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Introduktion

The media and politics are increasingly fused in what some refer to as 'the mediatization of politics'. This fusion has a real, material as well as a theoretical dimension. Thus, politics is increasingly conducted through and by the media, and on conditions set by the media resulting in sound-bite politics, political spectacle and infotainment. While some perceive this as a process of democratic decay, others have a more positive view on the prospects opened up by what also constitutes new types of political communication taking place through new media platforms created through the diversification of 'traditional' media and the invention of new media; most notably the Internet.

In order to fully understand these processes and locate them within the context of the challenge they pose for democracy and the nation-state in a globalized world as well as for the traditional mass media, established cultural institutions and the journalistic profession, it has become increasingly clear that there is a strategic demand for theories and research methods capable of integrating the traditional fields of political science and media studies.

An initiative to develop exactly such theories and methods and to investigate this rapidly expanding field was taken by a number of Danish researchers who, responding to a call from the national research councils, formulated a project entitled *Media and Democracy in the Network Society* (MODINET). The project, which received a major grant from the Danish Research Agency, ran from 2002 to 2006 and involved roughly 50 senior researchers and Ph.D. students. This theme issue, published as a joint venture between the Danish journals *Mediekultur* and *POLITIK*, is primarily based on presentations made at a MODINET conference in August 2005.

In the first article in this issue, *New Technologies and Not-So-New Democracies*, **Michael Schudson** intervenes in the discussion about the mediatization of politics and makes a powerful argument for the point that what matters for democracy is less the types of media

technology used by different groups of citizens than it is their views on citizenship. Using *The Simpsons* to illustrate the historically shifting ideals of citizenship in the USA, Schudson claims that political actors will use whatever technology is at hand and that the Internet therefore adds little new to politics.

In his article, *Domesticating the Simpsons - Four Types of Citizenship in Monitorial Democracy*, **Anker Brink Lund** demonstrates that Schudson's four types of historically informed citizenship (*The Simpsons*), can also be used for studying mediated democracy in Denmark. However, Lund finds that mediated democracy in Denmark is best characterized by the term 'monitorial democracy'.

Drawing on the examples of the cities of Bremen in Germany and Vina del Mar in Chile, **Hans Krause Hansen** and **Dorte Salskov-Iversen**, in their article *Global Interconnectedness - Local Authorities and Transnational Networking*, describe how these very dissimilar cities modernize their public sectors by using the Internet in their organizational infrastructure and strategies.

In the article *Online Citizens. Does the Net Add Something New to the Local Public and Local Politics?*, **Lars Torpe** uses case studies from three Danish municipalities to address the matter of online political communication. While his results confirm some of the skeptical views regarding the democratic potentials of the Net, he is also able to demonstrate that the information provided via municipal websites and online discussion forums add something new to the political public in terms of the persons involved and issues discussed.

In *Politics Backstage - Television Documentaries, Politics and Politicians*, **Ib Bondebjerg** deals with the mediatization of politics as it takes place through television and other audiovisual media. Through an analyses of television documentaries such as *Fogh bag facaden* ('Fogh backstage'), it is demonstrated that television in particular has indeed shifted much closer to the backstage of political processes as well as to the more private

and personal sphere of the individual politician. However, being reflexive and analytical in their dealings with the problems of modern politics, the media have thrust politics closer to the everyday life of ordinary citizens.

While Bondebjerg only briefly touches upon the development of spin, this question is central in **Nete Nørgaard Kristensen's** article *Spin in the Media - the Media in a (self-) Spin?* The article demonstrates that spin was a central issue among journalists during the 2005 Danish election campaign; however, it is argued that more than being an expression of a self-reflexive awareness of the trend, the focus on spin represents a 'ritual sacrifice' by the media/journalists, which is more about persuading readers and viewers to reinvest trust in journalism in order to maintain an audience than about any genuine self-examination.

Through a discussion of the unique features of the Internet and the relationship between the Internet and traditional media, **Niels Ole Finnemann's** article *Public Space and the Coevolution of Digital and Digitized Media* argues for a theory of co-evolution in order to understand how the Internet and mobile media are integrated in different societies. The crux of this theory is that the morphology of the new media matrix will depend on the different social and cultural drivers in different societies.

In his article, *Catch 22: The Privatization of Danish TV 2 vs. EU Rules on State Aid*, **Frands Mortensen**

explains how the Danish government's plan to privatize the public broadcaster TV 2 has been blocked by EU rules for competition. This apparent 'liberalization paradox' can only be understood by unraveling how TV 2 has historically received unlawful state subsidies, meaning that the decision to privatize TV 2 became an obstruction to save the broadcaster from the problems created by the state aid cases before the EU Court of First Instance. And now these state aid cases obstruct the privatization of TV 2. Indeed a Catch 22!

On the basis of data from a Danish nationwide representative survey conducted by MODINET, **Jens Hoff's** article *Virtual Capital? Internet Competence and Political Participation in Denmark* demonstrates that competence in using the Internet (virtual capital) has become a personal resource in its own right, and that virtual capital correlates positively with political participation and political efficacy. Indeed, for Internet users, virtual capital is more important in explaining variations in political participation and political efficacy than education.

We hope that these brief presentations of the articles in this volume have whet your appetite to continue to read on, but also to familiarize yourself with other publications from the MODINET project. In order to do so, we refer to the MODINET homepage: www.modinet.dk and **Eli Skogerbø's** article at the end of this volume, which provides an evaluation of the theoretical and empirical results of the MODINET project.

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