

THE STRUCTURAL TRANSFORMATION OF THE DEMOCRATIC CORPORATIST MODEL: THE CASE OF FINLAND

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Abstract

As in many other European countries, the Finnish political public sphere has been mediatised and commercialised over the last three decades at the same time that structural changes have taken place in the national media systems.

By using Finland as an example, article considers the structural transformation of the "Democratic Corporatist Model" defined by Daniel C. Hallin and Paolo Mancini in their */Comparing Media Systems/* (2004). Article also examines what the Finnish case could bring to the discussions on the public sphere and its relation to empirical analysis in general.

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Ever since Jürgen Habermas's *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit* (1962) was first translated into English in 1989 (as *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*), lively debate has ensued on the democratic role of the public sphere. As is well known, in the first part of his far-reaching work, Habermas constructs a historical narrative of the rising bourgeois society and its commitment to the development of the concept of the public sphere as a counterforce to monarchic state regimes during the eighteenth century's Europe, especially in France, England and Germany. According to Habermas, the foundations for a bourgeois public sphere were laid for example by Immanuel Kant's work. The public sphere was represented as a new form of public discourse in which the common concerns of citizens could be carried out in rational political discussion or deliberations that formed public opinion through the general interest. In the second part of his work Habermas discusses the decline or "re-feudalisation" of this public sphere during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, when borders between state and private organisations began to blur and the public relations industry as well as the mass media colonised and commodified the public sphere.

Just as Habermas's own work is divided into conceptual and historical analyses, so too the debates on his work have been similarly divided. As Koivisto and Väliaverronen (1996, 22) put it, "Habermas largely replaces the historical analysis of the forms of public sphere by the history of ideas on the public sphere. This in turn tends to make his 'bourgeois public sphere' an ahistorical and idealistic concept." Criticism of Habermas's analysis has therefore been mostly directed either to the ideal concept of the public sphere or to the "historical mistakes" found from *The Structural Transformation*.

The former has emphasised the problems that normative idealism of common public opinion formed only through rational deliberation by informed citizens may cause by demolishing differences between genders and various social groups or discourses. These critics have reminded us of the importance of "weak publics" (Fraser 1992) or "counter publics" (Warner 2002) as well as of the meanings of the "emotional" and the "popular" in public debates (e.g. Hartley 1996; van Zoonen 2005). Some critics point out that rather than confirming "the belief in the possibility of a universal rational consensus ... the task for democratic theorists and politicians should be to envisage the creation of a vibrant 'agonistic' public sphere of contestation where different hegemonic political projects can be confronted" (Mouffe 2005, 3).

The other mode of critique has focused on problems in Habermas's historical conceptions of the bourgeois public sphere in Europe (e.g. Baker 1992; Zaret 1992; Eley 1992) and elsewhere to the point that Schudson (1992) asks of the American case whether "there ever was a public sphere," and supplies the answer, "No there was." Sparks (1998, 5-6) states that "no such media" that realise all the requirements of the Habermasian ideal of the public sphere "exist in the world today, and never have existed in the past."

The debate has therefore been concentrated on the concept and the historical formation of the bourgeois public sphere. Much less attention has been given analysing the narrative of the decline or re-feudalisation of the public sphere, which has generally been considered less "satisfying" – because of Habermas's inability to analyse properly late capitalist societies and their media systems (Calhoun 1992,

29-30). Because of the normative idealism of Habermas's theory, there has been a clear disparity between theoretical discussions and empirical research.

It has to be kept in mind that Habermas's *Structural Transformation* was first published in the early 1960s and was anchored to the post-war European context and intellectual traditions. Since that time Habermas has turned elsewhere in his theory of communicative action and discourse ethics (Habermas 1990; 1996). He has also re-evaluated *The Structural Transformation* in relation to its critics (e.g. Habermas 1992). Habermas (2006) has even analysed different forms of the mediated public sphere and considered how deliberative political communication could be used in empirical research. More recently, the view has also emerged by contemporary scholars that opposite perspectives of Habermas and Mouffe, for example, are not so opposite to one another: despite Habermas's and Mouffe's counter arguments both idealise the pluralistic public sphere (e.g. Karppinen et al. 2008).

Media and journalism studies have, however, eagerly adopted the normative ideal of the public sphere as the core of political journalism repeating the narratives of decline and the stories about public communication in constant crisis (see McNair 2000, 2-10). In these narratives the erosion of the public sphere has been linked to the marketisation, commercialisation and commodification of the media and has been characterised as the "tabloidisation" or "dumbing down" of political journalism (see e.g. Sparks and Tulloch 2000).

This article tries to bridge the gap between the empirical and theoretical approaches to the concept of the public sphere by using the changes in Finnish political communication as grounds for empirical testing. As in many other European countries, the Finnish political public sphere has been mediated and commercialised over the last three decades at the same time that structural changes have taken place in the national media systems. By using Finland as an example, I will consider the structural transformation of the "Democratic Corporatist Model" (Hallin and Mancini 2004) at a systemic level, a transformation that is going on in many North European countries. I ask whether Habermas's theory of the decline of the public sphere can be seen as accurate in this respect and, furthermore, what the Finnish case could bring to the relationship between theory and empirical research on the public sphere in general.

