

NOTES

¹ Adding effects on opinion-formation and decision-making to the scheme signals that participation is not an end unto itself; rather, that it relates to the attempts of citizens to influence opinion-formation and/or policy-making (as underlined in liberal democratic theory) or to find common solutions (as underlined in deliberative and republican theories of democracy). Contrary to participatory theories of democracy where it is seen as a democratization effect in itself if more instruments of participation are afforded and if more citizen-activity is consequently generated.

² Hals lies in the countryside: Approximately 11,000 inhabitants in an area of 190 km². The municipality of Odder has approximately 20,000 inhabitants and covers an area of 220 km². Contrary to Hals, however, most of the inhabitants live in the provincial town of Odder. A Copenhagen suburb, Soellerød has approximately 32,000 citizens in an area of 40 km². The population density is thus more than 13 times as great in Soellerød as in Hals, with Odder in the middle.

³ 13 of the 17 council members responded to the question.

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Politics Backstage

- Television Documentaries, Politics and Politicians.

The mediation of politics and the images of politicians have changed with the development of television and other audiovisual media. The media have moved much closer to the backstage of political processes as well as to the more private and personal spheres of the politicians. This article discusses this development and analyses documentary programs in the light of changes in the public sphere and political discourse.

"Every generation gets the Thomas Jefferson it deserves (...) The Jefferson today is one of sex, scandal and hypocrisy." So wrote American Journalist Ellen Goodman in 1998 (Goodmann 1998). She was referring to a shift from political substance towards politics backstage, both in terms of media increasingly focusing on the private and 'dirty' aspects of the political game behind the scenes. The commercial nature of American media probably led to this development earlier than in Europe.

However, the breakthrough of television around 1960 as the dominant journalistic and political medium initiated this development globally. From that time on, politics and political figures have endured a greater degree of media exposure and worked under constant observation and in a veritable crossfire from journalists. The need for political 'drama', visual reporting and storytelling on television created a mediated political 'persona' in which the private sphere, the sphere of political institutions and processes and the sphere of the public and popular have become deeply intertwined in public opinion and communication (Corner 2003).

The television documentary, the political portrait and reports from political processes play an important aspect in this development, although of course the day-to-day news and journalistic programs are more dominant. In 1960, Drew and Leacock made the first of these documentary films, aired on ABC: *Primary*. Here, we follow John F. Kennedy and Hubert Humphrey during their respective campaigns for nomination as candidates for the impending presidential election. It is a discrete, observational documentary without an authoritative voice-over telling us how to interpret what we are

witnessing. We are able to witness politics as it unfolds and we are close to political persons without any filter or interpreter.

This feeling of being present is even stronger in Drew and Leacock's *Crisis: Behind a Presidential Commitment* (1963), with President Kennedy in direct political confrontation with Governor George Wallace in Alabama on a race issue. This is political drama, a watershed event in the reformation of civil rights and liberty, which the Kennedy administration strongly advocated and practiced. We are close to the political process and the private residences of the two adversaries, providing us with a backstage visualization of the contrast between southern conservative culture and an eastern, modern and academic lifestyle.

The transformation of visibility

This development led to a subtle struggle over the control of media exposure, media images and media performance. The political system developed its own staff of spin doctors in order to match the increase in media exposure. As Corner (2003: 73) points out: the strategic projection of political and private identity into the public became more important, and the branding of politicians became professionalized. One aspect of this mediatization of politics and political figures was that politicians allowed camera crews and journalists backstage in political journalism: exposing the political process became more common, as 'openness' could be perceived as a sign of democracy and honesty. At the same time, the branding of the political 'persona' as a private person became more clearly integrated in the projection

of politicians and in the way journalists approached politics. What would earlier have been termed the tabloidization or infotainment (Corner & Pels 2003: 4f) of politics is now often regarded as a mere restyling of politics. This shift is underlined by the fact that when Eisenhower hired a Hollywood actor in the 1950s to advise him in preparation for a television appearance, it created a huge public debate. Today, by contrast, American politicians and presidents receive intensive media coaching and are constantly judged according to their performance and actions in the media (Meyrowitz 1985: 303).

