

Mediatization and governance: an overview

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**Abstract**

Much has been written about the mediatization of society, i.e. that the institutional rules of the media as separate institution influence or even determine processes in other. However most of this literature has focused either on the media institution itself or on its influence on the political subsystem. The relation between media and governance so far has been largely overlooked. This paper provides a theoretical overview of the relation between mediatization and governance. It identifies three theoretical perspectives are being used in public administration to study the relation between media and governance processes: the literature on democratic information; political agenda setting; and political communication and PR. It further discusses that these theoretical perspectives need to take account that the media function through a commercial media logic. The commercially oriented media logic affects the relation between media and governance processes, as the concept of mediatization addresses. The paper ends with some theoretical reflections and directions for future empirical research to explore the relation between media and governance in depth.

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## 1. Mediatization in the context of governance processes

Much has been written about the mediatization of society, i.e. institutional rules of the media as separate institution influence processes in other institutions, as in politics (Schulz 2004; Cook 2005; Hjarvard, 2008; Landerer 2013; Strömbäck and Esser 2014). Many scholars describe how the institutional rules of media penetrate in the political sphere, as politicians follow an electoral logic, strive for media attention, and they adapt their behavior to the requirements of media (cf. Landerer 2013). However, few researchers have studied whether or how institutional rules of the media affect governance processes.

### *Governance as complex interaction processes*

This is strange since governance seems to be the one of the most popular 'catchwords' these days as illustrated by the extensive literature and the amount of policy documents on governance and governance networks. Governments all over the world seem to be looking for or experimenting with new forms of horizontal governance like public-private partnerships (Osborne, 2000; Hodge and Greve, 2013), interactive decision-making and stakeholder involvement (McLaverty, 2002; Edelenbos and Klijn, 2006) or various forms of citizens involvement (Torfing and Triantafillou, 2011). There are many conceptualizations of governance. Most conceptions share a focus on process instead of on structure, and on the limits of governmental power. This represents the idea of a shift from government – with an emphasis on the organization and the uni-centric power of governments – to governance – with an emphasis on the process in which outcomes are achieved. Or as Pierre and Peters put it "The strength of the state has become contextual and entrepreneurial rather than, as was previous the case, something derived from the constitutional and legal strength of the state institutions (Pierre and Peters, 2000: 194).

In this paper we take a narrow understanding of governance which excludes understanding governance as good governance or new public management (see Rhodes 1997; Frederickson, 2005) since then the concept becomes very broad. In this paper we define governance as more or less horizontal governing with and through various societal actors. Governance focuses on the complex interaction, decision- and implementation processes between public actors and other actors thus governance takes place in networks of actors (Klijn 2008). We use the terms governance and governance networks along each other or say that governance is the process that takes place within governance networks. We then use the term 'governance network' to describe public policy making and implementation through a web of relationships between government, business and civil society actors

Governance networks can roughly be defined as "more or less stable patterns of social relations between mutual dependent actors, which form around policy program and/or clusters of

resources and which are formed, maintained and changed through series of (policy) games<sup>1</sup>” (Koppenjan and Klijn, 2004, pp.69-70). Crucial to the emergence and existence of networks are dependency relations between actors (Hanf and Scharpf, 1978). The resource dependencies around policy problems or policy programs require actors to interact with one another and create more intensive and enduring interactions (Mandel, 2001; Agranoff and McGuire, 2003). At the same time, however, actors have different perceptions on the problem and will choose their specific strategies, which will make interaction unpredictable and therefore complex (Rhodes, 1997; McGuire and Agranoff, 2011). This makes processes in governance networks complex. The process of problem solving in networks thus takes quite some time and needs as various authors have argued a lot of dedication and active management (Klijn et al, 2010; McGuire and Agranoff, 2011).

*Governance and media: the lay out for this article.*

Until recently it seemed like the literature on mediatization and mediatization of politics and the literature on governance processes were two worlds apart, although these phenomena considerably interact in practice (Hajer, 2009). In the last years, however, several publications have described or empirically shown aspects of the mediatization of governance (as Spörer-Wagner and Marcinkowski 2010; Voltmer and Koch-Baumgarten 2010; Kunelius and Reunanen 2012; Schillemans, 2012; Esser and Matthes 2013). In this overview, we combine these recent studies on mediatization of (aspects within) governance processes with previous research on the relation between media and governance processes. In different fields of literature scholars have been reflecting on the role media have in political processes. Roughly, three different functions can be distinguished:

- media as a *democratic forum*; Media are an important forum where citizens discuss issues and democratic processes takes place. This perspective directly connects to literature on democracy, on democratic forums and the way citizens are informed (Iyengar and Simon 1993; Schudson 1998, 2009; Graber 2004; Aalberg and Curran 2012);
- media as *political agenda setters*; Media are an important factor in the way political agendas are set and which issues are put on the agenda and how they are dealt with. This perspective can be found in the long existing tradition on agenda setting research (as Cobb and Elder 1983; Baumgartner and Jones 2009)
- Media as *instrument for strategic communication*; Media are probably still the most important medium for politicians and public managers to get their message to a wider audience. This perspective is connected to a wide literature on public and political communication, public relations, political marketing and branding (Blumler and Kavanagh, 1999; Davis, 2002; Cook, 2005).

