Mediatization in Public Bureaucracies: A Typology

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Abstract

Based on extensive fieldwork, the present article illuminates how the logic of the news media is expanding from influential communication departments to the practices, routines and priorities of traditional career bureaucrats. To theorize the mediatization of a traditional bureaucratic rationale, the article proposes a typology for how rule-based public organizations adapt to and adopt the news media's implicit "logic of appropriateness.": It emphasizes the importance of (1) The news rhythm and (2) news formats, but also (3) how and why being in the media is valued by civil servants, and (4) how this leads to a reallocation of resources and responsibilities within the organization. It finds that career bureaucrats both anticipate and adopt news logic in their daily work. The normative implications of these transformations are discussed in the final part of the article.

Keywords: mediatization, public bureaucracies, news logic, bureaucratic logic, grounded-theory

Introduction

"I always ask my colleagues in other departments whether we have something we can convey to the media from the case we are working with," says a head of communication in a regulatory agency. A director of communication in a ministry explains: "We have to appear in the news—if we don't, we don't exist, this is the reality. And this reality is here to stay." An expert adviser in a ministry complains: "I never thought it would be like this to be a civil servant—I am not a neutral expert—I am promoting the politics of the cabinet minister to the press!" A caseworker illustrates the media pressure with these words: "I lay awake, with this terrible feeling, did I present the case in the right way to the journalist?"

As demonstrated in the quotes above, civil servants are increasingly aware of how they and their employer appear in the mass media (Angell, Byrkjeflot, & Wæraas, 2011). There is an extensive literature on the mediatization of politics (e.g. Altheide, 2004; Bennett & Entman, 2001; Bourdieu, 1998; Mazzoleni & Schulz, 2010; Meyer, 2002; Strömback; 2008) but, with precious few exceptions (Rawolle & Lindgard, 2010; Reunanen, Kunelius, & Noppari, 2010, Schillemans, 2012), the media influence on *public bureaucracies* has largely been ignored in the literature on both mediatization and public administration. Studies of how governments engage with, profit from, or succumb to a media logic do in general not generally distinguish between the role of elected government officials and the mandate of civil servants (Davis 2002, 2007; Gaber, 1999). We argue that this distinction is crucial and that the contrast between the classic rationale of bureaucracies and the processes associated with mediatization makes it vital to study mediatization processes in public administration in its own right. Hence, this article advances the established research frontier by providing a theoretical platform for studies of mediatization within a new field: that of public bureaucracies. More specifically, we ask whether, how and to what extent mediatization processes are expanding from influential communication departments to the practices,

routines and priorities of traditional career bureaucrats?

Aiming to meet the call for stronger empirical validation of mediatization theories (Hjarvard, 2008; Strömbäck, 2011a), the article takes a grounded-theory approach, drawing on extensive fieldwork and interviews in two organizations within central public administration. Based on the characteristics of the news institution and its logic, we propose a typology of mediatization of public bureaucracies. The construction of this typology builds on a new institutional approach to mediatization (March & Olsen, 2008), shedding light on how mediatization paves the way for an implicit "logic of appropriateness" transforming former practices based on explicit formal rules. Our conclusions illuminate how career bureaucrats are influenced by the news logic in their professional decisions and everyday routines. We identify mediatization processes with potential wide normative implications, addressed towards the end of the article.

Operationalizing Mediatization: From a Media Logic to a News Logic

Mediatization as an emerging grand theory of media influence (Hepp, 2012; Krotz, 2009; Schulz, 2004) is compelling. In essence, writes Hjarvard (2008), "mediatization is characterized by a duality in that the media have become *integrated* into the operations of other social institutions, while they also have acquired the status of a social institution *in their own right"* [original emphasis] (p. 113). For Schrott (2009), the core of mediatization "consists in the mechanism of the institutionalization of media logic in other societal subsystems" (p. 42). Mediatization can be studied as how and whether the media intervene in the social interaction between individuals within a particular social institution (the micro level), between institutions (the mezzo level) or in society at large (the macro level) (Hjarvard, 2008). This article adopts this dual institutional perspective on mediatization and aims to conceptualize mediatization processes on the mezzo level (Krotz, 2009).

