
UNDERSTANDING MEDIA ACCOUNTABILITY
Media Accountability in Relation to Media Criticism and Media Governance in Sweden 1940-2010

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ABSTRACT

The concepts of media accountability, media criticism and media governance are analysed and discussed in a Swedish setting; how they relate to each other and interact. This is achieved by using various methods – a survey to editors, analyses of parliamentary debates, interviews, direct observation and document studies – in studying different stakeholders, media representatives and governance conditions in Sweden during the last 70 years.

The findings point in a direction of dynamic complexities with a central role for media criticism. The type, level and intensity of media criticism may affect the functioning of the media governance structure and is a vital part of the media accountability process. The media governance structure – which in addition to media criticism is influenced by international conditions, technological developments and political factors – may in turn affect the media accountability process. In this process, media representatives aim to defend obtained positions of societal influence, achieve and maintain positive PR and enhance editorial quality at the same time.

Media criticism may start a substantial media accountability process if the discontent is widespread and not countered by market approval or political inertia. The process is facilitated if the critique is connected to more than one frame
of accountability and if stakeholders see opportunities for dual objectives. Very strong and widespread media criticism may be difficult for media organizations to neglect.

The accountability process in Sweden has become less dependent on corporative negotiations between organized interests and political assemblies. Instead, two other tendencies seem to have emerged: on the one hand a possibility for media organizations to favour such accountability processes that they are able to control, and on the other hand the rise of a rich variety of sometimes short-lived accountability instruments that may develop for specific occasions and are difficult to control.

**KEYWORDS:** Media criticism, media responsibility, media accountability, media regulation, media governance, public interest
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SUMMARY IN SWEDISH

Sammanfattning


På engelska finns olika ord som uttrycker olika aspekter av begreppet ansvar. Man kan ha ansvar och ta ansvar; då används ordet ”responsible”. Man kan även utkräva ansvar, ställa någon till svars och vara beredd stå till svars; då är ordet ”accountable” att föredra. På svenska finns orden ansvarig och ansvarighet, men de är inte särskilt använda och täcker inte helt innebörden av ”accountable”, och därför använder jag även i denna svenska sammanfattning den engelska termen media accountability. På liknande sätt är det med begreppet ”media governance”. Det har utvecklats som ett lösare och mera indirekt sätt för stater att (försöka) styra medier än regelrätt reglering och kontroll; ”media governance” ersätter allt mer ”government media regulation”. För att vara tydlig med att det är denna innebörd av mediestyrning jag avser så använder jag även här den engelska termen, det vill säga media governance.

Media accountability

Media accountability är den interaktiva process som leder till att medieorganisationer förväntas eller avkrävs en redogörelse (och ibland
en rättelse och/eller en ursäkt) för sina handlingar till olika intressenter. Intressenternas värderingar och relativa styrka varierar över tid och påverkas av mediesystem och medieteknik.

Media accountability-processen har kritiserats av företrädare för radikal mediekritik (Berry, 2002) för att vara idealistisk – i avsaknad av konkreta maktmedel - och därmed verkningsslös och ointressant. Det oaktat diskuteras utvecklingen av nya media accountability-metoder på olika håll i världen, bland annat i en stor EU-finansierad studie inriktad på internets möjligheter (Eberwein et al., 2011).

Mediekritik

Media governance
Begreppet governance formades först inom de ekonomiska och politiska vetenskaperna innan det introducerades inom medieforskningen. Användningen av begreppet media governance främjades av avregleringen av radio och tv i många länder under senare delen av 1900-talet och av EU:s intresse för governance inom olika områden, bland annat medier. Media governance blir ett sätt för staten och andra samhällsintressen för att motverka att marknaden blir den helt dominerande kraften. Forskare beskriver ett mångfacetterat system där stat, marknad, medborgare och mediemedarbetare verkar i en gemensam

**Accountability-processen**

**Artiklarna**
Avhandlingens empiriska underlag utgörs av studier av accountability-processen inom de fyra tidigare nämnda olika tolkningsarenorna i Sverige vid olika tidpunkter under efterkrigstiden. Olika metoder har utnyttjats för att analysera attityder och aktioner inom olika grupper vad gäller mediekritik, media accountability och media governance. Sverige ingår i den grupp länder vars medie-

Resultat
Sverige tillhör de länder vars mediesystem betecknas som demokratiskt korporativa (Hallin & Mancini, 2004) och resultaten är främst relevanta för denna grupp.

Forskningsfråga 1: Hur påverkar mediekritik och media governance accountability-processen?

Kraftig mediekritik från konkurrerande medier och från olika yrkesgrupper kan till en del neutraliseras av marknadens acceptans. Expressens stadigt ökande
upplagar försvårade media accountability-processen sett ur kritikernas perspek-
tiv. Media governance-förslag påverkas av mediekritikens allmänna omfattning,
av situationen på mediemarknaden och av den historiska politiska situationen.
Ett exempel är hur arvet från tryckfrihetsinskränkningarna under andra världs-
kriget påverkade utformningen av tryckfrihetsförordningen senare på 1940-talet.
På 1960-talet hade den tidens intensiva mediekritik en djupgående inverkan på
media accountability-processen och på media governance-området, särskilt när
den politiska kritiken som kunde ha olika bevekelsegrunder samverkade med
den allmänna mediekritiken i samhället. 40 år senare är mediestrukturen och
medietekniken förändrad, mediekritiken har avtagit och den politiska ramen
för media governance en annan i och med avregleringen av etermedierna och
EU-inträdet. Mediekritik från läsare och andra intressenter är fortsatt en viktig
angälägenhet för dagspressens chefredaktörer; för morgontidningarna gäller det
kritikens kvalitet medan kvällspressen främst reagerar på kritikens kvantitet.
Chefredaktörernas inställning visar på mediekritikens betydelse för accounta-
ability-processen. Statens roll är viktig anser de, men mer indirekt än direkt av-
läsbar. Fallstudien om Handikappförbunden och SVT visar att statens indirekta
inflytande kopplat till mediekompetens och kunskap om media accountability-
mekanismer hos aktiva mediekritiker kan ge konkreta resultat, till ömsesidig
glädje för båda parterna.
Sammantaget visar avhandlingen att mediekritiken är en viktig och möjlien
underutforskad ingrediens i media accountability-processen. Media governance-
strukturen, som styrs av fler faktorer än mediekritiken, påverkar – och påverkas
av – accountability-processen.

Forskningsfråga 2: Hur ser mediernas företrädare på media
accountability?

Det finns ingen enhetlig syn, särskilt inte när äldre företrädare för etablerade
medier kritiserar nykomlingar för att exempelvis vara spekulativa och av låg
kvalitet. Då skiljer sig även uppfattningarna om behovet av media accountability
åt. På 1960-talet representerade fortfarande flera ledande chefredaktörer sina
partitidnings parti i riksdagen. När pressen kritiserades vid denna tid och åt-
gärder krävdes, framför allt av socialdemokrater, var det flera S-redaktörer som
solidariserade sig mer med pressen än med partiet. I dag har partipressen mins-
kat i omfattning och betydelse och få redaktörer är riksdagsledamöter. När chef-
redaktörer rangordnar olika media accountability-mekanismer är möjligheten
till kontroll av överordnad betydelse. Därför föredras medieexterna mekanismer
framför externa, och utbildning av medarbetare framför kritik av medieinnehållet. Möjlighet att åstadkomma positiv pr – samt att undvika negativ pr – liksom möjlighet till redaktionell kvalitetshöjning är också viktiga faktorer när redaktörerna rangordnar olika mekanismer. Detta blir tydligt även i fallstudien om SVT; där olika nyanser dock kan skönjas på olika nivåer i företaget. Positiv pr och försvaret av integritet betonas i ledningen; eldsjälarna bland reportrar och producenter talar mer om redskap för bättre rapportering.


Forskningsfråga 3: Hur har accountability-processen förändrats över tid?


Interaktiva förlopp på olika nivåer och med olika motiv hos individer/organisationer och medier formar media accountability-processerna. Mediekritiken, ibland med understöd av media governance-faktorer, är en viktig ingrediens i

Medieföretag tenderar att vilja undvika eller om möjligt kontrollera mediekritiken, men mediekritiken kan också gynna medieföretagen genom att stimulera dem till välartikulerade motiveringar för kontroversiella publiceringar. Fortsatta studier av media accountability kan bland annat gälla motsvarande förhållanden i andra länder och huruvida exempelvis mänskliga rättigheter kan ersätta socialt ansvar som en överordnad motivering för media accountability.
LIST OF ARTICLES

This thesis is mainly based on the following four articles, herein referred to by their Roman numerals:

Article I  The Citizen as Media Critic in Periods of Media Change

Article II Changing Political Attitudes Towards Media Accountability in Sweden
             *Central European Journal of Communication, 5(2): 205-224, 2012*

Article III Between Public Responsibility and Public Relations:
              *A Case Study of Editors’ Attitudes Toward Media Accountability in Sweden*
             *Communication, Culture & Critique, 3(2): 190-206, 2010 (w. Lars W. Nord)*

Article IV From a Medical to a Human Rights Perspective
              *A Case Study of Efforts to Change the Portrayal of Persons with Disabilities on Swedish Television*
             *International Communication Gazette, 72(4-5): 379-394, 2010*
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One of the reasons for choosing media accountability as a subject in Kalmar was my earlier position as editor-in-chief for Pressens Tidning, a news magazine covering the media. Media criticism in various old/traditional and new/innovative forms was an important part of the beat, but when looking for academic literature and guidance on media criticism in the 1990s the result was meagre. I thank Journalistfonden (The Journalist Fund for Further Training) for the possibility to search for more background material in the U.S. Professor James Boylan, founding editor of the Columbia Journalism Review, pointed me in New York to the writings of French scholar Claude-Jean Bertrand who in 1978 had published a report on local, independent journalism reviews and then continued to study other media accountability instruments.

Several years later in Lugano, at a 2005 seminar on media journalism organized by professor Stephan Russ-Mohl and his colleagues, I had the pleasure of meeting professor Bertrand and to discuss media criticism and media accountability with him. He became a kind of mentor when I entered the project in Kal-
mar but unfortunately could not attend the international seminar we arranged – he passed away some months later.

