The Mediatisation of Political Negotiations and Its Consequences
- A Diachronic Perspective -

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1. Introduction

In the 2000s only a few social phenomena have been discussed as frequently and controversially within political and communication science as the so-called mediatisation of politics. Very broadly speaking, the concept refers to an increase in the quantity and intensity of the media’s observing, reporting and commenting activities on social and political events, issues and processes as well as to subsequent “adaptation processes” on the part of political actors (Lundby 2009b; Mazzoleni 2008a, 2008b; Mazzoleni and Schulz 1999; Schulz 2004; Strömbäck and Esser 2009, 43; Strömbäck 2008, 2011). Although having become “en vogue” (Reinemann 2010, 248) in recent years, research on mediatisation and its effects on each of the three political dimensions (polity, policy, politics) is still in its infancy leaving “many scholars remain stranded in Babel, without a theoretical map or conceptual compass” (Norris 2009, 323). Therefore, this paper seeks to develop a theoretical model capturing the ways in which mediatisation affects political processes (politics) in general and political negotiations in particular. Starting from the distinction of the three central decision-making rules structuring political processes – hierarchy, majority voting and negotiation (Dahl and Lindblom 1953; Eberlein and Grande 2003; Lehbruch 2000; Scharpf 2000) – the paper focuses on potential mediatisation effects on political negotiations in particular for two reasons. On the one hand, this focus of interest stems from the current state of research in the field. In fact, only a few scholars have theoretically or empirically analysed mediatisation effects on political negotiations thus inevitably leaving many questions unanswered (for the few exceptions, see f.i. Grande 2000; Häusermann, Mach, and Papadopoulos 2004; Marcinkowski 2005, 2007; Schrott and Spranger 2007; Spörer-Wagner and Marcinkowski 2010a, 2010b; Reunanen, Kunelius, and Noppari 2010). On the other hand, many of these scholars argue that mediatisation’s repercussions for political negotiations are particularly intense if compared to respective effects on hierarchical decision making or majority voting. In fact and as will be described in greater detail below, the action logics of political negotiations and the media seem to stand in sharp contrast, whereas hierarchy and majority voting are seen as being compatible with the “media logic”, all three being “characterized by elements of competition and the attribution of political achievements to certain political actors” (Floss and Marcinkowski 2008, 5).

As will be shown in this paper, mediatisation effects resulting from the increasing clash of the action logics of political negotiations and the media may from a theoretical point of view be both positive and negative. Based on a theoretical model structured according to the “Coleman bathtub”, the paper aims to theoretically discuss and synthesise both positive and negative effects on political negotiations as well as the factors that are assumed to affect (i.e. moderate) their direction, intensity and prevalence. Central to the theoretical model is the assumption that the media with its very own “media logic” (Altheide and Snow 1979) has become a further institutional context condition for political negotiation providing additional institutional incentives and constraints for the
actors involved. As such it affects the perception and behaviour of political actors and thus the process as well as the output and outcome of their political negotiations (Grande 2000; Marcinkowski 2005, 2007; Schrott and Spranger 2007; Spörer-Wagner and Marcinkowski 2010b, 2010a). Building on this theoretical framework, the research design of an ongoing research project is presented. Based on the assumption that “media influence” has increased dramatically in the last decades, a diachronic comparative case study of three social policy negotiations by the German Conference Committee (Vermittlungsauschuss) is expected to shed new light on this paper’s research question. Accordingly, three negotiations (cases) from diverse points in time during the mediatisation process were chosen in order to investigate mediatisation’s effects on political negotiations. At the conference, preliminary empirical evidence, i.e. the results of the first of the three case studies, will be presented.

This paper begins with a very brief overview of the young and partly chaotic conceptual debate on the phenomenon of mediatisation, followed by the conceptualisation central to this paper. Resting upon a neo-institutionalist interpretation of the media, the first two argumentative steps of the theoretical model are elaborated. In the fourth section two game-theoretic models are presented suggesting that mediatisation leads to the growing publicity of (formerly secret) political negotiations. Then, both positive and negative mediatisation effects on political negotiations as well as the mentioned moderating effects will be discussed from a theoretical perspective. All of these thoughts will then be compiled into a theoretical model that is structured according to “Coleman’s bathtub”. Lastly, the design guiding the still ongoing research project will be outlined.

2. Mediatisation – A Brief Introduction to a Controversial Conceptual Debate

Although “[r]esearch that broaches the issue of mediatisation and mediatisation phenomena has been experiencing a continuous boom in western European mass communication sciences” (Schrott 2009, 43), the conceptual debate on the phenomenon may still be described as controversial and partly chaotic. As a consequence, even today the concept is often defined very broadly. Mazzoleni (2009b), for example, refers to mediatisation as “the extension of the influence of the media [...] into all spheres of society and social life”, whilst Lundby (2009, 1) defines it as the “societal changes in contemporary high modern societies and the role of media and mediated communication in these transformations”. Krotz (2007, 257) even speaks of a further “meta-

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1 These are the negotiations on the health care cost containment act in 1977 (Krankenversicherungs-Kostendämpfungsgesetz, KVKG), on the long-term care insurance act in 1993/1994 (Pflegversicherungsgesetz, PflegeVG) and on the Retirement Savings Act in 2001 (Altersvermögens-Gesetz, AVmG).
process” influencing “democracy and society, culture, politics and other conditions of life over the longer term” next to others such as globalisation, individualisation or commercialisation. Not surprisingly, Strömbäck and Esser (2009, 205) argued only recently that despite the variety of existing conceptualisations, most accounts have to be criticised for not being “properly defined or thoroughly discussed”.

