Chapter 1

The interplay of media and the political executive
Introduction and framework

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On Friday 25 August 2017, the leader of the conservative party in Sweden, Anna Kinberg Batra, called a press conference. She was under pressure and declared that she would be leaving her post due to increased internal criticism. The press conference ended four days of intense coverage from all leading media on the decreasing popular support for the party. The internal wave of criticism had grown stronger every day, and journalists reported the story as a power struggle between different groups within the party.

Was the media the organiser behind the resignation? The coverage showed that the media and the political sphere are intertwined in a mutual dependency: Media provided an arena for the internal party struggle, but it also amplified the internal criticism. In media logic, the demands for a new leader became a good story, and the opposition in the party used this logic to oust a party leader democratically elected just eight months earlier (Eriksson, 2017).

What kind of relationships lie behind political journalism?

This resignation is just one example of the mediatisation of politics. There are many similar examples in other countries that illustrate how media logic and political logic are intertwined in daily politics (e.g., Esser & Strömbäck, 2014). In political journalism, the key actors are the politicians and their press secretaries on one side and the journalists on the other (e.g., Davis, 2010; Kuhn & Kleis Nielsen, 2014). In this book, we explore the question of how close or distant the political executive power and the media are to or from one another, and how we can understand their relationship. The title of this volume – *Close and distant. Political executive–media relations in four countries* – reflects the concern in research and elsewhere about the relationship between journalists and the political elite. Throughout this volume, we discuss questions about closeness and distance, the power balance between actors

– its exchanges and negotiations. Hence, this book is concerned with the ongoing relationships and mutual dependency between politics and the media, between journalists and their sources.

The relationship between the political elite and journalists is about power – who is able to get attention and influence the public image of politics and political actors. It is about conflicting interests as well as mutual interests, when both sides are dependent on one another.

The political elite needs media attention in a complex society with an abundance of information and a deficit of attention. Media can give the political elite access to the public sphere and the attention of citizens and actors; but there is also the question of how this attention is framed – how politicians and politics are portrayed.

Journalists need the political system for news and information, and a political reporter's network of sources is their most important asset. Journalists are supposed to be independent of political power and follow professional ideology, and their close relationships with their sources imply a kind of dependency and professional dilemma.

This power-based relationship is ultimately about the control of information and access to the public's attention. In this complicated relationship, there is no good or evil – both groups have legitimate interests in their struggle to influence the image of politics in society. However, there are also invisible limits on how far each side can go to influence the public, and by what methods. There are conflicting interests as well as mutual interests in the relationship – and the balance of power shifts depending on the situation.

A three-year project covering four countries and journalist-source interaction

The book is the result of a three-year research project that brought together researchers from four countries to analyse the relationship between the political executive power and the media. We analyse and compare the relationships identified in Finland, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden during the years 2015-2016. The examined countries are very different politically as well as in size and social structure. The media systems also differ in their legacy relationships between politics and media, and the key goals of this project have been to find similarities in all these differences, patterns in the interaction between the groups and, above all, national differences.

While there is broad consensus that journalists and their sources interact with each other in a variety of ways and that this interaction is worth studying, there is much less consensus on "who is leading the tango", the journalists or the sources.[1] This book makes two contributions to this debate. First, the determinants of the relationships between journalists and staff/sources in the Finnish, Lithuanian, Polish and Swedish executive governments are examined. This analysis builds mainly on extensive inter-

views with journalists and staff regarding media-related matters in governments and is supplemented by documentary evidence (see more below).

Second, the book advances a specific argument about how the strategic exchange of access and information between political sources and journalists brings them together while still maintaining a certain distance. Accordingly, we argue, they are both close and distant. There is interactivity and reciprocity – a mutual exchange, but also distance. In one way, journalists and politicians are forever locked in a daily power struggle. From another perspective, they are in a kind of working relationship with one another. Here, we seek to illuminate these connections and the ties that bind, but one thing is certain: politicians and journalists need each other.

While we often think of the relationship between the government and the press as hostile, in this book we show another side of the partnership by emphasising the ways in which news organisations and government officials benefit from this relationship despite the tensions. This book also approaches the partnership from both sides: politics and media. As Cook (2005: 12) notes, whereas many studies of journalism reveal the power of sources in suggesting and shaping if not determining the news, "the literature is asymmetrical, with many more journalist's-eye views of the process than perspectives from the politicians' side".