I thank my supervisor professor Lars W. Nord and my deputy supervisor professor Jesper Strömbäck for encouraging me to join the Mid Sweden University in Sundsvall in 2007 as a PhD candidate focusing on media criticism and media accountability. I thank them for the enthusiastic and cheerful climate they helped create in combination with academic rigour and non-bureaucratic support. I thank scholars Birgitta Ney and Kristina Lundgren of Södertörn University who commissioned a book on media accountability in Sweden when they worked at Sim(o), the Institute for Media Studies. The Institute and its network of board members, writers, researchers and administrators have since become very important to me. I am very grateful for financial support to my research provided by Svensk Presshistorisk Förening, Ridderstads stiftelse för historisk grafisk forskning and Journalistfonden. My thanks also go to an international community of friends and colleagues that are resourceful when ventilating issues of journalism ethics and accountability: Jacob Mollerup in Denmark, Joaquim Fidalgo in Portugal and John McManus, Jane Singer and Steve Smith in the U.S. In Sweden among others Göran Svensson, Susanne Wigorts Yngvesson, Björn Häger, Carsten Nilsson, Åke Pettersson and Martin Jönsson. I especially thank Håkan Lindhoff, David Finer and Kristoffer Holt for useful observations when reading drafts of the Introduction, Sven-Olof Johansson for technical assistance and Marina Gheretti for very valuable suggestions during the final seminar.

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Torbjörn von Krogh
INTRODUCTION

*Media Accountability in relation to Media Criticism and Media Governance in Sweden 1940-2010*

British Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg delivered a speech in London in the wake of the *News of the World* phone-hacking scandal. The government had hastened to appoint a judge-led inquiry “into the culture, practices and ethics of the press” (Leveson Inquiry, 2011). In his speech in July 2011, Clegg emphasized the need for media accountability when reforming media policy and regulation, vital aspects of media governance:

> I want to set out today the principles that I believe must now guide future reform. First, that the freedom of the press is vital. Liberty and democracy are founded on freedom of expression. Second, that our media must be held to account ensuring it acts within the bounds of the law and decent behaviour, with politicians and police equally accountable for their role. Third, that our free, accountable press must be plural, guaranteeing healthy competition and diverse debate. Freedom, accountability, plurality. That is how we preserve the best qualities of investigative journalism, but mitigate the worst excesses of an unfettered press too. (Clegg, 2011)

Nick Clegg is not the first politician to formulate demands in these terms when criticizing and seeking to influence the media, nor probably the last. The me-
dia are criticized for their methods and their content and requested to change their conduct. Politicians are encouraged, and maybe eager, to lend a helping hand. The process of holding the media to account is performed in an interplay between media critics, media organizations, societies and governments. Media accountability evolved as a concept in the 1940s, originating from demands for social responsibility for the media with implied threats of government activity. In a provisional definition 60 years later, McQuail suggests that it encompasses “all the voluntary and involuntary processes by which the media answer directly or indirectly to their society for the quality and/or consequences of publication” (McQuail, 2005, p. 207).

So media accountability is related to media criticism and media governance, but how? The purpose of this thesis is to examine and discuss the relationship between these three concepts, in order to reach a fuller understanding of the media accountability process. Four articles that deal with different aspects of accountability, criticism and governance in Sweden between 1940 and 2010 will be introduced in this context.

In this geographical and longitudinal setting, the research questions are:

*RQ1: How can media criticism and media governance influence the media accountability process?*

*RQ2: How do the media view media accountability?*

*RQ3: How has the media accountability process evolved over time?*

**Media accountability – the history**

The history of the concept media accountability starts with demands for media moderation during the 19th century. Industrialisation, technological innovations, increased literacy and democratisation gave rise to mass-market newspapers. The market was eventually deemed insufficient to curb their seamiest side. Demands for the media to be more socially responsible became more vocal among media critics and a subject for consideration among governments during the 20th century (Marzolf, 1991; Christians et al., 2009). Some of the reasons for this were the growing size of media outlets in Europe and the U.S., signs of local media monopolies, perceived low quality of journalism and fears of the ramifications of unbridled media power. Scholars studying the role of journalism in a democratic society label the dominant paradigm of the period 1800-1970 the Social Responsibility Tradition (Christians et al., 2009, p. 52-58). The norm was fuelled by social reformist movements, included a quest for education, ethical considerations and
professionalism among journalists. It contained ideological seeds for government regulation of broadcasting in the public interest. It also gave the media an identity as a defender of democracy, an information trustee with “a moral claim to autonomy and non-interference by government” (Christians et al., 2009, p. 55).

In 1900, in a study of 147 major city newspapers in the U.S., social psychologist Dr Delos F. Wilcox recommended that newspapers “should be responsible to society just as teachers must be” (Marzolf, 1991, p. 29). And in 1926, in the book *Newspaper Ethics* William Gibbons “delineated a social responsibility of the press, with every major doctrine the equivalent of the Hutchins Commission’s two decades later” (Christians, 2000, p. 22). Eight years later, in 1934, the term “public interest” was used for the first time in this context in the U.S. in the Communications Act, which urged the Federal Communications Commission to “regulate the airwaves ‘in the public interest, convenience or necessity’ ” (Freedman, 2008, p. 64). The report of the Hutchins Commission was published in 1947 bearing the title *A Free and Responsible Press* (Leigh, 1947) and the influential textbook *Four Theories of the Press* by Siebert et al. came nine years later. The book introduced, in its subtitle, “The Authoritarian, Libertarian, Social Responsibility and Soviet Communist Concepts of What the Press Should Be and Do” (Siebert et al., 1956). It has been influential, but was also heavily criticized during the ensuing decades for expressing cold war sentiments and being based on meagre empirical ground (Nerone, 1995). Nevertheless, the book has been significant in “the consolidation of thought regarding the media’s responsibility to society” (Christians et al., 2009, p. 5).

Media historians (Dicken-Garcia, 1989; Marzolf, 1991) find that the issue of press freedom raised the question of responsibility over and over again in 19th and 20th century U.S. media debates. “The press was free, but didn’t that guarantee of freedom imply some measure of public accountability in return?” (Marzolf, 1991, p. 62). In a footnote, Marzolf explains her use of the word “accountability”:

The debate over this issue from the late 1890s into the 1940s was always cast in terms of responsibility. The critics urged self-improvement and justified it by moral and social arguments. The responsibility was implied in the granting of free speech and press in the First Amendment. In using the word accountability, I am suggesting that these pressures toward legal restraints, such as privacy law and licensing, were attempts to force responsibility on a press that was not initiating it. The first critic I found using the term accountability was Archibald MacLeish in his 1946 draft
of the Hutchins Commission report, and he said that he meant “owner accountability” to the larger society. (Ibid., p. 73)

The members of the Hutchins Commission argued about how severe their suggested remedies for the shortcomings of the media should be. In the end they rejected proposals for licensing reporters and intervening in media ownership (Pickard, 2010). Instead they settled for recommending journalism training, a new independent (non-government) agency for appraising media performance, and urging media organizations “to accept the responsibilities of common carriers of information and discussion” (Leigh, 1947, p. 92). This was also alluded to in the title. Reformer Archibald MacLeish suggested in his draft that the report should be titled *A Free and Accountable Press*, but “accountable” was replaced by the term “responsible”. Marzolf provides an explanation: “Accountability implied some mechanism to enforce standards; responsibility was self-imposed” (Marzolf, 1991, p. 166).

Nevertheless, the Commission finally opted to use the word accountability in central sections of the report. If the media shall remain free, it must fulfil several conditions. It must “incorporate into itself the right of the citizen and the public interest” for information that is rich in substance and not biased by media owners and journalists’ position in society (Leigh, 1947, p. 18). Hence the Commission takes a stand and states that “freedom of the press for the coming period can only continue as an accountable freedom. Its moral right will be conditioned on its acceptance of this accountability. Its legal right will stand unaltered as its moral duty is performed” (ibid., p. 19). What is important in the Commission’s stance, is the emphasis on not only a negative freedom of the press, freedom from “external compulsions from whatever source”, but also a positive freedom, freedom to develop “its own conceptions of service and achievement” and to make “its contribution to the maintenance and development of a free society” (ibid., p. 18).

Apparently, according to Marzolf, somewhere in between the Hutchins report[1] in 1947 and Marzolf’s book in 1991, media accountability became more relevant and useful than media responsibility as a term for discussing the balance between media freedom and media intervention. In this respect, the late

[1] The Hutchins report is still influential. It was for instance referred to in a statement to the Leveson Inquiry: “There has never been a Hutchins moment in the history of British press. Hutchins chaired a Commission composed of leading American intellectuals of the day which produced the best written Report on journalism ever to have been published in the English language…” (Curran, 2011: 1)
1960’s and early 1970’s was an important time in the U.S., a period of increasing media criticism from segments of the public and from the Nixon Administration; an example in point is Vice President Spiro Agnew’s attacks on “the nattering nabobs of negativism” (Brogan, 1985, p. 11). When a task force proposed a National Press Council in the U.S. in 1973, it was indeed suggested that it should be called “The Council on Press Responsibility and Press Freedom”, but in the concluding paragraph, the members of the task force stated that the council “will attempt to make the media accountable to the public and to lessen the tensions between the press and the government” (Brown, 1974, p. 133). Due to “a credibility gap of crisis proportions between newspapers and the public” (Sanders, 1973, p. 61), the American Newspaper Publishers Association commissioned a study of how newspapers respond to external criticism, published in 1973 as “A Survey of U.S. Newspaper Accountability Systems” (Sanders, 1973). When the Society of Professional Journalists wrote and adopted its first Code of Ethics in 1973, it included accountability: “Journalists should be accountable to the public for their reports and the public should be encouraged to voice its grievances against the media” (Brown, 1974, p. 122). The U.S. National Press Council started in 1973, met fierce resistance from the major news organizations, and folded in 1984. At that time “the prospects for media accountability in America seemed gloomy” (Dennis et al., 1989, p. 189). This contributed to a search for new solutions at a 1986 public forum called “Media Freedom and Accountability”, held at Columbia University in New York (ibid., p. viii). The term media accountability was now firmly established.

