MEDIATISATION OF POLITICS: REFLECTIONS ON THE STATE OF THE CONCEPT

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Abstract

This paper reviews the current state of the literature on the mediatisation of politics. Five common assumptions are being identified, which in my view form the core of a basic understanding of the concept. I discuss for each of these assumptions a number of further deliberations. My analysis is based on a theory of functionally differentiated societies. More precisely, I draw on the vision of modern societies that German sociologist Niklas Luhmann has introduced. According to his view the functional specialisation of social sub-systems is accompanied by an increased consolidation of performance relations between them, because self-referential fixation on the own function inevitably causes deficits in most other capacities. Against this background mediatisation is reconstructed as a response to a serious deficit of political systems: the notorious lack of public attention given to democratic politics within modern societies. This framework has several implications for the reasoning on mediatisation, which are outlined in the article.

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Introduction

"Mediatisation" is a neologism of communication studies that is guided by terms such as economisation, judicialisation and politicisation. Just as economisation denotes the encroachment of economic calculi onto non-economic areas of activity (e.g., family, health, public administration), so mediatisation refers to the increase in importance of medial calculi in many non-media areas of activity in contemporary society (e.g., science, law, sport). By medial calculi are meant here the general criteria of attention, selection and presentation used by professional news media. Research on mediatisation looks for explanations for the fact that media visibility is perceived today in wide areas of society as an effective tool for increasing performance, which is why enormous efforts are devoted to its production. Moreover, mediatisation research is interested in the question of what it means for society when deciding, acting and communicating that are compatible with the media become the norm in more and more areas of social and cultural life.

The concept of mediatisation has rekindled long-standing debates within political communication about the relations of dependency and power between media and politics. What is innovate, then, is primarily the concept itself and the line of argumentation that it designates, rather than the state of affairs to which the concept responds. Mediatisation is also often understood as expressing a new supremacy of the media (Meyer and Hinchman 2002; Kepplinger 2002; 2008), which may explain why the concept has attracted significantly more attention within the European social sciences (Couldry 2008; Hjavard 2008; 2013; Lundby 2009a; Livingstone 2009) than in the US. Major impetus for its popularisation has come from Gianpietro Mazzoleni's study of media logic in the Italian election campaign of 1983 (Mazzoleni 1987) and Mazzoleni and Winfried Schulz's highly respected essay on the mutual dependencies of media and politics in contemporary democracies (Mazzoleni and Schulz 1999). Although since then the concept has developed greatly (Schulz 2004; Imhof 2006; Strömbäck 2008; 2011a; Hjavard 2008; Kunelius and Reunanen 2012a; Meyen et al. 2014), the mediatisation paradigm still looks more like an unfinished discourse than a theoretical approach that is used consistently. Nonetheless, we can make out several fixed points within the current debate forming a common basic understanding of mediatisation. This contribution reviews the state of the debate in its present form according to five basal assumptions.[1] Drawing on a systems theory approach to mediatisation, the foundations of which are laid out elsewhere (Marcinkowski and Steiner 2014), I will also formulate for each of these assumptions a number of further deliberations.

The Concept of Mediatisation – Five Basic Assumptions

Mediatisation Is a Reaction to the Logic of Media

In the usual understanding of the concept, mediatisation of politics means the diffusion of a specific media rationality in the sphere of the political. In this case, it always refers to democratic politics and free media, since state-controlled media can obviously not develop an autonomy that can then reach out into other areas of society. Rather, they are themselves governmentalised in the sense that compliance with the ideological positions of the ruling political elite forms the sole basis for the creation of media publicity. The thesis of the mediatisation of politics therefore

needfully assumes that media and politics are, at root, autonomous areas of action in an open society – which, if you will, is a further (often unspoken) premise of this approach (Strömbäck and Van Aelst 2013, 342; Kunelius and Reunanen 2012a).

Within communication studies, the inherent laws of media is called "media logic" (Mazzoleni 2008; Lundby 2009b). The concept is based on the idea that media develop certain rules and routines in the production of public communication, with these rules being determined by a number of constraints: for example, by the cultural symbol systems that are needed to construct and communicate meaning; by the specific technology that is used to create and disseminate news; by the organisational form of a medium that enables it to administer, finance and provide in the long term communication technology and labour power; by norms of appropriateness governing the profession; and, finally, by the self-understanding of media actors who shape the operational business of producing news. Within the interaction of these components emerges a particular "format" of media reality, which is assumed to give rise to an enormous shaping power for thinking, communicating and acting in society (Altheide and Snow 1979).

