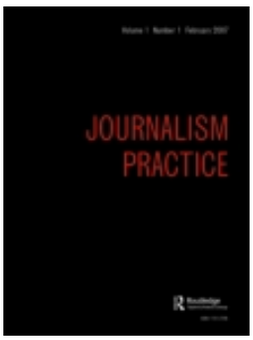

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Introduction

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INTRODUCTION
Making sense of the mediatization of politics

Jesper Strömbäck and **Frank Esser**

During the last decade, the concept of a mediatization of politics has become increasingly popular. A search in Google Scholar, for example, reveals that there were about 2000 citations in the years 2001–2006, while there were more than 6300 citations in the years 2007–2012. Much of this interest was sparked by Mazzoleni and Schulz's (1999) seminal article "Mediatization of Politics: A Challenge for Democracy?" To date, this is the most cited article on the mediatization of politics, followed by Schulz's (2004) "Reconstructing Mediatization as an Analytical Concept", Hjarvard's (2008) "The Mediatization of Society" and Strömbäck's (2008) "Four Phases of Mediatization: An Analysis of the Mediatization of Politics". The year 2008 seems to mark a pivotal point in time with respect to analyses of and interest in the mediatization of politics: not only were two of the most cited articles on the subject published that year: the *International Encyclopedia of Communication* also included two entries on the "Mediatization of Society" and the "Mediatization of Politics" (Mazzoleni 2008a, 2008b). The same year, Sonia Livingstone titled her presidential address at the annual conference of the International Communication Association "On the Mediation of Everything", analyzing and discussing the concepts of mediation and mediatization (Livingstone 2009).

The great interest in the mediatization of politics is also obvious from the response to the open call for papers—issued in the summer of 2012—for a special issue focusing on this theme. This call yielded an unprecedented 84 submitted abstracts, leading to a decision by Editor Bob Franklin to publish them as a double-volume, with one part appearing in *Journalism Studies* and the other appearing in *Journalism Practice*. After a rigorous selection process, 16 teams of authors were invited to submit full papers. After a traditional blind peer-review process, 12 articles were finally accepted. The final response rate was thus approximately 14 percent. The special issue of *Journalism Studies* (Volume 15, Number 3) includes six of the selected articles, while the companion special issue of *Journalism Practice* (Volume 8, Number 3) includes the other six articles. As Guest Editors of both, we want to take this opportunity to thank both our contributors and the reviewers, as well as Editor Bob Franklin for his wholehearted support throughout this process.

Although both compilations address the overarching question of how the news media and their coverage of political affairs have changed under the conditions of mediatization, and which implications this may have for the audience and for politics, they take separate yet supplementary perspectives. This is why we have given the first special issue the title "Mediatization of Politics: Theoretical and Empirical Perspectives" (*Journalism Studies*), and the second one the title "Mediatization of Politics: Facets of Media Logic" (*Journalism Practice*). Taken together, we feel confident that the end product will serve as an important springboard for further research in this area. It should be noted that the final selection of articles was not guided by our own conceptualization of mediatization, but based on a very competitive, double-blind review process and the recommendations of outside experts.

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In the context of contributing to further research, the aim of this brief introduction is fivefold. First, to outline how we believe the mediatization of politics should be conceptualized; second, to highlight briefly some of the contributions of the concept of mediatization of politics to research on media, politics and democracy; third, to discuss briefly some of the problems in current theorizing and research on mediatization in general and the mediatization of politics; and fourth, to address and attempt to clarify what we consider to be some key misunderstandings about the mediatization of politics as a theoretical framework. Finally, we will sum up and introduce the 12 articles that were finally accepted.

Conceptualizing the Mediatization of Politics

At heart, mediatization refers to a social change process in which media have become increasingly influential in and deeply integrated into different spheres of society (Asp 1986; Hjarvard 2013; Mazzoleni 2008a; Strömbäck and Esser 2009). Mediatization should thus be distinguished from the related concept of mediation, which refers to the more neutral act of transmitting messages and communicating through media (Mazzoleni 2008b; Strömbäck 2008). The undisputed fact that more messages and experiences than ever are transmitted and experienced through media—that is, mediated—is important and a key part of mediatization, but mediatization is a broader and more dynamic and process-oriented process and concept (Couldry and Hepp 2013; Esser 2013; Hjarvard 2013; Strömbäck and Esser 2009). With ramifications for most parts of modern society, mediatization has also been conceptualized as on par with other large-scale transformative processes such as globalization (Kriesi et al. 2013).