"Prior to the breakthrough of television, the print media created a much clearer distinction between public message and private style."

In *No Sense of Place* (1985), Meyrowitz points to this development as a consequence of the rise of the visual media. Prior to the breakthrough of television, the print media created a much clearer distinction between public message and private style. Obviously, the way politicians spoke could reveal elements of personal style and rhetoric, and journalists might even occasionally attempt to portrait a politician by including elements from his personal life and biography in general. However, the intense media exposure of both the personal and the private sphere and the whole backstage of political processes belong to modern media societies. Radio made the political voice aspect of everyday life in our private homes, but television was the medium that really brought the political persona down to our level and into our everyday life.

Thompson refers to the "transformation of visibility" (Thompson 2000: 33ff), pointing out the manner in which formerly distant persons and actions are brought close to every member of a mass-mediated audience. Politicians enter our living room, thereby taking the politician directly from a secluded public space into our privacy. This means that we relate to political figures with some of the same emotional and communicative patterns as in face-to-face interaction. This movement also goes the other way around: political communication on television adapts more of the strategies associated with private, face-to-face interaction; consequently, the private backstage of the public, political figures becomes essential.

The political hero and distant leader is suddenly on our own level (Meyrowitz 1985: 268ff), and if he cannot perform on that level and include his personal and private side in the way he presents himself in the media – he then loses some of his credibility and communicative strength. Meyrowitz develops a theory of different stages and types of acting and performing on these stages taken from Goffman's classical study, *The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life* (1959). Goffman employs the theatre metaphor to describe how, in everyday life, we move onstage (front stage) in public and at work and backstage, normally at home, but in principle everywhere where a distinction between onstage and backstage is possible (e.g. at work: private office vs. work meeting).

In a society dominated by visual media, the distinction between front and back is shrinking and contested by the media, and the classical division between the public and private spheres in the Habermasian sense (Habermas 1989) is becoming increasingly blurred (Meyrowitz 1985: 93ff). This development results in an ever-larger area of middle-region behavior in the media, a region where aspects of idealized and constructed forms of front stage behavior and forms of communication are mixed with backstage forms. The more formal and controlled front stage is invaded by the backstage, and larger parts of the backstage are naturalized as an aspect of political communication. Consequently, the former backstage may be extended with a deep backstage. Political communication and the mediatization of politics is, on the one hand, performed on this much more open and inclusive middle region, and political discourses and images are unfolded in a manner that mixes front stage and backstage, private and public. At the same time, however, the political system and the politician attempt to define a new, deep backstage.

The personification of politics

Drew and Leacock's documentaries are the first programs in a new television genre with access to the political process as it unfolds and thus to a domain of backstage politics often concealed from the general public. The programs are also new, as they grant us open access to the backstage of politicians' private lives and homes. In contemporary television and Internet culture (see Lene Hansen 2005), this tendency is much stronger. In a recent press release for a documentary program entitled

led *Evas store udfordring* ('Eva's Big Challenge', TV2, Lars Høj, 2005), which offers a portrait of the Danish Minister of Social Affairs Eva Kjer Hansen, focuses on the relationship between the private and public figure and the relationship between reason and emotion:

"Ministers today must appeal with their entire life and story to the hearts of the Danes. Politics is not just sold with arguments; it is also necessary to appeal to the voters' feelings. It is therefore of utmost importance how politicians look, how they live their lives, what their family life is like, how they are together with their kids, and it is of paramount importance that they are capable of communicating the right image of themselves in the media" (press release from TV2, my translation).

The genre of the political portrait in television documentaries tends to investigate the ways in which political profile and actions in the sphere of political institutions and processes interact with at least some aspect of the private sphere and the sphere of the political backstage. In Denmark, this can be seen in the unusually numerous portraits of politicians since 2000. The portrait of the Danish Prime minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen, *Fogh bag facaden* ('Fogh backstage', DR1 2003, Christoffer Guldbrandsen), while he served as Chairman of the European Union does not deal with the private side of Fogh or any of the other politicians mentioned. However, it takes us deep into the political process, as we witness meetings and negotiations normally taking place behind closed doors, and as we also hear and witness off-stage remarks from many European politicians.