In this overview we first (section 2) systematically discuss the literature that is connected to the three perspective mentioned above. We also summarize what each perspective has to offer for conceptualizing the relation between media and governance (processes). In the third section we explain the perspective of mediatization and show how this perspective can be related to the already discussed 3 perspectives on media and governance. After the theoretical overview and the discussion of mediatization the paper provides a framework where different mechanisms of mediatization are described in section four). Finally, in section five we reflect on the overview and offer suggestions for future empirical research.

## **2. Roles of media in governance processes**

Relations between media and governance can be studied through many different theoretical approaches and concepts. In the introduction we argued that three theoretical perspectives can be observed that deal with three important functions of media in political processes. We first contrast the three perspectives with each other (section 2.1.) and show that they are related and then discuss each tradition at length (section 2.2.-2.4).

### **2.1. Comparing the three perspectives**

First, the function of media as *democratic forum* is discussed. Media report on governance issues and processes, which could be done by a diversity of views. From the start democratic theories have been preoccupied with how citizens are informed. In more utopian and also deliberative expressions of democracy citizens are well-informed active actors participating in the deliberative process. Media provide citizens (and stakeholders) information on relevant political and societal processes so that citizens are able to make informed political choices and to 'check' authorities on their performance (Hulteng and Nelson 1983; Schudson 1998; Graber 2004; Aalberg and Curran 2012). Media thereby always need to select and frame governance issues and processes and with that they influence views of the public on these governance issues and processes (Lippmann, 1922; Gerbner 1998; Iyengar and Kinder 1987; Iyengar and Simon 1993; Entman 1993; McCombs 2004; Scheufele and Tewsbury 2007). The media thereby set the stage for the definition of problem and solutions in governance processes.

Second, the role of media as *political agenda setters* has been described. Politicians (sometimes accompanied by their policy makers) use the selection and framing of media as a proxy for public opinion and act upon the media reports to increase public support and subsequently electoral gains (Cobb and Elder 1972; Kingdon 1984; Baumgartner and Jones 2009; Walgrave and Van Aelst 2006). Cobb and Elder (1972; 1983) show in their classical study of agenda setting that media attention can push issues higher up the agenda and can open up decision-making to

previously excluded groups. Hence, the focus is on the interaction between media attention and (changes in) the political and policy agenda.

The third role of media is an instrumental role: different actors within governance processes use media as a *strategic communication instrument*. These actors aim to influence the selection and framing processes of media. They want to communicate their message to a larger public and need media to reach this public; to legitimate decisions, gain a positive public image or to increase their power position in governance processes (Keane 1991; Perloff 1998; Hurrelman et al. 2009). This is extensively explored in the literature about public or political communication, public relations and related literature about political marketing and branding.

These three broad perspectives on the role of media can be analytically distinguished, whereas the roles interact and are mutually reinforcing in practice, which is shown in figure 1.

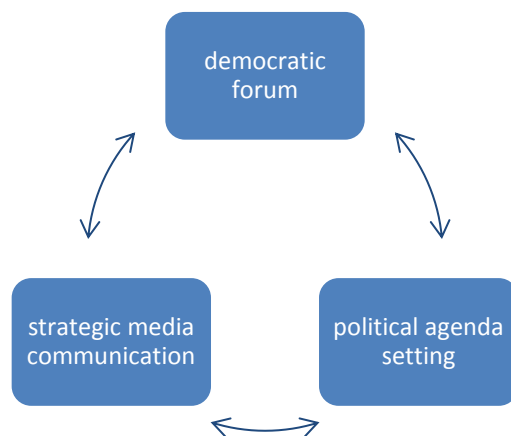


Figure 1. The three roles of media and governance are also mutually related

Table 1 summarizes the main differences between the three broad theoretical perspectives.

Table 1. Three perspectives on the role of media in governance processes

	<b>Media as democratic forum</b>	<b>Media as political agenda setters</b>	<b>Media as strategic communication instrument</b>
<i>Main origin</i>	Democratic theory and political communication	Politic science literature about agenda setting	Political and Public communication, public relation literature (and political marketing, and branding)
<i>Focal point</i>	Environment (the democratic forum)	Issue (and decision-making process)	Organization
<i>Focus</i>	Information and debate for genuine deliberative processes	Political agenda forming and impact media	Communicating messages using media
<i>Research questions</i>	Which information is provided by media and does it affect the democratic process of deliberation (and the public) opinion?	How do media influence political and administrative agendas?	How are media used to effectively communicate to a larger audience?
<i>Interesting phenomena to look at</i>	Media systems, news consumption patterns, public opinion research and priming.	Dynamics around political and policy agendas, windows to put issues on agendas and media influence to create 'windows'	Media power, legitimacy, ways of communicating ideas, relationships between journalists and politicians

## 2.2. The media as democratic forum

Democracy requires that citizens and (societal) groups interact and discuss with each policy problems and political choices. This has been emphasized in most democratic theories (see Pateman, 1970; McPherson, 1979, Held, 2006) but especially in the deliberate democratic theories that have been dominating democratic theory building the last two decennia (Dryzek, 2000; Held, 2006). News media are our window to the vast world beyond our direct experience (McCombs 2004, p.3; Lippmann 1992). And thus media are very important for democratic processes.