Democratic Corporatist Model in Transition

In their seminal comparative analysis of different media systems and politics Daniel C. Hallin and Paolo Mancini (2004) identify three "ideal types" of media systems dominating North American and European societies, exclusive of the former communist countries. In their classification Hallin and Mancini identify a Democratic Corporatist Model as distinct from an Anglo-American Liberal Model and a Mediterranean Polarised Pluralistic Model. The Democratic Corporatist Model is a system, in which state intervention in media is strong but media autonomy and professionalisation are nevertheless well developed. State intervention is intended to guarantee the plurality of the media markets rather than to colonise the political public sphere. Hallin and Mancini have located the Democratic Corporatist Model in Central and North Europe, especially in the Low Countries and Scandinavia, and Finland, according to the authors, is one of the countries that best represents the model (Hallin and Mancini 2004, 66-75).

Other features of the Democratic Corporatist Model have been the historically early development of the mass-circulation press in connection with the early growth of mass literacy as well as the recognised public service broadcasting. In this model the press has had close connections to political parties and other organised social groups such as trade unions, and the state has regulated public broadcasting in order to distribute content to all interest groups in society. Thus the Democratic Corporatist Model has been characterised by a high degree of “political parallelism,” whereby “the culture and discursive style of journalism is closely related to that of politics” (p. 29). However, at the same time North and Central European countries have supported the growth of commercial media markets and the relative autonomy of the media in relation to other social actors. Hand-in-hand with the Democratic Corporatist Model have gone the welfare state and high level of media professionalism (Hallin and Mancini 2004, 143-197). Such “co-existences” may be the feature that distinguishes the Democratic Corporatist Model most significantly from the two other systems wherein they “do not appear simultaneously” or might even “be perceived as incompatible” (Strömbäck et al. 2008, 19-20).

Hallin and Mancini’s contribution has inspired others to analyse the countries included in their systemic comparison. For example, Strömbäck, Ørsten and Aalberg (2008) have edited a comparative reader that tests whether the Nordic countries – Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Norway and Iceland – conform to the Democratic Corporatist Model as Hallin and Mancini claim. These authors conclude that even if there are variations and differences among the Nordic countries, it is possible to claim that a highly developed newspaper market, political parallelism, a high degree of journalistic professionalism and state intervention in the media system “are the most commonly shared features of the Nordic countries and indeed the Democratic Corporatist Model” (Ørsten et al. 2008, 268). Therefore the Nordic countries support Hallin and Mancini’s view (Hallin and Mancini 2004, 11) that at the large, systemic level, it is possible to classify countries according to this kind of models.

However, as Hallin and Mancini (2004, 12) note, “media systems are not homogenous,” and they are “in a process of continual change.” The Nordic countries have also been changing along with international tendencies towards the commercialisation of the media and the professionalisation of political communication. The rise of commercial broadcasting as well as the cuts in press subsidies have been apparent in the Nordic countries, where today all media are more commercial and more market orientated than ever. One reason for the commercialisation of the media has been changing media policy, namely, increased deregulation by nation states and the European Union. These changes have also meant more politically independent media and therefore diminishing degrees of political parallelism (Ørsten et al. 2008, 271). Hallin and Mancini, too, (2004, 251) conclude their analysis by saying that “the differences among these models, and in general the degree of variation among nation states, have diminished substantially over time.” They add that “in general, it is reasonable to summarise the changes in European media systems as a shift toward the Liberal Model that prevails in its purest form in North America” (pp. 251-252).

Even though systemic factors will always be important and will shape international tendencies and trends in ways that will never be adapted to national contexts

(Ørsten et al. 2008, 271; Brants and van Praag 2007, 108; Nord 2007, 91-92; Isotalus 2001, 11-13), it is justifiable to claim that there is a structural transformation going on in the media systems of the Nordic countries, and this transformation is challenging the Democratic Corporatist Model. It is not only the commercialisation of the media and the professionalisation of political communication have increased, but also the fact that the “European welfare state has clearly been rolled back as a consequence of the global shift to neoliberalism” (Hallin and Mancini 2004, 284), which has created trouble for the Democratic Corporatist Model. Another challenge to the model has been digitalisation and the rise of the network media, which already have re-structured media markets and systems in several ways and have also created a divide between different generations of media consumers and political agents.

