



# Media in Power: Some New Truths

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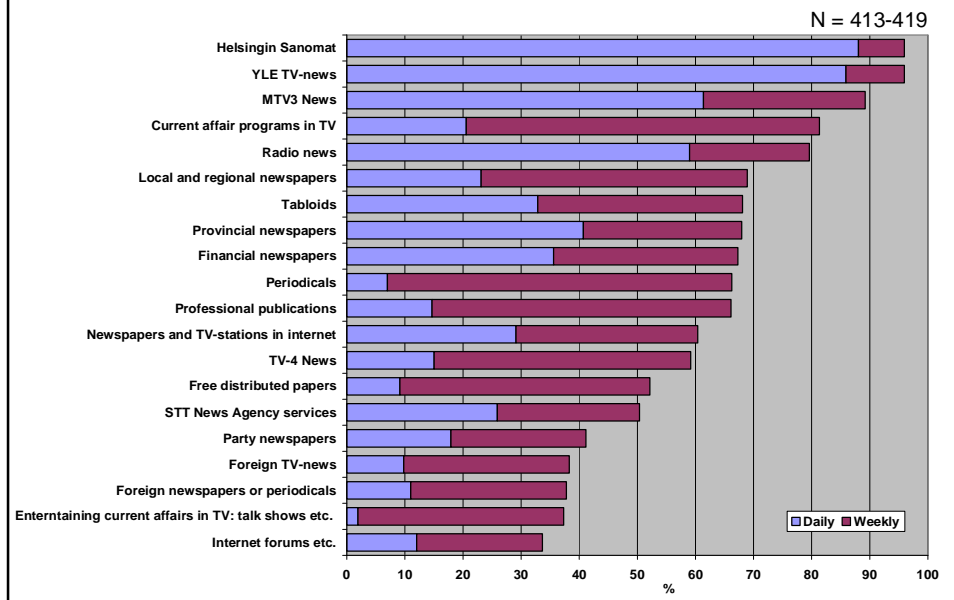
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## Themes of the presentation

- 1. Media diet of the decision makers**
- 2. Interaction with journalists**
- 3. The "depth" of mediatization**
  - Acting in and for publicity
  - Acting in policy networks
- 4. The "quality" of mediatization**
  - Strategic and communicative factors

## Media use of Finnish decision makers



## The classification of journalists

### ■ Chief editors and specialised journalists of most prominent media

- Most valued groups of journalists
- Limited number – personal relationships
- Systematic lobbying, mutual confidence
- Contacting may affect interpretation frames of the issues

### ■ National and local media reporters

- Assembly-line journalists, strong frames and angles may be set in advance, not enough expertise, use each other as sources.
- Becoming useful if other relations close up.

### ■ Inexperienced "summer reporters"

- exhausting to work with – "have to stay alert"
- make both factual and interpretative mistakes

## Interacting with journalists

### ■ Confidence as capital in personal networks

- Lots of informal collaboration
- Not really betrayals of confidence

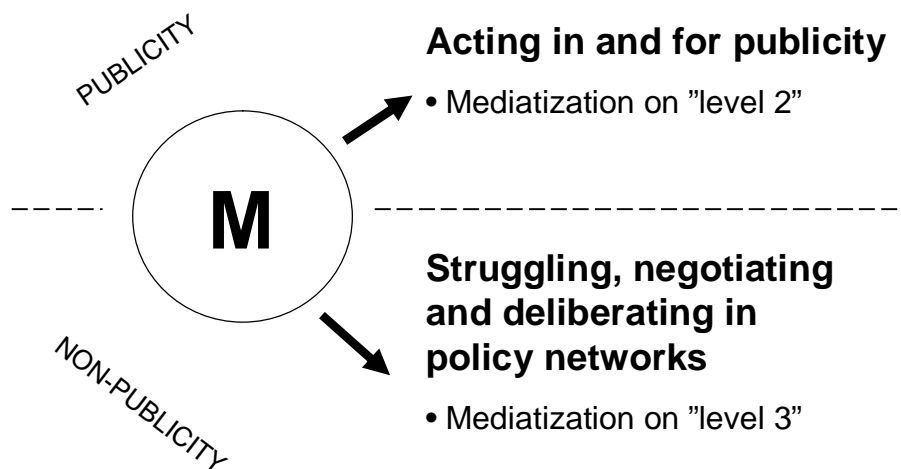
### ■ Two way flow of information

- Journalists “selling” their professional imagination: suppositions, opinion environment, framing of the issues...
- Power elites training themselves in the stock market of speculations
- Journalists still never expose their sources

