

A change in the power relationship between media and public bureaucracies?

*An analysis of mediatization and the work of
communication professionals in Norwegian ministries*

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Abstract

Deadlines has become continuous and there has been an increase in communication professionals in Norwegian Government ministries. This thesis will explore how mediatization is affecting communication professionals in Norwegian ministries and the empirical research builds on interviews with seven communication professionals, three communication managers, and four communications advisers. The theoretical framework mainly builds on research of mediatization, public bureaucracies and civil servants, and additional media affects. The analysis in this thesis confirms that news media logic has changed, and that this affects how communication professionals work. The analysis also confirms an increased media pressure and the mediatization of public bureaucracies. The relationship between the media and politics has changed – especially between news media and public bureaucracies. Our society has developed into a place where we are being continuously updated about what is happening around us. The media have gone through developments, and new logics have followed. Public bureaucracies have at the same time gone through a specialization, and the number of communication professionals has increased. Communication professionals are experiencing close relationships with the political leadership and the expert departments, and they are experiencing an ongoing media pressure. This seems to affect not only the work of the communication professionals, but also the relationship between all parties in the ministries.

Preface and Acknowledgements

I have always been interested in the relationship between the media and politics, and the process of writing this thesis was the perfect opportunity for me to learn more about the field of study. I am lucky to have come this far, and I am grateful for all my experiences throughout the writing process. It has been incredibly rewarding, but also demanding. Writing this thesis could not be done without all the people who have contributed with their time and knowledge. I cannot thank them enough.

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Writing this thesis, especially with a pandemic going on, has been the greatest challenge of my life. The constant frustration and sleepless nights have finally come to an end, and I could not be happier finally being able to say that my thesis is completed. I want to thank my family for believing I could do this, and I want to thank my friends for making me laugh in times that were difficult. Thank you Johanne, Juni and Angelina, for helping me remember that there is more to life than just studies.

Last but not least, I want to thank you, Marcus, for helping me relax after long working hours. Thank you for calming my mind at nights and to stay positive. For always being there with open arms – I could not have done this without your endless support!

12th of May, 2022

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Bokmerke er ikke definert.

1 Introduction

1.1 Contribution and research question

The purpose of this thesis is to develop a better understanding of the role and work of communication professionals in Norwegian government ministries, and to explore the relationship between them and the news media. Online journalism and 24/7 news cycles have speeded up the rhythm and made deadlines continuous (Thorbjørnsrud, Figenschou & Ihlen, 2014), and studies find that public bureaucracies strive to adapt to the format of the news media (Figenschou, Fredriksson, Kolltveit & Pallas, 2020). This study aims to explore how changes in the media landscape affects how the communication professionals within the ministries to their job, especially by looking at institutional logics and news media's form and format.

The mediatization of public bureaucracies is a relatively unexplored topic in the field of political communication, but scholars have provided valuable information and discussions about the topic (see for instance Chillemanns, 2012 and Thorbjørnsrud, 2014). Even though the concept of mediatization has been subject to a lot of research within media science related to politics (see Mazzoleni & Schulz, 1999 or Strömback, 2008), previous research has often focused on political actors and institutions without going into detail about public bureaucracies (Figenschou et al., 2020), and also without looking at communication professionals specifically. These actors function in the intersection between politics and administration, and their practices can sometimes be politicized, which have let researchers to conclude that they contribute to mediatization processes in public bureaucracies (see Kolltveit & Figenschou, 2020). Kolltveit and Figenschou (2020) also found that communication professionals can fall in-between the political leadership and expert departments, having to consider both sides and at the same time take news media and their demands into consideration. This opens for a closer look at the communication professionals' position in the middle of all parties, and thereby exploring how their relationship with the news media is balanced out in their daily work, as also questioned by Kolltveit & Figenschou (2020).

Building on this, this research tries to highlight the work of communication professionals by describing their experiences in detail and also exploring how they do their job in contact with news media. Making them the main object creates the possibility to find additional factors and explanations to the mediatization of public bureaucracies, what role the communication professionals play and is this any consequences for the overall cooperation and the internal role distribution.

The main issues leading up to this thesis has evolved around how public bureaucracies manage to do what they are set to do while the media is developing, turning news media into a new type of institution with new ways of operating. Communication professionals are there to handle all media inquiries, cooperating with journalists, giving advice internally and establishing communicating policies; they are working on behalf of the ministries and make up the central point of media relations. Still, there is not much research on their relationship with the increasing number of ministerial advisors or on their role as strategic actors. They are only included, to a varying extent, in formal guidelines and hence have a lot of flexibility (Kolltveit & Figenschou et al., 2020). All these gaps suggest more empirical research needing to be done. Another reason why this topic has aroused interest, is that civil servants represent a fundamental pillar in our democracy and are vital in the information we get about political issues and the business of public relation as regulated by law. This means that civil servants, like the communication professionals, are required by law to inform citizens about their rights and about the workings of the ministry, as well as being required by the Freedom of Information Act to answer all journalists who are seeking answers (Thorbjørnsrud, 2015).

By focusing on the communication professionals' relationship with the news media and their role in the ministries, some new insights will hopefully contribute to the field of political communication and enlighten how mediatization influences on an institutional level. My discussion about processes of mediatization and its influence on political actors and institutions may also bring forth some new insights to the field of political science. However, this thesis will primarily be contributing to theories about mediatization of politics and media effects.

Identifying the topic for this research was not nearly as challenging as striving to focus on a research question that was clear, straight forward and empirically testable. Trying to fill in the gaps described initially, the overall and main research question reads:

How does mediatization of public bureaucracies affect the work of communication advisors in Norwegian ministries?

When my interest in far too many concepts and theories started to lead me astray, I choose three sub-questions to keep me on track and to help break down the analysis. These questions made me understand how to answer my, relatively broad, main research question. The questions are based on the role of the communication professionals in public bureaucracies and how they manage the media, what logic they follow; is their role mostly following news media logic or a bureaucratic logic? And how the overall relationship between news media and the communication professionals are balanced out in their daily work.