We argue, that to be suitable as a theory with explanatory ambitions, mediatization

theory needs clear specification and operationalization (Finnemann, 2011; Reunanen, Kunelius, & Noppani, 2010). With the exception of Hepp (2012), stressing the need to incorporate critical analysis of media technologies and the specific "molding force" of certain media, the mediatization literature does not separate between media produced for the masses versus new social and personal media based on interpersonal communication (Hjarvard, 2008; Krotz, 2009; Schulz, 2004). Although the omnipresence and pluralism of media in modern society is a vital insight of mediatization theory in itself, to operate by virtue of a loosely-defined term like "the media" risks conflating processes of mediatization with other meta-processes in society and obscuring differences within and between institutions in which mediatization processes take place. Hence, the first basic step in the attempt to construct a typology for mediatization is to provide precise definitions of what constitutes an "institution" and how we should perceive the "logics" or "rules" of institutions.

New institutional theory defines an institution as a relatively stable collection of rules and practices embedded in structures of resources and meaning that explain and justify behaviour (March & Olsen, 1984, 2008). The rules or *logic*[i] of an institution can be formalized, explicit and procedural, or they can be of an implicit and customary nature based on conventions. The media, in the broad sense, do not qualify as an institution with stable and sufficient homogenous rules. Building on the seminal work of Cook (1998), this article therefore narrows down the definition of media institutions to the modern *news* media (Strömback, 2011b). The news media institution is based on the production of content edited according to journalistic principles with a mass audience in view. To regard the news media as an institution is not unproblematic (see Benson, 2006; Cook, 1998; Kaplan, 2006 for discussion), as it represents an institution with porous borders and non-exclusive membership, strongly affected by centrifugal changes in technical, political and economic conditions. When the aim is to explore how these rules, values and routines intervene in and influence

other spheres of society, however, the very openness and porosity of the news institution might be one reason why its rationale seems to be infiltrating other social spheres so deeply and so fast.

Having delimited the media as an institution to the *news* institution, news logic serves as a starting point in the construction of a typology of mediatization. Mediatization literature has predominantly taken a broader "media logic" as the catalyst or engine behind and within the processes of mediatization (Lundby, 2009; Mazzoleni, 2008). As a term, "media logic" was introduced by Altheide and Snow (1979) to identify how the media production process required a certain format and form that ultimately led to a specific way of interpreting social affairs (Mazzoleni, 2008). Media logic is the assumptions and processes—the rhythm, grammar and format—for constructing messages within a particular medium (Altheide, 2004). The media logic approach has been criticized for being simplistic and linear (Couldry, 2008), and for emphasizing media format over social interactions, consequently falling into a media deterministic trap (see Lundby, 2009 for a discussion). Concurring with Lundby (2009), the mediatization typology suggested in this article emphasizes mediatization *beyond* format.

The news logic, defined as the news genre with its specific generic criteria, serves as a starting point but is not restricted to genre conventions and news formats. The news logic brings with it a specific rhythm and a certain relation to time and timeliness. Moreover, news texts derive their power from their interplay with commentaries and op-eds, talk shows and debates, as well as from their diffusion in social media. Further, news logic is founded on the premise that news is and should be important and significant. In short, the power of the news logic is based on the assumption that the media offer a description of reality that matters and has consequences for those described (McNair, 1998; Schudson & Andersson, 2009).

Conceptualizing a Bureaucratic Logic vs. a News Logic

News journalism is known to build on implicit and unquestioned conventions rather than explicitly-stated principles (Cook, 1998). That being so, the rules of the news can be regarded as being premised on what new institutional theory labels a *logic of appropriateness*: they tend to be regarded as self-evident, given, natural and therefore not the object of deliberation (March & Olsen, 2006). Public bureaucracies in Western-style democracies represent the opposite type of institution. Even if a logic of appropriateness does play a role in all types of organizations, public bureaucracies traditionally are characterized by clear organizational borders and formal rules based on a comprehensive set of procedures and norms of conduct derived from regulations and law.