Four sets of questions

The purpose of this book is to study the relationship between journalists and political sources in the selected countries. The key question is whether these relationships are mutually reinforcing and symbiotic or more fundamentally adversarial. By making comparisons between different media systems, we try to define common trends and patterns in the four countries. This will contribute to the discussion about what is related to a national context and what features are parts of a common political communication culture in Europe.

The first set of questions, which is central to the book, revolves around the character of the relationships themselves. What is the nature of the relationships? How do the political sources and journalists enter such relationships; how is contact initiated? Who leads? Who follows? (Or, more cynically: who uses whom and who gains the most?) Further, what kinds of methods are used to influence the other party in this relationship, and how is this power relationship negotiated in daily practice? Does the use of social media in communications change the relationship, and if yes, in what direction? These questions are addressed and expanded on in this volume.

A second set of questions concerns the daily professional work, i.e. normal practices and routines, of chief executives' media advisors.[2] What are they actually doing? Why, in what ways and with what consequences are these practices and routines prevailing? This book looks at these and other questions concerning practical arrangements, practices and institutions or organisations in executive power systems.

Exploring such questions might tell us more about contemporary governing practices in the multimedia age through or with the media, the nature of executive power and politics, and life at the top.

A third set of questions targets journalists and contemporary political journalism specifically in a comparative perspective as well. What is the degree of political parallelism between journalism and politics? Are detachment and neutrality strong ideals, and how is this visible in daily work? How dependent are journalists on sources, and how can they develop their relationships with sources and still safeguard their autonomy? What conditions in their daily work set the limits for what political journalism can achieve: journalistic expertise, resources and the need for news 24/7?

A fourth and final set of questions focuses on the implications for modern democracy and its institutions, including the government as well as the media. What are the consequences for democracy of such evolving and prevailing mutual dependencies? In particular, we are interested in the consequences with regard to transparency, accountability, legitimacy, and the overall power relations and democratic processes more broadly.

Mediatisation or bubble effects?

This book offers insight into the practices of politics and journalism – the actual conduct of staff in these professions, what people actually do in everyday situations and what they must face when confronting real-world challenges. This includes the management of government communications (Sanders & Canel, 2013). Therefore, the book goes into structures as well as practices within the governing and journalistic processes.

The book also relates to the discussion of the role of media in modern politics. In the world of ideal models, media is regarded as "the fourth estate". In the normative theories of division of power in liberal democracy, media independently scrutinises power and creates a public sphere for deliberative public debate (Dahl, 1989; Christians et al., 2009). In this model, the division between the media and the political system is clear.

However, ideal models are seldom reflected in real societies. The real world is never this clear, but much more complicated with many power-based relationships, both visible and invisible. Over the past 20-30 years, different kinds of criticism in both research and public debate have been directed at the relationship between media and power. These criticisms come from different perspectives and often contain many contradictions:

The "mediatisation critique" – that the political system adapts to media logic and that the media therefore appropriates power in the political processes. Commercialisation of media and various changes in the political system lead to mediatised politics, under which the political system loses its autonomy and becomes dependent on media

(e.g., Mazzoleni & Schulz, 1999). This is basically undemocratic, because journalists and the media are not held responsible by voters (Petersson, 1996).

The "bubble critique" – that media and politics are part of the same bubble, that they are tied together with relationships socialising them into the same system and the same values (Kuhn & Kleis Nielsen, 2014). This kind of critique has often been used by populist parties claiming that mainstream media is politically correct and part of the political system (de Vreese, Esser & Hopmann, 2017). With populist parties and movements growing in many countries, this critique has in recent years become increasingly common.

These contradictory criticisms are a sign of the growing uncertainty regarding the role of the media in relation to politics. The uncertainty is a result of rapid changes in both the media system and the political system over the last 20-30 years (Kuhn & Kleis Nielsen, 2014).