In terms of theory, despite the broad consensus that mediatization refers to a process of increasing media importance and influence, thus far mediatization has the character of a theoretical perspective or framework rather than a proper theory. This holds true both for mediatization in general and the mediatization of politics. Although great progress has been made during the last few years, much work remains before it can be considered a full-blown, elaborated theory. To note this is not to diminish its value, only to say the obvious that much work remains to be done and caution against overstating our understanding of this process.

In terms of politics, the mediatization of politics has been defined as a long-term process through which the importance of the media and their spill-over effects on political processes, institutions, organizations and actors has increased (Strömbäck and Esser 2014). This definition highlights four essential features of the mediatization of politics. First, it is a long-term and dynamic process. Second, the essence of mediatization is increasing importance and influence of media. Third, mediatization affects all parts of politics, including the processes as well as the political institutions, organizations and actors. Fourth, many of the media-related influences may be indirect rather than direct, and result from how political institutions, organizations and actors more or less reactively or proactively adapt to the media and their own needs to communicate through the media.

Following Strömbäck (2008), the mediatization of politics is a process where four distinct albeit highly related dimensions could be identified. *The first dimension* refers to the degree to which media constitute the most important source of information about politics and society. This dimension thus deals with the extent to which politics is mediated. *The second dimension* refers to the degree to which media have become

differentiated and independent from other social and political institutions. Although all institutions, from a social systems perspective, should be perceived of as interdependent, for the media to have an independent influence in politics, they have to form an institution in their own right. *The third dimension* refers to the degree to which media and the coverage of politics and current affairs is guided by media logic or political logic. Thus, this dimension deals with the extent to which the media's own needs and standards of newsworthiness, rather than those of political actors, organizations or institutions, are decisive for what the media cover and how they cover it. *The fourth dimension* refers to the extent to which political institutions, organizations and actors are guided by media logic or political logic. It thus deals with the interaction between media and politics and the very essence of the mediatization of politics, that is, the direct as well as indirect and ripple effects of media in political processes and over political actors, organizations and institutions (see also Strömbäck 2011a; Strömbäck and Esser 2009, 2014).

Important to note is that mediatization along each of the dimensions is a matter of degree. Media can, for example, be more or less independent from political institutions, and media content as well as political institutions, organizations and actors can be more or less guided by media logic as opposed to political logic. There might consequently be variations across different media and different political actors, organizations and actors, both within and across countries. Ultimately, the mediatization of politics is always shaped by the practices of different media and different political institutions, organizations and actors, and should not be perceived as an exogenous factor influencing all institutions, organizations and actors in an equal or uniform fashion.

Within this framework, the media that matter most are news media conceived of as socio-technological organizations and institutions. In essence, this means organized journalism at newspapers, radio, television and news magazines in either their traditional or digital formats or, to the extent that they are organized and operate as institutional news media, purely digital news providers. While technology matters, what is most important here is not the particular technology, but whether these different news media are organized as institutional actors, which pursue certain goals and act in the interest of reaching these goals, whether it is to make a profit or provide high-quality journalism (Allern and Blach-Ørsten 2011; Cook 2005; Esser 2013; Sparrow 1999).

Not only do single news media organizations constitute institutional actors. Because of the great similarities across news media in terms of how they operate and their rules, routines, norms and news values—what Cook (2005, 64) defined as the media's "transorganizational agreement on news processes and content"—different news media can also be grouped together as an interorganizational field and be conceived of as *a singular news media institution* (Cook 2005; Esser 2013; Sparrow 1999). Different news media constitute the building blocks of the news media as an institution, but the rules and norms that govern the news media as a whole are considered more important than what distinguishes one news media company, outlet, type, etc., from another (Altheide and Snow 1979; Cook 2005; Esser 2013; Hjarvard 2013; Strömbäck 2008).