The use of the term has been reinforced by the development of an increasing number of practical accountability instruments (Bertrand, 2008b, p. 149) and a growing body of academic studies on media accountability emerging in the U.S. and Europe (for instance Elliot, 1986; Dennis et al., 1989; McQuail, 1997; Pritchard, 2000; Plaisance, 2000; Bertrand, 2000, 2003; McQuail, 2003; Bardoeal & d’Haenens, 2004; Petersson et al., 2005). Bertrand’s method of aggregating diverse “Media Accountability Systems” was translated into many languages and became frequently cited in debates on media ethics, attracting attention especially in areas “where press freedom is new and threatened...” (Bertrand, 2008a, p. 33).

**Media accountability – the concept**

Research on media accountability has developed within various sections of media and communication studies. Among other things, this research has dealt with normative issues about the relationship between media and society, media ethics, media regulation and media history, with input from media law, political
communication, political economy and political philosophy.

McQuail (2003, 2005) lists types of social control of media content (for political and moral/cultural reasons) and infrastructure (for technical and economic reasons). Perceived media power is of considerable interest to politicians: “...the nearer any medium gets to operating as a mass medium, the more it can expect the attentions of governments, since it affects the exercise of power” (McQuail, 2005, p. 42). In actual fact, media organizations are under the same obligations as other companies, but normative theory has identified informal obligations that stem from origin and tradition on one hand (with links to media professionalism), and pressures from public opinion, government and economic, cultural and social interests on the other (McQuail, 2005, p. 162). Historically, Sjøøvaag (2010) traces the roots of journalism’s claims for a journalistic social contract, with negative and positive rights and obligations to social contract theory, formulated within political philosophy (see also Strömbäck, 2005). According to this view, the media have a certain responsibility to serve the public interest (Siebert et al., 1956; McQuail, 2003 and 2005; Christians et al., 2009). Public interest is an important, though contested, concept in media accountability theory. McQuail states that public interest should be superior to particular interests, but in an imperfect world this means “inevitable tension, compromise and improvisation” (McQuail, 2003, p. 48). Ward traces the evolution of the concept public interest from the concept of a public or collective good, an objective philosophical value, to what later became a concept of something that is good for an aggregate of individuals, a mixture of subjective notions (Ward, 2010, pp. 196-200).

In this way, a negotiation of interests became incorporated in the concept and what the public interest means becomes a political issue (Hutchison, 1999, p. 132). In the context of media regulation, tensions between concerns for citizens versus the concern for media economics can be hidden by the use of a single concept, covering both perspectives (Feintuck & Varney, 2006, pp. 74-76); claims of serving the public interest may become one of several “convenient justifications” for accommodating corporate interests (Freedman, 2008, p. 79).

The concept of media accountability contains some of the same ambiguities since it is often justified by reference to the so-called public interest. However, the notion of media accountability could potentially bring the mediation of interests more to the fore by acknowledging the inevitability of tensions between the parties involved. One way of doing this is by giving more weight to the origins and varieties of media criticisms that are expressed in the accountability process.

Regarding this process, Hodges makes an often-quoted distinction between responsibility and accountability:
The issue of responsibility is: To what social needs should we expect journalists to respond ably? The issue of accountability is: How might society call on journalists to explain and justify the ways they perform the responsibilities given them? Responsibility has to do with defining proper conduct, accountability with compelling it. (Hodges, 2004, p. 173; modified from Hodges, 1986, p. 14)


FREE MEDIA
have
RESPONSIBILITIES
in the form of obligations
which can be either
ASSIGNED or CONTRACTED or SELF-CHOSEN
for which they are held
ACCOUNTABLE
to individuals, organizations, or society
(legally, socially, or morally)
either in the sense of
LIABILITY or ANSWERABILITY
for harm caused for quality of performance.
(McQuail, 2003, p. 203)

Pritchard views accountability from a process perspective; it is not a set of rules but behaviour over time. “Media accountability is the process by which media organizations may be expected or obliged to render an account of their activities to their constituents” (Pritchard, 2000, p. 2). A constituent, according to Pritchard, is “an individual, group, or organization whose good will is important to the media organization” (ibid.). Most researchers choose the term stakeholder when analysing media accountability. Stakeholder is a somewhat broader term than constituent and since the media accountability process might be influenced also by stakeholders that originally are deemed unimportant by media organi-
izations, I will use the term stakeholder in this thesis. A stakeholder is an individual, group or organization that may affect or is affected by or holds an interest in media conduct and performance.

Plaisance (2000) stresses the importance of a legitimate and healthy tension between media and stakeholders in order to maintain credible accountability. He understands the concept as “a fluid dynamic of interaction” and sees this fluidity, this degree of media responsiveness to the values of stakeholders, as the essence of the concept (ibid., p. 258).

Much of the debate on media accountability has focused on efforts to neutralize the tension between journalistic autonomy and the need for a responsible press. However, the nature of media accountability depends precisely on this conflict, which is not a dilemma to be solved but a healthy tension to be managed. … the media are accountable when they never stop seeking that uncomfortable balance with audience values. (ibid., p. 266)

The development of the Internet and various levels of interactive media technologies have profound effects on the forms of and possibilities for media accountability (Fengler, 2008; Eberwein et al., 2011; Heikkilä & Domingo, 2012). Media users’ participation is facilitated as well as media transparency, while at the same time global flows of online media content and anonymous online comments may make lines of accountability more difficult to manage. The development of online media is important to consider when discussing the evolving process of media accountability, see for instance distinctions between actor transparency, production transparency and post-publication responsiveness (Evers & Groenhart, 2010, described in MediaAct, 2011).

Another set of factors that influence the media accountability processes are the cultural/political entities called media systems. Media systems refer to the historical and structural connections between media and politics, that have been classified in various models. Hallin and Mancini use four dimensions for comparison in their seminal work: the structure of media markets (especially the evolution and size of the mass circulation press), links between the media and political parties, the development of journalistic professionalism, and the character of state intervention in the media system (Hallin & Mancini, 2004). Media accountability evolvement is mainly referred to the dimension of professionalism, but is affected by all four dimensions mentioned above. Three models of media and politics are described by Hallin and Mancini – the Liberal, the Demo-
cratic Corporatist and the Polarized Pluralist – with varying attitudes, institutions, instruments and processes of media accountability that have been studied in more depth by other researchers (Terzis, 2007; Eberwein et al., 2011; Trappel et al., 2011; Heikkilä & Domingo 2012).

In this thesis, I will use my previous working definition of media accountability (von Krogh, 2008, p. 27), slightly adjusted. It builds on the earlier mentioned distinctions by Christians, Pritchard, Plaisance, McQuail and others, as well as incorporating some modifying external factors:

Media accountability is the interactive process by which media organizations may be expected or obliged to render an account of (and sometimes a correction and/or excuse for) their activities to their stakeholders. The values and relative strength of the stakeholders vary over time and are affected by media systems and media technologies.

This definition shows similarities to McQuail’s provisional definition (quoted on page 2 in this Introduction) but puts more emphasis on the interactivity of the accountability process between stakeholders and media organizations and underlines the importance of stakeholders’ values and strengths over time.

The critique of the concept
Media accountability is a contested concept on different levels in terms of its normative foundation, conceptual clarity and practical use. Media accountability developed as a concept rooted in the paradigm of social responsibility. As previously noted, a group of scholars studying normative media theory have suggested that this “paradigmatic tradition” (Christians et al., 2009, p. 66) is changing towards a societal preference for citizen participation as a norm instead of social responsibility (ibid., p. 58). This change is due to a critique of the social responsibility norm for failing to achieve desired results. The authors e.g., refer to James Carey (1999), labelling the following observation of his “typical”: “that trustee journalism of the social responsibility tradition has generally played into the hands of hegemonic interests and has failed to bring into public debate the most pressing social issues” (ibid., p. 58). But this change does not mean that the authors reject the notion of media accountability. Media reflection, professional journalism and media scholarship have created “a counterweight to external and industry pressures” and in addition, “they increasingly recognize the need for and legitimacy of mechanisms of social and personal accountability that can be applied beneficially to the news media” (ibid., p. 241). Further research should,
they suggest, look into “the connections between the rights and duties of those who produce the news and the wider issues of the human rights relating to those who receive the news, are the subject of news, or are affected by news” (ibid., p. 242). One possible result of such research could be to suggest values other than social responsibility to hold the media accountable for.

Zelizer (2010) argues that the notion of media accountability is old-fashioned and not appropriate for an emerging environment of prosumer news, continuous global news flows, messy news, news as satire, et cetera.

We need to strive for accountability in a way that is sensitive to a variety of political regimes, public uses, media cultures and traditions of political engagement in various places, for accountability that can intelligently decode noise, messiness, contradiction, hesitation, brutality, multiplicity and unrequited expectation. (Zelizer, 2010, p. 69)

It might well be the case that today’s expressions of accountability will be insufficient to capture the news patterns of tomorrow; Zelizer argues for a different kind of accountability. Institutionalized news organizations however still carry enough weight (Trappel et al., 2011) to make it worthwhile to pursue their accountability – albeit in an increasing mode of co-operation with media users.

The concept of media accountability has been criticized for being to vague; “a conceptual muddle”, as the editors wrote in the introduction to an early anthology on accountability (Dennis et al., 1989, p. viii). In his introduction to a recent textbook on media ethics, Plaisance states that buzzwords like integrity and accountability “are too often vague platitudes” and prefers “the philosophically more meaningful principles” like justice, transparency and autonomy (Plaisance, 2009, p. xix), but still refers to the concept some 20 times in the book. Bennett, in reviewing McQuail’s book Media Accountability and Freedom of Publication (2003), finds the concept so abstract that it in itself is of limited value unless “characteristic national dilemmas” are analysed (Bennett, 2007, p. 226). Bennett strongly recommends studies of conflicts concerning publishing within particular countries to detect constructive remedies and criticizes McQuail for the lack of such studies: “Perhaps the failure to touch down to earth very often results from the comfortable sense that most such swings of accountability are within the acceptable margins in democratic society” (ibid., p. 226). Bennett makes a good point for the need of case studies (see e.g., de Haan, 2011), but case studies in turn will benefit from the theoretical points that McQuail and others have made.