In the political system, the role of the political parties has changed. Stable support is waning and those who stick with their parties are experiencing a more volatile political landscape. Without the old class- and interest-based party organisations, parties have had to develop communication strategies to reach voters. The growth of communication departments, PR consultants and "spin doctors" is evident in many countries; the professionalisation of political communication is a general trend (Strömbäck & Kiousis, 2011). At the same time, new populist parties are growing out of the discontent with the old system. The new parties are often weakly organised; instead of relying on strong internal organisation, these parties tend to rely on close relations with media (de Vreese et al., 2017).

Also, the media system is changing. Audiences are fragmented from the abundance of TV channels, websites and social media networks. The consequence of this fragmentation is referred to as "bubble effects", where audiences get their opinions confirmed by their media flow and more seldom meet other perspectives and opinions (Pariser, 2011). In addition to this, media is increasingly driven on a commercial basis, and commercial values are becoming more important in both news selection and framing. The speed in news reporting is increasing, and editorial resources for quality journalism have been downsized. As a result, fewer reporters have to produce more to fill all channels (Allern & Pollack, 2012; Nygren & Nord, 2017).

Taken together, these changes influence political journalism in many ways. They influence both the political actors and journalists, and the consequence is that the conditions for political journalism have become more difficult to analyse. A key question is how the interaction between journalists and political sources is influenced by these trends – the power balance in the ongoing negotiation on the selection and framing of political news.

A multidisciplinary approach

The starting point for the project is the assumption that the relationships between journalists and different kinds of political sources are simultaneously adversarial and collaborative/symbiotic. Both sides use the relationship for their own purposes, and there is an ongoing negotiation in the relationship based on strength and power. The actual result depends on the situation and what is at stake.

The different roles held by political sources and journalists in liberal democracies form the basis for the analysis. Both groups have legitimate incentives to influence the selection and framing of news. There is basically no antidemocratic tendency in the efforts of either of these groups to influence political journalism:

- The political system, in our case governments with leading politicians and press advisors, need media to get their issues on the agenda and gather support. In modern society, the media provides the most important arena for politics – the place where politics is made visible.

- Journalists have diverging roles as both actors and directors of the public arena for politics. Journalism and politics have always been intertwined (Schudson, 2003). Following liberal ideology, however, journalists are also supposed to be an independent watchdog on power and keep their distance to the political system (Christians et al., 2009).

There is also a limit to how far the political system can go to influence political coverage without being a threat to the autonomy of the media. This limit is hard to define, and, even if it occasionally shifts, it still exists to guarantee the autonomy for media as a "fourth estate" in relation to government and political power. Authoritarian regimes use *hard methods* to control information flows and media image: ownership, legislation, censorship and repression. This is the case in many countries with limited press freedom. In Western democracies, the political system predominantly uses *soft methods* to influence media and control information: "spin doctors" and news management strategies including the production of information subsidies for news media (Davis, 2014).

Is there a limit to the influence that is acceptable in the other direction, i.e. can the media have "too much" influence on political processes? This has been discussed in critical research on the mediatisation of politics (e.g., Mazzoleni & Schulz, 1999). According to basic liberal ideology, though, the freedom of the press and other media is part of the constitution and should not be limited, especially with regard to political issues.

At the core of the relation between politicians and journalists is the existence of a shared culture (Pfetsch, 2014). This culture binds journalists and sources together, and is based on shared norms, values and attitudes. While it has a normative basis, it nevertheless differs among national cultures. And here lies the rationale for a comparative approach: patterns that can be found in countries that are different from one

another stand above national versions and adaptations; these patterns are constituting features of the relation itself.

The project is multidisciplinary and based on earlier research and theories in political science, mass communication and journalism.

In political science, the personalisation of politics has gradually become more common (e.g., Karvonen, 2010; Langer, 2011). This development has been reinforced by media coverage, and politicians also use these mechanisms. Part of this is also a reflection of the presidentialisation of politics, where political power is concentrated to the prime minister (e.g., Poguntke & Webb, 2005). The role of media is certainly one driver behind this development, but so is the need for the political centre to control information in more complex processes. In several countries, there is a strengthening – via an increased capacity to coordinate and control policy – of the executive centre, of prime ministers' offices. Arguably, another driving factor is the increasing pressure for centralisation, as governments face the challenge of "speaking with one voice". This is epitomised by central control of government communication, tight message control and tendencies toward centralisation.