Although the mediatisation thesis is in this respect based on a quite complex concept of media and a no less expansive concept of media logic, reference is usually made, particularly in the context of the mediatisation of politics, to the typical production rules of journalistic news media (Strömbäck 2011a; Esser 2013). These rules comprise at least three interconnected control systems: (1) regularities of selection in the sense of the conscious choice of events, issues and states of the world for public information; (2) regularities of narration in the sense of typical patterns governing how media texts are narrated, structured and sequenced; (3) regularities of interpretation in the sense of recurrent and cross-theme patterns in the assignment of meaning and framing. News media use such routines to select and present public affairs in such a way that they are attended to closely by the audience. Under such conditions, political communication by the media frequently has predictable properties, such as the focus on strong images, a preference for events rather than structures, the focus on people rather than on institutions or ideas, particular attention to conflicts and deviations from the norm, the interpretation of politics as a competition, etc. Mediatisation is a term used for the graded response to this media reality. It denotes on the one hand the extent to which politics is willing to engage in the media's reality – for example, granting political importance to the issues prominently dealt with by the media, adopting the interpretations selected by the media as premises of its own acts of communication, bestowing actual influence on the people "loved" by the media. Marcinkowski and Steiner (2014) have denoted such phenomena of media resonance in practical politics as "simple" (first-order) mediatisation of politics, with the term describing a development in which the media – rather than parties, parliament or government – increasingly determine what is of general interest in politics, what counts as the adequate fulfilment of function, and which facets of politics are deserving public attention. Politics is mediatised to the extent that it has accepted the description of itself provided by the media as a valid orientation. Marcinkowski and Steiner speak of "reflexive" (second-order) mediatisation when political actors become so used to absorbing into their own repertoire of behaviour the attention rules practised by the media that they operate them on their own: for example, they create

pseudo-events, stage strong images, push people into the foreground and tailor everything to them, serve the human interest, provoke conflicts, etc. Reflexivity of mediatisation denotes the ability of politics to see itself through the eyes of others (the media) and to describe itself accordingly. In this respect, the concept defines the transition from a reactive to an active way of dealing with media logic. This can mean different things, from the habitual, almost unconscious adjustment by individual actors of their communication behaviour, to the creation by political institutions and organisations of structural measures to benefit conditions of media production. In the literature this is known as the *adoption* of media logic or the *accommodation* of politics to the media. Both terms do seem to suggest different degrees of voluntariness and compulsion.

Since media use different techniques of dissemination and adopt different forms of organisation, and since their professional norms are subject to change, we should, strictly speaking, assume a plurality of media logics and think of these as being dynamic rather than static (see also Strömbäck and Esser 2014). However, if reference is made to media logic in the singular, then the perspective of those affected is being considered, since political actors (and their advisers) can obviously only orientate themselves towards what they consider to be the logic of the media. The media-related horizon by which politics orientates itself is therefore inevitably something that it creates itself; it is a self-creation which incorporates those elements of news logics which they consider to be important and which they have experienced themselves. Accommodation is therefore always preceded by the "adaptation" of media logic in the literary sense of reworking something for other purposes. In the course of this reworking for political use, components are joined to form a new whole, one which might well not occur at all in the reality of media.

More important than the diversity of media logic(s), though, is the thesis that the news logic of traditional mass media, which is at the core of the mediatisation concept, faces a massive loss of importance and impact in the digital age, which is why the concept will become obsolete in the near future. This argument is unconvincing for several reasons. First, a number of studies on media usage indicate that television, radio, and the press will remain the backbone of political communication in all Western democracies, including the United States, for the foreseeable future (Rosenstiel and Mitchell 2012; Lilleker and Vedel 2013; Saad 2013). As long as that is the case, the traditional news media and their logic will act as the central point of orientation for politics, something which is also indicated by current studies of the individual perception that politicians have of the media landscape. Second, several studies also show that online offshoots of the traditional news media accept responsibility for all wide-ranging components of political communication in the Net, something that has been termed the "mediatization of the Net" (Fortunati 2005). These bridgeheads carry the existing news logic of the journalistic mass media into the Net and, in this respect, enhance its relevance rather than its relevance being relativised or even suppressed by the Net. Besides, we can find definite evidence of a new formatting of political communication in the Internet, for which terms such as interactivity, virality, inclusivity and specific forms of connectivity (to name just a few) are certainly appropriate (van Dijck and Poell 2013, Klinger and Svensson 2014). This only shows, though, that in principle there might exist a logic of online-media communication about politics, a thought that opens up further

opportunities for the mediatisation paradigm to be applied rather than making it dispensable (Schulz 2014).