Two documentaries about the leader of the largest Danish opposition party, Mogens Lykketoft, his way to power and defeat as prime minister: *Mogens og magten* ('Mogens and the Power', DR1, 2003, Poul Martinsen) and *Lykketoft finale* (DR 2, 2005, Christoffer Guldbrandsen), not only bring us on the road and backstage with the main character, we also witness more deep and long-running personal fights among the leaders of the Social Democrats. We also get glimpses of the private backstage of the main character, generally known as a very closed person. The mixing of the political and private backstages is

also visible in other political portrait documentaries. Christoffer Guldbrandsen has made *Exit Brixtofte* (2002), about a flamboyant Danish mayor forced to resign from office because of economic fraud, and *De første* ('The first', 2001) about the first two members of the Danish parliament with ethnic minority backgrounds.

These programs can be supplemented with two programs on female politicians: *Mimis sidste valg* ('Mimi's Last Election', 2005, DR, Michael Noer) about the decline of one of the smaller political parties and its leader, and the aforementioned *Evas store udfordring*. There is a clear gender difference in these programs which is of interest: the portraits of female politicians reveal a much greater interest in the private person and the family dimension than do the portraits of males.

In his analysis of the historical development of the

"The portraits of female politicians reveal a much greater interest in the private person and the family dimension than do the portraits of males."

Danish television news, Stig Hjarvard (Hjarvard 1999) has shown that the television news and journalistic communication has generally developed a greater independence from the political system: where politicians were previously served by the media, the media today serve the ordinary viewer and public. The definition of politics and the way politicians and political issues are treated has shifted: everyday life, lifestyle and softer areas of politics are much higher on the agenda, and the traditional core of politics are often treated in a new manner including ordinary people in addition to politicians and experts. The link between the political sphere and the individual citizen is stronger in subject choice, communicative form and style. The changes in documentaries on politicians reveal the same transformation: contemporary politics deal with political figures in such a manner that the entire character is exposed and combined, and the political success is more dependent than ever before on how politicians manage to combine this and strategically connect their public and private images.

Small nation – global politics

Christoffer Guldbrandsen's *Fogh bag facaden* is one of the most debated Danish television programs in recent

times, as it provides an unprecedented glimpse into the backstage of the EU political processes. Guldbrandsen must be credited for having achieved this access to filming during the Danish EU-presidency in the autumn of 2002. The Prime Minister and his staff must be praised for allowing this and for only censuring three short sequences in which the Danish Foreign Minister was humiliated. Included were sequences in which the French President Chirac were seen in an off-stage remark exposing his fear to go against the French peasants, and the German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer was ridiculed for his many contradicting standpoints on Turkey. This raised some measure of surprise in the foreign press, as this kind of openness is not common in all European countries.

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The opening sequence is very characteristic for the style and theme of the program: it is a montage of sequences showing, on one side, the ceremonial event after the successful completion of the enlargement negotiations with Fogh Rasmussen in focus in front of all of the leaders of the old and new EU countries, and, on the other side, bits of very hectic scenes from the difficult foregoing negotiation process. The whole film is shot with a small, handheld digital camera, which aesthetically underlines the feeling of an unfolding, almost raw reality. However, the use of the EU anthem as the underlying soundtrack together with the voice-over of Fogh Rasmussen as he announces the 'New Europe' also provides the opening with a strong, mythological and historical feeling.

The overall structure of the program is quite clear. The conclusion is revealed from the very outset, and the clips from scenes in the later part of the program give us clues to work with. The program then proceeds into linear and chronological reportage-mode. We follow the Danish chairmanship from the early autumn to the dramatic meeting in Copenhagen in December 2002. The major part of the program consists of sequences from meetings and negotiations related to the enlargement of Europe. We know the result, but the program takes us behind the scenes. We witness the real drama unfolding and how the respective political actors play their roles in the political

power game. The documentary value is that we learn about politics in real time, but also that political conflicts are personalized. We can identify with concrete characters performing this political game. The handheld camera underlines the viewer's sense of actually being present and being very close to the characters, involved in the sometimes chaotic and hectic goings-on.

