarding their policy positions. When it comes to domestic broadcast media, the Swedish Broadcasting Commission supervises laws, regulations and whether the broadcasting media fulfil their charter obligations.

Sweden has no law limiting media ownership, although this issue has appeared on the agenda from time to time. Thus far, the problems associated with the implementation of such a law have stopped the process. On the other hand, state regulations concerning the prevention of commercials in the public service media are important and have been extended to include new media formats, such as public service websites. However, the sponsoring of public service programmes, covering special events, is allowed under special conditions.

Another important feature of the Swedish system is that political ads on TV are not allowed on any channel – public service or commercial – broadcasting from Sweden. Satellite and cable TV stations operating from abroad do not have the same regulations, however, and to some extent they produce political ads. Nevertheless, the role of political TV ads is insignificant in Sweden. In addition, the parties are not allowed to broadcast any “party political broadcasts” free of charge. In contrast to many other democracies (Kaid & Holtz-Bacha, 2006), Swedish parties thus have no opportunity to control any of their televised communication with the voters. The implication of this is that the election news coverage is crucial as both the main source of information for the citizenry and the main channel for political actors to communicate with the people. This makes the Swedish news media important and powerful in the Swedish political communication processes, and perhaps more so than the news media in countries where political TV ads or party political broadcasts are allowed. This is true, although both public service TV and the leading commercial TV channel (TV4) are obliged to present political news in a non-partisan and impartial way.

Media System in Transition?

According to Hallin and Mancini, the Nordic media systems can be characterized as prototypical examples of the Democratic Corporatist Model of media and politics. Typical features of the Swedish media system are thus a highly developed newspaper market, a tradition of political parallelism, a high degree of journalistic professionalism and rather extensive state intervention in the media system. At the same time, the authors note that a homogenization process appears to be at work, resulting in a probable shift from the Democratic Corporatist toward the Liberal model (Hallin & Mancini, 2004, p. 252).

There are some signs that this shift is taking place in the Swedish case, although the changes should not overshadow the continuities. The Swedish newspapers have definitely lost their party press character and the majority are now independent newspapers without any clear political party affiliation. The press subsidies have furthermore been reduced and are not as important as they used to be. Governmental support has not been able to stop structural changes or to prevent a concentration of media ownership.

On the other hand, newspapers remain very important with regards to both general news consumption and the political communication processes. Newspaper sales are almost 500 per 1000 adult citizens, which exceeds the figure for most other European countries (Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Norris, 2000, *World Press Trends*, 2006). Newspapers also have a bigger share of advertising income than their European counterparts (Swedish Newspaper Publishers' Association 2006). Thus, in important respects Sweden continues to be a rather newspaper-centric country.

The shift is also evident with regards to the broadcasting media. As already noted, the deregulation of Swedish TV and radio in the early 1990s has resulted in tougher competition between the public service and commercial media. As a consequence, the public service audience share has shrunk, although not as much as in some other countries. Thus far, the public service radio and TV stations continue to be major players, and the only battle that they appear to have lost so far is the battle for the young audiences.

With regards to the degree of journalistic professionalism and the system for regulation of the media, there are only few signs of major changes. The Swedish Press Council and the Swedish Broadcasting Commission remain central in monitoring, interpreting and evaluating media ethics, and there is no real debate about changing these institutionalized systems in a more non-institutionalized direction. In this, Sweden remains a Democratic Corporatist country with regards to media and politics.

To conclude, the Swedish media system thus continues to share important characteristics of the Democratic Corporatist model, although some influences from the Liberal model are apparent. The relative strength of newspapers as opposed to TV, the institutionalized systems for regulation of the media and the strong position of the public service media make Sweden stand out even in times of globalization, modernization and homogenization processes. At the same time, state intervention has become less important and political parallelism appears, in effect, to have disappeared.

These observations may be summarized as key indicators of a process where the transformation of the Swedish media system can be described more as a de-politicization than as an absolute market-orientation towards full-scale commercialization and liberalization (Nord, 2008). If the de-politicization process of the media was the only criterion involved in deciding the direction of the Swedish media system, it could definitely be described as becoming more liberal. However, traditionally strong national media institutions so far appear to have survived these changes without becoming completely adapted to the market logic. Traditions and political culture matter, and this in combination with high public confidence in the historically most well known media institutions, as well as the institutionalized and corporative system for media ethical issues, may thus far have prevented a process where liberal market values turn the existing order upside down.

Swedish Political Communication at the Crossroads?

The overall picture of changing political communication practices in Sweden is thus mixed. Over the last few decades, the media have become significantly more independent from politics, while, simultaneously, their real or perceived power over their audiences has grown. If the major question with regards to the relationship between media and politics once focused on the independence of the media from politics, the major question now has shifted to focus on the independence of politics from the media. This is the result of the mediatization processes that have taken place since the 1960s – a process that, in turn, can be perceived of as a reflection of partisan de-alignment, increasing electoral volatility, societal modernization, decreasing legitimacy for political attempts to regulate the media, and increasing commercialization, to mention some of the antecedents of the mediatization processes.

In fact, Sweden can be described as a country where the news media are more important with reference to political communication processes than in many other countries. One reason for this is the independence of the news media from politics. A second reason is that the media are the most important source of information for people in general. A third reason is that the parties do not have any real opportunities to communicate directly and in an unfiltered manner with the citizenry through TV. A fourth reason is that people's need for orientation has increased due to the increasing electoral volatility and decreasing party identification – and that people meet this need for orientation through rather extensive consumption of news journalism in various media formats. A fifth reason is the belief among political actors that they must adapt to the news media and their standards of newsworthiness in order to gain attention, which in turn is perceived as a prerequisite for being able to shape public opinion. Thus, if the relationship between media and politics is likened to a tango, it is the journalists rather than the politicians who generally take the lead. The political actors are undoubtedly doing what they can to invite the journalists to dance, but ultimately, it is the journalists who choose who they are going to dance with (Strömbäck & Nord, 2006).

Taken together, these observations suggest that Sweden has reached at least the third phase of mediatization.

While the political parties initially did not stop this process towards increasing mediatization (Esaiasson & Håkansson, 2002), there are clear signs that the parties are trying to take back some of the initiative through a professionalization of their campaigning and news management. In this sense, the mediatization of politics has created incentives for the professionalization of political campaigning and news management. This is evident in that the parties nowadays employ more people with expertise in public opinion and news management than was previously the case (Nord, 2006), and that the use of campaign practices such as opinion polling and focus groups have become more common (Nord & Strömbäck, 2003). This is not, however, to say that there is a process of "Americanization" of Swedish election campaigning going on – the differences

between American and Swedish political campaigning are still more significant than the similarities (Nord, 2006; Petersson *et al.*, 2006).

Rather, the process should be described as a hybridization, which is a development where traditional national campaign practices co-exist with select transnational features of postmodern campaigning based on a more extensive use of political marketing techniques (Plasser & Plasser, 2002). The end result is selective professionalization rather than a full scale “Americanization” of Swedish strategic political communication.

This, in turn, can be explained by some of the systemic features of the Swedish political communication system, shaped by both the political system and the media system and their interactive relationships with each other and people as media consumers and voters. First of all, the Swedish multiparty system, proportional electoral system and party-centeredness create different dynamics with reference to political communication than in countries which have few parties, majoritarian electoral systems and which are more candidate-centered. This makes campaign techniques based upon the latter kind of countries less applicable in Sweden. Furthermore, regulations regarding the use of TV play a major role. Usually, a great deal of professional competence is required in the production of political TV ads and for party political broadcasts. As these formats do not exist in Sweden, the need for professional skills within these fields is reduced.

Secondly, the Swedish media structure can still be described as rather “politics-friendly”. Even if most newspapers are now independent of political parties and there is a dualistic broadcast system, there is still a widespread feeling that politics is important. Thus, most of the national media still pay a great deal of attention to political affairs, particularly during the run up to an election. The framing of politics as a strategic game and a focus on political scandals have become more frequent, but much time and space is nevertheless spent on rather serious and issue framed political coverage (Asp, 2006; Johansson, 2006; Strömbäck 2004). In addition, the public service TV channels remain popular, although commercial TV, with their more popularized style of news coverage (Jönsson & Strömbäck, 2007), have increased their audience share.

Finally, political culture and political behaviour tend to be considerable counter-forces in the modernization processes. The Swedish political parties still thrive on party platforms and manifestos in their campaign activities, while they are officially playing down political marketing practices, mainly because of possible negative attitudes from their members and voters. Most parties were founded as popular movements and this has encouraged a non-professional party “self-image” in the Swedish political culture. Changes in campaign practices in such political systems develop closer to the party structures, and might at times even move backwards to earlier phases of political campaigning (Mancini, 1999; Gilboa, 2004). This is yet another indication that communication practices can never be understood in isolation from a country’s history and tradition. Although it is true that globalization and modernization might lead to increasing homogenization, this is a process that is not necessarily

unidirectional, and nation-specific features continue to mediate the influence of transnational trends.

Thus, while there is no doubt that Swedish political communication has become increasingly mediatized throughout the last decades, this is a process shaped by the country-specific configuration of political institutions and media institutions, as well as the interactive and dynamic relationships between political actors, media actors, and people as media consumers and voters. As long as this is the case, there is no reason to expect the Swedish political communication system to change dramatically. Rather than revolutionary changes, it is thus reasonable to expect a continuation of gradual and evolutionary changes – some intended, some unintended, but none which can be regarded as being truly independent of the dynamic and interactive relationships being played out between media, politics and people.

Notes

1. http://www.idea.int/vt/survey/voter_turnout_pop2-2.cfm, retrieved 2007-02-05.
2. http://www.val.se/val/val2006/slutlig_ovrigt/statistik/riksdag/personroster_parti.html, retrieved 2007-02-06.
3. http://www.riksdagen.se/templates/R_Page_____1117.aspx, retrieved 2007-02-06.
4. <http://www.skl.se/artikel.asp?A=33967&C=5291&ArticleVersion=10>, retrieved 2007-02-06.

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II

Cases in Nordic Political Communication

Chapter 7

Conflicting Representations in the European Parliamentary Elections

Tom Andersson

In Sweden turnout in the European Parliamentary elections is less than half the turnout in the National Parliamentary elections. The main explanations for this discrepancy in democratic commitment range from the weak political power of the European Parliament to the public criticism of the democratic and economic performance of the EU. The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the role of political communication on this issue. The main argument is that the elections to the European parliament lack rationality due to the conflicting representations of the reality of the EU, its institutional, democratic and economic performance. Both public and political disagreement on the *raison d'être* of the EU and the EP elections make the elections inherently irrational. Consequently, the elections get permeated with issues of responsibility and accountability, resulting in nationalistic representations, preference voting and low turnout.

The Research Context

The purpose of this chapter is to reflect on the results of several studies of the European Parliamentary elections in Sweden in 2004 (henceforth “the EP elections”). I will primarily rely on my study of the Swedish electoral campaign (Andersson, 2005). It was commissioned by the Swedish Government with the purpose of evaluating the campaign efforts of the national parliamentary parties to raise the electoral turnout. I conducted interviews with party secretaries and journalists, as well as surveys among candidates, local and regional party representatives. The study also included media and audience research.

In April 2007, I did a small follow-up. I conducted interviews with 9 of the 19 Swedish members of the European Parliament (henceforth “the EP”). The purpose was to evaluate goals, strategies and plans of the national parliamentary parties regarding the elections and electoral turnout in 2009. I will refer to these interviews towards the end of the chapter, when speculating on the future of the EP elections.

Besides the commissioned study, and the small follow-up, I will make extensive use of two other studies of the EP elections: research and analysis of voting behaviour (Oscarsson & Holmberg, 2006), and research and analysis of the electoral campaign in the news media (Nord & Strömbäck, 2006). Together, the studies give a rather unanimous and dismal image of the Swedish electoral campaign.

Commitments at Drift

Election after election. Report after report. They all tell the same story. The EP elections are second order elections, that is less important elections than national parliamentary elections, which results in low voter turnout (Oscarsson & Holmberg, 2006; Steinbrecher and Huber, 2006; Rose, 2004). Many and complex factors contribute to this second order status, but a recurrent issue is the democratic basis of the EU and the political role of the EP. The EP is the only institution within the EU that is based on democratic elections in all membership states, but its power is limited and difficult to grasp as compared to a national parliament. In principle, a national parliament controls its government and has sovereign rights in national law- and policy-making. By contrast, the EP lacks independent regulative and legislative authority. Its policy-making is to a large extent conditioned by the decision-making of other institutions, such as the European commission, the European council, and the Council of Ministers.

No doubt, the authority of the EP in policy-making has increased over the years (Hix, Noury & Roland, 2007). There have also been signs of both power demonstrations and self-confidence. In October 2004, the parliament forced the European Commission president Barroso to withdraw his proposal of Buttiglione for Commissioner. However, the confrontation was an exception that proves the rule. The Parliament does not dictate European politics because of its limited and nested political power (Lord, 2004). For political parties and politicians, this justifies a lower electoral investment and commitment. For news media, it justifies the lower news value of the EP and the European elections. For the general public, it means lower interest and shorter attention span for the EP and the elections.

These contextual factors – lower investment, lower news value and lower public interest – interact and result in weaker public perception as well as knowledge of the European elections (Nord & Strömbäck, 2006). Thus, the relevance of the elections remains unclear, for which reason people's commitment to their cause also remains weak. The second order status explains the generally low electoral turnout in all membership states, besides states with mandatory voting (Belgium, Greece, and Luxembourg). Still, there are variations within the EU and Sweden has proven to be one of the most hesitant and sceptical membership states.

Since the first EP elections in Sweden in 1995, turnout has decreased with a record low in 2004: 37.8%. By contrast, turnout in national elections is high

compared to international standards, or more specifically around 80%. In fact, the discrepancy in democratic commitment is the highest within EU. This raises several questions. *Why is the discrepancy higher in Sweden? Why do the political parties fail in communicating the relevance of the EP elections? What can be done about it?* These are the main questions that I address in this chapter. Let me start by dwelling a bit on the first one – why Sweden demonstrates significantly lower commitment to the European election than any other membership states.

Public Perceptions

One recurrent theme in public discourse is that low turnout is due to negative attitudes towards politics in general and the EU in particular. However, even if more sceptical than the European average, the Swedish opinion on the EU membership is not exceptional compared to public opinion in other member states (Eurobarometer, 2006). The Swedish opinion is vaguely in favour of EU membership and has remained rather stable over time (Holmberg, 2005), which is not in accordance with the negative trend in turnout. Furthermore, social and economic differences have higher explanatory power for electoral turnout than attitudes (Hedberg, Oscarsson & Bennulf, 2001). The turnout rate is higher in groups with higher levels of income and education. However, this latter correlation makes the low Swedish electoral turnout even more mysterious. Why is the turnout lower for Sweden with both a higher and a more equal standard of living than the European average (SCB, 2006)?

A relevant explanation of the low Swedish turnout in the EP elections needs to take the discrepancy in commitment to national and European elections into account, rather than just looking at factors contributing to low turnout in general. The most promising lines of research in this area can be subsumed under the heading *public perceptions of institutional performance* (Brothén, 2001; Rohrschneider, 2002, 2005; Vössing, 2005). In the latest Eurobarometer (2006), the public perception of the benefits of being a member of EU is lowest for Sweden and the United Kingdom, which are also the countries with the largest differences in electoral turnout between national and European elections. In contrast, in Ireland, the public perception of membership benefits is highest, at the same time demonstrating the lowest difference in turnout between national and European elections.

The relation between public perception of membership benefit and discrepancy in turnout is not clear-cut ($r_{\text{spearman}} = -0.49$), but membership benefit is only one part of what is covered by “institutional performance”. The latter includes any democratic and economic outcome enabling the public to compare performances at the level of the nation and the EU. In this perspective, the electoral turnout follows from the public perception of discrepancies in institutional performance between national and European levels. If the national performance is perceived to be better than the European one, there

Table 1. Perceptions of EU Membership Benefits and Turnout Differences in National and European Elections (%)

Country	Public perception of EU benefit according to Eurobarometer 66	The difference in turnout between national and European elections*
Ireland	87	15
Denmark	74	36
Spain	64	16
The Netherlands	62	37
Portugal	61	26
France	50	18
Germany	49	27
Finland	46	30
Austria	41	32
Sweden	41	47
United Kingdom	39	38

*Figures according to Steinbrecher and Huber (2006:18).

is a strong argument for supporting independent national institutions. If the European performance is perceived to be better, there is a strong argument for supporting common European institutions. However, to the extent that public perceptions of performance affect public commitment to democracy, we must also address the quality of the political communication that shapes the public perceptions.

Of course a multitude of advocates for, opponents to and spokespersons of EU play their roles, as well as do the news media, but in the end, the responsibility for political communication falls on political parties and politicians. The EU is a political project. Parties and politicians must account for its performance, including the public perception of its performance. If the public perceives a discrepancy in institutional performance between national and European levels of governance, and to the extent that these perceptions end up in a discrepancy in commitment to democracy, the low turnout falls back on the political system and its communicative processes (Holmberg, 2001).

Bad Timing

Explaining the lack of commitment to the EP elections in terms of deficient political communication is not in line with the mainstream research in political science that stresses institutional, demographic and broad structural explanations of voting behaviour and electoral results (Oscarsson & Holmberg, 2006). Institutional explanations refer to the ways in which electoral systems are put into place, that is the administration of ballots and polling stations, whereas demographic explanations comprise socioeconomic patterns of various kinds, for example lower turnout among lower classes. I do not in any way dismiss

these structural factors, but I am more concerned with how political communication in practice sustains these structural factors. Let me illustrate with “the bad timing” of the EP elections.

The European elections take place in all membership states in the middle of June. At this time of the year, Swedes are if not already on vacation then busily planning for it. The official vacation month is July. The standard school year ends at the beginning of June. Furthermore, one of the most popular Swedish holidays – the midsummer – takes place only a week after the elections. In other words, the Swedish attention span for European politics is short in the middle of June. If the elections took place during another time period of the year, the electoral campaign would have a better chance of drawing public interest.

This is an institutional explanation of low electoral turnout. It may sound like a bad excuse, but both political scientists and politicians acknowledge the problem. Still, it remains unresolved. The Election Day is an agreement between the EU members and Sweden cannot change it on its own. However, if the EP elections were deemed important, bad timing would result in public debate and political negotiation, but since the elections are not deemed important, the elections take place in the shadows of Swedes’ yearning for summer. In other words, the timing of the elections is in actuality a question of cultural practice, including both institutional and contextual factors. The timing is in part an institutional factor defined by the official Election Day, but its meaning and relevance is cultural in nature.

Conflicting Representations

The cultural meaning of the EP elections, or rather their lack of meaning brings me to an alternative hypothesis of the low Swedish commitment to the EP elections. If we put public communication and sense-making at the core of the problem, the discrepancy in commitment may be due to “conflicting representations”, or incompatible cultural representations. I define cultural representation to be *any set of descriptions and arguments – or more generally, any set of signs and signals – that a group of people use in their everyday discourse to support, defend or make sense of their identities* (Euronat, 2004; Langenhove & Harré, 1999; Potter, 1996; Schott, 2007). Thus, “conflicting representations” denote any incompatible sets of descriptions or arguments that result in conflicting identities. In this cognitive-cultural theory, the discrepancy in commitment to national and EP elections may be due to *a common sense of coherence and rationality* in the national elections versus *a common sense of incoherence and irrationality* in the EP elections. Consequently, we should expect conflicting representations of identities – confrontations of rationality and irrationality – to permeate public discourse on the EP elections.

A striking illustration of the irrationality of the EP elections was provided by the Swedish Prime minister at that time, Göran Persson, in the electoral campaign 2004. On May 26th 2004, the former Prime Minister talked to campaign

workers at an internal meeting in his party, the Social Democratic Party. He stressed the importance of EU affairs, the elections and the need for mobilization to raise turnout. A few hours later, he expressed his view on the electoral campaign to a large group of news editors for public broadcasting companies in the Nordic countries. According to the former Prime Minister, the campaign was “as exciting as kissing your sister” (Nord and Strömbäck, 2006).

Surprisingly, these words did not make any headlines the following day, but only after the election when it was clear that the outcome for the Social Democratic Party was the worst ever (24.6%). A Swedish trade magazine in the media and advertising industry, *Resumé*, came to publish the story, with speculations on the reasons for the cover-up – why the news channels in question did not report the opinion of the Prime Minister. Two types of explanations were proposed. First, the speech was unofficial. The Prime Minister had been invited to an internal meeting to give his informal views on public affairs. Second, it was not scandalous at the time. Everybody was in agreement that the election was “as exciting as kissing your sister”. It was a fair assessment of the situation, even if pejorative (humorous).

Nowhere in the article, or in my other readings about this story, is there any mention of the comparison itself: “kissing your sister”. It is certainly not a common Swedish custom. Before the report, it was neither a well-known Swedish proverb, nor a conventional metaphor. The expression spread after the news report. It even entered a Swedish online proverb dictionary. Nevertheless, the expression is still odd in Swedish. It is a direct translation of an American saying, expressing one’s lack of motivation for doing something, and this is more significant than the attitude of the Prime Minister.

The use of an American expression of antipathy is a significant rhetorical form. What is EU compared to the US? Nationalism is passion. Passion is freedom. In contrast, EU is a forced relation (a big sister). Thus, the Prime Minister at the time gave voice to *a common sense of irrationality* in committing oneself to a forced cause. Since he represents not only his party, but the whole nation, his positioning of the electoral campaign represents more general and collective experiences of contradiction in the electoral campaign. The question is whether this common sense of irrationality stems from the electoral campaign in practice, or if it just a slip of the tongue by the former Prime Minister, revealing only his personal commitments.

A Campaign Void of Supporters

At the start of this paper, I referred to studies that point to the secondary nature of the European parliamentary elections. The different priorities are quite clear when looking closer at the political parties’ campaign budgets. The parliamentary parties allocate budgets of about a third of the campaign budgets in the national elections (Andersson, 2005). News media, experts and political scientists usually take this economic factor as prime evidence of the secondary

order of the European election (Nord & Strömbäck, 2006). However, most party representatives object to this line of reasoning (Andersson, 2005). They point to the limited number of seats in the European Parliament compared to the national parliament: 19 and 349 respectively. In addition, many more seats are at stake in the national elections at local and regional levels. There are more than 42 000 elected to local and regional councils. Thus, the campaign budget per elected is actually higher in the European election.

When interviewing local and regional representatives about local and regional budgets, they confirmed lower campaign investments compared to the national elections. On average, the local budgets were about a tenth of the budgets in the national elections. At the same time, they stressed that the economic argument is more or less irrelevant. The voluntary work is of greater value to electoral mobilization. I lack statistics, but some representatives claimed that the voluntary work is reflected in the numbers of parties and candidates in the national and European elections. In the table below, I summarize some key figures.

Table 2. Political Mobilization in National and European Elections*

The national elections in 2002	The European Parliament election in 2004
75 political parties running for seats in the Parliament	30 political parties
More than 5000 candidates for the Parliament	382 candidates
More than 200 parties running for local councils	–
More than 50 000 candidates for local councils	–

*Figures according to the Swedish Election Authority.

According to local and regional representatives, the low numbers of participating parties and candidates reflect the general commitment to the European elections at the grassroots level. Thus, the electoral campaign is to a large extent driven top-down by campaign professionals in the national party offices, rather than bottom-up by a broad range of people. The top-down character and the deficit in ground support are further illustrated by the candidates on the party lists. A clear majority represents regions with university cities, where the support for EU is the strongest. The top-down representation is also reinforced by the division of candidates into a few top candidates supported by the head offices of the parliamentary parties and a large majority of secondary candidates who more or less manage on their own.

The parties translate the national quota of European parliamentary seats and their likely share of votes into a number of top candidates, that is the candidates who will probably get a seat in the European Parliament. The top candidates get financial and personal support from the national party administration, whereas secondary candidates seek local support, if any at all. Thus, the result is a quite different level of commitment to the electoral campaign. During the last two weeks of the campaign, top candidates carried out three

election meetings per day on average, whereas secondary candidates managed less than half, somewhat more than one meeting.

To sum up, the electoral campaign is top-down driven with rather poor bottom-up support. If top-down and bottom-up processes are unbalanced, as in this case, they open up for speculation on the rationality of communication (Andersson & Hamrefors, 2005). When interviewing political journalists, they were quick to point out the parties' internal tensions and conflicts regarding the EU, that the major parties (the Social Democratic Party to the left and the Moderate Party to the right) are ambivalent on European politics, which blocks internal communications and make public communications hesitant and drifting in character. The question is whether this gap between top-down and bottom-up campaigning is extended to news media and public discourse – top-down discourse without bottom-up support.

The Missing Audience

In Swedish public discourse, the European Parliament elections go under different names, but the most frequent one is “EU-valet”, that is, “the EU election” (Andersson, 2005). The name was used in the referendum in 1994 when the Swedish citizens decided on EU membership. The connotation is still there, deciding on a commitment or not, rather than an election between multiple parties and candidates. Consequently, a top-down driven campaign for parliamentary elections becomes permeated by the image of a never-ending referendum. Representatives of political parties and news media attribute this image to the general public. They try to address it. Ironically, the audience is simply missing.

According to Nord and Strömbäck (2006), there has been a gradual decrease in the media coverage of the EP elections since they took place the first time in Sweden in 1995. The media coverage in 2004 was 50% less compared to the coverage in 1999, and 65% less compared to the EP elections in 1995. In contrast, a comparison of the media coverage of the national elections in 1998 and 2002 does not reveal any difference (Andersson, 2005). The decrease for the EP elections concerns primarily printed press; whereas the coverage in news broadcasts has been stable between the EP elections in 1999 and 2004.

Another change, irrespectively of the medium, is the proportion of news reporting on political arguments. It has decreased in favour of more dramatic news stories of winners and losers, as well as conflicts within and between parties (Nord and Strömbäck, 2006). This indicates changing editorial strategies – higher priority to campaign performances rather than political arguments to attract a bigger audience, or alternatively to avoid losing audiences. These latter changes are not unique for the EP elections, but more marked considering their low news value.

Despite these changes, the question of the audience remains. Is there any change in media reach? I lack statistics for the printed press, but have com-

pared the audience ratings for the broadcasts of the EP election debates with party leaders on the major news broadcasting channels (Andersson, 2005). The figures do not reveal any decrease in audience ratings between 1999 and 2004, but compared to the broadcasts of election debates in the national elections, the figures demonstrate interesting patterns.

The audience ratings of the EP election debates are clearly lower than the ratings for national election debates. However, the difference depends on the day of broadcasting in relation to the Election Day. A month before the Election Day, there is almost no difference in audience ratings for national and EP election debates. On the election night, the audience rating for the final national election debate in 2002 broadcast was well over 50%, which is more than the double than the figure for the final EP election debate in 2004. In other words, whereas the audience reach of the national election debates increases over time, the reach of the EP election debates remains almost the same throughout the electoral campaign, about 15-20%, including the ratings for the election night programming. This is a further indication of a top-down driven campaign without public support.

National Heroes and Heroines

In organizational communication of any kind, the interaction between top-down and bottom-up processes is essential (Andersson & Hamrefors, 2005). On the one hand, communication is directed, designed and executed at the right time and in the right place. On the other hand, communication is moulded and adapted to changing publics, interests and relations. The major imbalance between top-down direction and bottom-up support in the EP elections indicates that political communication is not in tune with public representations.

One week before the Election Day in 2004, the opinion polls predicted about 4-5 percent for a new party called the June List (Junilistan). On election night, the June List got 14.5% of the votes and became the third largest Swedish party in the European Parliament. In many ways, it is a prime example of the drifting political commitments that surround and permeate the elections and the electoral campaign.

The party was founded by two national economists in their sixties, Nils Lundgren, a former Social Democrat, and Lars Wohlin, politically to the right, both willing to forgo ideological differences for a common cause, "to represent the politically homeless people in the elections" (Oscarsson & Holmberg, 2006, p. 108). Oscarsson & Holmberg (2006) attribute their success to their leadership and populism, and in no small way to the public perception of Lundgren as a trustworthy leader, whereas they claim that the public opinion on the party's European politics and positioning was highly confused. A third of all voters did not want to specify the party's attitude towards EU. A majority of the party's own supporters believed that the party was against membership in EU. However, I do not think that this analysis does justice to the public support for the party.

The main message and argument of the June List was the need for decentralization, that is more power to local authorities and less power to the EU. Thus, the criticism was a question of the democratic performance of the EU. Voters can agree with this without questioning Sweden's membership in EU. They can also agree on this issue irrespective of their general attitudes. This is not to deny the role of populism. Nils Lundgren always took the opportunity to deliver his mantra: *we only say what all Swedes say*. I never heard a journalist question him on this issue. On the contrary, he was treated as somebody who took the elections seriously. He even appeared to make them more sensible, a clear-headed man with common sense in the midst of the confusion, somebody who refused to be an obedient citizen, a hero who dared to confront Brussels with simple truths. However, he was not the first of his kind.

In the European parliamentary elections 1999, Marit Paulsen was the top candidate for the Liberal Party. She left the European Parliament in 2004, but still holds the record as the most popular and famous member of the European parliament among the Swedish public, known for her commitment to food security, animal treatment and environmental issues. She also holds the Swedish record in "preference voting", 62%, which is the proportion of voters for a party who mark their preference for a particular candidate on the ballot by a cross (Oscarsson & Holmberg, 2006).

In the elections of 1999, Marit Paulsen featured a political advertisement that was later rewarded by the Swedish advertising industry. It is significant for her image and success. In the ad, Marit Paulsen, a farmer and farmer's wife, as well as a writer, dressed in dark casual clothing, sits on a rustic old suitcase bearing the marks of many journeys. Her arms are crossed and she has a serious, almost grim look on her face. The headline is a single word: "besvärlig", which translates to "tough" or "trouble" in English. On the lower right hand side of the ad, there is the name of the "The Liberal Party", below which we find the baseline: "Marit Paulsen – our candidate to the European Parliament". The message of the ad is clear. Let's send Marit to Brussels. She will not fail in her mission to give unreasonable bureaucrats a lesson.

The notion of choosing and sending somebody to a foreign country is the most striking feature of this advertisement, but also a recurrent theme in the public discourse on the elections. In an interview, a party secretary told me that the choice of candidates for the European Parliament is like appointing an ambassador. Since this interview, I have used the metaphor many times in other interviews with candidates to evaluate its relevance. Nobody has dismissed it, but rather elaborated on it, whether one is an ambassador for one's own country in the EU or for the EU in one's home country.

The metaphor is not unreasonable to the extent that citizens and national parties expect *their* members of the European Parliament to represent national interests. However, to the extent that the members of Parliament represent political groups and positions *within* the European Parliament, without national concerns, the metaphor is misleading. In a follow-up study with elected candidates in April 2007, I asked the question to which extent the elected candidates

represented their own party, their political group, their preference voters (their constituency), Sweden, the EU or even Europe at large. The priority was either one's own national party or one's preference voters. The political group in the parliament came second. The national interest is not explicit, but implicit in a clear division between the national and European political organizations.

Preference Voting for National Candidates

The elections to the European parliament are proportional in kind. The citizens vote first and foremost for a political party, rather than individual candidates. In contrast, in majoritarian elections, citizens vote for a particular candidate to represent their constituency in an assembly, or a candidate for a particular office. In practice, the difference between the systems is far from clear-cut. Most electoral systems combine features of both. For example, Sweden had for a long time a pure proportional system (or almost pure considering majoritarian voting within parties). In 1994, "preference voting" was introduced as a supplement. Citizens still vote for a particular party with its own choice of candidates, but on the ballot, voters can mark at will a candidate of preference for the party in question.

The electoral reform has had a rather limited effect on the national elections, but more on the EP elections. In the national elections of 2002, 26% of the voters marked a candidate. In the EP elections in 2004, 59% marked a candidate, or more than double (Oscarsson & Holmberg, 2006). This is partly due to different bars for preference voting. In national elections, a candidate needs at least 8 percent of preference votes to change his or her list position. In the EP elections, the bar is 5%. Furthermore, preference voting also depends on the voter profiles. The proportion of citizens with a strong interest in politics is larger in the EP elections. They are also more frequent preference voters. However, different voting bars and profiles cannot by themselves explain the large difference in preference voting between national and EP elections.

A more direct hypothesis of the higher rates of preference voting is that the EP elections are more majoritarian in kind than the national elections. Each member state of the EU is a single constituency with a limited number of seats (19 in the case of Sweden). The smaller the number of seats for a member of the EU, the more the election will resemble a majoritarian election. In part, this explains the success of Marit Paulsen (the Liberal Party) in 1999 and Nils Lundgren (the June List) in 2004. To some extent, they ran majoritarian elections to represent Sweden. To some extent, their performance may even be compared to the national candidates in the Eurovision Song Contest (ESC).

The ESC draws the largest broadcasting audience in Sweden. Year after year, the show gets the highest audience ratings. In 2006, it reached 4.2 million people. It does not only attract viewers, but it also turns Sweden into a voting country like no other country in Europe. In 2006, the final in Athens mobilized 8.5 million voters by SMS and phone. More than half a million (6.8%) were

Swedish votes, in spite of the fact that the Swedish population makes up less than 2% of the entire population of all member states of EU. If we take Turkey and Israel into account, the share is even less. The Swedish obsession for the ESC is not easy to explain, but it demonstrates a difference in commitment to European elections that begs the question: – is it only a matter of public interests in music versus politics, or does the majoritarian electoral system in the ESC play a role?

In the ESC, each country is represented by just one candidate, irrespective of the population of the country. Furthermore, no country is allowed to vote for its own candidate. In other words, there is no public perception of discrepancy in democratic performance, even if there are national alliances (Fenn, Suleman, Efstathiou & Johnson, 2005). The majoritarian representation makes the electoral system appear transparent and rational to the spectators. In contrast, the top-down driven EP elections make them opaque. It is unclear what they actually represent. Thus, the majoritarian forms of representation gain in importance. Let me illustrate.

In the EP elections 2004, Anna Hedh was a candidate for the Social Democratic Party. She was openly and explicitly critical of the power centralization of the EU, for which reason she was both unpopular and popular within her own ranks. The official party line is pro-EU, which was one reason why she ended up on the back of the party ballot with the list number 31. With 5.3% preference votes, Anna Hedh advanced to the top 5 candidates, which gave her a seat in the European parliament. During the electoral campaign, Anna Hedh was treated as a prime candidate by some party representatives, a renegade and defector by others. She was praised by some, blacklisted by others. In other words, she became subject of an internal majoritarian electoral system.

The European Parliamentary Elections 2009

The stories of Anna Hedh, Marit Paulsen and Nils Lundgren are exceptions that prove the rule. *The EP elections may be proportional in nature, but they are to some extent majoritarian in culture.* They represent two different and competing rationalities in the elections. To some voters, the parties rule the campaign and the elections as usual. To others, it is more sensible to vote for a national ambassador who represents national interests, rather than party interests. To yet others, nothing makes any sense. The perceptions of the discrepant institutional performance of Sweden and the EU cannot be overthrown by the electoral system. To a majority, the EP elections lack rationality altogether, for which reason they do something else on the Election Day. The question is whether it will be any different in the EP elections in 2009?

This was one of the questions posed in follow-up interviews with the Swedish members of the European Parliament in April 2007. None of the 9 interviewees believed that the turnout will change radically. On the contrary, they were all more or less sceptical about any change at all. It will take a long time to de-

velop a broad public recognition of the democratic function of the European parliament. When asked what had been planned and done for the next EP elections so far, the answers were equally tentative, a preliminary meeting or two at most. Nobody had any new ideas on how to approach the problem of low turnout, apart from stressing the need for better public understanding of the institutional role of the European Parliament. I truly believe that this will not be enough.

The national parties need to address the issue of public perceptions of institutional performance. This implies changing public perception, institutional reality or both. To change public perception of the EU at large, parties and news media need to agree on the beneficial institutional performance of the EU in relation to national performance. This seems highly unrealistic. A near future with a clear democratic structure and function of the EP is equally unrealistic, if not more so. We must settle for more moderate goals of change.

Since citizens seek transparency, the EP elections are to some extent majoritarian in culture, even if not in nature. The national parliamentary parties could in many ways reinforce this cultural ingredient without changing the proportional foundation. For example, all parties could agree to regionalize the electoral campaign and list one candidate for each of the 19 regions. The purpose would be to create a common sense of rationality of the national representation by relating to local and regional public interests. If this regional campaign is combined with official and public support for majoritarian voting, a common sense of rationality of the EP elections may get even more manifest and draw public support. However, this presupposes radically different campaign strategies than those prescribed by tradition in Swedish politics.