### ■ Some clues of change of generation

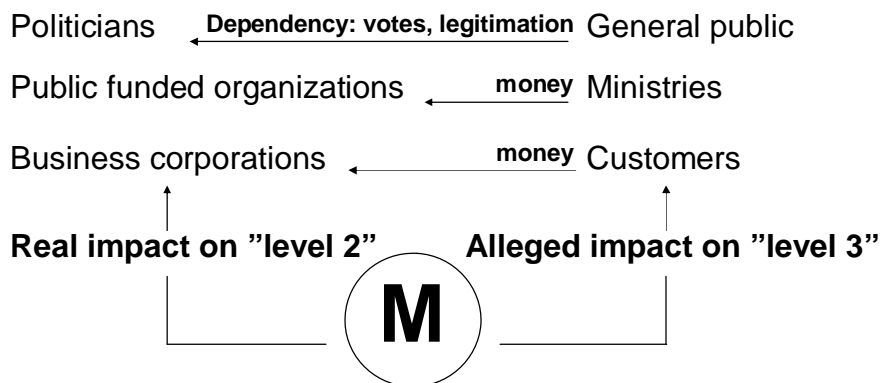
- Power elites not as exclusive as earlier?
- Previous generation: informal meetings when it is useful  
New generation – hanging out together for networking
- Intensified professionalization: both parties know the rules of the game

## The “depth” of mediatization



## Impact: Acting in and for publicity

*Paradox of media impact: "Third-person effect"*



## Impact: Acting in policy networks

### ■ Media images contribute to authority

- Decision makers mostly denied that media publicity would affect their opinions or decisions
- However, media images may contribute to their ability to further their ends

### ■ Media truths frame decision making

- Even decision makers may accept media truths unchallenged
- Contest among truths, lobbying
- Truths about issues vs. truths about public opinion

### ■ Publicity can create or inflate stakes

- Strong opinions in publicity creates headroom for negotiations
- Publicity may inflate one's stakes

## The "quality" of mediatization

- Unproblematized strategicity in publicity
- Publicity (public opinion) as a temptation
- Shamefulness of backing away
- Exposing to undue criticism and pressure
- Making people more committed
- Opening new viewpoints

Strategic  
mediatization



Communicative  
mediatization

## Unproblematized strategicity

"In publicity one simplify things and, of course, gives as positive interpretation of the own argument as possible. But in actual negotiations both parties are experts, and the point normally is not to convince the other party. The point is to make the other party understand the importance of the own argument." (trade union actor)



## Publicity as a temptation

“Instead of thinking that I have calling which says that this is the right thing to do, people are more and more thinking that, well, this is what the public opinion says. Or that there is pressure to this or that direction, and that we have to be able to react to that. These are the kinds of issues with which one has to wrestle oneself too. So, even if I think that I can be above such acts, the inner deliberation goes on all the time.” (politician)



## Shamefulness of backing away

“Publicity can be harmful or make stances rigid. If someone by accident says in public such opinion that is not well considered, it is, then, very difficult to back away.” (trade union actor)

“It is wise to avoid contesting in publicity for nobody to lose one’s face” (politician)



**Exposing to undue criticism**

**Opening new viewpoints**

**Making people more committed**

”One asks for trouble if one promotes public discussion (...) It will arouse awfully public criticism and pressure. (...) Okay, we can do it here in the working group within the ministry, and after one year busy work we will publish a proposal. Then the external pressure is only momentary, and we’ll probably get it forward just as we want. But will it be good? Anyhow it is so, that public discussion opens viewpoints and problems and also makes people committed. (politician)