The main character, Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen, is at the centre of almost all of the sequences. Most of the time, we merely participate in the meetings and actions as voyeuristic outsiders. There are no interviews in the program, but it is very characteristic that Fogh Rasmussen speaks directly into the camera five times during the course of the program – always walking along, never a quiet moment. He is filmed up close, and those five moments indicate that we are close to his genuine inner feelings and entering a psychological backstage. We are not entering any deep private backstage – Fogh is much too controlled for that; but we do acquire some impression of his state of mind.

The sequences in which we are observers to public or more informal meetings between two or three persons are the core of the program. It is here that we receive information regarding the strategies in political processes, insight into European affairs and problems and backstage information of both a political and personal nature. However, the program has other structural and aesthetic elements. First, we have a guiding voice-over (VO) during the program. It is not a very dominating and interpretative VO, but it takes over at certain points to give us necessary background information. Another element is the systematic use of clips from different news programs commenting on the development and problems in the political process. This adds to the factual complexity of information in the program, but it also anchors the story in a broader and more familiar media context. The news programs quoted are from several countries, reflecting the transnational character of the drama we are witnessing.

The program received the European *Golden Link Award* for 2004. The reason stated for bestowing the award was that the program had succeeded in "bringing politicians down from their pedestal and closer to ordinary people and simultaneously do this with discretion and professionalism" (*Berlingske Tidende*, June 23, 2004). At least in EBU, the Eurovision Broadcasting

Union, the program was regarded as a positive sign of democratization and opening of an EU system often accused of bureaucracy and a non-democratic, closed political culture. In Denmark, the debate was dominated by the leaking of the three cuts in the program and the fact that DR had agreed to give the Prime Minister the final cut in the making of the film. Another significant theme was the impression the program gave of Fogh as a very unpleasant hardliner and the internal power struggle with the Foreign Minister, Per Stig Møller. Although many newspaper articles did in fact praise the program and Fogh Rasmussen for its openness, there was also a feeling that the portrait backfired by exposing a politician void of empathy and emotion. In that sense, the debate about the program underlines that political professionalism is not enough on the contemporary scene; the private, human dimension is also important.

A leading article in *Politiken*, for example (January 2004 – my translation) states that

“The same competences that make him a strong leader of the government are seen as something negative by those who emphasize that leading politicians should have respect for ‘soft values’ and that a strong drive to act is linked to empathy and compassion; with emotions in general. Lately, it seems as though Fogh Rasmussen’s advisors have realized that a more soft styling is needed.”

This quote confirms that the personalization of politics is taken as a fact of modern, mediated democracies, but also that the program is not seen as a sign of new openness. This is the core of the program, however, and also clearly what Guldbrandsen intended to do with the program. In an interview on the *Kommunikationsforum* website (www.kommunikationsforum.dk, 13 February 2004), he states that the major strategy behind the program was to open the EU for ordinary people and to show that political actions and human relations are intertwined. He proved this in his documentary *Europa på spil* (‘Europe at stake’, 2002), which uses part of the footage from *Fogh bag facaden* to provide a very intense image of the life of three persons playing their respective roles during the Copenhagen 2002 EU summit: Fogh

as the EU Chairman, a young woman from Global Roots, an NGO against globalization, and the Copenhagen Chief of Police, who was in charge of security during the EU summit.

This program underlines how Guldbrandsen uses his observational documentary form to give the audience access to backstage politics and to open up normally very closed aspects of the political system and the various institutions in the system: documentary in service of democratic public dialogue. Other conflicts Guldbrandsen wanted to portray in the program included the obvious contrast and power play between small countries and big countries, the central role of Germany and France, as well as Turkey’s double-dealings. All in all, the program has substantial documentary values, both in the exposure of internal processes of national and international politics and in the opening of a very closed EU system.

“The major strategy behind the program was to open the EU for ordinary people and to show that political actions and human relations are intertwined.”