Important democratic functions are therefore attributed to the press. Information contributes to informed political choices of citizens and secondly, information serves a 'checking function' by monitoring whether elected office holders uphold their oaths of office and in general carry out the wishes of their electorate (Aalberg and Curran 2012a, p.3). The press selects important, relevant societal and political issues and gives them meaning. Moreover, the news media can alert citizens and other stakeholders on corruptive practices or other sorts of misbehavior of authorities, which is often referred to as the watchdog function (see Schulz 1998). Citizens do not read all available news; they will survey 'the political scene carefully enough to detect major political threats to themselves or their communities' (Graber 2004, p.562; see also Zaller 2003, Schudson 1998). In other words, media provide adequate data to arouse attentive publics; their concerns and recommendations transmit news stories to less attentive citizens that subsequently form and express their opinions (Graber 2005, p.564).

In this democratic forum function media influence public opinion. The most prominent issues in the news become the most prominent concerns of the public (McCombs 2004). Furthermore, the news guides how people think about governance processes –which are referred to as cultivation effect in the early research of Gerbner (1998) or the priming effect in studies as Iyengar and Kinder (1987) or Iyengar and Simon (1993). Scheufele (2000, p.300) explains the priming model as follows: "Mass media, Iyengar and Kinder (1987) argued, affect 'the standards by which governments, policies and candidates for public office are judged' (p. 63). Political issues that are most salient or accessible in a person's memory will most strongly influence perceptions of political actors and figures."

Related studies, although they are based on different psychological foundations (Scheufele and Tewsbury 2007), argue that news 'frames' governance issues and processes. Frames are interpretation schemes that reduce the complexity of information. In the words of Entman (1993, p.52) "to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation".

Both priming and framing studies argue that news affects public opinion. In this line of argument, Lippmann (1922, in McCombs 2004) already critically claimed that public opinion does mainly respond not to the real environment, but to the *pseudo*-environment constructed by news media. The effects of media on public opinion should however be looked at as a dynamic interactions also involving other input. "The public sphere does not begin and end when media content reaches an audience; this is but one step in larger communication and cultural chains that include how the media output is received, made sense of and utilized by citizens" (Dahlgren 2006, p.274).

### **2.3 The agenda perspective: how does media attention change the political agenda?**

The agenda perspective examines the effects of the number of media reports and its framing on the political decision-making process. Its focus is on the complex interaction between media attention, actors and actors' strategies and the governance process as a whole. Agenda literature generally emphasizes the complexity of governance processes. Agenda forming processes are characterized by continuous struggles between various actors (and their strategies) to (see Cobb and elder, 1983; Baumgartner and Jones, 2009; Walgrave and Van Aelst, 2006)

1. (re) formulate policy issues;
2. to increase attention for certain issues or certain problem formulations;
3. to get the issues on the political agenda; and
4. to obtain influence in the decision-making process.

In this struggle policy issues are formulated and reformulated; the aim is thus not only to get the issue on the agenda but also to get a specific problem formulation on the agenda (see Dery, 1984; Kingdon 1994). Different actors emphasize different aspects of an issue, an issue is therefore rarely treated systematically in the political system (see Baumgartner and Jones, 2009). Baumgartner and Jones argue that changes in issue definition can lead to a disruption in political subsystems or as they say "... a change in issue definition can lead to destabilization and rapid change away from the old point of stability. This happens when issues are redefined to bring in new participants. Similarly a change of institutional rules of standing or of jurisdiction can rupture an old equilibrium" (Baumgartner and Jones, 2009: 16). They thus envisage the process of agenda building as a complex system of actors, institutions and issues that can be in relative stable position but can suddenly be disrupted by changes in issue formulation and actor participation. The media are both important in the way an issue is framed and in how much attention an issue gets and thus whether it is likely for the issue to become part of the political and policy agenda. Due to the complex interaction between issues, actors' strategies and internal and external events the outcome of agenda setting processes is unpredictable.

Cobb and Elder stress that one of the core strategies of actors to get issues on the agenda is expanding the issue to a larger public (Cobb and Elder, 1984: 50-51, 110, see also Baumgartner and Jones 2009). Media attention is crucial for getting wider recognition of the issue. Moreover, decision-makers use the news as a proxy for public opinion (Entman, 2007). Research however disagrees about whether media attention does have an impact on the political and policy agenda or if that impact is largely symbolic. Walgrave and Van Aelst (2006) show in their



overview article that half the studies have found a large impact and the other half has only found a limited impact. One of the reasons is that the impact on, for instance, presidential speeches or other events where rhetoric is employed may be large, but less on changes in the actual political agenda. Walgrave and van Aelst suggest that the actual impact of media differs for several contingencies, like the types of the issue (obtrusive issues or not, the ownership of the issue etc.) and various factors in the political context (election time or not, political configuration like the type of government-opposition game etc.).

Thus the agenda perspective highlights the complexity of the interaction between media and governance processes and the various factors that might influence the impact of media attention on agenda setting. Whether or not issues arrive on the agenda depends partly on the media attention that can be generated, but also on the way issues are (re)framed, the strategic moves of other actors and their interactions. Media reports can significantly influence the context in which actors bargain and make decision (Cook 2005). Formulating the issue in such a way to enhance the possibility of being adopted by the media and gaining wider support of actors creates the possibilities of new agenda issues and new decisions.