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Visualizing Egalitarianism

Political Print Ads in Denmark

Jens E. Kjeldsen

A great deal has been written about commercial print advertising, and several studies have focused on advertising and campaigns for organizations. However, very little has been written about political print advertising. In the literature on political campaigns in the US, print advertising is almost non-existent, while studies of television advertising are overwhelming in number. In Scandinavia, printed political advertisement is a dominant rhetorical means, but apart from a few exceptions (Krogstad, 1999; Aalberg & Saur, 2007), even here research on political communication generally does not cover print advertising or at best provides only scattered remarks about it (Carlson, 2000; Eide, 1991; Esaiasson, 1990; Håkansson, 1996, 1999; Aardal, Krogstad, & Narud, 2004). When we turn to research on advertising, there is virtually no treatment of political communication (Andersen, 2004; Hansen & Christensen, 2003; Hansen & Hansen, 2001; Mral & Larsson, 2004; Selfors & Bakken, 2004). The present article examines the ideology of Danish political print advertising from the perspective of visual rhetoric (Hill & Helmers, 2004). The article builds on some of my own previous studies (Kjeldsen, 2000, 2002, 2006a, 2007).

Every ideology has a style. Traditionally the *aesthetics of power* represented the powerful, politicians and leaders, in an ornamental way, at a distance: elevated, impersonal and ritualistic (Hariman, 1995; Hernes, 1989). George Santayana referred to “the aesthetics of democracy” as early as in 1896, describing democracy as a case of unity in multiplicity through uniformity (Santayana, 1961, p. 78, 85). The emergence of modernism and functionalistic architecture displayed a similar expression of democratic equality. As noted by Anders Johansen (2002, p. 255), the lack of ornament and the pure lines comply with the preference for the uniform and homogeneous.

A similar example of this is provided in an article on “The Statistical Atlases of the United States from 1874 to 1925”. In this article, Charles Kostelnick illustrates how the minimalist style of the atlases fostered cultural assimilation. The emphasis on perceptual immediacy made data accessible to all readers and the international, modernist aesthetics dissolved cultural differences: “Clean, geometric forms supplied a basic design vocabulary for implement-

ing the modernist program, engendering an aesthetic of cultural homogeneity that dovetailed with the melting-pot ideology of early 20th-century America" (Kostelnick, 2004, p. 235).

Danish political print ads from the general elections of 1998 and 2001 demonstrate a parallel ideology of egalitarianism. In the ads, the institutions and representatives of power, the unions, parties and politicians, do not elevate themselves; they associate themselves with ordinary people, often appearing as "one-of-us".¹ The following study of these ads is organized in two parts. Part one proceeds to determine and describe the choices of dominant rhetorical appeals, known in rhetorical theory as *topoi* (lt. loci). Part two elaborates on the thesis of egalitarianism by analysing the change of visual rhetoric from the first to the second campaign.²

Visual Topoi in Danish Political Print Advertising

The concept of *topoi*, also known as the topics or the commonplaces, is prominent and omnipresent in the rhetorical tradition from the ancients up to the present. Still, it is notoriously difficult to pin down a uniform and consistent definition that covers all meanings of the term. In the following, I use the term to mean "an intellectual source or region harbouring a proof that could be inserted into any discourse where appropriate" and as "formal or structural inventive strategies like definition, division, or classification" (Crowley & Hawhee, 1999, p. 75; Kjeldsen, 2006b, p. 151-169). Different topoi thus represent different manifestations of a *sensus communis*, the common sense that a community shares. The persuasive power of rhetorical topoi lies in their expressing shared thoughts, opinions, assumptions or values. Visual topoi, then, are common ways of looking at the world, groups of representations communicating in the same way, trying to bring about certain rational and emotional responses.

When studying a piece of oratory, a critic has to examine both what is said and how it is said. The same goes for the study of visual rhetoric. We should pay attention both to *what* is shown (I refer to this as *content topoi*) and *how* it is shown (I refer to this as *presentational topoi*). Together these two constitute the kind of rhetorical appeal being made and reveal the ideology behind it. The choice between showing a politician or an ordinary citizen ("what"), for example, is a choice between two different rhetorical strategies. In the same way, a person may be shown from a frontal or an oblique angle or from a high or a low angle; he may gaze directly at the viewer or look at something outside of the frame ("how").

Visual Content Topoi

Content topoi normally consist of concrete representations showing something particular: a person or an object. However, their appeals are general, such as when nature, fruit or vegetables are used to signify good health or ecological

awareness. The visual content topoi of political advertisements in the campaigns of 1998 and 2001 can be divided into two main groups: topoi of documentation and topoi of emotion. These are roughly concordant with the rhetorical appeals to logos and pathos.

Topoi of Documentation

In general, topoi of documentation are appeals that seek to persuade by giving an impression of visually proving or establishing something without doubt. Showing official papers, signatures or diagrams seems to document facts, and thereby communicates a general impression of rationality. In the Danish campaigns examined here, the most dominant visual topoi of documentation were lists, documents and signatures:

a. Lists: The use of different forms of lists is a prevalent visual strategy in Danish political ads, with the three-part list as the most common (see illustration 1).

The rhetorical appeal of visually listing three things is in many ways parallel to the verbal three-partlist (Atkinson, 1984, p. 57 ff.) Both support recollection and function as a unified whole. One seems complete to the ear, the other to the eye. When more than three points are put forward, they are frequently divided into sections of three: three points for a certain policy, three points against; three points about what *the other parties* do; three points about what *we* do. In the *checklist*, the reader is visually invited to check important issues in connection with the election. The common visual rhetoric of such of lists lies in their ability to signal brevity, clarity and concise communication. They leave an impression of simplicity, thus promising the reader an easy overview and ease of acquisition.

b. Documents (e.g. bills, petitions, written guarantees, letters, etc.): Showing documents is a form of documentation, or at least an attempt to give an impression of documentation. The use of the written guarantee from the politicians is one example, another is simulating familiar official documents (Kjeldsen, 2002). We find an example of this type of pseudo-documentation in 2001, where the Liberal Party (Venstre) used an ad that looked like an electricity bill, with the full amount on the invoice, DKK 2383.28, circled in red (see illustration 2).

Below this, also circled in red, was the amount without rates and dues, only DKK 793.89 kroner. Like most of the documentary appeals, the ad seems



Illustration 1.
(1998) Party ad from the
Danish People's Party

to copy a piece of reality. Such ads pretend that they are not really persuading and that they are just reminding the observer of factual circumstances. They use a visual rhetoric that works through recognition of familiar documents and simulation of reality.

Presenting an ad as a letter from the candidate (a written document) to the electorate is another common type of visual rhetoric, typically followed by a 'personal signature'. Similar kinds of documents are the proclamation or the open letter from celebrities or, more commonly, the electorate, appealing to the ethos of celebrity and the average, ordinary person, respectively. These ads are mostly characterised by a large number of names. Normally they only have a very short text, which does not argue much, but just states the names of the people supporting the ascertainment being made? (see illustration 3)

Because the visual impression of so many names appears as an 'image' of a large crowd, these ads create a presentational topos which I call the *rhetoric of abundance* (see page 147).

c. *Signatures*: We are familiar with the signature as an individual's personal sign for giving confirmations, guaranties, promises and greetings. In political ads the signature functions rhetorically by supporting these kinds of communication acts and by creating a more personal and close relation to the candidate. Since a signature is an indexical semiotic sign, in an analogue code, of a text actually written by the candidate, it is not only a sign referring to the candidate, but also a sign both *of* and *from* the candidate. The signature thus expresses both the personality of the candidate and supports the impression of a personal and direct address to the voter. In some instances the sense of closeness and authenticity is increased by printing the signatures in colour, commonly in blue, giving

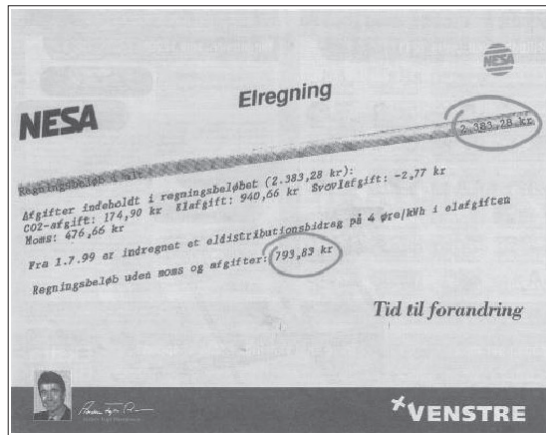


Illustration 2.

(2001) Party ad from the Liberal Party

For en familie med to almindelige lønninger og et parhous kan en vurdering på 800.000 kr. via VNs skattepolitik betyde et tab på 3.500 kr.

Kunilior med høje lønninger og dyre huse vinder dermed, og ikke nok med det: Der er flere andre regleringer på vej til lønmodtagerne. Bl.a. fuld VR vil afskaffe fradraget for fagforeningskontingenter. Vi vil forsøge samfundets goder og byrder på en helt anden måde.

x A den 11. marts.

[illegible]

Illustration 3.

Organization ad from
the Labour movement

the impression that it has been written with a felt-tip or a ballpoint-pen (see illustration 4).

While the signature seems to bring us closer to the candidate as a person, the use of lists and documents seems to present reality itself, appearing as both non-rhetorical and ideology-free communication. The effect is to conceal the ideological use of a style of realism (Hariman, 1995), which implies that political choices are more a matter of empirical fact and calculation than of vision and deliberation. It also implies that politics is, or should be, a matter of simple and pragmatic options: confronted with three clear points for and three points against, all we have to do is choose.



Illustration 4.

(2001) Party ad from the Liberal Party

Topoi of Emotion

By topoi of emotion I mean visual figurative representations that seek to evoke the feelings described in rhetorical theory (e.g. calmness/anger, friendship/enmity, fear/confidence, etc., as described for instance in Aristotle's *Rhetoric* (Aristotle & Kennedy, 2007)). These representations can be of living beings (people or animals), human artefacts (objects, buildings, etc.) symbols (e.g. logos or the national flag), or of nature and ambience. We may distinguish between the following, with people-topoi being the most common:

a. The politician or his opponent, the praising or the mocking picture: In the candidate ads the most common people-topos is, of course, the epideictic photo of the politician. Here the aim is to picture the politician in a favourable way, praising him visually and increasing recognition. Most of these ads present a rather conventional portrait of the candidate, smiling and looking directly at the observer. Generally, the photos only show the candidate's head and sometimes a little bit of their shoulders (see illustrations 1, 2, 4 and 11). The opposite of the epideictic praising picture is the epideictic mocking picture, where the aim is to visually express the flaws and shortcomings of the opponent. Using pictures gives an opportunity to exhibit character traits and express dislikes, which would be improper and ill timed if stated explicitly in words (see illustration 6).

b. Families and children: Families and children are frequent visual topoi, especially in the party ads. These examples almost exclusively represent attempts to associate the party with safety and happiness in the nuclear family or the

joy of the newly born. Aiming at positive pathos appeals, the pictures show happy children and babies and smiling parents representing the life and future the party seeks to provide (see illustrations 4 and 7).

c. The elderly and the sick: while the topoi of families and children are restricted to positive pathos appeals, the pictures of the elderly and the sick are dominated by a negative pathos appeal, especially when used by the opposition. Mostly we see the elderly depicted alone, looking sad and the ill and infirm depicted as though they were in pain. Even though there are some pictures of happy elderly people, evoking the care and welfare the party either wants to provide or already has provided, the most dominant appeals represent indignation and offence with regard to the bad treatment the nation (i.e. the present government) provides for the elderly and the sick.

d. The ordinary Dane: Visual topoi of the ordinary Dane can be manifested in many ways, but are mostly represented as either a family member (see illustration 4) or a worker. The ordinary person is thus perceived and presented as, for instance, a father or a mother, a craftsman, a fireman, a teacher, or a doctor. Ads appealing to either the present favourable state of affairs or to the hope of a bright future mostly show the Dane smiling, together with other people, and often engaged in some activity. Ads appealing to the fear of a darker future mostly show the Dane with a grave demeanour, often passive, alone and viewed from behind.

e. The supporter: the use of personal recommendation, a sort of testimonial, through picture (and text) is used in some candidate ads. In principle, the supporter may be anyone with a valuable ethos; however, the person supporting and recommending is most often a more experienced fellow candidate or a known and respected politician, for instance a former prime minister. In such ads the photographs of the candidate and the supporter visually validate the recommendation and establish a personal connection between the two persons. Compared to verbal text, photographs call for attention, are more easily remembered, and are better at visualizing the political value of party unity.

f. Symbols and objects: the presentation of *symbols* is also common. We may distinguish between the *simple symbol*, such as the ballot mark, ballot letter, flags, logos, etc. (see illustration 1), and the *tropological symbol*. Whereas the simple symbol normally has a rather straightforward conventional meaning, such as the Danish flag representing Denmark, the tropological symbols create meaning by means of rhetorical tropes and figures, such as metaphor, metonymy or synecdoche. An example of this is an ad (see illustration 5) about educational policy from the Social Democrats (Socialdemokraterne). The ad depicts a bicycle helmet, which metaphorically and metonymically represents protection of knowledge (through protection of the brain), but at the same time synecdochally refers self-ironically to Prime Minister Poul Nyrup Rasmussen's unsuccessful par-

ticipation in a bicycle demonstration against French nuclear bombing tests (Kjeldsen, 2000).

There are other kinds of topoi of emotion, such as *animals* appealing to care and protectiveness or signifying ecological concern. The same effect is created through pictures of *fields and countryside*. Showing a *group of politicians* from the same party is a very explicit way of expressing party unity.

While the topoi of documentation appealed to a pragmatic, down-to-earth realism, the emotional topoi reveal an egalitarian tendency. While candidate ads naturally present pictures of the politician, party and organization ads tend to present pictures of ordinary people in ordinary situations³. They focus on the life of ordinary people, not the extraordinary experiences of politicians and ministers. This tendency becomes even more evident in the presentational topoi.

Visual Presentational Topoi

Visual presentational topoi partly involve *mode of expression*. Choosing a photo, a drawing or a caricature enables different types of rhetorical appeals. Secondly, presentational topoi concern the choice between different types of *visual design and grammar*, such as the use colours, angles and perspectives, etc, which contain different semiotic, and hence rhetorical, resources (Kress & Leeuwen, 1996). This approach also includes the use of visual tropes and figures such as those described in research on commercial advertising (McQuarrie & Mick, 1999a, 1999b; McQuarrie & Mick, 2003). Thirdly, visual presentational topoi have to do with the *actio* of the persons presented: their facial expressions and body language.

Photo Realism and Popular Culture

Danish political ads are restricted to a rather limited number of forms of expression. The most dominant kind of ad by far is the combination of text and photograph. In addition to this kind of ad, there were a few consisting only of text and a few created as caricatures or cartoons. Besides text, photography and drawing, and of course different types of design and font, no other forms of expression were used in the two campaigns. There were no paintings, lithographs or any mode of expression connoting the fine arts.



Illustration 5. (1998) Party
ad from the Social
Democrats

The most important visual mode of expression in the campaigns of 1998 and 2001 is the photograph, which appears in almost every ad. Three types are dominant: the portrait which shows the candidate, sometimes with an opponent; the staged photo, which presents elements arranged in a way which makes it obvious that it does not seek to appear either natural or realistic in a documentary sense; and finally the documentary photo, which does attempt to present events as natural and realistic as possible.

The second most commonly used mode of expression was caricatures and cartoons. The cartoon strips from The Liberal Youth of Denmark (Venstres Ungdom) in 1998 are an example of this. On a daily basis, these strips launched hostile attacks at Prime Minister Poul Nyrup Rasmussen, portraying him as a silly, incompetent person doing silly, incompetent things (see illustration 6). Such cartoons function rhetorically by expressing commonly shared views and opinions (topoi) about the Prime Minister in an exaggerated way.



Illustration 6. (1998) Party ad from the Liberal Youth

The strategic advantage of expressing character attacks through cartoons is that this genre does not place strict demands on factual truth. Cartoons are allowed, indeed expected, to exaggerate, distort and caricature. Hence, it is not surprising that cartoons were almost exclusively used in hostile and mocking visual rhetoric. Through their lack of respect for leaders and authorities the cartoons, like the mocking pictures, manifested vivid examples of “lowering the political hero to our level” (Meyrowitz, 1986, p. 268), while simultaneously underscoring the dominance of popular culture.

The Politician as an Insignificant Figure

From studies in art history, design and visual grammar and literacy, we know about the meaning and rhetorical potential in picture composition and the use of colours and values. The perspective and visual angle, the distribution of elements and similar kinds of formal arrangements in a picture are essential parts of the visual rhetoric in a political ad. A general account of visual grammar and literacy is beyond the scope of the present paper. Thus I will focus on explaining the most dominant and important means of formal expression

in Danish political ads, since they are especially prevalent in contributing to the *rhetoric of egalitarianism*. The first is the photographic presentation of the Danish politician, constructing him not as a leader above people in general, but as a rather ordinary person on the same level as everybody else. The most important presentational topoi in this construction are arguably the rhetoric of the direct gaze and the vertical frontal angle. Direct gaze works as a form of direct address to the observer, and in general it has two rhetorical functions: attracting attention and communicating credibility. The politician could have been depicted looking at something inside the picture frame, for example talking to an ordinary Danish citizen or to international politicians, thus enhancing his ethos through association. Another possibility is the visionary gaze, where the politician lifts his head and looks slightly upwards at something (the sky) outside the picture frame. However, in the two examined campaigns there was only one single instance of a politician not using the direct gaze. This convention is so predominant that it would be notable if a politician did not follow it.

Combined with a vertical frontal angle, the gaze creates maximum involvement (Kress & Leeuwen, 1996, p. 149) and a sense of equality: as viewers we are placed on the same level as our leaders. Whereas the low angle shot has been common in many presentations of leaders and dictators (e.g. in Leni Riefenstahl's presentation of Adolf Hitler in *Triumph des Willens*) (Messaris, 1997, p. 34 ff.), such a presentation of a Danish politician would probably be considered a conceited insult. Instead, the egalitarian qualities in the pictures are supported by moderate and friendly smiles, almost never by a serious or grave face (see illustration 4).

Furthermore, with few exceptions, the pictures are always small, very rarely occupying more than a sixth of the total space in the ad. Most often we are presented with a passport size portrait photo showing only the head and shoulders of the candidate. In this way a politician presents himself as less important, i.e. less self-conceited, than he would have with a large picture in full figure. A full-figure photo would also imply the importance of persons over politics. It is thus very unusual to see a politician represented in this way.

In general, the presentations of the politicians are uniform, following the same conventions, making them all look alike. Only rarely are means such as symbols, objects or body language used in order to support and enhance the ethos of a politician. The ads communicate a political ethos of homogeneity and uniformity, not characterized primarily by competence (*phronesis*), but by personal character (*arrete*) and good will (*eunoia*).

Antithesis and Abundance

The two most common presentational topoi in the formal construction of Danish political ads are the antithetical juxtaposition and the rhetoric of abundance.

The antithetical juxtaposition consists of a formal arrangement of elements forming a contrast or opposition between something favourable and something unfavourable. We may distinguish between three forms of internal contrasts,

that is visible contrasts occurring within the frame of the ad: image-image antithesis, graphical antithesis, and text-image antithesis.

Image-image antithesis is most often created by juxtaposing photographs of the recommended candidate with his opponent, often contrasting a praising, favourable picture with a mocking one. Another kind of image-image antithesis is created by the juxtaposing of candidates with the social conditions that they want to improve. This was common in several of the ads appearing in the Liberal Party's 2001 campaign "Time for a change". These ads portrayed party leader Anders Fogh Rasmussen and the party logo next to an elderly woman, a withered rose and a patient in a dark hospital hallway, respectively.

Image-image antitheses are sometimes enhanced graphically through the use of contrasting colours or by juxtaposing elements of the same size and form, creating a *graphical antithesis*. Such antitheses were used by the Social Democrats in 2001 when they markedly divided several of their party ads, making the left side black and the right side white. The first represented the politics of the opponents; the second represented their own (see illustration 7). Such graphical antithesis was commonly used in representations of list and points in order to visually underscore the choice between two alternatives.

Text-image antithesis is most often used to imply the existence of some kind of blameworthy behaviour, such as inconsistency between theory and practice. In the organization ads from the national trade Union of workers, SID, we see a discrepancy between the appreciative statement in the caption, saying "For long and faithful service ...", and the obscene gesture that indicates what the employer is really thinking (see illustration 8).



Illustration 7.
(2001) Party ad from the Social Democrats



Illustration 8.
(1998) Organization ad from the National Trade Union SID

As mentioned, *the rhetoric of abundance* is a visual presentation that gives the viewer a physical and material sense of volume, mass or large quantity. For instance, when many names are depicted as a solid block, graphically representing “many people” and stating a visual *argumentum ad populum*, this constitutes a claim: “This is the opinion of many people (as you can see clearly documented here), so you have good reason to believe the same” (illustration 3). As we encounter not only a text saying that many people believe something, but also a sensuous ‘image’ of a physical mass representing “the people”, we are given an opportunity to see and sense this crowd.

We find another instance of this topos in the 1998 ads from The Liberal Party, where a dense and overwhelming use of written text implies that the party has many important points and much to say about them. Thus, the massive text works as an argument for this party’s seriousness. This party, it is shown, does not take to the populist and emotional use of pictures. Naming the ads as “Information for electors” supports this construction of ethos. This example also illustrates that not using visual rhetoric is not possible. Choosing to do without pictures is just choosing another form of visual rhetoric, such as using ‘the image’ of many written words persuasively.

The topos of abundance can be made more vivid and compelling by photographically showing many objects or a large number of people. This tactic was used by the Danish People’s Party (Dansk folkeparti) in 2001, in an ad showing a picture of a countless number of people gathered in a dense crowd (see illustration 9), accompanied by the title: “There are about 20.000 people



På billedet er der ca. 20.000 mennesker

Vi aner ikke, hvem disse personer er, hvad de tror på eller hvad de vil. Vi ved i det hele taget ikke det mindste om dem.

Kun ved vi med sikkerhed, at det er et antal som dette, der alene i år 2000 er flyttet til Danmark.

De er kommet som et supplement til de 450.000, der er her i forvejen.

Hvis vi skulle vise alle Danmarks fremmede, skulle vi altså bruge 23 billeder som dette.

Dansk Folkeparti **Stem dansk!**
- fordi vi tager fremtiden alvorligt

Tlf: 33 37 51 99 • Fax: 33 37 51 91
df@ft.dk / www.danskfolkeparti.dk

Illustration 9. (2001) Party ad from Danish People’s Party

in this picture". Instead of just mentioning the number of foreigners who come to Denmark, the picture actually gives a material sense of the masses of people who will, allegedly, overrun Denmark. Thus, the picture transforms numbers into 'real' people, but still keeps them unknown. This preserves the feeling of insecurity or threat we often feel when encountering a large mass of unfamiliar faces.

The use of the rhetoric of abundance as a visual *ad populum* supports the egalitarian inclination. Abundance is a topos of quantity, which claims "the superiority of that which is accepted by the greater number of people", and this "forms the basis of certain conceptions of democracy and also conceptions of reason which equate reason with "*common sense*.'" (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1971, p. 86). Appealing to topoi of abundance and quantity, therefore, is a way of appealing to the superiority of what many people think over the views of the authority and experts (topos of quality). The value of the ordinary is greater than the value of the unique (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1971, p. 90).

From Aesthetic Ethos Appeals in 1998 to Realistic Pathos Appeals in 2001

Visual rhetoric through images may employ two different general strategies. Adopting, in part, the vocabulary of Charles S. Peirce (Peirce, Dinesen, & Stjernfelt, 1994; Peirce & Hoopes, 1991), we may call the first strategy iconic and motivated and the second conventional and tropological (Kjeldsen, 2002).

The iconic strategy presents pictures that function as mirrors of reality and thus can be understood intuitively; they are experienced as a message without a code (Barthes, 1977). The conventional and tropological strategy presents pictures that function as a visual language, and that are thus experienced as a message that must be decoded. The difference between the two may roughly be described as follows: the first resembles what it represents, while the second does not represent what it resembles. A picture of a candidate or a patient in a hallway actually resembles what is shown, while the picture of the bicycle helmet does not represent what we see.

The persuasive effect of the iconic and motivated representations is grounded in their ability to communicate vividly, creating what rhetoricians call *evidentia* (gr. *energia*, i.e. vivid description (Kjeldsen, 2003)). These representations appeal directly to the emotions, as such imagery gives us an experience that is similar to the one we would have had, if we had actually been present in front of what is depicted (Messaris, 1994; Messaris, 1997). When these representations are made photographically, they also contribute to a documentary reality appeal.

The persuasive effect of the conventional and tropological representations is that they invite the observer to actively participate in constructing the meaning of the ad, and at the same time they flatter the observer who finds himself

able to 'decode' the visual message. On the one hand, this may contribute to strengthening the ethos of the communicator who presents the artistic ads and visual riddles (McQuarrie & Mick, 1999b). However, on the other hand, this strategy may give the impression of artistic, elaborate, even deceitful, rhetoric at odds with the non-elitist and unassuming rhetoric characterizing the egalitarian appeal. The difference between the two strategies is important in the attempt to understand the general shift of visual rhetoric that occurred from 1998 to 2001.

1998: Visual Tropology and Aesthetic Ethos Appeals

In many ways the campaign of 1998 marked a new beginning of the modern marketing of politics in Denmark. Advertising agencies had been involved in political advertising for many years (Hoirt, 1997), but in the 1988 campaign they were given more influence and money than ever before. Several of the agencies wanted to do away with the pathos appeals of a traditional documentary style of black and white photos showing children, the poor and the elderly. Instead, they designed artful, tropological ads appealing primarily to ethos.

In spite of the agencies' wish for a new kind of political advertising, the candidate ads of 1998 showed a very limited use of visual rhetoric. Besides the ubiquitous portrait photo, almost none of the ads used any kind of visual means or artistic effects to express the character and competence of the candidate more explicitly and precisely. There were, for instance, no photographs showing candidates in the woods and fields or in nature (associating themselves with protection of the environment), no pictures of candidates in company with the electorate (presenting themselves as people-oriented) and no pictures of candidates in working situations (appearing hard working). Instead, the close-up, the direct gaze and the personal intimacy of the traditional candidate photograph were preferred. Because of the many candidate ads, the epideictic, praising photograph presenting the politician in a positive way was the predominant kind of visual rhetoric in the candidate ads of 1998.

Whereas the candidate ads mainly relied on the iconic strategy, using only a few visual rhetorical means, symbols, obvious artistic means, associating mechanisms and tropology were frequently employed in both the party ads and the organization ads. Especially the ads from the Social Democrats and the Centre Democrats (Centrum Demokraterne) used tropological communication, appealing mainly through graphic and aesthetic design. The bicycle helmet ad (see illustration 5) from the Social Democrats, for instance, seeks partly to create an ethos of quality, professionalism and energy through simplicity in the controlled and light composition and the sparse use of elements (Kjeldsen, 2000). We find a similar ethos appeal through design and aesthetics in the "Dog and cat" ad (illustration 10), with the caption "We can all end up as the little guy". Even though the animals may attract attention and evoke emotions in an iconic way, their main function is tropological. They are to be understood, decoded, metaphorically as describing the changing luck of life, as evidence

of why society needs a decent welfare system.

The newspapers were dominated by the ads from the Social Democrats and the Liberal Party. Even though the Liberal Party did not use tropological ethos appeals, it also did not use iconic documentary appeals. Instead, it mainly used the rhetoric of abundance in the verbally dominated party ads. Technically of course, this may be defined as a visual rhetorical trope (a kind of *amplification*, such as *congeries*); however, the massive text does not prompt the viewer to perceive it as an artistic expression. In addition to the portrait photos of party leader Uffe Ellemann-Jensen, only two of the ads used iconic strategies creating *evidentia* (vividness), epideictic mocking of the Prime Minister and the government, respectively.

Even though the 1998 campaign in general was quite hostile and negative, the visual rhetoric in the ads was not characterized by strong negative or emotional visual appeals, and it was more or less without iconic *evidentia* (vividness) presenting pathos appeals. Negative campaigning in the ads became more prevalent towards the end of the campaign and in the organization ads, especially in the organization ads supporting the Social Democrats.

In general, negative visual campaigning, as we know it from the US, can obtain effective impact through vivid, realistic pictures creating *evidentia* (Jamieson, 1992). Presenting emotional, vivid pictures

of a sad state of affairs in connection with social policy, for instance, seems an obvious possibility when trying to reach the many discontented voters. However, most of the negative ads used a visual rhetoric which was quite weak or unclear, leaving the negative emotional appeals to the verbal text.

Furthermore, the prevailing part of ads performing negative visual appeals used pictures that were studio photographs or in other ways clearly staged. Thus, these pictures appear more as symbols than as compelling documentarism



Illustration 10. (1998) Party ad from the Social Democrats

and realistic pathos appeals. Consider, for instance, the obscene ad from the union of semi-skilled workers (illustration 8), or the “Dog and cat” ad (illustration 10) from the Social Democrats.

So, the visual rhetoric of the political newspaper advertisements in the 1998 campaign only partially utilized the possible visual means of persuasion. It is especially notable that the documentary reality appeal was almost completely absent. Visually, the advertising agencies chiefly appealed to ethos, either through design and mode of expression or through conventional portrait photos of the candidates.

In general, the campaign exhibited two major strategies, linked to contrasting ideologies. On the one hand, many of the ads were marked by the rhetoric of egalitarianism; they were simple, unassuming and matter-of-fact. They were uniform in execution and showed a limited use of visual artistic effects. The ads were mostly dominated by letters and lists and presented few pictures besides the candidate photos and the moderately mocking photographs and cartoons used to deride the opponents.

On the other hand, parties such as the Social Democrats, the Centre Democrats and partly The Christian Democratic Party used artistic, tropological ads. These were designed in a new, out of the ordinary style. The aesthetics of the ads called attention to the expression, attempting to create a political ethos appeal signalling dynamism and uniqueness. Whereas the egalitarian appeal seeks to make the mode of expression an unnoticed medium for the delivery of political content, the artful, creative appeal makes it an explicit part of the message.

Because the Social Democrats ran more ads than the other parties, with the probable exception of the Liberal Party, the artful ads dominated the press. However, towards the end of the campaign, when the Social Democrats realized that their ads had not had the desired effect, they abandoned the strategy of visual tropology and aesthetic ethos appeals, advocated by their agency, and began using more traditional person-oriented party ads. These epideictic praising photos were still clearly arranged, giving the iconic visual appeal of eagerness, initiative and good will a somewhat artificial and non-authentic impression. Nonetheless, they pointed towards a return to the more traditional way of political advertising displayed in 2001.

2001: Documentarism and Realistic Pathos Appeals

While the candidate ads did not change significantly from 1998 to 2001, the party ads demonstrated a more widespread use of the iconic strategy using *evidentia*, manifest negative rhetoric and hostility expressed visually. The emotional visual appeals were stronger and the use of (pseudo)documentary appeals increased. In contrast to the tropological pictures of three years earlier, this year brought a much more widespread use of images of ‘the real world’ and everyday life.

The shift was evident in the ads from the Social Democrats, who left the conspicuous, artistic image appeals of 1998 behind and turned to photographs

similar to the normal press photo in order to create vividness (*evidentia*) and a sense of documentary reality. These photos all had visual emotional *evidentia* and supported the party slogan “People first” and the idea that Denmark was doing well. The pictures used the iconic function to show doctors in action, a nurse sitting with an elderly gentleman in a residential home, a smiling girl (illustration 7) and public employees and workers. In 2001 as well, the Social Democrats only presented Poul Nyrup Rasmussen in a few, very small images. The strategy was obviously not to sell the party through the image of the Prime Minister, but to emphasize and praise the ordinary Dane.

The Social Democrats were not the only party avoiding artful tropology in favour of more iconic vividness with emotional appeal. Out of all the ads in the newspaper *Politiken*, only three employed conspicuous tropological appeals. The Liberal party left its 1998 strategy of appealing through massive text and small pictures of the party leader, and replaced it with a much more pronounced use of iconic and documentary visual rhetoric in order to create vivid representations of their slogan “Time for a change”, and their negative logos appeal: The Social Democrats are tired and things are not going well in Denmark. The most pronounced, and controversial, documentary appeal in the whole campaign was without a doubt the use of a press photo of six young second generation immigrants leaving the court house in Århus after being convicted of mass raping a young girl (see illustration 11). The caption anchors the meaning of the picture: “Time for a change”. This ad, which was condemned both nationally and internationally, stirred emotions, and is



Illustration 11. (2001) Party ad from the Liberal Party

a prominent example of the pathos appeals created by an iconic strategy of pseudo-documentation.⁴

In general the photographic reality rhetoric of 2001 was dominated by three visual content topoi:

1. Children: Among the parties using the topoi of babies and children were the Socialist People's Party (SF) and the Social Democrats, which is not surprising since these parties fight for the welfare state and express concern for the vulnerable in society. The most vulnerable of all are the newborn, and if they could vote "they would vote for SF", the Socialist People's Party asserted in an ad with a picture of a baby. Showing children is both a way of getting the viewer's attention and of evoking sympathy, compassion and care, all of which the political left seem to associate with the well-fare state. The sight of the most vulnerable in our society visualizes and creates closeness to these feelings and the responsibility that follow. When the Conservative Party showed pictures of children and babies in their ads, they were presented as small individuals living as an integrated part of a nuclear family (see illustration 4). Showing a child, and particularly a baby, is an "egalitarian trope" (Hariman & Lucaites, 2007, p. 103), since it tends to render class and cultural background ambiguous.

2. Danish countryside: In 1998 both the Socialist People's Party ("Socialistisk folkeparti" or SF) and the Red-Green alliance ("Enhedslisten") used carrots to tropologically connote ecology and SF also used pictures of meadows and fields. However, in 2001 the Danish countryside became a much more significant topos in the political advertisements, especially on the socialist side of the political spectrum, as seen in the ads from SF and the Red-Green alliance. Values such as giving your self plenty of time, eating natural food and creating an ecological way of farming are expressed through photos of meadows and fields, people lying in the corn relaxing and free-ranging animals.

However, the countryside has additional potentials for meaning. This is obvious from a range of ads run by The Danish People's Party, all using a meadow with grass and dandelions under an open sky of light clouds as background. This does not connote sustainable ecological development, but Denmark as a nation. This seems likely when we look at the text in two similar ads: "Your vote makes a difference – vote Danish" and "Your country, your choice. Vote Danish.". The images are clearly used in order to represent and accentuate a certain landscape, allegedly especially Danish and shared by all Danes.

3. The elderly and the ill: The third prominent topos in this election was elderly and ill people. As with the topos of children and babies, these groups are often presented as weak, vulnerable or powerless. Thus, this topos appeals primarily to the emotion of compassion and care for others. In one ad, the Social Democrats report how much they have done for the elderly in the last eight years of government, and show a photo of pleased elderly gentleman sitting outdoors on a bench with a smiling nurse. The aim, of course, is to show a

positive image of the government's achievements. This kind of positive visual presentation of the elderly and their situation was also used by the Socialist People's Party in an ad which shows a photo of two smiling elderly people looking into each other's eyes.

Naturally, the largest party in opposition, the Liberal Party, was not inclined to argue that everything was going well. In one ad the caption reads: "The elderly are too often being treated in a way we should be ashamed of". The photo shows an older woman, appearing neither happy nor pleased, walking towards a staircase so dark that it is impossible to see the steps. Visual rhetoric lamenting the state of things was even more pronounced in the ads from the Danish People's Party. One ad states: "We must always remember our duties and our responsibility. This is especially so in Denmark". The photo shows an elderly man sitting in a chair with his pinched face turned away from a young smiling woman holding her right hand around his back and her left hand on his clenched fist.

The opposition was also eager to show vividly that ill people do not receive proper care. In one ad, the Liberal Party presents a photo of a Danish patient lying in the dark hallway of a public hospital. In this (pseudo)documentaristic way the photo presents the sad state of affairs in the Danish hospital service. By using realism to create pathos appeals, the photographs also work as arguments by vividly placing us in (front of) the blameworthy situations. The Social Democrats did not, as we might assume, show pictures of smiling and satisfied patients. This would probably have been perceived as an untrue beautification. Instead they use more neutral pictures, such as surgeons in the middle of an operation.

Equality through Artlessness and Uniformity

After the "lowering of the political hero" (Meyrowitz) by television and weeklies, the ethos of the ordinary has become a central democratic value and an important factor in political communication. In the US we have witnessed this in the casual, conversational fireside chats of Franklin Roosevelt and the colloquial style of Ronald Reagan (Jamieson, 1988). In countries such as Denmark and Norway (the origin of the Jante's Law⁵), appearing ordinary and unassuming seems to be even more valuable. A Danish study of public spokespersons found that besides credibility (ethos), and charisma, public communicators were appreciated when displaying a "one-of-us" appeal consisting of qualities such as being sensitive, warm, folksy and capable of admitting mistakes (Kock & Hansen, 2003).

