

Introduction

ANU KANTOLA

The Nordmedia 2007 panel titled *Media, Economy and Democracy* discussed and compared the changing societal and political role of the media in contemporary Nordic societies.

Media systems have characteristically been an elementary part of national democracies and national power systems. In this regard, the Nordic countries form an exemplary case, as their political and media systems have been characterized by a strong Westphalian nation state, which rests on an ethos of national democracy and the national public sphere. Since the 1980s, forces of economic globalization and market-driven reforms have challenged national democracies as well as media institutions and practices in the Nordic countries. The panellists were invited to reflect on the media's role in Nordic societies in light of these changes. How has the media's role changed in the Nordic societies with regard to democracy, the political system and political power? Has there been a change from a national democracy and public sphere towards market-driven institutions and media practices, or do the national institutions and practices still have power? How has the media's role changed due to, for example, economic or cultural globalization, Europeanization, commercialization or the mediatization of politics? Have the media evolved to become an isolated centre or various dispersed centres of power or are they still linked with the national democratic structures and institutions? Can one talk about powerful media, and if so in what sense? What are the most interesting challenges and changes likely to take place in the future regarding the relations between the media, the economy and democracy?