In journalism studies, the relationship between journalists and sources has been an important area of study for a long time (e.g., Sigal, 1986). This is a delicately negotiated relationship. It is based on an exchange of what each part can offer the other – the sources can offer information and news, and journalists can offer space in the public sphere and public visibility. Thus, both sides are interdependent, even though journalists and political sources pursue different professional goals (Blumler & Gurevitch, 1995). The negotiation is based on power, and the group of actors that has the upper hand changes from situation to situation (Berkowitz, 2009). While there are different schools of thought in the analysis of which side has the leading role – journalists or sources – it is also possible to view the relationship as a kind of cooperation – a symbiosis where both sides have a mutual interest in keeping a good relationship (Larsson, 1998; Manning, 2001).

Theories on mediatisation of society bind together political science and journalism studies. The term has been defined as a general social process in which the media has become increasingly influential and deeply integrated in different spheres of society (Esser & Strömbäck, 2014). It is a slow and structural change in society – not a question of media effects but of how society in general has adapted to the logics of media. In the field of politics, it is defined as a long-term process where the importance of the media in political processes, institutions, organisations and actors has increased (Esser & Strömbäck, 2014). Research has analysed a broad spectrum of trends in political journalism resulting from the mediatisation of politics and the increasing influence of media logics in public political debate; among these are the increased use of game frames and interpretative news, personification, orientation towards conflicts, dramatisation and scandals (Jönsson & Strömbäck, 2007; Patterson, 1993).

In comparative media studies, the key area is the relationship between media and political power. The influential model of Hallin and Mancini (2004) focuses on this

relationship in two dimensions: the degree of state intervention in media and the degree of political parallelism (if media is used for political purposes and reflects political divides). The degree of professionalism is also very much about the autonomy of journalism in relation to politics. On a systemic level, the degree of professionalism and detachment is also part of the professional political communication culture (Pfetsch, 2014). In these comparative studies, important national differences are visible that can be traced back to history and cultural heritage.

These areas of research and theories form a matrix for our analysis. On top of this, theories on media development are used to analyse the changing conditions for political communication. New media platforms are becoming increasingly important within the political communication system, but the traditional media is still present and adapting to the new situation. Chadwick (2013) calls this a "hybrid media system", where old and new media coexist. New technology like the Internet and mobile networks create new platforms for both up-and-coming social media and legacy media. Newspapers also use social media platforms for both reporting and distribution of content, TV channels are present both in broadcasting and online, and fragmented online news services and blogs use media content and increasingly often produce their own content. Thus, while technology changes the system, political communication culture is rather sluggish. The result is a hybrid media system where old and new media logics coexist and interact.

Research design and methods in the project

We explore this area of research by applying a twofold strategy. First, we provide in-depth case studies of contemporary political executive-media relationships in each of the examined countries. Second, we place the findings from our individual cases in a comparative perspective, surveying evidence on political executive-media relationships across the four countries participating in the project: Finland, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden.

Most of the research and theories on political communication originate in the U.S. or the U.K. (Blumler, 2015). This is why there has been a tendency in recent decades to "de-westernise" media research (Wasserman & de Beer, 2009). The main argument is that results from the U.S. and the U.K. are not always applicable in other countries without taking history, the level of economic development and national culture into account. By including two central European countries in the analysis, our perspective is broader than the perspective provided by studies examining similar (western European) countries.

The countries examined here are all situated around the Baltic Sea. However, they differ regarding size, economic development, political history and culture. Most notably, there is variation among them regarding the media system and the political system. Sweden and Finland are quite close and have a common history; Poland and

Lithuania share post-communist experiences. As far as media systems or models of the media-state interaction are concerned, Finland and Sweden belong to the same model – the democratic corporatist model (Hallin & Mancini, 2004). Poland, in a post-communist context, belongs instead to a unique East Central European model (see Dobek-Ostrowska & Głowacki, 2008, 2011). Lithuania, finally, shares many of the experiences of Poland, carrying a heritage from the Soviet era and a high degree of what Hallin and Mancini (2004) referred to as "political parallelism" (Balčytienė, 2012).[3]

It is easy to detect differences between the four countries, but if we also find similarities in the analysis despite all these differences, these similarities will be a very strong indication of general features in political journalism and the relationship between journalists and their sources in the political system. This, together with the need to "de-westernise" political communication studies, is the main argument for including four countries that are so different in the project.