In Norway, Anders Johansen has described the value of authenticity in political communication. In this context authenticity consists of expressing oneself with a "lack of style and form in the traditional sense" (Johansen, 1999, p. 162; 2002). As early as in 1966, the American social scientist Harry Eckstein described the particular authority and legitimacy of a Norwegian politician. Despite the fact that his observations were done in Norway more than 40 years

ago, they describe a disposition that is still present in Danish politics (Eckstein, 1966, p. 156): “The great thing even among parliamentarians, for example, is to appear to be a regular fellow, practical and common-sensical, well-versed in dull facts, rather inelegant, unimpressed, indeed embarrassed by success. One displays [...] a monotonous delivery, a bare style, a lack of “manners” (although not of courtesy)”.

Prime Ministers, Eckstein explains, “cultivate equality more than primacy”. These descriptions suggest, I claim, a certain general Scandinavian appreciation of equality through uniformity and unassuming artlessness, which, as we have seen, were present in most of the Danish political ads. We find the same kind of egalitarian rhetoric in Danish Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen’s Speech for the New Year on January 1st, 2002, where he launched an attack on the “chartered arbiters of taste, who determine what is good and right”. Even though this part of the speech concerns the importance of securing the individual freedom to form his or her own life, it still – paradoxically – supports the egalitarian inclination we have seen in the ads. “There is a tendency towards a tyranny of experts which risks suppressing the free popular debate. The population should not put up with the wagging fingers of so called experts who think they know best”.⁶

This is the verbal equivalent of the visual laudations of the common people seen in the ads described here which mostly showed the ordinary Dane or representations of “things Danish”, such as the Danish countryside. When the ads do show the politician (which is mostly in candidate ads) the viewer is included as an equal; the ads use small conventional portrait photos, refrain from any use of conspicuous editing or signifying symbols, and present the candidate as a friendly ordinary person. Compared to ads from France, the UK or the US, Danish ads show a remarkable lack of pictures of incumbent prime ministers in action; there are no visual appeals to leadership capabilities or to international experience, no pictures of the minister with foreign heads of state.⁷

In general the design of the ads is plain and unadorned, often characterized by shortlists, contrasts and antitheses implying that politics is simple and a matter of pragmatic choosing between facts. A widespread use of the topos of abundance suggests the value of the (ordinary) people. The down-to-earth tendency also reveals itself in the documentary style, seemingly presenting reality. The real everyday life presented in documents and photographs is superior to the visions and ethos of the politicians.

The exceptions to the rhetoric of egalitarianism in the ads, of course, are the artful, tropological ads of 1998. However, even during the campaign several politicians expressed dislike of this form of political communication (Kjeldsen, 2002), and the change to the realism of 2001 indicates that this style did not have the desired effect. After having examined their visual rhetoric, we see an important reason for this. Conspicuous artfulness appealing to the decoding abilities of the clever voter is contrary to the dominant ideology of egalitarianism and plain talk. In the light of this, it also runs the risk of being regarded as ‘mere façade’ – empty talk – and potentially manipulative and deceitful. Clever

design and visual artistic rhetoric may have a persuading effect in commercial advertising; however, it seems that it may not be the best rhetorical choice in Danish political communication. Such ads are the visual equivalent of the speaker proudly showing off his eloquent abilities. Danish politicians seldom gain by presenting themselves as brilliant, important, proudly competent, or even visionary – either in oratory or in advertising.

Notes

1. A phenomenon in politics which has been described by among others Sennett (1992), Meyrowitz (1986) and Johansen (2002). Cf. Kock & Hansen (2003) who describe the “one-of-us” emotional appeal.
2. The analyzes are based on print ads collected from both newspapers and from the parties. In 1998 ads were collected from the day the election was called on 18 February to the day after the election was held on 12 March. The following newspapers were included: *Politiken* (broadsheet), *Ekstra Bladet* (tabloid) and *Weekendavisen* (a weekly newspaper). In 2001 ads were collected from 3 November to election day, 20 November. The following newspapers were included: *Politiken*, *Ekstra Bladet*, *B.T.* (tabloid) and *Weekendavisen*. Both in 1998 and 2001 political parties were contacted in order to make sure that as many of their ads as possible had been obtained. In total 98 different ads from 1998 and 87 from 2001 were examined. In 1998 15 interviews with advertising agencies and three interviews with party press secretaries were conducted.
3. For a more detailed description of the three types of ads, see (Kjeldsen, 2002).
4. For an elaborate analysis of this ad see (Kjeldsen, 2007).
5. The 10 commandments of Jante’s Law are formulated in the novel *A Fugitive Crosses His Tracks*, written by Danish-Norwegian Aksel Sandemose. The first commandment reads “You shall not believe you are special”. In Australia the same phenomenon is known as the tall-poppy syndrome, which refers to the allegedly behavioural trait of Australians to cut down those who are or act superior.
6. The speech (in Danish) can be found at: <http://www.stm.dk/Index/dokumenter.asp?o=2&n=0&h=2&d=79&s=1&str=stor>
7. This does not mean that egalitarianism has no place in these countries. Especially the US has a long tradition of egalitarianism. We find it in the ‘ordinary guy’ rhetoric of presidents such as Abraham Lincoln, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Ronald Reagan, William Clinton, and George W. Bush. In *No Caption Needed*, Hariman and Lucaites (2007) mention egalitarianism as one of three powerful discourses in American political history, the two others being nationalism and civic republicanism. They convincingly illustrate the egalitarian ethos of the most famous and published photograph of all times: Joe Rosenthal’s image “Raising the flag on Mount Suribachi”. The idea of political equality is manifested through the anonymity and physical entrainment of the marines. They are all in identical uniform, performing a coordinated ritualized action, which embodies collective action and mark them as “ordinary men in common labor for a common goal” (Hariman & Lucaites, 2007, p. 98).

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Chapter 9

Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose? *The Evolution of Finnish Web Campaigning 1996-2004*

Tom Carlson & Kim Strandberg

“In some respects”, Foot and Schneider note, “the history of campaigning could be understood as the diffusion of technology into the political sphere” (2006, p. 7). Indeed, looking back, changes in election-campaigning practices have been closely related to advances in communication technology. In the *pre-modern* era of campaigning, distinguished by Norris (2000a, p. 137), direct interpersonal communications and print communication (party press, posters, and pamphlets) were central. Subsequently, in the *modern* campaign era, the national television developed into the most important forum of campaign events. Finally, moving from the television age to the digital age, the internet – particularly the World Wide Web (henceforth: the web) – plays a key role in today’s emerging *post-modern* era of campaigning. Interestingly, in two respects, web campaigning may represent a return to the pre-modern campaign era (Norris, 2000a, p. 149; Ward & Gibson, 2003, pp. 189-190). Firstly, there may be a revival for interpersonal communication between politicians and voters, since the new digital technology allows different forms of interactivity. Secondly, the new communication technology may decentralise campaigning. Whereas the television brought forth centralised party campaigning, the web, offering a reasonably cheap and functional platform for campaigning, may strengthen individual candidates at the local level. In a worldwide review of web campaigning, Gibson emphasizes the role of candidates in the development of on-line campaigning:

A key distinction that emerges in studies of the US cyber-campaigning compared with other countries is the extent to which it is personalized. Having a candidate rather than party-centered system means that individualised uses of it for electioneering purposes inevitably predominate. This more decentralised model of site creation [...] is also possibly one of the key reasons why the US offers such high levels of innovation and development in web campaigning (Gibson, 2004, p. 103).

Regarding Western Europe, Gibson points out that the strong party system in most of the nations has hampered web-campaigning activity among individual

candidates. As to Scandinavia, where the political parties are in a central position in the national election systems, she notes that Denmark, Norway and Sweden “[...] have not necessarily been trailblazers in campaigning online” despite the region’s high level of internet penetration and the early party presence on the web (Gibson, 2004, p. 104). In a Nordic perspective, Finland can be seen as a deviant case regarding the role of individual candidates in web campaigns. Like the other Nordic countries, Finland is characterised by long-term high levels of internet penetration (Norris, 2000b, 2001). Contrary to the Scandinavian countries, though, Finland has an electoral system that is strongly oriented towards individual political candidates. In the Finnish system, using proportional representation in multimember districts, the voters cannot cast ballots according to party lists of candidates but merely for unranked individual candidates representing parties or electoral alliances. This system results in rather candidate-driven campaigns. Finnish candidates thus invest in personal campaigns and usually have their own support groups that organize campaign activities, raise money, and generate publicity (Ruostetsaari & Mattila, 2002).

Against this background, it is not surprising that candidates in Finland already in the mid-1990s expressed an interest in utilising the web in their campaigns. Thus, in the 1996 European parliamentary elections, as well as in the 1999 national parliamentary elections, a significant share of Finnish candidates launched their own web sites (Isotalus, 1998; Carlson & Djupsund, 2001). The early adoption of individual web campaigning in Finland generates a considerable time span which now makes it possible to shed light on the general question of how political actors over time implement new campaigning techniques. More specifically, in this chapter, we address the question of how individual candidates, across time, adopt and use web sites in their campaigns. Previous research on candidate web campaigning has typically focused on single elections (Gibson & Ward, 2002; Kamarck, 1999; Sadow & James, 1999; Ward & Gibson, 2003). There is, with a few exceptions that we will return to, a lack of research that empirically and systematically analyzes trends in candidate web campaigning across time. Examining such trends, this study aims to contribute to the understanding of the dynamics of candidates’ adoption and use of campaigning innovations.

Empirically, we focus on three main areas of enquiry. Firstly, we examine the web presence amongst candidates: how has the propensity of candidates to set up campaign web sites changed over time? Secondly, we focus on adoption patterns regarding candidate web campaigning by analysing longitudinal changes in the profile of the on-line candidates. Were there distinct “digital divides” among the candidates when web campaigning was initially adopted and have these gaps narrowed or broadened over time? These two areas of inquiry will be examined across time in two kinds of elections: Finnish national parliamentary elections (henceforth: national elections) and Finnish European parliamentary elections (hereafter: EP elections). Can we find similar patterns of evolution although the electoral contexts are dissimilar? Thirdly, we pay attention to changes in the features of the candidates’ web sites. Have the campaign

sites, over time, moved beyond being primarily “electronic brochures” (Kamarck, 1999, p. 108) to being sites that increasingly utilize media-specific features, particularly interactivity? Before turning to the empirical analysis, these areas will be put into a theoretical context and related to relevant earlier research.

Framework

The Expansion of Web Campaigning by Candidates

In a study of the establishment of web sites by American political candidates in 1996 and 1998, D'Alessio (2000) views the early expansion in the use of web sites by candidates as an adoption process, departing from Rogers' classic work on the adoption and diffusion of innovations (Rogers, 1962, 1986, 1995). According to Rogers, a person's attitudes towards an innovation are based on perceptions of different characteristics of the innovation. Among these innovation attribute perceptions, D'Alessio (2000, p. 557) highlights comparability and relative advantage concerning candidate web-site adoption. Comparability, i.e. “the degree to which an innovation is perceived as consistent with the existing values, past experiences, and needs of potential adopters” (Rogers, 1995, p. 224), is deemed central to web adoption by political candidates. In particular, D'Alessio remarks that web campaigning meets the candidates' need to retain control over their campaign messages. On-line, candidates can communicate their messages to the voters without the journalistic intervention present in traditional media. As this need is likely to increase in the post-modern campaign era, with its more complex and fragmented news environment (Norris, 2000a, p. 147), we can expect that the share of candidates setting up web sites should grow over time.

Subsequently, relative advantage, i.e. the degree to which an innovation is perceived as better than the idea that it supersedes (Rogers, 1995, p. 212), is often seen as the favourable result of a cost/benefit analysis. In the context of web campaigning, D'Alessio (2000, p. 558) identifies costs as both financial and in terms of staff and volunteer resources. As election campaigns are becoming increasingly costly – particularly in countries where televised political advertising is allowed, e.g. Finland – adopting web sites can, from a cost perspective, be appealing for candidates. Compared to televised political advertising, creating and maintaining a web site can be achieved at lower costs (Margolis et al., 2003, p. 58). The benefits of adopting web campaigning, then, can be various and depend upon many factors. D'Alessio however highlights the audience numbers, i.e. the potential number of voters that can be reached on-line, as the central factor in considering the benefits of launching a campaign site (2000, pp. 558-559). Thus, whilst the societal internet penetration rate grows over time, the possible benefits for adopting web sites in campaigns should increase and thus the share of candidates being on-line should increase, given that the costs of cyber campaigning do not rise significantly over time.

As to empirical observations of the expansion of web-site adoption by candidates, covering a reasonably long period, Conners (2005) has charted the development in the context of US Senate campaigns between 1996 and 2004. When compiling results from her own and earlier research, Conners concludes that the use of web sites by candidates over time has reached a plateau. In 1996, 33 percent of all candidates launched web sites; the corresponding figures for 1998, 2000, 2002 and 2004 were 63, 77, 73 and 75 percent respectively. As regards candidates running for major parties, she notes that the overall proportion of adoption of campaign sites has remained flat since the 2000 election cycle. Since then, approximately 90 percent of the major party candidates have been on-line. Minor third party candidates, in contrast, have been slower to adopt web sites across time.

Earlier and Later Web Adopters: Digital Gaps

In the general research of the adoption and diffusion of innovations, a central topic concerns the characteristics of different kinds of adopters of an innovation. Rogers (1995, pp. 262-266) distinguishes between five categories of adopters based on their time of adoption of the innovation: innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards. Moreover, he describes how the adopter types differ from each other in terms of their personalities and demographics. As regards the diffusion of new communication technologies, Rogers (1986, pp. 132-134) notes that early adopters, compared with later adopters, are predominantly male, younger in age, and possess a higher socio-economic status. Examining particularly the general public's access to the internet, several studies have observed similar "digital gaps" between those using the internet and those lacking access to it (Norris, 2001). Thus, the early users of the internet have been disproportionately young, better educated, male, and socio-economically better-off (Norris, 2001, pp. 68-69).

In a longitudinal analysis of the social profile of internet access and use, Norris theoretically departs from two scenarios of future population trends on the internet. The *optimistic* perspective predicts that "[...] the social profile of the online population will gradually broaden over time [...] until eventually it comes to mirror the society as a whole" (Norris, 2001, p. 70). Accordingly, over time, as the internet diffuses, the social digital gaps will narrow. Alternatively, Norris presents a *pessimistic* scenario. Departing from Rogers' discussion of characteristics of earlier and later adopters, she points out that the "[...] adoption of successful new technologies often reinforces economic advantages [...] so that the rich get richer, and the less well-off [...] fall further behind [...]" (Norris, 2001, p. 71). This interpretation predicts that the digital gaps will widen, not narrow, over time. In fact, Norris' empirical analysis of the social profile of internet users in Europe 1996-1999 showed that "[...] far from equalizing, the digital divide [...] expanded during these years; the inequalities of access by income, education, occupational status, and age become stronger and only the gender gap weakened over time" (Norris, 2001, p. 86).

Regarding the case of web-site adoption by political candidates, we find the reasoning regarding earlier and later adopters and of closing or widening gaps useful. Arguably, turning to the world of campaigning, the relevant characteristics of earlier and later web site adopters among candidates may be different.

In examining web site use by candidates, scholars have usually paid attention to two types of candidate-specific characteristics: demographics (Herrnson & Stokes, 2003; Gibson & McAllister, 2006; Gibson & Römmele, 2003) and political resources (Cunha et al., 2003; Davis, 1999; Margolis et al., 2003; Margolis & Resnick, 2000; Sadow & James, 1999). In the perspective of earlier and later adoption of web campaigning, we find two demographical variables intriguing: candidate age and gender. Considering age, it can be assumed that the early adopters of web sites among candidates should be disproportionately young. Generally, young candidates tend to have less financial and organizational resources for mounting expensive offline campaigns, thus having a need to go on-line. Moreover, in the emergent internet era, the young generation generally shows greater familiarity with and interest in the internet, thus making younger candidates more likely than older candidates to launch web sites. Still, few studies have examined the impact of age on candidate web-site adoption. Gibson and McAllister (2006), however, examining Australian candidates' web campaigns in the 2004 federal election, reports that youth was indeed a major significant factor in predicting whether or not a candidate had a web site. An unexplored question, however, is whether such an initial generational gap in candidate web-site adoption has narrowed over time.

As regards gender, the early observed gender gap in the general public's use of the internet – males use the internet more often than females – may not necessarily be represented in the context of web campaigning. Actually, some studies have observed a lack of gender significance in candidates' web presence (Carlson, 2007; Gibson & McAllister, 2006; Greer & LaPointe, 2003). One reason to the keenness of female candidates to adopt the new campaign tool rather early may be the female candidates' need to retain control over their campaign messages, as the news coverage tends to treat them disadvantageously compared to male candidates (Kahn, 1996). In any case, we lack systematic empirical observations across time about the propensity of male and female candidates to use the web for campaigning.

Turning to the role of political resources, two circumstances can be perceived as central regarding candidates' web-site adoption: size of the candidate's party and candidate status. Regarding party size, small party candidates have theoretically been perceived as being more inclined to adopt web sites than major party candidates (Corrado & Firestone, 1997; Davis, 1999; Gibson & Ward, 1998; Hill & Hughes, 1998). Through offering an affordable and fast communication channel, the internet seems suitable for candidates lacking resources to efficiently campaign through traditional media (Davis, 1999; Gibson & Ward, 1998). More recently though, empirical studies focusing on single elections have mostly demonstrated that major party candidates are on-line at a higher rate than

smaller party candidates (Gibson et al., 2003; Gibson & Ward, 2002; Margolis et al., 2003). Still, longitudinal evidence regarding the impact of party size to candidate web-site adoption is scarce. Kamarck's study of the 1998 and 2000 US Senate, House and Gubernatorial elections, though, point in the direction of unaltered or even widening gaps in favour of major party candidates (2003, pp. 88-89). However, since the US party system is dominated by two major parties, putting minor and fringe parties in an unfavourable position, there is an obvious need to study this topic in multi-party systems, too.

Concerning candidate status, it has been argued that challengers might feel more compelled to campaign on-line than incumbents. According to Kamarck (2003, p. 87), challengers may "[...] feel that they have to try harder and thus become more likely to adopt new technologies." Thus, they should be more prone to turning to alternative new ways of campaigning, as they are lagging behind the incumbents in terms of name recognition, campaign leverage, and governmental resources (Davis, 1999, pp. 94-95; Gibson, 2004, p. 109; Gibson & McAllister, 2006; Margolis & Resnick, 2000, p. 67). On the other hand, several scholars have perceived the same incumbents' resources – name recognition, campaign leverage, and governmental/party resources – as favourable for web-site adoption (Davis, 1999, pp. 94-95; Gibson, 2004, p. 109; Margolis & Resnick, 2000, p. 67). Concerning empirical evidence, Kamarck's findings (2003) from the 1998 and 2000 US elections show that challengers were on-line at a higher rate than incumbents in 1998 and that this gap remained in the 2000 elections. Beyond the US context, web-site adoption by challenging and incumbent candidates is still lacking systematic longitudinal evidence. Possibly, the clearly competitive character of the plurality system with single member districts, used in the US, may affect the candidates' need to adopt campaign sites in a different way than proportional systems, based on representation in multimember districts.

The Evolution of Web-site Features

In the early days of web campaigning, just having a site was the main thing for political candidates (Foot & Schneider, 2006, p. 9; Schneider & Foot, 2006, p. 21). Unsurprisingly, most early studies of campaign web sites labelled them as "electronic brochures" or "virtual billboards" (Kamarck, 1999; Sadow & James, 1999). Thus, the sites were rich on basic, traditional campaign information but they did not in general utilize the inherent technological possibilities of the new medium, particularly different forms of interactivity. With time, as Schneider and Foot demonstrate with longitudinal US findings, more candidate sites tend to gradually adopt site features or practices which "go beyond brochure ware" (Schneider & Foot, 2006, pp. 28-29; Foot & Schneider, 2006, pp. 159-160). Across time, beyond the practice of informing, candidates have increasingly adopted the practices of involving and mobilising voters/supporters on-line (i.e. providing techniques and opportunities for individuals to interact with the candidate's campaign and with other actors) and the practice of connecting

(e.g. by providing hyperlinks to other political sites). Also Kamarck (2003) notes slight increases in participatory features such as fund-raising, volunteering and interactivity between the 1998 and 2000 US elections for the Senate, House and Governor. Finally, in analysing candidate sites from the same US Senatorial and Gubernatorial election campaigns, Greer and LaPointe (2003, pp. 125-129) prove that there have been significant increases in the provision of information, graphical elements and interactive features on the web sites over time.

In sum, based on the evidence so far, candidate sites are slowly going beyond “brochure ware” which was evident among the early adopters. There are, however, doubts whether these findings from the US are valid in other countries, as the US is often regarded as being a forerunner in the development of web-campaigning techniques, producing benchmarks that are gradually adopted elsewhere (Gibson, 2004).

Web Campaigning in National and EP Elections

In this final part of the framework, we briefly pay attention to the role of election types to patterns of candidates' web campaigning. The empirical analysis of web-site adoption by candidates will include national parliamentary elections as well as Finnish EP elections. In both types of elections, the Finnish voters cast their votes for individual candidates and, therefore, the candidates carry out their own personal campaigns. However, in Finland, as in most other European Union member states, the EP elections can be characterised as so-called second-order elections (Reif & Schmitt, 1980; Schmitt, 2005). Thus, EP elections, in contrast to national elections, are seen as less important by the parties, and the voter turnout is lower, too. Moreover, the EP election campaigns do not attract the attention of the news media to the same extent as national elections (de Vreese, 2001, 2003).

Possibly, the second-order nature of EP elections may strengthen the incentives for individual candidates to campaign on the web for several reasons. First, the low interest shown by the media and the parties towards the EP elections, as well as the low voter attendance, is forcing EP candidates to independently promote themselves more actively. Therefore, they may opt for inclusion of a web site as part of their campaign. Second, in Finland, the EP election is a relatively competitive election. For example, in the 2004 EP elections, 227 candidates competed for a mere 14 seats. Consequently, a candidate might be more compelled to seize every possible vote by every possible means, including web campaigning. Third, as the whole country is treated as a single constituency in Finnish EP elections, web campaigning might be considered a cost-efficient way for candidates to maintain a nationwide campaign. In sum, there is reason to expect that the expansion of web-site use by candidates over time has been more rapid in EP elections than in national elections. As regards the evolution of digital gaps across time between different kinds of candidates in the two electoral contexts, subsequently, we find it difficult to theoretically formulate clear hypotheses; rather, we here opt for an open-ended exploration.

Data and Methods

Basically, the empirical study consists of two parts. In the first part, we focus on the adoption of web sites by Finnish candidates across time. Initially, we observe the overall expansion of web-site use by the candidates. Thereafter, we longitudinally analyze the use of web sites by different subgroups of candidates, according to candidate gender, age, party affiliation (major, minor, or fringe party¹), and status (incumbent or challenger). The empirical data of the first part of our analysis derives from several studies. In compiling the longitudinal data set, the starting point was a study by Isotalus (1998) surveying the use of web sites by candidates in the 1996 Finnish EP elections. This was the first time candidates campaigned on the web in Finland. Isotalus (1998, p. 159) reported that 57 of the 207 candidates launched their own personal web sites during the campaign. In his study, Isotalus excluded such candidate sites that were obviously set up by the party organizations, using standard templates, and, in addition, official sites by incumbents that were created by the national Parliament. In order to collect data on the on-line candidates' background characteristics, we contacted Professor Isotalus in 2005. Re-examining his archive, he found that *de facto* 66 candidates had their own web sites in the campaign. For all the 207 nominated candidates, we then coded data on their web site possession, gender, age, party affiliation, and status using official sources. In order to compare the candidates' propensity to campaign individually on-line in 1996 with a later EP election, we re-used data that we had collected in a study of candidates' web campaigns in the 2004 Finnish EP elections (Carlson & Strandberg, 2005, 2007). As to the national elections, we compared the 1999 and 2003 elections by re-using data on the candidates' on-line presence that we had collected in earlier projects (Carlson, 2007; Carlson & Djupsund, 2001; Strandberg, 2006, pp. 116-144). In these studies, a candidate was considered to have a web site even in such cases where the site had been created and maintained primarily by assisting parties or the Parliament. In the present study, in order to follow Isotalus' research strategy, such sites were not considered as individual web-campaigning efforts by candidates.

The second part of our empirical study focuses on over-time changes in the provision of certain features in the Finnish candidate web sites. Specifically, sites from the 1999 and 2003 national elections are compared using quantitative content analysis. Unfortunately, the web campaigns of the candidates in the 1996 and 2004 EP elections could not be compared here; we did not have our own data on web-site contents from the 1996 EP elections. Nor could we, due to differences in methodology, utilize the qualitative findings of Isotalus (1998) as a basis for comparison with our quantitative data on the features of the candidate web sites in the 2004 EP elections, collected in a earlier project of ours (Carlson & Strandberg, 2005, 2007).

The data of our content analysis of the candidates' web sites in the national elections of 1999 and 2003 originate from two different research projects and studies. As to the 1999 elections, we here reuse data from a quantitative content

analysis of candidate web-site features (Carlson & Djupsund, 2001). In that study, a random sample of 10 percent (102 sites) was drawn from the population of identified web sites ($N = 1,046$). For the present study, we had to thin out this sample as it contained candidate sites created and maintained primarily by assisting parties or the Parliament. After doing that, 47 personal candidate web sites remained, which equals approximately 10 percent of candidate sites not maintained by assisting parties or the Parliament ($n = 452$).

Concerning the 2003 elections, the data was drawn from our content analyzes of the census of candidate web sites in the campaign (Carlson, 2007; Strandberg, 2006, pp. 116-144). Again, for this study, candidate sites maintained by parties or the Parliament were disregarded, shrinking the number of web sites from 874 to 733. The quantitative content analyzes undertaken in these two separate projects did not use sets of variables that are fully comparable. For the sake of comparability in the present study, we had to consider such variables that were measured and operationalised in similar fashions. We finally opted for solely examining web-site features which, so-to-speak, go beyond brochure-ware. Thus, we first observe the presence or absence of such types of electoral information that we suggest are uncharacteristic for static offline campaign brochures, i.e. dynamic news sections, media releases, calendars which are usually frequently updated, and, in addition, audio/video files and extensive use of photographs. Second, we examine the presence or absence of different interactive features: the provision of e-mail contacts, discussions forums, chat rooms, opportunities for visitors to sign up to receive e-mail, and features encouraging visitors to volunteer for the campaign (cf. Foot & Schneider, 2006; Schneider & Foot, 2006). In the following, we label these interactive devices "engagement features" as they contribute to the political engagement of site visitors (cf. Dányi & Galács, 2005; Lusoli & Ward, 2005). Finally, we examine a case of the "practice of connecting": the provision of hyperlinks. Hereby, the candidate sites connect to other political (and non-political) sites thus creating a networked so-called electoral web sphere (Foot et al., 2003; Foot & Schneider, 2006).

Findings

The longitudinal findings concerning both the EP and the national elections are presented in this section. Initially, we observe the share of candidates with campaign web sites in the four examined elections.

Table 1 shows that there has been a significant rise in the share of candidates having a web site in both types of elections. Essentially, this expansion in web-site use by candidates mirrors the growth in the internet penetration rate in Finland, which went from 11 percent in 1996 to 57 percent in 2004². Interestingly, comparing the expansion in web-site use by candidates between EP and national elections, we note that the share of candidates on-line was higher in the 1996 EP elections than compared to the 1999 national elections,

Table 1. The Candidates' On-line Presence in the Four Elections (percent)

Election	Year	Do the Candidates Have Web Sites?		Total: % (N)
		Yes	No	
EP Elections*	1996	32	68	100 (207)
	2004	56	44	100 (227)
National Elections*	1999	23	77	100 (1,991)
	2003	37	63	100 (2,013)

* = $p < .001$ (χ^2 -test).

held three years later. What is more, as expected, the rate of the candidates' web-site adoption has been faster across time in the EP elections.

Narrowing or Widening Gaps?

In exploring the adoption of web campaigning by different kinds of candidates, we begin by looking at the distribution of subgroups of candidates with web sites in the four elections. Table 2 compares the distribution of candidates with web sites in the elections according to the candidate-specific variables discussed earlier, i.e. gender, age, party affiliation, and electoral status.

Table 2. Candidates with Web Sites in the Four Elections: Examining Four Candidate-specific Variables (percentage of candidates having a site)

	European Elections				National Elections			
	1996		2004		1999		2003	
	%	Total N	%	Total N	%	Total N	%	Total N
<i>Gender</i> ¹								
Male	30	128	52	141	23	1,260	33	1,215
Female	35	79	64	86	23	731	42	798
<i>Age</i> ²								
18-34	55	40	67	49	37	379	44	410
35-49	26	57	61	75	23	789	44	695
50-	30	96	51	96	16	823	28	908
<i>Party</i> ³								
Major	58	48	97	60	42	674	66	679
Minor	37	60	79	75	23	556	34	738
Fringe	16	99	12	92	6	761	6	596
<i>Status</i> ⁴								
Incumbent	64	11	100	10	22	182	47	170
Challenger	30	196	54	217	23	1,809	36	1,843

1. 1996: ns; 2004: $p < .05$; 1999: ns; 2003: $p < .001$ (Fisher's exact test).

2. 1996: $p < .01$; 2004: ns; 1999: $p < .001$; 2003: $p < .001$ (χ^2 -test).

3. $p < .001$ for all elections (χ^2 -test).

4. 1996: $p < .05$; 2004: $p < .01$; 1999: ns; 2003: $p < .01$ (Fisher's exact test).

As to patterns in the evolution of the gender, generational and political resource gaps in candidate web presence, presented in Table 2, we can on a general level observe similar patterns in both types of elections. Firstly, we note that only the age gap has narrowed over time in both election types. Thus, the lead that younger candidates once had has gradually eroded. Secondly, over time, a gender gap has emerged. In terms of having web sites, female candidates were *on par* with male candidates already in the 1996 EP and the 1999 national elections. In the later EP and national elections, however, female candidates were on-line at a significantly higher rate than their male counterparts. Thirdly, the party size gap has widened over time. In both types of elections, fringe party candidates are increasingly lagging behind minor and major party candidates in terms of having campaign web sites. What is more, we note that the large on-line gap between major and minor party candidates has remained more-or-less unaltered, although there has been a considerable increase in web presence for both types of candidates. Fourthly, there is a widening incumbency gap in both types of elections: incumbents are to a higher degree on-line than challengers in the latter as compared with the former elections. However, the number of incumbents in EP elections is notably low, which calls for some caution in generalising from this finding.

In order to distinguish the relative importance and the independent effects of the examined candidate-specific variables on web-site adoption, we ran four logistic regression models, one for each election, predicting candidate web presence.

The logistic regression models in Table 3 reveal that the party size factor plays a more decisive part regarding candidate web-site adoption than demographic factors and status in both types of elections and across time. Major party candidates were the most likely to have campaign web sites already in the two earlier elections. Over time, in both types of elections, the influence of running for a major party on web-site adoption has increased more compared to the significance of running for minor parties. Concerning generational effects, belonging to the youngest age group has remained a significant positive predictor across time in both types of elections even though its power has weakened in the national elections. Regarding gender, we note that being male or female is not a significant factor in explaining the candidates' on-line presence in both EP elections. As to the national elections, the gender effect detected in the 1999 election is no longer significant in the 2003 election. Finally, concerning the widening incumbency gaps observed in Table 2, the regression models do not confirm an independent effect of running as an incumbent in national elections. The explanation for this is that the incumbents with web sites run for major or minor parties. For the EP elections, the effect of incumbency could not be compared over time.

Table 3. Predicting the Candidates' Adoption of Web Sites in the Four Elections (logistic regression models)

	European Elections				National Elections			
	1996		2004		1999		2003	
	B (SE)	Exp(B)	B (SE)	Exp(B)	B (SE)	Exp(B)	B (SE)	Exp(B)
Gender	.004 (.356)	1.004	.718 (.467)	2.050	.303* (.124)	1.354	.036 (.112)	1.036
Status	.597 (.718)	1.817	-----	-----	-.625** (.200)	.535	-.389* (.179)	.678
Age								
18-34	1.310** (.436)	3.707	1.336* (.568)	3.804	1.115*** (.162)	3.049	.651*** (.148)	1.917
35-49	-.168 (.403)	.845	.077 (.492)	1.081	.342* (.140)	1.408	.450*** (.125)	1.569
Party Size								
Major Party	1.821*** (.453)	6.176	5.741*** (.836)	311.367	2.634*** (.183)	13.934	3.484*** (.198)	32.593
Minor Party	1.134** (.419)	3.108	3.563*** (.501)	35.264	1.617*** (.192)	5.037	2.077*** (.193)	7.983
Constant	-1.836		-2.899		-3.413		-3.053	
Nagelkerke R ²	.223		.656		.251		.349	
% Correct	71.5		86.8		78.8		74.3	
N	193		220		1,991		2,013	

*** = $p < .001$; ** = $p < .01$; * = $p < .05$. The dependent variable: 0 = Candidate does not have a web site, 1 = Candidate has a web site. Predictors: Gender: Male (1); Female (0). Age: reference category (0) = 50 years or older. Status: 1 = Incumbent; 0 = Challenger. Party size: reference category (0): fringe party. The status variable could not be included in the model for the 2004 elections; it did not meet the requirements of sampling adequacy.

From Brochure-ware to Web-ware?

We now turn our focus to the features of candidate web sites in the 1999 and the 2003 national elections. Our main interest concerns the potential expansion of web-site features which, so-to-speak, are more than brochure-ware inasmuch as they provide web-specific content to the campaigns. In Table 4, we examine the provision of five "information features" and five interactive "engagement features" (coded as absent or present on the sites) in the two elections.

With due caution for the relatively low number of cases in the 1999 sample, Table 4 shows that the share of candidate web sites providing "more than brochure-ware" has increased moderately between 1999 and 2003. Looking beyond the general picture, the increase has mostly been in terms of information provision and not to the same extent in terms of engagement features. While there has been a statistically significant, although not dramatic, increase of candidate sites providing news sections, calendars, and large amounts of photos as to information features, only the slight increase of sites providing opportunities for volunteering is significant concerning the opportunities for engagement.

In order to examine if the range of information and engagement features provided on the sites has grown across time, we compare, in Table 5, the

Table 4. Information and Engagement Features Provided on the Candidate Web Sites in the 1999 and 2003 National Elections (figures are the percentage of sites including a specific feature)

Features	Election Year		Difference 2003–1999 (in % points)	Significance ¹
	1999	2003		
News Section	6	21	+15	.007
Media Releases	51	52	+1	.533
Calendars	49	63	+14	.035
Audio/Video Files	6	7	+1	.616
>10 Photos	13	29	+16	.010
E-mail Address	89	95	+6	.085
Discussion Forum	13	10	–3	.338
Chat	0	0	0	.940
Get E-mail	2	7	+5	.179
Volunteering	0	7	+7	.043

1. Fisher's exact test.

N: 1999 = 47; 2003 = 733.

means for both election years of two indices, an Information index (0-5) and an Engagement index (0-5). These are additive indices assigning one point for the presence of each of the examined features on a site. In addition, Table 5 contains a means comparison of the number of hyperlinks provided on the candidate sites in the 1999 and 2003 elections.

Table 5. Provision of Information, Engagement and Hyperlinks on the Candidate Web Sites in the 1999 and 2003 National Elections (mean scores)

	Year		Significance ¹
	1999	2003	
Information Index (0-5)	1.25	1.71	.009
Engagement Index (0-5)	1.04	1.19	.097
Number of Hyperlinks	6.96	6.72	.902

1. *t*-test for independent samples.

N: 1999 = 47; 2003 = 733.

The results in Table 5 confirm the picture in Table 4. While the increase in the range of information features provided is statistically significant, although it is far from dramatic, the small increase in the provision of different engagement features does not reach the significance level of 0.05. At best, it can be considered a statistical trend ($p < 0.10$). Finally, as to the practice of connecting, the candidates' limited use of hyperlinks has remained stable over time.