Biography of a loser

The Social Democratic party in Denmark has been an important ideological cornerstone in the development of the modern welfare state. In recent years, however, the party has faced crises and transformation, resulting in a protracted leadership struggle and conflicts over political strategies, which have resulted in intensive media coverage and public interest in the life and political battle between the four dominant figures: Poul Nyrup Rasmussen, Mogens Lykketoft, Sven Auken and Ritt Bjerregaard. One of the bestselling biographies in 2005 was Hans Mortensen’s book about these four persons, *De fantastiske fire* (‘The Fab Four’). The election to party leader of the almost totally unknown Helle Thorning-Schmidt in the spring of 2005 represents a major turning point in democratic style as well as a new generation: a female version of Blair in the UK.

The media interest in the Social Democrats is also indicated by the fact that two political portraits were made about the last man representing the former generation, Mogens Lykketoft. In 2002, a coup took place in which the leader and former Prime Minister Poul Nyrup

Rasmussen was ousted and Mogens Lykketoft took power. For many years, Lykketoft was known as the *eminence grise* of the party and a clever, strategically gifted thinker with affiliation to the party's leftwing. His reach for power and the position as prime minister thus represented a late attempt at grasping the power for himself that he had so often helped others to get. It was Mogens Lykketoft more than any other who helped force out Sven Auken in 1992 and bring Poul Nyrup Rasmussen to power, and it was also Lykketoft who headed the expulsion of Poul Nyrup Rasmussen in 2002.

"You want power because you find that you can do something that will be to the benefit of the greater public and for the country."

This is clearly visualized in the first of the two documentaries, Poul Martinsen's *Mogens og magten*, from 2003. The opening sequences show Lykketoft (and his wife at the time, Jytte Hilden) boarding a train to embark upon a tour of Denmark. The soundtrack is the Social Democratic anthem *Danmark for folket* (Denmark for the people) – but played by a sad, lonely flute – reflecting that the collective power of the official Social Democratic song is not working and the relationship between the leader and party is in crisis. We see Lykketoft in the train, writing a speech he is about to give. As the train leaves and we see the landscape outside, a transition brings a newspaper page into the picture with a splash headline reading: "Welcome to the two-time king murderer." From this, Martinsen cuts back to Jytte Hilden saying: "If you want to take power of the Social Democratic party, you have to be brutal." And finally, we see a picture from the congress where Lykketoft defeated Nyrup Rasmussen, and where they, still smiling, greet one another, and Lykketoft in a voice-over says: "Well, I guess you need to have that coolness." In just 30 seconds of the documentary, Poul Martinsen has framed his story with a very clear perspective: this is the portrait of a person reaching for power without the human dimensions and communicative abilities necessary in a modern, mediated democracy. In this sense, it is clearly a very critical program.

In an interview in the Danish Tabloid *BT* on the day of the broadcasting of the program (23 April 2003), Poul

Martinsen states that Mogens Lykketoft has not seen nor sanctioned the program, but he did set certain limits to the film crew. Martinsen was not allowed to shoot from Lykketoft and Hilden's private home nor could he film in his office in Parliament. In the same interview, Martinsen also reveals that he found Lykketoft to be more closed and reserved than he had expected:

"It is difficult for him to step out of the politician role and into the private person Mogen Lykketoft. He will have huge difficulties in being popular, and that may ultimately cost him the seat as Prime Minister."

The quote underlines the understanding of politics as both dependent on the political persona and the private persona. In a comment the day after the program, *Berlingske Tidende* (24 April 2003) similarly refers to the program as a portrait of a man without genuine passion, "so self-controlled that his quest for power almost seems like sleepwalking."

The journalistic style of the program is not merely the observational following of a politician on tour; it is also a more investigative program, where two commentators are used: journalists Hans Mortensen and Arne Hardis. They are introduced as "journalists known for working in a matter-of-fact way, but also for taking us deep backstage in politics, where the public are very rarely allowed." This analysis is clearly demonstrated in some of the very powerful visual documentations in the beginning of the film. Martinsen opposes images of the winning team and the losing team with cross-cuttings from the two camps during the election night in 2002, where Nyrup Rasmussen lost power to Fogh Rasmussen. The two journalists perform a close reading of the pictures, including a famous close-up of Auken and Lykketoft talking as Nyrup declares that he will remain as party leader although he has lost the prime ministry. It is a close reading that brings us deep behind the stage of official politics.