Additional sub-questions:

- 1: How are communication professionals experiencing their own role?
- 2: How is the relationship between news media and the communication professionals balanced out in their daily work?
- 3: What logic is being followed and in what way?

Empirically, this research is based on 7 semi-structured interviews with communication professionals during the last months of 2021. The research focuses on communication professionals empirically, but also considers journalists and experts departments without them being interviewed, as this research mainly aims to explore how communication professionals is being affected by mediatization, and how they are experiencing their relationship and cooperation with news media.

Through my research, I also hope to contribute with some insights to the discussion of democratic transformations and implications.

1.2 Previous research overview

The relationship between the media and political actors and institutions in Norway, has been research for decades. The press and its relationship to political power were even discussed back in 1982 (NOU, 1982:30). Since then, there has been a gradual professionalization of journalism, and the news media in Norway became increasingly independent from political parties and actors. The professionalization has been particularly visible after the introduction of television (Allern, 2004). With the increase in news media's power, research regarding media's influence and increasing power in various political institutions has been published (see for instance Cook, 1998, Sparrow, 1999 or Fawzi, 2018). The mediatization of public bureaucracies has also especially been studied by Nordic scholars in the field of political communication (see for instance Thorbjørnsrud, 2015 and Thorbjørnsrud, Figenschou & Ihlen, 2014). These studies have discussed how public bureaucracies adapt to and adopt the logic of the news media, and also the reallocation of resources within the bureaucracies, which is highly relevant in this study. Thorbjørnsrud, Figenschou and Ihlen (2014) discuss the neo-institutional perspective and argues that the many reforms of the public sector have contributed to the willingness of public bureaucracies to adapt to the media. Mediatization of the public sector has also been discussed related to reactive and proactive media management, and Pallas et al. (2016) found that these internal processes involve disagreements and that the process of translating media logic into organizations unfold unevenly because of the different groups within "understand and interpret activities, routines and practices related to work with the media in different ways" (p. 16).

There has been given great attention to news media's influence on political actors and institutions as the news media in Norway has become independent from the party press. Jenssen & Aalberg (2007) argues that the media has become the most important political arena related to election campaigns, and several studies has focused news media's power overall related to for instance agenda setting (see McCombs & Shaw, 1972, McCombs, 2014 and Thesen, 2014). As news media's power has increased, not many studies have discussed these topics related to the work of communication professionals within the ministries. As the news media has taken a centre stage within the ministries over the years, issues relating news media's agenda setting and overall logic becomes relevant also within the public bureaucracies.

Within political science, the government ministries in Norway have been given great attention, but this is in relation to the political system and has mostly been focused on the expert departments and the ministries as secretaries to the political leadership (see for instance Christensen, Egeberg, Larsen, Lægreid and Roness 2007 and Christensen, Egeberg, Lægreid and Trondal 2018).

A report from Statskonsult (2007) shows that the pressure from the media has increased, pointing out a doubling in the number of journalists the last 20 years. This can be stated to be a result of the constant need to respond to the media and to be visible in the press (Kolltveit & Figenschou, 2020). The report (Statskonsult, 2007) indicates that the increase in media inquiries can be assumed to have consequences for the political leadership and their need for assistance. In addition, the report states that media logic has consequences for the formulation of policies; i.e. professional inputs are being simplified, they are person related and are being wrapped up in “statements” from the minister. Media logic is also affecting the pace within the bureaucracy. There is an increased need of time and resources, because the policy formation has to be supported with updated knowledge and analyses, and there is considerable pressure in having to answer inquiries quickly with media-friendly timing and angles. This may interfere with the expert departments in the ministries because of their need of time and the possibility to quality-assure and nuance the message (Statskonsult report, 2007).

Researching communication professionals in Norwegian government ministries, Kolltveit & Figenschou (2020) found that the cooperation between expert departments and communication professionals works well. They emphasize that even though the communication units may generate more tasks, their ability to predict can lower the media pressure. Thorbjørnsrud, Figenschou and Ihlen (2014) has found that in a mediatized public bureaucracy it is perceived as strategically important to not only follow the news, but to also appear in the new. They also found that continuous news deadlines have led to proactive strategies within the ministries. Public bureaucracies today also use strategic strategies, civil servants are increasingly expected to pitch positive news stories in order to set the news agenda (Thorbjørnsrud et al., 2014).

1.3 About Norwegian Government Ministries

The public sector in Norway is described as fragmented compared to other countries, and the government stands quite strong compared to the Prime Minister (Tranøy & Østerud, 2001). According to Tranøy and Østerud (2001), there is also a big difference between each ministry related to complexity, extent and works tasks, and there is a large number of subsidiary bodies connected to each of them. In 2022, there are 15 ministries in Norway, 16 including The Office of the Prime Minister.

While the number of employees has increased, the number of ministries has been stable over the last 40 years, although a couple of new ministries were established in 1972 and 1978. There has also been great stability in the structure within the ministries. However, since the Brundtland-government from 1981 and onward, there have been made far more changes within the ministry structure, and organizational changes were also implemented (Christensen, Egeberg, Læg Reid & Trondal, 2018). Particularly in the years 2001 to 2005, it was especially turbulent with organizational changes, with 15 such changes. They often seem to happen with coalition governments, and half of them are associated with a change of government, which suggests that many of them are controlled politically (Christensen et al., 2018).

Not only has there been an increase in employees, but there has also been a larger number of departments within the ministries. There were 78 departments in the ministries in 1975 and 101 40 years later, i.e. a growth of 30% (Christensen et al., 2018). Also, while there were 4,9 departments in each ministry in 1976, there were 6,3 departments in 2016, which shows both increasing fragmentation and specialization in the ministry structure at department level (Christensen et al., 2018).