One of the major and frequently cited articles published on the issue is Mazzoleni’s and Schulz’ (1999) “Mediatization” of Politics: A Challenge for Democracy?“. According to these authors, the mediatisation of politics may be described as a process by which politics “has lost its autonomy, has become dependent in its central functions on mass media, and is continuously shaped by interactions with mass media” (Mazzoleni and Schulz 1999, 250). In spite its importance for the following debate, this conceptualisation was soon criticised for being normative (Hjarvard 2004, 48). Therefore, Schulz (2004, 98) tried to “reconstruct mediatization as an analytical concept”. In line with scholars such as Hjarvard (2004) or Krotz (2007), he presented a processual conceptualisation of mediatisation distinguishing four phases.2

„First, the media extend the natural limits of human communication capacities; second, the media substitute social activities and social institutions; third, media amalgamate with various non-media activities in social life; and fourth, the actors and organizations of all sectors of society accommodate to the media logic”.

Building on these considerations, yet putting a special focus on the mediatisation of politics, Strömbäck (2008, 2011) then made another important contribution to the conceptual debate. Also defining mediatisation as a process, he distinguished the following four succeeding phases of mediatisation.

„The first aspect [...] is the degree to which the media constitute the most important or dominant source of information on politics and society. A second aspect is the degree to which the media are independent from political institutions in terms of how the media are governed. A third aspect is the degree to which the media content is governed by a political logic or by media logic. A fourth aspect, finally, is the degree to which political actors are governed by a political logic or by media logic“ (Strömbäck 2008, 234).

Taking on this perspective, this paper puts a special emphasis on the fourth and final step of Strömbäck’s account. Accordingly, one of the major goals of this paper is to analyse if, how, and to what effect political negotiation actors accommodate or adapt to the media logic and which consequences this may have for the process, output and outcome of their negotiations. In the following sections, a theoretical model seeking to capture these adaptation processes and their effects will be presented.

2 For comprehensive summaries of the conceptual debate, see Strömbäck 2011 or Strömbäck/Dimitrova 2011.
3. Media (Logic) as Institutional Context Condition for Political Negotiation

3.1. The Media (Logic) as a Political Institution

The theoretical framework of this paper rests upon a neo-institutionalist interpretation of the media. Following this approach, the media itself is regarded as a political institution (Cook 1998, 2006; Sparrow 1999, 2006) and, thus, as a political-institutional context condition for political negotiation. Central to the theoretical model is the so-called “media logic” (Altheide and Snow 1979, 10).

“In general terms, media logic consists of a form of communication; the process through which media present and transmit information. Elements of this form include the various media and the formats used by these media. Format consists, in part, of how material is organized, the style in which it is presented, the focus or emphasis on particular characteristics of behavior, and the grammar of media communication. Format becomes a framework or a perspective that is used to present as well as interpret phenomena.”

Media actors thus rely on certain (informal) rules and routines when selecting, interpreting and presenting political events, issues and processes. As Marcinkowski (2007, 99) argues, these informal rules and routines are taught in journalistic training programs and strengthened via mutual orientation and observation. Despite the fact that there are important differences between different media outlets within a given media system, it is assumed that there are certain (overarching) rules of news production. “Different media organizations and their formats, operations, and content constitute the building blocks of this overall system, but within a given space the sum is greater than its parts, and the norms that govern the media overall are often more important than what distinguishes one form of media from another” (Strömbäck and Dimitrova 2011, 33). Drawing upon neo-institutionalist terminology, media organisations and actors are thus assumed to follow a certain logic of appropriateness structuring their behaviour and guiding the selection of issues regarded as newsworthy as well as the ways in which these issues are interpreted and subsequently presented in the media. Therefore, the media may be regarded as a political institution (Marcinkowski 2005, 2007; Spörer-Wagner and Marcinkowski 2010a, 2010b; Strömbäck 2011, 372).