The program is very elegantly organized in two parallel stories or rhetorical strands: on the one hand, you have the story of Lykketoft's tour of Denmark visiting and talking to the party grassroots, including Lykketoft's own comments and interpretations; on the other

hand, you have the two journalists uncovering the deep backstage side of the same story, but going back in time and commenting on the crisis and internal power struggle among the Social Democrats. Visually, this second strand is based on footage taken from prior television coverage and clips from newspapers.

The story of Lykketoft's tour is clearly a story of a man who is not in balance and not communicating very successfully with the grassroots. The sequences from this tour are in the observational style, but the interview sequences bring us closer to both the politician and person Lykketoft as he discusses power and why he entered politics. Here there are elements of a broader biography, but no deep penetration into the more private space. We do occasionally get closer to him, for instance in those instances where his wife, Jytte Hilden, comments on his performance and the way he communicates. In some of the brief sequences in which we look back on his political career and see pictures from his personal photo album, we actually also see pictures of a very young Lykketoft changing diapers on some of his children. However, this is not a backstage story in terms of crossing the line to the private sphere; rather, it is a biography of a political loser that takes us deep backstage to the processes of political power games at their most intense – and at times unpleasant.

The 'Mogens and the Power' title operates on two levels: the first alludes to the perhaps more negative meaning of power as internal, 'dirty' power struggle, and the second as the 'good meaning of power' as Lykketoft himself defines it: you want power because you find that you can do something that will be to the benefit of the greater public and for the country. The question of power is central to the program and often discussed and thematized, but Lykketoft is not just characterized as a person with a brutal and cynical perspective on power. The portrait depicts him as a man for whom power is everything but the person is unimportant – a very traditional working class movement ideology. This concept of politics is also clearly indicated in his rage over the media. He does not want to chase popularity in the media, participating in all kinds of quizzes and talk shows – he wants to focus on political content, not form.

The problems facing Lykketoft as the new leader are clearly demonstrated in the final sequences of the program from the congress where he is elected. Criticism

from the floor regarding undemocratic methods, slow motion pictures of Nystrup, Lykketoft and Auken indicating the deep backstage of political and personal emotions, and the voice-over from news programs after the election indicating that the power struggle continues – the Nystrup-wing in the party will not accept defeat. The comments of the two journalistic commentators are ruthless: they have never witnessed a congress with so little enthusiasm and so many negative feelings and hatred. The psychological dimension of politics – the political side of the personal – is clearly demonstrated.

Lykketoft does not succumb to a more modern political style and rhetoric."

This is also the case in the second of the documentary programs dealing with Lykketoft, Christoffer Guldbrandsen's *Lykketoft finale*. Guldbrandsen sees Lykketoft as an 'old school' politician who believes in the power of the argument and lacks some of the communicative abilities and personal charisma that are so important today (*Jyllands-Posten*, 11 March 2005). This is what the film demonstrates, but we also see critical aspects of the work of his media advisors. Guldbrandsen has openly stated that his film shows how the media had a fixed, negative image of Lykketoft, which influenced their line of interviewing and made them focus more on personal style than political message (*De Bergske blade*, 19 May 2005).

The film has a complicated – but nevertheless very clear – structure and visual and narrative styles. It is basically a political road movie in which we follow Lykketoft on his campaign surrounded by his advisors and a rather large group of journalists; however, the film begins at the end. In the first sequences, we see Lykketoft at home at his computer, first in a long shot, making him a very lonely small figure, and then in an extreme close-up, where we can really see his tired and almost worn-out face. The camera also scrolls the computer screen and we realize that Lykketoft is writing his political farewell speech; the speech in which he accepts responsibility for defeat and announces his resignation as party leader.