The literature on public organizations do stress that public bureaucracies are complex organizations with competing tasks and conflicting goals (Christensen et al., 2007). They are judged by different parameters such as political steering, effectiveness and loyalty, but also representation and participation by affected parties, co-determination of employees, sensitivity vis-à-vis users, transparency, publicity, and insight into decision-making processes. In the last decades moreover, a process of hybridization has taken place, where an increasing number of organizations operate in the grey zone between public and private interests (Christensen et al., 2007). Notwithstanding their multiple functions, and in spite of numerous reforms aiming at "de-bureaucratization" of organizations criticized for being ineffective and cumbersome during the last decades, the fundamental values outlined in the classic Weberian ideal model still form the fundamental ethics of public administration, closely tied to the principles of constitutional democracies and the importance of preventing arbitrary power (Kettl, 2008; Meier & Hill, 2005; Olsen, 2008; Weber, 1978). Key to this model is that decisions should be based on precedence and equal treatment, underpinned by abstract rules and expert knowledge. Cases are analyzed and defined through codes and classifications, and the terminology is technical and juridical, carefully defined to secure correctness, preciseness

and comprehensiveness (Tilly, 2006). Public bureaucracies are not an extension of politics and bureaucrats have a rationale of their own. They can be organized in different ways, with varying degrees of autonomy and closeness to a political leadership, but a common denominator is that public servants have permanent positions independent of the political party in office and they stay on when political leaders are replaced (Christensen, Lægreid, Roness, & Røvik, 2007; Olsen, 2008). As multifunctional organizations, bureaucracies have opportunities for discretionary judgment and degrees of freedom in assessing which considerations to emphasize (Christensen et al., 2007). Multiple reforms of the public sector based on changing ideas of how it should serve society and how it should be organized in order to reach its goals reflect this fact: different emphasis can be put on different values, be they responsiveness towards citizens' initiatives and affected stakeholders, effectiveness and rationalization of casework, or responsiveness towards the media. When the logics of these two very different types of institutions meet, a crucial question is which will dominate. Here we ask whether the explicit traditional norms of bureaucracies are challenged by a logic of appropriateness, where the power of the news media has come to be accepted as "natural" or "just the way it is" among career bureaucrats in expert departments.

Method

Inspired by grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), we have followed an inductive stepwise approach to construct a typology theorizing the meeting points between the bureaucratic logic and news logic in modern society. Its insights are based on extensive ethnographic fieldwork, textual analysis of internal and official documents and qualitative interviews with directors, advisers, and communication officers in the central Norwegian administration of migration. The focus is on the interplay between immigration bureaucrats and communication officers in the Norwegian Ministry of Justice and the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI). The Norwegian Ministry of Justice is responsible for

formulating and coordinating Norwegian legislation and policies on immigration. The Directorate of Immigration (UDI) stays in close contact with and reports to the ministry, but has autonomous power with regard to single cases. It is the responsibility of UDI to process applications for residence related to, e.g., asylum, visas, family reunion and citizenship. The communication departments are placed directly below the top level of the political and administrative direction in both organizations. Civil servants in the ministries work closely with the political executive leadership. Public agencies are in general more autonomous, less preoccupied with political signals and a larger proportion of their employees work with single cases (Christensen, 2011). By including both a directorate and a ministry in the analysis, we could identify common features in their media relations notwithstanding different affiliation to a political leadership. Note that communication officers in Norwegian public administration hold permanent positions are, as such, part of civil service and supposed to serve all governments regardless of their party affiliation.

The central immigration administration was selected in this study because immigration is a controversial, emotional and polarized topic and the administration is regularly the object of intense media focus. At the same time, the government of migration is a field tightly regulated by law, and dominated by jurists trained in deductive reasoning and rule-oriented knowledge. As such, the Ministry of Justice and the Directorate of Immigration represent strongholds for a traditional bureaucratic approach, which arguably makes their reflections and practices related to the logic of the news media more interesting.