A fourth line of critique holds that media accountability is a questionable
concept from the outset, more or less aimed at disguising the goal of preventing radical structural reforms of media ownership and media functions. Pickard gives a nuanced description of three different ways to interpret the role of the Hutchins Commission and then formulates his own position: “...this paper adheres to the critical interpretation that the Hutchins Commission’s tenets were largely co-opted by a profit-driven news industry to provide a veneer of even-handedness and accountability, but it also takes into account the report’s contingency and conflicted nature” (Pickard, 2010, p. 398). In his view “the commission shrunk from its task and fell back on palatable halfway measures” (ibid., p. 409). According to Pickard, the media industry won a battle against radical regulators: “As evidenced by the increasingly commonsensical belief in the self-regulation of the press, industry’s capture of major policy institutions and discourses consolidated its grip on the media apparatus” (ibid., p. 404). Berry goes further and explicitly states that Bertrand’s idea of media accountability systems “collapses because essentially it is based on volunteers or individuals with the good will to confront the evils of media development in its present form” (Berry, 2002, p. 120). Media accountability is a dead end; structural reform is needed. “The system is rotten and no amount of media ethics without a thoroughgoing discussion on power and inequality is going to resolve it” (ibid., p. 121). To analyse the form and distribution of power in relations between media and society is of course justified, also in a media accountability setting when for instance discussing the effectiveness of different approaches. But analyses of specific cases and conditions should be performed before far-reaching conclusions are drawn.

The status of the concept today
The critique mentioned above has not refrained researchers from using and developing the concept. In 2010, an EU-funded, four-year study of 14 countries in Europe and the Arab world called Media Accountability and Transparency in Europe (MediaAcT) started. MediaAcT stresses the relevance of mapping the existence and functioning of media accountability instruments in a period of international media concentration, sophisticated PR/lobbying, new mobile/interactive technology and changing patterns of media consumption.

A reliable comparative study of media accountability instruments is ever more important as they are currently attracting increasing attention by European and international policy makers such as the European Commission [footnote with a link] and the Council of Europe [footnote with a link]. (Eberwein et al., 2011, p. 8)
MediaAct has hitherto published a book with country reports (Eberwein et al., 2011), country reports on net-based accountability efforts (MediaAct, 2011), and an overview of the net-based country reports (Heikkila & Domingo, 2012). Another project aims at monitoring media in Europe, “to what degree they contribute to democratic life” (Trappel & Meier, 2011), and here, accountability is one of the factors that is measured in various ways. The first book from the project discusses pros and cons of using media accountability indicators (von Krogh, 2011). In the second book (Trappel et al., 2011), the accountability aspects are further emphasized, “the conduct of the media as agents of power in democracies should be closely monitored, and media organizations should be called to account” (ibid., p. 21), and the monitoring is in itself viewed as a media accountability mechanism (ibid., p. 40).

Media accountability is a contemporary concept “entering into the political agenda” in Europe (Baldi & Hasebrink, 2007, p. 17). It is discussed at academic conferences using various approaches, for instance online accountability (in Lugano, 2012) and shaping accountable media cultures (in Braga, 2010). Recent contributions to the evaluation and use of the concept have been published in two consecutive theme issues on media accountability in *Journal of Mass Media Ethics* (2010 and 2011) that have dealt with the concept in contexts like global ethics, digital ethics, users’ comments, social audits, news ombudsmen, twitter and satirical TV-shows. What these diverse articles share is “an epistemology that argues the traditional demarcations that have outlined our field—between audience and media professional, between news and entertainment, between comment, fact and criticism—have blurred in the Internet age” (from the editor’s introduction, *Journal of Mass Media Ethics*, 2010, p. 255). One of the texts (Cenite & Zang, 2010) discusses the potential of media users’ comments for enhancing media accountability under certain circumstances. Cenite and Zang build on an earlier contribution by Glasser and Ettema (2008) that stresses the importance for journalists to be skilled communicators in order to foster a nuanced accountability interaction with their critics.

...being ethical requires the facility to argue articulately and deliberately thoughtfully about moral dilemmas, which in the end means being able to justify, publicly and compellingly, their resolution. The aim of ethics is, in a word, accountability. (Glasser & Ettema, 2008, p. 512)

Glasser and Ettema here view accountability as a process and not just as an ou-
come, and for this process to be as meaningful and rich as possible, journalists should think through their decisions and manage to discuss them taking into account all the nuances involved. Journalists need to be as eloquent as their most eloquent critics, they state. Glasser and Ettema deal with a theme that is highly relevant both to the study of media accountability and media criticism.

The term accountability journalism is increasingly used to describe a watchdog kind of journalism that holds the authorities to account for their actions (e.g., Downie & Schudson, 2009). A recent addition to the definition of accountability journalism is that this journalism “itself must be held accountable in relation to its social obligations and ethical standards” (Eide, forthcoming). This modern quote contains an echo of the reasoning in the Hutchins Commission 65 years ago.

**Media criticism**

Press historians provide a perspective on the creation of the Hutchins Commission in the 1940s in pointing out that the media criticism in the U.S. was harsh in the 1930s; the press as an institution “came under challenge more directly than at any time since the Federalist attacks upon press freedom in the 1790s” (Emery & Smith, 1954, p. 712). Media criticism in itself was nothing new, “press critics had been having their say since the dawn of newspaper publishing” (ibid.), but while earlier criticism had centred on cultural and social values of the press, this time its political power was in focus. Special targets were ‘press lords’ like Hearst and McCormick. The influential study *Four Theories of the Press* (Siebert et al., 1956) also has a separate chapter on press criticism as a prerequisite for the development of the social responsibility theory.

Although there has been an abundance of criticism directed at the media throughout history, the academic study of this criticism is not very extensive. Carey, in turn, criticized this:

> The press is certainly one of our most important institutions but in serious attention it ranks slightly ahead of soccer and slightly behind baseball. The press is attacked and often vilified, but it is not subject to sustained critical analysis – not in public, and rarely within universities or the press itself. (Carey, 1974, p. 227)

Carey described three kinds of media criticism: a) criticism by standards of public or social responsibility, b) “scientistic criticism” (ibid., p. 243) by standards based on studies of media impact on audiences, and c) cultural criticism by
which he meant “an ongoing process of exchange, of debate between the press and its audience and, in particular, those among the audience most qualified by reason of motive and capacity to enter the critical arena” (ibid., p. 244). Carey dismissed a) and b) and preferred c). Wyatt (2007) offers a theory of media criticism as a discursive procedure between critics, the public and the media, similar to the relationship between state and citizens in a discursive democracy. Wyatt builds on Carey in her definition of press criticism, where the term press equals the general news media (Wyatt, 2007, p. 5):

> Press criticism is … the ongoing exchange of debate among members of the press and between the press and its audience over the role and performance of the press in a democratic society. (Wyatt, 2007, p. 7)

Some researchers demand very much of the media critic. An underlying notion is for the critic to be constructive and suggest ways of improving media operations. Marzolf (1991) makes a long list of qualifications. The critic ought for instance to have a “thorough knowledge of the history of American journalism”, journalistic experience and a “thorough understanding and familiarity” with journalistic codes, news values and “the realities of deadlines” (ibid., p. 208). Furthermore, media criticism should be “realistic” and “coherent”:

> Criticism should be realistic in that response is possible and guidance is offered. Its values must precede the criticism; both must be public. It should mediate actual and ideal values of the press and the public. It must be coherent and systematic relative to both. (Brown, 1974, p. 19)

Media criticism has been described as “the informed, analytical evaluation and judgement of the performance of the media” (Ericksen Mendoza, 1995, p. 67). High demands, indeed, but media criticism contain more varieties than the ‘constructive’ ones mentioned above. It can be an expression of stakeholder power, seeking to influence the media for framing or agenda-setting purposes, e.g., the aforementioned attacks on the media by the Nixon Administration. It can be expressions of popular discontent leading to grassroots campaigns (Stokes & Reading, 1999), and it can consist of philosophical or cultural elaborations, not aiming at media improvement at all, but at criticism of society (Jensen, 1990; Ross, 1997; Svensson, 1998; Berry & Theobald, 2006). Especially the analysis performed by Jensen of four highly profiled American media critics is illuminating in this respect. Media criticism can come in many varieties, with various
rationales. It might be constructive, often internal, criticism of the media in order to make the media function as a better watchdog or a better informer. Or stakeholder’s criticism of the media in order to further stakeholder interests. Or again, philosophical/cultural criticism of the media in order to analyse/criticise the evolution of society.

Bertrand, himself a media critic, started by studying different forms of media criticism before coining the term “media accountability systems”, of which criticism is one of the main ingredients (Bertrand, 2000, 2003, 2008) for the accountability process. Pritchard emphasizes the function of media criticism, the ‘naming and blaming’ parts of the ‘naming-blaming-claiming’ chain of media accountability (Pritchard, 2000, p. 3). McQuail underlines that the media is watched as much by society as the media itself watches society; the scrutiny can be divided into issues concerning media structure, conduct or performance (McQuail, 2005, p. 166).

With *media criticism* in this thesis, I refer to criticism of the media in a broad sense relating to media structure, conduct, performance, content, role and influence, formulated by individuals as well as by civil society organizations, corporations and governments. I choose this broad definition for two reasons. Firstly, media criticism is not a well-researched field and a narrow definition may exclude parts that contain impulses for media accountability processes. Secondly, the research at hand shows that media criticism sometimes may be a disguise for critique of other targets, or a critique with a multitude of targets. This kind of criticism may still influence the accountability process, e.g., in a governance perspective.

**Media governance**

Media accountability is related to media governance, a later concept that also deals with influencing media conduct and content. McQuail states: “the issue of accountability has to be addressed within some framework of governance in the widest sense” (McQuail, 2003, p. 91). The term governance, which “emerged out of the blue” in the 1990s (Bardoel & d’Haenens, 2004, p. 8), soon became central for analysing relations between government and society. EU stated that governance involves “the rules, processes and behaviour that affect the way in which powers are exercised, particularly as regards openness, participation, accountability, effectiveness and coherence” (EU, 2001, p. 8). This also goes for relations involving the media. McQuail describes media governance as “steering or guidance” according to agreed principles and performed through a “network of various influences, claims and demands” from a variety of interests (McQuail,
2007, p. 17). He underscores the importance of de-regulation and the withdrawal of the state as an active executor of media regulation. This withdrawal is according to McQuail due to changes in media technology, commercialization and globalization and leads to a more prominent role for the market.