These sequences return repeatedly during the film until, at the end of the film, we hear his final words and

follow him through the crowd. All of his enemies and friends salute him for the best speech he ever made, but the media already start debating the exit of an entire generation and the end of the rule of the aforementioned Fab Four – and then the film ends as Lykketoft leaves and closes the door. Guldbrandsen clearly wants to confront the style and mentality of this old school politician with the whole modern media circus. Lykketoft does not succumb to a more modern political style and rhetoric – and the program in fact gives him positive credit for sticking to who he is and what he believes in. This is rather strongly underlined in a number of sequences in slow motion in which the reality sound is lowered to almost nothing. The camera lingers on Lykketoft as a sad, circular kind of music conveys the sense that here is a lonely man in the midst of the chaos and noise of modern, mediated politics (Iben Have 2005).

“It is overly pessimistic to just talk about the total decline of serious politics and arguments, and it is too easy to once again simply blame the media.”

Mediated politics and backstage.

The portrait of Fogh Rasmussen in *Fogh bag facaden* is the portrait of a hardliner who knows the political game and can play it on a highly mediated platform. Seen from a media perspective, the program is exceptional in the sense that we are allowed exceptional access to the political processes and power games normally behind closed doors. The two other programs depict the image of a political party paralyzed by a protracted power struggle and a Lykketoft caught in the web and shadow of this fight. The programs demonstrate how documentaries have moved deeper into the backstage of politics and how personalized our perception of politics have also been. Guldbrandsen's almost melancholic portrait of Lykketoft's final defeat is thematized not merely as a personal defeat, but as the end of a certain kind of political style and rhetoric. This was stressed very strongly in the DR press release:

“*Lykketoft finale* is a film about a political system under change. The presentation, the political slogan, has defeated the poli-

tical argument. Mogens Lykketoft is caught between his idealistic image of himself and the media image of him as an elitist man greedy for power. The film thus portrays the modern Danish election campaign as a media circus in which form and presentation is everything. The political consensus is created through the ability to speak in headlines in front of the camera. The exit of Lykketoft is the exit of the idealist.”

The documentaries analyzed in this article have a complex and nuanced perspective on political problems and political persons. They clearly state that in modern mediated politics, there is no turning back on the fact that media go deeper into both the political and personal backstage and that politics today are very personalized. However, they also reveal problems in this development: nothing goes unnoticed and in the strong media competition the tendency to go for the sensational and most personal and colorful story behind politics is eminent.

It is overly pessimistic to just talk about the total decline of serious politics and arguments, and it is too easy to once again simply blame the media. The media certainly have influenced the way contemporary politics is communicated and understood, and the rise of audiovisual media in different forms have made it impossible to escape a greater personification of politics. Nevertheless, modern media have also greatly increased the scope and knowledge of politics and in many ways moved politics closer to everyday life and the ordinary citizen. Programs such as these backstage documentaries help us understand exactly these narrative and cultural dimensions of politics and the role played by symbol and style.

However, this development carries with it a danger. The ‘habermasian’ notion of democracy and the public sphere based on a rational dialogue between the system and the enlightened citizen is not merely old-fashioned ideology. Though this notion lacks an understanding of the cultural and symbolic dimension of politics, it is also worth keeping in mind that a complete commercialization of the media may create a deep gap between a political communication for the elite taking place behind closed doors and a special media and public communication dominated by a very superficial and personalized

form of politics as entertainment as we see it already today in some tabloid newspapers, magazines and commercial television (Hjarvard 2005: 62-63).

In an article in the *New York Times* (26 December 2003), Paul Krugman has satirically suggested some rules for future media coverage of elections and politics: 1) "Don't talk about clothes," 2) "Actually look at the candidates proposals," 3) "Beware of personal anecdotes," 4) "Look at the candidate's records," and 5) "Don't fall for political histrionics." These are timely warnings for all

of us and the media in specific: substance is more important than form; the private and personal is only important if it influences politics; and the backstage and drama of politics should not dominate political journalism and political documentaries. The television documentaries analyzed here are part of this shift towards the political backstage and to some degree also the personal and private dimension of politics. At the same time, they are reflexive and analytical in their dealings with the problems and dilemmas of modern, mediatized politics.

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