In this paper it is argued that the media logic predominating a media system varies significantly between Western media systems. Theoretically speaking, there is a continuum ranging from a type of “media logic” fully oriented towards market principles on the one hand and a type of “media logic” based on journalistic ethics and oriented towards the public interest and the media’s frequently cited role as “fourth estate” on the other hand. It is assumed that the media logic to be found in a media system (i.e. the position on this continuum) depends on the degree of commercialisation of the media system.
As above all Patterson (1993) emphasised, in highly commercialised media systems there is usually a stiff competition between various media organisations. Economic pressures force media organisations and actors to catch customers’ attention in order to gain market shares. This is achieved by drawing upon journalistic techniques such as simplification, sensationalisation, dramatisation, the framing of political processes as “a horse race or strategic game rather than issue debates” (Strömbäck 2011, 372), personalisation and polarisation (Crouch 2008, 63–9; Kepplinger 2002, 973; Koch-Baumgarten and Voltmer 2009; Strömbäck 2011). In sum, these rules and routines may be described as media logic oriented towards market principles forming one of the two poles of the continuum mentioned above. At the other pole, there is a type of “media logic” oriented towards the public interest and based on journalistic professional ethics. In weakly commercialised media systems, media organisations’ and actors’ behaviour is less driven by economic pressures. Instead, they feel committed to their (unwritten) social and political tasks and obligations as representatives of the “fourth estate”. Hence, they aspire to inform the public and control their representatives by drawing upon journalistic principles such as filtering out and contextualising relevant information, balanced and matter-of-fact reporting as well as informed commenting on and assessing of political opinions and problem-solving solutions.

As already stated above, it is argued in this paper that a given media system’s position on the continuum and thus the nature of its “media logic” depends on the degree of commercialisation of the media system. The more commercialised a media system is, the more are media actors forced to catch people’s attention due to economic pressures. The less commercialised a media system or the bigger the public sector within the media system is, on the other hand, the less important are market principles and the more do media actors stick to journalistic principles driven by professional ethics and the public interest. It is important to note, however, that this proposition rests upon the assumption that the first two steps of Strömbäck’s conceptualisation of mediatisation (mentioned above) are reached, that is, that “the media constitute the most important or dominant source of information on politics and society” and – most notably – that “the media are independent from political institutions in terms of how the media are governed” (Strömbäck 2008, 234). Given this assumption, it is expected that the degree of commercialisation of the media system has an effect on the nature of the media logic in Strömbäck’s (2008, 234) third phase of mediatisation, i.e. “the degree to which the media content is governed by a political logic or by media logic”. If mediatisation has progressed to the third phase and media content is governed by media logic, it is assumed that there are significant cross-national differences with regard to the latter depending on the degree of commercialisation of the media system.

In summary, it was shown in this section that the media and its logic may be regarded as a political institution. Being only “one part of the story” (Strömbäck and Dimitrova 2011, 33), this neo-institutionalist interpretation of the media forms the basis for the theoretical explanation of political negotiation actors’ adaptation processes to the “media logic” in the following section.
3.2. The Media (Logic) as Institutional Context of Political Negotiation

Building on a neo-institutionalist interpretation of the media, it is argued in this paper that due to mediatisation the media and its logic have become an additional institutional context condition for political negotiation (Marcinkowski 2005, 2007; Spörer-Wagner and Marcinkowski 2010a, 2010b). Given the institutional incentives and constraints emanating from this increasingly important institutional context condition, negotiation actors’ behaviour is no longer only shaped by the institutional constraints of the negotiation arena or party competition. Instead, the media (logic) increasingly “competes with established guidelines and influences on the actions of individuals” (Strömbäck and Dimitrova 2011, 33). Resembling (but not similar) to what Streeck and Thelen (2005) as well as Mahoney and Thelen (2010) call institutional layering, mediatisation may thus be described as “the introduction of new rules on top of or alongside existing ones” (Mahoney and Thelen 2010, 15). Following Grande (2000, 123), potential changes in political actors’ perception and behaviour mainly stem from the observation that political negotiations (the arena of negotiation democracy) and the media (the arena of media democracy) are driven by completely different logics. “Hence, whereas negotiations require a confidential and closed atmosphere and call for consensus orientation and collective actions with all participants winning, media logic is characterized by public transparency, indiscretions, conflict orientation, personalization and the focus on who is winning and who is losing in a political process” (Floss 2008, 5). Furthermore, political negotiations usually require a detailed exchange of arguments on a variety of technical questions, in order to elaborate a decision that may be implemented successfully. Given the growing importance of the media as an institutional context condition for political negotiation due to mediatisation, negotiation actors must increasingly cope with these diverse action logics (Grande 2000; Marcinkowski 2005, 2007; Spörer-Wagner and Marcinkowski 2010a, 2010b). As a consequence, mediatisation may “fundamentally alter the overall trajectory of development as the old institutions stagnate or lose their grip and the new ones assume an ever more prominent role in governing individual behaviour” (Streeck and Thelen 2005, 23).

The central mechanism linking the meso-level of institutional context conditions and the micro-level of individual political actors’ perception and action rests upon Kepplinger’s (2007a, 2007b, 2008) concept of the so-called “reciprocal effects”. Kepplinger builds on the idea that political actors are aware of their observation by the media as well as the rules and routines shaping journalistic activities, i.e. the major components of the media logic as described above. Moreover, he argues that political actors believe that the way they present themselves and are presented by the media has a significant effect on their popularity in the electorate and hence on their chances to be re-elected.

3 In contrast to these authors’ approach, mediatisation should, however, not be regarded as the intended consequence of political actors’ active attempts to “work around those elements of an institution that have become unchangeable” (Streeck and Thelen 2005, 23). Instead, it is the result of unintended and “externally” driven environmental changes.
and to pursue a political career. Given the growing importance of the media in an increasingly mediatised context, they try to anticipate and – if possible – manipulate the way they are presented in the media, that is, they try to adapt to the rules of the media in order to increase their chances of re-election (Spörer-Wagner and Marcinkowski 2010b, 422).