Mediatisation Is a Process

As can be seen from its morphology, mediatisation is a term denoting process. It identifies one aspect of social change – namely, the penetration of society by the logic of production of public attention practised by the media. Schulz (2004) points to four aspects of social change for which media play a role: the extension of human possibilities of communication in factual, temporal and social ways (extension), the substitution of societal activities by media-related activities (substitution), the linking of media and non-media activities (amalgamation), and the accommodation of social behaviour to principles of media communication (accommodation). Imhof (2006) deals with forms and consequences of social processes of differentiation that are shaped by the development of communications media, such as the emergence of new social inequalities (stratification) and the fragmentation of social groups and public domains (segmentation). Kunelius and Reunanen (2012a) as well as Marcinkowski and Steiner (2014) refer to the functional differentiation of modern societies as a key to understanding the mediatisation process. Hjavard (2008), meanwhile, defines mediatisation as a process of societal modernisation, one which is driven by the organisational, technological and aesthetic ways that the media function.

The consequence of thinking in terms of process is first of all that mediatisation effects only become visible in the long term and are not of a short-term nature. In terms of research strategy this means that empirical studies of mediatisation must be longitudinal or intertemporal. Second, consequences of mediatisation must be thought of as unintended effects, since social change is not determined consciously or in detail. And, third, it stands to reason to consider mediatisation always in conjunction with parallel processes of social change, processes with which it is interwoven. Of particular interest here is the interplay of mediatisation with similar processes by which system-specific calculi expand their sphere of influence. Marcinkowski and others (2013), for example, have been able to show with the example of the German higher education system that the mediatisation of universities is an immediate consequence of their economisation. Their analysis is based on a socio-theoretical perspective in which mediatisation appears as a result of the increasing functional specialisation of modern society. As a result of this specialisation, the mutual interdependencies between the functional areas increase, so that performance relations between them thicken and have to be structurally anchored (Schimank 2006). Mediatisation denotes to a special type of performance relation, namely between the media system and other social systems, which try to gain access to the output of the media: publicity.[2] Reflexive mediatisation would then be nothing other than the effort to ensure structurally that public visibility is available (Marcinkowski and Steiner 2014, see also Kunelius and Reunanen 2012a). Admittedly, we still need to explain why publicity should be regarded today as a response to a variety of functional problems of society, where previously money, law or trust could be relied upon.

With regard to politics, some authors have described mediatisation as a historical process that can be reconstructed from the different stages of development in the relationship between politics and media in Western democracies (first Asp

and Esaisson 1996). What these authors seek to make visible is how political logic has been gradually reshaped by the logic of (commercially operating) news media. Typical here is the work of Blumler and Kavanagh (1999), who argue that the "third age" of political communication is characterised by an all-encompassing professionalisation of the communication management of the political system, a constantly growing pressure of competition in the media system, an anti-elitist populism practised by the wide-ranging news media, a centrifugal diversification of what is offered by political communication, and a fundamental change in how people perceive politics. Similarly, Brants and van Praag (2006) have described a half-century of election campaigns in the Netherlands as a sequence of dominance in political communication of *party logic*, *public logic* and *media logic*, a sequence which corresponds to a shift from party democracy to audience democracy. This historicist understanding of the mediatisation of politics has also been given important impetus by Strömbäck (2008) and his four-phase model, although he has since come to understand the phases more in terms of four dimensions (Strömbäck and Esser 2014). For all their clarity, though, such models of historical process remain ultimately unsatisfactory, if only because they assume at least implicitly a *telos* of development for which vague structural concepts such as "telecracy" and "mediocracy" (Meyer 2001) then suggest themselves. In addition, mediatisation is assumed to have a degree of uniformity, periodisability and singleness of purpose which is not commensurate with its actual complexity and multiformity.

Less effort has so far been spent on modelling mediatisation as a causal process – that is, on differentiating according to its causes, characteristics and consequences. On the contrary, current literature often uses the concept interchangeably to refer to all three of these elements. This ambiguity clearly prevents the development of the concept into a full-bodied analytical paradigm. Some authors have explicitly advised against modelling the mediatisation process in a causal-analytical way (Schulz 2004). At the same time, causal thinking is by no means excluded by the assumption often made that there may be interactions, such as between mediatisation of politics and politicisation of media.

When it comes to the question of who or what triggers the process of mediatisation, the majority of authors provide an expectable answer: the media cause mediatisation. Unspecific reference to "changes" in media conditions, the "expansion" of the media system, the "proliferation" of media channels, or the somehow increased "importance" of the media at the end of the twentieth century is usually made here (Schulz 2004; Hjavard 2008; Meyen et al. 2014). If we see media development as a sufficient condition of mediatisation in society, then we can ask, for example, whether this development (particularly in the case of politics) is a result of the television age, or whether it had already begun with the rise of the mass press in the nineteenth century, and whether finally the Internet will trigger a new push of mediatisation. Contrary to such technological-deterministic speculations, the first premise of the approach points to the fact that mediatisation is bound neither to a particular technology of dissemination and nor to a specific organisational form of the media, but to the development and autonomisation of original media mechanisms for producing and bundling public attention with regard to events and issues in the world. The condition of possibility for mediatisation can therefore be seen on the most general level in the differentiation of a system of mass media

which operates according to its own laws, as was already originally pointed out within systems theory some 20 years ago (Marcinkowski 1993; Luhmann 2000; see also Kunelius and Reunanen 2012a). With regard to the news media, which are of critical importance for the mediatisation of politics, the key lies generally in the development of a professional journalism up until the end of the nineteenth century and especially in the formation of an interventionist or interpretive news logic in the twentieth century (Strömbäck and Esser 2009; Salgado and Strömbäck 2011a; Cushion and Thomas 2013), a logic which no longer limits itself to reproducing the self-portrayals of politics.