When considering communication and staff-units, an increasing number have been established over the years. This increase has been particularly high between the years of 1996 and 2016 – from 5 to 25. This has naturally also caused a considerable increase in the amount of communication advisors, from about 30 people in 1992 to 120-130 people in 2016 (Christensen et al., 2018). Every ministry had, in 2016, a communication unit of at least five people. Three of them had communication units of more than ten people, and The Ministry of

Defense had the most, a total of 16 people (Christensen et al., 2018). In 2022, all ministries have a minimum of 5 people, four of them has more than ten people, and the Ministry of Defense still have the highest amount of communication advisors, with a total of 13 people. The Ministry of Education and Research though have 11 people in the communication unit. The remaining ministries have an average of 6,7 communication professionals each, including The Office of the Prime Minister. At present, all the ministries have an average of 7,37 communication professionals – a considerable increase. An implication could be that media considerations have become an integrated value in the public bureaucracies (Kolltveit, Figenschou, Karlsen & Thorbjørnsrud, 2017).

1.4 Outline of the study

Chapter 2 is the theoretical framework, the literature review. To be able to analyze how communication advisors is being affected by mediatization, I will first introduce some relevant literature about public bureaucracies and the role as a civil servant. In addition, I will among other things present relevant theories about the mediatization of politics and discuss news media logic up against a bureaucratic logic. As stated, the media focused on in this research, is the news media institution. This is related to their logic and how their role is balanced out with the role of communication professionals in Norwegian ministries. News media's role is also discussed related to its influence of communication professionals. Therefore, I will also present some relevant literature about journalism.

In chapter 3, I will present the methods used in the forthcoming analysis. I will explain the choices I made and why I choose to follow an explorative qualitative dataset, and a thematical analysis. Chapter 3 also consist of ethical aspects related to the study.

In the thematical analyses in chapter 4, I will present the research's empirical results. They will be presented thematically, highlighting the most important findings extracted from the interviews. The analytical framework is based on four main perspectives from chapter 2 – mediatization as an institutional perspective, news media logic, bureaucratic logic and the role of a communication professional in the ministries.

Chapter 5 consists of summary of the most important findings and a discussion of these results in relation to the theoretical framework. I will carefully speculate, but also discuss the meaning of the results. I will also compare them to previous findings in the theoretical framework to be able to see both patterns and differences. Chapter 5 will end with other considerations to the overall study.

2 Literature review

To be able to answer my research questions, there will be necessary to look at several theories and empirical work done previous to this research. There are several concepts that needs to be presented and discussed, next to theories about mediatization and political processes. I will especially be using Hjarvard (2013) to present theories about mediatization, Kolltveit and Figenschou (2020) to present the role as communication professionals in ministries in Norway and how they cooperate with journalists, and Ihlen, Skogerbø and Allern (2015) to present some overall understandings in the field of political communication. Also, McCombs (2004) will be the main source of how we understand the term “agenda-setting”. To narrow down the term “media”, I will mainly be focusing on news-media and news-media coverage in addition to journalists, in this research.

Mediatization have been studied related to public bureaucracies (see for instance Thorbjørnsrud, 2015 and Thorbjørnsrud, Figenschou & Ihlen, 2014). In those studies, as well as in mine, I will especially focus on news media logic, and how the ministries can be said to follow a news media logic, perhaps more so than political logic, or bureaucratic logic. This is to be able to place mediatization as to having effect on an institutional level, and more specific within the Norwegian ministries.

2.1 Public bureaucracy and communication in Norway

Public bureaucracies are government entities such as ministries and agencies, and regional and local bodies. All of them are embedded in a public service ethos, where regulations and norms of transparency, accountability, and privacy protection are paramount. Because civil servants are expected to act with integrity, and public bureaucracies encounter certain formal constraints, communication can be more challenging compared to other types of organisations. This is linked to the fact that decisions being made in public bureaucracies are regulated by law, official statute or decree (Figenschou, Fredriksson, Kolltveit & Pallas, 2020). According to Figenschou et al. (2020), public bureaucracies are often understood as neutral experts behind media-oriented politicians and leaders.

In general, most research on political communication have focused on party leaders, prime ministers or presidents, on prominent members of parliament, and generally on party politics. However, recently there has been increasing focus on the communicative efforts made by public bureaucracies. This research focuses to some extent on when the bureaucracies become

involved in government communication; when they act as instruments for the political executive (Johansen & Nygren, 2012; Figenschou et al., 2021).

2.1.2 Bureaucratic communication

The purpose of bureaucratic communication can be understood as providing citizens with information that they need as citizens and voters. This also involves providing the media and other interest groups with the information they ask for. They must be given general access to documents, and acts received or drawn up by public agencies and ministries (Hood & Heald, 2006; Figenschou et al., 2020). Also, the activities of public bureaucracies are morally and legally bound to be open and transparent. This is to ensure that they conduct their activities according to predictability and accountability. In addition, their communication is guided by information and communication mandates which are defined and constrained by freedom of information laws and also public service code of conduct (Laursen & Valentini, 2015; Figenschou et al., 2020). The public bureaucracies differ from other institutions and organizations because they are required by law to inform citizens, hence the media, about their business (Thorbjørnsrud, 2015). In the Central Government Communication Policy, which encompassed the central objectives and principles for the government's communication, democracy, openness and participation are listed as fundamental values. The aim of the policy is among other things, to secure that citizens have access to correct information about their rights, responsibilities and opportunities, as well as to information about the government's activities. A vital premise for reaching these goals, is to use well-written and clear language that is understandable to everyone, and also to communicate and inform in a goal-oriented and efficient way to make sure that target groups are being reached. The policy also lists that the government, or the employees, shall efficiently and expediently exploit the opportunities offered by new technology and new channels (Central Government Communication Policy, 2009).