Changes in the Finnish Media System

In Hallin and Mancini’s (2004, 75) comparative analysis, Finland is considered with other Nordic countries to be a representative example of the Democratic Corporatist Model. At historical and global-systemic levels, this view is accurate even today, but over the last three decades the radical changes in the Finnish media system and political culture justify the claim that the model has been extensively challenged. The structural transformation of the Finnish media system has meant a transition from partisan to commercial media and the increased de-regulation and re-regulation of media markets, changes that can be described as the overall marketisation of the Finnish media. Most of the statistics used in Hallin and Mancini’s analysis are ten to twenty years old. It is evident that the marketisation of the media systems accelerated in many North European countries from the 1990s on, and, in the case of Finland, this is undeniably true. Three indicators illustrate the change: the decrease in press subsidies, the diminishing role of public service broadcasting and the changing shares and statuses of different media in national media markets (see Table 1).

The press subsidies in Finland were at their highest in the late 1980s when the state supported the press with almost 80 million euros per year, even though the greatest share of the subsidy was channelled into postal delivery. However, in the 1990s subsidies were cut substantially, and since that time only some 13 or 14 million euros per year has been designated for press subsidies, of which the greatest share is channelled through political parties (Nieminen et al. 2005, 17; *Joukkoviestimet* 2006, 282). The structural transformation of the Finnish press was extensive during the 1990s, when many political and local newspapers were either closed down or merged with other papers. In this respect the period could be described as the “apoliticalisation” of the press. The result was the concentration of the press in the hands of a few large corporations, which were listed on the stock market (Jyrkiäinen 1994).

The undeniable hegemony of public service broadcasting was challenged for the very first time in its history, when commercial radio stations were launched in 1985. Finnish commercial television company, MTV, started also its own television news programmes and international satellite channels reached Finland in the mid-1980s. Until that time the national Finnish Broadcasting Company, YLE, had had a monopoly on radio and television programming – or, more accurately put,

Table 1: Changes in the Finnish Media System between 1985 and 2005
(Source: Statistics Finland)

	1985	1995	2005
Press subsidies (millions of euros)	79	25,2	14,4
Number of newspapers	229	231	205
Number of periodicals and magazines	4275	4818	4922
PSB Radio audience share (%)	100	69	51
Commercial Radio audience share (%)	– *	31	49
PSB TV audience share (%)	(70)	47	44
Commercial TV audience share (%)	(30) **	53	56
Largest private media company (and its revenues in millions of euros)	Sanoma OY (243)	Sanoma OY (313)	Sanoma-WSOY (2.622)
PSB (and its revenue in millions of euros)	YLE (201)	YLE (354)	YLE (375)
Household Internet connections (%)	–	7 (1996)	58

* Private radio stations launched in 1985.

** The share of commercial MTV from all television viewing in 1985.

in television there was a kind of duopoly, because YLE had rented its air time to MTV for entertainment programmes since the late 1950s. In 1993 MTV launched the first completely commercial national television channel, which, from its first year of operations, proved to be the most widely viewed channel in Finland. The second national commercial television channel Nelonen, was launched in 1997 as part of the largest media company in Finland, Sanoma Oy.

Heikki Hellman (1999) succinctly describes these changes in the Finnish broadcasting markets as a transition “from companions to competitors.” Even though the status of public service broadcasting is strong in Finland even today, it is evident that since the 1990s, YLE has no longer dominated the broadcasting markets. In the twenty-first century the share of commercial television channels has been more than half of all Finnish television viewing, with YLE’s share being about 45 per cent (*Joukkoviestimet* 2006, 170, 196). Stiff competition with commercial radio and television has led to extensive organisational reforms at YLE, including increasing emphasis on strategic management, scheduling and programming, all of which were formerly connected more with commercial than with public service companies (see Hujanen 2002). The audience share of domestic public service broadcasting in 2002 was less in Finland than, for example, in Britain, Spain, Italy, Austria, Poland or Russia, and it was the same as in France (*Joukkoviestimet* 2002, 259) – to name some of the countries representing the Anglo-American Liberal Model and the Mediterranean Polarised Pluralistic Model.

The changes described above are linked to overall changes in the status and shares of different media in the Finnish media markets, which, over the last three decades, could be described as a triumph of the commercial entertainment media. It is true that Finland, along with Sweden, Norway and Japan, is still a “newspaper nation” in the sense that in these countries more newspapers are published and read

per capita than anywhere else in the world (*Joukkoviestimet* 2006, 256). However, the fact is that, since the 1990s, Finnish newspapers have been continuously losing circulation and readers. The so-called prestige papers have been in particular trouble. The only papers that have succeeded in increasing their circulation after the depression of the early 1990s have been the popular tabloids and the free newspapers (*ibid.*, 195, 203), but even they have lost readers in the last few years, even before the devastating effects of the current financial crisis, which has gutted advertising incomes, took their toll.

The most rapidly growing print media in early twenty-first-century Finland have been the popular periodicals and magazines that more closely resemble the British and US tabloid papers than the Finnish tabloids, which perhaps can be described as “serious popular papers” rather than tabloids in the Anglo-American sense (see Sparks 2000, 14-15). For example, the most popular gossip magazine in Finland, *Seiska*, has almost tripled its circulation since the early 1990s. There is one top-rated “prestige paper” in the country, namely, *Helsingin Sanomat*, but the second and third popular newspapers are tabloids, whose circulations beat that of the “prestige papers” – and so do the circulations of most of the popular gossip magazines.