This notion of the news media as a single institution is important, as it highlights the relative autonomy and differentiation of the news media from political institutions and as the idea of increasing media importance and influence presumes that the news media are not subordinate to other institutions. In essence, it is through the functional and structural differentiation of the news media from other institutions that they have come to form an institution in their own right, and it is through becoming an institution in their own right

that the news media have come to increase their importance and influence (Hjarvard 2008, 2013; Esser 2013; Strömbäck 2008, 2011a).

Media Influence and the Concepts of Media Logic and Political Logic

Another key part of this understanding of the mediatization of politics is related to how media influence is conceptualized. As noted by Schulz (2004, 88–90), at least four processes of social change arising from media-driven transformations can be identified: *extension*, *substitution*, *amalgamation* and *accommodation*. All these processes follow from the combination of the characteristics of different media technologies, what social, cultural or political needs these media technologies might serve, and the increasing presence and importance of media in all parts of social and political life. Media influence in the context of mediatization is thus a broader concept than media effects and "both transcends and includes media effects" (Schulz 2004, 90). For example, most media effect theories assume that media effects follow from content, whereas mediatization also includes how media through their very existence and semi-structural properties exert influence. Traditional media effects theories also cannot account for anticipatory effects, for example when political actors behave in a certain way or abstain from certain behaviors because of how they anticipate the news media's reactions. Rather than restricted to traditional media effects, media influence in the context of the mediatization of politics refers to all activities and processes that are altered, shaped or structured by media or the perceived need of individuals, organizations or institutions to communicate with or through the media (Strömbäck and Esser 2014). These changes need not be imposed upon politics, but might as well be self-initiated in the face of a media environment that is perceived as omnipresent and influential. How influential media are perceived to be may thus have significant consequences for how politics is affected by the media (Cohen, Tsfati, and Sheafer 2008; Strömbäck 2011b).

Two key concepts in this context are *media logic* and *political logic*, as mediatization along the third and fourth dimension deals with the extent to which media content and political institutions, organizations and actors, respectively, are guided by media logic as opposed to political logic. The more media content or political institutions, organizations and actors are guided by media logic, the more influential the news media are, and the further mediatization has progressed.

Both these concepts, and in particular media logic, have been criticized. Among the most common criticisms of the concept of media logic are that it is too elusive and vague, that it suggests a linearity and singularity that is not there, that it lends itself to technological determinism, or that it may hide important patterns of social interactions (see e.g. Couldry 2008; Lundby 2009; Landerer 2013). Some of this criticism may be justified—but it also depends on how media logic and political logic are understood.

From our perspective and focusing on *news media logic* rather than a general media logic (Strömbäck 2011a), the basic idea behind the concepts of news media logic and political logic is that media and politics constitute two different institutional systems that serve different purposes and that each has its own set of actors, organizations and institutions, rules and procedures, and needs and interests. These institutional rules and procedures can be formal as well as informal, and together form a certain "logic of appropriateness" (March and Olsen 1989) within each sphere. Neither media logic nor political logic is thus set in stone, and may evolve in accordance with institutional as well

as significant contextual changes, but neither is arbitrary. Both have evolved to serve as guidelines for appropriate behavior and thinking within each institutional sphere and based on each sphere's purposes, interests, needs and institutional structures (Strömbäck and Esser 2014).

Both news media logic and political logic should, furthermore, be conceptualized as formed by three dimensions, respectively (Esser 2013). With respect to *political logic*, these are polity, policy and politics. *Polity* refers to the system of rules regulating the political process in any given country, including the institutional structure. *Policy* refers to the processes of defining problems and forming and implementing policies within a certain institutional framework. *Politics* refers to the processes of garnering support for one's candidacy, party or political ideas, including the self-presentational side of politics (Esser 2013; see also Meyer 2002; Pennings, Keman, and Kleinnijenhuis 2006). With respect to *news media logic*, the three dimensions are professionalism, commercialism and media technology (Esser 2013; see also Strömbäck and Esser 2014). *Professionalism* refers to the extent to which journalism is differentiated as an institution and set of professional practices and norms that sets it apart from other institutions, in particular politics. *Commercialism* refers to the persistent fact that most media are commercially driven, which has significant implications for all processes of news production, news selection and news presentation. *Media technology* refers to how the various communication platforms shape content in production and reproduction processes, and the processes of finding or reshaping news to fit the socio-technological formats of different media.