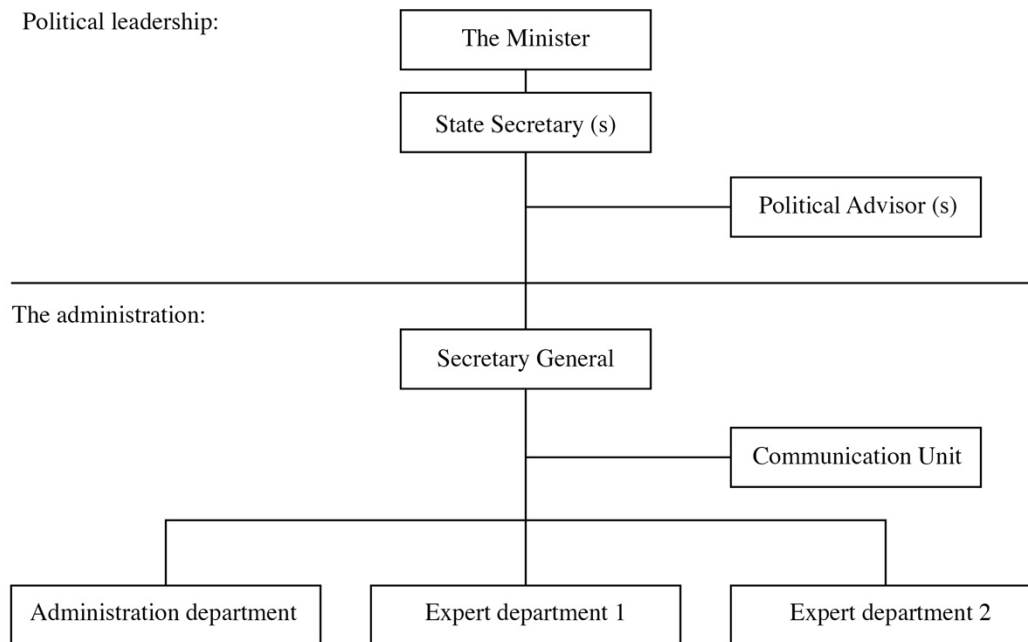
The policies and practises of communication in public bureaucracies have been prioritised and professionalised over time. Communication units have expanded in recent years, and communication professionals are today a natural and prominent part of public bureaucracies. There has been a general growth of communication professionals and an increase of policy professionals across parliaments, ministries, parties and bureaucracies (Figenschou et al.,

2020). This is related to the development of new governance structures and political ambitions, to turn bureaucracies into complete organisations (Brunsson & Sahlin-Andersson, 2000 in Figenschou et al., 2020). Hence, the general development within public bureaucracies has boosted the importance of strategic communication and political public relations within ministries and public agencies (Fredriksson & Pallas, 2016; Strömback & Kiosis, 2019 in Figenschou et al., 2020). This is also linked to the importance of visibility, which has also become widespread in public bureaucracies. The visibility involves a goal of sending out positive messages about the organisation to build a good reputation. Therefore, the news media has been given central position (Thorbjørnsrud, 2015).

2.2 The ministries' organizational structure

The Government in Norway is the state's executive power. The state administration has three levels: the national, the regional and the local. The state administration on the national level is called central administration. Examples of central administrative bodies are directorates, governmental supervision, and ministries (Christensen, Egeberg, Lægreid & Trondal, 2018). The ministries in Norway consist of the Office of the Prime minister, and all of the ministries with their subsidiary bodies connected to each ministry. As mentioned, in 2022 there are 16 ministries, including the Office of the Prime minister. One of the central administration's most important jobs is to prepare cases for the government towards bills and budgets proposals, which they are obligated to promote to the parliament, the Storting. The ministries' main job is to work as a professional secretariat to the political leadership and the ministries, and to assist the ministers in running the various sectors of the government administration. The ministries are led by the ministers, normally each ministry has one minister, but some have two – for instance, the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Fisheries and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The internal organizational structure within the different ministries has some common traits (Christensen et al., 2007):

Figure 1: The Government Ministries in Norway's internal organizational structure



Obtained from Christensen et al., 2007, p. 50

Among the staff, outside the hierarchy, we find the communication unit. The communication unit is attached to the administrative leadership and its function is to assist political leadership and the administration by answering questions from media and to issue press releases and such (Christensen et al., 2007).

2.2.1 The role of the Norwegian Ministries

The ministries' work tasks can be separated into constitutional and political tasks on one side, and managerial and administrative tasks on the other side. With the constitutional tasks, the ministry follows up on the political decisions and the government and the Storting. With the political role lies the ministry as policymakers. The managerial and administrative tasks are linked to policy-executive tasks and to being a governing body to underlying authorities (Christensen et al., 2007). The ministries are executive tools to the government, but they are also meant to lead and provide service to its own sector. Therefore, the main tasks of the ministries can be described as functioning as a secretariat to the political leadership and to be the highest body for policy-executing tasks with the responsibility of controlling

underlying organs (Christensen et al., 2007). The bureaucracy also has a duty to inform citizens on behalf of its political leadership (Thorbjørnsrud, 2015).

One of the most important issues to take into account, as an employee in the central state administration, is political loyalty. It is expected of the officials in the ministries to act as loyal and constructive team-players to the minister. They are meant to follow the ministers' intentions and decisions, even though they might not agree with them (Christensen et al., 2007). Even though their role may involve some political advising to the minister, there must be a balance in regard to party-politics; the expectation of the bureaucracy is to give the current politics a professional, or academic, foundation. The relationship between the different ministries and their political party is recognized by the bureaucracy to lie outside their set of work-tasks (Christensen et al., 2007). The issue of political loyalty is not absolute and has to be viewed against the issue of political neutrality. The statutory guidelines for the central government communication limits the communication – it shall not move towards political agitation (Thorbjørnsrud, 2015). The bureaucracy is supposed to promote the current governments' policies, but at the same time be a tool for any government. An important distinction is that the bureaucracy, by its party-political neutrality, is a guarantee for the political opposition. The bureaucracy is supposed to be a democratic public resource that does not favour the political party or parties which the governments consist of. The ideal is that the employees in the state administration is sufficiently loyal to the current government, but not too loyal to be able to serve another government and thus represent stability and continuity (Christensen et al., 2007).

2.3 The ministries and the media

The media's role regarding the bureaucracy and the ministries has changed over the years. Studies of media management distinguishes between reactive media strategies and proactive media strategies. The reactive form is about how media requests are logged, dealt with and responded to, while the proactive ones is about how the organizations takes initiative towards the media to inform and promote (Figenschou, Fredriksson, Kolltveit & Pallas, 2020). There are rolling deadlines, continuous critical news coverage, and media-oriented political leaders. Studies have found that ministries have routinised reactive media management, which means

that the communication units operate with a 24/7 press service and monitor media coverage, and media requests are dealt with in designated meetings (Figenschou et al., 2020).