The data analyzed is generated from one year of fieldwork, April 2011 to April 2012. The researchers conducted participatory observation in the communication department and immigration department in the ministry of Justice and in the communication department in The UDI during two months in May and June 2011. Contracts of confidentiality were signed with both organizations, promising that no individuals or individual cases would be identified.

In the Ministry, a team of researchers was based in the department of communication, shadowing the communication officers working with immigration related topics. We attended all internal meetings and their meetings with the migration department and representatives from subordinate agencies, observed their interaction with the career bureaucrats, as well as their interactions with the news media. In addition, we conducted fourteen qualitative semi-structured research interviews with key informants and management from both the communication department and the immigration department.

In the Directorate of Immigration, 11 qualitative interviews were carried out with key personnel: the communication director of the UDI, the four press contacts and six bureaucrats in the Department of Managed Migration, which handles family immigration issues and expulsion. During two weeks in June 2011, one researcher sat in on the morning meetings of the press contacts and the communication director in UDI, where they discussed media coverage and upcoming issues. He also spent time in the open-plan office of the press contacts, observing their work and listening in on telephone conversations with journalists.

The authors engaged in all aspects of the data collection whereas research assistants transcribed the taped interviews, which were then submitted for approval by the interviewees. The authors have translated the interview extracts used in this article. In addition, the authors obtained access to several internal documents and data files, including the digital archive where all media requests were logged, memos and minutes from meetings, diaries and media clips

Since the primary aim in the present article is theory development, we do not go into detail about the particular details of the organization and routines of the two organizations (more detailed ethnographic findings will be elaborated elsewhere). Here, the observation data forms a backbone in the construction of a typology of mediatization processes in public bureaucracies, able as they are to reveal practices otherwise hidden from the eye of the

researcher (Rhodes, 't Hart & Noordegraaf, 2007).

Mediatized Bureaucracies: A Typology

The typology aims to conceptualize how public bureaucracies adapt to and adopt the (1) news rhythm and (2) news formats, but also how and why (3) being in the media is valued by civil servants and (4) how this reallocates resources and responsibilities within the organization. The four characteristics illustrate a gradual intensification of the mediatization of public organizations from superficial adaptations to political and media requests to more substantial organizational changes.

(1) Adapting to the News Rhythm and Response Requirements

The most basic feature of news is the requirement to be first or on time with a breaking story (Brighton & Foy, 2007). Online journalism and 24/7 news cycles have speeded up the rhythm and made deadlines continuous (Fenton, 2010; Ward, 2002). The timing of news is essential, not only because of the journalistic requirement to be first with a breaking story but also in terms of timing publication to maximize reactions from institutions and actors. Our ethnographic studies find that when the 24/7 deadline of news alters or influences the work of civil servants, it does so, first, because of reporters' calls for quick answers. When public bureaucracies are asked to provide statistics and facts or to explain case procedures and decisions, having to manage numerous such requests with short deadlines has become part of the daily routine to a much greater extent than hitherto. The following quote from a career bureaucrat demonstrates the adaptation to a faster news rhythm:

> The deadlines are shorter and there are more media requests. And having to manage numerous such requests with short deadlines has become part of our daily routine to a much larger extent than it used to.

> Journalists' requests are passed on to the specialized divisions in ministries and

agencies. The administrative leaders, advisers and caseworkers are requested to prepare the necessary information. As the number of people working full-time with media relations increases (Agency for Public Management and eGovernment [Difi], 2011), we find that it does not mean that the workload related to media inquiries decreases for the other parts of the organization but, rather, the opposite. Our data shows that when the political leadership prioritizes the news media, initiates media stunts and performances, and the communication staff manages a growing number of journalists' requests, enquiries to the career bureaucrats increase accordingly. Many experts, caseworkers and advisers spend more of their time providing expositions and explanations to journalists who seek knowledge on a certain topic. The successful adaptation to shorter deadlines implies that other tasks are increasingly put aside. In our interviews, the career bureaucrats indicated willingness to prioritize media requests over other tasks; not least, when a national media outlet requested information. The managers and the press officers stated they would not leave the office until an answer was provided. Concurring with these findings, Schillemans (2012) finds that non-media people in public service organizations spend considerable time on media work.