#### **2.4 The media as strategic communication instrument: The public relation perspective**

In a complex media society it is vital that politicians and public managers but also various interest groups that are present in governance processes communicate their messages. In the public relation perspective the media are seen as an instrument for strategic communication by (governing) actors to communicate their message to the larger public; to legitimate decisions; and to gain a positive public image (Keane 1991; Perloff 1998; Hurrelman et al. 2009)... This perspective is elaborated in the literature on public relations but also on political marketing and branding<sup>ii</sup>. In this literature an organization and how it builds (communication) relations with its relevant publics is taken as starting point.

The perspective on media as communication instrument emphasizes the strength of the message but also building relation with an audience and the media. Needham (Needham, 2006: 180). argues that creating brands is actually a way to build that relationship by creating a set of ideas and leadership styles that bind voters.<sup>iii</sup> A brand is not the product itself; it is what gives meaning and value to the product and defines its identity. An example of branding is Blair's 'Third way'. This brand, emphasizing that the problem is not the state or the market but the cooperation between the two, enabled Blair to distinguish his policies from old Labour policies (state oriented), and conservative policies (market oriented). This brand successfully created associations with voters such as new, distinctive, innovative and solving problems (Lees-Marshment 2009).

Brands not only communicate images and meaning to a possible audience but also simplify choices (voters do not have to read the program) (see Needham 2006: 179) The advantages of

brands outlined by Needham and others echo those writers who emphasize the strength and the content of the message (see Kotler, Asplund *et al.* 1999; Arvidsson 2006; Hankinson, 2004; Malony 2002; Leesh Marshment, 2009). Market research should play an important role in designing the content and associations of the brand or the communication message in general (see Leesh-Marskment, 2009). But besides the strength of the message this perspective focuses on the way the message is communicated and the relationships that are being built with an audience (both *directly and through the media*). In this section we only elaborate on building these relations through the media by means what is called information subsidies.

. PR professionals offer journalists information that easily suits the news format. 'Faced with time constraints, and the need to produce stories that will win publication, journalists will attend to, and make use of, subsidized information that is of a type and form that will achieve that goal. By reducing the costs faced by journalists in satisfying their organizational requirements, the subsidy giver increases the probability that the subsidized information will be used' (Gandy, 1982: 62). Press releases, press conferences, pre-arranged interviews and press tours are examples of these information subsidies offered by authoritative news sources that are nowadays fully integrated into the process of news production (Davis, 2002). Besides that, you can also think of organized protests, web pages or news leaking which are examples of information subsidies of less authoritative stakeholders in governance processes. Several authors observe that there is an increase in the volume of information subsidies aimed at the media, whereas at the same time the number of journalists decline (see Davis, 2007; Prenger et al 2011; Esser, 2013).

On the one hand scholars claim that PR's information subsidies increasingly shape the news (Davis 2002; Cook 2005; Lewis, Williams en Franklin 2008; Prenger et al 2011); on the other hand studies show that media shapes the political agenda at least as much and that information subsidies would only have limited impact on the political agenda (Tedesco, 2011; see also Walgrave and van Aelst, 2006 for an overview). Instead, it is argued that the effectiveness of information subsidies varies across context and is dependent on factors like the personality of the politician, the approval rate, and relationships with the press (Stromback and Kioussis, 2011).

This brings us back to at least one conclusion that the various studies in this perspective seem to agree on: relations and communications, whether in the form of information subsidies or the construction and maintenance of brands, need constant nurturing (Eshuis and Klijn, 2012). Brands needs to be renewed, communicated constantly and worked upon as need information subsidies. In that sense it fits nicely with the modern governance and network literature which also emphasizes constant management of processes (=network management) (see Eshuis and Klijn, 2012 for a comparison of network management and brand management).

Hence, to use the media as a strategic communication instrument requires a good analysis of your audience (market research, building your network), positioning of your image (by brands), and providing the right information incentives to journalists (see Stromback and Kiouisis, 2011).

### **3. The perspective of mediatization**

To an increasing degree societies<sup>1</sup> are submitted to or become dependent on the media and their logic, as is argued in the recently expanding literature on mediatization (as Hjarvard 2008:113; Mazzoleni & Schulz 1999; Reunanen et al. 2010; Strömbäck & Esser 2009). The perspective of mediatization thus not only focusses on the importance and impact of media in society- as is also done in the literature discussed in the previous section- but also on the guiding logic behind news media reporting.

Media do not neutrally transmit information, but, like all institutions, shape and select information in certain ways (Altheide and Snow 1979, Mazzoleni and Schulz 1999, Cook 2005, Parkinson 2006). The process of news-making led by the media's rules, aims, production routines and constraints is known as media logic (Altheide and Snow 1979, Brants and van Praag 2006, Hjarvard 2008, Strömbäck and Esser 2009).

#### **3.1. Rules of media logic**

Media form a separate institution with their own rules and modus operandi (Cook 2005; Hjarvard 2008; Stromback and Esser 2014). This means that we can see media logic as an institutional practice; as a set of rules regulating actors behavior (see Scott, 1995; Scharpf, 1997, Koppenjan and Klijjn, 2004; Cook, 2005; also Asp, 2014). Media logic provides a set of rules for journalists and others involved in media that both enables sensible actions and constraints actions. By constantly enacting these rules media logic as institution is confirmed but also changed as is aptly explained by Giddens in his 'duality of structure': structure (here seen as the set of rules) is both the precondition for action as the result of those actions in the long run (Giddens, 1984). Media logic is therefore not static but changes over time in processes of institutionalizing (Cook, 2005). An extensive set of rules make up the institutional practice of media logic; various elements are listed in the literature (see Altheide and Snow, 1979; Bennett, 2009; Landerer, 2013; Asp, 2014). Stromback and Esser (2014, p.17-18) (see also Esser 2013) identify three distinctive dimensions that could be used to categorize the various rules and norms of media logic as institution:

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<sup>1</sup> Hjarvard (2008) emphasizes that mediatization is not a universal process that always has characterized all societies. "It is primarily a development that has accelerated particularly in the last years of the twentieth century in modern, highly industrialized, and chiefly western societies, i.e., Europe, USA, Japan, Australia and so forth" (Hjarvard 2008, p.113).