Three steps in the research design

Teams of researchers in the four countries carried out the project during the period 2014-2017. They worked closely during this period, holding regular workshops and developing common methods and questions. This close cooperation made it possible to conduct the comparative analysis in this volume.

The focus of the project was the day-to-day relationships between journalists and political sources. However, the role of the media during crises and scandals has been analysed before (e.g., Allern & Pollack, 2012; Lull & Hinerman, 1997), and the basis for journalism during crises is the relationships that have been established under normal situations.

Another limitation of the project was the focus on politicians in power (ruling political parties and government) and political journalists. However, while the focus has been on journalists' relations with the party currently in power, many of the sources have the experience of being in opposition and fathoming how to then use political conflicts in their daily work.

The project had three clear steps. In the first step, the authors of individual chapters mapped the landscape of political journalism for the country in question. They identified political actors and journalists, analysed important media and described the structures of political communication.

The second step consisted of interviews with leading political journalists and political press secretaries/press advisors in the governments, in some cases including ministers and press advisors from earlier governments. In each country, 20-25 interviews were conducted, most of which were held in 2015-2016. Each interview took one hour on average and followed the same interview guide, and the interviewees were granted anonymity. The findings from these interviews are presented in each country chapter (Chapters 2-5).

In the third step, the results were analysed and compared with regard to certain themes and topics. The findings from the comparative analyses are presented as thematic chapters (Chapters 6-10).

In the research design, there are some limitations to bear in mind. In the interviews, journalists and political advisors provided information in the manner that they wanted it to be made public. No systematic content analysis was conducted to verify the results from the interviews. Despite this limitation, the project still offers insight into the process behind the published stories in the newspapers and radio/TV news, an insight that would never have been gained through content analysis or surveys. Thus, the project offers a glimpse of parts of a hidden interaction that forms the daily output in news media. We believe this will contribute to the cumulative knowledge of social science despite the limitation.

Adversarial or symbiotic relationship?

The points of departure for the analysis are that there are two major dimensions in the relationship between journalists and political sources: adversarial vs symbiotic and public vs hidden. Taken together in a four-square matrix, these two dimensions cover the different types of interaction between journalists and political sources. This matrix was developed as a hypothesis, and the analysis considers how the empirical findings fit into this matrix (Figure 1.1).

Figure 1.1   Dimensions of the interaction between politicians and journalists.

	Visible/public (Overt)	Hidden/not public (Covert)
Symbiotic/no conflict	Press conferences. Public performances, debates and journalists referring to what politicians are saying.	Positive leaks about "good news", to get the news before competitors.
Adversarial/conflict	Journalists as watchdogs, scrutinising political actors and political acting on the initiative of journalists.	Negative leaks from the political sphere about competitors. "Cover-up" of scandals, trying to hide negative information.

The hypothesis was that most of the interaction between the actors can be placed within these four squares. Much of the previous research on the interaction between journalists and politicians has focused on public interactions, for example the use of press conferences (Eriksson et al., 2013).

Another possibility is that interaction concerning a news story moves between these kinds of interaction depending on the situation and the balance of power between the parts in each stage of the negotiation. For example, a journalist may receive a leak about something that will be presented at a press conference the following day, and

in exchange for this, the source gets more coverage than would otherwise be the case. There is no conflict between journalists and politicians in this story. It starts as a hidden interaction, but later moves into the public sphere. Another example is a watchdog story that starts as a leak from political opponents and moves into the public sphere, where its development is uncontrolled.

This book does not include an evaluation of these four squares; from a normative perspective, none of them contains "better" journalism than any of the others. Instead, they all perform different functions in democracy: information, debate and a watchdog function. The types of interaction differ, however, between the four squares, and the distribution of power in the daily negotiation differs. This also influences the role of journalism in democracy and the balance of power between the political system and media.