What I have sketched here, though, is no "history" of mediatisation, but the historical development of a condition of its possibility. For media autonomy and intrinsic logic are only a necessary condition of processes of mediatisation, but not a sufficient one. Otherwise, wherever comparable media conditions prevail, the same phenomena would have to appear at more or less the same time and with more or less the same intensity within societies and internationally, which obviously is not the case. How else could we explain that the mediatisation of universities represents a quite observable phenomenon, but not the mediatisation of primary schools? If mediatisation is ultimately about public attention, then it makes sense to look for the reasons of differential mediatisation not least in the specific publicity requirements that are quite unevenly pronounced both within and between the various areas of activity in modern society. Accordingly, pushes in the process of mediatisation are not triggered by the media (push model); it is caused by the contingent need for public attention of a given system combined with its inability to attract attention by system-specific means. There is much evidence of both in the case of politics. On the one hand, democratic politics needs public attention to keep its internal dynamic of gaining and losing power going. On the other hand, politics in the globalised world has become more complex than regular people can account for. Consequentially, increasing shares of the population turn away from politics and focus their attention on other points of interest within modern society. Mediatisation, in my view, is a reaction to this basal dilemma of functionally specialised politics.

Such a push-and-pull model of mediatisation has at least two conceptual consequences. First, it should prevent us from representing political actors as victims of mediatisation that have the logic of the media imposed upon them as if by force. Politics is involved actively in the process of mediatisation in the sense that it is happy to make use of the services provided by the media. Second, it should reminds us of the fact that mediatisation is about enabling, not about destroying politics. It serves foremost to make politics possible under conditions of high political complexity, nearly complete inclusiveness of democratic politics and tightened competition for scarce public attention (see Marcinkowski and Steiner 2014). This in no way excludes the fact that the incorporation of media logic into the repertoire of actions belonging to politics does have unintended consequences.

Mediatisation Is a Multidimensional Phenomenon

The literature offers different answers to the question of what exactly is the object of mediatisation studies in the realm of politics. Most literature talks simply of a mediatisation "of politics" (Mazzoleni and Schulz 1999; Hajer 2009; Strömbäck

2011a). From time to time, though, the mediatisation of individual political actors (Elmelund-Praestekaer et al. 2011; Kunelius and Reunanen 2012b), a mediatisation of political organisations (Schillemans 2012; Strömbäck and van Aelst 2013; Donges and Jarren 2014), processes (Spörer-Wagner and Marcinkowski 2010) and institutions (Meyer 2009), or simply of the mediatisation of political communication (Blumler and Kavanagh 1999) is mentioned. And, indeed, mention has even been made of the mediatisation of media (Cushion and Thomas 2013, 342). This indecisiveness can be traced back to the fact that no conceptual differentiation is made between the conditions, the characteristics and the consequences of mediatisation. If we assume that all three areas could be objects of investigation for mediatisation studies, then this means first of all that (to talk along disciplinary lines) research focusing on communicators, on content and on effects all have to make a contribution to these studies. This also makes clear that mediatisation is a multidimensional concept, since it is concerned with all dimensions of the communication process.

Jesper Strömbäck (2008) has formulated this most clearly so far. He distinguishes four dimensions of the mediatisation of the political sphere: (1) the development of news media into the primary source of information about politics; (2) the dissolution of institutional, financial and personal links between media organisations and political institutions; (3) the development of an autonomous construction logic for political media reality; and (4) the development of media logic into the calculus used by political actors to guide their patterns of communication and action. Since the second and third dimensions are concerned ultimately with the same thing (the institutional autonomisation of media is, after all, a prerequisite for the formation of their operational independence), we can capture the analytical content of Strömbäck's model by discussing just three dimensions.[3]