These changes demonstrate that nowadays all Finnish media are more commercial and market orientated than before. The Finnish media system has therefore been “marketised” as part of a “more general secularisation of society” (Hallin and Mancini 2004, 178), in which state intervention has diminished and market intervention has increased in all social sectors. Hannu Nieminen and Mervi Pantti (2004, 22) describe this change as a transition from “cultural-moral regulation towards economic-commercial regulation.”

The consequence of deregulation and marketisation has been stiff competition in the media branch, which in turn has led to a concentration of the Finnish media in hands of large corporations. The most active period in media concentration was the 1990s when several mergers took place. Since that time, Finnish media markets could be described as an oligopoly of a few large corporations that dominate the markets. In fact the media markets in every Nordic country can be described as oligopoly with one company significantly larger than the others, but a special characteristic in Finland is the unique status of one company, Sanoma Oyj, which by revenue in the year 2007 was almost eight times larger than the second largest company in Finland, the Finnish Broadcasting Company, YLE. However, more than half of Sanoma Oyj’s revenue came from businesses abroad, mainly from periodical and magazine publishing in the Low Countries and Eastern Europe (*Nordic Media Market* 2009, 19-26). Today’s media corporations in Democratic Corporatist countries are therefore more often business corporations than social institutions.

Large cross-media companies can share risks among the different media branches and therefore edge out smaller companies if there are economic difficulties. Another benefit in merging different media, from press to broadcasting and from Internet to book publishing, is the synergy this “cross-media structure” enables in media production and marketing (Croteau and Hoynes 2001, 116-117; Turow 1992). Large companies circulate content and advertisements in their media so effectively that cross-promotion seems to be the most innovative practice in commercial media today (see Herkman 2004). At the same time large commercial companies have constituted a counterforce to public service media, which continu-

ously have to legitimise their position to politicians and consumers as publicly funded institutions. By promoting commercial values, large corporations put pressure on the public service broadcasting (PSB), which has been challenged by neo-liberal ideology and claims that it “distorts media markets.” As a result of this legitimisation crisis, PSB has had financial problems in many European countries. In Finland the legitimisation crisis has led to remarkable organisational reforms in YLE as well as to pressure on funding systems other than license fees, which have been used in Finland since the 1920s.

Much of the media circulation and cross-promotion has been done in the name of convergence, a key word in media industries since the so-called digital revolution in the 1990s (e.g. Küng et al. 1999; Mueller 1999). The irony in “digital revolution” has been that technological development of media systems has cost a great deal of money and has simultaneously challenged radically traditional media businesses. For example, the digitalisation of television has been a painful process in many countries; in Finland it has been one reason for the distress of public service broadcasting (Hujanen 2002, 156-162). The younger generations of media consumers have embraced the Internet as their master medium in which social networks, free content and grassroots activism flourish. The press and broadcasting companies are trying to find ways to attract these consumer groups as paying customers before their devoted consumers become extinct. It is worth asking how “corporatist” this kind of media system can continue to.

The Structural Transformation of Media and Politics

The changes in political cultures and institutions have paralleled the changes in national media systems in a process that has generally been called mediation or the mediatisation of politics. The mediatisation of politics has involved at least three factors in the relationship between media and politics: the increased significance of media publicity for politics, the increased professionalism of political communication and the increased personalisation of politics. According to the mediatisation theory these changes have forced political agencies to rethink their actions through media insofar as the logic of today's politics is determined by so-called “media logic” rather than by the logic of politics itself – whatever that might mean (Mancini and Swanson 1994; Scammel 1995; Mazzoleni and Schulz 1999). Mediatisation has taken place at the same time that political agencies, such as political parties, have assigned their power to market forces, political ideologies have converged on multiparty systems and voter volatility and political cynicism have increased.

In Holland the rise and sudden death of populist politician Pim Fortuyn in 2002 has been described as a dramatic turning point in which the established and elitist political communication culture collided with the popularised performance politics of “medialand” (Pels 2003, 41-44; Brants and van Praag 2007, 99). The case of Fortuyn may be particular, but the mediatisation and personalisation of politics have been apparent in all Democratic Corporatist countries over the last few decades. The mediatisation of politics, the convergence of political ideologies and increasing voter volatility have also been apparent in Finland, even though they are distinguished by national characteristics.