An important dimension of the relationship is formality and informality. These two sides exist at the same time, and the border between them on a day-to-day basis is often blurred:

> It is clear that we need to pay close attention not only to the routine interaction between journalists and politicians, but also to the informal and formal ties that bind them together in relationships that are adversarial one moment and symbiotic the next, as well as the paths via which some journalists move into politics (as advisers and candidates) and sometimes back to news media. (Kuhn & Kleis Nielsen, 2014: 16)

A key aspect of this project has been collecting truly comparative material. Even before we started to pursue the empirical research, a number of analytical challenges became evident.

First, comparative analysis was going to be difficult due to the wealth of data – many hours of interviews were gathered. The only way to manage this was for the researchers to cooperate closely around clearly defined themes. The result of this work is presented in the cross-national thematic chapters in this book.

Second, our focus on cross-country comparisons implied that we had to sacrifice the longitudinal dimension, or, in other words, that comparisons across space were given priority over comparisons across time. In some interviews, journalists and political sources were able to make comparisons over time. It was also possible to make comparisons using earlier research in some of the cases. In general, however, the results present a picture of the situation in the 2010s.

It should also be borne in mind that the political situation can change very fast. An example with regard to the study at hand is the election of a new Polish government in 2015, and the ensuing conflicts concerning the role and standing of Polish media. Indeed, growing political populism and anti-EU tendencies are currently changing the political scene in many European countries, including the four countries in the study. While it is possible to cover this development in some cases, the main purpose of the study is to find more general patterns in the relationship – patterns that are stable during different kinds of political regimes.

Organisation of the book and core messages

The book is structured into three parts and eleven chapters. In this first chapter, we describe the research problem, the aim and the research design of the study, and we present our selection of national cases and theoretical and methodological approaches. We then preview the chapters of the book in the context of the analytical dimensions and the research problems that they address.

The first part consists of four empirical chapters that present the case studies of political executive-media relationships in, respectively, Finland, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden. In the analyses, these chapters focus on interactive dynamics in the relationships. Consequently, all chapters have a similar structure that is based on the same matrix. Accordingly, the chapters reflect five dimensions (Figure 1.2).

Figure 1.2   Dimensions in the analysis of interaction.

Daily work
- Routines
- Access to political sources and media
- The role of social media in daily work

Formality and informality in the relationships, given different situations
- Visible/public or Hidden/not public
- Symbiotic/no conflict or Adversarial/conflict

Professionalisation
- The roles of the actors
- How the system works on both sides

Relationships between actors
- Networks
- Cultures developed within the system
- Strategies from both sides

Changes over time
- In the short perspective, 5-10 years
- In the long perspective, 20-30 years

A concluding discussion in each chapter assesses, in particular, the common questions about closeness and distance, and the exchange and power balance between actors. This assessment is placed in relation to the specific conditions of the country.

In Chapter 2, Risto Niemikari, Tapio Raunio and Tom Moring explore the relationship between the political executive and media in Finland, arguing that this relationship is characteristically a system of interdependence where journalists rely on politicians for information, and politicians, in turn, rely on journalists as a channel for publicity. Drawing on 21 interviews with political and media elites, they demonstrate that the role of political advisors is central, while the civil servant media staff of the prime minister's office seek to maintain a neutral position. Interviewees on both sides describe the high degree of access to political sources as a distinct, almost unique feature of the Finnish system. However, a culture of informal interaction operates alongside this openness, as the management of pre-public information is crucial for both politicians

and journalists. Even though informal interaction remains an integral part of political executive-media relationships, both sides describe a shift towards more professional and ethical conduct. Social media has the potential of providing politicians with a way of bypassing media influence, but it is still far from surpassing the importance of traditional media coverage.

In Chapter 3, Auksė Balčytienė and Milda Malling examine the relationship between the media and politics in Lithuania, arguing that it is an interaction shaped by benefits-oriented reasoning. They argue that for both communicating sides, the logic of "benefits-oriented reasoning" appears to be a key determinant of success in communication. This analysis is based on 20 interviews with political journalists, government spokespersons and press advisors in Lithuania. It shows that each group gains power in different situations along a formality-informality continuum. Beyond contextual particularities, as described in the chapter, the changes in political-media interaction uncover broader tendencies that are also recognised in other sociocultural contexts as well as in conditions and circumstances related to political communication and journalism production.