1. *Professionalism* (see also Bennett, 2009; Asp, 2014); Journalistic norms and values prescribe journalists to be independent; to maintain standards of newsworthiness in news selection and to serve the public interest. Scholars stress that rules about objectivity, being unbiased and the separation of facts and figures gradually emerged in the beginning of the 20th century (see Cook, 2005)
2. *Commercialism*; due to the fact that all media have commercial interests the question how to maximize public relevant for advertisers is very relevant. Rules inspired by commercialism are related to the logics of running a business and have implications on processes of news production, news selection and news presentation. Consequences for the news production process have to do with the efficient use of scarce resources. This makes for instance that when news media allocate reporters to a specific event news has to be generated even if there isn't any. Furthermore growing competition can lead to places where no journalist is able to act as a watchdog; that is, commercial interests can overrule professional standards (Patterson, 2000). In addition, rules related to commercialism also have a strong content dimension, in terms of news selection and news presentation. News has to be attractive for an audience, which often results in dramatizing and personalizing of news (see Bennett, 2009)
3. *Media technology*; each communication platform has its own format criteria in which news has to be presented. Media technology shapes the production process and content (the 7 o'clock news, the 8 o'clock news etc.) and the way messages have to be communicated (in a news format, in images, sound and/or text).

As in all institutions the rules generally do not form a naturally coherent and unambiguous set. Clear tension exists between the rules of professionalism and those of commercialism. The last rules tend to push journalist to more sensational, dramatic framing of the news while the first tend to stimulate giving facts and to separate news from opinion. Even so, rules of media logic as institutional practice gradually change over time, as discussed. Various authors emphasize that commercialism has become a stronger element of the media logic in the last decades (see Patterson, 2000; Bennett, 2009). Moreover, commercialism and its consequences seem to be one of the most significant motives behind studies on mediatization (Landerer 2013).

Mediatization studies generally focus on consequences of the interference of the commercial news media logic in logics of other societal institutions; studies on the mediatization of politics report to what extent and how the adaption to the *commercial news media logic* has been changing politics and other spheres (as Stromback and Esser 2014; Landerer 2013; Hjarvard 2008; Kepplinger 2002; Mazzoleni and Schulz 1999). Recently, there has been a growing interest in the consequences of the news media logic in relation to decision making processes in governance (Cook 2005; Kunelius and Reunanen 2012; Esser and Matthes 2013; Sporer-Wagner and Marcinkowski 2011; Marcinkowski 2014; Korthagen and Klijn Onlinefirst).

### *The consequences of mediatization for governance processes*

In section two three important roles of media in governance processes were discussed. In the next section the implications of the thesis of mediatization for these functions are described. The media logic, especially the commercial dimension of the media logic, has an impact on the described relations between media and governance. Media logic affects the framing and priming effects of news, and thereby the information provided for the deliberative process. Moreover, media logic moderates the relations between media and the political agenda and the use of media as an instrument for strategic political communication. As Lundby argues: 'The concept of mediatization may help see 'old' questions in communication studies and media sociology in new and more striking and relevant ways'. That means that mediatization builds on the described theoretical traditions; the concept both transcends and includes media effects (Schulz 2004, p.90).

On the basis of the recent literature on mediatization and its impact, the consequences of the commercial news media logic for the roles of media in governance processes will be discussed.

### **3.2 Mediatized political information**

Hjarvard (2008) argues that one of the principal consequences of mediatization of society is that we have a shared experiential world that is regulated by media logic (see also Mazzoleni and Schulz 1999). Media select and frame governance issues and processes following a commercial media logic. Hence, complex governance processes are often immensely reshaped to fit journalistic norms of newsworthiness and media formats (Davis 2007, Bennett 2009)., Many studies report that media biases – which can be explained by the fact that news has to sell – shape the information media provide about the complex reality of governance processes (Brants and Neijens 1998, Patterson 2000; Semetko and Valkenburg 2000, Brants and van Praag 2006, Kleinnijenhuis et al. 2006, Strömbäck and Shehata 2007; Bennett 2009). Information biases as of personalization (a focus on human interest), dramatization (an emphasis on crisis and conflict) and an authority–disorder bias (a claim that authorities are not able to establish or restore order in society) dominate the selection and framing of news reports (cf. Bennett 2009).