Studies looking at how media management impact organization priorities, routines and practices, have found that public bureaucracies strive to adapt to the rhythm and format of the news media. In addition, these studies have found that news stories are “always” prioritized and that they largely set internal agendas within the ministries (Thorbjørnsrud et al., 2014 in Figenschou et al, 2020). There is also, in relation to the media, the question of whether the bureaucracy is conducting political communication strategically becomes applicable (Thorbjørnsrud, 2015).

Within the ministries, public servants are experiencing that the media’s agenda is making an impact on resource allocation and case decisions under certain conditions – such as massive media pressure (Figenschou et al., 2020). Thus, there is the possibility that the media is setting the agenda, either through journalist’s own initiative, or by inquiries from others, thereby promoting issues in the public debate. Journalists influence how such issues are being defined. The inherent norms in the journalistic profession and what at any time is contributing to higher sales figures, will affect which issues are being brought up, and how they are presented (Christensen et al., 2007). In addition, Christensen et al., (2007) state that political issues which involves a conflict, always get the most attention. Also, it is emphasized that newspapers and other forms of media have been specialized and their capacity is increased, which in turn has enabled them to pursue specific cases and political issues over time. This strengthening of the media has, from the bureaucracies’ point of view, led to an increase in media attention, both on the leaders and on the caseworkers (Christensen et al., 2007).

The communication units in the different ministries do not only have reactive media management, they also work proactively by “selling” cases to the media that the ministry wants focused attention on, and they update with information about activities and news on the ministries’ website and on their social media accounts (Kolltveit & Figenschou, 2020). In addition, in studies on how public bureaucracies deal with critical coverage, there is literature that emphasizes the dilemmas and limits of reactive media management. Citizens may raise their case in the news media or on social media platforms when they have suffered the consequences of failed policies or poor services. This type of negative coverage represents a

burden for many public servants (Figenschou et al., 2020). To be able to manage negative coverage, public bureaucracies have a number of strategies (Ihlen & Thorbjørnsrud, 2014a in Figenschou et al., 2020). It has however been found that bureaucrats are restricted; they have a limited selection of strategies at hand to resolve the “problem” in the media. In addition, “bureaucrats cannot profit directly from the use of journalistic strategies mimicking the generic storylines in the news”, they must instead rely on more traditional factual strategies (Ihlen & Thorbjørnsrud, 2014, p. 57).

2.3.1 The Communication Units

As a response to the increased media attention, ministries have strengthened their capacity by establishing communication units. Over the years, the number of communication professionals in Norwegian ministries has increased. From 30 communication professionals in 1992 to around 120-130 communication professionals in 2016. After 2016, the number have been relatively stable (Christensen et al., 2018). Also, more and more communication professionals with journalistic backgrounds have been hired in the ministries. The communication professional’s daily functions take place in the intersection between politics and administration. The work-tasks of these communication advisors can be seen in the light of mediatization-theory, as to in what extent political institutions adapt to media and their logic (Kolltveit & Figenschou, 2020).

The increasing importance of media and the emergence of communication advisors in Norwegian ministries, has actualized the inherent role conflict, without there being clear answers as to how this is balanced in daily work. The inherent role conflict is about the expectation of bureaucrats behaving in compliance with the values of loyalty, neutrality and professional independence. The role conflict is discussed in relation to how media’s importance has increased and the growing number of communication professionals (Kolltveit & Figenschou, 2020).

The communication professionals in the ministries assist in defending the minister publicly and work on getting stories about the minister or the ministry out into the media. They pass different media requests on to the department responsible for the different cases and demand answers from the expert departments. They work on the background information with the

experts and bring the statements to the political leadership. When all parties involved agree on the statements internally, they convey the information back to the journalists (Kolltveit & Figenschou, 2020). Overall, the communication professionals monitor the media and answer journalists, and they also prepare communication around big political investments and plan the ministers' travels, speeches and appearances (Kolltveit & Figenschou, 2020).

2.5 Increased media pressure

A report from Difi (2011) states that a major change within the Norwegian ministries is the increasing pressure from media. The report also shows that policy communication gets more focus and takes up more of the resources, because of the growing amount of communication units and by the expert departments being more involved. This can create problems for both the ability and the capacity for policy formation and policy implementation. According to the report (Difi, 2011), the development within media in general leads to an increase in liability for the ministries as there are no deadlines anymore; news media are updated constantly. As an example of media pressure, the Ministry of Transport got 563 inquiries from journalists in the first half of 2010 (Difi, 2011). The increase in inquiries from journalists is also pointed out by Kolltveit & Figenschou (2020) who describes how this is affecting the expert departments in the ministries. Their research shows how these departments are using more time and resources on managing the media. This, in turn, causes increased work pressure, unpredictable days and makes long term planning difficult internally. However, their research also shows that some informants from expert departments experience that the work of the communication professionals in fact lowers the pressure, as these professionals are monitoring the media and are thus able to predict upcoming issues. The study also shows that both the communication units and the expert departments have great respect for the media production rhythm and deadlines. Clarity and simplicity is emphasized by almost every communication professional interviewed as crucial when answering media inquiries (Kolltveit & Figenschou, 2020). Another challenge is that the communication professionals experience a lot of journalists lacking in knowledge about the political sector and about the ministries. While some journalists are experts in some fields, the majority of journalists are generalists who are expected to produce captivating journalism that quickly can be published on multiple platforms (Kolltveit & Figenschou, 2020). According to their research, cutbacks in the media industry lead to fewer journalist at work during evenings and weekends, and the

communication professionals are forced to spend more time teaching journalists about the ministries and the public sector (Kolltveit & Figenschou, 2020).