In Chapter 4, Bogusława Dobek-Ostrowska and Jacek Nożewski explore the political executive-media relationship in Poland, drawing on 23 interviews. This analysis reveals how close ministers and press secretaries are to each other, whereas spokespersons are more marginalised, politically speaking. Another important finding concerns social media, which is widely used for self-presentation in Poland. Both the politicians and the media use such platforms (especially Facebook and Twitter) for communication and immediate connection. While the dramatic political change in Poland has brought about many changes to the media world, journalists do not notice any limitations on their access to sources. This relationship is dependent on the networks of sources that individual journalists establish over time, and these sources are not limited exclusively to politicians. Moreover, journalists try to access political sources in another way, and as a result political changes have only changed their routines. This chapter observes a process of politicisation of communication staff, which also includes the spokespersons. It also claims that the prime minister plays the main role in the communication process of the government, followed by political advisors. Civil servants come last.

In Chapter 5, Karl Magnus Johansson, Milda Malling and Gunnar Nygren explore the political executive-media relationship in Sweden and suggest that it is "a professionally symbiotic relationship". This chapter focuses in particular on professional day-to-day relationships and habits. The analysis is mainly based on 21 interviews with journalists and government press secretaries, supplemented by documentary evidence. The analysis establishes the routinisation at work, as well as the professionalisation. The exchanges appear close, but both parties recognise the professional roles at the heart of the relationship. Media development also influences the relationship between journalists and their sources in government; downsizing in the newsrooms, increased production 24/7 for all platforms and increased competition for unique news make journalists more dependent on available sources. At the same time, professionalisa-

tion of government communication makes news management more efficient and has centralising effects on executive systems. These trends serve to change the balance between journalists and their political sources in favour of the sources.

Taken together, the contributions to the study of the political executive-media relationships in the four countries yield three core messages. First, these relationships have been subject to *increasingly intense interaction* over time, following increased demands from media and technological changes. In brief, there are more channels of communication, and both sides use social media and various platforms to communicate. This pattern is also reflected in practically instant reporting, as revealed through social media and news media online.

Second, parallel to this rise in intensity, we have witnessed a *broadening of the interaction locations* used to communicate. Although the traditional locations remain resilient, they have been complemented by increasingly prominent interaction locations, reflected in everyday and institutional practices.

Third, important variation in the patterns of political executive-media relationships is established and may be *explained by centralisation vs decentralisation in governments*. Over time, trends are consistent with the idea of growing politicisation in the wake of rising media scrutiny. The growth of resources in government communication and downsizing of newsrooms in leading media outlets change the power balance between journalists and their sources, especially in times of increasing speed in the news cycle.

The second part of the book consists of five chapters on different themes with a cross-national perspective based on the four national cases.

In Chapter 6, Karl Magnus Johansson and Tapio Raunio explore government communication from a comparative perspective. They set out the research on government communication and then proceed to explore and compare the contexts in which it occurs. They hypothesise that there is a trend of centralisation in government communication – a move upwards in the political executive towards central coordination and control. They test this hypothesis empirically through an inventory of elite interview evidence and a four-country comparison including two case studies – Finland and Sweden – as well as two case illustrations: Lithuania and Poland. Based on the extensive interviews in the case studies, they describe how government communication is structured. They find that the cases of Finland and Sweden offer support for the centralisation hypothesis, while those of Lithuania and Poland point to the limitations of the centralisation hypothesis. Hence, they conclude that the extent to which government communication is centralised varies and that the variation is patterned. The findings suggest that previous research, which is heavily focused on "Western" states, underestimates cross-national variation in government communication.

In Chapter 7, Elena Johansson examines the use of social media among journalists and political sources in the countries. According to Chadwick (2013), technological development, through the emergence of media channels and so on, has transformed media systems toward hybridisation. In the modern hybrid media systems, older and newer media forms interact, interweave and compete with each other. This chapter

looks at strategies of government communication in social media (Facebook and Twitter). The analysis demonstrates that, for ministers, Facebook serves as something of a top-down channel to bypass editorial media, while Twitter provides some informational exchange with professional elites, including media elites. Thus, government communication in social media combines features of traditional and new media practices and follows a "hybrid" logic. Ministers' communication, whether via press secretaries or not, suggests a centralised management system as far as social media is concerned.