Applied to this paper’s research question, it may thus be argued that the media has become an additional institutional context condition for political negotiation affecting actors' perception and behaviour. In the next section, it will be shown that mediatisation leads to the increasing publicity of (formerly secret) negotiations further reinforcing both positive and negative mediatisation effects on political negotiations to be presented in Section 5.

4. “Going Public” as a Negotiation Strategy in “Mediatised Negotiations”

By means of two game-theoretic models it will be shown in this section that mediatisation leads to a growing transparency and publicity of formerly secret/non-public negotiations. As already stated above, this is expected to further strengthen the effects to be discussed in the next section. Both game-theoretic models rest upon the following assumptions: First, in order to illustrate the effects of the negotiation actors’ strategies in a simplified manner, both games are played by only two players. Second, both actors are assumed to act rationally and seek to maximize payoffs. Third, information on the available strategies and payoffs are complete. Given the assumption that both players know about each other's moves and may react accordingly, both models are sequential move games structured as game trees. Fourth, it is assumed that both players have different preferences with regard to the policy-issue discussed. Given this assumption, both players only have two strategic options: discretion and indiscretion. In the case of discretion information on the (secret) negotiation process is kept secret. Indiscretion, on the other hand, implies that negotiation actors commit themselves publicly before or during the negotiation process or make some information on the content or process of negotiation public by sharing it with the media. Thereby, it is assumed that indiscretion may be an attractive strategic option for political negotiation actors for two reasons. On the one hand, indiscretion may have a positive effect on individual actor’s bargaining position, as “the credibility of one’s commitment to a certain position is increased by creating a ‘loosing-face’ situation for oneself” (Naurin 2004, 36). On the other hand, the act of making secret information on the negotiation process public may allow negotiation actors to “show off, both to the public and to the other parties” (Naurin 2004, 36) and thus to induce or at least stimulate positive media appearances. Turning this argument on its head, discretion is on the other hand expected to increase chances to reach a compromise solution. In fact, “[e]fficiency, in terms of problem-solving capacity, may suffer as a result of publicity not only because of actors become more unwilling to back down from their positions, but also because they stop talking to each other. The
audience becomes a distraction which brings the decision-making process to a halt” (Naurin 2004, 37-38). In short: Whereas indiscretion is expected to have a positive effect on individual negotiation actors’ bargaining position and popularity, discretion has a positive effect on consensus-building.

**Figure 1**: Non-Mediatised Negotiation Game

![Diagram](Diagram by author. D: Discretion. ID: Indiscretion.)

In **Figure 1** a two-player negotiation is illustrated that is assumed to take place under *weak* media influence, i.e. at an early stage in the mediatisation process. Both players are assumed to prefer reaching a compromise to a breakdown of negotiations. Since it is more likely that a compromise is reached in secret than in public, discretion on the part of both players equates to a payoff of 4 for both. Furthermore, it is assumed that both players may strengthen their individual bargaining positions by committing themselves publicly and/or sharing secret information on the negotiation process with the media. However, given the assumption of weak media influence, potential competitive advantages over their negotiation adversary are assumed to be of only secondary importance. As indiscretion would furthermore bear the risk of hampering cooperation and of breaking down negotiations (Naurin 2004, 36-37), it is assumed that active indiscretion on the part of one of the two negotiation actors – here: Player 1 – will result in a payoff of 3 for this player. If in this case the other player (Player 2) nevertheless chooses discretion, this will yield a payoff of 1 for him since he would be in a weaker bargaining position compared to his opponent, whilst nonetheless facing the risk of a breakdown of the negotiation. In order to avoid this competitive disadvantage, it is assumed
that – in case one of the two players opts for indiscretion – the other one will also choose this strategy. Since neither of the two players would then, however, have a competitive advantage over the other, while a compromise would nevertheless be less likely, this bargaining constellation would result in a payoff of 2 for both players. Given this strategic constellation, discretion is a dominant strategy for both players in this first game. It is important to note, however, that this kind of strategic interaction does not necessarily lead to compromise solutions, but that media-induced risks would – at least – become less likely.

The second game-theoretic model illustrated in Figure 2 takes the mediatisation process into account thus building on the assumption of an increase in importance of the media and its logic as an institutional context condition for political negotiation. Resulting from an increase in importance of the media’s tendency to frame politics as a horse race (that is, the media’s tendency to interpret and present political processes such as negotiations as strategic zero-sum games between political opponents), political actors face the risk of being portrayed by the media as weak representers of their electorate’s interests or even as “losers” of the political negotiation in case they offer concessions to their opponents. In order not to jeopardise their chances of being re-elected, it is thus expected that political negotiation actors increasingly adapt to this interpretation frame. In other words: The “rules of the (negotiation) game” in its traditional sense are increasingly supplemented by the “rules of the media”. As a consequence, there will be a decrease in negotiation actors’ willingness to offer concessions and/or an increase in political negotiation actors’ attempts to manipulate news reporting on their personal “performance” in the negotiation. Negotiation actors are consequently expected to increasingly commit themselves publicly in order to strengthen their bargaining positions and/or to increasingly share secret information on the negotiation process with the media in order to “show off”. In short: Mediatisation leads to a growing publicity of political negotiations.