Decision-making is left more and more to marketplace judgments, with relatively independent public regulatory bodies at some distance from government and with legal and regulatory intervention reserved for maintaining basic ground rules as agreed nationally and internationally. (Ibid., p. 24)

Bardoel and d’Haenens (2004) point out that governments have been criticized for not preventing media monopolies and stimulating plurality of media content, that market-driven media tend to favour advertisers and consumers over citizens, that media professionals see limits in their accountability to society and that citizens are becoming more active media users. A pluri-centric approach with four parties – government, market, professionals and citizens – evolves:

There is, in other words, a growing awareness that an adequate media and communications ‘ecology’ can best be organized, not by exclusively relying on one of these parties or mechanisms, but by way of interrelated and multileveled ‘governance’ arrangements in the media system. (Ibid., p. 10)

Bardoel later points to recent observations of “many alternative forms of regulation on the continuum between state and market and based on collaborative arrangements between public and private partners” (2007, p. 456). One consequence of dispersing state power to other institutions is a blurring of the distinction between public and private governance (Lunt & Livingstone, 2012). Rossi & Meier (2012) argue that a more distant role for the state in media governance must be balanced by empowering civil society organizations, otherwise economic interests will gain the upper hand in the process.

Puppis (2010) describes how the concept of governance first was developed within political science, economics and politics and later was introduced in communication research as media governance, although media governance probably existed well before it was so labelled (Puppis, 2010, p. 138). The role of the state has changed but is still important; Puppis describes a change from command to influence where the state becomes a “facilitator or a primus inter pares” (ibid., p.
He distinguishes between a collective (societal mechanisms) and an organizational (company mechanisms) sphere of media governance.

Media self-regulation, that has a long history, belongs to the organizational sphere if it concerns a single company, whereas media self-regulation on an industry level and co-regulation belong to the collective sphere (ibid., p. 141). Co-regulation, or regulated self-regulation, where the state may provide a goal for the endeavour, is increasingly encouraged and put into practice, for instance at the EU level (Tambini et al., 2008; Wyss & Keel, 2009). EU defines co-regulation as a combination of legal and non-legal instruments:

Co-regulation combines binding legislative and regulatory action with actions taken by the actors most concerned, drawing on their practical expertise. The result is wider ownership of the policies in question by involving those most affected by implementing rules in their preparation and enforcement. (EU, 2001, p. 21).

Puppis agrees with a previous definition provided by Freedman, where media governance broadly “refers to the sum total of mechanisms, both formal and informal, national and supranational, centralized and dispersed, that aim to organize media systems” (Freedman, 2008, p. 14). Adding to this definition, Puppis includes organizational governance at company level and ends up defining media governance “as the regulatory structure as a whole, i.e., the entirety of forms of rules that aim to organize media systems. The definition covers both collective and organizational governance” (Puppis, 2010, p. 138). This is a useful definition that in my opinion only needs a clarification considering the meaning of ‘rules’. Rules in this context should not necessarily be understood as formalized written rules; that would narrow the definition of media governance. But when ‘rules’ are understood in Freedman’s words also as ‘informal mechanisms’— then Puppis’ broad definition covers what I mean by media governance in this thesis.

Media accountability in relation to media criticism and media governance
Following from the earlier reasoning, media criticism precedes media accountability in time. Media accountability deals with reactive or proactive responses to critique of media conduct and quality of content. Media criticism probably often also precedes media governance, but this need not always be the case. Media governance has motives other than media criticism, for instance enhancing the situation of domestic media companies in an international environment and al-
location of scarce resources. Media accountability deals with many of the issues that are of interest to media governance, but is a smaller entity. The concepts are visualized in Figure 1.

**FIGURE 1. The terrains of media criticism, -accountability, and -governance**

<table>
<thead>
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<th>A. media criticism</th>
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<tr>
<td>B. media accountability</td>
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<td>C. media governance</td>
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Media criticism consists of at least three different categories according to the earlier conceptual presentation. One of them, the cultural/philosophical, is normally not engaged in an ongoing dialogue with media professionals and other stakeholders in order to influence media conduct through a process of media accountability; this covers space A. The two other kinds, media/constructive and stakeholder originated, are on the other hand very much so; space B. Their aims are to influence media through interaction for quality and/or reasons of self-interest. This is done within the sphere of multifaceted influences, including state power, which characterizes media governance. But there are areas of governance that do not deal with matters of content and publication as previously noted; space C.

The strength in quality and/or quantity of media criticism has implications for media accountability and media governance. Media accountability and media governance may in turn influence the conditions for media criticism. These are interactive processes. The processes are visualized in Figure 2.
The driving force in media accountability is a critique of media conduct and content. This is emphasized with a bold arrow. But a discursive dialogue between media critics and media representatives or other stakeholders (Wyatt, 2007; Glasser & Ettema, 2008) means a give and take of arguments and positions and waves of potential influence in the other direction. Media critics will raise questions about the media’s role in society and demand actions from politicians and government, who in turn will try to influence what kind of critique and what kind of conditions for accountability that will develop. The connection between media accountability and media governance, finally, may contain a learning process for media as well as media stakeholders, finding out which accountability instruments that are meaningful and that should be encouraged by material and/or ideological means. The stakeholders within one sector of society may interact with other sectors in order to expand their impact versus the media.

**Media accountability in relation to the market, the media, the political system and civil society**

The accountability process as a process in relation to criticism and governance is an abstraction. In reality, agents more or less bound by societal structures interact and negotiate the outcome. McQuail (2003, p. 215) draws a figure of what he calls “external lines of accountability for publication” between media and ten different stakeholder categories plus public opinion, where public opinion “to some extent … stands in for society in general” (ibid., p. 218). The categories are media owners, media clients (especially advertisers), media sources, and me-
dia referents (those who are reported on). Then follow media audiences, media regulators, social institutions, pressure/interest groups, artists/performers, and voices/advocates. Building on these “lines of accountability” McQuail then introduces four “frames of accountability” that cluster different ways of holding the media accountable. His definition:

A media accountability frame is a frame of reference within which expectations concerning conduct and responsibility arise and claims are expressed. It also indicates or governs the ways in which such claims should be handled. (Ibid., p. 219)

Earlier research in the U.S. (Dennis et al., 1989) suggested four models of media accountability: the market-place, the self-regulatory, the fiduciary and the legal model. McQuail has modified these with regard to the European context and technological developments, describing four frames: the market, the professional, the public and the legal/regulatory frame (McQuail, 2003). These frames have in turn been somewhat adjusted by other researchers (Bardoel & d’Haenens, 2004) into the following four: the market (supply and demand; consumer choices), the professional (institutionalized ethics; performance standards), the public (informal social contract; civil society activities) and the political (public service remit; media policy and regulation) frames.

Combining these frames with my earlier presented definition of media accountability, a new figure can be drawn; figure 3.
Different media systems, which are “shaped by the wider context of political history, structure and culture” (Hallin & Mancini, 2004, p. 46) and media technologies (e.g., leading to new ways of producing and consuming media) are important external factors that help mould the conditions for the accountability processes. These processes are rarely simple and clear-cut, a connection between simply a sender and a receiver, but rather dynamically interactional and complex. The media itself is not a monolithic entity; criticism from both internal and external parties may be used in various ways in internal policy struggles, quality efforts and attempts to get positive PR. Politicians may stimulate critical enquiry from civil society, if it coincides with their own political interests; politicians may also claim to speak for public opinion as a whole, when this seems opportu-
Public opinion, which McQuail later would equate with “society as a whole” (McQuail, 2005, p. 211), is of course a problematic concept, likely to be used by different stakeholders for their own purposes. But there is still a need for a preliminary concept that expresses what Ward calls “the public good” (Ward, 210, p. 196), that might be used as an overarching claimant of media accountability, maybe in conjunction with the factors of media professionalism, civil society and the political system.

Environments can be created that favour a certain brand of critique; liaisons can be manifold. The articles, now soon to be introduced, illustrate these multifarious connections.

Methods
I have used a broad variety of methods in the studies included in this thesis in order to capture different aspects of media accountability. A quantitative survey was conducted to obtain an overview of editors’ attitudes towards different media accountability instruments. Several qualitative analyses of debates and documents regarding media criticism, media accountability and media governance were performed at different points in time, in order to allow for historical comparisons among media users and among politicians. And finally, in carrying out a case study of the interactivity of different frames of media accountability, I used semi-structured interviews with key players combined with a chronological reconstruction of events and participatory observation of stakeholder negotiations. The data include a broad variety of media criticism from the periods studied (printed and later net-based), records of parliamentary debates on media performance and regulation, survey responses from Editor-in-Chiefs, government documents, documents from the Swedish public service television company (Sveriges Television, SVT), NGO documents, interviews, and personal (participatory) observations. The qualities and limitations of data and methods are discussed in more detail in each article.

The articles
The sequence of the articles follows a structure outlined in the models previously presented; from criticism to accountability/governance. They study aspects of accountability originating from four frames: the market, the political, the professional, and the public. All four articles aim to contribute to the discussion when answering the three research questions.
Table 1. An overview of how the four articles connect to the research questions and the frames

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<th>Frames:</th>
<th>RQ 1</th>
<th>RQ 2</th>
<th>RQ 3</th>
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<tr>
<td>Market</td>
<td>Article 1</td>
<td>Article 3</td>
<td>Article 1; 2</td>
</tr>
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<td>Political</td>
<td>1; 2; 4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1; 2; 4</td>
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<td>Professional</td>
<td>3; 4</td>
<td>1; 2; 3; 4</td>
<td>2; 3; 4</td>
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<td>Public</td>
<td>1; 2; 4</td>
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The first article deals with aspects of citizens’ media criticism and contains comparisons over a period of some 60 years. The second one compares intense media criticism connected to political demands for media accountability in the late 1960s with the more distanced media governance situation 40 years later. The third article investigates how newspaper editors view media criticism as one of an array of different media accountability instruments. The fourth and last article pulls a few previous threads together in a case study that exemplifies connections between media criticism, accountability and governance. All the articles are based on studies carried out in Sweden, a country with a media system typical of the Democratic Corporatist model (Nord & Strömbäck, 2008). Sweden has a history of a partisan press combined with a strong mass-circulation press, a high level of journalistic professionalization, including early introductions of codes of ethics and press councils (in 1900 and 1916), strong organizations for publishers and journalists, and protection of press freedom, combined with state interventions in the media sphere, including a substantial public service sector (Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Weibull, 2007).