It appears from the findings displayed in Tables 4 and 5 that there has been a slight change in the provision of "beyond brochure-ware" features over time. Arguably, time-related factors – e.g. technological developments related to web-site production and changes in the on-line candidates' perception of

the new campaign tool's possibilities – may have influenced this trend. However, this change could be due to other factors than such time-related factors. Particularly, the distribution of different kinds of candidates with sites in the two election years might be more influential on web site content. In order to scrutinise the factors explaining candidate web-site content, we ran ordinary least squares regression models predicting the scores for the Information and Engagement indices. Alongside the predictors used earlier in the chapter (gender, age, status, and party size), the election year was entered as a predictor in the regression models (cf. Greer & LaPointe, 2003, pp. 128-129). We are thus able to examine whether “time” has any independent impact on campaign web-site content when controlling for candidate-specific variables. The findings are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. OLS Regression Models Predicting Information and Engagement Provision on the Candidates' Web Sites

	Information		Engagement	
	B	SE	B	SE
Election Year	1.091 ***	.193	.211 *	.100
Gender	-.018	.081	.004	.042
Age	-.003	.004	-.005 **	.002
Status	.783 ***	.127	.065	.066
Party Size				
Major Party	.785 ***	.176	.211 *	.091
Minor Party	.353 *	.183	.168	.095
R ²	.107		.015	
N	780		780	

*** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$

Note: Dependent variables: information index (0-5); engagement index (0-5). Predictors: Election Year: 2003 (1); 1999 (0). Gender: Male (1); Female (0). Age: Years. Status: 1 = Incumbent; 0 = Challenger. Party size: reference category (0): Fringe party.

With due caution for the weak explanatory power of the regression models presented in Table 6, time does have an independent significant influence on the provision of candidate web-site features. Thus, the web sites of the candidates were richer on information features and somewhat richer on engagement features in 2003 than in 1999 when controlling for candidate gender, age, party size, and incumbency. Apart from the election year, incumbency and running for a major party are also relatively strong significant positive predictors of web-site information features. Running for a minor party, albeit weaker in power, is also a significant positive predictor. Concerning the provision of engagement features, running for a major party is equally a strong predictor as the election year. Younger candidate age also has a weak, but statistically significant effect on the provision of engagement features.

Conclusions

Finally, the main findings will be summarised and discussed. Initially, regarding changes in Finnish candidates' web presence, our findings demonstrate that there has been a significant rise in the share of candidates campaigning on-line, in both types of elections. However, in comparison to the expansion of web use by American senatorial candidates between 1996 and 2004, the Finnish development has been more modest. One explanation for this country difference might be the fact that many candidates in Finland, regarding the web, have relied solely on party-maintained candidate presentations, especially in national elections.

In the EP elections, the share of candidates with their own web sites was higher in the 1996 election than in the 1999 national elections which took place three years later. In addition, the expansion of the EP candidates' web campaigning has been more rapid than in the national elections. Possibly, these observations indicate that the comparably lower interest paid by the parties for the "second-order" EP elections is actually spurring candidates' party-independent web-campaigning efforts. Moreover, other EP election-specific factors discussed earlier – the little interest paid by the media, low voter turnout, and the competitive electoral system – may have provided incentives for the candidates to go on-line.

The expansion in web-site use by candidates over time has not, however, narrowed significant on-line gaps between different types of candidates, as the optimistic scenario of the adoption and diffusion of the internet would have suggested. Two important resource-based gaps have widened. First, as in the US case, our findings point in the direction of widening gaps favouring major party candidates. Apparently, the contrasting party- and election systems in Finland and the US do not matter in this respect. The strong and increasing importance of party size in explaining candidate web-site adoption suggests that as the novelty of the internet fades and candidates grow more aware of the new medium, candidates of larger parties are increasingly edging in front of their rivals in terms of campaigning on-line. Second, we have observed a widening gap favouring incumbent candidates. Interestingly, this is contrary to findings from the US where challengers have maintained their lead in campaigning on-line over time. Potentially, the election system used in Finland, based on proportional representation in multimember districts, explains this. Many candidates only act as supplementary candidates in order to fill out the party's slate of candidates and add some votes to the party total; consequently they do not campaign wholeheartedly.

Contrary to the pessimistic view of the general adoption and diffusion of the internet, the initial on-line gap between younger and older candidates has narrowed considerably. Finally, in contrast to the early observed gender gap in the general public's use of the internet, our findings show that female candidates, in terms of having web sites, were *on par* with male candidates already in the early elections. Over time, female candidates have put up web sites to

a significantly higher degree than male candidates. Still, the regression models revealed that gender itself was not especially influential on the candidates' propensity to campaign on-line. This could potentially be explained by the strong male dominance among the candidates running for fringe parties; these candidates seldom launched their own web sites (cf. Carlson, 2007, p. 57).

Turning to the evolution of web-site features, our findings show that the Finnish candidates' propensity to provide "more than brochure-ware" has increased moderately over time. Mainly, this trend has been in terms of information provision, whereas the provision of interactive features, offering opportunities for political engagement to site visitors, has remained more or less unaltered. The same goes for the limited use of hyperlinks. Thus, contrary to the US findings presented earlier, the Finnish candidates have not yet moved beyond the practice of informing on their web sites. Tentatively, the lower use of engaging practices on candidate sites in Finland, compared to the US, may be a result of an adoption lag, the US being the forerunner in devising web-campaigning techniques. Alternatively, the need to mobilize and involve supporters and voters for campaigning activities, on-line as well as off-line, may be greater in the political system and culture of the US. Additionally, our findings may indicate that the adoption of web sites by Finnish candidates is not necessarily a result of a rationally-based cost/benefit analysis. In a situation where the candidates are still relatively uncertain of how efficient the new campaigning tool is, they may simply imitate their counterparts' moves. Hence, they may go on-line simply in order to follow the fashion and signal innovativeness; developing their sites' functionality is regarded as a less important matter.

The regression models predicting the range of information and engagement features on the Finnish candidates' web sites bring about a final observation. Concerning the relative importance of candidate-specific factors in explaining the provision of site features, the results show, once again, that political resources do matter. Thus, being an incumbent and running for a major party are important factors spurring the candidates' provision of information features, even when time-related factors (election year) are taken into account. Thus, the lead of resourceful candidates in providing "beyond brochure-ware" features has remained over time. Again, this circumstance echoes the pessimistic scenario of the adoption and diffusion of the internet: over time, "the rich get richer" (Norris, 2001, p. 71). If the costs of constructing and maintaining sophisticated campaign web sites rise, accentuating the need to employ technical expertise in order to stay up-to-date, the less-resourceful candidates will further lag behind (cf. Margolis & Resnick, 2000; Margolis et al., 2003).

In conclusion, the early evolution of web-site adoption and use by candidates has been less than revolutionary in the context of Finnish election campaigning: the expansion in candidate adoption of web sites has been less than dramatic; important resource-based on-line gaps between different types of candidates have not narrowed over time; the utilization of web-specific features has not increased considerably; across time, the resource-rich candidates remain the forerunners in web-site adoption and use. Hence, the candidates' use of web

sites in Finnish election campaigns, can – for now – be seen as a case of *plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*? – the more it changes, the more it stays the same.

Notes

1. This classification is based on a categorization by Norris (2003, p. 28): “Major parties” are those with more than 20 percent of all seats in the national parliament; “minor parties” are those with more than 3 percent but less than 20 percent of the seats; “fringe parties” are those that lack at least 3 percent of the elected members of the parliament.
2. Source: Statistics Finland (www.stat.fi): the percentages represent the share of Finnish citizens aged 15-79 using the internet at least once a week.

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Acknowledgements

The authors have contributed equally to this chapter; the authors' names are in alphabetical order. We would like to thank Professor Pekka Isotalus (University of Tampere) for kindly digging his archive and providing the names of the candidates with web sites in the 1996 EP elections. Needless to say, we are solely responsible for any shortcomings in the results and conclusions reported here.

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Chapter 10

Popularized Election Coverage?

News Coverage of Swedish Parliamentary Election Campaigns 1979-2006

Bengt Johansson

In the aftermath of the 2006 Swedish election, discussions in the media emphasized what was said to be a number of new campaign characteristics. Campaign tactics and spin were claimed to be more important than ever before. And because a major political scandal occurred during the campaign – when a computer break-in into the Social Democrats' internal network by members of the Liberal Party was reported to the police – scandals were also argued to be significant for the 2006 election campaign. After the election, critics also pointed out that the campaign had been framed as a presidential race between the leaders of the two largest parties – Prime-Minister Göran Persson, representing the Social Democrats, and Fredrik Reinfeldt, representing the Conservatives.

No doubt these phenomena did appear during the 2006 Swedish election campaign. However, the question we must ask ourselves is whether these tendencies put forward in the general debate were anything new. Is there really a trend toward more campaign tactics, scandals and personalization over time?

The debate over campaigning style and media campaign coverage fits well into a scientific discourse on changes in political journalism. In a highly competitive media landscape, the struggle for attention is crucial, both for politicians and for the media. However, scrutinizing political news is not self-evident for a growing portion of the general public, and the media have to find efficient ways of arousing the audience's interest. Focusing on campaign style, scandals and personalization might make election news more popular and be an efficient way of getting the audience's attention.

The purpose of this chapter is to analyze the news media coverage of nine Swedish parliamentary election campaigns covering a period of 27 years. We will see to what extent these traits of popularization can be found in the news media coverage of the national elections.

Popularized Election Coverage

A number of researchers have pointed out a growing tendency toward mediatization or structural bias in journalism and election coverage (Asp, 2007b; Graber, 2006; Hernes, 1987, 1993; Peterson et al., 2006). The term captures how media reporting is steered by professional values, norms and routines. An important driving force behind this mediatization is the need for the media to capture the audience's attention, that is, to present news stories that will attract the medium's target audience (McManus, 1994). In a media world in which news about the election campaign has to compete with election coverage in other media and with other more popular genres, it has been claimed that political journalism tends to become more popularized. In order to arouse attention and interest, journalism tends to describe politics as a game, with winners and losers. Other features focus on campaign strategies, scandals and personalization. Instead of describing political issues and abstract principles, the media put more emphasis on the struggle for power between candidates and other sorts of dramatized news, all in order to attract an audience (Blumler & Gurevitch, 1995; Esser & Pfetsch, 2004; Rappe, 2004). Others have named this process tabloidization, which means that broadsheets and other "quality" media tend to adopt a more sensational and popular style of reporting (Esser, 1999). Another concept used to describe this development is entertainmentization. Neil Postman argued in *Amusing ourselves to death* (1985) that the public sphere was degenerated when information was sacrificed for entertainment. Other scholars have also pointed out a shift towards entertainment-based content which leaves less room for a hard news and a rational discussion (Franklin, 1997; Meyer, 2002).

In the literature, this development is said to be general, but comparative research shows differences between countries (Esser, 1999; Strömbäck & Dimitrova, 2006), and mediatization techniques seem to be more oriented toward popularized coverage in commercial media (Strömbäck, 2004).

One question, which must be addressed, is whether this development is of benefit to democracy. Can these features of increasing dramatization of a more popular style of reporting about politics strengthen democracy or do they constitute a threat? As already mentioned many media researchers would immediately conclude that this development is negative. Focusing on the informational function of the media, election journalism is becoming a poorer basis for decision-making (Patterson, 1993; Franklin, 1997; Meyer, 2002).

But in addition to this basic informational function, other normative models of the media's role in electoral democracies emphasize the importance of the media in engaging and mobilizing the public (Norris, 2000; Corner & Peels, 2003; Strömbäck, 2005; Johansson 2006a). Seen from this perspective, the media should not only convey information that provides a basis for individual voting decisions, it should also convey campaign information that engages the citizenry. Although engaging content may not necessarily provide citizens with in-depth knowledge about political issues, it is seen as having other values. Engaging campaign coverage can increase citizens' interest in the campaign.

A more popular style of reporting politics would therefore not be seen as a degeneration of the public sphere, instead it could be seen as re-establishing and intensifying democratic involvement and communication (Corner & Peels, 2003).

Common for all these traits of changing media content – mediatization, tabloidization, entertainmentization – is reporting about politics in a way which can attract a larger audience through a more popular style of reporting. Therefore, I will in this chapter use the concept of *popularization* to analyze changes of campaign reporting in Sweden. The concept will be analyzed with regard to two dimensions. The first one could be called *dramatization*. In order to capture the audience, the media focus on different aspects of drama (Hernes, 1983). There are, of course, numerous ways of measuring dramatization, but in the present analysis, it will be limited to three aspects: campaign news, scandals and opinion polls reporting. These three aspects may be seen as different techniques for presenting exciting news (Peterson et al., 2006).

The second dimension of popularization is the extent to which media coverage of elections can be seen as personalized. However, the concept of *personalization* in relation to political journalism can be defined in a number of ways. One way might concern how politicians are framed, for example, how different attributes are connected to politicians or to what extent the media focus on their private lives (Meyer 2002). Another aspect of personalization concerns to what extent journalism focuses on politicians instead of political parties; a third could be how much attention party leaders receive as compared to other politicians. This last aspect will be analyzed here, but also related to the framing of party leaders, in terms of how often they appear in dramatized news.

Following this logic, we should be able to see a number of changes and structural differences in news coverage of election campaigns in Sweden during the past 30 years. If media coverage has indeed become increasingly popularized, we should see, over time and in all news media, a growing focus on campaign coverage, scandals and opinion polls as compared to political issues (Hypothesis 1). If it is true that the media describe politics as a struggle between individuals, over time we should furthermore see a greater emphasis on the party leaders in the election news coverage (Hypothesis 2). In line with this argumentation, party leaders should also receive increasing amounts of exposure in the context of dramatized news as compared to political issues (Hypothesis 3). Moreover, because popularization is driven by a more commercialized media market, we should also find stronger tendencies toward dramatized and personalized election coverage in the tabloid press as compared to the morning press (Hypothesis 4). Following this logic, the analyzes should also reveal greater emphasis on these aspects in commercial television than in public service television (Hypothesis 5). This last hypothesis can only be analyzed after 1991, when the channel TV4 was granted a concession for terrestrial transmission. The program Nyheterna on TV4 started this year and was the first broadcasted television news to be shown on a commercial television channel in Sweden.

Method

The material used in this study consists of content analyzes conducted within the framework of the Swedish Media Election Studies program. These analyzes have taken place regularly at the time of parliamentary elections in Sweden since 1979 at the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication at University of Gothenburg (JMG). The content analyzes include press and television news material published/broadcast during the four final weeks of the campaign. The aim of the studies is to analyze the political content found in the mass media during the campaign. Political news material is defined according to the following criteria: the article/story contains a party-political actor, addresses politically relevant subjects or is in some other way related to the campaign, for example appearing as part of the news program's election-extra headline. The papers included in the analysis are the three largest national subscription morning papers (*Dagens Nyheter*, *Göteborgs-Posten* and *Svenska Dagbladet*) and the two national tabloid papers (*Aftonbladet* and *Expressen*). The television programs included in the study are the Swedish Television (SVT) news programs *Aktuellt* (9 p.m.) and *Rapport* (7.30 p.m.), for the entire 30-year period, as well as *Nyheter* on TV4 (10 p.m.), which has been dealing with the campaigns since 1991. The dataset consists of more than 36,000 articles/news stories, which are distributed as presented in Table 1.¹

Table 1. Media Election Studies 1979-2006 (number of article/stories)

	Morning press	Tabloid press	Television news
1979	2 145	1 047	347
1982	2 345	1 021	282
1985	3 079	1 136	330
1988	3 137	1 251	418
1991	3 317	–	403
1994	3 900	–	440
1998	3 430	1 111	419
2002	2 761	838	318
2006	1 930	709	371
Total	26 044	7 113	3 328

Comment: In 1991 and 1994, the tabloids were not included in the Swedish Media Election Studies.

Dramatized Election Coverage

Over the past decades, the distinction between game and substance has been important in studying political communication during election campaigns. In the research field dealing with the media and election campaigns, the information function of the media is seen as central. The media should facilitate the electoral process and convey information relevant to political issues, thus enabling

citizens to make informed decisions (Asp, 2007; Blumler & Gurevitch, 1995; Norris et al, 1999; Norris, 2000; Meyer 2002; Patterson, 1993; Strömbäck, 2005). Results from the US show that issue coverage has dropped over time and that game frames have become more prevalent. Most well-known is perhaps Thomas Patterson's study of the American press, which shows that issue content has steadily decreased in American presidential elections (Fallows, 1996; Patterson, 1993). This pattern has not been demonstrated in the Nordic and European context, however, despite fears to the contrary. In Scandinavia at least, policy issues continue to make up a relatively large portion of campaign coverage, even if certain studies show that the proportion has dropped somewhat the past recent decade (Asp, 2007b; Esser 1999, Norris et al., 1999; Rappe 2004; Waldahl & Narud, 2004). Looking at election coverage in Sweden, tendencies toward more dramatized news coverage can be traced which then support the first hypothesis (H1). Table 2 shows the proportion of news articles/stories focused on campaign news, scandals or opinion polls. On average, one-third of all news stories can be categorized as having a dramatized frame, but there are changes over time and differences between news media.

Table 2. Dramatized Frames in News Media Election Coverage 1979-2006 (percent)

	1979	1982	1985	1988	1991	1994	1998	2002	2006
Morning press	18	26	24	31	28	31	36	40	54
Tabloid press	33	55	49	49	–	–	49	55	70
Television news	18	31	28	38	30	34	34	34	54
Public service TV	18	31	28	38	28	30	28	33	50
Commercial TV					35	41	50	35	65

Comment: Morning press: $t=4.314$ $p<.005$, Tabloid press: $t=2.251$ $p<.088$, Television news: $t=3.167$ $p<.019$, Public service TV: $t=2.322$, $p<.053$, Commercial TV: $t=1.583$, $p<.212$.

For the morning papers, we see a significant trend toward more dramatized news. In the late 70s and early 80s, somewhere between 20 and 25 percent of the articles about the election campaign had a dramatized frame. Since that time, this figure has risen to more than 40 percent during the past two elections. Tabloid press and television news show the same pattern, but here it is less apparent. In 1979, we find the lowest percentage of dramatized frames, and in 2006 the proportion is clearly the highest. But in the election campaigns falling between these two extremes, we see only rather small changes in media reporting of dramatized articles/stories. However, the considerable difference in the level of dramatized news stories between the 2006 election campaign and earlier elections should be mentioned. One important explanation for this focus on dramatized news in 2006 is of course the computer break-in scandal mentioned earlier. But there are also other factors that could explain this change in reporting. The most important explanation is probably the narrow opinion gap between the sitting government and the opposition during the whole campaign, which provided many opportunities to speculate about winners

and losers. When no one can predict the outcome of the election, it is quite natural that this kind of journalism becomes more prevalent.

Comparing the different levels of dramatization, we find support for the hypothesis (H4) that more attention will be given to these kinds of news stories in the tabloid press than in morning papers. During the whole period, the tabloid press had somewhere between 15 and 25 percent higher levels of dramatization.

One of the hypotheses (H5) predicted that we should find more dramatized news coverage following the break-through of commercial television. On the basis of other studies, we know that Nyheterna on TV4 tried to adopt an "American-style" format of news presentation including anchor-reporter dialogs about the news stories. However, after a few years, the channel adopted a more traditional style of news reporting (Asp, 1995). Because the hypothesis posited more dramatized news in commercial television than in public service television, Table 2 also analyzes the difference between these news programs.

When Nyheterna started in 1991, the amount of popularized election coverage was greater compared to that broadcast in public service television – Rapport and Aktuellt. Since then, election news has become even more dramatized in commercial television, even if the difference between the news shows was insignificant in 2002. However, in 2006, when all news media seemed to be occupied with campaign news, scandals and polls, Nyheterna focused considerably more on these kinds of news than did television news on public service channels.²

We should also take a closer look at opinion polls in the election coverage. Frequent use of opinion polls is one way of framing politics as a contest, where winners and losers can be easily identified. Such items are essentially dynamic, offer drama and are definitely news (Peterson et al., 2006). In Table 3, this kind of dramatization is analyzed separately. As predicted (H1), we do find an increasing interest in opinion polls in the news media. For the morning press the trend is obvious, even if we are talking about rather small numbers. In the 80s, approximately three percent of the articles focused on opinion polls. From the 90s onward, this figure increased significantly, peaking in 2006 (10 percent). The tabloids also focus more on opinion polls, and even if 1991 and 1994 are not included in the analysis, we see a clear trend toward more news about opinion polls in the tabloids as well.

Table 3. Opinion Polls in News Media Election Coverage 1979-2006 (percent)

	1979	1982	1985	1988	1991	1994	1998	2002	2006
Morning press	1	2	3	3	5	3	5	6	10
Tabloid press	2	5	4	2	-	-	6	6	8
Television news	3	4	7	4	8	5	3	1	5

Comment: Morning press: $t = 5.03$ $p < .002$, Tabloid press: $t = 1.55$ $p < .197$, Television news: $t = -.461$ $p < .659$.

The pattern for television is unclear. The share of polls in television news reaches its highest level in 1991. In the election campaigns thereafter, there are fewer reports on polls until the last election campaign in 2006.

As predicted (H4), the results show systematic differences between the tabloids and morning press in this respect. But there is no significant difference between television news in public service and commercial channels.

Personalized Election Coverage

In journalism, one well-known technique for capturing the attention of viewers, listeners and readers, is to focus on a person. Earlier analyzes of television news during elections in Sweden show a trend toward more personalization by portraying party leaders as active subjects in news stories, especially during the last weeks of the campaign (Johansson, 2006a). But this study was limited to television news during only three different campaigns. The question is whether we can see a growth in party leader personalization that can be traced throughout the studied period. In this section, three aspects related to personalization of party leaders will be analyzed. The first concerns how often party leaders are positioned as one of the main actors in the news story. The second aspect concerns the extent to which party leaders are visualized in the papers, and regarding the third aspect, the analysis will focus on the extent to which party leaders are exposed in dramatized news.

Because the measurement of actors was carried out differently in the 1979 study, it is not possible to evaluate the results for the 1979 campaign along with those for the other elections. But based on an analysis of the eight election campaigns since 1982 (Table 4), support for the hypothesis predicting an increasing tendency for media to focus on party leaders (H2) must be considered mixed.

Table 4. Party Leaders in News Media Election Coverage 1982-2006 (percent)

	1982	1985	1988	1991	1994	1998	2002	2006
Morning press	19	19	16	19	16	16	18	17
Tabloid press	33	30	25	–	–	37	36	36
Television news	26	29	21	18	26	25	35	28
<i>Public service TV</i>	26	29	21	19	26	23	33	27
<i>Commercial TV</i>				16	27	32	41	29

Comment: Morning press: $t=-1.247$, $p < .259$, Tabloid press: $t=1.219$, $p < .299$, Television news: $t=.957$, $p < .375$, Public service TV: $t=.662$, $p < .533$, Commercial TV: $t=1.700$, $p < .188$.

Studying the morning press, there is no change at all. In the election campaign news, party leaders received somewhat more than 25 percent of all attention directed at politicians. This figure is the same today as 30 years ago. Comparing the other media, we see some changes, and there seems to be a trend toward more party leader personalization in the tabloids during the past three elec-

tions (1998, 2002 and 2006), compared to those in the late 70s and early 80s. For television news, no clear pattern can be detected. Comparing this aspect of personalization, we see the same levels in television news today as at the beginning of the 1980s.

Comparing the morning press and the tabloids, we do find support for the hypothesis (H4) that these media have different ways of presenting political journalism. In every election campaign since the beginning of the 80s, the tabloids, as compared to the morning press, more often publish articles in which party leaders are one of the main actors.

When analyzing the results for television news, we see a difference between public service television and commercial television for the past three elections. As predicted (H5), commercial television tends to focus somewhat more on party leaders than do news shows broadcast on the public service channels.

Another way of looking at how campaign coverage is personified is to analyze the visualization of politics. It is not possible to analyze moving images using this dataset, but in the content analysis pictures in the press are coded. Therefore we are able to see whether there is an increase over time in press pictures of party leaders in the context of election news.

Table 5. The Visualization of Party Leaders in News Media Election Coverage 1979-2006 (percent)

	1979	1982	1985	1988	1991	1994	1998	2002	2006
Morning press	44	37	42	35	35	34	39	42	43
Tabloid press	43	48	51	42	–	–	62	66	64

Comment: Morning press: $t=-.125$, $p < .904$, Tabloid press: $t=3.42$, $p < .019$.

As in earlier analyzes, the hypothesis (H4) concerning more prevalent personalization in tabloids is supported (Table 5). Here we also see a change over time. At the beginning of the 80s, party leaders were portrayed almost as often in the morning press as in the tabloids. But since the end of the 90s, there is a significant difference between the tabloids and the morning press. In the national morning papers, about 40 percent of the pictures of politicians portray party leaders. This has not changed since the 1980s. But the tabloids have changed; when politicians are portrayed in tabloids during the latest campaigns, somewhere between 60 and 70 percent are pictures of the party leaders.

In the 2002 election, the leader of the Liberal Party, Lars Leijonborg, was transformed from being a loser to being the “Lion King” when the polls showed better figures during the last weeks of the campaign. And because the Conservatives had had problems during the 2002 campaign, with scandals and declining support, the party leader was framed as a loser in the media (Johansson, 2006b; Peterson et al., 2006). Thus, even if we did not see a clear tendency toward more exposure of party leaders in the news (Table 2), how party leaders are exposed might have changed with regard to how they are framed in the news.

One way of capturing not only the media attention on the party leaders, but also how they are framed is to combine the dramatized content with the exposure of party leaders. We know from Table 2 that election news has tended to become more dramatized, especially in the morning press. But we have not seen a clear development toward increasing media exposure of the party leaders. However, in line with what said about personalization, the hypothesis (H3) predicted increasing exposure of party leaders in dramatized stories about winners and losers, scandals and campaign strategies.

Table 6. Party Leaders in Dramatized News Articles/Stories in News Media Election Coverage 1982-2006 (percent)

	1982	1985	1988	1991	1994	1998	2002	2006
Morning press	29	37	46	43	62	56	60	71
Tabloid press	66	61	65	-	-	68	76	86
Television news	38	35	49	40	48	49	47	70
Public service TV	38	35	49	41	49	43	46	71
Commercial TV				40	47	61	52	67

Comment: Morning press: $t = 7.178$, $p < .000$, Tabloid press: $t = 3.462$, $p < .026$, Television news: $t = 3.162$, $p < .020$, Public service TV: $t = 2.587$, $p < .041$, Commercial TV: $t = 4.444$, $p < .021$.

Table 6 shows a clear change in the way party leaders are framed during the past 30 years of election campaigns. In the late 70s, party leaders were more often exposed in articles/stories about political issues. Somewhere between 30 and 40 percent of the articles in the national morning papers in which a party leader played a role focused on the game perspective, strategies and scandals. For the latest election in 2006, however, the figures are the opposite. Now dramatized news predominates when party leaders receive media attention. Only 40 percent of the articles/stories are framed as political issues in the morning press. Looking at the tabloids, we can see the same tendencies, but starting from a higher level. The tabloids tended already in the late 70s to expose party leaders in a dramatized frame. But at the beginning of the present century, it was rare for a party leader to be part of a tabloid article that mainly discussed a political issue (i.e., non-dramatized). With respect to the 2006 election campaign, the result show that out of the tabloid articles in where party leaders constituted of the main actors, 86 percent of the stories focused on the political game, scandals and campaigning.

The hypothesis that commercial media formats focus on drama and personalization (H4 and H5) has received obvious support in the analysis so far – especially concerning tabloids, but also when comparing commercial and public service television. However, looking at this distinction in relation to television news, there is no systematic difference between public service television and commercial television. Only for two out of five compared election campaigns did we find that party leaders were more exposed in dramatized frames in Nyheterna on TV4 (commercial) than in Aktuellt and Rapport on SVT (public service).

Conclusions

In the present chapter, the concept of popularization has been analyzed in relation to two dimensions – dramatization and personalization. A number of hypotheses were made to investigate whether there are changes over time and whether more market-oriented media tend to present politics in a more popularized way.

Hypothesis 1 argued that, in line with theories of growing popularization in election coverage, we would find an increasing share of dramatized news. Support for this hypothesis was mixed. Over time, we see a clear trend in which election coverage in the morning papers focuses more on dramatized news. For tabloids and especially television news, the pattern is unclear. However, for these types of media, we do find the highest proportion of dramatized news in the 2006 election campaign. And for the tabloids, we also see an increasing amount of reporting about polls over time.

Hypothesis 2 proposed a development whereby different aspects of personalization in the election coverage would become more common over the years. Personalization was measured with regard to how party leaders were exposed in the news. Measuring personalization in this fashion, we see no evident patterns, except for a slight tendency toward increasing personalization in the tabloids. However, when the analysis focused on how often party leaders are portrayed in newspapers; this was significantly more prevalent in the tabloids over time. But the hypothesis (H2) about a general personalization in the news media, measured in this way, must be rejected.

Hypothesis 3 was a specification of the general personalization hypothesis and proposed that party leaders would more often be connected to dramatized news frames over time. This hypothesis received unambiguous support in the results. In all news media, there was a significant increase in articles/news stories in which party leaders were connected to dramatized news.

Hypothesis 4 predicted that dramatization and personalization would be more prevalent in the tabloids as compared to the morning papers. This hypothesis was generally supported. In all comparisons but one, the tabloids tended to be more popularized with regard to how news about the election campaign was presented.

The rationale of the last hypothesis (H5) was similar to that of Hypothesis 4: the more market-oriented the medium, the more popularized the content. Here commercial and public service television news were compared. The hypothesis was not supported by all indicators, but must generally be seen as supported by the results.

To sum up, the results of this test of the popularization hypothesis, the general conclusion is that the hypothesis is supported. In analyzing the media coverage of nine Swedish election campaigns, the results show a trend in line with the notion of increased popularization of election coverage. If the two dimensions are separated, one could argue that the most obvious change toward more dramatized election coverage can be seen in the morning press, and the

tendency toward more personalization in the tabloids. The analyzes of television news were less clear with respect to changes over time, even if the most dramatized and personalized coverage was found in the election campaigns of the late 1990s and early 2000s.

So what about democracy? Will it benefit from this development, or is a sign of a degenerated public sphere? If the only function of news coverage is to enlighten the public by providing information about public affairs in the society, this trend towards more popularized campaign coverage indicates a decline in quality. But as discussed earlier, news media could be argued to have other functions than informing the citizens, campaign coverage should also engage the citizens. Seen from this perspective, it is not self-evident to conclude more popularized election coverage indicates any crisis of political communication at all, not at least since election coverage in Swedish news media still contains a large proportion of policy issues (Asp, 2007b).

The quality of a more popularized election reporting can also be discussed in relation to voting turnout and the media image of the campaign. Previous research has revealed a number of individual-level and system-level factors involved in affecting voter turnout. But the electoral context is also crucial, as shown by the importance of the closeness of the elections, the likelihood that a particular outcome will lead to a change in government or the perceived differences between the parties or candidates competing in an election (Franklin, 2004; Holmberg & Oscarsson, 2004; Strömbäck & Johansson, 2007). This indicates that some elections are more mobilizing than others, regardless of system- or individual-level factors, and that voter turnout is not mainly "about how people approach elections; rather, it is mainly about how elections appear to people" (Franklin, 2004, p. 6). Therefore, one could argue that because the voter turnout in the 2006 Swedish election was higher compared to the 2002 election, the higher turnout might be an effect of what we have seen in the analysis of media coverage of the 2006 election. The media focused on dramatized news more than ever before, there was a major scandal and the party leaders were framed as players in an exciting power play. Perhaps this is why voter turnout increased again in 2006. If so, then it might not be so bad after all if the election news coverage focuses on the political game and political strategies, scandals, and on personalized news stories.

Notes

1. For details about coding instructions, see Asp, Johansson & Nilsson (1998).
2. Analyzing the results in detail, one can also see that scandals have been more common during the past three election campaigns. But there have been major scandals in Swedish election campaigns before the 90s. The most famous was when the Minister of Justice had to step down as a result of the so-called "Ebbe Carlsson-scandal", which was connected to the investigation of the assassination of Olof Palme. Looking at Swedish election campaigns during this period of nine elections, it is quite obvious that scandals seem to have become a "natural" component of election campaign news (Johansson, 2006b; Sabato et al., 2000).

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Chapter 11

From Public Educator to Interpreting Ombudsman

Regimes of Political Journalism in Swedish Public Service Broadcasting 1925-2005

Monika Djerf-Pierre & Lennart Weibull

Recent research on the long-term trajectories of political journalism suggests two, seemingly contradictory, developments. Some observers put forward the notion of journalistic degeneration and decline, caused by increased competition and market pressure. Concepts used to describe this development are commercialization, popularization, and tabloidization. Other observers, interestingly, have advanced the opposite argument, suggesting that there has been a process characterized by progress and improvement. They sustain this position by pointing out that journalism during the latter half of the 1900s adopted professional ideals of objectivity, fairness and balance and that it has achieved an increasing independence from political institutions. Journalism, according to this group of scholars, is portrayed as an independent scrutinizer of political institutions, fulfilling a democratic mission as the fourth estate. The concepts of professionalization and modernization are often used to depict this particular trajectory. Implicit in both these models of journalistic development is the notion of linearity. The common picture advanced by the two sides of the argument is one of sustained development.

This article analyzes changes in political journalism in Swedish public service broadcasting from the beginning of broadcasting in 1925 up until the present time. Drawing on an extensive and in-depth analysis of the development of news and current affairs journalism in Sweden over a period of 80 years, this article challenges the theory of a linear trend from a serious, informative coverage of society towards a more tabloidized journalism geared to maximize ratings.¹ Furthermore, our evidence calls into question the theory of permanent progress and modernization. Rather, the long-term development of political journalism in Swedish public service broadcasting cannot be understood simply as a trend over time. Instead, the article argues that a more accurate way of describing the changes is to portray them as a sequence of different phases where each phase displays specific genres and modes of representation in political journalism. These practices are the product of specific journalistic discourse embedded in specific ideals and norms of journalism, here called a journalistic regime.

Four Regimes of Journalism

Theories of linear historical evolution are problematic for at least two reasons. First of all, they are normative, drawing on an implicit notion of natural evolution. During the last decades, such “grand narratives” have been profoundly criticized in all of the social sciences. Also, in recent years the equivalent grand narratives of political communication – the stories of professionalization, Americanization, convergence, and commercialization – have come under attack (Blumler & Kavanagh, 1999; Neveu, 2002; Negrine & Lilleker, 2002; Hallin & Mancini, 2007; Holtz-Bacha, 2007; Petersson et al, 2006). To be sure, even modernization is part of a normative theory that conceives of development as a more or less natural progression toward an (often implicit) goal. Different countries at different points in time are presumed to have reached different stages of an essentially linear progression. Inasmuch as American political culture is presumed to represent the highest stage of development in the progression, “modernization” does more than signify an actual course of developments; it denotes a course that we should expect to take place, perhaps even advocate, in other political systems.

Secondly, the notion of linear development of political journalism can be questioned on empirical grounds as well. Most importantly, the linearity argument is rarely sustained by empirical, historical or comparative research. Recent studies on political communication in Sweden, Norway and Denmark respectively, dispute the hypothesis of a standardization and homogenization of political campaigns in the Nordic countries (Jönsson & Larsen, 2002; Karlsen & Narud, 2004; Petersson et al, 2006). Similarly, comparative research offers little support for the notion of a convergence of national political cultures such as the alleged Americanization of political communication (Blumler & Gurevich, 2001; Plasser & Plasser, 2002; Holtz-Bacha, 2007; Petersson et al, 2006). Thus, historians and social scientists researching media history rarely advance theories of evolution and progression. Rather, the general argument coming out of this research is that historical change appears to be characterized by phases or epochs (Neveu, 2002; Bourdon, 2001; Banhurst & Nerone, 2001; Hjarvard, 1999; Schudson, 1996) and – even more so – by path dependencies and enduring traits and qualities. With regard to political journalism, the evidence available suggests that there is a high degree of continuity in political campaigning as well as in political journalism in Europe as well as in the US (Benson & Hallin, 2005; Negrine & Lilleker, 2002).

In our research we have found four reasonably distinct phases of political journalism in Swedish broadcasting: (1) education and enlightenment 1925-1945, (2) mirroring objectivism 1946-1965, (3) critical scrutiny (1965-1985), and (4) interpretation (1985- today). Each phase represents a specific regime of journalism. The regime concept refers to the fusion of ideals and norms on the one hand and practice and production on the other. The concept rests on a discursive argument, describing the dominant discourse within journalist culture in a specific social and historical context. The discursive vantage point

is not only found in the journalistic genre structures and rhetoric, but also in the implied audience. The time periods are defined based on how journalistic discourse has positioned journalism in relation to both the audience and the political institutions.