The main issue for scholars that address the mediatization of political information is a tension between the professional norms of journalism and the commercial interests of the news. "The degree of mediatization may be measured according to how much the respective field's autonomous pole has weakened; eventually, some fields will lose their autonomy entirely. Media, too, have autonomous and heteronomous poles, where the autonomous pole is the site of aspects like professionalized journalism and codes of ethics, and the heteronomous pole is the site of, say, the influence exerted by the advertising market. There is a tension between the

poles in the media; in news media, for example, journalistic criteria of news value and the ideals of good journalism often compete with the demands of the need to sell copies, the influence exerted by news sources, and so forth (Schultz, 2006)” (in: Hjarvard 2008, p.126). The dominance of information biases in news reports about public affairs shows commercial interests are dominating public interests in mediatized political information. In this line of argument, many scholars express large criticism regarding the mediatization of information. Habermas (1989) argues that the commercial interests are dumbing down political reporting. Patterson (2000) shows in an analysis of news messages from 2000-2009 that soft news is increasing and politicians are treated more negatively. He claims that and the increase in soft news and critical journalism are shrinking the news audience and weakening democracy.

On the other hand, scholars as Graber (2004, p.551) blame these critics to have a non-realistic ideal on news media that covers all political important issues and providing this in qualitative news stories to their news-hungry public. For many publics political news is not interesting (Aalberg and Curran 2012b) or difficult. Soft news has more potential to reach this dis-interested audience. Moreover, also soft news or infotainment can provide political information (Aalberg and Curran 2012b).

### **3.3 Mediatized political agenda setting**

From the perspective of mediatization the role of political agenda setter is modified in the sense that only a limited amount of issues will be selected by media and framed, due to media biases as personalization, dramatization and the authority-disorder bias, but at the same time politicians are even more willing to get involved in these issues, anticipating on the media reports. Baumgartner and Jones have already highlighted that the agenda setting role of media is somewhat biased by the fascination with conflict and the competition between media (Baumgartner and Jones 2009: 104). Moreover, they describe positive feedback in media attention that is media attention for an issue will generate more media attention because media outlets have a tendency to follow each other (See Baumgartner and Jones, 2009). A substantial amount of news media reports on a certain issue can in turn lead to strategic reactions of politicians and/or policy makers which reinforces the positive feedback.

Many proponents of the deliberate democracy model are critical about the mediatization of the political agenda. Fischer (2003, 58) states in his book *Reframing public politics*: “Politicians and the media...have turned contemporary politics into a political spectacle that is experienced more like a stage drama rather than reality itself. Based on socially constructed stories designed more to capture the interest of the audience than to offer factual portrayal of events, the political spectacle is constituted by a set of political symbols and signifiers that continuously

construct and reconstruct self-conceptions, the meaning of past events, expectations for the future, and the significance of prominent social groups..." This of course echoes Edelman's (1977) observations more than thirty five years ago in his book 'Words that succeed and policies that fail'. The critical notes are clear: politicians and the political agenda but also politician's (symbolic) interventions would be too much led by media coverage instead of thorough analysis and deliberations with the involved stakeholders.

Recent studies give preliminary evidence on mediatized agenda setting processes in which mediatized political reality is the main trigger for political and governing strategies. Landerer (2014) shows that a substantial part of the MPs in Switzerland mainly perform 'audience-oriented activities', which can be a serious populist challenge to deliberative governance processes in combination with commercially oriented media companies. Audience-oriented activities include tough bargaining; use of the media primarily to increase sympathizers; use of symbolic political intervention that do not need endorsement of other MPs, such as interpellations and questions; and well-orchestrated media performances (Landerer 2014, p.307-308). This seems to be comparable with a study of Melenhorst (2013) in the Netherlands which shows that a bill receives more media attention more amendments are proposed by politicians as well as by members of government. Another recent study of Ihlen and Thorbjørnsrud (2014) demonstrates that huge media coverage with a dramatized, human interest framing of three immigration cases in Norway caused politicians and policy makers to reverse their decisions.

### **3.4. PR and branding as coping strategies in a mediatized landscape**

The main driver of mediatization is the symbiosis of the commercially-oriented media landscape with the adoption of the commercially oriented media logic by other institutions and organizations and society (Landerer 2014). While different actors, collectives and institutions have become dependent on mass media in their central functions, their actions are continuously shaped by the media logic (Mazzoleni and Schulz 1999; Thørbjørnsrud et al. 2014). Actors adapt their behavior and especially their communication to the outside world to make it fit the requirements of media on form and substance (Hjarvard 2008; Bennett 2009; Strömbäck and Esser 2009; Thørbjørnsrud et al. 2014).

In the last decennia the number of communication professionals that works for governmental organizations, private companies and interest groups had risen spectacularly (Davis 2002; Cook 2005; Neijens and Smit 2006; Lewis et al 2008; Prenger, et al 2011). These communication professionals need to cope with the media logic as they strive for as much positive publicity as possible, as well as when they try to protect their organizations against negative or undesirable publicity (McNair 2003). The awareness of both politicians and public managers that media are or can be active actors in governance processes and have to be addressed has grown. As Klijn et

al show public managers do seem to consider media to be very important, but have quite different views on how much they can influence the media.

An illustration of this is the growing number of speeches of presidents and other major political figures (see Esbaugh-Soha, 2011) or the media communication strategies around policies (Thørbjørnsrud et al. 2014; Korthagen, under review). Furthermore, the work of communication professionals seems to be closer to decision-making processes.

Many scholars therefore claim that socially relevant information is reduced to for media attractive information, since communication professionals make their message fit the (commercial) news media logic (Blumler and Gurevitch, 1995; Mazzoleni and Schulz 1999; Davis 2002). This adaption to the media logic only strengthens the influence of media logic on governance processes.