Media criticism is the focus of The citizen as media critic in periods of media change (Article I). By way of a review of literature and an examination of the fierce early media criticism towards Expressen, a new kind of single-copy tabloid in Sweden founded in 1944, some distinctions are made. Media criticism may at least be di-

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[3] Bertrand (2000) used the term “media accountability systems”, although they are not ‘systems’ in a theoretical sense, and so the term may give a misleading impression. In the articles, the term system is not used consistently only for Bertrand’s work, but also in some instances when the intention is to describe accountability means or instruments (see also Eberwein et al., 2011: 8).
vided into three categories: cultural/philosophical, media/constructive and stakeholder originated. The first category, exemplified by writers like Søren Kierkegaard and Theodor Adorno, most often delivers a media critique that has other motives than demanding accountability from the media. Still, as a comment to Jensen’s earlier mentioned, significant work on cultural media criticism (Jensen 1990), it is noteworthy that such studies may also shed valuable light on the accountability process. Jensen’s analysis helps the parties involved in a “communicative discourse” (Wyatt 2009, p. 137) to distinguish between a general critique of society disguised as media criticism and accountability-directed media criticism. It provides analytical tools for both critics and for media professionals (Glasser & Ettema 2008).

In terms of the research questions, the case of Expressen is illustrative in several ways. Different categories of criticism are used for various purposes by different stakeholders and hence affect the accountability process in various ways. The boundaries are not distinct; sometimes efforts to preserve establishment hierarchies – for instance within the church, the courts and the medical profession – are disguised as media critique justified by claims of protecting children and youth. Elite editors may lash out against the newcomer for destroying the common morale, whilst fearing for the positions of their own tribunes. Existing conflicts found a scapegoat in Expressen. The media profession was divided, to some extent along generational lines, regarding the content of Expressen as well as the justification for accountability actions. Civil society was also divided, a split encouraged by Expressen in endorsing a young avant-garde in the arts and in social science. The avant-garde got a platform and Expressen could diffuse some of the criticism from other groups. The political sphere had their hands tied as a consequence of Parliament’s manipulation of press freedom during World War II; they were now writing a new constitution for freedom of speech in order to eliminate the loopholes that had made the previous manipulation possible, and could not at the same time propose legislation against Expressen. Instead the critics in Parliament suggested, in an early spirit of media governance, that youth organizations and others should organize actions and boycotts against the paper. The wave of criticism resulted in the use of accountability instruments like professional debates, policy explanations in Expressen and reports, comparing the editorial content of metropolitan newspapers. But the one factor that gave Expressen the leeway to continue more or less unaltered was the market. It was difficult for the critics to demand actions against the paper in the name of the public interest while the general public at the same time was buying more and more copies of the paper. The circulation rose while the paper expan-
ded on issues that the established press hid in their back pages.

Areas and periods of friction are fruitful to analyse in an accountability perspective (Plaisance, 2000). The newspaper created friction that some abhorred and others applauded; Expressen itself made the friction a part of its trademark, its symbol a stinging wasp. The critique needed for an accountability process to start was at hand, but it lacked the force and roots that would have made a difference. The civil society and the professional community were divided, the political sphere was prevented from acting, and a large part of the audience was pro-Expressen.

The other case study in the article analyses the launch of the participatory news- and debate website Newsmill in 2008. It illustrates some of the same mechanisms of criticism within the professional sphere as for Expressen; established journalists lament lack of quality (and fear of lost authority and weakened positions for themselves). But this time, the technological development has a clear effect. The participating users defend Newsmill, it is also their site. This makes it harder for the old establishment to argue their case as a defence for quality and for ‘public interest’. Groups of people, segments of the public, now speak up (Fengler, 2008) and use their rhetorical skills in the communicative process. Probably this was also the case 60 years ago, probably many readers defended their paper, but they were not heard or seen in the public sphere as they are today. So the critique has more elements to attend to and the market can vote with more than their feet in media matters. But the Internet also contains opportunities for vested interests to hide their true origins and try to influence public opinion in a disguised form. The accountability process is affected either way.

*Changing Political Attitudes towards Media Accountability in Sweden* (Article II) also has a comparative temporal perspective, this time focusing on the political system. The first period deals with the late 1960s, some twenty years later than in Article 1. Expressen is now by far the biggest newspaper in Sweden and the social democratic single copy tabloid Aftonbladet is using all kinds of methods to compete. An intense tabloid war for increased circulation is raging, but the market is almost saturated and further gains are not easily achieved. At the same time, the leading social democratic morning papers in the capital Stockholm and in the second largest city Gothenburg have folded, mainly from lack of advertising. The ruling Social Democrats exercise vehement media criticism in the Parliament and threaten with legislation if the press does not behave responsibly.

Following the notion developed earlier, that media criticism is of vital importance for the accountability process, the article studies the critique phrased
by those in the Swedish Parliament that wish to, or formulate threats to, regulate the press. This critique is compared to the attitudes towards the press that are expressed by their opponents. Then the same set of analyses is performed for the current (2006-2010) set of expressed opinions in Parliament. The findings indicate that the media critique was of a whole other magnitude in the 60s, when harsh media accountability measures were demanded, than today when Parliament emphasizes market influence and self-regulation. Furthermore, the strong critique in the 60s with a resonance in public opinion seems to have forced the accountability dialogue in the Parliament (significant media defenders in Parliament were themselves leading newspaper editors) to be performed on the critics’ half of the field. This importance of public opinion for the outcome of the criticism is, in the U.S. context, stressed by Marzolf (1991, p. 2).

Compared to the 1940s, the politicians in the 1960s argued with more force when they claimed to interpret a public interest in their critique. The new approach of the outspoken Expressen had lost some of its pioneer status, although it still had many readers. Some 40 years later, in 2006-2010, MPs tend to more frequently include the interest of the media companies in having sound finances in the notion of public interest (see also Feintuck & Varney, 2006, concerning the British situation).

Media governance has changed its appearance from traditional top-heavy political and organizational worked-through corporatism to more light-touch relations via consumer/market/NGO networks. Changes in the media system including its relation to government and changes in media technology and media consumption have affected the functioning and strength of the accountability process. Looking at the political potential space for accountability demands, we see that they are shaped by history and tradition as well as by the real-time power balance between media and stakeholders: In the 1940s, members of Parliament felt indulged to expand the legal conditions for the media as a consequence of the criticized manoeuvring of the press by the Parliament during WW2, even though they were highly critical of Expressen. In the 1960s, the Social Democratic MPs felt that they had a strong position both in Parliament and in the public opinion and the bad conscience from the war-years was long forgotten. Demands for action, and threats of legislation should demands not be met, were strong and frequent. The interest in media quality declined somewhat after the passing of a financial bill in Parliament, securing press subsidies primarily for ailing newspapers close to the Social Democrats and to the Centre Party (formerly the Farmers’ Party). These new press subsidies can be seen as the peak of the Swedish party press system, where many newspapers and political parties were...
linked through ownership, content and readers (Strömbäck & Nord, 2008). Since then, both political parties and the press have changed, and the political affiliations are mainly visible in the editorials. Today, after a period of de-regulation and globalization, the quality of the news media is no longer a hot topic on the political agenda. Looking at suggestions from the political sphere for media critical actions from the citizens, related patterns of activity may be discerned: In the 1940s, when the politicians themselves felt restrained, they recalled and praised the past broad and successful civil society actions against sleazy papers in 1908 and 1926, and encouraged similar campaigns. In the 1960s, the social democratic politicians felt more powerful; they did not need to call for active assistance from the citizens. In fact, in the 1960s, it was the opponents of state media regulation in Parliament who invoked the potential of the readers to police the press. And in today’s media governance, the judgement and capacity for action within civil society are once more higher in demand within the political circles, albeit sometimes linked to political guidelines.

The main focus for Between Public Responsibility and Public Relations (Article III) is the professional sphere. Once the stakeholders have delivered their media criticism, it is up to media organizations to respond. What factors weigh in when they respond? How do the editors of the biggest Swedish newspapers view demands for accountability, external influence on conduct and content, the usability of different accountability instruments – some old and some new – and the established self-regulatory system? The findings indicate that the editors enter – or try to develop – the accountability process for a variety of reasons: they try to avoid negative PR and to garner positive PR, they dislike so called unconstructive criticism but also have ambitions to reach higher levels of content quality. The editors share opinions in many areas, for instance in their positive estimations of internal news ombudsmen (also called readers’ editors), but their responses in the survey are not uniform. Some feel that the established system of self-regulation needs a radical overhaul to adjust to the new world of Internet interaction, and some criticize other editors for not publishing corrections prominently enough. And even though they applaud the idea of news ombudsmen, they no longer have such a person on their payrolls, claiming that the costs are too high. One interesting difference, in terms of the market, concerns the attitudes towards qualitative and quantitative media criticism. Most editors for the larger morning papers state that they take close notice of “serious”, “specific” and “concrete” criticism. Their newspapers are subscribed to, the readers normally pay for the newspaper a year in advance. The two evening tabloid editors on the other hand
declare that they are highly influenced if and when their readers react in great numbers to their content, and it doesn’t matter if the criticism is sophisticated or not. Their newspapers are not subscribed to, they are sold in shops and kiosks as single copies every day. There is a resemblance here to the reasoning in the 1940s regarding Expressen. Established editors formulated intellectual arguments against Expressen, but the paper did not care much, they normally managed to find someone who could express a counter argument or they did so themselves. As long as the readers did not react in great numbers, they carried on.