Political journalism always exists in a space defined by relations to political institutions on the one hand and the audience on the other. These relationships are characterized either by an approach of influence and change, or, conversely, by an approach of adaptation and adjustment. Specific historical social, economical, political and cultural forces shape the particular approach manifested in the every-day practices of journalism. These practices may differ between national contexts, but they nonetheless display some similar traits in comparable regions of the world. Sweden and the Nordic countries typify what Hallin and Mancini (2004) call the democratic corporatist media-political systems. The strength and cultural importance of public service broadcasting is one of the fundamental features of this model. To be sure, Sweden has one of the most long-lasting public service monopolies in the world. Although the monopoly was broken in the early 1990s, PSB continues to have an immense impact on and importance for political life.

The remainder of the article is organized as follows. First, we describe each of the four phases and regimes chronologically in more detail. The focus of this analysis is on political journalism at large and on journalism's relation to politics and political life in general. Within each section, we start out by giving an overarching characterization of the regime of journalism; the fundamentals of the journalistic discourse during an era. Next, we analyze how this regime of journalism has brought about different genres of political journalism and different spaces for politics and the political world in news- and current affairs programming. A concluding discussion closes the article.

Education in the Service of Society

During the first regime of journalism in the history of radio, 1925-1945, radio was mainly a distribution medium, a megaphone or "an invisible trumpet" transmitting what others supplied (Williams, 1989; Bliss, 1991; Hilmes, 1997). Telegram bulletins conveyed the news and in other fact-based programs experts presented matters of common concern. National radio expressed a consensus perspective on society; controversy was generally avoided. Party politics, political debate and other political matters with controversial connotations were treated with utmost caution. Although formally independent, the radio company maintained close links with public institutions, aiming at enlightening the citizens. Thus radio served as – and sought to serve as – an educator in society's service. Radio positioned itself as a public educator. Social appropriateness served as the primary selection criterion in news and current affairs programming.

Radio News: Starting as a Daily Communiqué

As in most other European countries, early radio started as a private initiative, but the Swedish Telecommunication Authority controlled the radio development (Hadenius, 1998). The first regular broadcasts began in 1923 at the Stockholm (the capital) station, involving newspaper and magazine companies. Following a period of discussions it was decided that national broadcasting should be organized as a one-company monopoly. The monopoly was granted to the *Radiotjänst*, a private company controlled by the Swedish press, through the national news agency (TT), and radio manufacturers. The director of TT was appointed director of the radio company keeping his position in TT, hence the nickname "The Double Excellency". The Telecommunication Authority supervised the company, and owned all broadcasting technology, from microphones to transmitting masts. *Radiotjänst*, the origin of public service broadcasting in Sweden, started its transmissions on January 1, 1925.

From the beginning, news played an important role for the radio. It was a common interest for the press as owner and the government as supervisor that the national news agency TT was granted exclusive rights to broadcast news. For the newspapers, controlling the news organization of the new medium was a matter of importance. Similarly for the government, the semi-official status of the TT guaranteed responsible news reporting in service of society. In the early days of radio, only one newscast of 15 minutes was broadcast at 9.15 PM daily. The news, broadcast from the editorial offices of the TT, covered a wide range of topics from accidents and human interest to international news and sports. Party politics was generally avoided; when political news was included it mainly pertained to government announcements and proceedings. Telegram bulletins appeared as official communiqués, explicitly quoting official and institutional sources. Newscasts were sometimes criticized for being formal or dull, but at the same time they were appreciated because of their objectivity and, as one radio official expressed it in 1929, the TT radio news "opened a window to life. It has given back (the audience) the feeling of being part of the spirit of civilization".

Chronicling Politics and Society

An important genre of the new radio was lectures. Most of them concerned history and culture but also hygiene, new technology, medicine and sports. Economy and social issues made up about ten percent of the 300 to 400 lectures each year. The lectures were mainly held by academic experts and were generally educative, often containing practical advice (Nordberg, 1998).

Current affairs were treated in chronicles. Starting in 1927, a chronicle on parliamentary affairs and one on foreign affairs were aired every second week. The form of the chronicles was similar to that of the lectures and contained detailed presentations of facts. Even though the presenters were eloquent, their appearance more resembled a schoolteacher than a political commenta-

tor. On the other hand, the parliamentary chronicle was often mentioned as evidence of the fact that radio actually could treat controversial issues in an unbiased way.

Lectures were sometimes criticized for being biased. At one instance, a group of private shop-owners protested against a lecture presenting the consumer-cooperative movement, which they regarded as propaganda against private business. The reaction from the director of programming was typical for how such political conflicts were solved at the time; he invited the organization of private shop-owners to make a radio presentation of their ideas and activities. Balance was achieved by providing equal opportunities for interest groups to put forward their cause.

Current Affairs: Party Politics as a Problem

In 1935 a director with no ties to the TT or the daily press replaced the "Double Excellency". One of his first measures was to establish a news department. In 1937, *Radiotjänst* started its first program that contained "news" not produced by TT. The format of the new program *Dagens Eko* resembled that of a news program and it predictably encountered criticism from the TT, since the TT still claimed its news monopoly. To solve the problem, it was decided that *Dagens Eko* only should broadcast interviews or commentaries on news that had previously been transmitted by the TT. Already in the first year there were almost 200 contributions, a third of which were interviews. True to its policy of avoiding controversy, *Dagens Eko* did not focus on politics and politicians, but concentrated on other domestic issues such as culture, entertainment and sport. The director of radio lecturing in 1935 maintained, that "radio was a medium of education, not of propaganda such as party politics".

Official propaganda, particularly programs promoting the modernization and cultural education of the Swedish population, was however prevalent in Swedish radio at the time. It was party politics that was considered problematic. A program series on the population problem was produced in cooperation with a government commission with economist and Social Democrat Gunnar Myrdal as secretary. The series was supposed to provide education on different ways to solve the problem and it included several academic lectures. The series was later followed by a similar one, called *Lort-Sverige* ["Dirt-Sweden"], where a well-known author traveled around Sweden and passed judgment on the poor hygienic conditions in the countryside. The government authority responsible for public health sponsored the series. Both of the series triggered heated debates. What made them controversial was neither that they contained official propaganda, nor that they were sponsored by public institutions. Instead, the common denominator was that they were publicized as public education and therefore should contain no political debate. The criticism arose mainly from the fact that the problems treated were politically controversial and that they gave politicians unequal access to radio. If representatives of the political parties were to appear in radio, they expected equal representation.

Radio as a Public Educator

To summarize, radio did not perceive its task as playing an active role in domestic political debate. In contrast to the daily press, which was considered to be the appropriate place for the political debate, the radio functioned more like a civil service department. Radio submitted to the demands of the dominant social and political institutions. Propaganda through radio was regarded as appropriate as long as it served the general public interest. The spirit of consensus was strong and there were no question about that radio should act in the service of society.

At the same time, this initial epoch also saw changes in the dominant ideas about what should be the function of radio in society. For the first decades of broadcasting, radio's position as a passive conveyor of official information was completely unchallenged. It was an organization that carefully executed its task, providing what was needed for social modernization. After the mid-1930's, however, the programming company displayed an emergent desire to develop the unique qualities of the radio medium. This change in perspective, however, did not alter the fundamental role of radio as a public educator.

Information in the Service of the Public

During the second regime of mirroring objectivism (1945-1965), the relationship between radio, its audience and society gradually changed. The programming company began to show a growing interest in political life. However, the approach was to mirror events with adherence to the ideal of objectivity, neutrality and balance in reporting. Radio and television set out to report political events by presenting facts, and political information should be relayed unbiased and without prejudices. In comparison to the previous paternalistic educational role of broadcasting, this represented a profound shift in journalistic discourse. Particularly noticeable was a new kind of audience orientation, which addressed itself to satisfying the tastes of the viewers and listeners. Efforts were made to make political news and election programs more interesting to the public. When new program formats for political programs were developed they were all launched with the explicit purpose of "making good television" (Esaïasson & Håkansson, 2002). This does not imply that radio had completely abandoned its prior authoritarian perspective, but rather that the operation increasingly came to be characterized by a weighing of audience and societal interests. Thus, this regime of journalism can be portrayed as radio and TV in the service of the public.

Mirroring Modernity

The post-war era entailed new possibilities for the expansion of broadcasting. A second radio channel was started in 1955 and television was introduced

in 1956. Television was organized as part of the radio company, which was reorganized by a change of ownership, now dominated by social movements instead of the press. In 1957 it changed its name to *Sveriges Radio*.

The early postwar years displayed a growing interest about what was happening outside Sweden. In 1950 almost 50 percent of the entries in *Dagens Eko* focused on foreign affairs, compared to only 5 percent on domestic politics. A new genre, the social cover story, was introduced, and it replaced the educating program series of the 1930. These programs were based on journalistic research made by the radio and not sponsored by government agencies. The social cover stories set out to be unprejudiced, reporting reality *as it was*, but from an unbiased and detached stance. The programs displayed a true faith in modernization and social engineering, reflecting the dominant ideology of postwar Sweden when social democracy developed the welfare state. Typical examples include programs on the aging Sweden [*Ålderdoms-Sverige*] and on decision-making in a company [*Direktören och arbetarna*]. On the one hand, these programs reported on social problems; on the other hand, the topics chosen reflected the process of social modernization. Even when uncovering social problems, the programs displayed a strong optimism and faith in political reform.

Audience expectations on radio now began to change. The communiqué form was considered old-fashioned, not the least in comparison with the popular journalism displayed in the successful tabloid press. Popular journalism seemed to meet a strong public response. The radio news department started hiring experienced newspaper journalists that were better in touch with audience tastes than the old academics. A radio newsroom was organized, focusing on the news value of stories rather than the “appropriateness”. The on-the-spot coverage of the two international crises in 1956 in Suez and Hungary was praised also in other media for being swift and serious. The coverage of domestic politics, however, remained limited; in 1955, domestic political issues only constituted less than ten percent of the news stories aired in radio.

The established model for political reporting was that opposite views must be represented within the same program and in the same form. In practice that meant that if one party refused to participate it could effectively prevent the program from being aired. This “veto-rule” was naturally contradictory to the “news value principle” now embraced by radio journalists. The first confrontation regarding the principle concerned a coalition government declaration by the Social Democrats and the Farmers Union after the 1956 election. The radio newsroom had made a summary of the statement and aired live comments from the two of the opposition parties. When the Social Democratic party leader refused to participate, the radio company decided after extensive discussions to broadcast the program nonetheless. The decision provoked an intense debate on political journalism in radio. The Social Democrats appealed the decision to the supervising radio council. The council, however, found no reason for criticism since radio had offered the party leader an interview. As a result, the “news value principle” was established also in party political news coverage.

Early Television News – No Politics, Please

When Swedish television began regular broadcasting in 1956, the organization had a small staff and operated under severe technical and economical constraints. The first news program in Swedish television, as it was in most other countries, was a newsreel, and called *TV-journalen*. It consisted of news films selected, edited and narrated by one single man, thus constituting the “news department” of Swedish television for a few years. The first news magazine, *Aktuellt*, started in 1958 and provided news and news commentary weekday evenings. It focused on sport, accidents, crime and “soft news”, e.g. human interest and entertainment, together constituting almost fifty percent of all news stories. Less than 30 percent of the stories were what today is referred to as “traditional” hard news such as the economy, politics, and international news. Domestic party politics was almost unseen. For the period 1958-1960 only three percent of the news was devoted to domestic politics, and current affairs did not surmount to more than 15 percent. Political news in the early 1960s was obviously a matter for radio, not for television.

Critical Journalism – But Cautiously

In radio, programs on social problems gradually began to tread into controversial areas. One example is a program in 1959 concerning problems at a private children’s home in Stockholm [*Internatbarn på Eugeniabemmet*]. The program explicitly criticized the living conditions of the children, although in a very cautious manner. The owner complained to the supervising radio council, which, however, saw no reason why radio should not broadcast social cover stories, albeit somewhat critical in their approach.

Television, too, introduced critical stances in its reports on social issues. A program series that caused an intense debate was *Strövtåg i folkhemmet* [Excursions in the People’s Home], starting in 1958. The critical approach of the program was the attempt at displaying the backyards of modern Sweden and the public authorities’ lack of understanding of people’s problems. The new program format *Utfrågningen* [The Interrogation] is perhaps the most important innovation in radio journalism of the 1960s. The format was inspired by John Freeman’s interview program *Face to Face* in BBC. The basic idea was that the interviewer should not be a submissive “microphone holder”; instead, he should confront the interviewee with direct and polemic questions. In Sweden, this format became known as “shotgun journalism”; a strategy that proved effective in exposing political malfeasance. The strategy soon became employed as part of the election coverage in radio and television.

In Service of the Public

During this period politics became an integral part of Swedish public service broadcasting. The expansion of political news and current affairs program was

however predicated on the programming company's claim for balance and neutrality in reporting. The efforts of satisfying the interests of the audience as well as those of political institutions evolved into an intricate and frequently conflict-ridden act of balance. The ideal of mirroring objectivism – to objectively reflect actual events – can be understood as a strategy on the part of radio to mitigate those conflicts. The professional claim for objectivity was essential for legitimizing the public service monopoly in a context of growing power of radio and television in political life. The broadcast media was becoming a core provider of political information for the Swedish public and the ability to provide (objective) information in service of the public was crucial to justify that role.

Scrutiny in the Service of Citizens

With the arrival of the regime of critical scrutiny (1965-1985), consensus no longer served as the standard for high-quality political journalism. Gradually, a shift took place both in approach to the public and to the dominant institutions in society. An “active effects” ideal was established both in relation to the audience and the political institutions. The journalistic task acquired a critical directive. In relation to the audience, knowledge gaps should be filled and citizens should be encouraged to actively engage in politics; and, in relation to the political institutions, power-holders should be critically monitored and attention should be brought to social deficiencies and power abuses. The defining characteristic of this regime of journalism was that the broadcast media should scrutinize politics in the citizens' service.

Civic Education also in Political News

A radicalization of the Swedish political climate evolved and culminated at the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s. As one of the most importance purveyor of the publics' images of the world, the broadcast media was deeply drawn into the political debate. A second PSB TV-channel, (SVT2) went on air in late 1969. The new channel emphasized news and current affairs; news, factual programming and current affairs dominated the program schedule of the new channel at the expense of entertainment programs.

The central newsroom was supplying both channels with “factual” news, but each of the two channels was in charge of a news program on evening prime time, *Aktuellt* in SVT1 and *Rapport* in SVT2. The news profile of both of the daily news programs was in-depth reports, commentaries and analysis, focusing on the important social and political issues of the times. Almost 80 percent of the news in *Rapport* was stories on political, economic and social issues and almost 20 percent on domestic politics. The new active journalistic approach indicated a break-up from the mirroring ideal that had dominated journalism since the mid-1950s. The basic news criterion was the social and political importance for the citizens. The role of the journalist changed from

that of a neutral conduit to that of an active and critical actor who independently selects, processes and presents events and developments relating to political issues. Journalists took a distinctly higher and more active profile in interviews with politicians; critical questions replaced the previous politeness and submission to authority.

Scrutinizing Politics in New Genres

In SVT1 news and current affairs programming was also emphasized, and the radical perspective on society was almost as salient as in the “new” channel. The current affairs *Insyn* [Insight] started in 1971, airing in-depth reports on labor market issues with the outspoken perspective of the workers and labor unions. It also reported on other political issues from the same critical stance. The producers expressed clear educationalist ideals: television should explain the world to the audience and the programs were to be controversial. The policy of SVT1 was generally regarded as “a clear standpoint for the use of television as a medium of social and political emancipation, to increase the consciousness of citizens about the significance and meaning of social events”. SVT1 was also responsible for the production of several controversial programs and current affairs reports, including the later infamous series *Från socialism till ökad jämlikhet* [From socialism to increased equality] in 1971. The main objective of the program series was to critically analyze the history of the working-class movement in Sweden. The program took a Marxist stance, asserting that class struggle and class conflict is the prime mover of history. Social democracy was described as betrayers of the previously revolutionary ideals of the movement. This was so far – and ever – the most provocative and daring attempt to test the limits of the freedom of speech in PSB television in Sweden.

Political criticism was put forward in fictional and artistic genres as well. The so-called *TV2 Theatre* produced a series of provocative plays. One of their most contested productions was called the NJA-play [*Nils Johan Andersson*], broadcast in 1970. The play departed from a socialist perspective of class conflicts between workers and corporate managers and expressed a profound social criticism, focusing on the bad working conditions and lack of workplace democracy at the steel mill NJA. To counter the criticism against the program the television company instigated what was called a “Balancing studio debate”, where all the conflicting parts were given opportunity to express their discontent with either each other or the slant and angle of the program. In the 1970s, broadcasting this kind of debates was established as the default strategy of managers at the PSB to handle any criticism and discontent that tended to follow controversial programs.

The Discourse of Social Criticism and Conflict

The angle of social criticism that saturated political journalism during the 1960s and 1970s naturally caused a heated public debate and controversy regard-

ing the impartiality, neutrality and factuality of the news and current affairs programs arose. The discourse of conflict that flooded political journalism was contrary to the discourse of consensus that had characterized the previous eras of broadcasting. Even the news showed an evident increase in the level of conflicts in reporting; indeed, the amount of criticism in the news doubled 25 times from the beginning of the 1960s to the early 1980s. Interviews with representatives of the political parties sometimes took on the form of inquisitions rather than questioning.

The political consequences that followed showed that television now had crossed the boundaries of what was politically acceptable. The management of Sveriges Radio was deeply concerned about the accusations. One of the managers described his situation in 1971 as being "squeezed between several shields". Sveriges Radio was criticized for being slanted to the left from the social democrats, the liberals and conservative parties, but PSB was also accused of being bourgeoisie and commercialized from parties and activists on the far left, groups that at the time had a noticeable impact on public opinion. In 1971 the appointed Board of directors of Sveriges Radio directed a harsh and unanimous statement of disapproval of the management. Eventually, they responded to the criticism and instigated a more restrictive policy when it came to political and current affairs programming.

The new watchdog journalism experienced a rapid breakthrough during the latter half of the 1960s. A young, politically active generation of journalists educated at the newly established journalism schools made their mark on Swedish journalism, and their influence was particularly noticeable in radio and TV. Journalism was characterized by a will to transform society, but there was also a firm belief in politics to be able to bring about necessary changes. A main feature of political journalism up until the mid-1970s can, paradoxically, be described as an expectant social criticism, a general faith in the power of social engineering. Current affairs programming was driven by a social pathos where journalists competed in exposing social problems that the political system should solve.

The controversy between broadcasting and political institutions faded towards the end of the 1970s. The accommodation was first and foremost the result of a mutual adaptation. Politicians had to learn and accept the new, active political journalism, but radio and television too had to accept and comply with the demands of the political institutions. Watchdog journalism and critical scrutiny were here to stay, at the same time as new limits for what was politically acceptable were established. During the latter half of the 1970s, however, the political foundation became less pronounced and faith in the political institutions apparently declined. Instead, critical journalism became more associated with a routinized polarization and an anti-establishment perspective in which the average person was pitted against those in power. The exposure, the drama and the sensational aspects were considered important, not the results. Programming was driven towards a more pronounced audience orientation, where news and current affairs should entertain as well as inform.

Interpretation in the Service of Customers

In the fourth and still ongoing period (1985-), the active influence approach towards the audience/public declined as public service broadcasting faced new competition from a growing number of domestic and international commercial television channels. The ambition to educate and to promote civic duties faded as public service broadcasting tried to tackle the competition by adapting their range of programs to the tastes and desires of the audience. For political journalism this was primarily expressed in the explicit effort to make the mediated interface between the audience and the political world more accessible and pleasurable. The nature of these changes is often discussed in terms of commercialization, tabloidization and popularization. However, addressing the audience as customers did not, at least in a Swedish context, necessarily mean “dumbing down” or tabloidizing political reporting. Since Swedish public service is free of advertising, PSB radio and television were not plagued by the cogent need to offer attractive target groups to advertisers. However, the logic of the market had a distinct impact on programming policies; the audience orientation increased as a strategy for the PSB to maintain its legitimacy through high ratings for its programs (cf Hjarvard, 1999; Jönsson & Strömbäck, 2007).

At the same time, the ideal of journalism as a scrutinizer of those in power remained intact. The combination of an increased audience orientation and a critical stance toward those in power generated a new role for political journalism as an advocate and ombudsman. Journalists acted as representatives of the public vis-à-vis the politicians, who must be taken to task and held to account. Also, the balance and fairness ideal that traditionally had been the backbone of political journalism in public service broadcasting, was questioned. Political journalism became differentiated and more heterogeneous as competing traditional and online media were trying to cater to an increasingly diverse audience, producing a wide range of “journalisms”. In this new cultural environment, the discourse of public service journalism positioned itself as a provider of interpretations of the increasingly more complex world. Hence, we have chosen to characterize this epoch as interpretation in the service of customers.

Tabloidization of Political News?

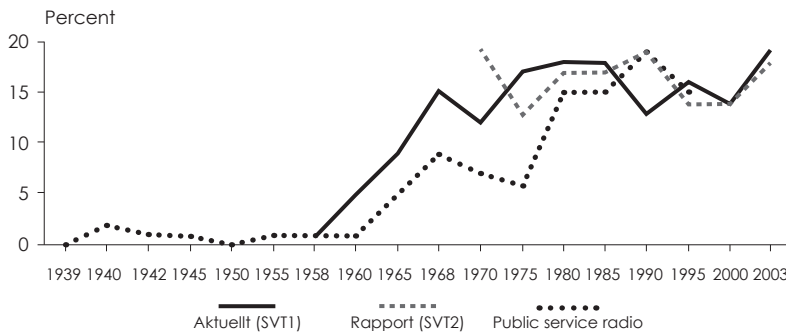
The single most important factor influencing political journalism during the 1980s and 1990s was the break-up of the public service monopoly and the launching of new radio and television channels. The introduction of commercial broadcasting in the form of satellite-cable channel TV3 in late 1986 and TV4, which was granted the concession for terrestrial transmission in 1990, changed the Swedish media landscape.

At the outset, TV4 tried to create an image of itself as a quality public service commercial broadcaster. During the following years those ambitions gradually declined, but the channel still invested much prestige and effort

into its evening news show, *Nyheterna* [The News] although the news desk of TV4 was much smaller than the corresponding news desks at SVT. The new channel introduced a popular style of journalism. The principles for news selection were to include less politics and to emphasize the sensational (crime, accidents) and “soft news” as well as everyday “news you can use”. However, when the audience reactions to the new popular format were examined, the TV4 managers learned that the public appreciated the style and presentation but were weary of the philosophy of news selection. The conclusion was that *Nyheterna* had a credibility problem. That insight resulted in the news desk’s return to a more traditional news format, with adherence to the criteria for news selection already established by SVT (Asp, 1995).

With regard to political news, there were few signs of declining attention to politics in public service broadcasting in the period 1985 and onward. The number of political news stories was about the same in 2003 as in 1970 (see Graph 1). Although TV4 started out with the explicit policy not to focus on traditional political news, a decade later *Nyheterna* contained about as much political news as the public service broadcaster. Popularization of news was most evident in the early 1990s. Later, there is little evidence of a continuous trend towards more tabloidized television news (Jönsson & Strömbäck, 2007).

Figure 1. Domestic Political News in Public Service Newscasts in Radio and Television in TV 1939-2003 (percent of all news stories)



Comment: Radio 1939-1995 Dagens Eko. Television: 1958-2003 Aktuell (SVT1), Rapport 1970-2003 (SVT2).

Distrust in Politics: Current Affairs Journalism

The total airtime increased dramatically between the 1980s and 1990s but it was news and talk shows, not traditional current affairs magazines and investigative reporting, that accounted for most of the increase. The main talk show in SVT in the 1990s was TV2’s *Svar direkt* [Answers on the Spot] with the program host as “the ombudsman of the audience”, asking power holders questions that the audience wanted to have answered.

In current affairs journalism a new skepticism versus the political system’s capacity to solve societal problems was articulated in political stories. Here

lays a significant difference compared to the previous regime of journalism in the 1970s; although critical towards political practices and institutions, journalism in the 1970s never lost faith in political intervention, legislation and other regulatory instruments of the state in solving social problems. One example of the new approach towards the political institutions is the current affairs series *Glashuset* [The Glass House] that started in 1990 in SVT1. The program was provided with the subtitle “throwing stones at the Swedish welfare state” and the ambition was to invite the audience to laugh at stupid bureaucrats and incompetent politicians. The populist, ironic and bantering stance was evident, as the producers stated their claims: “The Glass House will be a program about us and them. “Us” who are governed by “them”. This means the government, the bureaucracy and the politicians, who confine our lives with new legislations and paragraphs. It is the glass house of the bureaucrats and politicians we will attempt to throw stones at”.

The most praised but also most disputed current affairs series in PSB television was *Striptease*, a series of investigative reports, launched in 1991. The program departed from an underdog perspective on society, where the “people” was pitted against the “elite”. Typical to *Striptease* was the sharp angles in stories, the provocative style of presentation, reporters who refused to be neutral in pursuing their mission, and the use of controversial methods for gathering evidence. In 2002, the successor of *Striptease* at SVT, *Uppdrag Granskning* [Mission: Investigate], provoked a massive debate when reporters secretly recorded what campaign workers were saying about immigration and immigrants to voters who visited their campaign stalls (Andén-Papadopoulos, 2003; Johansson, 2006). The programs were awarded several prestigious prizes, but its “assault journalism” was also deeply questioned.

Also TV4 launched a hard-core current affairs magazine for investigative and scrutinizing reporting, *Kalla Fakta* [Cold Facts] which started in 1991. *Kalla Fakta* faced the problem of surviving in the competitive, market-oriented environment of a commercial channel. It got good reviews, but its existence was put into question on several occasions, not the least by the board of TV4. An attempt at a more popularized form of current affairs programming by TV4 was the talk show *Svart eller vitt* [Black or White], first showing in 1994. It was a late evening show aimed at a younger audience, providing high paced, intense debates and polarization. One section of the program was *Åsiktsmaskinerna* [The Opinion Machines] where a panel of celebrities clashed, trying to surpass each other in asserting controversial opinions. Topically sex and violence were recurrent themes but most important was to have people expressing sensational and thrilling opinions. The main commercial competitor of TV4, TV3 (broadcasting to the Swedish audience from London by satellite) focused on entertainment and popular drama. Its programming attempts in the category current affairs had an unmistakable popular streak. In 1989 TV3 launched a popular talk show: *Diskutabelt* [Debatable], modeled after The Morton Downey Jr Show (USA 1987/88, see Örnebring, 2001). The aggressive and provocative arrogance of the host was something never experienced before in Swedish television.

Interpretive Journalism

The advent of interpretive journalism is the most significant change in political journalism in Swedish public service broadcasting during the last decades. Interpretive journalism is characterized by four entwined features: critical expertise, speculation, advocacy, and meta-journalism. Journalists appear as experts in studio interviews, or as commentators interpreting political reality to their audience. Taking on the role of ombudsmen of the public, journalists advocate the presumed interests and needs of the public/audience. They do this from a critical stance, conveying an explicit distrust in political institutions in general and in political power-holders in particular. The journalist of the previous regime of scrutinizing journalism often tried to relay the professional knowledge of external political experts in an instructive manner. In their new role as interpreters, journalists themselves assume the position of experts, a role legitimized by their assumed professional expertise in the field of politics (Pettersson et al, 2006). Political commentaries are no longer restricted to describing what has happened and why in political life. Instead, journalists convey what politicians think and feel, disclosing their hidden motives and considerations, telling us how they will react and what will be the likely consequences. Speculation is a key feature of political journalism in the 2000s. So is meta-journalism – journalism on journalism (cf. Esser & D'Angelo, 2006). Political journalism has become self-referential, re-mediating and re-interpreting events already mediated in the first place (Ekström, 2003; Esser, Reinemann & Fan, 2001)

The “critical expertise” of political commentators that evolved in the 1970s and 1980s gave journalists greater power to describe the political world, independently of the political parties (Neveu, 2002). Greater autonomy does, however, not necessarily entail adversarial journalism (Benson & Hallin, 2005). When coupled with the ideology of audience compliance, it defines a new role for political journalism where “journalism produces the journalist as the advocate or ombudsman of the people in relation to those in power” (Hjarvard, 1999, p. 245; Eide & Knight, 1999). In the previous era of political journalism an important ambition had been to narrow knowledge-gaps and to promote civic duties. The power of persuasion was however based on displaying numbers of facts, telling the Truth, sustained by documentary, realistic footage. Today, journalists would unambiguously focus on convincing the audience, promoting a cause or arguing a thesis without hesitating to employ dramatic visuals and elaborate narrative techniques to capture and sustain the audience's attention and involvement. In the present era, journalism has ultimately ventured beyond the traditional notion of journalism: the unbiased, factual reporting of “real” events.

Concluding Discussion

The four regimes of journalism described in this chapter are characterized by different approaches towards the audience and the political institutions, creating four different roles for political journalism.

Figure 2. Four Regimes of Journalism

		Approach to the Audience	
		<i>Adaptation</i>	<i>Influence</i>
Approach to the Political Institutions	<i>Adaptation</i>	Information purveyor 1945-1965	Public educator 1925-1945
	<i>Influence</i>	Ombudsman & interpreter 1985-today	Watchdog & pedagogue 1965-1985

The role of the public educator that was typical to the first regime came out of an active influence or effects ideal in relation to the audience and an adaptation ideal in relationship to political institutions. The information purveyor role of the mirror objectivism regime was the result of a philosophy of adaptation both to the audience and political institutions. The position of the watchdog in the third period implied an active influence ideal in both directions and thus laid claim to an independent position for the media and journalism. The ombudsman or interpreter role stems from an adaptation philosophy to the audience combined with an active influence or effect role in relation to political institutions.

Returning to what was argued earlier, the evidence presented here regarding the tasks and roles associated with political journalism does not support the theory of a general, linear development. The view that Swedish public service journalism has gradually become more audience-oriented over the past fifty years appears not to be sustained by the present analysis. The pursuit of audience compliance in the 1950s is similar to the audience-orientation in journalistic discourse in the 2000s. There is a striking resemblance between the activist ideal of the pedagogue, promoting civic duties in the 1970s on the one hand and the public educator striving for public enlightenment during the first era of broadcasting on the other. Both express an implicit paternalistic view of “giving the audience what they need and not what they want”.

The critical stance towards the political institutions is an enduring professional ideal established in the 1960s and 1970s and remediated in the new competitive era of broadcasting. But when the critical expertise (cf. Neveu, 2002) of political journalists (and the ideology of scrutiny) is amalgamated with the market orientation (and the ideology of audience compliance) of the 2000s, the role of journalists in political journalism changed. Journalists appear as ombudsmen of the public or as representatives of the common man in juxtaposition to the

political institutions – “those in power” – with a mission to unveil any abuse of political power. Their discursive role is to come to the defense of “the ordinary citizen” when s/he suffers the consequences of unwanted political decisions. For its entire critical stance, watchdog journalism rested on an unyielding trust in politics, faith in collective action, and a confidence in the power of political and social engineering. Interpretive journalism, by comparison, departs from profound distrust in political institutions in general but even more so in political actors’ competence and willingness to address societal problems (Ekström & Andersson, 1999).

A key finding in our analysis is that interpretive journalism characterizes late modern PSB political journalism in the era of commercialization. A distinct feature is its focus on delivering interpretations and opinions on political events, rather than factual reporting. Interpretations are, inevitably, not new in political journalism. Actually, it is one of the oldest forms of mediated discourse. Commentary became an integral part of the press long before journalism as an institutional practice and profession was invented (Chalaby, 1996). The evolution of objectivity as a journalistic ideal, and the neutral, descriptive style of journalistic expression are closely connected to the growth of professionalism and of journalism as an independent social force in the 1900s (Schudson, 1996). In the Nordic countries the claim for objectivity has been crucial for sustaining and legitimizing public service broadcasting as a monopoly. But whereas the partisan press of the 1800s and early 1900s often advocated the interest of particular social groups and analyzed the world from the viewpoint of the group they represented, in the 2000s, commentaries persist but they now rest on the purportedly disinterested, critical expertise of professional journalists.

The regime concept captures the essential features of the normative underpinnings of political journalism during different epochs. Other possible choices of terms would be ideology or paradigm (Høyer & Pöttker, 2005), but the concept of paradigm is based on the idea of incommensurability; one paradigm replaces another. Instead of sharp shifts and break-ups, genres and modes of representations established during a certain era have a tendency to live on, remediated into new shapes as layers of media history. “New” media tend to borrow from “old” media, and new genres tend to transform and accommodate old genres, in an ongoing process of remediation (Bolter & Grusin, 2002, p. 45ff). The ideal of critical scrutiny, established during the 1960s still prevails, but was fused in the last decades with audience orientation and market conformity, thus creating a new role for journalists as interpreting ombudsmen. There is an obvious contradiction in the way media scholars and political scientists describe the relationship between journalism, political institutions, and the public (Dahlgren & Sparks, 1992; Gripsrud, 1999; Sparks & Tulloch, 1994). Our analysis suggests that an audience-conformity approach could well be combined with a critical and pro-active journalistic approach to political institutions.

Note

1. The conclusions are mainly based on a five-year (1996-2001) research program on the history of broadcasting in Sweden, funded by The Swedish Broadcasting Research Foundation. The main publication which was published in Swedish in 2001 (Authors, 2001) focused on the development of news and current affairs programming in radio and television during the 1900s, but also dealt with political journalism as part of the analysis. Four sources of empirical data were used in the research: 1) documents of the archive of Sveriges Radio, the Swedish public broadcasting company, which was opened for researchers for the first time when the research program started (containing a wealth of primary sources, such as documents on policy, protocols, as well as PMs and informal notes), 2) official documents, such as government commissions and articles in the contemporary press, 3) interviews with editors, journalists and managers of the public service broadcasting company (in total 61 interviews), 4) and finally quantitative and qualitative analyzes of programs from the program archive of Sveriges Radio.

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Chapter 12

Aestheticizing Politics

Non-verbal Political Communication in Danish TV Documentaries

Iben Have & Anne Marit Waade

Dick Pels, co-author of *Media and the Restyling of Politics*, argues (2003, p. 50) that there is a gap between rational and emotional democracy, and while rational democracy has been the legitimized version for the last few centuries, television democracy affords a new revaluation of emotional, bodily, and subjective reactions in politics. In this article, we will try to fill this gap and point out positive perspectives on the aestheticizing of politics, while viewing stimulating modes of awareness, knowledge, and reflection in political culture and modern democracy. Most academic publications on the aestheticizing of politics treat the subject on a rather general level, but we will try to relate this discussion to a concrete and rather detailed analysis of two Danish documentaries broadcast on Danish national public service television channels. One of them is *Fogh Behind the Façade* (2003), portraying the Danish Prime Minister,¹ and the other is *The Queen of the Ball* (2006), which portrays the most powerful woman in current Danish politics, the leader of the controversial, right-wing *Danish People's Party*, the third biggest party in Denmark.² These documentaries were selected for their diverse aesthetic strategies for generating authenticity and emotional engagement.

We wish to pursue media-specific and aesthetic issues, and argue that mediated non-verbal political communication in television documentaries includes numerous expressions and effects regarding dramaturgic and audiovisual elements, respectively. We focus on certain communicative aspects within political culture, not from the sender's point of view, but rather from the recipient's perspective. Our analytical method is reception aesthetic analysis, and we address the emotional aspects of staged authenticity in political documentaries, and how television as a medium offers an opportunity for, and stages the viewers' affective participation. In the following, we discuss theoretical approaches to non-verbal political communication, and focus particularly on authenticity, affective participation, and emotional democracy, after which we present analyses of the two television documentaries portraying Danish politicians.

