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Journalistic interpretation and journalism's political role

The paper investigates journalism's political role by exploring the different ways Finnish journalists actively interpret the issues they cover, how they evaluate the importance of interpretive and opinionated journalism, and how they see that the role of interpretation in journalism will change in the future. The empirical results are based on thematic interviews with 20 reporters and 10 chief editors in ten Finnish newsrooms and on a survey targeted to journalists in Finnish daily newspapers (N=330). The interviews were conducted in 2012 and the survey in 2013. Theoretically, the idea is that interpretive journalism implies media interventionism that for its part is connected to the mediatization of politics (e.g. Strömbäck & Dimitrova 2011) and to the more general social change from high modernity to liquid modernity. Kantola (2013), for example, asserts that the journalists of liquid generation differ from the earlier journalist generations in their emphasis on assertive opinion building. Our analysis gives empirical evidence on to what extent this interpretative ethos reigns in the Finnish newsrooms, and it describes how journalistic interpretation and political intervention occur in journalists' evaluations of news relevance, search for truth, generation of public discussion, and taking stances in political issues.