From this perspective, neither political logic nor news media logic are cast in stone and fully consistent across time, countries, or political or media institutions within countries. Instead, both political logic and news media logic have a partly situational and dynamic character, and there are tensions within the component parts of both logics. For example, there might often be tensions between policy and politics, as well as between journalistic professionalism and media commercialism. How such tensions are played out and resolved might have a significant influence on the exact nature of political logic or news media logic in particular processes, but may also change from time to time or vary across political actors, organizations and institutions, or between different news media (see further Esser 2013; Strömbäck and Esser 2014). This does not change the tension between political logic and news media logic, and that the news media as well as political institutions, organizations and actors regularly find themselves in situations where they have to decide to what extent they should let political logic or news media logic guide or govern their behavior. The more they let news media logic guide their behavior, the more mediatized they are.

Contributions and Criticisms of the Mediatization Perspective

While the relationship between media and politics has been at the center of research on political communication and news journalism for decades, and many important theories have been developed, tested and refined, overall the field is characterized by a lack of more general theories. It is in this context we believe the theoretical framework of mediatization is highly important. More specifically, we see at least four reasons where the theoretical framework of mediatization has great potential to contribute to further research on the relationship between media and politics and our

understanding of the processes that during the last decades have transformed and still continue to transform democracies around the world.

First, the theoretical framework of mediatization has the potential to develop into a general theory on the dynamic relationship between media, politics and democracy, including how that relationship evolves and changes over time. Second, we believe the framework of mediatization has great potential to integrate other theories related to the relationship between media and politics. This includes theories that are related to each of the four dimensions of mediatization, ranging from media consumption patterns to the institutional relationship between media and politics, factors and processes shaping the media coverage of politics and society including the coverage itself, and the extent to which political actors, organizations and institutions are influenced by media or guided by media logic. Third, in contrast to most theories on media and politics, the mediatization perspective has the potential to link micro-level processes and phenomena to meso- and macro-level processes and phenomena. Fourth, and this is also important, the mediatization framework raises many normative questions about the relationship between media, politics and democracy, without in itself being normative (for a wider discussion of these points, see Esser and Strömbäck 2014a).

If the framework of mediatization has great potential, it is also true that much work remains to be done and that there are reasons to be critical of how the mediatization concept is often used. First, mediatization still has the character of a theoretical perspective rather than a proper theory, and it remains more of a "sensitizing" than a "definitive" concept (Hjarvard 2013, 4–5). As such, it is more loosely defined and used as an exploratory tool than a carefully defined concept that lends itself easily to precise operationalizations that can be used in empirical research. Second, too often mediatization is vaguely defined, referred to rather than empirically investigated, and treated as a fact rather than as a process or phenomena to be investigated. Here we agree with Waisboard who, when writing about mediatization in general, notes that

> Yes, mediatization is a metaprocess that has spearheaded epochal transformations over the last century. But this should be considered a point of analytical departure or an intriguing affirmation to be tested rather than a conclusion. This is necessary to avoid deterministic conclusions which assume that the availability of media technologies inevitably transforms the society without closer inspection of the kind and magnitude of the changes. (Waisboard 2013, 7)

Third, the mechanisms of mediatization and the linkages between micro-, meso- and macro-level phenomena and processes remain rather poorly investigated, analyzed and understood. In addition, we also need to "understand better the factors that bind, steer and shape mediatization" (Waisboard 2013, 7), both in general and with respect to the mediatization of politics. Fourth, and more in general, there are still too few empirical studies on the mediatization of politics that operationalize mediatization in a theoretically coherent and strong fashion. Consequently, there is a need not only for more empirical research on the mediatization of politics, but also for the development of empirical indicators of mediatization along each of the four dimensions and the linkages between different aspects and mechanisms of mediatization. This weakness in conceptual and empirical terms had mainly motivated us to initiate this edited collection.