In Chapter 8, Milda Malling analyses formality and informality in the relationship between political sources and journalists in Lithuania and Sweden. How do the exchange, trust and power balance between journalists and their political sources differ depending on the form of interaction (formal vs informal)? The findings indicate that formal situations and agenda-based news are advantageous for the professional sources. Informal sources gain power over formal sources during political conflicts and non-agenda news, while the top political leaders and their press advisors are most often isolated from this interaction. The result calls for the reconsideration of existing theories on interdependency and shows that the type of interaction influences the content of exchange and power between journalists and their sources.

In Chapter 9, Gunnar Nygren and Risto Niemikari discuss theories on mediatisation of politics in relation to the findings in the project. They challenge the understanding of mediatisation as replacing political logics with media logics. The empirical results from the four countries confirm the ongoing mediatisation, but this does not mean a transfer of power from the political system to media. On the contrary – professionalised government communication learns how to play the game with media according to the rules of media logics. By transforming the political system and integrating media logic into political processes, the political instrumentalisation of media is becoming stronger. The shifting power balance between downsized and commercialised media outlets and professionalised government communication gives the notion of mediatisation of politics a different meaning to the usual interpretation.

In Chapter 10, Auksė Balčytienė and Tom Moring look at the results from the perspective of political communication cultures. They offer a historical perspective: how contextual circumstances (histories and traditions, values and ideals as well as other cultural legacies) are shaping the trajectories of transformations in each of the four countries. Furthermore, they discuss these specific "moments of truth" in each of the four countries studied, and how these moments might be characterised. Are these infused by local political and economic or global reasons? Is there anything specific that can be learned from these changes? In other words, what in the political-media interaction in all four countries is historical and cultural (and thus context-specific) and what is universal and reciprocal, and thus transferable also to other contexts?

Combined, the contributions covering cross-national themes yield several messages and important insights into the interplay of media and the political executive. If there is one core message it is this: the communication process is one of reciprocity,

of exchange, where the centrally involved actors somehow find themselves not just interacting but in a kind of working relationship.

The book concludes with a chapter by Karl Magnus Johansson and Gunnar Nygren that offers perspectives from political science and journalism studies. The chapter discusses the findings and implications for political studies as well as from a normative perspective: whenever there are actual or possible evolving symbiotic relationships with journalists and news sources, including political power holders, what are the consequences for democracy? The relationship qualifies the expectation of a "symbiotic" relationship as well as of a clear trend of "mediatisation" and of growing centralisation of government communication across time and cases. The chapter also discusses the results from a normative perspective of journalism as an autonomous institution in a democratic society. In relation to the different media systems studied in the project, this normative perspective gives different results. The final question is how much space there is for journalism as a "fourth estate" in the networked and commercialised media system that is developing in all of the studied countries. Is political instrumentalisation of media coming through "the back door"?

Notes

1. Key, classical, works are Blumler & Gurevitch, 1981; Ericson, Baranek & Chan, 1989; Gans, 1980; Gieber & Johnson, 1961; Sigal, 1986. See also, for example, Allern, 1997; Brants et al., 2010; Cook, 2005; Davis, 2009; Koch-Baumgarten & Voltmer, 2010; Larsson, 2002; Manning, 2001; Reich, 2009; Strömbäck & Nord, 2006; 2010.
2. In this book, we use the terms "chief executive", "head of government", "prime minister" and "premier" interchangeably. We also use the terms "press secretary", "media/press advisor" and "political advisor" interchangeably to describe political appointees serving in this function. Likewise, we use the terms "professional communicator", "press officer" and "information officer" interchangeably – they are "non-political", that is, not politically appointed or non-partisan, civil servants.
3. In the words of Hallin and Mancini, political parallelism refers to "the degree and nature of the links between the media and political parties or, more broadly, the extent to which the media system reflects the major political divisions in society" (Hallin & Mancini, 2004: 21).

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