However, we have to make a reservation about the media communication around policy processes. Much research on PR, branding and political communication, that describes the adaption to media logic, is done in the context of highly visible actors, as PMs, political candidates in elections or presidents. At the same time, only a selection of actors in policy processes has a comparable public visibility. Moreover, as only a selection of policies are covered in news reporting (Veltmer and Koch-Baumgartner 2011) and not all actors involved in governance have professional communication staff; the adoption of the media in the communication of governing actors might be less strong than appears from some of the existing publications (Korthagen and van Meerkerk 2014). In the implementation phase some governance networks do include communication professionals, however, others do not have such professionals involved (Korthagen, under review). At the same time, there seems to be a sharp increase in the number of public relation officials employed at governance agencies; there can certainly be seen a growing professionalization in this respect (Esbaugh-Soha, 2011; Schillemans 2012; Djerf-Pierre and Pierre, 2014).

#### **4. Conclusions: Different mechanisms of mediatization for different stages of governance processes**

We first provided an overview of the roles of media in governance processes –media providing political information; setting political agenda's; and as being used as strategic communication instrument. Secondly we analyzed these roles with the perspective of mediatization. On the basis of these two steps, we conclude with an analytical scheme that can be used to study the mechanisms of mediatization in governance processes.



The scheme offers analytical questions around the impact of mediatization on the content, process and institutions within a specific governance trajectory. Governance processes are often complex and do not proceed according to strict phases (Kingdon, 1984). They are more like complex games (Allison, 1971; Koppenjan and Klijn, 2004) which can show outcomes in terms of content, process and institutions (Koppenjan and Klijn 2004). These outcomes can be mediatized to varying degrees, with different consequences.

	<b>Content</b>	<b>Process</b>	<b>Institution/structure</b>
<b>Mediatized political information</b>	How are policy definitions, policy solutions and other decisions framed in media, and to what extent can this be explained by media logic? How does the news about this influence the perceptions of actors and citizens?	To what extent and how are the interactions (in terms of trust, (value) conflicts, power positions or collaborative efforts) and actors' strategies framed in media, and to what extent can this be explained by media logic? How does this news influence the perceptions of actors and citizens?	To what extent and how is the network formation and its set of rules framed in media, and to what extent can this be explained by media logic? How does the news about this influence the perceptions of actors and citizens?
<b>Mediatized political agenda setting</b>	To what extent and how has mediatized political realities been affecting the policy definition and solutions in the governance process, as well as the frame reflection and cross-frame learning?	To what extent and how are the mediatized political realities affecting the character of the policy process, in terms of interactions between actors and actor strategies?	To what extent and how are the mediatized political realities affecting the institutional outcomes, in terms of network formation, network change or rules of interaction?
<b>Mediatized political communication</b>	To what extent and how are actors prompting their problem definitions and solutions to media by PR and related communicative activities?	To what extent and how are actors aiming to change the policy process by PR and related communicative activities?	To what extent and how are actors aiming to change the network formations and its set of rules by PR and related communicative activities?

Changes in content, process or structure of governance networks due to mediatization can be explained by tensions between the media logic and the requirements of governance networks. In the introduction we argued that governance networks are complex and need dedication of the various actors, as well as active management. Leaders in governance networks need to construct policy solutions (or service packages and conditions) attractive to the various actors involved. Moreover, flexibility in handling the goals and content proposals is needed in

maneuvering through the process and to create the essential support (see Agranoff and McGuire, 2003; Koppenjan and Klijn, 2004). Last but not least, governance processes require dedication to the long process and skills to create trust relations between actors. Actors must be willing to exchange information and cooperate over a long time period. When media interfere in the governance process, this means that actors have to deal with the commercial news media logic that tends to emphasize drama, conflict and personal gains of authorities. This can lead to tensions and to changing strategies of actors, which has implications for the content, process and/or structure of the governance trajectory.

Some pioneering scholars have been examining effects of aspects of mediatization on the content, process or structure of governance trajectories. On the basis of their work we are able to provide some preliminary answers to questions in our analytical scheme as well as to formulate directions for future research. Although effects of mediatization could be functional and dysfunctional (see also Schrott and Spranger 2007), scholars have been discussing more negative effects of tensions between a commercial news media logic and governance than positive effects,

### ***Content***

In governance processes a wide range of policy options must be deliberately considered. Moreover changes in policy plans due to cross-frame reflection actually need to be stimulated in order to achieve integrative, innovate policy solutions (Koppenjan and Klijn 2004). However, after media reports about risks and policy failures the range of policy solutions which can be possibly legitimated is limited for decision-makers (Voltmer and Koch-Baumgarten 2010). Actors avoid making unpopular decisions fearing unfavorable media coverage (Kepplinger 2007, p.14), which Davis (2007) refers to as anticipatory news media effects. Such effects on content thus result from the tension between an ideally wide range of flexible policy options versus a limited range of policy solutions that seem to be possible in a mediatized political reality.

Effects on content within governance can also come from tension between news values and values within governance. As Cook (2005, p. 91) describes: 'while officials have an easier time entering the public sphere, they cannot get their message across in an unfiltered way. The production values of news directs them – and us – toward particular political values and politics: not so much pushing politics either consistently left or right as toward officialdom and toward standard of good stories that do not make for equally good political outcomes'. Also actors which not directly experience media pressure often have to take into account how the media affect those more prone to media impact (Kunelius and Reunanen 2012). Not only can the communication around policies but also policies be molded to fit media logic characteristics to

some extent or to respond to news reports. Hence, political realities shaped by negative, dramatized or human interest news reports can change substantive policy decisions, as Ihlen and Thorbjørnsrud (2014) report.