The survey was carried out in 2006-2007, i.e. overlapping the period studied in the second article (dealing with attitudes in Parliament). The media governance at hand, with a rather distant role for the state, is reflected in the results of the survey. The editors are not particularly concerned about external influences on their territory, neither from civil society nor from government; they do not perceive their control over editorial content as being threatened. The issue of control is an important aspect when analysing editors’ attitudes. A dividing up of internal accountability instruments – a methodological contribution of this article – further illustrates the weight of the control factor. Editors care for the quality of their paper, for their independence and for the image of their operations. Knowledge about these aspects is useful when trying to implement instruments of accountability, which is the subject of the next article.

In From a Medical to a Human Rights Perspective (Article IV), I focus on civil society and its interconnectivity with other frames of accountability. The article is a case study of how the Swedish Disability Federation, SDF, with a long history of critically analysing media portrayals of people with disabilities, in a pilot project of accountability managed to establish co-operation with the public broadcaster Sveriges Television. The article shows the potential of constructive media criticism and illustrates the complexities at the interface between media accountability and media governance.

Media scholars have suggested both internal and external instruments as tools for change in order to transform the portrayal of people with disabilities and to implement a non-discriminatory journalism, for instance values from outside the media system instead of institutionalized routine news evaluation (Morlandstø, 2006), updated mental maps for media organizations as well as disability NGOs (Ghersetti, 2007), media content monitoring and increased media literacy among media users (Brune, 2008), and increased “institutionalized self-criticism and reflection on standards and routines in the daily news operation” (Camauër and Nohrstedt, 2006, p. 29). To some extent, these suggestions
were reflected upon and actualized by the Disability Federation taskforce in their dealings with the television company.

Historically, the disability movement had used its connections in Parliament to try to set the agenda for developing a more Human Rights-directed disability policy. This had some success in Parliament, but media portrayals lagged behind. Efforts to influence public opinion by op-eds in the newspapers merely triggered defensive reactions from media organizations.

Employees in the disability federation with a background in journalism ran the new project. Instead of criticizing the media head on, they managed to finance a scientific report (Ghersetti, 2007) that documented the lamentable state of media portrayals, a report made together with the television company. With their media competence, the project team identified “the vulnerable values” (Blumler, 1992) that the media company would fight for no matter what, and declared that they agreed fully on the protection of these values. With the help of the scientific report and the government’s demand for a dialogue between the public broadcasters and the disability movement, the project team managed to negotiate the goal and meaning of a joint project with the television company. The project team made alliances on different levels within the company with various benefits for both the media professionals and the disability movement. As in the previously mentioned survey to newspaper editors, different objectives were involved: obtaining positive public and political relations, avoiding negative public and political relations and enhancing the quality of the media content and the desire of journalists to “do good work”. The project team also convinced the leadership of the disability movement to think through the need for new relations to politics and to the media.

The complexity of media accountability

The purpose of this thesis is to examine and discuss the relationship between media criticism, media accountability and media governance in order to reach a fuller understanding of the media accountability process. I will now respond to the research questions and discuss the results of the articles. The findings point in a direction of dynamic complexities with a central role for media criticism.

RQ1: How can media criticism and media governance influence the media accountability process?

The articles illustrate the complexities of the media accountability process. The effects of media criticism vary with its intensity, scope, context and origin and
with the interplay between media critics and media governance networks within and across media accountability frames.

The quantity of media criticism against *Expressen* and other tabloids was high within the professional frame in the 1940s. It was supplemented by qualitative media criticism from various stakeholders from within the public frame who feared sensationalist reporting about their fields of interest. But the media representatives were not united in their critique, *Expressen* gained support from e.g., younger journalists for their ‘modern’ journalism, which was seen as being more aggressive and not dominated by political party interests. The political frame was not very visible. Some politicians proposed sharper legislation and there was some support for the media criticism, but the timing was not right for attacks on the Constitution. The professional and political frames were furthermore intertwined, as leading editors were also Members of Parliament. The market frame however, gained considerable influence as the circulation of *Expressen* and the other tabloids increased year by year. Media criticism fuelled the media accountability process up to a point; *Expressen* became more transparent, media debates were held, media owners conducted their own research into editorial quality and discussed PR-initiatives. But the process did not get much support from a media governance perspective. The Parliament had another agenda and the market frame was influential.

In the 1960s the balance of power within and between frames had shifted. The quantity of media criticism was not as high within the professional frame as in the 1940s, but the establishment perspective from older editors was now supplemented by a radical critique from younger journalists. Most importantly though, some social democratic editors in Parliament were joined in their attacks on media ownership concentration and media sensationalism by heavyweight social democratic politicians. The media criticism resonated well within the public frame and the market frame was not a strong counterforce; the market in the late 60s was increasingly described more as a problem and a threat than as a solution to media accountability issues. Media interests were well organized and bent on achieving a compromise with the Parliament. Media criticism within different frames plus a strong commitment, including threats of regulative legislation, from the reigning social democratic party created a transformation of the institutionalized media accountability system. A nucleus of media governance might be discerned, but the politicians relied more on parliamentary force than on a network of combined interests.

Today, as results in Articles III and IV indicate, it is possible to identify new patterns of interplay within and between the frames in the media accountability
process. Strong media criticism no longer emanates from within the professional frame in the same manner as in the 1940s and the 1960s. The institutionalized system with a code of ethics, a national press ombudsman and a national press council is still important, but loosing ground. The press organizations are not as powerful and the press itself is not the dominant mass medium anymore. Internet and media convergence make alternative solutions possible, but have not yet fully materialized. On the other hand, the professional frame is influential in new ways as media competence is important to all kinds of stakeholders when dealing with communication aspects of their ordinary line of work. Less monolithic media organizations make it easier for media subgroups to make alliances in the media accountability process with stakeholders within the public frame.

Today, very few Members of Parliament hold leading positions as newspaper editors. The party press system has by and large disappeared, and the old connections between the professional and political frames have grown weaker. The earlier focus on national media regulation has been replaced by European media governance – with international ingredients – that strengthens network approaches to the media accountability process within the political frame. Among Members of Parliament, more emphasis is placed on suggestions for accountability instruments within the public frame than on political initiatives. Media content as a direct concern for Parliament has become less important, whereas media market conditions in an international setting have become more so.

The market frame is important to the media sector as a supplement to the professional frame when media criticism is on the agenda; it underscores the importance of economic strength and sustainability in order to tackle issues of editorial quality, especially in comparison to the allegedly immoral activities outside media sites on the Internet. In the 1940s, the market frame perspective functioned as a counterweight to the fierce media criticism of Expressen; there are as yet very few signs that the same pattern is applicable to the critique of the seamier parts of the Internet.

The possibilities for impact via the public frame in the media accountability process have increased in Sweden over the last half century. Media criticism is facilitated by technological developments, growing media competence, increased interest in some aspects of media accountability within media organizations, and increased space for innovative media accountability initiatives within media governance networks. Top editors of the largest Swedish newspapers confirm that stakeholder media criticism is an influential ingredient in the accountability process.
The influence of media criticism in the process is affected by its quantity and its quality, by the degree of uniformity of opinions within the frames of accountability, and by the opportunities for media organizations to find solutions that are beneficial to both stakeholders and themselves. Potential media governance initiatives are affected by the general level of public media criticism, by the situation in the media market and by the political climate (which in turn may be affected by the other factors mentioned). The type, level, intensity, and origin of media criticism may affect the functioning of the media governance structure and is a vital part of the media accountability process. The media governance structure – which in addition to media criticism is influenced by international conditions, technological developments and political factors – may in turn affect the media accountability process. Of vital importance is how the representatives of the media view their role and options in this process.

**RQ2: How do the media view media accountability?**

The survey to Swedish editors-in-chiefs analysed in Article III shows that the overall attitude to the established system of professional self-regulation with a national code of ethics, a cooperative press council and a national press ombudsman is very positive. The reasons given are manifold: to keep legislators away, to enhance media credibility and to function as a counterweight to powerful media companies. Some distance between positive attitudes in theory and more negative actions in practice is detectable for cooperative news ombudsmen and generous corrections. Regarding 34 other media accountability instruments a pattern may be discerned among the attitudes of the editors: instruments that combine editorial control and quality enhancement with opportunities to develop positive public relations (or to avoid negative public relations) are preferred. Internal newsroom instruments are preferred to external; training of journalists is preferred to internal media criticism; media research is preferred to external media criticism. Media criticism is an important ingredient in the accountability mixture, especially when expressed by readers. The attitudinal pattern described above is supported by the case study analysed in Article IV. Dual possibilities for fostering positive public/governmental relations and developing a less stereotyped portrayal of persons with disabilities are identified and put into practice. Attitudes vary at different levels in the television company SVT. Some reporters and producers are personally very involved in using media accountability means in order to change the company’s portrayal of persons with disabilities. Several reporters and producers want tools that will allow them to do a better job. Compa-
ny management aims at establishing positive public relations while navigating a course between political demands and editorial integrity. The media governance dimension in the case study of SDF and SVT does not fully explain the development of the joint efforts. SVT did more than other public service companies and demonstrated a willingness to participate in quality initiatives/projects.

Studying media attitudes to media accountability over time, it is fruitful to use the four frames of accountability. In the 1940s the main debate over media standards and remedies for lack of quality went on within the professional frame. Established editors criticized the immature newcomer Expressen, which advocated a more ‘modern’ journalism and gained support from young journalists in other newsrooms. Although the professional frame was intertwined with the political frame – leading editors were also Members of Parliament – the political frame was not especially visible due to events during the war period. In the 60s however, the political frame was very visible and media representatives in the Parliament were forced into defensive positions concerning media accountability. The survey and the case study, both from recent years, show that the public and the market frame have gained strength when it comes to mould the attitudes towards media accountability among the media representatives. There is no single uniform view of media accountability within the media. Some editors in the survey wish to sharpen the code of ethics and to extend accountability instruments more than others. SVT is more open to NGO suggestions than other public service companies and some producers are more committed to change than others. Some SVT-employees align themselves with external media criticism in order to gain strength in internal policy feuds. Looking back at the 1940s and 1960s, the view is not uniform either, and it may have been affected by factors like age and position within the media sphere. New and not-yet established media outlets are frequent targets for criticism, and accountability measures are suggested by people from within traditional media circles.