In the game-theoretical model illustrated in Figure 2 the prescribed changes in the “rules of the game” and the resulting changes in the payoffs are taken into account by multiplying the initial payoffs of the weakly-mediatised negotiation game (Figure 1) with (1–d) and (1+d) respectively. Thereby, “d” captures the extent of the prescribed changes and ranges from 1 (full change) to 0 (no change). It is thus expected that the more mediatisation progresses, the greater the changes in both the rules of the negotiation game and the initial payoff structure, the bigger “d” and the smaller (bigger) the payoffs resulting from discretion (indiscretion). Given this strategic constellation, reactive discretion remains a dominant strategy only as long as 4(1-d) > 2(1+d), implying that there is a theoretical tipping point beyond which mediatisation affects the strategic behaviour of political negotiation actors making them choose “Indiscretion” instead of “Discretion”. Overall, this would lead to the growing publicity of political negotiations.
Furthermore, it is assumed that the strength of mediatisation’s effect on the payoff structure is affected by two moderating variables. These are: the degree of commercialisation of the media system and the degree of competitiveness between the negotiation actors outside of the negotiation arena as induced by the political-institutional context. Regarding the former it is assumed that the more commercialised a media system, the more influential is the commercially driven media logic described above and the more do negotiation actors have to fear to be portrayed as “weak” or as “loser” of the negotiation by the media due to the latter’s frequent reliance on horse race frames. On the other hand, it is argued that strategic incentives towards indiscretion increase with the degree of competitiveness between the negotiation actors outside of the negotiation arena, that is, if “success” in a particular “negotiation game” is likely to have an effect on both players’ competition outside of the negotiation arena. Research on comparative political institutions and systems (for example: Lijphart 1999; Tsebelis 2000) has shown that this degree of competition depends on the political-institutional context. In short: The effect of mediatisation on the level of publicity of political negotiations is assumed to be particularly strong in highly commercialised media systems and in competitive political-institutional settings.

Note: Diagram by author. D: Discretion. ID: Indiscretion.
5. The Mediatisation of Political Negotiations - Negative and Positive Effects

Based on the assumption that mediatisation leads to an increase in importance of the media and its observing, reporting and commenting activities (Section 2), an increase in political negotiation actors’ adaptation processes to the “media logic” (Section 3) and the growing publicity of formerly secret political negotiations (Section 4), mediatisation’s effects on political negotiations will be elaborated more thoroughly in this section. Thereby, existing theoretical research on the effects of media scrutiny and (non-)secrecy on political processes in general and political negotiations in particular is applied to this paper’s research question. It will be shown that the respective effects may from a theoretical perspective be considered both positive and negative. It is argued that the direction of these effects depends on the degree of commercialisation of the media system at hand since most of the negative effects to be presented are linked to the media logic oriented towards market principles, whereas most of the positive effects to be presented are related to the media logic oriented towards journalistic ethics and the public interest.

5.1. Negative Effects

From the perspective of negotiation theory many authors argue that strong media scrutiny and non-secrecy have a negative effect on political negotiation processes. Accordingly Chambers (2004, 392) states that “there’s something about going public, opening up deliberation to a broad audience and mass media, that has a deleterious effect on deliberation”. In the following the theoretical arguments backing up this claim will be summarised. It will become evident that most of these negative mediatisation effects may be linked to the media logic oriented towards market principles and may thus be expected to be mostly prevalent in highly commercialised media systems.

Following Chambers (2004, 2005), Elster (1991, 1995a, 1995b, 1998), MacCoun (2006), Meade and Stasavage (2006), Naurin (2004, 35) and Stasavage (2004, 2005, 2007), publicity has a negative effect on negotiation actors’ willingness to cooperate and compromise. The main reasons are the so-called “posturing” (Stasavage 2006, 171) as well as “precommitment strategies and overbidding” (Chambers 2004, 393). In non-secret negotiations both the initial bargaining positions of individual negotiation actors as well as subsequent changes during the course of the negotiations are public. Therefore, negotiation actors face the challenge that potential concessions will be known to the public. This might hamper negotiation actors’ willingness to compromise for two reasons. First, considering the media’s reliance on horse race frames, negotiation actors who are willing to offer concessions to their opponents face the risk of being presented as weak or even as “losers of the negotiation game” in the media. Secrecy, on the contrary, “tends to improve the quality of whatever
discussion does take place because it allows framers to change their mind when persuaded of the truth of an opponent's view" (Elster 1995, 388). Second, constituencies might accuse their representatives for a lack of commitment to their interests. In fact, increasing media scrutiny and publicity (as induced by mediatisation) can “prompt representatives to ‘posture’ by adopting excessively tough bargaining positions that are designed to demonstrate loyalty to constituencies” (Stasavage 2006, 171), whereas secrecy allows negotiation actors to „speak candidly, change their positions, and accept compromises without constantly worrying about what the public and the press might say” (Chambers 2004, 394).