Mediatization of Politics—An Empirical Matter

While we strongly believe that the mediatization of politics is a highly important phenomena and process that needs to be better understood for a fuller understanding of the transformation of Western democracies, ultimately it should be considered an empirical question. Thus, there is a great need for both more theoretical work, operationalizations of different aspects and mechanisms of mediatization, and empirical studies. For future research in this area to be productive, there are some misunderstandings of the mediatization concept that we believe need to be avoided or treated as empirical questions rather than assumptions.

First, the mediatization of politics should not be considered a linear, unidirectional process. Neither should it be considered an exogenous force. When media institutions have achieved a certain threshold of autonomy from political institutions, organizations and actors, the degree of mediatization is likely to depend not only on the institutional framework, but also on various contextual and situational factors at work in specific processes. Thus, in any specific country there might be processes of increasing mediatization across time, but there might also be processes of decreasing or variable degrees of mediatization of politics. Whether the degree of mediatization of politics is increasing or decreasing also depends on the time frame under study.

Second, the degree of mediatization might vary not only across time or countries, but also across different media and different political institutions, organizations and actors within countries (Schillemans 2012). As the mediatization of politics ultimately is shaped by the practices and the tactical and strategic interests and needs of different media and different political institutions, organizations and actors within a certain institutional framework, it should not be perceived as an exogenous factor influencing all institutions, organizations and actors in a uniform fashion.

Third, and to reiterate a point already made above, we believe it is important to consider both media logic and political logic as multidimensional, where media logic is formed by professionalism, commercialism and media technology, while political logic is formed by polity, policy and politics (Esser 2013). The implication is that both media logic and political logic have a partly situational and dynamic character. This perspective also avoids the trap of technological determinism, recognizes the multidimensionality of both politics and media, and opens up for a greater understanding of the social as well as institutional interactions that help shape not only media logic and political logic, but also the relationship between these different logics and, on a broader level, between media and politics. Important to note though is that this does not change the fact that these are two different logics, anchored in two different societal domains, and that there consequently is a continuous tension between media logic and political logic.

Fourth, changes in politics must not be directly and willfully "caused" by the media to be studied within the mediatization paradigm. The reciprocal character of mediatization effects also includes strategic adaptations by political actors to incorporate media-related rationales in their own operations—the implications of which for the efficiency and autonomy of political processes need to be studied empirically (and cannot be answered theoretically alone).

Fifth, it is also important to think of the concept of mediatization, both in general and in the context of politics, as a non-normative concept (Hjarvard 2013; Strömbäck 2008). Whether mediatization has positive or negative consequences might depend not only on normative perspectives. It might also vary depending on what aspect is at the

forefront of the analysis or the degree of mediatization. Ultimately, it should also be considered an empirical question—like all other aspects of the mediatization of politics.

Overview of the Accepted Articles

We would also like to point out that we see this collection in a wider context of collective and cumulative theory building that is currently taking place. It accompanies other recently published or forthcoming publications like the ones by Couldry and Hepp (2013), Esser and Strömbäck (2014b) or Lundby (2014) that all aim at synthesizing relevant concepts and arguments and detecting superordinate connections that can serve as bigger theoretical building blocks for the consolidation and further development of the mediatization paradigm. In order to illustrate the diversity and richness of current scholarship, we would like to seize this opportunity and address *all* contributions that we eventually accepted. We hope that this overall summary will provide further context to the mediatization of politics and stimulate wider interest in it.

"Mediatization of Politics: Theoretical and Empirical Perspectives" (*Journalism Studies*, Volume 15, Number 3)

Grouped under the common theme "Theoretical and Empirical Perspectives", this first set of articles opens with two theoretical contributions that both discuss and analyze mediatization and the key concept of media logic. In the first of these, Kent Asp examines the institutionalization of news media logic from a New Institutional perspective. Among his conclusions is that the process of institutionalization of news media logic should be understood as an evolutionary process, primarily explained by institutional learning. The title of this article is "News Media Logic in a New Institutional Perspective".