The Mediatisation of the Reception of Politics. This cannot mean that people today have in any quantifiable way less primary experience of politics than they did in the past. Such a claim would be difficult to prove empirically. On the one hand, there are and always have been a proportion of the population who abstain from politics. On the other hand, those who are interested in politics now possibly have a different primary experience of politics than their predecessors. They are less often involved in political parties and prefer instead more unconventional forms of participation. But *different* does not necessarily mean *less*. What also cannot be meant is that people talk less often about politics because they use media more often. Empirical studies suggest the opposite is the case: those who often use political news in the media also discuss politics more often. Mediatisation of reception can therefore only mean that (quite irrespective of the extent of primary experience of politics) we are more often exposed to media reports on politics, and that conversations about politics are becoming more and more based on information that we receive from the media. Even if we can reconstruct a plausible understanding of the mediatisation of reception in this way, what still remains unclear is why the political public is considered to be an important element in Strömbäck's model at all. In the usual understanding of mediatisation, the accommodation of politics to media logic, the audience clearly does not occur. If Strömbäck nonetheless considers the dimension of reception to be important, then he probably does so because he assumes that the pressure on politics to adapt increases with the increase in use of the media for political information, since a wide-ranging presence of the media in

society points to the media's influence on public opinion (Strömbäck 2008, 236). A closer analysis of the argument shows that it works just as well if it is geared solely towards the perception that political actors have of the range and power of media rather than towards actual media use of the population. Mediatisation research can in this sense dispense with research into media use, and should concentrate instead on deciphering the implicit theories and perceptions that political actors have of people's behaviour regarding media use and of the media's power to affect. I shall return to this point when I consider "mental mediatisation."

Mediatisation of Public Communication about Politics. With this dimension, we are concerned with showing that news media are more than mere organs of pronouncement or dissemination for political primary communicators. Rather, they have developed the autonomy that I have already mentioned with regard to theme selection, theme interpretation, opinion formation, timing, method of presentation, etc. Diachronic studies are clearly needed here, and they are now also being increasingly provided (Brants and Van Praag 2006; Zeh and Hoopmann 2013; Seethaler and Melischek 2014). The most serious conceptual problem of cross-sectional studies, which still represent the bulk of research, is to provide a theoretically founded notion of the dominance of political logic in public communication about politics, a notion from which autonomously constructed media reality can be validly distinguished (Mazzoleni 1987). Either we define this state *ex negativo*, i.e., as the absence of typical features of media logic, or we resort to pure self-description, according to which politics is exclusively what politics says it is.

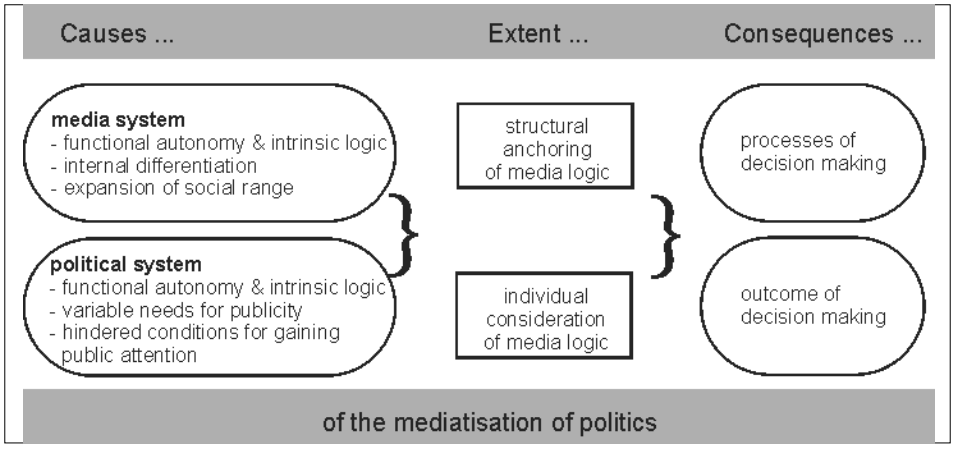
Mediatisation of Politics. In my understanding, we find ourselves here in the dimension of effect. This leads to the question already raised above: what really are the relevant consequences of mediatisation for politics? Most authors refer here to all possible traces of an adjustment to the media, whereas, in line with my suggestion above, we should really distinguish between adoption of media reality of politics ("first-order mediatisation") and adoption of criteria of its production ("second-order mediatisation"). The latter includes not only approaches of an individual and informal kind, in terms of the dealings of political actors with journalists, for example (Davis 2009; Elmelund-Praestekaer et al. 2011; Kunelius and Reunanen 2012b). Second-order mediatisation also comprises institutional and organisational innovations, such as the adoption of formal regulations governing contact with media, decisions on whether committees are public or non-public, the timing of sessions, the content and frequency of press releases, the forming of specialised communication departments, the expansion of competencies and changes to the hierarchical position of organisational units of communication, the shift of resources for their benefit, etc. (Donges 2008; Schillemans 2012). What often remains ignored here, though, is the fact that adoption means the complete spectrum of the handling of the logic of media attention, including therefore measures to shield or make invisible certain areas of politics. But even if we consider both together, measures for producing and shielding against media resonance, we can ask whether doing so really captures all the relevant consequences of mediatisation. Such measures are certainly valid indicators for an adoption of media logic and therefore a good yardstick for the state of the process of adjustment. But if nothing more comes out of it for the core business of politics, if mediatisation affects "merely" the form but

not the function of politics, then that would certainly still be of academic interest – but it would only have a limited social relevance. We should therefore add a fifth dimension to the research agenda, one that is concerned with the substantial political consequences of mediatisation. Relevant consequences of mediatisation would arise when the process of accommodation brings about consequences for the functional purpose of politics – namely, the production and enforcement of collectively binding decisions.