Strong media scrutiny and publicity may lead to a polarisation of negotiations given the “need to demarcate oneself ideologically from the opponent even when there is no real disagreement” (Elster 1998, 250). “Media logic” thus encourages political negotiation actors to adopt extreme bargaining positions hampering consensus-building. Moreover, extreme positions are usually overrepresented in the media. On the one hand, this further aggravates the polarisation effect just described, whilst on the other hand strengthening the bargaining position of negotiation actors already holding extreme positions. As a consequence, mediatisation enables these kinds of actors to manipulate decision-making processes in their interest leading to an overrepresentation of their preferences in the final policy output (Koch-Baumgarten and Voltmer 2009; Stasavage 2007; Voltmer 2007, 31).

Whereas in secret negotiations actors do not have to consider about “how their arguments will affect their re-election” (Chambers 2004, 409), publicity may also have a negative effect on the quality of debates (Chambers 2004, 2005; Naurin 2004, 38-39). Actors negotiating in public or under strong media scrutiny feel forced to adapt to the media logic in order to positively affect their media appearances (see also: Elster 2007, 409; Gosseries 2005, 2006, 21). Following the line of argumentation above, this may – especially in commercialised media systems – lead to an increase in political actors’ tendency to simplify, dramatise, sensationalise, etc. their arguments. Moreover, negotiation actors increasingly refrain from “rational communication in the sense that it is the cognitive reasonableness of the content of the message that counts”, whilst instead relying on “emotional rhetoric in order to induce other into a certain position” (Naurin 2004, 38). In summary, Chambers (2004, 393) therefore states that “under the ‘glare’ of publicity [...] arguments may become shallow, poorly reasoned, or appeal to the worst that we have in common”.4

As Naurin (2004, 36) furthermore states, “publicity seems to activate a decisiveness norm. There is a certain expectation on political actors to appear principled and assured of themselves. This decisiveness norm, in combination with the consistency requirement [...] contributes to giving positions a ‘high degree of finality’”. According to scholars such as Gosseries (2005, 2006),

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4 Empirical evidence for this effect is provided by the results of the so-called Discourse-Quality-Index-Project (among others: Bächtiger, Pedrini, and Ryser 2010; Steiner et al. 2004) showing that publicity has a negative effect on the quality of political deliberation.
Checkel (2005), MacCoun (2006), Prat (2005) as well as Meade and Stasavage (2006, 2008) publicity may further impede negotiation actors' spontaneity and creativity due to the fear of disgracing oneself in the public. “[U]nless the deliberating parties are able to try out ideas out of the blue with the risk of having to abandon them straightaway (trial and error), to show hesitation, to reconsider the issues again and again with a fresh eye, the actual deliberation may not be more than the juxtaposition of pre-prepared statements with no actual interaction taking place” (Gossseries 2005).

Following Stasavage (2004, 2005, 2007) as well as Maskin and Tirole (2004) publicity furthermore bears the risk of the so-called “pandering” strategies. Pandering refers to negotiation actors' opportunistic attempts to argue and act in the assumed interest of the public and to draw upon populist lines of argumentation, while putting aside their actual (and usually better informed) preferences, ideas and convictions. “[W]hen decisions are made in public then representatives will be less likely to follow their own private beliefs about which policy is best and more likely to follow prior beliefs held by the public. […] Political correctness of this sort can lead to a dramatic loss of efficiency in policy choice” (Stasavage 2005, 6).

Given the short attention cycles of the media as well as its tendency to sensationalise and dramatise, publicity may, lastly, exert strong pressure on negotiation actors to come to an agreement and/or find an effective problem-solving solution. Additional media-induced time pressure may decrease the chances for the creation of a detailed and well-reasoned policy measure, whilst instead forcing negotiation actors to ad-hoc-policy-making measures or negotiation breakdowns (Koch-Baumgarten and Voltmer 2009; Voltmer 2007).

5.2. Positive Effects

Following Neidhart (1994a, 8-9), the public in general and the media as one of its central actors in particular provide three functions in society: transparency, validation and orientation. Again in line with the argumentation above, each of these three functions has been strengthened by mediatisation. Following from this proposition, several positive effects on political negotiations may be derived (mainly) from the literature on deliberative democratic theory. It will become evident that most of these positive mediatisation effects may be linked to the media logic oriented towards journalistic ethics and the public interest as outlined above and may thus be expected to be mostly prevalent in media systems with a low degree of commercialisation.

Critically observing the performance of political actors and informing the public about it, the media as the “fourth estate” contributes to power-sharing and checks-and-balances mechanisms within the political system. Increasing media scrutiny and publicity resulting from mediatisation therefore leads to an
increase in transparency and information on the contents and dynamics of political negotiations and the political performance of the actors involved. Therefore, it enables the public to follow how a political decision is made and who has to be held responsible for it. Assuming that political actors are aware of this, positive effects on their political performance seem plausible. In summary and as stated by Gutman and Thompson (1996, 95), “[p]ublicity is valuable first and foremost because it is a friend of democratic accountability”.