2.4 Political communication

The link between politics and communication has no doubt changed over time. However, political communication can be described as “a continuous relationship between political institutions and actors, media institutions and actors, and people as citizens, voters and media consumers (Strömback, Ørsten & Alberg, 2008, p. 11). Political communication has been described in different ways, but Ihlen, Skogerbø and Allern (2015) sum up politics to concern the governing of society, cooperation, conflict, values and Interests. Therefore, they explain that any use of symbols and attempts to influence in any of these areas, is what we call political communication. Political communication influences our knowledge, our attitude towards something, and our behaviour. Political communication is important related to power and politics because it promotes some interests and values at the expense of others (Ihlen et al., 2015). A broader definition involves all forms of communication and communication processes between institutions and actors linked to politics and authorities. Using this definition, the administration is clearly conducting political communication (Thorbjørnsrud, 2015).

As well as almost anything in our society, political institutions and political parties adapt to their environment. Defining political communication, Negrine (2008) emphasizes how political communication goes beyond election campaigns, and “also involves day-to-day party conflicts and compromises over policy, budgets and the ups and downs of politicians” (p. 10). There are different kinds of political actors, although we often automatically think about politicians or political parties when discussing political communication. Discussing political actors, Negrine (2008) states that “governments and parliaments are supported by extensive bureaucracies and often unseen but influential civil servants” (p. 10).

In the field of political communication, scholars have shown that news media’s influence on politicians, political actors and institutions has increased over the years (Ihlen et al., 2015, p. 14). By questioning the importance of the media in political processes, different theories and studies have created the term mediatization of politics, a term I will present later.

2.5. News media developments

Up until the 1960's, the party press in Norway was the dominant channel for political information. But today, the party press is practically gone, and the political parties have lost an important information channel that they used to be in control of (Jenssen, 2007, p. 10). When the party press started to disappear, a journalistic profession-ideology developed. It focused on journalists' independency and their own news criteria (Jenssen, 2007, p. 10). With the increasing self-awareness among journalists, there were also an increase in the ambition of media content control (Jenssen, 2007, p. 10). The media grew more independent politically. According to Jenssen (2007), the introduction of commercial TV and the organizing of newspapers in concerns, led to a visibility and strengthening of the economic impetuses behind media priorities, also when covering political issues (p. 10). Also, among the fundamental pillars of the welfare state system in Norway, we find the funding and subsidy system and the public service media with "arm's length" distance to state (Skogerbø & Karlsen, 2020, p. 98).

The media-system is characterized as one of the most important institutions in the public sphere and it has developed over time, with rules, routines and norms for editing and public publishing (Allern, 2004). With journalists no longer openly linked to political parties, they have become media actors with political influence through case-focus and news selection, and framing and debate-direction (Allern, 2004). The media's role in society today is different from what it was before, in terms of its logic and format, and how political parties and politicians have had to adapt to it (Allern, 2004, p. 144).

With developments such as the ending of the party press, new technology and social media, political journalism has changed. Also, the commercialization of communication and the digital revolution has challenged the terms of political journalism. Especially printed newspapers have lost a vital part of their advertising income to platforms like Facebook and Google and have had to develop new business models to survive (Allern, Blach-Ørsten, Kantola & Pollack, 2020). In Norway and other Nordic countries, one answer to this challenge has been payment for online news content (Allern et al., 2020). In most Nordic media organizations, however, financial problems have led to staff reductions and other editorial cuts. This has limited the resources available for quality journalism based on investigations and reportage (Allern et al., 2020, p. 136). The second way commercialization

of communication and the digital revolution has challenged the terms of political journalism, has to do with how social media has changed communication. The establishment of online and social media networks has given political actors such as governments, parties, and individual politicians increased opportunities when it comes to reaching opinion leaders and voters (Allern et al., 2020). This is often independent of legacy media's editorial judgements and filters (Allern et al., 2020).

2.5.1 Journalists and their sources

Political news coverage can be said to come out of direct and indirect exchanges between journalists and their sources (Negrine, 2008). When informing citizens, journalists seek out and find information they believe are in our interest to know about. Most content journalists get, comes from daily exchanges between themselves and their sources, either via formal press conferences and press releases, or informal meetings, social media and emails (Negrine, 2008). In the relationship between media and their sources, "both sides need each other and have developed a professional relationship based on exchange" (Negrine, 2008, p. 92). While journalists need information and access, politicians need positive publicity (Negrine, 2008). Taking this into consideration, both groups have "competing objectives", meaning that that both sides might wish for different outcomes and have different goals. Politicians want to be seen in a favourable light through the media, while the media want to maintain their autonomy while reporting critically and also hold politicians and governments to account (Negrine, 2008). Direct contact between journalists and politicians forms the basic relationship in political journalism, but today other actors have entered the media scene. A new kind of political actors, the communication professionals, have been hired by political parties, various organizations and by governments ministries handling both media relations and direct communication to stakeholders and voters (Allern et al., 2020). This is emphasized as the relations between journalists and their sources largely explain the content of the news media, especially news and reportage material. Reporters, commentators, politicians, advisors, and so on, with backgrounds in media or politics, know each other well. They can develop long-term relationship and talk "on record" as well as "off record" (Allern et al. (2020). Both parties also initiate possible news stories and "follow-ups". This is important when discussing how communication professionals and journalists interact on an everyday basis. In this relationship, both parties seek each other, "sources seek access to journalists, and journalists

seek access to sources” (Allern et al., 2020, p. 140). Even though this may seem like a balanced relationship, sources often play the leading part. The Nordic media research (Allern, 1997, 2015; Kristensen 2004; Mathisen, 2013; Sahlstrand, 2000), has documented the ability of resourceful actors to engage journalists, “this should not be interpreted as though professionalised sources have permanent positions as primary definers” (Allern et al., 2020, p. 140). This is explained as “influence through agenda setting and the framing of news stories are always conquered through negotiations of control” – the final decision concerning publicity is an editorial responsibility (Allern et al., 2020, p. 140).