The spread of television has often been connected to the mediatisation of politics, and mediatised politics could even be called “televisualised politics” (see McNair

2007, 131). The spread of television has also dramatically changed political publicity in Finland, beginning in the 1960s, but Finnish researchers in political communication have been unanimous in stating that it was the 1980s when television radically encroached upon political campaigns and communication strategies (e.g. Pernaa and Railo 2006; Salminen 2006, 17-32). Until then, Finland has been governed by a powerful president, Urho Kekkonen, whose policy was determined by the post-war relations between Finland and the Soviet Union and by close connections to Finland's economic elite. There was also a national tendency towards pluralism in media content during president Kekkonen's long-lived regime, which lasted from 1956 until 1981. This tendency was advocated by the public service broadcasting policy and by press subsidies, but it did not support "performance politics," which were propagated more by commercial media – first the yellow press in the 1970s and then entertainment television from the 1990s.

Press and public broadcasting in the 1960s and the 1970s also had close connections to the political establishment, which, as Hallin and Mancini have noted, supported strong "political parallelism." Conservative foreign news reporting, especially in the case of Finland's powerful neighbour to the east, characterised Finnish media in those days. However, Kekkonen's regime came to an end in the early 1980s, and Finland opened up to an international market economy. The partisan media began to disperse, and liberal journalism gained ground. Political parallelism declined somewhat when journalists began to shoulder their task as the "watchdogs of political power" more eagerly than ever. The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 also diminished the "self-censorship" of foreign news in Finland (Luostarinen and Uskali 2006).

One indicator of the mediatisation of politics is that almost all citizens depend on media content for information about politics and politicians, both during elections and at other times. In the 2003 parliamentary elections and in the 2006 presidential elections, for example, only eight percent of the voters had witnessed politicians speaking live. The most popular sources were television news and discussions as well as newspapers, even though the latter were considered as more important than television (Borg and Moring 2005, 54, 64; Moring and Gallup Finland 2006). Opinion polls published by the media have also been a central feature of Finnish politics and elections since the 1960s.

However, it is reasonable to assume that survey responses are biased by "the myth of the good citizen," who is rational and deliberative rather than emotional and impulsive in making decisions (Ankersmith 2003, 22). Increased voter volatility and the popularity of political entertainment reveal that performance politics may have much more significance in people's political choices than voter surveys and opinion polls would suggest.

Finnish politics has been personalised by mediatisation. Media publicity and campaigns are focused on a few top politicians, such as party chairmen, leading ministers and the president of the republic. It is therefore no surprise that the most popular elections are presidential elections, in which votes are given directly to one candidate, and only two main candidates face off in the dramatic media spectacle of a second round. The second most popular elections are parliamentary elections, while far less voter interest is awakened by local and by European parliamentary elections. The highest voting rates in parliamentary and local elections were

achieved during the politically active decades of the 1960s and the 1970s and in the presidential elections following Kekkonen's terms in the 1980s. Ironically, voters of "the new media age" are most interested in elections that have the least to do with real political power and voters everyday lives – since the president's political power was remarkably dismantled in the constitutional reform in the year 2000 – and are least interested in the elections that have the most to do with political decisions affecting their immediate living conditions.

The centrality of media publicity in political campaigns has increased the professionalisation of Finnish politics to the point that top politicians are trained in media performances, especially on television, and communication professionals are used during campaigns. One reason for this is that since 1991 paid political advertising has been allowed on commercial radio and television channels, a feature in which Finland differs from many other Northern and West European countries (Moring 2008, 57). It could even be argued that it was the successful use of advertising agencies in the presidential elections of 2006 and the parliamentary elections of 2007 that brought the National Coalition Party to victory: an all-around media strategy, positive image construction and ideological inversions in campaigning were carried out in a manner similar to the triumph of Tony Blair's Labour Party in Britain in the 1990s (cf. McNair 2007, 52-55). A closer comparison can be found in Sweden, where a right-wing alliance of bourgeois parties defeated social democrats and gained power in the parliamentary elections of 2006.

However, Tom Moring (2006) reminds us that Finland has not become as media-tised as some other states in Europe appear to have become. The degree of professionalisation of Finnish political communication was still quite modest in the early twenty-first century. The biggest parties and leading politicians had communication agencies and training only during their campaigns. As recently as 2002–2003 most members of Finnish parliament had no experience with image strategies or media training (Aarnio 2004). The spin doctors "are still absent in Finnish politics, and political journalists generally have direct access to the political leaders, including the Prime Minister" (Moring 2008, 56). Even though all candidates, campaign managers and media personnel whom I interviewed after the presidential elections of 2006 subscribed to the undeniable importance of media publicity for politicians, they also stated that the mediatisation of politics in Finland is still "at a quite amateurish level" (Herkman 2008a).

Therefore, the reason for the effectiveness of the Finnish media is not so much the professionalisation of political communication as it is the convergence of political ideologies, which has increased voter volatility and the success of populist politics in most multiparty system countries. The success of the bourgeois alliance in the Swedish parliamentary elections of 2006, for example, cannot have had much to do with political images constructed by advertising campaigns, because political television advertisements are still prohibited in Sweden (Nord 2007, 84). However, politicians and parties will use every means at their disposal to capture the attention of a volatile electorate in their campaigns. The mediatisation of political communication in Finland, as in Sweden, can therefore be described as a somewhat "lighter version" of the American model of professional political communication, which has been customised for a national Finnish context (Nord 2007, 91-92; Isotalus 2001, 11-13).