Our fieldwork confirms that continuous news deadlines have led to proactive strategies within bureaucracies to anticipate the media agenda and to prepare standardized texts in advance. Aiming to make (often) unpredictable days more predictable, the organizations had established systematic archives and databases for media requests. Additionally we find that civil servants aim to anticipate likely peaks and turns in requests from the media. Proactively anticipating the timing of the media thus means that bureaucracy not only provides rapid responses but also prioritizes the planning and preparation for future media requests. As described by this administrative leader in a specialist department:

When we start focusing on certain issues related to the media, it does not necessarily have to be in response to specific requests from journalists. We may do it to be

prepared, or because we know it is something we will have to follow up on later (…) We anticipate that something will come up.

A common proactive media strategy is to try pitching stories during periods where there is reason to believe that a message will receive much media attention (Sadow, 2011). Within this logic, we find that civil servants are, on the one hand, increasingly expected to strive continuously to pitch positive news stories in order to set the news agenda; on the other hand they are expected to provide press releases on unpopular or delicate matters at a time when media attention is directed elsewhere. Whether the deadlines and rhythm of news cycles are handled reactively or proactively, we clearly see indications of a civil service that increasingly follows the rhythm of the news.

(2) Adapting the Language and Format of News

The conventions of news construction are described in a wide range of studies (Cook, 1998; Iyengar, 1991; Johnson-Cartee, 2005; Wahl Jorgensen & Hanitzsch, 2009). Compared with other text genres, news is short and favors unambiguity. News is often episodic, focusing on a single event or instance and, in general, does not provide much background information (Iyengar, 1991). The news format favors the use of everyday/colloquial language to describe things in a way familiar to the public. This familiarity is created in part by building on conventional judgments and commonsense morality. News frames seldom challenge these conventions; the sensational story is sensational exactly because it is framed within a context defining what is normal, right and just. News, moreover, tends to be constructed as *stories/narratives* with a beginning, middle and end, featuring protagonists and antagonists, and some sort of conflict resolution (Altheide & Snow, 1979; Cook, 1998). News needs faces and images to illustrate the case; it tends towards personalization, featuring stories with emotional cues, a conflict with a clear-cut moral, designating roles of heroes, victims and villains. Popular or tabloid news, in other words, is replete with human (melo)drama (Sparks

& Tulloch, 2000).

The news format is a way of engaging with what goes on in society that is far from a classic bureaucratic approach. The "format" of bureaucracy builds on norms of correctness and comprehensive information. Written accounts explaining decisions typically describe the conformity of a case to specified sets of categories, procedures for ordering evidence and rules for interpretation (Tilly, 2006). The bureaucratic language used to describe and explain these procedures tends toward a technical and juridical style based on carefully-defined expert terminology. In short, whether applied in casework or in analysis and planning, bureaucratic language is neither simple nor short. The traditional ideal is a neutral and detached language, contrasting with the personal and emotional morality of news (Graber, 2002; Graver, 2007).

Yet we find that the generic characteristic of news influences the practice and functioning of public administration in several regards. First, it affects what questions journalists ask, and what aspects of the planning, administration and casework of bureaucracies become news. News conventions also mold the way in which civil servants answer the questions posed by journalists, more precisely the texts they prepare as a response to journalists' inquiries.

There is a shared assumption among our informants that there is a need to use a clear and easily understandable language and administrative leaders have initiated several rounds of formal media and communication training. More informally, practical experience of dealing with journalists has resulted in a high awareness of news format and language. Civil servants prepare talking points on the cases they work on for political leaders, and adapt to the format and language of the news and particular news formats or programs. The communication staff edits and modifies the information provided by the rest of the organization in a manner (even) closer to journalistic norms. The communication staff stresses the need to simplify the message and to avoid expert codes, and negotiate the final text with caseworkers and

administrative leaders. We find that both the communication staff and the bureaucratic experts struggle to balance the ambiguous relationship between providing correct, neutral and comprehensive information and providing what political leaders need and journalists want. One communication officer epitomizes the dilemma:

> We often have extensive background information, you know, whereas the politician requests only a few talking points. So it may turn political, or it becomes a mix between politics and facts, but that's what the politicians want.