Such typologies are useful to clarify what empirical research on mediatisation has to deal with. Instead of indiscriminately denoting all this as dimensions of mediatisation and thereby abetting the confusion described above concerning the semantic content of the mediatisation concept, we must state very precisely where we are in the process model of mediatisation. If it is about the autonomy and intrinsic logic of political communication by the media, then we are concerned not with a dimension of mediatisation, but with a condition of its possibility. Research into indicators for the accommodation of political actors, processes and institutions tell us something about the degree of mediatisation. Ultimately, we should distinguish this from the study of the consequences of mediatisation; and, as far as I am concerned, we should only talk about these consequences when it comes to proving that mediatised politics decides differently, and that in two senses: differently as far as the process of decision-making is concerned (politics) and/or differently in relation to the results of decision-making activity (policy).

The following figure illustrates where the dimensions are to be located in a process model of mediatisation:

Figure 1: A Process-Model of Mediatisation



Mediatisation Is a Gradual Phenomenon

Mediatisation is not a disjunctive fact, but a gradual phenomenon. It can be differently far advanced in different dimensions. We won't find it in any venue of society, and we won't find it in each branch of politics. Instead, mediatisation will most prominently occur in venues where a lack of public visibility threatens the operational basis of a given process or institution.

Nevertheless, the gradualisation in the middle part of the process model (Fig. 1) showing the competition between calculi and logics is of paramount importance. In the case of politics, very far-reaching versions of the understanding of mediatisation have been formulated in this respect, ranging from a complete superimposing of political rationality by the logic of media, to a veritable "colonization" (Meyer and Hinchman 2002) of politics. Such exaggerations are generally based on a simplified notion of what is called "the" political logic. The notion of a uniform political logic is opposed in political science by the concept of *governance*, which expresses the idea that modern governing takes place in a variety of different and interwoven regulatory structures in which quite different mechanisms for coordinating action come into operation (Kooiman 1993; Pierre 2000; Benz and Papadopoulos 2006). The regulatory structure includes all forms of the intentional ordering of issues, formal and informal, governmental and quasi-governmental, self-regulation and external regulation. The coordinating mechanisms in operation here range from hierarchy, through market-shaped coordination, shared norms and routines, to agreement by compromise (Bevir 2013). The central insights of the governance perspective include the assumption of a constantly growing importance of non-hierarchical forms of regulation based on negotiation; the description of the factual complexity of horizontally and vertically networked systems of regulation with their sometimes contradictory combination of functional logics; the insight into the importance of informality in the political realm; and, finally, the extent of involvement of private actors in the production of collectively binding decisions. At the same time, regulating structures and mechanisms of coordination differ not only between different institutional spheres, but also between different sectoral policies.

Given the complex networking of regulatory structures, rationality calculi and legalities, it is hardly plausible to speak of a displacement of the logics of politics by the logic of the media. Mediatisation is not synonymous with de-differentiation. In the words of systems theory, it does not play on the level of part-systemic guiding values ("codes"), but rather on the level of "programmes" (Luhmann 1995; see also Marcinkowski and Steiner 2014). It therefore means the incorporation of additional rationality calculi into regulatory systems that actually exist. What exists, though, is not replaced, but reorganised to a certain extent. The task of empirical research on mediatisation is to analyse where measures are taken to ensure public visibility in the existing political structures of regulation, and where not. There are three key questions of interest here: How do the rules and routines of media production behave as regards to the (in the narrow sense) political components of the governance structure of an institutional sphere or of a political field? What problems of compatibility and connectivity are there, such as between coordination through media logic and coordination through hierarchy or negotiation (Grande 2000; Marcinkowski 2005)? When there are "competing institutions" (Cerny 2000), what conditions cause political actors to give preference to media rules over alternative means of political coordination of action? Research that is devoted to these questions not only provides information regarding the degree of the mediatisation of politics, but also allows for a more differentiated view of its consequences. Because, if we do not think in terms of the repression of political rationality calculi, but of different forms of their coupling with journalistic calculi, then the assumption of differential consequences of mediatisation presents itself. Political and journalistic calculi can

relate to each other indifferently, complementarily or incompatibly. Depending on which, mediatisation can also result in an increase in performance as well as in blockage, or simply lead to nothing at all (Marcinkowski 2007).