The Public Sphere and Politics

From an empirical point of view the main problem in the Habermasian concept of the public sphere is its singularity, which overlooks the contesting forms of public discourse as well as draws an imaginary line of demarcation between the public and the private as distinctive spheres (Koivisto and Väliverronen 1996, 22-24). Understood in the singular, the public sphere contains all political deliberation, from public interpersonal communication to the most popular mass media content. It might have been possible to consider the national public spheres in more or less this way until the mid-twentieth century, but since that time, the trans-nationalisation of the media industries, the globalisation of media culture, the digitalisation of media technology and the Internet as a "global" network have made it impossible to picture any singular public sphere as an empirical entity.

Therefore, for empirical understanding of political communication, we need more precise systemic models that take into account the various relations between different media forms, politics and private life. John Corner's sketch of the "spheres of political action" is a useful starting point. Corner (2003, 73) defines three spheres in which politicians or other political persons act, namely, (1) the sphere of political institutions and processes, (2) the sphere of the public and popular, and (3) the private sphere.

The sphere of political institutions and processes means those specific institutions and processes in which political decisions are made and political careers are constructed. Understood like this, the sphere of political institutions and processes is manifested in its purest way in political parties and other social organisations as well as in parliaments, governments and administration. This sphere is only "indirectly mediated," unlike the sphere of the public and popular, which contains all those serious and entertaining occasions when "politicians are seen as 'public figures'." In Corner's definition the public/popular sphere is the "realm of the visibly 'public,' the space of a *demonstrable* representativeness." Corner adds a third sphere, private life, to the junction of politics and the public sphere and notes that "there is ample evidence that the private sphere of politicians is now more than ever being used as a resource in the manufacture of political identity and in its repair following misadventure" (Corner 2003, 72-76).

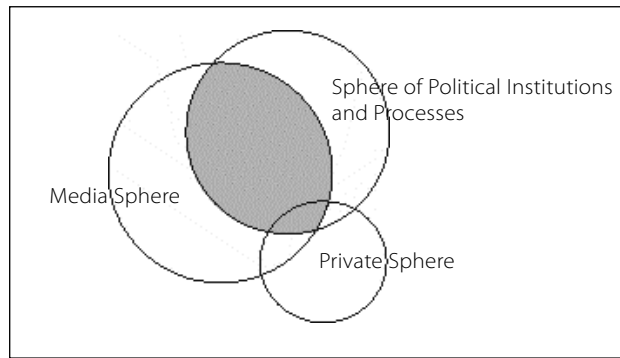
Corner's sketch has retreated from the Habermasian ideal model in at least two ways. First, Corner takes the disparity between the public and political spheres as the real state of affairs and does not see it as a kind of decline or re-feudalisation of the public sphere. Second, unlike Habermas's concept of the public sphere, Corner takes seriously the role of private emotional experience in politics. It is possible to maintain that Corner's three spheres resonate more easily with the empirical reality of today's political communication than with Habermas's ideal concept of one totality of the public sphere.

However, it is difficult to see Corner's three-part diagram at a systemic level because Corner concentrates on the actions of political personae. I will therefore reshape Corner's model in favour of a systemic comparison and rename the sphere of the public and popular a "media sphere." By using the term "media sphere," I emphasise the role of the media in all its technological and cultural forms in today's mediatised culture and political communication. In Hallin and Mancini's systemic comparison the media/politics junction is essential, including in relation to the discussions on the public sphere in general. It is worth remembering, however, that

the media sphere is only a part of the public sphere in the Habermasian sense, and vice versa. Thus, the key questions from a systemic point of view are how much and in what ways do the media sphere and the sphere of political institutions and processes intersect, and how does the private sphere trespass on them.

In the ideal Democratic Corporatist Model, the politics and media spheres intersect each other largely because of a strong political parallelism (see Figure 1). The ideological pluralism of the media sphere is supported by the state regulation of media markets and public service broadcasting, which guarantee that the interests of various social groups can be introduced into the public discussion. The role of the private sphere in politics is weak because the corporatist model stresses social groups and institutions over individuals. Yet the private interests of citizens are represented by various social groups and political parties and therefore are taken into account.