Numerous studies have pointed out how the success of strategic media work depends on the ability to exploit journalistic news conventions (e.g., Ihlen & Allern, 2008; Motion & Weaver 2005; Reunanen et al. 2010). As mentioned above, we find that civil servants go beyond answering requests from the media to pitch messages strategically at the news media. For this purpose, texts will be adjusted to meet the news media's demand for conflict, faces and feelings: "packages" of new "facts" or statistics, an offer of an interview with a political or administrative leader, as well as someone who is affected (positively) by new policies or regulations, a so-called "case." Another characteristic we noticed in our study is that news media language and formats will not only be adopted in texts produced directly for the press but will also influence texts written for other purposes. Public reports and propositions are often written with a clear message, some type of introductory teaser, personifications and/or illustrations (photos). One administrative leader in a specialist department argues:

> If you are writing a proposition, what is your message? Is there a message? We have to figure out these questions early in the process. What are we trying to achieve here? We are writing a proposition, and we need to have a substantial message, not only a lot of facts.

The various adoptions of news conventions can be studied in the interactions between the public bureaucracy and the journalists, interactions that many civil servants find

challenging and for which they develop various coping strategies (Ihlen & Thorbjørnsrud, 2012). The adoption of such news conventions does not happen without the constraints of a traditional bureaucratic ethos. Many civil servants define it as their primary duty as professionals to provide correct and nuanced information and the definition of what is "correct" or "nuanced" enough is widely debated internally.

(3) Belief in the Significance of News

The position of the news media in modern society is based on the premise that they not only tell the truth but report important and attention-worthy issues (McNair, 1998; Schudson & Andersson, 2009). The journalistic profession aims to be the watchdog of democracy and to *speak truth to power* (Ettema & Glasser, 1998; Keane, 1991). If these norms are accepted as legitimate, journalists and the genre they master possess a position as privileged interpreters of what goes on in the world and how to talk about it. In terms of analyzing the mediatization processes within the public administration, it is vital to study the extent to which the professional journalistic norms and ethos are accepted and/or adopted by career bureaucrats.

Politicians' belief in the power of the media and their motivation for being in the media have been examined in a wealth of interview- and survey studies documenting a strong belief in the (presumed) influence of the media and the numerous motivations for playing the "media game" (Cohen, Tsfati, & Sheafer, 2008; Strömbäck, 2008). Studies have documented a steady growth in communication budgets and numbers of communication staff in Western political parties and governments (see Davis, 2002, 2007), and the professionalization of media strategies and political spin (see Gaber, 1999 for an overview). Political actors participate in the media to communicate with the public that holds the power to re-elect them; to communicate with each other; to achieve publicity; and to be seen.

On the one hand, the mediatization of the practices and routines of the expert advisers, case workers and administrative leaders in the public administration is clearly related to the

mediatization of politics, as part of their mandate is to be politically loyal and to respond to the signals from their political leaders. Nevertheless, the taken-for-granted importance of media presence in public administration is not reducible to top-down instructions from political leaders. We find that our informants perceive it as strategically important to be in the news media to strengthen the reputation and the public perception of the organization as such, beyond the reputation of the elected Government and the party it represents. Politicians and civil servants share a belief in positive media coverage, but they will not always agree on what represents a good story in the news. Reflecting the bureaucratic rationale, a good story seen from the perspective of civil servants conveys that the organization is well-run and rational; that regulations and laws are fulfilling their intentions within the given budgets and political framework; and that case-handling is fair, efficient and correct. In contrast to party politics, where the individual politicians themselves are the front figures, public organizations aim to promote the system and the rationale on which it is built. In short, public bureaucracies have their own particular reputation to cater for in the media. As explained by one administrative leader:

> A 'good story' for us documents that the regulations and laws are fulfilling their intentions and within the given budget; that the case handling is efficient and correct … When claims of bureaucratic inefficiency—that the situation is out of control, that we are not in control, that there are too many arrivals of asylum seekers, that the case handling time is too long—arise… that is not a very good situation to work in, because then we do not get the message out: that we are rational and well-run, and that we fulfill the aims of the politicians and the budget.