Part I: Theoretical Approaches to Non-verbal Political Communication and Emotionalized Media Democracy

In *Media and the Restyling of Politics*, John Corner and Dick Pels (2003) present articles and perspectives that discuss how politics, entertainment, and aesthetics are combined, and how the restyling and emotionalization of politics are playing central roles in television democracy. Style and aesthetics have been connected to politics since the dawn of democracy, and the aestheticizing of politics is an inherent and inevitable feature of mass politics. In their introduction, the editors write, "In our society, the level of direct engagement that characterized Athenian democracy may have become unattainable ... except in the playful interactivity which is afforded by modern mass entertainment" (Corner & Pels 2003, p. 1). The articles offer convincing, thorough, and inspiring discussions that challenge the established and critical viewpoints on the aestheticizing of politics in contemporary media democracy. As media sociologists like John B. Thompson (2001) and Joshua Meyrowitz (1985) have done, the editors of this anthology point out that non-verbal expressions such as style, personality, appearance, and authenticity have become important qualities for politicians wishing to achieve democratic involvement and support in a modern media democracy in which citizens have become political consumers who no longer buy ideological party packages (these are seen as empty cubicles since all parties tend to become center parties), but instead vote for a person they find genuine and in whom they feel confidence:

Under such conditions of mediated visibility and "thin" solidarity, a politics of personal style may generate democratic effects, by expanding the platforms of engagement and citizenship, and by offering forms of popular appeal and emotional identification that cut through technocratic smoke-screens and institutional inertia. A performative politics foreground the politician as an actor, whose performance on the public stage is continuously judged on authenticity, honesty and 'character'. (Corner & Pels, 2003, p. 10)

By defining non-verbal expressions as communicative devices, we are operating within an extended concept of information and communication that transcends the rational verbal level (cf. the concept of information in Meyrowitz, 1985). Regarding the four components of political communication mentioned in the introduction of this anthology, we are dealing with what are described as *communication-relevant aspects of political culture* (see introduction to this volume). One of our main interests is the relation between aesthetic devices and emotions or affective participation, and we believe it makes sense to talk about a mediatization of emotions, where emotional experience and affective participation both inside and outside the media adapt to the aesthetic forms of the media. In audiovisual media, affects, emotions, and moods are, to a significant extent, communicated, experienced, and reflected through aesthetic effects, like music, visual composition, dramaturgical dispositions, etc., and

in communicating emotions, politicians and producers are thus dependent on the actual language of the medium. The whole political culture changes historically together with the emerging forms of different media aesthetics. The mediatization of politics has been an issue in several academic works (Moring, 2006), but we will not go into that discussion, but instead focus on the mediatization of emotions in political culture. In this case it is important to analyze how emotions are staged and experienced, and how these emotions are a democratic, political resource.

Authenticity in Television Democracy

In this connection, authenticity concerns how the politician is presented and experienced as a trustworthy and reliable person. In modern society, citizens do not automatically trust political systems or expert systems (one of the main arguments in Giddens' *Consequences of Modernity*, 1990, for example). Credibility and trust have, therefore, become important issues that have to be maintained in political communication and democratic processes. When trust, credibility, and political participation have become a reflexive and individualized process, politicians' authenticity is crucial to political communication in contemporary democracy. At the same time, authenticity is a key concept in factual entertainment formats and televisual trends. In our analyzes of television documentaries, authenticity represents certain emotional relations and qualities in political communication, and when speaking of political communication we give preference to the term authenticity (instead of for example visibility, image, or style), because it includes the idea of transparency and credibility on both personal and institutional levels.

Authenticity may be related to a place, an object or a person, and the issue is not whether or not it is real, but the way it is presented and experienced as real. According to linguist Roman Jakobson's communication model (Fiske, 1982, p. 35), authenticity is not related to the *referential function* (referring to something in reality, a function that has been central in factual media genres), but rather a *cognitive function*: the effect of the message on the addressee. In other words, authenticity is an effect that is experienced by the viewer regardless of whether it is true or staged. And it is specifically the person's authenticity that is judged when the viewer can watch how the person acts and reacts, how he/she reflects and behaves in various reality programs³.

Authenticity has also become an important issue with regard to political communication. The politicians' personae, performance, credibility, and charisma are of decisive importance, and the media represent a stage on which to perform and challenge this communicative role-play game of authenticity. In the two documentaries analyzed below, we witness the politicians' front stage and backstage behaviors, but in different combinations. Even the titles of the documentaries comment on this premise of staged authenticity (*Fogh Behind the Façade*, *The Queen of the Ball*). The documentaries leave it to the television audience to evaluate and judge whether the person's backstage per-

formance lends authenticity and confidence to his or her front stage role. As a consequence of the extended backstage in political communication, different modes and levels of backstage performativity appear, and staged authenticity remains a general condition in media democracy. In continuation of Joshua Meyrowitz's work, Ib Bondebjerg (2006) describes the growing number of television documentaries portraying politicians, as part of a trend in political communication and television culture, respectively:

This development results in an ever-larger area of middle-region behavior in the media, a region where aspects of idealized and constructed forms of front stage behavior and forms of communication are mixed with backstage forms. The more formal and controlled front stage is invaded by the backstage, and larger parts of the backstage are naturalized as an aspect of political communication. (Bondebjerg, 2006, p. 46)

The concept of a politician's authenticity is related to the question of credibility. In an article on political spin in Denmark, Christian Kock (2004), a Danish professor in rhetoric, qualifies the complex and often diffuse concept of credibility, and claims that politicians' credibility must integrate three different strategies and effects: 1) the person's credibility, 2) the person's charisma and 3) the person's human qualities. Connected to *credibility* are values like objectivity, intelligence, professional expertise, fairness, and impartial behavior. *Charisma* includes characteristics like being outgoing and open-minded, entertaining, direct, passionate, dynamic, and able to reach the audience. *Human kindness* includes traits like being "one of us", sensitivity, warmth, ability, to relate to ordinary people, and the ability to admit to mistakes. We propose that authenticity in politically personalized communication occurs when the three strategies succeed in being combined, and fit together.

With regard to classical rhetoric, ethos and authenticity are communicative qualities that include certain emotions and effects. These emotions and effects are typically trust, identification, openness, a sense of belonging, and equality (Andersen, 2006, p. 143), and they represent stable emotional conditions. The appeal of pathos, on the other hand, includes strong and unstable emotions, both negative and positive, which are used to provoke, shock, move, and "lift" the addressee's emotional condition (Andersen, 2006, p. 145). Pathos, as well as logos, may be used to communicate a person's ethos, and ethos is related to a politician's personal 'brand-building' and style. In other words, in political communication, authenticity, as a combination of a politician's credibility, charisma, and human qualities, represents an emotionalization of politics.

As it relates to a politician's performative presence, authenticity is something that the television viewer can feel and judge. The person's ethos, credibility, and backstage behavior can be staged, performed, and controlled, and as a medium, television is perfect for emphasizing and staging precisely these emotional qualities, because audiovisual media expose performative and bodily communication. In *reality TV* and journalistic television documentaries, the concepts

of authenticity and backstage behavior even have an entertaining effect that attracts and fascinates a large audience. The main issue in this context is that political communication includes different emotional aspects, and that these emotional aspects, along with rational, verbal, and social aspects of political communication, are important for securing citizens' democratic involvement.

Affective Participation

In media theory, the relation between emotions and specific media forms (e.g. film, music), as well as emotions, and different genres and aesthetic expressions, has been an issue as long as media have existed. The concept of affective participation covers how media aesthetics and various communicative features are used to encourage the audience's emotional involvement and reactions. Edgar Morin (1956/2005) describes how use of different cinematic techniques, such as camera movements, pacing, close-ups, slow motion, lighting, high or low angle shots, and so on, intensify the projection-identification process, as well as the spectator's affective participation. With regard to political communication, the concept of affective participation describes the ways in which the television viewer gets involved, and participates in the politician's life and the actions that take place on the screen. Concerning the mediatization of emotions and the relation between emotional experience and TV-aesthetic devices like music, narrative suspense etc., Daniel N. Stern's concept of *vitality affects* can be clarifying. Even though he developed the term in a totally different context when studying the non-verbal communication between mother and child, it can be used to explain the intimate connection between aesthetic forms in television and emotions – not the categorical emotions as we usually understand them, such as fear, joy, love, hate, etc., but the continual, dynamic flow of feelings, which we experience as tensions and relaxations, as flowing, exploding, fading, bursting, dull, energetic, etc. (Have, 2008). In our argument, the emotional aspect of political culture is of importance, and when focusing on authenticity and credibility as communicative issues in television documentaries portraying politicians, the viewers get involved and participate at an emotional level.

In our view, affective participation includes both an emotional aspect (affective) and a social aspect (participation). Regarding Dick Pels' argument on how television democracy affords a revaluation of emotional, bodily and subjective reactions in politics, he refers to the ideas of the Jungian psychoanalyst, Samuels, on political psychology, explaining that "Such a rehabilitation of affect, bodily sensation and fantasy, of feelings and disgust, fear, discomfort, anger or sympathy supports a form of political analysis that breaks the rationalistic limitations of much current political theorising" (Pels, 2003, p. 50). Emotions and affective communication have become important strategies and issues in contemporary art, marketing, and social behavior.

Alongside the emotionalization of politics, television democracy also includes a social aspect. According to Horton & Wohl's (1956) classical theory, the identifying mark of television as a medium is *parasocial communication*.

Factual entertainment, news, and television shows are all television genres that represent certain modes of social communication, relationships, and events. By staging, for instance, intimacy and identification, letting the television host communicate directly to the camera/spectator with her or his words, eyes, and body, television simulates and stimulates social behaviors and communication. As viewers, we are no longer only receivers of a message; we instead participate in a (mediatized) social event, relationship, or community. In other words, with respect to documentaries on politicians, the concept of affective participation includes both a media-specific (e.g. as in factual entertainment, where the persons look directly into the camera several times to achieve and improve the social communicative mode) and a politically specific (democratic) approach to participation.

Part II: Danish Documentaries Portraying Politicians

On April 22, 2003 the Danish Broadcasting Corporation aired *Fogh Behind the Façade*, a documentary about the current Danish Prime Minister, Anders Fogh Rasmussen, at that time also the chairman of the European Union (EU) and leader of the negotiations on EU expansion, which involved the inclusion of ten new member states, in December 2002.⁴ The documentary has since been broadcast in most European countries and has offered European citizens access to backstage political negotiations usually carried out behind closed doors. The viewers join the negotiating table, so to speak, and witness the European leaders' off-stage comments, jokes, and intrigues among them. Since then, Danish public service television has broadcast six more documentary portraits of top Danish politicians, showing different aspects of politicians' personal, private, and political backstage areas.⁵ Portraying currently active top politicians is not new in Danish television documentaries, but the intervals between the broadcasts of this type have decreased during the last few years. Along with a wide range of other Danish media products exposing politicians (talk and game shows, (auto-)biographies, literary fiction, fiction films, and homepages), these programs reflect the tendency towards personalization in politics, and a growing interest in backstage politics – trends that blur the boundaries between private and public, politics and entertainment, and the political leader and the media celebrity.

In Denmark, journalistic documentary programs generally have high ratings and a great influence on the formation of public debate and opinion. Portraying functioning top politicians in this serious normative genre on prime-time national television thus gives the programs an important role in democracy. As yet, there are no statistics to show how much these portraits influence the polls, but respected political commentators pointed to *Fogh Behind the Façade* when explaining why his party lost eight percent (mostly female) of its voters in the year after the film was broadcast. The film portrays the Prime Minister as a strong chief negotiator, but also as a cold-hearted, arrogant man with an

extreme focus on precision and control. In most of the recent documentary portraits of politicians in Denmark, an explicit theme is the politicians' orchestration of their image in the media as a constant balancing act between private and public, emotion and reason, style and substance. At the same time, as a genre, these television documentaries themselves are media exposures of politicians that balance between each pair of concepts. In the Danish context, it is a genre that still builds on credibility, objectivity, and impartiality, but also aims at getting under the skin of the viewers, and therefore uses a number of aesthetic devices for achieving emotional involvement. In Denmark, we are currently experiencing a blurring of the boundaries between the critical journalistic television documentary and the documentary film. In general, parallel to the development of the television media, the Danish television documentary genre has evolved from using an authoritative, didactic rhetoric with a functionalist aesthetic, to a rather intimate and emotional appearance; rather than just supporting an understanding of reality, the aesthetic effects themselves supply the program with a *vitality* by which aesthetic and emotional energies are intensified and released in a constant flow (Have, 2008). Whereas the television documentary has become more personalized and emotionalized, the documentary film has become more political and more critical. After a period dominated by the personal, introspective documentary film, directors and critics are now talking about a politicized wave in Danish documentary films, triggered by an increasing political consciousness, as well as American tendencies, as represented, for example, by the films of Michael Moore.⁶ These new Danish political films are not political in a traditional, normative, authoritative way, but in the way they generate reflection and debate. The same can be said about the television portraits we address in this article.

*Analysis of Two Documentaries:
"Fogh Behind the Façade" and "The Queen of the Ball"*

These documentaries are hybrids using various fictional and documentary styles, and as such they are representative of today's journalistic television documentary style. If the titles *Fogh Behind the Façade* and *The Queen of the Ball* are supposed to correspond to the actual presentation of the two politicians, they ought to be interchanged. We do not get behind the façade of Prime Minister Fogh Rasmussen; rather, he is portrayed as a self-willed ruler controlling the grandiose political machinery of the EU expansion, while the people around him submit like frightened subjects. We only see him at work: In meeting rooms, at his office, and, not least, walking in corridors constantly surrounded by people (secretarial staff, interpreters, advisers, politicians etc.). We do not see Fogh at home or with his family. The most private scene shows him jogging with three bodyguards in a park in Berlin during an official visit.

On the other hand, we do get behind the façade of Pia Kjaersgaard, whose controlled front stage performances are mixed with personal and emotional backstage behavior, creating a much wider middle ground than in *Fogh Behind*

the Façade. Much of the documentary takes place in her private home, even the more private rooms like the bathroom, cellar, and kitchen; she is interviewed about her inmost feelings, and her husband participates and is interviewed as well. We even see her totally unmasked, in a bathing suit, without make-up, and wet all over, in recurrent sequences from a dark swimming pool, where she is alone, accompanied only by the sad, spacey, soundtrack. But Kjaersgaard is also seen working. We see her in the streets promoting her politics and speaking from diverse rostrums; several scenes take place in her office. But it is remarkable how this office seems to function as and resemble a private living room, where she dines with her closest colleagues and even gets a bit drunk. In general, Kjaersgaard is portrayed as a powerful, strong-willed leader, but also as a very vain, sensitive person who encounters a good deal of opposition, especially among her own colleagues in the parliament. Comparing these two documentaries with similar programs on Danish public service television, it is significant that portrayals of female politicians include their private lives to a much greater extent.

Suspense and the Puppet Show of European Politics

In *Fogh Behind the Façade*, the concepts of authenticity and affective participation are related partly to the way the documentary's conceptualization underlines certain characteristics of the politician at a macro level, and partly to specific scenes that show situations and conflicts in which the politician's actions and reactions are crucial to understanding his style and personality, as well as the television spectators' emotional and aesthetic involvement. At a macro level, narrative suspense and conflicts are used as dramaturgical strategies to achieve affective participation and also to show Fogh behind his façade. As an aesthetic concept, the television documentary stages the Copenhagen Summit as a gigantic, almost comic, media show in which all the politicians are puppets on strings, and every step and movement is planned and prepared in detail, and whose stage manager is impossible to identify. Even though Fogh is the undisputed puppeteer of his own menagerie, and stage manager of this specific political meeting, the documentary also implies that international politics are a great puppet show, and at this level it might be difficult to identify which person (or the persons) who operates the puppets. The documentary allows the television spectators to judge the Prime Minister's performance and to determine the identity of the stage managers.

Fogh has 50 days to re-unite Eastern and Western Europe, and he has to overcome a series of obstacles before attaining the goal: the French Prime Minister, Chirac, and the German Prime Minister, Schröder, are challenging Fogh and the EU presidency; the negotiations with Vladimir Putin over the problem with Kaliningrad are further complicated by a Chechen spokesman visiting Denmark, and the Turks, supported by George Bush, are applying pressure to get an appointment for joining the EU. The suspense increases about two-thirds into the documentary, when the official day for the summit meeting in Copenha-

gen arrives, and an agreement has still not been reached. The negotiations are very intense, and reach their final climax five minutes before the end of the documentary, when Poland finally gives in, and an agreement is reached at the absolute last moment. Parallel to the negotiations narrative, a more personal conflict is brought to the forefront, concerning the tense relationship between the Prime Minister and the minister of foreign affairs, Per Stig Moeller. Fogh Rasmussen treats Moeller in a condescending manner, ignoring him, and not allowing him to be credited for the results of the summit.

So the documentary is based on conflicts at two levels, and at both levels the Prime Minister is the undisputed winner. The documentary develops like an action movie or political thriller, in which the main character typically overcomes challenges and conflicts, and goes through a process of change. Poland, Russia, Turkey, and so forth, as well as the minister of foreign affairs, play antagonistic roles in the documentary. These conflicts secure the dramaturgical drive and suspense, and also show deep-seated characteristics of the politician's personality and authenticity. Fogh is presented as an unconquerable leader; at first glance this appears to be a positive quality, but regarding the different aspects of credibility and authenticity, the presentation of Fogh is complex. We will clarify this in the following.

The Climactic Scene:

Fogh's Time Schedule as a Dramaturgical Concept

The way the climax is constructed in the last minutes of the documentary (when the Prime Minister is shown negotiating with Poland) communicates different personal characteristics of the politician, and also stages certain affective relationships. The spectator follows Fogh close up – never too close, but mainly medium-distance shots and full shots, so that the minister remains the powerful agent he is. In the climactic scene, the filmic strategies used to underline the line of action and the conflicts in the negotiation are made by crosscutting music and short clips that focus on Fogh's tension. As a means of dramaturgical suspense, the spectator never follows the politicians' negotiations inside the meeting room; instead, the camera shows people rushing in and out of the doors and waiting nervously outside the room, and spin doctors and organizers talking on cell phones and rushing to get ready for the next step. Fogh is presented as controlled, powerful, and rational, however excited and stressed; he is able to work efficiently and to perform under challenging conditions. The attention to time and tight schedules is commented upon all the time, and Fogh is presented as the sovereign time ruler.

With respect to credibility as a quality of authenticity, the scene shows Fogh as an intelligent and powerful professional expert who confidently directs the meetings and the negotiations in a sovereign way. He is a dynamic hero in a political action drama. This quality is obvious when we look at how Fogh deals forcefully and efficiently with the external, international conflict, but when it comes to his charisma and human qualities, the image cracks. As described

earlier, charisma is about how the politician reaches the audience, and about being outgoing, open-minded, and entertaining. With respect to these values, Fogh is presented without charm or sense of humor; he is too serious and too concerned about his own principles and plans, and he is not able to listen to other people. The internal plot of the story and the Prime Minister's conflict with his minister of foreign affairs exposes Fogh's ruthless, arrogant, and sarcastic attitudes. His last line in the documentary, immediately after the climactic scene, stresses this fact, when he explains to the cameraman, "The most important thing for me in this negotiation was to follow my own time schedule". Fogh is presented as a hardcore politician, one who is powerful and task-focused on a professional level, but who lacks charisma and human qualities on a personal level. And apart from the unrelenting pursuit of the hand-held camera, this impression is not just a result of his actions and words, but also of the visual compositions, dramaturgical dispositions, and soundtrack.

The Music in "Fogh Behind the Façade"

In *Fogh Behind the Façade* the music is symphonic and classical-romantic, and plays for a total of 20% of the program, distributed over four themes by Beethoven, Rossini, Shostakovich, and Tchaikovsky. The most interesting theme is the one by Shostakovich. As mentioned above, we never get behind the façade of the private Fogh Rasmussen in this documentary, only behind the façade of the political processes. Most of the time he is surrounded by many people, but in the scenes where he is most alone and private, most backstage (for example in his office or running in a park in Berlin) we hear the theme from Shostakovich's "Waltz No. 2" from *Jazz Suite No. 2*. It is an ambiguous theme, at once communicating something sad, with its declining minor scales and dark brass instrument, and something comical and decadent, with its circus-like saxophone and waltz rhythm. Along with a close-up of Fogh Rasmussen's face in a thoughtful moment, the theme *could* have caused the viewer to feel closer to the man, but the camera keeps a distance, causing the comical aspects to become apparent—for example, in a scene where the elevator does not arrive and an embarrassing situation arises, or a scene with the bodyguards exercising with Fogh in the park, and one of them can't keep up with the others. This music was also used as the main theme in Kubrick's film *Eyes Wide Shut*, with Nicole Kidman and Tom Cruise, and associations from this film might further influence the reception.

In *Fogh Behind the Façade*, the music easily generates para-musical associations (associations to things and thoughts outside the music itself): the EU in connection with the Beethoven finale, a circus in connection with the Rossini waltz, etc. This gives rise to a feeling of elevated distance from the protagonist and the situations in which he is. Thus, the music in *Fogh Behind the Façade* creates (ironic) distance rather than emotional intimacy, which corresponds to the general impression of Fogh Rasmussen in this documentary. The music does not take us under his skin, but rather celebrates (and maybe even

caricatures) him from the outside. Related to the three levels of authenticity described earlier – the music does not generate the feeling of human qualities, but is more related to credibility and charisma, with the score-fixed, grandiose, classical music. But the partly teasing and decadent circus-like Shostakovich theme does also burst the impression of authenticity, and creates a meta-level from where you watch the puppet show.

Pia Kjaersgaard Backstage

In *The Queen of the Ball* we are not offered the possibility of rising above the narrative and watching the “puppets” from an outside, distant perspective, as in *Fogh Behind the Façade*; instead, we stay at eye level with the narrative and the protagonist. The settings are to a large degree those in the everyday life of Pia Kjaersgaard, and where the emotional engagement in *Fogh Behind the Façade* was mainly connected to situations, the aesthetic orchestration in *The Queen of the Ball* often generates an immediate emotional attachment to the person, Pia Kjaersgaard. This affective participation promotes a narrative drive peaking in the two moments where we see (or believe we see) a tear in the corner of her eye. Pia Kjaersgaard is often portrayed as a nagging woman by the media, but a woman with power and charisma. In this documentary, where she has more than the usual few seconds to develop a picture of herself, the professional and powerful image is balanced by emotional and human qualities. The result is, in Street’s words, a picture of a “cool” person, who is both in charge and in touch. In *The Queen of the Ball* Pia Kjaersgaard is presented as being “one of us”. By showing her own home and office arranged in a very traditional, conservative, old-fashioned style, decorated with objects that strongly convey national significance, the documentary precisely addresses the core right-wing voters of her party (mainly elderly conservatives and nationalists with an anti-immigration stance), and confirms the authenticity of what she stands for.

The plot in *The Queen of the Ball* develops over three weeks, during which the journalist Helle Faber follows Kjaersgaard during the general election campaign in 2005, ending with a victory for her and her party. In the first part of the documentary Kjaersgaard is introduced as a powerful and successful politician, and her daily working life and the history behind her political career are presented. Halfway through the narrative, the point of no return is reached during a car interview, in which Kjaersgaard refers to an episode where young left-wing Danes assaulted her on the street, and she feared for her life. This experience had both strong emotional and safety-related consequences for her, and she gets so emotional while talking about it that she must look away, blinking her eyes. This gives an impression of human qualities accentuated by zooming into her face, and a thoughtful pause followed by emotional, reflecting music. After this car interview, which is illustrated by a montage from the violent episode, the documentary becomes more emotionally charged, showing the problematic sides of her political career as a controversial right-wing, female politician. Like Fogh, she runs into opposition of various kinds, but she

too always succeeds, in the final analysis. And, like *Fogh Behind the Façade*, the last third of the film builds towards the final general election victory. The documentary ends with a montage of newspaper headlines indicating future ups and downs for Pia Kjaersgaard and the *Danish People's Party*.

The Bar Scene: The Queen With Whom Nobody Wants to Dance

In spite of the positive backing from the voters, *The Queen of the Ball* also shows how the other party leaders continually turn their back on Pia Kjaersgaard and refuse to meet her in public; “but”, as the speaker says 30 minutes into the film, “... at the final session with the party chairs, they do not have a choice”. This comment is followed by a scene, not from the session with the party chairs on television, but from a bar (apparently next to the TV studio), where the party chairs can have a beer and meet the press the day before the election. Pia Kjaersgaard tries hard to make contact with some of the other party chairs, who one by one turn their backs on her, and leave her alone in the bar. The whole scene is characterized by a tense, embarrassed mood and strained social situation, which are natural results of the journalists’ and photographers’ constant surveillance of the politicians, but are also enhanced by the audiovisual editing. The scene causes a feeling of sympathy (maybe even empathy) for Pia Kjaersgaard, and the viewer might even feel a bit of pity for her—feelings that are strongly but discreetly enforced by the soundtrack.

In this scene of few words, the music is rather significant. The music can be separated into two alternating motifs. We first hear a motif characterized by a quick semiquaver accompaniment that sounds like a marimba. In addition to this accompaniment, an airy flute plays some isolated tones, marking single beats in the semiquaver flow, generating a happy, playful mood. Just after the first rejection at the bar, the flute is replaced by a 16-bar-long string motif played legato, contrasting with the first motif. The strings move downwards and then up again, again generating a sad, melancholy mood. Both motifs have a flowing quality without suspense, but contrast with one another at some points: the flute motif is whirling and is more cyclically static, whereas the string motif is focused, having a direction and a darker tone. With the two different motifs, the music establishes two spaces: one expressing the external dynamic and easy-going mood of superficial socializing, and one expressing the internal and more focused emotional state of Pia Kjaersgaard. It is significant that as soon as the strings take over we move “inside” Pia Kjaersgaard; we take a dive, so to speak, into her emotional state and return to the external reality.

The feelings of sympathy and identification in this scene are related to Pia Kjaersgaard’s human qualities, which are elements in the generation of authenticity. And in general, Kjaersgaard is no doubt aware of her need to communicate more human qualities (and even weakness). In an interview in the Danish news paper *Ekstrabladet*, with the headline “Tears were rolling when Pia Kjaersgaard saw this night’s documentary about herself”, she said, “I think the documentary shows the person I am. The real Pia. The true Pia”, and to

a question about whether what we see in the bar scene described above is just another example of Fogh's cold side – as is depicted in *Fogh Behind the Façade* – she answers:

I will leave that evaluation completely up to the individual viewer. But during such an election campaign Fogh is – more than any – extremely controlled. He is almost like a mask. Unlike myself, I would say. I always try to be myself. (*Ekstrabladet*, 30 January 2007)

She draws attention to herself as an un-masked, sensitive, authentic, and trustworthy person, in contrast to the Prime Minister, and she develops her image towards a broader range of human qualities.

The Music in “The Queen of the Ball”

Apart from during the bar-scene in *The Queen of the Ball*, where the origin of the music is unknown, Pia Kjaersgaard is accompanied by the track “*Überholen hat kein zweck*” from the Danish hybrid band EPO-555's album *Mafia* (2006). The music covers almost half of the program, and the mix of “real” instruments and electronic effects and synthesizers gives the music a very modern sound, as well as an ambient, dreamy, meditative quality, and in this way it resembles television documentary music in general (Have, 2008). Characteristically, this kind of semantically open music mostly communicates via its musical expressiveness rather than by generating para-musical associations. The expressiveness of music, conceptualized as sound objects developing over time, is directly related to the emotional flow, which developmental psychologist Daniel N. Stern (1985) conceptualized as *vitality affects*. In *The Queen of the Ball* the music in general generates the impression of introverted loneliness and a constant vibrating unrest (at times also appearing as light effortlessness) – impressions that in most cases are related to the protagonist, Pia Kjaersgaard. “You feel the loneliness right under the surface”, wrote the Danish newspaper *Ekstrabladet* about this documentary (January 30th, 2006, section 1, p. 18), and we believe that the soundtrack plays a significant role in this experience.

From the point of view that the soundtrack in general communicates various kinds of *vitality affects*, you can further argue that the soundtrack adds an additional dimension of (emotional) vitality to the documentary. As opposed to *Fogh Behind the Façade*, where the emotional engagement generated by the music was mainly connected to situations (comical, exiting, meetings, etc.), the emotional engagement in *The Queen of the Ball* is much more connected to the protagonist's inner feelings and state of mind, and as such are experienced as deeply integrated at the narrative level.

Emotional Political Communication in a Nordic Context

Both documentaries address the concept of the politicians' authenticity, but in different ways and with emphases on different qualities of authenticity. In *Fogh Behind the Façade*, the politician's authenticity is primarily presented as based in professional and power-related qualities, while in *The Queen of the Ball*, authenticity is basically shown as the politicians' human and charismatic qualities. These approaches may be seen in light of the two politicians' personal branding processes and (gendered) image work, as well as having certain entertaining effects in the specific documentaries. In *Fogh Behind the Façade*, the viewer has a God's eye view, and he/she acquires an overview of the European political puppet play and the Prime Minister's eminent stage managing, in which the viewer follows the process closely, minute by minute. The distance and irony are maintained through the use of music and a tentative caricature of the Prime Minister when he stresses his time schedule. In *The Queen of the Ball*, quite another relationship and atmosphere are staged, in which the viewer gets the feeling of meeting the politician backstage, in her private world, and at eye level. The communicative intention in *The Queen of the Ball* concerns the politicians' human qualities, sympathy, and an intimate relation to the viewer.

Our theoretical and empirical findings explain and nuance the growth of political backstage communication, as well as the emotional and social intentions in political communication. One question is whether we see this as an advisable or inappropriate development, not at least when it comes to the Nordic political culture, in which the aestheticizing and emotionalization of politics typically have been seen as undesirable conditions, and in various ways associated with American election campaigns, or fascist propaganda. A lot of studies on media and politics have indicated an awareness of the negative consequences and risks of the changes in political communication. For example, the Finnish media researcher Axel Rappe (2006) characterizes the development of political communication in Finland as a negative process, from informative, activating, and critical, to personalized and ironic communication that makes the spectators passive. Ib Bondebjerg's article on Danish television documentaries on politicians also reminds the reader of the cultural gap, and the risks that the commercialization of the media includes: "(it will) create a deep gap between political communication for the elite taking place behind closed doors, and a special media and public communication dominated by a very superficial and personalized form of politics as entertainment, as we already see it today" (Bondebjerg, 2006, p.53). Some might say that we are experiencing an Americanization in Danish television culture, in which political communication lacks political content and consists only of spectacle, personal performance, one-liners, and superficial attitudes. In this context, an obvious gap exists between a political reality that includes only the elite, and entertaining politics without political consequences for the rest.

Even though we defend a positive view of the potential of emotional democracy in this article, we still realize that there *are* limits for to emotionalization,

if the media are to aid citizens in becoming informed and reflected voters. Neither emotional democracy nor television democracy can operate without a core of rationality, which politics needs, in order to be meaningful. How then, can emotions be defended as a political communicative strategy in Nordic democratic cultures? Our findings show that some kinds of emotions are quite obvious and unavoidable in political communication, because they have considerable appeal and are crucial to obtaining political involvement. These emotions involve credibility, trust, authenticity, charisma, and human qualities, and are related to ethos as a rhetorical mode. Ethos, with regard to political communication, is much more than politicians' personal style and rhetorical skills; it also includes the citizens' essential relation to, and trust in the political system and democracy, and is necessary in developing political and cultural citizenship. In ancient Greece they did not have our modern, individualized, psychological understanding of emotions. They saw them as objective phenomena, and not opposed to reason, but assisting it in establishing knowledge and understanding. The two documentaries in our material thus represent ethos and more stable emotions as strategy. American political communication in the media might involve pathos and more strong emotions to a higher degree than we at the moment accept in Denmark and the other Nordic countries. Finally, we would like to propose that, instead of discussing emotionalization of politics in general terms, either from a positive or negative point of view, you should rather try to distinguish between different emotional categories and emotional strategies – and discuss why some seem more acceptable than others in political communication. Neither unqualified optimism nor unqualified pessimism is adequate for addressing the complexity of the changes that are occurring in political communication in a modern media society.

Notes

1. The official English title of this documentary is "The Road to Europe" (and in Danish: *Fogb bag facaden*). The film is directed by the journalist Christoffer Guldbrandsen and was broadcasted by DR 1 in April 2003.
2. *The Queen of the Ball* (in Danish: *Ballets dronning*) is directed by the journalist Helle Faber and was broadcasted by TV 2 in January 2006.
3. Several studies in both media and culture (here selected mainly from a Danish context) have sorted out the different strategies and aesthetics of staged reality in reality subgenres such as docusoaps, reality shows and lifestyle series (Fiske, 1987; Dovey, 2000; Harms Larsen, 2002 and 2005; Hjarvard, 2002 and 2003; Jerslev, 2004; Carlsen & Frandsen, 2005; Knudsen & Thomsen 2003). In these studies, the concepts of intimacy, authenticity, emotions, sensuous experiences, performativity, and personality, as well as seriality, are regarded as playing important roles in factual entertainment.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank John Corner, the Political Communication working group at the Nordmedia conference in Helsinki 2007, and the members of the research project High-tension Aesthetics for their fruitful comments on this article.

4. The ten countries are Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, Cyprus, and Malta
5. The other documentaries portraying top Danish politicians on Danish public service television include *Ballets drønning* ("The Queen of the Ball", Helle Faber, TV 2, 2006), *Lykketoft finale* (Guldbrandsen, DR 2, 2005), *Evas store udfordring* ("Evas's Big Challenge", Lars Høj, TV 2, 2005), *Mimis sidste valg* ("Mimi's Last Election", Michael Noer, DR 2, 2005), *Mogens og magten* ("Mogens and Power" Poul Martinsen, DR 1, 2003). Four of them deal primarily with the general election campaign that preceded the Danish parliamentary elections on February 8, 2005.
6. The trend was, for example, spotted at the CPH: DOX documentary festival in Copenhagen in November 2006. See the Danish newspapers *Berlingske Tidende*, the Culture section pp. 6-7 (Wednesday, 15 November 2006) and *Weekendavisen*, section 1, p. 12 (16-22 February 2007).

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Chapter 13

This Is the Issue: Framing Contests and Media Coverage

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Strategic communicators like political actors and public relations practitioners use frames as strategic tools to further the interest of their organizations, and one goal is to get the media to adopt the same frames. A frame is important in that it promotes a certain definition and perspective at the expense of competing ways of understanding a particular issue. This means that while it is important for strategic communicators to gain media coverage, it is even more important to influence how journalists frame the news stories and construct media versions of reality. However, little research has focused on the dynamic contests between different frames and their reception in the media (Gandy, 2001; Hallahan, 1999; Pan & Kosicki, 2001). With the help of three case studies we want to discuss what determines who wins the framing contest. The following research question is posed: *What kinds of frames typically prevail in mediated conflicts where actors present competing frames?*

In the following section we briefly present and discuss some theoretical approaches to framing. After this, we present our methodology, before turning to the empirical analysis devoting a section to each case study. The final part of the paper contains a discussion of the findings, as well as suggestions for further research exploring framing contests.

Theoretical Starting Point

Over the last decades, the concepts of frames and framing have gained popularity in social science as a way of analysing media content and media impact (Entman, 2004; Gamson, 1992; Iyengar, 1991; Johnson-Cartee, 2004; Reese, Gandy, & Grant, 2001; Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). Frames are important because they provide context and promote a certain understanding of a phenomenon, for example in news stories. Frames represent schemata of interpretation which are as inescapable in everyday life (Goffman, 1974/1986), as they are in journalism. To tell a story involves inclusion and exclusion of possible elements, and both journalists and news sources have, more or less consciously, to choose

an angle. Framing is also consequential in that it influences and affects how people perceive what is reported (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997; Entman, 2004; Iyengar, 1991; Strömbäck & Aalberg, 2008).

A well-known definition by Entman (1993, p. 52) indicates the political and social significance of frames, and hence the necessity to study power and sponsorship of frames: “To frame is to *select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation* for the item described” (original emphasis). Our concern is with the kinds of competing frames that exist around an issue and how certain frames are manifested in news discourse as a result of negotiations between journalists and competing political actors. This frame building process takes place in a continuous interaction between journalists and news sources (de Vreese, 2003).

In general terms frames can be defined as “*organizing principles* that are socially *shared* and *persistent* over time, that work *symbolically* to meaningfully *structure* the social world” (original emphasis) (Reese, 2001, p. 11). Frames are seen as relatively lasting principles that are used in discursive communities. Using a cultural approach, it can be said that frames make up a cultural stock of ways of thinking about issues (van Gorp, 2007). Frames, in this sense, might operate on different levels. We think it is fruitful to distinguish between, on the one hand, generic news frames that can be applied to a whole range of different issues, be they nuclear power, immigration, or petroleum production. On the other hand, it is possible to talk about issue-specific frames, frames that characterises a specific news story and that might be subsumed under a generic frame (de Vreese, 2003).

Generic news frames are general and not confined to a specific issue; they can be seen as standard ways journalists cover issues. One study of generic news frames is Iyengar's (1991) investigation of the “episodic” and “thematic” news frames. Another study found five generic frames often used by the media (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000):

1. Conflict frame: The journalist focuses on a conflict between individuals, groups, institutions, regions or nations to capture the audience's interest.
2. Human interest frame: The journalist uses a human face in the story and emphasizes the emotional aspects of an event, issue or problem.
3. Economic consequences frame: Here the journalist focuses on the economic consequences of an event, issue or problem for individuals, groups, institutions, regions or countries.
4. Morality frame: The journalist might choose to focus on religious or moral prescriptions in covering an event, problem or issue.
5. Responsibility frame: The journalist could attribute responsibility either for the cause or for the solution to problems.