Figure 1: Democratic Corporatist Model (Ideal)

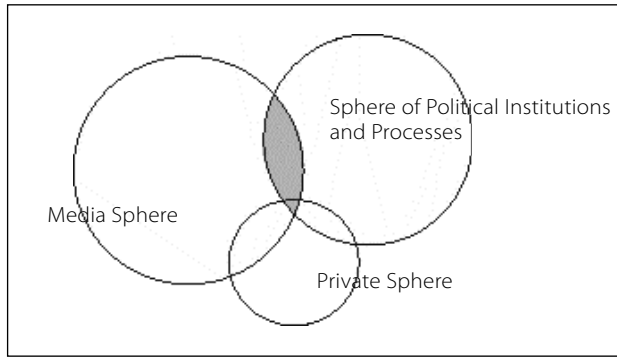


This kind of model was pursued in the Nordic countries between the 1960s and the 1980s but, as in the case of Habermasian ideal concept of the public sphere, it is questionable if it has ever been realised in its ideal form. At least in Finland, a strong political parallelism has historically meant an elite-driven media sphere, in which journalistic culture has not been so autonomous and the private interests of citizens have not been represented as well as Hallin and Mancini's model supposes (cf. Nieminen 2006). Certainly some pluralism of ideologies and social groups in the Finnish media sphere was achieved in the 1960s and the 1970s, thanks to an active media policy, but the political media were also closely controlled by the political and economic elite of President Kekkonen's regime. It is clear that the liberalisation and marketisation of the Finnish media since the 1980s decreased this kind of political parallelism and increased the autonomy of the media from political elite.

The mediatisation of Finnish politics exploded with the commercialisation of the media and the changes in the political culture after Kekkonen's time. However, in contrast to the mediatisation theory, the consequence of these changes has been the separation of political processes and the media sphere (Herkman 2008a; Kunelius et al. 2009). Interviews after the presidential elections of 2006 proved that a kind of "amoral" discourse of professional political communication had largely replaced normative discourse in the statements of candidates, media personnel and campaign managers, indicating the "secularisation" or "apoliticalisation" of Finnish politics.

Survey responses showed that voters were divided into two groups by generation: many of younger voters were keener to take “a playful postmodern stance” towards political media publicity, whereas some older voters were more critical of the commercialisation and personalisation of the public sphere (Herkman 2008b).

Figure 2: Democratic Corporatist Model in Transition



The commercialisation and liberalisation of the media have therefore meant more autonomy for the media and less political parallelism, but at the same time divergence between political processes and the media sphere as well as an increasing intrusion of the private sphere onto political and other media publicity (see Figure 2). In the Democratic Corporatist Model the mediatisation of politics has therefore meant an increased intersection of the media and private spheres but decreasing intersections of the media sphere and political institutions and processes, at least when they are understood as decision-making processes in a parliamentary democracy. The mediatisation of politics has therefore not increased the transparency of political processes, as was supposed. Quite the contrary.

As Brian McNair (2007, 63) puts it:

In an intensifying competitive environment, therefore, the political process comes to be seen by journalists as the raw material of a commodity – news or current affairs – which must eventually be sold to the maximum number of consumers. Inevitably, those aspects of the process which are the most sellable are those with the most spectacular and dramatic features, and which can be told in those terms.

In Finland this has meant that, since the 1990s, political publicity has flourished in two kinds of events, namely, during elections and during political scandals, which are most often linked to the private lives of politicians.

As in Sweden, the Finnish media can be described as “politics-friendly,” because “most of the national media still pay a great deal of attention to political affairs, particularly during the run up to an election” (Nord 2007, 93; Strömbäck and Nord 2008, 118). However, there is also great deal of evidence that this shared political publicity does not awaken volatile voters’ interest any more than dramatic and personalised political publicity of election campaigns and political scandals. This is also the reason why politicians yearn for professionalised political communication and performance politics (e.g. Corner and Pels 2003; Niemi 2006).

Above all, the performance politics of election dramas and media scandals deal with moral discussions in postmodern societies (Lull and Hinerman 1997; Thompson 2000). “Moral politics” are not as interested in the structural power relations of a society or in political decision making of social institutions as in the moral values of individual choices. The problem in focusing on this kind of politics in today’s media sphere is that remarkable power is still exerted by national and trans-national political institutions.

Political scandals, in which general moral annoyance is displayed by the media, might arouse views about “the watchdog media” with concrete political consequences, as in the case of Finnish Foreign Minister Ilkka Kanerva, who had to resign after sending several hundred text messages to an erotic dancer in the spring of 2008. Such episodes can, however, bring our attention apart from political decisions fundamentally affecting our daily lives. As McNair (2007, 63) puts it: “We may in such cases be enthralled at how the mighty are fallen, while remaining ignorant as to the less glamorous but more important details of how political power really works and is exercised.” The crucial problem of performative political publicity was crystallised by one of my interviewees, who worked as a campaign manager in the 2006 presidential elections: a “disparity between public performances and hidden political decisions.”

Analysing changes in the Finnish media system and political communication can therefore more generally reveal the problems facing the public sphere when the Democratic Corporatist Model is transformed into the Liberal Model (see Table 2). The success of the popular press and commercial broadcasting indicates that it will be justified to assert, at least in the Finnish case, that Hallin and Mancini (2004, 159, 165-170) understate the role of the commercial popular press and overstate the role of public service broadcasting in today’s Democratic Corporatist countries.