In the second article, titled "Mass Media Logic and the Mediatization of Politics: A Theoretical Framework", Michael Meyen, Markus Thieroff, and Steffi Strenger propose a framework for analyzing both mass media logic as a driving force for social change and the change that is caused by the mass media. This framework mainly builds on Schimank's approach of agent–structure dynamics, rooted in Luhmann's system theory and starting out at the level of individual acting. One of the conclusions of this article is that the mediatization of politics should be understood as second-order effects following from the perceptions of first-order media effects among political actors.

The perception among political leaders and the media themselves of the influence of the news media is key in many accounts of mediatization, and there is often an assumption that the influence of the news media has increased. This issue is at the center of the article by Pekka Isotalus and Merja Almonkari, titled "Mediatization and Political Leadership: Perspectives of the Finnish Newspapers and Party Leaders". The article focuses on two key questions: first, how the Finnish press and political leaders themselves perceive the role of the media in the work of political leaders; and second, how they evaluate changes over time. While the results in general support the notion that Finnish politics has become more mediatized, they also suggest that the development might not be as straightforward as is sometimes assumed.

The next article is written by Nino Landerer, titled "Opposing the Government but Governing the Audience? Exploring the Differential Mediatization of Parliamentary Actors in Switzerland". It operationalizes the mediatization of political actors as the expressed

preference of parliamentary actors for audience-oriented activities. Among other things, the results show that not all political actors are equally affected by mediatization, and more specifically, that some parties—opposition and pole parties—are more likely to resort to mediatized and audience-oriented activities. This raises the prospect that a populist challenge to democracy might be a mutually beneficial symbiosis between audience-oriented political actors and commercially driven media companies.

In the next article, Monika Djerf-Pierre, Mats Ekström, Nicklas Håkansson, and Bengt Johansson investigate how mediatization influences news coverage of political responsibility and how politicians are held to account by the media. The news media are often perceived as democratic watchdogs, and from this perspective, how news journalism does *accountability work* is of key importance. The empirical study compares the news coverage of two industrial crises in Sweden in 1980–1982 and 2008–2011, respectively. Among other things, the results suggest evidence for the mediatization of politics but, also important, that this process is non-linear. The article is titled "The Mediatization of Political Accountability: Politics, the News Media Logic and Industrial Crises in the 1980s and 2000s".

In the final article, Peter Maurer and Barbara Pfetsch investigate the state of mediatization within a comparative framework including eight European democracies. The study draws from a comparative survey among journalistic and political elites, and focuses on perceptions of mediatization in the news media's political coverage and with respect to the level of conflict in the relationship between journalists and politicians. One of the conclusions in this article is that there are cross-national differences regarding the state of mediatization of politics, and that the media system context and structural differences act as moderators of the mediatization of politics. The article is titled "News Coverage of Politics and Conflict Levels: A Cross-national Study of Journalists' and Politicians' Perceptions of Two Elements of Mediatization".

"Mediatization of Politics: Facets of Media Logic" (*Journalism Practice*, Volume 8, Number 3)

The starting point of the works published under the master theme "Facets of Media Logic" is Josef Seethaler's and Gabriele Melischek's article on "Phases of Mediatiatization: Empirical Evidence from Austrian Election Campaigns Since 1970", a long-term study that finds clear evidence in support of the four phases of mediatization defined by Strömbäck (2008). Taking Austrian election campaign communication as an example and employing sophisticated time-series analysis, the study traces the transformation of the news media to an increasingly autonomous and powerful actor. This is evidenced in a proactive agenda-setting role, which is the first facet of media logic explored in this set of papers. This facet reveals itself in a more selective approach to covering political issues as well as more emphatic attempts at influencing the agendas of political parties. Over time, the authors find that it has become harder for parties to get "their" issues on to the media agenda, whereas—in a reciprocal relationship—media logic has reached deeper and deeper into the policy agenda-setting process.