A frame will activate a cognitive schema among individual audience members, and often let him or her “fill in the lines” between the dots that are presented by a particular frame. A successful frame also ensures that the audience will not use “schemata that are contrary to the frame in interpretation of the message” (van Gorp, 2007, p. 66). Successful frames are often felt as given entities: The social construction that takes place remains invisible. Hence, critical scholars have also been interested in using the concept of frames in analyses of power (Carragee & Roefs, 2004). Framing can be described as an ideological contest not only over the scope of an issue, but also over matters such as who is responsible and who is affected and which enduring values are relevant (Pan & Kosicki, 2001).

If politicians or public relations practitioners are to succeed in getting their frames wholly or partly presented in the media, they have to adhere to certain news conventions and genre demands from commercial news organizations giving priority to conflicts, power struggles and drama which can be personalized (Allern, 2001a, 2001b). Professional news sources, representing economic, social or political institutions and organizations, value information subsidies as a tool for their relations with news organizations (Gandy, 1982).

Such subsidies can involve results from polls, exclusive news interviews and other types of free news information, including pictures and offers of illustrating case stories (Allern, 1997). Cost reduction through information subsidies is also a mechanism for enhancing framing potency: Actors strategically cultivate their resources and translate them into framing power (Pan & Kosicki, 2001). Politicians, for instance, consciously try to stage events that fit conventional news values and to give comments that lower the costs of newsgathering. Being used by the media will increase the news sources’ framing power.

The media coverage might be seen as the result of a negotiation between frame sponsors and news organizations, a process Gamson (1988) calls frame sponsorship. News frames (like focusing on the elements of conflict) are supplemented by more political frames (defining the problems and proposing solutions). In this way the different and specific news episodes become elements in a more lasting news narrative (Allern, 2001a, 2001b). In the analysis section we address the research question more fully, and emphasize the difference and the similarities between the sets of frames in the conflicts. First, however, we detail our methodological approach.

Methodological Approach

In order to answer our research question we decided to draw together and utilize material from three case studies that we have analyzed and published on thoroughly elsewhere. This approach allows us to highlight some of the more important aspects of the framing contests, while not getting too bogged down in the details of the extensive and complex cases that dominated the public agendas in their respective periods. The first case deals with a conflict

over gas-fired power plants (GPPs) (Ihlen, 2004, 2006); the second regards the source of the problems of a political party (Allern, 2001a); and the third concerns a scandal involving the leader of the national trade union in Norway (Allern, 2007; Allern & Pollack, 2007). The original case studies used a combination of different methods described below, and we had ready access to this material while writing this chapter.

The main protagonists in the GPP-conflict were the company *Naturkraft* that applied for a building license, and the ad-hoc environmental alliance *the Action Against Gas-Fired Power Plants* (AGPP) that was set up to combat the plans. For this chapter, excerpts were used from the qualitative interviews conducted with the leader of the AGPP and one of its board members. The conflict ran from 1994 to approximately 2001, but in this chapter we focus on what seemed like a crucial five-month period in 1997 (January-May). We also analyzed a brochure published by the AGPP, and conducted a qualitative analysis of the coverage in two large Norwegian dailies – *Aftenposten* and *Dagbladet* – during the mentioned period using an online archive (<http://atekst.mediarkivet.no>).

The second case study is based on a content analysis of how leading newspapers covered and framed a factional power struggle inside the social democratic Norwegian Labour Party during 1999–2000 (Allern, 2001a). The main protagonists inside the party were one faction supporting the then party chairman Thorbjørn Jagland and another supporting Jagland's main rival, Jens Stoltenberg. Some of the media organizations played an active role in this conflict. In the analysis it was focused on the coverage in the two popular newspapers with a national distribution (*VG*, *Dagbladet*), a national business daily (*Dagens Næringsliv*) and three morning papers with a regional distribution (*Aftenposten*, *Dagsavisen* and *Bergens Tidende*). Clippings were collected from the period September 15–October 16, 1999, and January 11–February 10, 2000.

The third case study analyzes the intense, critical media coverage of serious, personal and political accusations against the then leader of the national trade union movement in Norway, the LO, in the winter 2007. The final outcome was that this leader decided to withdraw from her position. The analysis was primarily based on a content analysis of the coverage of the conflict in six newspapers in Oslo in the three last weeks of January 2007. The newspapers included for analysis were *VG*, *Dagbladet*, *Aftenposten*, *Dagens Næringsliv*, *Dagsavisen* and the small, national daily *Klassekampen*.

The case study approach was chosen to gain in-depth knowledge in relation to the framing contests and the media coverage. Case studies are typically more suitable for theory building than theory testing, and our goal is to formulate some hypotheses regarding the phenomenon of framing contests and media coverage.

Case 1: Dumping Down to Steal back the Initiative

In 1994, the company *Naturkraft* was established in Norway and tapped into a relatively new type of discourse on climate change. The problem of climate change was now framed as one that would require a new international approach (Hovden & Lindseth, 2004). Several researchers, politicians and industrial actors argued for the principle of cost-effectiveness and so-called flexible mechanisms, such as the trading of emission quotas. If a country does not reach its specified emission level target, it can buy quotas from others that have made larger cuts than required (see <http://unfccc.int>). *Naturkraft* convinced the majority of the Norwegian politicians that power from GPPs would replace power from more polluting sources in Denmark, mainly coal-fired power plants. This issue-specific “substitution frame” would allow Norway to increase its emissions, while the global emissions would decrease.

Established environmental organizations, in particular *Nature and Youth*, attempted to argue against the relatively complex substitution frame. They argued that the power from the GPPs would *not* substitute the power from the coal-fired power plants, but only be an additional unclean energy source. Building GPPs would not take issue with the real source of the increased pollution problem; that of growing energy consumption based on non-renewable energy sources. The environmentalists thus favoured domestic cuts and argued using a “national action frame.” Despite the efforts of the environmentalists, *Naturkraft* was given the necessary building permits in 1996 and prepared to start building in the summer of 1997 (Ihlen, 2004).

Now, the environmentalists decided on a new strategy and wanted to frame the issue differently (*Action Against GPPs* leader, personal communication, April 22, 2003). AGPP was set up to build a broad alliance that could engage in civil disobedience. The activists still favoured a national approach to emission cuts, but decided to focus on what they saw as the basic problem and to make some aspects more salient (Entman, 1993). The environmentalists chose a “pollution frame” and started to compare the carbon dioxide emission from the GPPs with the emissions from cars. GPPs “pollute like 600,000 cars”, read one brochure published by the activists. To keep the comparison simple, the focus was on carbon dioxide, rather than on other emissions from the two sources. The board member of *Action Against GPPs* used the phrase “dumbing down” to describe this change (AGPP board member, personal communication, April 14, 2003). The main strength of the comparison was to make the abstract issue of climate change more concrete and relate it to an everyday object; cars. The issue was said to be pollution, not substitution. The life threatening effect of this pollution merited civil disobedience, according to AGPP. By this, they added an element of controversy and drama to the conflict, playing up the generic news frame of conflict. The activists also drew on a cultural stock of thinking about environmental conflicts (van Gorp, 2007). They wished to evoke the controversy concerning the hydroelectric power project in Alta in 1978-1982. This is the most dramatic post-war conflict in Norway, and the ac-

tivists employed civil disobedience. In hindsight, most people recognize that the Alta hydropower project was unnecessary and ignored basic environmental concerns (Ihlen, 2004).

The activists simplified and repeated their basic contention, thus exploiting the limits of the media's *modus operandi* – the need for simplification and lack of space. The activists also paid close attention to other needs of the media. They knew they had to provide events and photo opportunities and roll out the campaign in such a fashion that the issue would remain interesting. A few newspapers were chosen as “allies” and were given exclusives, or what the literature calls “information subsidies” (Allern, 1997; Gandy, 1982). The media was probably more drawn to the dramatic side of the events, than to the “pollution frame” itself. Still, the activists were able to get this frame across, although the generic news frame of conflict was the overarching frame in the coverage.

The turning point came in early May, when a protest march was arranged at the location where the first GPP was to be built. The march drew 250 people and demonstrated that the activists were able to follow up on their threats and that they were seriously committed to the cause (Kapstad, 2001). The newspapers could now show something other than mug shots of activists or archival photos from other protests. The point was made that the protest preparations should be conducted in openness to gain media coverage. The fact that the organization offered schooling in civil disobedience, for instance, did receive media attention (Berg Bentzrød, 1997). When the activists raised tents that were similar to those that had been used in the Alta conflict, this was an attempt to make the audience fill in the lines. That is, to use the same mental scheme on this conflict, as the one in Alta (van Gorp, 2007).

The issue-specific frame focusing on pollution had been sufficiently infused with the generic news frame of conflict, to dominate the coverage. The activists thrived on the conflict frame, and through this was able to enhance the potency of the issue-specific “pollution frame” (Pan & Kosicki, 2001). The reframing, coupled with credible threats of civil disobedience and media shrewdness, succeeded in gaining substantial media coverage and opinion polls reflected a negative public sentiment toward GPPs. In May 1997, fearing large-scale civil disobedience actions during the coming election campaign, the Prime Minister urged *Naturkraft* to postpone its construction (Ihlen, 2004, 2006).

Case 2: Locating the Problem of the Labour Party

After the general elections in Norway in 1997 the Labour Party lost the government power, and the polls that followed indicated that the road back to the Cabinet could be long. Before and after the municipal elections in 1999 this led to public and internal debates about the party's problems, focusing on the role of the party chairman and former prime minister, Thorbjørn Jagland.

The problems of the Labour Party, often described as “the eagle” among the political parties in Norway, became a hot topic in the press during the election campaign and a relatively weak result in the municipal elections accelerated the critique. One faction in the party defined and framed the party’s problems as a “communication crisis”, and blamed the party chairman for the problems: he was regarded as being too traditional and lacking the necessary personal charisma, a problem especially visible in the television debates. The proposed solution for the party would be to replace him with the then Vice Chairman of the Labour Party (Jens Stoltenberg), an economist and former Minister of Finance who was regarded as more “modern” and commonly accepted as a better communicator in the media (Allern, 2001a).

The difference between these two politicians seemed from the outside minuscule in the terms of political views. However, they clearly differed in political “style” and background and therefore, as symbolic figures, represented different traditions and tendencies in the party. Jagland had his political roots and strongest support in the local party organizations and the trade union movement and had cultivated these relationships. Some of his strongest supporters belonged to the trade unions and the left side of the Labour Party, and among them the repeated attacks on Jagland were interpreted as an offensive from the urban, media oriented and more market liberal faction of the party. None of the factions did present any alternative political strategy to cope with the party’s problems.

In two periods covered by this analysis (September 15-October 16, 1999 and January 11-February 10, 2000) the six analyzed newspapers printed 214 articles about the leadership struggle in the Labour Party. 64 percent of these were news articles and the rest editorials and political commentaries. Party members demanding a change of leadership were regarded as hot news. Commentators interpreted bad polls for the Labour Party, which both were organized and followed up by the news media, as a proof of the party leader’s inability to change the opinion in a more positive direction. The “poor communication frame” confirmed the reality of internal party contradictions and therefore corresponded with generic news frames as the conflict frame and the responsibility frame. It also gave news organizations an easy possibility to personalize the political conflict. Thus, it satisfied a particular media convention that has been consistently identified in the literature (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996).

In four of the six of the newspapers, namely *VG*, *Aftenposten*, *Dagens Næringsliv*, and *Dagsavisen*, the “poor communication frame” dominated both the news columns and the editorial comments. Both the opposition in the Labour Party and most of the pundits of the press argued that Jagland’s style of leadership was a problem for the party’s future. Alternative frames, raising questions concerning the political strategy and tactics of the Labour Party’s leadership, were treated as unimportant or irrelevant. However, *Dagbladet* showed in their political commentaries some sympathy with the Labour Party Chairman, and *Bergens Tidende* was more or less strictly neutral – and both papers commented on the activist role *VG* had taken in the conflict (Allern, 2001a).

In February 2000 Jagland, after new rounds of negative opinion polls and media criticism, proposed that his Vice Chairman, Stoltenberg, should take over as the Labour Party's Prime Minister Candidate. A dubious poll in *VG* even promised the Labour Party an eleven percent gain in support by changing leaders (Allern, 2001a; Strömbäck & Aalberg, 2008). Jagland himself still wanted to continue as the leader of the party organization. This compromise was applauded by both the Party's leadership and the press and gave, for some time, the Labour Party, new vitality. The Labour Party assisted by the Conservative Party and the right-populist Progressive Party, succeeded shortly after in toppling the then governing liberal-agrarian coalition government. Stoltenberg formed a new Labour Party (minority) government, with party leader Jagland as Minister for Foreign Affairs.

The technocratic, market oriented "modernization" program of the new government was, however, no success with the voters. In September 2001 the Labour Party, after an election campaign with Stoltenberg as the party's dominating spokesman and communicator, lost the election. The result was regarded as a catastrophe for the Labour Party. Jagland himself held a low profile in the election campaign. Stoltenberg was the dominant figure, especially in the television debates.

This could, as some analysts then expected, have led to a debate about the political strategy and priorities of the Labour Party, especially about the party's unsuccessful attempt to use the recipe of British "New Labour" in Norway. Instead a new faction struggle exploded both inside the party and in the media. Now both the supporters of Stoltenberg and some of the pundits of the press, especially in *VG*, defined and framed "the double leadership" between Stoltenberg and Jagland as the reason for the problems (Halse, 2005). A former cabinet member declared in *VG* that the "power-sharing" between Stoltenberg and Jagland had destroyed the party's election campaign (Skarsbø Moen, Mosveen, & Sønsteli, 2001).

In the literature, the frame construction process is often seen as a form of negotiation between journalists and sources (de Vreese, 2003). This was also the case in this second stage of the conflict: Journalists interacted and negotiated with news sources inside the Labour Party in this frame-building process. Many of the news sources inside the Labour Party were allowed to stay anonymous in their attacks on the party leader Jagland, including politicians which *VG* described as members of Stoltenberg's cabinet (Skarsbø Moen, Sønsteli, Mosveen, & Mikalsen, 2001). The press coverage became especially intense and negative for Jagland from December 2002 and onwards. In January the party chairman suddenly got ill and he was hospitalized for a period. Shortly after he declared that he would step down as a party leader at the Labour Party's congress the following autumn (Halse, 2005). This demonstrates how the media success of a specific political frame might be consequential.

Case 3: The Fall of a National Trade Union Leader

The third case study concerns political and moral accusations in the winter 2007 against Gerd-Liv Valla, the then leader of the Norwegian trade union confederation LO. In January 2007, *VG*, Norway's largest newspaper, broke the news that the leader of the international section of the LO, Ingunn Yssen, had resigned from her job. The sensational element was that she declared to be a victim of harassment. Valla, the radical, female LO leader, was named as the villain (Mosveen, Johansen, & Ertesvåg, 2007).

The coverage in *VG* was based on Yssen's long resignation letter, delivered to the newspaper soon after the LO got it. The front-page headline was: "I was harassed by Valla because I became pregnant." The six pages devoted to the story included several other harassment accusations. Beside a short comment from a former colleague and friend, there were no attempts at documentation or evidence from other sources.

The news media immediately treated the accusations as a political and incriminating scandal. Both women were well known public figures, something which gave the incident added commercial news value. Valla had earlier been Minister of Justice and was one of the leading architects behind the red-green coalition that won the general election and formed a new government in 2005. Under her leadership LO had flexed political muscles in discussions and conflicts with the new government, and Valla was by some circles inside the Labour Party seen as being too powerful. Ingunn Yssen, her counterpart, was also a member of the Labour Party, however belonging to its more market-oriented, liberal-right wing. Earlier she had held positions as Under-Secretary of State and as director of the State Centre for Gender Equality. Valla and Yssen were both known as feminists.

One of the political factors contributing to the media priorities and public interest was of course that it is the policy of LO to defend workers' rights and fight all kinds of harassment against employees. Harassment of pregnant women is regarded as intolerable, and Valla was known to have an active profile regarding gender questions.

In the media coverage two competing issue-specific frames immediately became visible. The dominant "harassment frame", established by *VG* in their launch of the story, was based on Yssens accusations as the angle of the story and generally presenting the rude "management style" of Valla as the core of the problem. LO and Valla tried to counterattack by using a "revenge frame:" Yssen had not managed to do her job as an international secretary and section leader, and declined the other job solutions that was suggested. Yssen also sought revenge because LO had refused to pay her salary while she planned to attend a half year-course at the prestigious Military Defence College.

In the period from January 11-31, 2007, the first stage of the conflict as it played out in the media, six Oslo-papers printed as much as 599 articles about the case, 77 of them were front-page stories. The six dailies are in order of their

circulation figures *VG*, *Aftenposten*, *Dagbladet*, *Dagens Næringsliv*, *Dagsavisen* and *Klassekampen*.

An analysis of the ‘main angle’ and framing of the articles (Allern & Pollack, 2007) show that in the four largest newspapers, all with liberal or conservative political leanings, more than half of the total coverage (all genres) were critical of the LO leader, and a very low percentage presented her or the LO’s version of the conflict, defended her position or criticized her opponent, Yssen. The news coverage was even more one-sided negative than this, while the commentaries were somewhat more balanced. There were few critical articles about the media campaign in most papers; furthermore, most of the critical texts were debate articles and letters from the readers. The social democratic newspaper, *Dagsavisen*, was more balanced in its overall reporting while the socialist-left *Klassekampen* had the highest percentage of articles with an angle positive for the LO-leader and critical of the media coverage in the market leading papers.

The figures clearly indicate that the political orientation of the newspapers influenced how the different news organizations covered and framed the conflict. A qualitative reading and analysis of the news stories in the four largest newspapers reveals that very few articles were based on any critical assessment of Yssen’s accusations. None of the section leaders or other employees of the LO were interviewed as public witnesses by any newspaper.

The torrents of critique against Valla in the press were based on other sources. One of the most important in the news coverage was a female lawyer who in the spring 1997 was Valla’s Sub-Secretary of State in the Ministry of Justice. The lawyer denounced Valla’s leader style as arrogant and manipulative, and was immediately treated as an important, trustworthy character witness and her comments were made into front-page news. Later it became known that a former Sub-Secretary of State in the same ministry in 1997, now a well known judge, in the same period gave a lengthy interview to *Dagbladet*, where he, in contrast to the lawyer, gave a very positive evaluation of Valla’s working style and leadership. This interview, which did not fit the “harassment frame”, was never printed (Skjeseth, 2007). An independent commentator made this observation: “Good stories about the evil Valla is on sale. You will get the whole front page in *Aftenposten* if you can give evidence that Valla behaved in a rude way on a trade union meeting ... ten to fifteen years ago” (Hompland, 2007, p. 39).

Other critical sources were different types of politicians, some from the political parties, or with a background in the trade union movement. The reactions of Valla and the LO to Yssen’s resignation and accusations were characterised as a PR catastrophe; instead of a humble answer, promising to look into the matter, the LO leader launched a counter attack, denied the accusations and gave out information about how (bad) Yssen had done her job.

The extreme amount of news stories, combined with the one-sidedness of the coverage in the mainstream press, was a shock for the LO leaders and got old conflict lines inside the organization into the open. As a compromise and preliminary solution the LO, after some weeks of public torments, decided

to establish an external, fact finding commission with three legal experts as members, all with conservative political leanings.

The group started its work in early February and was organized as an inquisition, i.e. their committee being investigators, prosecutors and judges in one body – with no right for the main actors to appeal the coming verdict. Two psychiatrists, one of them being an expert of war traumas, were recruited as part of the group. An international consulting company was engaged to make anonymous interviews among ordinary employees in the LO, while the committee of five organized their own hearings with the leading personnel of the organization.

All in all, the commission interviewed 31 witnesses, beside Valla and Yssen. The report from the group was delivered to the LO on the March 9, 2007. In the month with investigations four of the testimonies were leaked to the press, all to the *VG*, the leading organ of the anti-Valla campaign. Three of them were like Gerd-Liv Valla, elected LO politicians in top positions. The fourth witness was the general secretary of the Norwegian Labour Party. The reports about contradictions between some of the leaders holding top positions in the LO, some of the conflicts about personal conflicts years ago, were all interpreted by the newspaper as an indirect confirmation of Yssen's accusations (Allern, 2007).

The planted leaks to *VG* was a clear indication of the conclusions in the coming report from the commission, delivered to the LO on March 9 and formulated as a classical verdict: the LO leader was found guilty in harassment of her former international secretary. At a press conference Gerd-Liv Valla attacked both the premises and the conclusion of the commissions report. However, her conclusion was that she, because of the media pressure and the future of the LO, had decided to withdraw from her position as leader of the organization.

Discussion and Conclusion

The three case studies have illustrated different aspects of framing contests that take place when frame sponsors compete with each other and negotiate with journalists to obtain favourable coverage, that is, coverage that uses their frames.

The first case study illustrated how an organizational actor (the environmental group AGGP) was able to adapt to new political conventions and the needs of the media and thus succeeded in getting significant parts of its frame incorporated in the media coverage in competition with the frame of the industrial actor. In other words, the case study showed the importance of being media savvy when framing an issue. An issue-specific frame was fused with a generic news frame focusing on conflict (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000), and journalistic conventions were utilized with great effect: Simplification, concretization, and repetition. The issue was made tangible, the activists provided photo op-

portunities, gave exclusives or “information subsidies” (Allern, 1997; Gandy, 1982), and also tapped into a cultural reservoir making use of a well-known previous environmental conflict. In other words, they attempted to activate a particular mental schemata (van Gorp, 2007). At this time in the conflict the competing issue-specific frame of “substitution” had become old hat, and was far less interesting from a journalistic angle.

The second case study was concentrated on a conflict over problems of the Norwegian Labour Party. The then leader of the party was accused of lacking modern communication skills and the party opposition who wanted a change of party leader successfully launched “poor communication” as a frame of reference and a change of leader as the solution. This was a media success. One of the reasons was that the attacks on the party leader corresponded with established generic news frames, like the conflict frame, the morality frame and the responsibility frame (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). This gave the news media possibilities to intervene in the inner party conflict and develop the contradictions through news interviews and opinion polls. The faction who wanted a change of leadership experienced that “information subsidies” in the form of offers of public criticism of the party chairman easily became news. The communication skills of the faction who agitated for Stoltenberg as the news party chairman was even recognized by *VG* in a commentary: “So may be it is no coincidence that the uproar is lead by media professionals, Labour Party-members with smart experience from TV, radio, advertisement and [the PR agency] Geelmuyden.Kiese” (Simonsen, 2000). This gave the “friends of Stoltenberg” easy access to the news columns in most news outlets. The supporters of the party chairman had a more complicated, and less newsworthy, story to tell, and no specific framing of the conflict to offer.

Another reason seems to have been the political congruence between the opposition in the Labour Party and editorial departments of the newspapers most engaged in the conflict, namely *VG* and *Dagsavisen*. The newspapers’ pundits themselves used the “bad leadership frame” in their commentaries and argued that a change of leadership was necessary for the party to recover and mobilize new enthusiasm. The party press is history in Norway. However, the new role of news organizations as an independent institution does not exclude political engagement, political bias and the possibilities for news organizations to intervene in political, even inner party, processes.

The third case study concerns a classical political scandal with accusations of transgressions of moral values, norms and codes. Both commercial and political factors were involved. Political scandals sell because they represent moral tales that appeal to collective curiosity and maliciousness and can be highly personalized and dramatized. At the same time they seem to confirm and demonstrate the power and potency of journalism and the will of the media to criticize people in power.

In the Yssen versus Valla-case the basis for the media campaign was a resignation letter from Yssen, delivered as a “information subsidy” to *VG*. The story was framed as a “harassment case”, both in the resignation letter and the

media coverage, based on accusations partly of a private character that were as difficult to deny, as they were to prove. This issue-specific frame corresponded with several well-known news values and generic news frames, like the conflict frame. The personalized attacks, and questions concerning individual responsibility, made it even easier to personalize the news coverage. Another factor, which made the exposure especially “scandalous”, was that harassment in work situations throughout the last years had been a topic prioritized both by the LO and public authorities.

The LO leader's counterattack, presenting the accusations as unreliable and framing the story as “revenge” because of the accuser's failure in her job, had less of a chance to succeed. First of all, this frame was more complicated, and could only be confirmed through fact finding, investigative reporting. The counterattack was also quickly interpreted and denounced by leading media outlets as a confirmation of the “brutal” character of the LO leader. The media scene became wide open for different actors who wanted to undermine both her or the LO's political power and position.

Taken together, the three case studies suggest at least two hypotheses regarding framing contests and news coverage: First, and as indicated by the literature on source strategies (Allern, 1997; Ihlen, 2004; Palmer, 2000), actors improve their chances of gaining coverage for their chosen frame when they are able to identify and exploit media conventions like the need for visuals and exclusives. The literature has consistently demonstrated how the latter form of “knowledge capital” is valuable for source. It has also been pointed out that this resource can be used when actors attempt to frame issues (Pan & Kosicki, 2001). What we argue, however, is that the dynamic contest that takes place can be fruitfully analyzed using the twin format of issue-specific frames and generic news frames like conflict or moral drama.

Our second and most important hypothesis is that it seems likely that actors that can fuse their issue-specific frames with standard generic news frames stand a better chance to obtain coverage. In political conflicts, the commercial media's orientation is largely geared towards the political play as such, often focusing on personalities and individual responsibilities. When actors can feed into this generic news frame they seem even more likely to succeed with their framing goals.

Furthermore, the potency of an actors' frame is greatly enhanced when journalists actively partake in co-constructing the frame. The active and intervening role of leading news organizations in the framing process is an important point, not least the active and leading role of the market leading popular tabloid *VG* in the two last case studies. The influence and penetration of specific frames is clearly dependent on the market power of the journalistic medium that launches them. These case studies also illustrate how a chosen frame colors the remaining coverage, turning most different and specific news episodes into elements in a more lasting news narrative (Allern, 2001a, 2001b). Potential news stories that do not fit into the dominating frames are easily dropped as ‘not newsworthy’.

In Norway, this has led to a public debate about the political actor roles of media organizations (Allern, 2001a). In interviews conducted by Thorbjørnsrud (2000; 2003) the journalists strongly opposed the view that they and their news organizations could be interpreted as political actors in the Labour Party-conflict. They insisted that they had “no agenda role” outside reporting good news stories and that a power struggle inside the Labour Party clearly is such a story. In their view, it is always necessary to focus on the qualities of the leader during political crises. However, this is done “without intentions to intervene or influence” politically (Thorbjørnsrud, 2001, p. 65).

This ideology of “pure journalism” represents a naive positivism typical in news departments (“we just report the facts”). However, it can also be interpreted as a conscious attempt to avoid public debate about the political and ethical aspects of political news framing. The choice of perspective, focus, angle and news sources, as well as the exclusion of other aspects, is treated as journalistic professionalism, pure and simple. Ironically this also means that the professional news sources and political actors who are invited to dance on the media scene will avoid any search light on their steps and motives. This also becomes troublesome, given the potential power of frames to decide who is responsible, and which values and perspectives are relevant (Carragee & Roefs, 2004; Pan & Kosicki, 2001).

A qualifier has to be added regarding the possible framing success of actors that are able to draw on knowledge about media frames and media conventions: When “everyone” has become adept at communicating on the media’s terms, the competition hardens. Furthermore, the journalists might also use generic news frames that do not necessarily benefit any of the sources, for instance by focusing on the “political horse race”, rather than the issue in question (Ihlen & Nitz, 2007). The business of frame sponsorship is not always straightforward. Further research should be conducted to obtain more systematized knowledge of the relationship between issue-specific frames and generic news frames. Another interesting avenue to pursue would be to research which actors use what type of frames. There is a wealth of insight from news sociology on offer that could assist in this endeavour.

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Organizing Audiovisual Campaign Coverage

Influence on Power Relations Between Media and Politics in Norway

Kjersti Thorbjørnsrud

The relationship between the field of journalism and the field of politics is often described as characterized by certain struggles and negotiations (Gans, 1980; Cook, 1998; Bourdieu, 2005). Politicians wish to see their messages reach the public with as little modification by journalistic editing, framing and commentary as possible. According to their rules of production and their understanding of politics, journalists, on the other hand, see it as their task to show what is really going on in politics, to decide who the important political players are, and what types of questions are worth discussing. Needless to say, the journalistic version is often in contradiction with that of the politicians.

Some argue that politicians should have a stronger claim to media access and influence during election campaign periods, than in ordinary times. In other words, because of the campaigns importance to democracy, politicians should be more powerful in the period leading up to an election. Several countries have introduced regulations to ensure stronger political control with the audiovisual coverage of election campaigns. In Norway, however, there are no such formal regulations.

How will the absence of regulations and normative guidelines influence the audiovisual coverage of Norwegian election campaigns? How will this way of organizing campaign coverage affect the power struggle between media and politics? This chapter will first demonstrate how audiovisual campaign coverage is organized differently in Norway compared to how this is done in other well known systems. Then, having identified what characterizes the Norwegian system, the second part will present an analysis of how the lack of formal regulations influences power relations between media and politics in Norway. This analysis is based on a production study conducted in 2003 as well as interviews with editors, politicians and their public relations advisers.

Politics and Journalism – Autonomy or Subversion?

According to Blumler and Gurevitch (2004, p. 338) “a key dimension of the relationship between the media and the political system is the continuum

of autonomy versus subordination". The authors argue that all societies can be placed at different points on this continuum, according to the degree to which their political cultures entitles the media with a high measure of autonomy from the political system or conversely subordinate the media to that system. The autonomy side of the continuum has a favoured and celebrated status in most liberal democracies. As a rule, free and independent mass media is seen as a condition for a working democracy. However, media institutions producing news and debate genres, are said to also have democratic obligations toward society. They are expected to present relevant, trustworthy and balanced information, providing citizens with knowledge enabling them to participate in society. This line of reasoning can make use of parts of arguments in favour of some type of external regulation of media content, and thereby result in a certain reduction of journalistic autonomy. During election campaigns in particular, many countries exhibit an extraordinary degree of regulation of media coverage. Rules vary from regulations concerning opinion poll reporting to standards for the number of minutes of airtime awarded to the various political parties (Coleman, 2000, pp. 6-20; Hallin & Mancini, 2004).

Election coverage regulation of this kind can be based on the argument that media institutions can not be left alone to decide form and content of this coverage in periods of such vital importance to democracy. The argument is moreover that elections constitute a situation in which politicians have strong claims to media access, more so than during more ordinary periods (Esaiasson & Håkansson, 2002; Coleman, 2000). As such, election campaigns are seen as situations in which normative principles of balance, fairness and equal media access, especially to the audiovisual media, are particularly important.

The opposite perspective would maintain that external regulations of form and content of media coverage constitutes a threat to the freedom of the press, and thereby a threat to democracy as a whole. Decisions concerning election coverage should be left to journalists and editors, they should be free to determine their own perspectives, and free to prioritise among media messages as they themselves see fit, thereby allowing for critical investigations of the political system. This perspective is rooted in a liberal view of the role of the media, and is, not least, in line with the ruling ideology of modern journalism in Norway (Thorbjørnsrud, 2001; Allern, 2004; Raaum, 1999).

The pattern of domination, or the answer to the question of "who has the upper hand" in the power struggle between journalists and politicians, is not given. Studies in political communication points in both directions, although many British and American studies have allocated politicians to the dominant position in this relationship (Strömbäck & Nord, 2006). The correct answer to the question of who dominates who, depends on many factors, including the structural conditions underlying the function of the mass media and the political system in different countries. One should hardly expect to find the same types of power balances or imbalances in countries with different political cultures and media systems. As emphasized by Strömbäck and Nord (2006),

comprehensive research in single countries, as well as comparative research across countries, is called for to balance and clarify the picture.

It is a well-known fact that media messages are journalistically framed and constructed through the selection, framing and editing of reported events and quotation of sources (Schudson, 1995; Katz et al., 2003; Cook, 1997). That production and format criteria are also very involved in the construction of talk shows and live television debates is also an important insight, though less discussed in the literature on political communication (Ytreberg, 2004). It is nevertheless important to explore how these format criteria shape the public's impression of debate participants, what type of questions they are asked, and how debaters are able to communicate their messages. These factors are of particular importance when investigating election coverage, since televised debates are such an essential part of this coverage.

Any kind of audiovisual transmission involves some basic framing. This is due to the technology involved, the number of cameras used in the production, the use of different angles etc. However, in the case of audiovisual media, one gets close to unedited or uncut transmissions when political debates (arranged by the political parties themselves), meetings, hearings and press conferences etc. are transmitted in full time, as a block, without cuts, intervening commentaries or journalistic composition. These types of broadcasts will henceforth be characterised as unedited transmissions. Here, politicians are largely in control of their own appearance, as well as their communication of messages to the public.

Television news, current affairs magazines and talk shows though, are usually produced based on various journalistic format criteria. The nature of these criteria; the principles on which they are based; their explicitness and predictability; the degree to which they are defined by journalists; and whether or not some notion of public or political control is involved, are all important indicators of the power balance between politicians and journalists (Ytreberg, 2004; Asp, 1986; Jenssen, 2007). In other words, they can say something about the degree of autonomy or heteronomy of the two fields.

A hypothesis is that the more explicitly, concretely and closely connected editorial guidelines or codes of conduct are to actual journalistic production criteria, the harder it will be to deviate from them journalistically. If there for instance are specific rules connected with the use of opinion polls during elections, coverage will be less diverse than if there are no official guidelines for this type of content. In other words, opaque and highly general guidelines can obscure or render the actual production criteria more ambivalent in the eyes of the public and the participants involved. This is often the case in the production of different kinds of participatory programmes, making "the contract" between participants and TV-producers unclear (Ytreberg, 2004). As for television debates that are part of the election coverage, vague guidelines regarding topics and participation in debates, make the conditions more unpredictable and less controllable for the politicians involved.

Standards of Audiovisual Election Coverage

Whether the guidelines for the election coverage are subject to political or public control, provides clues about politicians' degree of control with the election coverage. This control, direct or indirect, can come from different institutional sources and be of differing kinds. To provide a comparative background for the Norwegian case, examples from the organization of the election coverage in Britain, France and The US will be used here. These are all democracies, and have well developed journalistic professions, though in different manners, representing important strands in journalistic practice and traditions. France represents a continental tradition where a subjective and opinion oriented journalism stands strong (Hallin & Mancini, 2004). Britain and the US are countries with an early and extensive commercialization of the media, but with very different traditions concerning public broadcasting and degree of state regulation and financing of the public broadcaster systems (ibid). In spite of their differences, all three countries display a significant amount of unedited TV coverage of the election campaigns. In addition, all three countries have different types of public or political control with important parts of the election coverage.

Some countries such as Britain and France, have independent bodies that formulate principles intended to govern election coverage according to judicial law. In France, election coverage is under the control of the government-appointed Conseil Supérieur de L'audiovisuel. This strong and active regulatory agency establishes rules concerning how elections should be covered by public radio stations and television channels in concurrence with audiovisual media law.¹ In Britain, broadcasters are obliged by law² to formulate detailed guidelines for election coverage in accordance with the opinions of the so-called Electoral Commission. A broadcaster such as the BBC, for instance, submits a draft of codes to the Commission, and adapts these codes according to their potential objections.³ Influence over editorial content during British elections is in other words transferred to an external body whose views broadcasters must consult and consider. However, unlike the regulatory system in France, the precise formulation of rules for the British election coverage is left to the broadcasters themselves.

Both French and British election coverage guidelines are concerned with the equal and fair treatment of the various candidates. The French commission (CSA) ensures that incumbent government politicians as well as representatives of the opposition are assured equal airtime according to comparable principles. A cornerstone in the guidelines for British broadcasters such as the BBC is likewise that the coverage should be *balanced*. The various political parties must be granted access on equal terms. This pertains not only to the total coverage, but also to individual programmes. Both France and Britain moreover, have rules regulating the use of opinion polls during election campaigns.