In line with political logic and media logic, the news media define the communicative rules, and politicians depend on media coverage for gauging public opinion and generating attention (Esser, 2013; in Allern et al., 2020, p. 141). Therefore, politicians adapt to media and their logic. They do so by adapting their initiatives to conventional media formats and general news values such as conflicts, proximity, sensations, and personalization (Allern et al., 2020, p. 141). The expansion of policy professionals and communication specialists inside government institutions and parliamentarian party groups confirms and reinforces this development (Allern et al., 2020, p. 141). To look at mediatization of politics as media power, or control over political institutions and actors, is too simple and to some degree wrong. One can always use, adopt and exploit medias formats and its “news value”. Communication professionals also know how to “spin” a story (Allern et al., 2020, p. 141). Nevertheless, how communication professionals offer interviews and news “exclusives” to competing media organizations, and “leaks” with information directed to political opponents (Allern et al., 2020, p 140) is difficult to easily apply to communication professionals within government ministries. These communication professionals, even though they may have their own agenda, as stated above, are bound by party political neutrality and shall not have political opponents like other political actors or institutions.

2.6 Two types of logic

When discussing mediatization of politics, media logic and political logic are two key concepts. According to Hjarvard (2014), mediatization indicate that there is a process where culture and society become increasingly dependent on the media and their logic. The media and politics constitute two different institutional systems that serve different purposes. Each

of them has their own set of actors, rules and procedures, as well as needs and interest. It is emphasized that none of them are set in stone, and they have evolved to serve as guidelines, and are based on each sphere's purposes, interests, needs and institutional structures (Strömback & Esser, 2014). Within each of these institutional systems, "there is a certain "logic of appropriateness" that guides behaviour and action and that is usually followed because it is perceived as "natural, rightful, expected, and legitimate" (March and Olsen, 2004 referenced in Strömback & Esser, 2014, p. 14).

2.6.1 Media logic

Media logic is often perceived as the engine of mediatization (Mazzolini, 2008c; Schrott, 2009 in Strömback and Esser, 2014), and the term was first introduced by Altheide and Snow (1979) according to whom 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 this 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 (Strömback and Esser, 2014, p. 16).

Even though this understanding of media logic has been influential, it has also been criticized. Lundby (2009b) questioned whether media logic can constitute a "form" or a "format" and argued that it is "not viable to speak of an overall media logic" (Lunby, 2009, in Strömback and Esser, 2014, p. 17). The original definition of media logic suggests a linearity and singularity that according to Strömback and Esser (2014) simply does not exist. In addition, they state that none of the explanations of media logic escape the criticism of being vague and lacking conceptual precision. Hence, we need to break media logic down and explore news media logic.

2.6.2 News media logic

In order to explore how media logic can interfere with the logic of the ministries, we need to narrow down the term "media logic" by looking at the news media as its own institutional system with its own set of rules and procedures. To research institutional changes, it is appropriate to define "the media" more clearly (Thorbjørnsrud et al., 2014). This is because literature on mediatization often have not distinguished between different types of media -

media based on journalistic principles and media as books, music and different types of digital platforms (Thorbjørnsrud et al., 2014). Esser (2013) suggests that “media logic, similar to political logic, should be conceived as combining three sub-concepts, which all influence the culture of news production in individual media organizations as well as in media institutions as a whole” (Strömback and Esser, 2014, p. 17). Focusing on news media logic, following Esser (2013), Strömback and Esser (2014) suggest three dimensions that together shape news media logic:

Professionalism, which refers to how journalism differs as an occupation and institution from other social institutions, especially from politics. Professionalism also refers to how journalistic professionalism presupposes first and foremost a growing *autonomy* from outside influence and outside control over one’s work. Journalistic professionalism also means that there is a distinct set of professional norms and values, especially related to news values and news selection criteria. Also, the term refers to the claim to serve the public, and by acting as a fourth estate and “watchdog”.

Commercialism, which refers to the fact that most media are commercial organizations and that this has impact on news production, news selection and news presentation.

If professionalism creates incentives for the media to provide people with the kind of information they need as citizens, commercialism creates incentives for the media to provide any kind of content that is economically efficient, which is relatively cheap to produce and report, in relation to how successful it might be in garnering the largest possible audience among those groups that advertisers are interested in reaching (Strömback and Esser, 2014).

Media technology refers to how content in production and reproduction processes are shaped by communication technologies, and also “the process of finding news or reshaping news to fit the socio-technological format of different media” (Strömback & Esser, 2014, p. 16).

Media technology also refers to how each media technology pressure the news media to adapt and take advantage of the format of that particular medium, for example digital media and their emphasis on interactivity and focus on immediacy. Media technology is not the only message, but always an important part of it.

Professionalism, commercialism and technology collectively shape news media logic at any time and for any media. From this perspective there is no news media logic set in stone, and

news media logic cannot be reduced to either of the three dimensions (Strömback & Esser, 2014). Regardless, one important notion made by Strömback and Esser (2014), is that Hallin and Mancini's comparative analysis from 2004 suggests that commercialism is stronger in countries belonging to the liberal model of media and politics, for example in the United States, than for example in a democratic corporatist model like in Sweden, or in a polarized pluralist model like France. Also, there is some evidence that points to commercial media having a stronger tendency to frame politics as a strategic game than public service media or broadsheets (Strömback & Van Aelst, 2010 in Strömback & Esser, 2014).

The analysis shown above has important implications for the overall theory of the mediatization of politics. It highlights how tension between political logic and news media logic must be understood within the context of particular processes (Strömback & Esser, 2014). If political actors, organizations and institutions act in a certain way, or if they abstain from some actions, because they either want to win favorable media coverage or because they are afraid it is not favorable, it may seem that they are adapting to news media logic along the fourth dimension (Strömback and Esser, 2014, p. 20). Nevertheless, news about politics are often a result from a co-production between media and other political actors who try to influence the media (Strömback & Esser, 2014 in Klinger & Svensson, 2018). It is also worth mentioning, with the understanding of mediatization not being a linear process with a uniform influence, that political actors and institutions that are more likely to be the subject of media interest, are also more likely to be mediatized than political institutions and organizations outside the media spotlight. Also, political institutions and organizations are more likely to be mediatized if they want to use the media for some type of benefit, than those with lesser need of public support (Strömback & Esser, 2014).