A prevalent logic of appropriateness (March & Olsen, 2006) governs much of the thinking and assumptions on the importance of the news media. The resources spent on media work are perceived as necessary and important among our informants, to the extent that it is not

questioned whether the resources could instead have been used to increase efficacy and the number of cases processed. Media presence signals openness, seriousness and professionalism. The assumption that it is necessary for modern civil service organizations to be present in the news is largely internalized across the organizations studied.

This emphasis on reputation and the necessity of promoting and pitching "good news" signals a turn away from the norms of neutrality and detachment towards a strong identification with the image of the organization one serves. It seems likely that mediatization may involve a shift in the balance between neutrality and loyalty, where the value of loyalty to the organization is perceived as more important than the value of neutrality.

(4) Reallocation of Resources and Responsibilities

The re-allocation of resources as a consequence of media influence is probably the most fundamental effect of the mediatization of career bureaucrats. Public bureaucracies have a lawful mandate to distribute and withdraw rights and duties, resources and burdens to the citizens they serve according to the law. Their work is financed by taxes—the question of how they spend their time and resources ultimately touching upon their very legitimacy. Our data suggests that the reallocation of resources owing to media influence is of three main types: (a) internal reallocation and reorganization of personnel resources; (b) changes in the priorities regarding which problem areas and cases to attend to at what time; and (c) changes in policies, laws, regulation or decisions related to case processing and decisions.

Re-allocation of the first type involves a focus on the importance of media management, a type of work not originally part of the basic mandate of a given ministry or agency. In our study it is expressed in the increasing number of people working as communication staff and in the resources spent on media monitoring. Moreover, the communication departments have moved upwards within the organization; they are now placed directly under the central command, and they work with other departments across

traditional hierarchical organizational structures. Of more far-reaching consequence is the extent to which many administrative leaders, advisers and caseworkers spend more time on issues related to the mass media. In the organizations studied here, the amount of time spent is often extensive but is not systematically measured or evaluated from a cost/benefit perspective. New requirements such as speed, flexibility and the ability to perform under high pressure are imposed upon public servants. An administrative leader emphasizes the ability to combine bureaucratic skills with media skills:

> So, when we hire people here in my department, it has to be someone who can work with tedious, long-term legal processes where they do not see the result of their work before Parliament discusses the issue sometime in the future. And at the same time I look for someone who is quick. … When the parliamentary debate approaches we will receive questions and requests around the case, and then the caseworker has to prepare talking points: what is the news angle here, what are the politics? So, there is pressure; it attracts people: there is always something going on, you don't have full control and no two days are the same.

The next level of allocation of resources owing to media influence pertains to *how* bureaucrats respond to different types of focus in the media, be they related to more general phenomena and problem areas or to single cases waiting to be processed by the bureaucracy. We find that when a topic is suddenly hot in the news, often both administrative leaders and advisers focus on it, on their own initiative or at the request of the political executive. Yet is it right to choose to focus on one problem area rather than another according to what is high on the news agenda? One administrative leader illustrates the dilemma for the public administration in the following quote:

> Sometimes news stories can reveal that regulations are dysfunctional, outdated, that something needs to be done. But then the question is: should the issue be prioritized

now or should it be placed on the list of tasks that can wait?

On the single-case level, the reordering of casework is a well-known phenomenon among our sources. The disputed cases that are high on the news agenda are picked out from the line of cases and decisions are accelerated. When the news media request information about a particular case, this case will be examined by career bureaucrats, the media or political leadership briefed about the case status and the case will often be processed as it is already on the political agenda.