Turning one of the major arguments presented in the previous section on its head, Elster (1991, 1995b, 250, 1998, 111) pointed out that in public negotiations (or negotiations under strong media scrutiny) political actors are confronted with the so-called „civilizing force of hypocrisy“. Being observed by the masses that they are supposed to represent, political actors feel forced to argue and act in line with public opinion. “Generally speaking, the effect of an audience is to replace the language of interest by the language of reason and to replace impartial motives by passionate ones. The presence of a public makes it especially hard to appear motivated merely by selfinterest” (Elster 1998, 111). Moreover, under media scrutiny political actors are pressured to justify their arguments more intensively as well as to quickly find and subsequently agree on effective solutions to the social and political problems of their electorate. From this perspective, increases in publicity and media scrutiny may thus be expected to improve the quality and legitimacy of political negotiations as well as the chances of deciding on an effective compromise/problem-solving solution (Chambers 2004, 390–1, 2005, 257; Gutmann and Thompson 1996, 95, 114, 510; Koch-Baumgarten and Voltmer 2009, 305–6; Martinsen 2009, 47; Meade and Stasavage 2006, 124; Neidhardt 1994a, 23; Reunanen, Kunelius, and Noppari 2010, 303; Stasavage 2004, 672, 2007, 60; Thompson 2008, 510; for a thorough discussion of the pros and cons of “theory of publicity’s civilizing effects”, see Naurin 2004, 21-48). Overall, publicity may thus be expected to lead to a shift from bargaining to arguing as the central “mode of communication” (Naurin 2004, 31).

Furthermore, the media helps social groups to articulate their interests and thereby allows them to be recognised by the people and political decision-makers and to put their interests on the political agenda (Koch-Baumgarten and Voltmer 2009, 302). Against this background the media is often said to provide a mirror picture of social reality including its social processes and conflicts (Martinsen 2009, 47). Applied to this paper’s research question, mediatisation may lead to an increased variety of ideas and interests to be considered by political negotiation actors. In case of balanced and matter-of-fact reporting, this may have a positive effect on political negotiation outputs not over-representing minority interests, but stimulating political deliberation. Overall, the increasing quantity and variety of (at least passive) participants of a political discourse resulting from mediatisation may furthermore imply a weakening of the elite-centeredness of “traditional” political negotiations behind closed doors (Koch-Baumgarten and Voltmer 2009, 305).
Besides aiding social forces in articulating their interests, the media filters and selects political events, issues and processes according to their relevance. Furthermore, it facilitates the masses’ understanding of political issues by reducing their complexity, whilst nevertheless hinting at important and otherwise possibly neglected details. By informing the citizens about social and political problems, behaviour and standpoints of political actors as well as the pros and cons of the problem-solving solutions they propose, the media provides the basis for citizens’ political information, thinking and participation thereby fulfilling an important social task. Applied to this paper’s central question, mediatisation may thus be expected to lead to an increase in information on political decision-making processes within political negotiations. Thereby, it helps the public to understand and evaluate these processes and may thus have a positive effect on political culture in general and citizens’ political information and participation in particular (Neidhardt 1994, 24–7).

6. The Theoretical Model

In this section, all the presented theoretical steps will be briefly summarised and condensed into a theoretical model that is structured according to Coleman’s (1990) bathtub (see Figure 3; for related, yet not similar models see Spörer-Wagner and Marcinkowski 2010b, 425; Schrott 2009, 50, 52).

Macro-Meso-Micro (Step 1a&b): By introducing a meso-level, that is, by regarding the media as a political institution or an institutional context condition for negotiation (Step 1a), the theoretical gap between the macro-level phenomenon of mediatisation and the micro-level changes in individual political actors’ perception is bridged. Thereby, it is assumed that the first three steps of Strömbäck’s conceptualisation of mediatisation have led to changes in the importance of the media and its logic to political negotiation actors. Following from these propositions, political (negotiation) actors are said to be aware of the media’s increase in importance and fully understand the basic principles of the media’s logic. This assumption provides the theoretical link from the meso-level of institutional context to the micro-level of political actor’s perception (Step 1b).

Thereby, the first two steps of Strömbäck’s conceptualisation are regarded as given, that is, that “the media constitute the most important or dominant source of information on politics and society” and that the “the media are independent from political institutions in terms of how the media are governed”. Furthermore, it is argued that – at the level of Strömbäck’s (2008, 234) third phase of mediatisation, i.e. “the degree to which the media content is governed by a political logic or by media logic” – the nature of the media logic at hand and therefore the direction of the theoretically discussed mediatisation effects are moderated by the degree of commercialisation of the media system. As argued above, the predominant media logic in a media system (i.e. whether it is guided by market principles or the public interest) is dependent on the degree to which
the media system is commercialised. As most of mediatisation’s negative effects presented in Section 5 were linked to a media logic oriented towards market principles, it is postulated that the more commercialised the media system at hand, the more is the media logic orientated towards market principles and the more predominant are the negative mediatisation effects as mentioned before. The less commercialised the media system, on the other hand, the more orientated is the media logic towards the public interest leading to an increase in the positive effects as described above. This first moderating variable thus captures potential changes of the direction of potential mediatisation effects.