The second article—authored by Shannon Sampert, Linda Trimble, Angelia Wagner, and Bailey Gerrits—shares many features with the first. Their study "Jumping the Shark: Mediatization of Canadian Party Leadership Contests, 1975–2012" is also longitudinal, also content analysis-based, and also structured around Strömbäck's four-phase model of

mediatization. This study focuses in particular on the turning point between the third and the fourth phase, a "jumping the shark" moment which in Canadian popular culture describes a dramatic activity staged solely for the purpose of attracting attention from a breath-taken media audience. This turning point, namely the election of 2000, is followed by a drop in campaign news coverage and a move toward more interpretative, personalized and game-oriented news. This, in the view of the authors, confirms a key element of the mediatization thesis: a shift toward facets of media logic at the expense of political logic.

Another important example of media logic penetrating campaign news coverage is at the center of the third article, by Paul D'Angelo and Frank Esser. Their study "Metacoverage and Mediatization in US Presidential Elections: A Theoretical Model and Qualitative Case Study" uses the United States to highlight those contextual conditions that are particularly conducive to a mediatization of politics. A specific type of news, called metacoverage, is particularly influential because it provides campaign organizations with information about the media politics environment that can be useful to adjust the direction of the campaign. D'Angelo and Esser propose a theoretical model that links mediatization to metacoverage, and lays out how it can be studied empirically. Metacoverage—as another facet of media logic—is found in news stories that foreground media use, interactions with media organizations and media strategies on the part of candidates and campaign organizations.

Taking up D'Angelo and Esser's work on metacoverage (and also their argument that not all metacoverage must necessarily be interventionist), the fourth article takes us beyond election campaigns to study facets of mediatization in crime news. Anat Peleg's and Bryna Bogoch's article, "Mediatization, Legal Logic and the Coverage of Israeli Politicians on Trial", highlights the conflict between media logic and legal logic in cases of high-profile criminal investigations. They find ample evidence of a mediatization of legal coverage, based on several indicators to measure journalistic interventionism (dramatization, emotional commentary and criticism of the court that all border on the concept of "trial by media") and metacoverage (in stories deconstructing the media strategies of legal actors as well as self-critically examining the media's own involvement in mediatized trials—something the authors understand as "counter-interventionism"). Like the three previous articles, this study also documents by way of content analysis which facets of public affairs coverage have changed under the influence of spreading news media logic.

Another article that looks at mediatization outside of election campaigns is by Jörg Haßler, Marcus Maurer, and Corinna Oschatz on United Nations Climate Change Conferences. Compared to the previous articles that focus on election news and crime news, their study on climate news finds fewer indications of media logic-driven news coverage and fewer indications of political actors following or adapting to media logic. The authors explicitly address this divergence, discuss reasons for it, and thereby provide clear evidence that mediatization effects are dependent on contextual conditions and issue environments. Another interesting finding of their study, "Media Logic and Political Logic Online and Offline: The Case of Climate Change Communication", is that they also find no indications of a special online logic that would differ from the logic of traditional news media. This finding indicates that the concept of news media logic remains viable and stable across channels and platforms.

This set of articles concludes with Tamara Witschge's contribution, "Passive Accomplice or Active Disruptor: The Role of Audiences in the Mediatization of Politics".

She draws attention to the fact that the commonly taken institutionalist perspective in mediatization research does not give sufficient attention to the audience—an aspect that we can confirm in light of the submissions we received. Witschge examines whether practices of news organizations to involve readers and viewers in their coverage challenge the independent status of the news media and the way they execute media logic. She finds this not to be the case. Apparantly, audience participation practices of mainstream news organization follow the same commercial interests that also guide their other news production. She takes this as an opportunity to reflect on the field's understanding of media logic and its facets.

In Conclusion

Taken individually and even more together, we believe these articles add significantly to our theoretical as well as empirical understanding of mediatization. They also suggest the importance of a nuanced and differentiated understanding of the mediatization of politics, as well as of the importance of studies that compare the degree of mediatization between political actors and institutions within countries as well as across time and countries. Thus, we hope this edited collection will contribute not only to increasing our present knowledge of the mediatization of politics, but also encourage more research into this key transformation of media and politics in contemporary democracies.

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