Picking cases out of the pile is one thing, changing a decision is another matter altogether. All decisions at the case level must be made according to regulations and law, and the guidelines describing how they should be interpreted. Changing a decision in response to massive critical media coverage of a case sometimes means that the law or the regulations involved must first be changed. The initiative for such a change must come from the political executive, but it can be the result of advice from civil servants within the communication staff who deem the media coverage of a certain case as simply too significant to be ignored. Changes in regulation as a response to critical media coverage of the processing of single cases will often be tailored, making it possible to reach a different conclusion in the particular case without far-reaching repercussions for similar cases.

Based on an extensive fieldwork, this typology has aimed to characterize how career bureaucrats are influenced in their daily work by a news logic. The mediatization of public bureaucracies has important normative implications, which are addressed in the next section.

Normative Implications: Democratization or Arbitrary Rule?

Public bureaucracies are powerful organizations, with the mandate to implement and enforce law and to (re)distribute resources, a mandate regulated and restricted by deep-seated principles of fairness, due law and decisions based on precedence. At the same time, career bureaucrats are supposed to be responsive to the voices and reactions of affected stakeholders

(Christensen et al., 2007; Olsen, 2008).

Numerous positive implications of the mediatization of the bureaucracy can be assumed on the basis of the typology outlined above. Informants interviewed for this study have emphasized that mediatization of public administration may make formerly-closed decision-making processes more transparent and more accessible. In particular, the adaptation to the language and formats of the media may be valuable, as traditional bureaucratic language often tends to be cumbersome and inaccessible to the public. Using a simpler language to inform and explain might enable more citizens to understand complex cases and processes: it is easier to expose malpractice, and the public and the media have an increased possibility of influencing decision-making processes.

One principal question that must be asked, however, is whether changes in administrative practices come about because of new information revealed in the news or whether practices are changed and new decisions reached because of the unpleasant noise created and the volume of mass media coverage. There is a vital difference between responsiveness to the documentation of the unforeseen consequences of a law or a policy and subordination to the press because of the noise resourceful stakeholders have been able to make in the media. In our study of the Norwegian Immigration administration we find that many informants raise concern over the relative importance of the issues problematized in the media compared with problem areas that are left in darkness outside the media spotlight, deprived of public attention.

A key question here is about what type of news story provokes reforms and modifications of policies, law and casework. Our preliminary findings indicate that human-interest stories with idealized victims are more likely to create so much widespread public sympathy and media pressure that the public bureaucracy has to alter its procedures. If these idealized media stories are prioritized by civil servants, and, more importantly, if they are

treated differently from other cases, the uncomfortable question that must be examined empirically is whether media influence pushes civil servants towards the antithesis of legitimate bureaucratic governance, namely (populist) arbitrary rule.

Conclusion

This article has, through the development of a typology of mediatization, theorized what happens when a news logic transcends from the news media, via the communications department, to influence the daily practices, routines and priorities of career bureaucrats. Our approach has enabled us to identify two ongoing parallel processes of mediatization in ministries and public agencies: (a) the mediatization of the civil service through top-down political directives, and (b) the mediatization of public bureaucracies as a more profound societal force exceeding the field of politics.

Secondly, the neo-institutional perspective employed in this typology illuminates how the news logic, as a logic of appropriateness (March & Olsen, 2006), influences and interacts with a formal bureaucratic rationale. It argues that it is the diffuse, porous and informal character of the logic of news that makes it so seemingly easy to adopt. Had the news logic been more formalized, it might have conflicted more openly and directly with the formal, explicit traditional norms of career bureaucrats. By spelling out the characteristics of mediatization in public organizations, this article aims to contribute to the explicit deliberation over the role of bureaucracies in democracies where the media have taken centre stage. It is an ambition to demonstrate how mediatization involves opportunities and constraints involving adaptation to the rules of the news media, but also strategies to profit from it.

Thirdly, an important ambition of this typology is to set up a theoretical framework precise enough to be substantiated, refined or even rejected in future, empirically-grounded research. Our research is based on a singular case study of a contested field in a specific

regional, political and cultural context. It needs to be tested and developed further in different cultures and political systems.

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