**Micro-Micro (Step 2):** On the micro-level the link between perception and action is built upon the assumption that political (negotiation) actors’ are aware of the importance of the media and positive media appearances for their political/electoral success. Due to mediatisation political negotiation actors are thus no longer only confronted with the institutional constraints provided by the negotiation arena (as well as with external influences emanating from the political-institutional context such as party competition) but also with those institutional constraints springing from the media and its logic of...
appropriateness. This, it is argued, leads to changes in behaviour, i.e. attempts to adapt to the media logic and the latter’s internalisation.

It is furthermore argued in this paper, that the intensity of potential effects resulting from these changes in behaviour – either positive or negative – is driven by the second moderating variable of the model, the degree of competition between the negotiation actors outside of the negotiation arena as induced by the political-institutional context.\textsuperscript{5} It is thus postulated that adaptation to the media logic within a specific negotiation arena appears more attractive to negotiation actors, when it promises to yield competitive advantages outside of the negotiation arena. It may thus be hypothesized that the more competitive the political-institutional context, the more intense are both positive and negative mediatisation effects as described above.

\textit{Micro-Meso (Step 3a):} Due to mediatisation, more and more individual political (negotiation) actors feel forced to adapt to the rules of the media. Therefore, it may be argued that the fourth phase of Strömbäck’s (2008, 234) conceptualisation is reached at this stage, i.e. “political actors are governed by […] media logic”. All four phases together may be called the mediatisation of political negotiations and are captured by the grey arrow in Figure 3. It seems plausible to assume that collective adaptation processes resulting from the new “structural rupture” (Grande 2000, 123) between the action logics of negotiation and media democracy have an effect on the process, output and outcome of their negotiations as a whole. As was shown, these effects may be both functional and dysfunctional.

\textit{Meso-Macro (Step 3b):} In contrast to the argument formulated at the meso-level of individual political negotiations (Step 3a), it may finally be stated that on the macro-level of political systems, mediatisation effects are particularly prevalent in so-called consensual political-institutional contexts or consensus democracies (Armingeon 2002; Czada 2000; Lijphart 1999; Tsebelis 2000). This proposition stems from the results of research on comparative political institutions and comparative political systems stating that the prevalence of negotiations as a political decision-making rule in a given political system depends on the political-institutional context.

\textsuperscript{5} Apart from the two structural variables, a couple of situational factors are assumed to have a moderating effect, such as public interest in and degree of polarisation of the policy field and issue, problem pressure, temporal proximity to elections and election campaigns (Spörer-Wagner and Marcinkowski 2010b) as well as the so-called electoral pressure (Immergut and Abou-Chadi 2010).
7. Research Design

Due to the state of both theoretical and empirical research in the field in general as well as the nature and inconclusiveness of the presented theoretical arguments in particular, an exploratory comparative case study is conducted. Building on the complex theory of democracy and Scharpf’s (1970, 2004) distinction between input and output legitimacy, the empirical part of the research project puts a special focus on mediatisation effects on the problem-solving efficacy of political negotiations (dependent variable). Based on the assumption that mediatisation has increased dramatically in the second half of the 20th century, variance on the independent variable is achieved by choosing cases (i.e. negotiation processes) diachronically. Thereby, only cases within one single country case were selected due to the difficulties in finding more than two cases that allow to hold one of the two moderating variables (degree of commercialisation of the media system and competitiveness of the political-institutional context) constant, whilst nevertheless being largely “similar” with regard to the “score” of the independent variable, i.e. the starting point and subsequent progress of mediatisation. Given these limitations, the prescribed moderating factors may not be tested in the research project. Instead, mediatisation effects on political negotiations are investigated by analysing three negotiations (cases) on social policy by the German Conference Committee (Vermittlungsausschuss), one from the late 1970s (Health Care Cost Containment Act in 1977), one from the early 1990s (Long-Term Care Insurance Act in 1993/1994) and one from the early 2000s (Retirement Savings Act in 2001). The three (negotiation) cases are largely “similar” with regard to the institutional context conditions of the negotiation arena as well as the interests and actors involved. Each of the three negotiations took place under conditions of divided government and in each of them both governmental and oppositional forces agreed on the need and the broader goals of reform, but disagreed on the means to achieve these goals. In two of the three cases social democratic governments tried to push through social cuts that had to be negotiated with a conservative opposition, whereas it was exactly the opposite case in the third act: A conservative government tried to amend social expansion laws that had to be renegotiated with a social democratic opposition. Overall, the three cases are thus assumed to be “most similar”, whilst nevertheless varying on the independent variable of “mediatisation”. Applying process tracing techniques potential media(tisation)-induced (changes in) behaviour on the part of political negotiation actors are investigated. Thereby, both minutes and media coverage of the negotiations are analysed. Furthermore, expert interviews with journalists and politicians with much experience in political negotiations are conducted. Finally, the results of the comparative case studies are cross-checked with the Discourse-Quality-Index mentioned above. Taking aspects such as level of justification, respect, participation and constructive politics into account, the DQI coding scheme will help to capture changes in “quality of debate” and add explanatory power.

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6 The outlined theoretical perspectives will nevertheless guide the empirical analysis and help to identify potential mediatisation effects.
References