## **Process**

Sporer-Wagner and Marcinkowski (2010, p.9-10) claim that 'the rationales of media publicity and political negotiation are incompatible: The media call for transparency in political processes and show specific interest in individuals, conflicts and negative outcomes. Negotiations, on the other hand, require an atmosphere of privacy which allows for compromises, communicated to the public as collective decisions without indicating any winner or loser.' Furthermore, in a mediatized world, the short term is important. There is pressure to show quick results. This is problematic, however, because in a networked world we are dealing with complex problems for which it is crucial to bind actors for the longer term who are willing to compromise as well (see Koppenjan and Klijn 2004). That is however not an interesting and appealing story to tell in the mediatized world. Negotiating processes under the media spotlight are therefore complicated by actors that position themselves and their values more decisively (Sporer-Wagner and Marcinkowski 2010; Esser and Matthes 2013; Landerer 2014). Actors want to react on media's pressure for quick compromises (Sporer-Wagner and Marcinkowski 2010) but at the same time they are less willing to compromise and to make backstage deals (Veltmer and Kock-Baumgarten 2010). Such effects on the process result from the tension between long-term dedicated negotiations versus short-term visibility and score.

Other effects on the process can result from the contradiction between media's fascination with conflicts and the need for trust relations in governance processes. Trust building is important in networks because many unexpected events can happen; trust is the essential glue that holds the network together in difficult times (Provan et al, 2009; Klijn et al, 2010). Media attention from a commercialized media logic perspective, however, is focused on dramatizing events, emphasizing and constructing conflicts and competition between (political) actors. Media attention can therefore be a threat for trust relations since it reflects or fuels existing conflicts between actors (Sporer-Wagner and Marcinkowski 2010; Korthagen and Klijn 2015 forthcoming).

The ability to attract and to control media attention, to anticipate media attention and to build a reputation that can be used to reinvest that attention into getting something done is a key political resource, as Cook (2005) and Kunelius and Reunanen (2012) argue. 'Because of the opportunities that news attention thus provides for influencing policy outcomes, *media strategies in government are designed to reach other governmental actors and political activists at least as much as to reach the public at large*' (Cook 2005, p.196). The news media logic requires actors to communicate strong, often controversial statements that will be noticed in

the media landscape and to build an authoritative image (Hajer 2009), which stimulates opportunistic behavior and go-it-alone strategies (Korthagen and Klijn, 2015 forthcoming). The audiences, and especially the media, thereby want a leader who is responsible for solving the problem and takes ownership of the process; this strongly clashes with the need for a connective leader who connects various actors and communicates on behalf of a wide coalition. In a mediatized political reality a (political) leader needs to claim success, whereas in network governance processes success has many fathers (Klijn, 2014).

## **Structure**

The network structure can be significantly changed due to aspects of mediatization. Power balance between actors in network settings might be considerably altered due to their discursive power in media (Uitermark and Gielen 2010). While many scholars argue that news seem to be dominated by official news sources (Tresch 2009; Hopmann et al. 2011), as they are newsworthy as well as efficient news sources (Shoemaker and Reese 1996). The information biases that Bennett (2009) criticizes are in fact defended by Schudson (2008). The characteristics of the commercial news media logic, the preoccupation with events, the fascination with conflict and an anti-political cynicism are features that serve democracy most, Schudson (2008, p.62) claims. With such media reporting actors can subvert established power positions. Korthagen and van Meerkerk (2013) show how citizen groups gain decision making power and open up the governance network by organizing protests and other media strategies. Thus, effects of mediatization on governance structure include new actors entering a network formation and the alteration of decision rules. Such effects on structure are the result of the tension between political power positions, based on political values, and media power, based news values and other news media logic characteristics.

After we have listed some potential effects of mediatization on content, process or structure of governance we need to emphasize that not every governance trajectory will be mediatized to the same degree. The degree of mediatization varies among issues and among policy rounds. As a matter of fact, some governance processes will not be covered in media at all (Sporer-Wagner and Marcinkowski 2010). In addition, the degree of mediatization and the sort of effects may also vary among different actors and their power position. While the power elite will use media as one power resource in addition to other resources; actors with less positional resources are more dependent on media (Kunelius and Reunanen 2012). Finally, mediatization effects are moderated by the complex interaction between media logic and the specific logic of institutions involved in the governance process, as levels of formalization; transparency; binding character of decisions; exit and inclusion of actors and the frequency of meeting (see Schrott and Spranger 2007).

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<sup>i</sup> Games then are ongoing, coherent sets of (strategic) interactions between actors around specific issues or decisions that actors have interest in. Networks mostly consists of a wide variety of games that take place at the same time

<sup>ii</sup> Political marketing is more focused on using marketing tools to reach and influence an audience (especially using marketing research and selling and communication techniques). Political marketing basically sees the voters (or other publics) as consumers (Needham, 2006; Leesh Marshment, 2009), and classical marketing research as a way to find out what the consumer wants..

<sup>iii</sup> Following Kotler, Armstrong *et al.* (1999: 571), we define a brand as 'a name, term, sign, symbol or design, or a combination of these, intended to identify the goods or services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors.'