Media attitudes are affected by desires to defend obtained positions of societal influence, develop public relations and enhance editorial quality at the same time. However, a unifying goal is to control the media accountability process if possible. The existence of parallel goals for media accountability instruments (quality of media performance and media self interest) makes it possible for media critics equipped with media competence to gain influence. Another route to influence is media criticism by readers; quantitative but also qualitative. The significance of media criticism is present over time, but varies in scope and strength.
RQ3: How has the media accountability process evolved over time?

I have already included a historical perspective on Swedish media accountability when discussing and answering the previous research questions. In order to analyse the chronological dimension further, I will now focus on the factors friction, stakeholders, technology and media system over time. Media criticism was intense and the friction high half a century ago. Personal careers – and ideologies – for media representatives were at stake; established individual and organizational positions both inside and outside the media sphere were perceived to be threatened by the criticized media development. Today the friction is less visible and may be channelled through other networks of influence. The media governance approach provides new opportunities for media critics and media organizations to pursue accountability instruments of mutual interest.

The stakeholders who were active half a century ago were mainly politicians and editors who to a varying degree were backed up by spokespersons for various institutions like law, medicine, business et cetera. The editors have since left the Parliament and nowadays deal more with media economy and less with media ideology than before. Currently, the politicians are much less visible in matters of media content and instead promote the responsibilities of media users and the possibilities of accountability instruments within the public sphere.

Media technology makes it possible for many more to engage in the process today than half a century ago. In the 1940s, most of the public critique and the demands for media change were formulated on the opinion pages of the newspapers by editor-in-chiefs and within stakeholder groups by leading representatives. In the 1960s most of the debate took place in Parliament and in the press. Nowadays, public criticism is possible in much wider circles. This may influence the critique formulated both by elite critics and by non-elite media users. It also might make it harder for media critical politicians to claim ownership of the public interest.

Sweden is a typical representative of the Democratic Corporatist model (Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Strömbäck & Nord, 2008). In the 1960s, the conditions that shaped the media accountability process were literally negotiated between well-organized media interests (the Publishers’ Association, the Journalists’ Union and the Press Club) and a standing committee in the Parliament. The creation of the new national press ombudsman and the revision of the national press council can arguably be viewed as the peak of the Democratic Corporatist model regarding media accountability. Since then, the basis of the national system for
professional media accountability has slowly eroded and the market has gained strength. Nowadays, the central media organizations and the Parliament are relatively less important for processes of media accountability that take place in many more varieties compared to during the 1960s. The media governance approach can be seen as an adaption to this change. The new strategy adopted by the organization for persons with disabilities, analysed in Article IV, exemplifies this change. About 10-20 years ago, the strategy involved lobbying powerful politicians backed by op-ed articles in the leading newspapers. During the past few years, this organization instead has developed cooperative resources (sources and knowledge) for editorial and educational purposes in order to maximize the effects of a rather vague government guideline.

 Portions of the media critique in the 1940s and the 1960s can in retrospect be viewed as reactions to structural transformations of the Swedish society. The development of a new media content, perceived as sensational, challenged established values and established positions, but was to some extent a reflection of an evolving society with more spending power in the workforce, more leisure time and less authoritarian management principles. This kind of media criticism still exists half a century later, e.g., regarding the relationship between traditional media and the Internet, but does not dominate the debate. Media criticism that include practical suggestions for media improvement seem to be more influential, at least within media organizations, providing that the cause for critique is not of a seriously high magnitude.

 The accountability process has become less dependent on corporative negotiations between organized interests and political assemblies over time. Instead, two other tendencies seem to have emerged: on the one hand an opportunity for media organizations to favour such accountability processes that they are able to control, given that the level of media criticism is not very high, and on the other hand the rise of a rich variety of sometimes short-lived accountability instruments that may develop for specific occasions stimulated by different networks. Due to their spontaneous nature, these accountability instruments may be difficult for media organizations to control, but may also have less impact over time.

 The findings of this thesis emphasize the vital function of media criticism in the media accountability process, an aspect that at times has been somewhat neglected (see e.g., literature overviews in McQuail, 2003 and Eberwein et al., 2011). This dissertation illustrates that media accountability involves more than a one-way sequence of naming, blaming and claiming (Pritchard, 2000, p. 3). Instead, this contribution shows that multifaceted interconnections between critics, me-
dia professionals at diverse levels and various stakeholders in civil society and politics with multiple ambitions and motives shape the accountability process. I have done this by way of an examination, including historical perspectives from the 1940’s to today, of a single country, Sweden, employing various sources and methods and with a case study of a concrete dilemma, a conflict between a media-critical NGO and a leading television company, in order to go beyond somewhat abstract concepts (see earlier criticism of the media accountability discourse, Bennett 2007).

Media criticism may start a substantial media accountability process if the discontent is widespread and not countered by market approval or political inertia. The process is facilitated if the critique is connected to more than one frame of accountability and if stakeholders see opportunities for dual objectives. Very strong and widespread media criticism may be difficult for media organizations to neglect; a recent example, mentioned in the beginning of this introduction, is what began as the News of the World scandal in the UK in 2011.

Does a media accountability process contribute to restrain the media from fulfilling a critical role in society? Ward places accountability on the “restraining” side of media ethics – minimizing harm and explaining your actions – as opposed to the “proactive” side – seeking the truth and being independent (Ward, 2010, p.50). These two principles are built into most codes of media ethics and are also opposing principles in conflicts over media freedom and media regulation. This is a potential core concern for media accountability processes; to make these principles clear and possible to handle (as opposed to the fogginess of the public interest concept). But as the case study in Article IV, the survey of editors in Article III, and the examples of critique against the tabloid Expressen in different periods in Articles I and II indicate, the accountability principle may also play a role on the proactive side. Considering the importance of media criticism to initiate the accountability process, this criticism facilitates for media organizations to articulate and develop their arguments as to why a controversial publication is legitimate and important. This in turn may raise the level of media literacy and the legitimacy for media organizations as watchdogs (Plaisance, 2000; Glasser & Ettema, 2008).

Media ethicists have been important in the development of the concept media accountability (for instance Hodges, 1986; Christians, 1989; Bertrand 2000; Plaisance 2000). Together with media historians (for instance Marzolf 1991, Dicken Garcia 1989) and other media researchers (for instance McQuail, 2003; Bardoel & d’Haenens, 2004; Glasser & Ettema, 2008), they have elaborated on principles, concepts and instruments in order to deepen the study of conflicts concerning
relations of media freedom, media power, media harm, media credibility, media quality and media control – to just name some of the interfaces.

Governance, on the other hand, is a concept that has been developed in other academic fields by scholars from political science and economics (Puppis, 2010). Maybe this is one of the factors that can help explain the sometimes vague treatment in this discourse of relations between media accountability and media governance (see for instance Bardoe, 2007) and sometimes a neglect to include media criticism in the picture (see for instance Puppis, 2010).

This contribution aims to clarify some of the distinctions between media accountability and media governance, where media accountability deals with media conduct and content and contains a vital component of media criticism, whereas media governance is a larger entity with a necessary component of (often distant) state connection. But both concepts express fields of interactivity with networks linking state, market, media and civil society. The concept of media responsibility is contested for allowing elite interests to prevail, and diversity/human rights have been suggested as grounds for a new overarching principle (Christians et al., 2009). This contribution indicates (Article IV) that human rights may work very well as a rationale for media accountability.

**Final remarks**
The findings, building on studies of different arenas with a variety of sources and methods and with a historical perspective, are valid for Sweden. They are arguably also relevant for other countries that share the characteristics of what is labelled a Democratic Corporatist or a North/Central European model (Hallin & Mancini, 2004). That means countries that were democratized relatively early with similar political systems that contain ingredients of consensus and a tolerance for state intervention in the economy. Coupled with a developed mass-circulation commercial press, commercial television, strong public broadcasting, an experience of advocacy journalism, a high degree of journalistic professionalization, a fierce defence of freedom of expression and numerous media accountability instruments (e.g., national codes of ethics and press councils). Some of the historical experiences, e.g., regarding the constitution and state-management of the press during WW2, are unique for Sweden, as well as the finer details of the media and media accountability structure. Still, an understanding of the overall potential patterns of interplay between media criticism, accountability and governance on interconnecting arenas in the name of the so called public interest are most likely relevant to countries with similar structures. This contribution may also hold some relevance for Hallin and Mancini’s North Atlantic or Liberal
countries, where the term media accountability originated (USA) and later was elaborated on (UK). Remembering that very large parts of the world were left out from the mapping of Hallin and Mancini (2004; see also Hallin & Mancini, 2012), it is sufficient to point out the demand for particular country studies (Bennett, 2007) and their value when compared to other studies. This is a study of Sweden during the period between 1940 and 2010.

International comparisons of solutions found to practical accountability conflicts and the meaning of media accountability in a human rights perspective are two important fields of further research. First, following the reasoning in the last paragraph, it is clear that comparative research of similar conflicts or dilemmas in other countries would be of considerable interest. Which attitudes towards media accountability instruments are common among editors in other countries? What kind of accountability is expected from citizens who contribute to media content on the Internet? What happens to self-regulation if borders between former ‘pure’ audiences and ‘pure’ journalists are vanishing (Eberwein et al., 2011, p. 21)? What kinds of media criticism are voiced in other parliaments and how are they connected to views on media accountability? Is it possible to discern patterns of criticism and accountability over time? Is it possible to identify driving forces behind media accountability projects that can be defined as successful, e.g., the influence of media competence? Secondly, to study the implications of replacing social responsibility with diversity/human rights as a normative cornerstone for media accountability, seems to be both of theoretical interest and of potentially practical importance (Christians et al., 2009; Ward, 2010; Christians, 2011).

Although many aspects of media accountability remain to be studied, this contribution has aimed to enhance the understanding of the complexities involved, to update the knowledge of the field and to underscore the importance of media criticism for comprehending the accountability process.
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