Mediatisation Is a Multi-level Phenomenon

Research on mediatisation can begin on different analytical levels – microscopic, mesoscopic and macroscopic (Donges 2005; Strömbäck 2008). This is entirely understandable given the objects of study that such research considers, which range from individual media use through organisationally anchored media logic, to the transformation of areas of action in society. More interesting here is also the question of whether what we have identified as the core of the mediatisation process (namely, the anchoring of media logic governing the creation of public attention outside the media) can also be conceptualised on all three of these analytical levels. This question is relatively easy to answer for two of the three levels of analysis.

On the macroscopic level of society, we can observe mediatisation as a structurally secure form of drawing on mass media services in non-media functional areas, with the consequence that criteria, norms and guidelines belonging to service delivery by media are implemented in the programme supply of other social systems (Kunelius and Reunanen 2012a; Marcinkowski and Steiner 2014). Even if the identity of an action area is not thereby put at risk, because mediatised politics is still politics, and mediatised sport is still sport (Vowe 2006; Meyen 2009), we can still talk in terms of changes which are observable and potent macroscopically. Of course, politics continues to be concerned with the production of collectively binding decisions and all action such as communicating is based on it. But if, with respect to media employability, no longer everything can be decided as politics might wish it to be, then we are dealing with a limitation of systemic autonomy in the operation of its guiding value. Uwe Schimank (2006, 76) has termed this a "hetero-referential framing of part-systemic self-referentiality."

From a mesoscopic perspective, mediatisation acts as a collective term for all references to mass media services in the structural and procedural organisation (as well as external communication) of corporate actors (Donges 2006; Schillemans 2012; Strömbäck and Van Aelst 2013). Also on this middle level of analysis there are studies that deal with changes to institutionalised routines of procedure under the influence of media logic, as they concern, for example, the metamorphoses of logic of political negotiation (Spörer-Wagner and Marcinkowski 2010).

On the individual level, mediatisation has been associated with the altered perception of politics by citizens as a result of their dependence on news media (Strömbäck 2008), but also with the individual behaviour of politicians in their dealings with media (Elmelund-Praestekaer 2011; Kunelius and Reunanen 2012b). In both cases, there is a problem – or at least there is if we value the consistent use of scientific terms. Media influence on thought and action is in fact occupied within communication studies by the notion of *media effects*, a notion with which the concept of mediatisation is in this respect in competition. To avoid the charge of merely exchanging terms in order to be able to claim that what it is doing is new, microanalytical research on mediatisation should at least be able to make clear that it deals with a very specific type of media effect. To this end, the literature provides a number of valuable clues (especially Kepplinger 2007; 2008; Schulz 2009; Ström-

bäck 2011b), which could be condensed into a model of "mental mediatization." The key points of this model can best be conveyed when they are contrasted with a simple pattern of individual media effects as these are usually thought of in the communication sciences (see Table 1). A first difference concerns the question of who is affected by mental mediatisation in contrast to political media effects. While research on media effects begins with effects on the recipient, it stands to reason that, in the case of mediatisation, we begin with effects on the person who is reported about: in the case of the news media, then, political actors. Politicians are also consumers of media content, but, in contrast to other recipients, they are informed by the media not only about events and states of affairs in the world, but especially about how they themselves are perceived externally. When they open the newspaper, they therefore look not through a pair of binoculars, but in the mirror. This fact distinguishes them from "normal" media users and establishes through the particular nature of this involvement a highly idiosyncratic reception situation. A first feature of this model of effect is therefore that it focuses on a relatively small group of users with a specific reception modality.

Table 1: A Model of Mental Mediatisation

	Media Effects	**Mental Mediatisation**
Those affected	Media Users	Subjects of Reporting
Triggers	Media Contents	Anticipation of Contents
Consequences	Attitudes/Behaviour towards Objects of Reporting	Attitudes/Behaviour towards the Media

A second difference to conventional thinking is already suggested here – namely, effect beyond content. Usually it is assumed that media effects are caused by media content: by a specific piece of information, a persuasive item of news, a specific framing, etc. In the case of mental mediatisation, though, we assume that it is the fact of being observed itself that causes changes in the thinking, communicating, and acting of the politicians concerned. According to this model, what triggers effects is the experience of the omnipresence of media, the expectation that the smallest utterance will always somehow reach the light of media publicity, combined with a hardened notion built through years of experience of what the media will make of it – in a word, the anticipation of media practices and products. It is not critical whether all this also then takes place. Occasional experiences of the relevant kind are more than sufficient to reinforce the expectations described (Davis 2009), which otherwise have an effect without having to be confirmed on a daily basis. In a modification of Altheide and Snow's well-known dictum (1988, 206), then, we could talk in terms of the *primacy of anticipation over content*, which adds another facet to the idea of the self-involvement of political actors in their mediatisation.