Table 2: The Twenty-first Century’s Finnish Media System in Comparison with the Ideals of the Habermasian Public Sphere and the Democratic Corporatist Model

	Habermasian Bourgeois Public Sphere (ideal)	The Democratic Corporatist Model (ideal)	The Democratic Corporatist Model in Transition
<i>Period</i>	18 th century	1960s and 1970s	Since the 1990s
<i>Location</i>	England, France, Germany	Nordic and Low countries, Central Europe	Finland (other North European countries?)
<i>Arena for political deliberation</i>	Public sphere	Public and media spheres	Media sphere
<i>Political interests represented by</i>	Private citizens	Social groups (parties, trade unions)	Individuals (politicians, consumers, activists)
<i>The role of citizen</i>	An active individual	A member of a social group	Audience, a consumer
<i>Political parallelism</i>	Strong, weakly mediated	Strong, mediated	Weak, strongly mediated
<i>Political decision making</i>	Common, public	Common, corporations	Hidden
<i>Political publicity</i>	Deliberative	Informative	Performative

Similar changes with slight variations characterise all the countries included in Hallin and Mancini's Democratic Corporatist Model. The partisan press and press subsidies have declined, and the commercial media have strengthened their position. In the Nordic countries the model seems to resonate more with the past than with the present (Esmark and Ørsten 2008, 36-38; Moring 2008, 57-58; Strömbäck and Nord 2008, 117-118). Among the Nordic countries, Norway and Sweden seem to have the most continuity with the model. In Norway and Sweden political television advertisements are prohibited and the share of public service broadcasting is still at a high level, even though the commercial media constantly increase in significance (Nord 2007; Strömbäck and Nord 2008, 113-116; Østbye and Aalberg 2008, 89-98). The popularity of the Internet is spreading in all countries, and no one knows exactly what its significance will be in future media markets and in politics. Developments in the US demonstrate that the Internet's role in political communication will probably be much more important than it is today (e.g. Nord 2007, 90).

However, it has to be kept in mind that every country included in Hallin and Mancini's Democratic Corporatist Model differs from every other country proving that variations characterise this transition. The same kind of "pillarisation" of various Christian and political ideologies seen in the Netherlands cannot be found in the Nordic countries (see Hallin and Mancini 2004, 146, 151-152). The case of Pim Fortyun has had undeniable and particular significance for more recent political communication in Holland (Pels 2003; Brants and van Braag 2007). Norway and Sweden could have supported the welfare state and public service broadcasting more enthusiastically than Finland, even though the mediatisation of politics and the professionalisation of political communication may otherwise be more established in Norway and Sweden than in Finland (Strömbäck and Nord 2008; Østbye and Aalberg 2008) Finland may therefore differ in many ways from other countries in the Democratic Corporatist Model.

Still, the mediatisation of politics, the professionalisation and personalisation of political communication, the increased voter volatility and populist politics have been apparent in all (formerly) corporatist countries. Table 2 demonstrates how the Democratic Corporatist Model constituted an effort to create pluralistic and diversified public sphere by media policy and state intervention in mediatised and corporative countries during the 1960s and 1970s. It also shows that this system has been declined by deregulation and commercialisation of the media since the 1980s and 1990s. Finland could therefore be taken as a baseline for comparing whether the same kind of separation of the media sphere and political decision-making is taking place in other countries of the model. At least Cees Hamelink sees that the professionalisation of political communication, common to many European countries, is increasing the divergence between the interest of political elite and citizens: "Professionalization emphasises the democracy of representatives, not the democracy of citizens" (Hamelink 2007, 181).

A key question is whether this kind of separation is a problem emerging in systemic transition or whether it is a more permanent symptom of larger problems facing North European democratic societies today. Is the public sphere in the more mediatised Liberal Model, towards which Democratic Corporatist countries are turning, also more transparent and therefore more democratic, or is it just more

colonised by those who have money enough to run public relations industries, as Habermas suggests? Commercialisation of the media does not necessarily increase a neutral journalistic professionalism. Quite the contrary; it is “likely to create new forms of advocacy journalism and political parallelism, even as it undercuts the old ones” (Hallin and Mancini 2004, 286). This certainly appears to be true in Finland, where the news business today is intensively connected to political elites as the sources and subjects of journalism (Kunelius et al. 2009).

Another important question is how the Internet will affect political publicity: will it become a prominent political public sphere or will it remain a fragmented public arena of private interests as it has been? The divide between political and media generations in today’s societies suggests that there will be remarkable changes in this respect, when the older generation of the political and economic elite retire during the next few decades.

The most important lesson from the Finnish case, however, is that the mediatisation of politics may focus our attention as citizens and researchers too much on the “secondary dimensions” of politics, such as media performances, election campaigns and political scandals. The mediatisation theory may be taken too much for granted, even though there is still a great deal of politics and decision-making behind the media sphere. It might therefore be time to take the sphere of political institutions and processes seriously again.

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