An alternative way in which election coverage control can be placed outside media institutions is by obliging broadcasters to transmit unedited coverage of events and debates etc, organized in full by the political parties. This is

done in both countries mentioned here. In France the rules of the audiovisual commission, CSA, secure candidates and their supporters direct and unedited access to the public through the allocation of airtime within the established broadcasters.⁴ Public broadcasters in Britain are, like the French broadcasters, obliged to make airtime available for unedited party and referendum broadcasts. These broadcasts are produced by the political parties themselves and broadcasters disclaim editorial responsibility for the content.⁵

US political journalism is known for its increasingly short sound bites and hard news editing (Cronkite, 1998; Hallin, 1992). However, when it comes to the format of the most important political debates in the election campaign periods, the Republican and Democratic parties remain in control. Prior to the election, the presidential and vice-presidential debates are transmitted by selected broadcasters, and organized, sponsored and produced by the so-called Commission on Presidential Debates. The commission is hosted by former heads of the Republican and Democratic parties (Coleman, 2000). Among the features regulated by the Commission, is the issue of time allocated to each candidate and time allocated to responses and rebuttals; whether to allow for questions from the floor; who should be the debate moderator; the specific role of the moderator etc. Like in France and Britain, there is also an extensive amount of uncut coverage of the different election campaign arrangements in the US. This is provided by C-SPAN, as a public service to the audience.⁶

In Norway, television election coverage began with strictly organized debates between party leaders. The conditions for the debates were controlled by the political parties, and the role of the programme's host was limited to leading discussions in line with rules previously agreed upon by the parties. These rules secured each debater, and thus each political party, strictly equal airtime overall (Allern, 2004; Bastiansen, 2006; Fedøy, 2003). The guidelines were stipulated in written form and formulated by NRK (Norwegian Public Service Broadcaster). Rules complied with the interests of the political parties, were concrete and specific, and allowed little room for ambiguity or unexpected debate content. The journalistic practice of this time has been characterized as deferent towards politicians, a political logic governed the format of the election coverage. This mode of producing debates has certainly undergone fundamental changes due to professional development within journalism, new technology and the maturation of the television genre. Allern (2004) has characterized the development of election coverage as starting with power residing with the politicians and ending with power residing with the journalists. As such, election coverage during the 1990s and the beginning of the 21st century is characterized as being controlled by journalists.

This interpretation of the development of the content and form of election debates can be supported when considering the relatively high degree of autonomy that NRK and the commercial public broadcasters, most importantly TV2⁷ enjoys today vis-à-vis external institutions. There are no laws regulating the form and content of election coverage in Norway, and neither is the coverage dictated by any external institution. Unlike the BBC, and unlike before,

NRK does not itself have detailed written editorial guidelines for the coverage of political elections.

The three countries used as examples above all have unedited audio visual media coverage of elections. Looking at Norway, the situation here arguably differs on this account, as Norwegian television incorporates no unedited media coverage of election campaigns.

The state broadcasting council, *Kringkastingsrådet*, has the mandate to discuss and comment on the broadcasters programming policy⁸. This council is however not involved in the policy or planning of programming, and should NRK or TV2 refuse to comply with the council's criticism regarding programme production, no sanctions are involved. One example of such incomppliance occurred after *Kringkastingsrådet* criticized NRK's first programme coverage of the 2003 election campaign. NRK was represented at the meeting where this criticism occurred by the political editor and the election coverage coordinator. They took note of the criticism, but refrained from giving any substantial concessions in their response to the critique.⁹

Today, each Norwegian election campaign is covered according to various kinds of internally defined programming policies. The programming policy in NRK builds indeed on a custom that says a certain (non-defined) section of NRK's news and debating programmes during elections should in some way or another focus on the political campaign. In fact, NRK has since its beginning designated airtime during election campaigns to election-related programmes and formats. This constitutes a strong tradition within the institution, and, in spite of increasing pressures from primetime entertainment-based formats, there is no indication that this practice will change in the near future. However, this principle aside, the alternative ways in which NRK can choose to produce election coverage are indeed numerous and diverse.

As a traditional public service broadcaster, NRK must also fulfil certain obligations towards society. However, NRK's statutory rules (*Vedtekter*) define these democratic duties very broadly. For example, the rules declare that NRK should strive for high quality, comprehensiveness [*allsidighet*], and diversity [*mangfold*] in its programming. The statutes further state that the broadcaster should communicate vital or important information as well as debates concerning society in accordance with core democratic values. Furthermore, NRK's programming should retain high ethical standards and *over time*, be balanced (paragraph 3.3). Achieving balance over time implies that production teams and their programmes are not obligated to satisfy this principle in their own particular series of programmes.

The broad scope and generality of these codes entails that they fail to reflect the actual changing programming policy and production criteria within NRK. Much of the production practice is actually founded on implicit conditions, based on an unspecified journalistic logic; this includes the premises for the election coverage. The journalistic practice is non-transparent in the sense that it is not made open to the public in written form.

Ideal Types and Convergence

The purpose of a small-scale investigation into the different ways of controlling media coverage is not to make normative evaluations of various types of election coverage. Rather, the aim is to point out that the existence of different regulatory practices of election coverage can act as an indicator as to politicians' ability to control the basic conditions of this coverage. The question of control can again be seen as one of the variables that influences the relationship between politicians and journalists and the power balance between them. From the examples of the various ways of organizing and managing election campaigns, three different ideal types can be derived:

- The election coverage can be partly produced according to principles defined by law and/or an independent body.
- The election coverage can be directly party controlled, through the transmission of arrangements organized by the political parties themselves.
- The election coverage can be left completely up to the TV channels: The audiovisual media institutions determine the quantity, form and content of the election coverage independently, with varying programming policies involved, according to the dominant media logic of the time.

Hallin and Mancini (2004) allege that, in terms of regulations of public broadcasting, the state has been and continues to be highly important in the countries found within the Nordic media systems model. According to them, broadcasting in these countries has been treated as an institution whose influence on society is too great to be left to its own devices. As such, it has been deemed imperative that broadcasters be operated by the state as representative of the general interest (2004, p. 164). The Norwegian media researchers Trine Syvertsen and Henrik Bastiansen who have described the Norwegian public broadcaster NRK as characterized by a "social democratic enlightenment ethos" (Hallin & Mancini, 2004, p. 164, Bastiansen & Syvertsen, 1996) is quoted to support this picture. Bastiansen and Syvertsen, however, describe a certain historic period, namely the 1970's and 1980's, and it is doubtful whether this characterization is still valid as a general description of NRK's programming policy.

It should be added here that Hallin and Mancini (2004) open up for perspectives indicating that the development of the different media systems is going through a convergence process where Nordic and Continental models are approaching the more liberalist and commercially based Anglo-American model. The public broadcaster systems in Europe are in general increasingly influenced by market logic, where competition and audience ratings have grown in importance (Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Örnebring, 2001; Djerf-Pierre, 2000). When it comes to laws regulating campaigns and political coverage, however, the assertion here is that the Norwegian system has developed beyond countries within both the Anglo-American and Continental models. This pertains to the degree of journalistic self-regulation, commercial influence and the impact of

tabloid and popular journalistic criteria as conditions for election coverage. How will the absence of Norwegian laws and regulations influence the audio visual coverage of election campaigns?

Organizing Audiovisual Campaign Coverage. The Case of Norway

The purpose of this section is to analyze how audiovisual campaign coverage are organized in Norway and how this influence the power relations between the political and journalistic fields. The empirical data are based on a production study of NRK, as well as interviews with core actors from media and politics. The choice NRK's 2003 election coverage is based on a wish to focus on an important as well as strategic case (Yin 1994) within the Norwegian mass media system. As a traditional public service broadcaster, one could expect NRK to be more protected and also less influenced by a commercial popular and audience-based media logic than would other media institutions directly dependent on high revenues and therefore on high ratings. If NRK on the other hand has moved closer to a commercial media logic, even in its coverage of politics, a field of particular importance with regard to NRK's commitments as a public service broadcaster, it can indicate trends within the political news coverage in Norway in general.

The focus of the analysis will in particular concern the terms of production for the flagship programme during the campaign period, *Valg-Redaksjon EN*. This was a current affairs programme based on a combination of election reports and debates aired twice a week during the 2003 election. The production team consisted of 8-9 people, including the programme's host, editorial leader, reporters, producers and one person responsible for audience interaction through the Internet, opinion polls etc. An ethnographic field study was conducted for a period of 8 consecutive days. During this period, the team's daily discussions and its planning and production of the programme, was followed closely. Relevant NRK-documents, as well as the *Redaksjon En* programmes aired during the campaign, were also analyzed.

In order to reveal the premises for this programme, and how it was produced in practice, interviews with the most essential informants from the 2003 field-work were conducted both in 2003 and repeated again in the fall of 2007. To access perspectives from the politicians' side, political leaders and their advisors were interviewed. In other words, the interviewed informants were the NRK's 2003 election coverage coordinator, the programme's host and the editorial leader of *Redaksjon EN*, TV 2's 2003 political editor as well as representatives of the political parties. In 2003 interviews were also done with the leaders of the production team behind TV 2's competing debate programme *Tabloid*. The last round of interviews in 2007 revealed that the main principles of the 2003 coverage had been continued into the election coverage during the 2005 and 2007 elections. For a more extensive and detailed analysis, as well as a meth-

odological account, see Thorbjørnsrud (2008). The next section will analyze the basic production premises for this program, with the dichotomy between editorial autonomy and externally defined imperatives particularly in mind.

Desperately Seeking the Audience

Prior to the 2003 elections, a short written document outlining the premises for the election coverage, called a “target poster” (målplakat), was formulated by NRK’s coordinator of the election coverage. It was an internal document, and it began with the following guidelines: “NRK will be first, biggest and best in its election coverage. Our election coverage shall be the natural first choice for most people”. This “poster” is symptomatic of a fact that became evident in interviews with NRK’s political journalists and editors, as well as during the fieldwork undertaken at NRK during this period, namely that NRK’s election coverage was highly influenced by commercial standards and competitive strategies. As such, high ratings were the essential and by far most important imperative for the election coverage. *Redaksjon EN*’s host explained it like this:

We air during prime time, when there’s a competition for audiences. The number of people watching the election coverage has dropped in line with declining voter turnout and political engagement (...) We must get people to watch TV. The ratings are always the bottom line. Our mission is to make interesting programmes. We used to have these vague terms regarding importance – but anything can be defined as such. We’re here to make interesting TV. (Interview with programme host 13.08.03).

In competitive terms, reaching a large audience was an absolute necessity. Winning the competition for audiences was the production team’s highest criteria for success. Slightly reduced ratings lead to frustration and dissatisfaction. Overall, the topic of ratings was a tender nerve for the team and it was regularly addressed during informal conversations and editorial meetings. The team kept close track of the ratings of competing debate programmes, as well as the ratings of competing formats within the entertainments genres – reality series in particular. The latter was regarded as the most difficult format to compete with this season. This concentration on audiences cannot, however, be fully explained by a competitive approach only. The focus on reaching the largest possible number of viewers was also closely connected with a journalistic focus on “the common man”, on people in general, and what they were thought to prefer, their choices, their tastes and their opinions. Reference to “people” and their everyday experiences was heard in the team’s editorial room at short intervals during the day, such as in discussions during their daily meetings. Interestingly, the production team seemed to be quite convinced about what people wanted to see. This conviction applied to everything from the degree of “bickering” to what party to invite. They were also quite certain about what issues people would care about or understand, like this conversation from the fieldwork suggests:

Reporter: It would be interesting to get at this issue of voting, the fact that people can't be bothered getting involved (...)

Host: People don't care anymore, contradictions used to be bigger before, now people mostly agree, except on immigration and the EU, because that's what people can understand. People don't understand any of this school business.

Editor in chief: No, the issue of 9-5 schools and that kind of stuff, people don't understand.

Generally, this focus on large audiences, featured as "the average man", was not only due to competitive concerns, but also a way of *legitimizing* the journalism conducted by the team. Rather than assuming the role of political experts, educators or critical watchdogs, the team focused on what most people would bother watching, as opposed to making programmes that had a more elitist or narrow scope. They prioritized the familiar and the concrete, they wanted debates that could reach the audience emotionally and engage them, and they searched for names and topics that could serve as teasers, tempting the audience to keep watching. The absence of regulation of the election coverage, regulations that entitle politicians with a predictable right to media access, made it possible to keep the audience as the primary reference for the production theme. Whether the presence of such access rights or the existence of an unedited party political broadcast as we find them in France and the UK would have made the Norwegian election coverage less appealing for the audience and narrower in scope is another question.

The planning of the election debates was initiated in early summer, prior to the campaign period. A small group consisting of NRK's political editor, the project leader of NRK's election coverage, and the host and chief editor of *Redaksjon EN* sat down and compiled a list of possible topics and debates. *Redaksjon EN's* editor pointed out, however, that the list was to be regarded as provisional and highly likely to change in accordance with campaign developments and forthcoming events. It was also clear that the selection of topics very often depended on finding a suitable combination of debaters. Even more important than keeping focus on vital political questions was getting the right debaters in the studio.

The priorities of the team were generally in line with what the host and editor would refer to as criteria for "good TV", where dramaturgy, the right telegenic personalities and polarized debates with controversial arguments were the important ingredients. As such, the production team would try to construct election debates that allowed for sky-high temperatures, with clear conflicts and bickering politicians. This was however not enough to constitute a "good" debate. The politicians would also need to inhabit celebrity status to be considered attractive by the production team. The editors believed celebrity status was necessary to keep audiences watching and not switch to more entertaining programme genres on other channels. The programme's host and editor explain their way of thinking thus:

We do focus on a few regular faces. It is the familiar faces that attract viewers. That's the reality unless someone has an exiting story to tell – we've seen that. We only want a few people, so the parties depend on having people who work well on TV (Programme host. Excerpt from field conversation 03.09, 14:30).

It's almost worse cancelling people now than at other times. Because you usually cancel because something important has happened, because of some news we have to cover. Now we do it because we find other participants who we feel will work better (Editorial leader. Excerpt field conversation 03.09, 14:30).

Politicians who failed to live up to the format criteria; the ones whose faces were less known to the public, or whose argumentation techniques were considered boring and stiff by the production team, were hardly ever invited. This implied that even certain top leaders of the main political parties were excluded from participation in the programme. In other words, guests on these programmes were invited to participate based on their ability to fit the conditions of television production and attract a large audience through their celebrity status and not because of their status as an important politician *per se*.

When planning debates and searching for new ideas, the production team relied heavily on their own everyday experiences, rather than researching political documents or other written sources of information. The only exception was the reading of the daily news. Their approach to the debates implied a refusal to accept debaters that would touch upon too many “dry facts”, statistics or prior political decisions. It also meant that the host basically never confronted the debaters by providing information that opposed their arguments. The production team also welcomed controversial statements and insulting accusations from debaters. The host would instead of confronting the debaters, typically rather repeat the most emotional outbursts and extreme assertions, and ask opposing debaters to respond. Reports were sometimes included in the programme to provide premises for the debates. These would generally feature individuals telling their personal stories, often showing strong emotions – anger, fear, sorrow or frustration. Alternatively, reports would be action-based and taken from live “here and now” situations. Common for the reports was that they rarely provided contextualization or fact-based information concerning political decisions, history or statistics of any kind.

The relatively low interest in distinguishing between “fact and fiction”, of assuming the role of watchdogs or investigators, became apparent in the way in which information was presented to the audience. This could be seen for instance in the manner in which fresh polls predicting voter behaviour were referred to. These were not questioned in any way. Isolated opinion results, whether strongly deviating from long-term trends or not, were presented as face-value indications of upcoming catastrophes or triumphs for the political parties involved, and used as premises for debates between political party

leaders. This practice was not questioned or regulated by written codes such as is the case in the UK or France; where, as mentioned, strict rules regarding the use of opinion polls apply during elections periods.

NRK's editorial leaders and journalists shared, along with their colleagues in the largest private channel TV 2, a common doxa concerning what the relationship between politicians and television journalists ought to be. Decisions concerning how the election should be covered— which issues were to be discussed and, not least – *which* politicians should be allowed on air, had to be solely an editorial or journalistic decision. In the interviews, journalists would talk rather contemptuously about the past, when politicians had a say in these arrangements, and declared with self-confidence that this era was thoroughly in the past. NRK's election coverage coordinator explicitly noted that NRK had abandoned a former “ceremonial” practice, where politicians were given an equal amount of airtime. In other words the contrast is stark compared to the detailed BBC rules concerning party representation, or the firmly executed principles of the French election campaigns. Any alternative to the model of journalistic autonomy was described as dictatorship and an assault on the free press. Perspectives along this line have been reported in previous studies on Norwegian journalists' conceptions of their own role (Thorbjørnsrud, 2001; Allern, 2004). The strong belief in journalistic autonomy is part of a professional journalistic ideology, one that enjoys a solid position in the Norwegian public discourse about politics and the media.

In summary, the relations between politicians and television journalists observed in this case, discerned a situation in which journalists were in a supreme situation. Political leaders wanted to attend the programs, but were in themselves and through their points of view not particularly attractive or exclusive as participants. With no regulations or specific editorial guidelines, production conditions were highly unpredictable and far from representing a “political” or even a democratically based logic.

The Party-political Perspectives

Interviews with the various parties' media advisors revealed that they all gave top priority to getting access to NRK and TV 2's debating programmes during the campaigns. All advisors said they would cancel almost any other arrangement previously booked should they receive an invitation to participate in a televised debate on short notice. However, the prevalent programming conditions in *Redaksjon EN* were of such a nature that political parties had no guarantee of being invited to the debates.

All except one of the party informants displayed frustration over the manner in which participants were treated by NRK and TV 2's production teams during the campaigns. Television's preference for a few famous top politicians meant that leaders of smaller parties, or leaders of large parties who lacked telegenic qualities, would try unsuccessfully to get access to the debates. As for the four or five politicians highly ranked as TV debaters, they faced a situation that could

be highly stressful. Because the production teams could pick and choose the politicians they wanted, and because they continued to alter the topics and list of participants up to only a few hours before transmission, late changes would frequently occur. The politicians involved could experience cancellations on the very same day they had agreed to participate in the programme. Bookings, cancellations and re-bookings seemed quite usual. Topics also happened to change, something which left politicians and their staff with great challenges. This rather unpredictable situation left politicians with little control over their own time schedules, and highly dependent on the ever changing decisions of the production teams. This led to obvious frustration among the politicians and their advisors. The Socialist Left Party's political advisor explained the situation facing the party leader during the election campaign like this:

Kristin [the party leader] is really driven hard, because the focus is only on her. So we did try to get others for that reason also, to relieve her. And to present something more, show that we have other talented people besides Kristin. (...) Everything else is bullshit really, than the fact that it is the editors themselves who want the leader, they are extreme when it comes to this (Interview 11.11.03).

The party leader focus and its consequences for time management and predictability was also a problem for the other parties. The Labour Party's media advisor put it this way:

It can be very frustrating. And it is especially frustrating because they are so hung up on getting the leader. Because it means that Jens can sit at two o'clock thinking that in six hours I'll be on so and so debate, having prepared himself for that, we have written comments... Because there are always a lot of people working on these things, and then suddenly everything changes. Even though Jens can be very good on TV, in any debate, there is always a lot of preparation, and the more time he gets to prepare, the better he will be, as is the case with everyone. So it's extremely frustrating for the politician's to get these thematic changes and stuff (Interview 31. 10.03).

Others were more concerned about not being invited to participate in the debates at all. Typically, this happened to the smaller parties. The lack of access to the televised debate triggered the following remarks from the Centre Party's advisor:

Out of about forty debates in the campaign, that is television-aired debates, we participated in six. So we didn't participate much, we didn't participate in *Redaksjon EN* at all.

Interviewer: Did you work hard to get into the debates?

Yes. We did. We tried to introduce both single issues, and to get in on *a* few of the issues that were raised, but it seems *Redaksjon EN* and *Tabloid* thought

differently than us. We thought, “that now there is an election where people are supposed to decide who will run local governments and counties, and what are the important local questions?” While the editors to a greater extent thought “what are the issues and politicians that can provoke the strongest reactions in the people right now”, and raised a number of issues that had nothing to do with the election in question. But that politicians at the national level were sort of interesting in relation to. (...) (Interview 06.11.03)

In spite of these conditions, politicians as a rule always wanted to participate in this programme, and they prioritized requests from the production team before all other types of campaign events. Their calculations were simple enough: The reason why TV 2 – the main commercial TV channel in Norway – and NRK’s election programmes were so important to them was their high ratings. The attraction of these debate formats made the political parties adapt to the production criteria of the TV-teams as best they could. Knowing that they could be requested to participate shortly before the debates, they organized their campaigning so that it was possible to reach the studios on short notice. The Progress Party was described as the most media professional by the journalists. The party kept a helicopter ready to take their leaders to the debate studios. Their representatives adapted well to the format criteria of *Redaksjon EN* and appeared most frequently in the debates.

In general, all the parties would accept the production theme’s selection of debaters and topics, even if they were actually critical of their decisions. In the interviews, the informants from the political parties could for instance question the relevance of some of the debate topics, as well as the selection of debaters, who they regarded as marginal according to party political hierarchies.

Supply and Demand in the Media Market

Exchange theory has often been used to describe the relationship between journalists and sources in general, and the relationship between journalists and *political* sources in particular (Cook, 1999; Eide, 1992; Eide & Hernes, 1987). Exchange theory is based on a market model of human interaction, where market transactions are used as a model for social interaction where benefits rendered will produce a return. Regarding the relationships between politicians and journalists, the assumption is that there is an exchange of information for publicity involved. The source or debate participant controls information that is of interest to the journalist, and this information control represents a potential power for the source. The journalist on the other hand, controls access to the public. In other words, he or she holds power as gatekeeper. A timely question, however, is what happens when this relationship is asymmetric – when the sources’ publicity interest is higher than the journalist’s interest in the potential source’s information?

In a time of tabloid and commercialized journalism, having a famous name and face, and having personal, dramatic or scandalous stories to tell, may be of higher interest to journalists than being able to offer political information in the classical sense of the word. Political messages and viewpoints, information without the hint of scandal or party intrigue, can be more difficult to get on the air. As seen in the analysis of the Norwegian election programming, this phenomenon can also apply to political journalism and election campaign journalism. Sources with assets highly valued in tabloid journalism are generally scarce within the political establishment. The journalistic criteria at play might therefore demand strong, even hazardous, efforts from politicians to attain airtime, to the extent that one could refer to the presence of a ruling media logic that in important ways defeat democratic or political logics.

A market ceases to function when there is a fundamental imbalance between demand and supply, or when customers have nothing to offer suppliers in return for their services. In these circumstances, market intervention in the form of for instance state regulations or publicly financed services is an alternative. Should such an imbalance between demand and supply be descriptive of the relationship between politicians and journalists working in attractive media institutions, politicians *could* answer by introducing some form of regulation of media output – at least in times of exceptional political importance, such as during political elections. Regulations of this kind, as has been shown here, hardly exist in Norway. Neither have such plans or strategies been seriously suggested by any political party in Norway. Politicians might complain and make appeals to journalists to change how they cover elections, but they have never put any pressure or legislative power behind their kind requests.

By comparing the degree of media regulation during political election campaigns in Norway with systems in other well known democracies, the ambition has been to illustrate the role of such regulation with regard to journalistic autonomy on the one hand and politicians' subordination to journalistically defined production criteria on the other. The main assertion is that politicians in Norway have comparatively little control with the guiding principles for the election coverage, leaving them in a position of dependence and subordination towards the public service broadcaster NRK. An important point in the debate concerning the power balance or the asymmetry between mass media and politics, has been that it is worthwhile to explore the structural conditions of these relations and not merely looking at more loose phenomena such as political culture or journalistic mentality.

Today the development of media technology and media genres is so fast that it is difficult to foresee the consequences of these changes or even to keep track of them. What is clear is that political parties are increasingly making use of new Internet technology to publish their own videos and information about party political events. With this technology, they may have attained increasing control over the manner in which messages are mediated to the public. It is however too early to predict whether or not this will be an effective communication tool, a real alternative to the established professional media outlets.

Thus far, the Internet has not proven successful in terms of the political parties' election campaigns. In 2007, informants from the political parties still report that the largest broadcasters' television debates are the most important places to be. It is too early to predict yet whether this will change, but what is certain is that Internet sites will be unable to compensate for the lack of trustworthy and critical professional journalistic coverage of politics. Now as much as ever, vibrant democracies need public service oriented editors able to provide balanced information based on principles other than the highly tabloid and popular format criteria dominating the Norwegian election coverage of today.

Notes

1. "Loi sur l'audiovisuel" concerning pluralistic information".
2. Political Parties and Referendums Act 2000.
3. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/guidelines/editorialguidelines/edguide/politics/reprotingukelc.s...>
4. http://www.csa.fr/infos/controle/television_pluralisme_accueil.php.
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/editorialguidelines>, The Electoral commission Fact sheet: 04-05, "Party political broadcasts"
5. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/editorialguidelines>, The Electoral commission Fact sheet: 04-05, "Party political broadcasts"
6. C-SPAN is funded by fees paid by cable and satellite affiliates who carry C-SPAN programming. C-SPAN networks are committed to televising the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate when they are in session. C-SPAN airs unedited government hearings, press conferences and meetings of various political, media, and non-profit organizations; book discussions etc.
7. TV2 is Norway's largest commercial broadcaster and the only one with a licence to broadcast national commercial television.
8. http://www.nrk.no/informasjon/organisasjonen/1_386_146.html.
9. As revealed in the protocol from the council meeting 21.08.03.

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Chapter 15

Conclusions

Similarities and Differences between the Nordic Countries

Mark Ørsten, Toril Aalberg & Jesper Strömbäck

As outlined in the introductory chapter, there are three major reasons for why we decided to edit a book on political communication in the Nordic countries. One reason was based on the fact that most Nordic scholars in political communication tend to publish their work in their native language, with the end result that this research does not reach or influence the international scholarly community. To change this state of affairs somewhat, we wanted to present original research on political communication practices in the Nordic countries to an international audience of scholars and practitioners. By doing this and including chapters on the political communication systems in each of the Nordic countries, we also hope that this book might work counter to the Anglo-American bias that political communication research tends to suffer from.

The third reason for why we decided to edit this book follows from the work by Hallin and Mancini (2004), according to whom all the Nordic countries should be characterized as typical examples of the Democratic Corporatist Model of media and politics. In their assessment, the Nordic countries are almost indistinguishable, and while this might be reasonable from an international perspective, it still raises the question as to whether the Nordic countries really are so similar to each other. Thus, a third reason for why we decided to edit this book was that we wanted to offer a means to analyze similarities and differences between the Nordic countries and to assess the characterization of these countries as prototypical examples of the Democratic Corporatist Model.

In this concluding chapter, we will thus offer some conclusions and discuss similarities and differences between the Nordic countries. We will start by discussing whether it is reasonable to speak about a Nordic model of political communication.

A Nordic Model of Political Communication?

According to Hallin & Mancini, one feature that distinguishes the *Democratic Corporatist Model* from other models of media and politics is three "coexist-

ences”, bringing together features that individually might appear in other systems as well but not simultaneously.

- Firstly, a high degree of political parallelism has coexisted with a strongly developed mass-circulation press.
- Secondly, a high degree of political parallelism has coexisted with a high level of journalistic professionalization.
- Thirdly, a significant involvement of the state in the media sector has and continues to coexist with strong protection for press freedom and a deeply held respect for journalistic autonomy.

As noted in the introductory chapter, these coexistences are not as apparent today as they used to be, due to, among others things, declining political parallelism. Still, the individual country chapters suggest that the Nordic Countries, including Iceland, in many ways do fit Hallin and Mancini’s description of the Democratic Corporatist Model. In their chapter on political communication in Denmark, Esmark and Ørsten conclude that they “find little reason to contest the fundamentals’ of Hallin & Mancini’s model”. Likewise, Strömbäck and Nord conclude that “the Swedish media system continues to share important characteristics of the Democratic Corporatist model”, while Østbye and Aalberg state that most of the indicators of the Norwegian political and media system “are in accordance with Hallin and Mancini’s Democratic Corporatist model”. Regarding Finland, Moring writes that “Finland would indeed historically (...) be closest to the ‘Democratic Corporatist Model’”, and even Iceland, not included in Hallin & Mancini’s original work, “resembles the Scandinavian countries in many respects on Hallin & Mancini’s five dimensions of the political context of media.”

Based on the individual country chapters, we can therefore conclude that the following four characteristics – although to different degrees – are the most commonly shared features of the Nordic countries and indeed the Democratic Corporatist Model:

A highly developed newspaper market: Historically this is true of Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden. To some extent it is also true of the media development in Iceland, where however most of the early written press was confined to the capital of Reykjavik. Today newspapers still play an important role in political communication processes in the Nordic countries, although both the number of dailies and their sales and circulation numbers differ vastly between the individual countries. Measured by daily copies per 1000 inhabitants, Norway rank on top of the international statistics with 626 copies. Japan is the only country with more daily copies per 1 000 inhabitants, or more precisely 634 copies. Finland and Sweden also have relatively high rankings with 518 and 481 daily copies, respectively. The circulation of newspapers are however considerably lower in both Denmark (294 copies) and Iceland (268 copies). Though readerships and circulation generally is high in the Nordic countries, newspapers have come under an increased commercial pressure. In Denmark and Sweden the free dailies represents a major competition. In Norway, com-

petition primarily comes from the web-based news sites. For the traditional newspapers, the increased competition has also resulted in a decreasing share of advertisement revenues.

Political parallelism: Historically this feature is found to be very distinct of all the Nordic countries. In his chapter on Finland, Moring states that although there has not been as clear a link between the Social democratic party and the so-called 'A-pressen' in Finland – a link that can or could be found to be dominant in Denmark, Norway and Sweden – there have been clear links between the parties and the press also in Finland. The same goes for Iceland where the political parties dominated the press from the 1930s and onwards. Since the 1970s or 1980s, however, political parallelism has been in decline in all the five Nordic countries. Today both press and television is most commonly described as politically independent and subsequently more commercial and market oriented. Many newspapers can however still be linked to political ideologies, at least with respect to their editorial stances if not with respect to news journalism, and in Denmark recent studies even suggest that a re-politization of the press has taken place. This re-politization is not, however, based on party ideologies. Instead it can be seen as part of the movement from ideology-based politics to issue-based politics (Borre, 2007). In issue-based politics the political agenda is made up of a limited number of issues that the government has put forward. Newspapers then position themselves on these issues, and on some issues there is a clear indication that this position is in line with the papers 'old' political ties. However, the position of a particular newspaper is not a given – as would have been the case with the old party press – and there are many examples where newspapers position themselves in opposition to their political roots.

A high degree of journalistic professionalism: The existence of a high degree of journalistic professionalism along with a high degree of political parallelism is one of the particular "coexistences" that characterize the Corporatist Democratic model, and indeed this particularity is found to be true in the cases of Denmark, Norway, Sweden and to some extent also Finland and Iceland. In all five Nordic countries, the increase in journalistic professionalism from the 1960s and onwards is seen as a significant contributor to the decline of the party press. Thus a clear parallel can be observed between journalistic professionalism and the politically independent media that characterize the five Nordic countries today. In the future however, journalistic professionalism might be considered equally important for a slightly different reason. Whereas professionalism in the past was seen as a shield from party-political forces and a means to break the bonds with the political parties the various media used to be aligned with, journalistic professionalism is now also seen as shield from market forces and the general professionalization of political communication (Negrine et al., 2007).

State intervention in the media system: State intervention in the media system can be found in all the five Nordic countries, but to a highly varying degree. In Denmark, Norway and Sweden, the state has been largely responsible for the

development of radio and television, and for offering subsidies to the press. These subsidies have been both direct and indirect in Sweden and Norway, while only indirect in the case of Denmark. However, television in both Finland and Iceland were both public and commercial from early on. Today a decrease in state subsidies to the press is apparent, and while the public service television and radio stations in all the five Nordic countries maintain a very high share of viewers and listeners, the public service stations are becoming increasingly dependent on commercials, sponsoring and revenues from various by-products. The commercial stations are also gaining a stronger foothold, especially regarding the television audience.

Based on these four indicators, a general model for the phases of the relationship between media and politics can be derived, as suggested in Østbye & Aalberg's chapter.

Table 1. Four Phases in the Relationship between Media and Politics in the Nordic Countries

Period	Main Role of the Media	Period Characteristics
Phase I: 1920–1960	Channel	A loyal party press and the breakthrough of radio.
Phase II: 1961–1970	Arena	A loyal party press under pressure and the advent of television.
Phase III: 1970–1990	Actor	Dissolution of the party press and the beginning of the television era. Increased journalistic professionalization with focus on independence from political actors. State subsidies to the press.
Phase IV: 1990–	Director	Television dominates. Decreased state subsidies. Increased focus on interpretive journalism, but together with a strong focus on journalistic professionalism. Media intervenes in and directs the political debate. Alternative public arenas are marginalized.

Nordic Political Communication Research Now and in the Future

As mentioned in the introduction, one of the main focuses of political communication research in the Anglo-Saxon-tradition has been how the media aid – or hinder – citizens in becoming informed voters. Elections and election campaigns are also a central focus of Nordic political communication research. Not surprisingly, then, five out of the eight case chapters in this book offer analyzes and insights into different aspects of elections and processes related to election campaigns. Several well-known topics from the international political communication literature are discussed from a Nordic angle, such as popularization/tabloidization (chapter 10) and commercialization (chapter 14) of national parliamentary election coverage. The European Parliamentary elections are also discussed (Chapter 7), as is the evolution of web campaigning (Chapter 9).

The chapters thus suggest that Nordic scholarship in political communication focuses on approximately the same questions, tendencies and features of media and politics as their colleagues in the international scholarly community. No particular “Nordic” theories, questions or approaches are apparent, although research on public service broadcasting is more important in a Nordic setting than internationally. Overall, however, most chapters show Nordic variations on international trends, such as the tendency to focus more on party leaders and less on the parties in election news coverage. In the case studies we can also find warnings about the future, both when it comes to election coverage as well as voter turnout. Two other chapters offer other insights into the change of political journalism in the Nordic countries. Chapter 11 focuses on the changed role of political journalism in public service broadcasting. The authors describe how we have entered an era where journalism has ventured beyond the traditional unbiased factual reporting of “real events” and now rather unambiguously focus on convincing the audience, promoting a cause or arguing a thesis without hesitating to employ dramatic visuals and elaborate narrative techniques. Chapter 13 uses the popular device of framing analysis to investigate how important strategic political communication has become.

We also find warning signs that commercialism and strategic political communication are playing an increasingly important role, perhaps up-setting the power structure between political journalists and their sources. However, many of the studies presented here also suggest that an increased focus on the audience/readership, as part of increasing commercialism, can or will be combined with a “critical and pro-active journalistic approach to political institutions” as Djerf-Pierre and Weibull conclude. Finally, two chapters (8 and 12) take a strictly qualitative approach to analyze different aspects of political communication, such as the use of political print ads in Danish newspapers and emotion and music in Danish political documentaries.

Taken together, the country chapters as well as the individual case studies suggest that political communication practices and processes in the Nordic countries might be changing in ways similar to what is happening internationally. The changes concern both a commercialization of the news media (both print and television) and a general professionalization of political communication. However, the chapters also suggest that the changes are not turning political communication or political journalism in the Nordic countries into a clone of political journalism and political communication in countries that form part of the Liberal, or the Polarized Pluralist, Model. If nothing else, systemic factors are always important in shaping the boundaries within which the news media as well as political actors and citizens act. New trends and tendencies certainly emerge in all countries, and will continue to do so. This is particularly true in a world where global communications ensure rapid diffusions of new ideas and innovations. Nevertheless, new trends, tendencies and ideas always have to be implemented within a structure shaped by systemic factors, sometimes deeply embedded in the history and value systems of a particular country. Thus, while old co-existencies in certain cases are in a process of withering

away, new ones might emerge, and in such a case, the Nordic countries might continue to be different in important respects from countries that form part of other models of media and politics – and from each other.

The only way to tell for sure is however through more comparative research across time and across countries. Thus, we would like to end this book with a strong call for more comparative political communication research both in general and with respect to the Nordic countries. In the end, comparative research is necessary for creating a better understanding of both other systems and our own systems, and if comparative research could become a characteristic of future Nordic political communication research, it would indeed work to the benefit of all.

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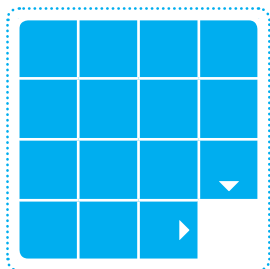
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Communicating Politics

Political Communication in the Nordic Countries

Modern politics is mediated politics, and the media constitute the most important source of information and channel of communication between the governors and the governed. Media and politics are thus inextricably linked together, with the media playing an important role in contemporary democracies and for political processes. While this is true for virtually all advanced democracies, there are still important differences between countries depending on, for example, their media systems and political systems. The purpose of *Communicating Politics: Political Communication in the Nordic Countries* is consequently to describe and analyze both the political communication systems and cases of political communication processes in Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. Taken together, the chapters explore differences as well as similarities between the Nordic countries, and provide a broad view of political communication systems, practices and research perspectives in the Nordic countries.

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ISBN 978-91-89471-63-4



9 789189 471634



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