The third difference is in the type of effect. Usually it is assumed that the media influence attitudes and behaviour of recipients in relation to the issues which they report on. In the case of mental mediatisation, though, we suspect that it is about the attitude towards the media themselves. Politicians experience at first hand what powers of influence the media can exercise. This experience, coupled with frequent contact with journalists, the persuasions of media advisers and their own extensive

media consumption, leads to the development of ideas about how media function. Especially significant here is the power of media to influence public opinion that political actors typically assume (Davis 1983; Gunther and Storey 2003). This leads almost inevitably to the idea that it is important for politicians to control their dealings with the media in order to be successful.

Using this line of reasoning, we can explain the adjustment of politics to the laws of the media at the micro level, too. Since the theoretical argument differs in three relevant respects from the standard model of media effects research, it is justified to bring the concept of mediatisation into play to describe this very specific form. The research available on the influence of presumed media influence can then be used (Tsfati and Cohen 2005; Cohen, Tsfati and Gunther 2008) to investigate the consequences of the mental mediatisation of political personnel for decision-making processes and policies.

Conclusion

The mediatisation of politics, as I have been trying to conceive of it here, is not a direct result of media development and also not a process by which politics is exclusively "affected." It is created, rather, in the deep structure of functionally differentiated society. In this social formation, specialised functional areas for politics, economics, law, science, etc. have formed which owe their ability to perform to the absolutisation of certain guiding values and which precisely for this reason have deficits in the consideration of competing spheres of value. Science is programmed to truth and does not necessarily think economically. The economic sphere is concerned with profits and not with the natural environment. The judiciary focuses on law and not on education. Politics specialises in the handling of power but is not primarily moral. This built-in ignorance of secondary concerns has become a relevant problem of modern society. This is why all functional areas of society are in many ways dependent on the performances of other functional areas that, precisely due to their specialisation, they themselves cannot provide (or at least not in sufficient quantities). The mediatisation of politics is nothing else but the reaction to an essential deficiency within the political system: the typical deficit of attention given to politics in modern society, in which growing parts of the potential public turn away from politics and towards other attractions. Politics counters this threat to its own foundations of legitimation with affection towards that functional area which is, like no other area, able to bundle public attention: the media. The downside of this development is that politics has to reckon with an uncontrollable manner of its social visibilisation just as much as with excess attention to states of affair that it would prefer to deal with discreetly. Adaption and handling of media logic therefore always have two goals: steering media attention to specific issues, positions and messages, and deflecting it away from others. In other words, reflexive mediatisation aims at the ability to "manage" public attention. However, it is the positive side of the distinction (attracting attention), that drives the mediatisation process, because camouflage is easily manageable by system specific (especially bureaucratic) means.

The systemic view makes it clear that the process that we call mediatisation is not, in truth, about the media and whatever kind of intrinsic logic(s) they have, but about the performance to which it grants access: namely, publicity. Media logic is

not in itself important, even for politics; it is a means to an end. This end is called public attention, which, as all experience shows, is bound in contemporary society to media visibility. Accommodation does not really apply to media; it applies to the mechanisms that have proven to be particularly effective in the struggle for scarce attention. Each media logic is an operative formation of the guiding value of publicity. We may therefore wonder whether the process described here really can be called the mediatisation of politics, when it is actually about intended publicity, which, in turn, is used as a means to the end of managing assent, ensuring legitimacy, maintaining or gaining power – that is, for genuinely political ends. Ultimately, the process described here serves the maintenance of politics. That does not speak against the use of the term mediatisation, however. In the case of economisation, too, it is not decisive how the profit made possible by the use of economic calculi is put to use. Only within the economy is economic logic an end in itself; in the rest of society, the economic use of resources serves other ends, such as health (enabling a visit to the health spa), security (being able to take out another insurance), law (paying for the best lawyers) or truth (having more money for research). What is decisive is that this extension of possibilities is bought through the installation of a special external reference, which should be referred to with the appropriate concept formation.

Notes:

1. I am orienting myself here to a so-called consensus list, which participants (including myself) put together at the end of several days of discussion as part of the "After Mediatization" workshop during the ECPR Joint Session in St. Gallen in 2011. For reasons of space, I have assigned some of the points that appeared on this longer list to my five primary assumptions.

2. According to my earlier writing I refer to publicity as the medium of the media (Marcinkowski 1993). The concept includes two different aspects: social visibility, e.g. being observeable independently of space and time (Thompson 2005), and the recognition of recognition (Luhmann 1970), e.g. knowing that others might know. In this text I use "publicity" and "public attention" synonymously.

3. Strömbäck differentiates between these two dimensions because he still viewed mediatisation (at least in his essay from 2008) as a historical-genetic (phase) flow model in which institutional independence precedes operational autonomy. This differentiation seems to me to be superfluous for an analytical distinction between dimensions.

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