To capture how mediatization influence public bureaucracies, the first step is to define both mediatization and to specify what constitutes an institution and how we should perceive the logics or rules of institutions (Thorbjørnsrud et al., 2014). "The media" in a broad sense do not qualify as an institution with stable and homogenous rules, but "the modern news media are institutions producing a content edited according to journalistic principles with a mass audience in view" (Thorbjørnsrud et al., 2014). Therefore, the news logic can be used at a starting point to investigate how the news media influence the practices and rationale of other institutions (Thorbjørnsrud et al., 2014), such as the ministries. In addition, the news logic

involves a specific rhythm and certain relation to time and timeliness, as the news often shows off individuals and individual stories, highlighting the emotional (Thorbjørnsrud et al., 2014).

2.6.3 Political logic

When talking about political logic, we need to address the fact that politics “is about collective and authoritative decision-making as well as the implementation of political decisions” (Strömback & Esser, 2014, p. 14). And with this comes the process of politicians having to win public support and elections, and how they also distribute political power and processes of deliberation. Politics is also about bargaining and making decisions, and implementing political decisions (Strömback & Esser, 2014, p. 15). Strömback and Esser (2014) also mention power as a process that comes with the explanation of politics - power in relation to “who gets what, when, and how” (Lasswell, 1950 in Strömback & Esser, 2014, p. 15). All the processes mentioned are explained by Strömback and Esser (2014) “to take place within a certain institutional structure, including the legal and administrative framework that different political actors must follow” (p. 15). Based on this explanation, three major dimensions of politics shape political logic according to Strömback and Esser (2014):

Polity, the institutional and formal framework of politics. Which refers to the system of rules regulating the political process, including the institutional structure. This for example includes the type of political system, electoral system, party system, judicial system or bureaucratic system.

Policy, policy- and decision-based production of politics. Which refers to the process of defining problems and forming and implementing policies within a certain institutional framework. This for example includes the process of debating alternative policy choices and finding enough support for taking political decisions and implementing political decisions.

Politics, power- and publicity-gaining presentational politics. Which refers to the processes of garnering support for one’s candidacy, party or political program, and these processes can take place either before elections or during. Either when the short-term goal is to make electoral progress and increase vote share, or when the goal might be to “increase public or political support in different processes of problem definition and framing, agenda setting, policy information and political negotiations” (p.15) As explained by Strömback and Esser

(2014), policy differ from politics by often taking place backstage and focuses on the content of policies and substantial issues, while politics focuses more on tactics and strategies for winning public support and publicity and also having more of a public face.

To understand the overall meaning of political logic, we need to have in mind that political processes are about power as well as about policies and issues and they are also always conditioned by the constitutional framework (Strömback & Esser, 2014). Strömback and Esser (2014) emphasizes that the exact nature of political logic will thus vary across countries that have different institutional frameworks, and also “across political institutions within countries with different roles and purposes within the overall polity” (p. 16). Another implication is that political logic has a situational character, meaning that different aspects of political logic will be more important depending on, for example, closeness to an election. A third implication according to Strömback and Esser (2014) is

that the likelihood of politics becomes mediatized depends on what aspect of political logic is at the forefront, as media logic can be assumed to affect the front-stage part of political processes (*politics*) more easily and forcefully than the backstage part (*policy*), and have less, if any, influence in the institutional framework (*polity*). (p.16)

This strengthens the notion that mediatization is always a matter of degree and that it can vary in countries as well as in institutions (Strömback and Esser, 2014, p. 16).

2.6.4 Bureaucratic logic

As public bureaucracies represent the opposite kind of institution from that of the news media (Thorbjørnsrud et al., 2014), we need to narrow down political logic to explore what applies to the bureaucracies. The news media challenge the bureaucracy’s information activities. The news media have certain format criteria which include short texts, a clear focus with few bits, the argumentation is simple, and there is often focus on the negative or the deviating, as conflicts have news value (Thorbjørnsrud, 2015). In contrast, bureaucratic communication is based on precision, circumstances and a technical language (Thorbjørnsrud, 2015). To improve their functions, modern public bureaucracies have been reformed to a range of different perspectives the last decades and The New Public Management has been a vital force to introduce market mechanisms. Nevertheless, the core principles of public

bureaucracies distinguish them from private enterprises (Thorbjørnsrud et al., 2014), and set boundaries for how they shall relate to and act in the media (Thorbjørnsrud, 2015). The institutional restraints within the bureaucracies limit the communication repertoire that is available, which often results in an unconvincing media performance (Figenschou et al., 2020). Public bureaucracies are supposed to make decisions only based on the regulations of law, and civil servants tend to work under civil service rules (Kettl, 2008 in Thorbjørnsrud et al., 2014).

2.7 Mediatization

As media has become more important, and as it has become more embedded and integrated in both social life and the political life, so has the influence of the media. Media has given us different ways to communicate and different ways to influence and to be influenced. Print media, radio, television and the internet have given us new, initially, and different ways to communicate with each other. We do not have to meet physically anymore and everything we communicate through media can be stored, thus extending the content of communication across time (Strömback & Esser, 2014). This is the first of four processes of social change arising from media-driven transformations presented by Shultz (2004) in Strömback and Esser (2014): *extension, substitution, amalgamation and accommodation*.

The second process is about how the media has partly or completely replaced social activities and institutions, and how it changes their character. (Shultz, 2004, in Strömback & Esser, 2014, p. 9). We can now use media for a variety of things that used to require face-to-face interaction. In this second process, the media do not only “substitute traditional forms of communication; what were once non-media activities also assume media form” (Strömback & Esser, 2014, p. 9). For example, TV can be said to have given politics a new “look”. TV gave the looks and appearance of politicians more importance, at the expense of the content of their speeches. This led to what has been called “intimate politics” and contributed to the personalization of politics (Strömback & Esser, 2014, p. 9).

The third process points out how there are no social or political processes where a type of media is not represented or integrated. In this process, the boundaries between mediated and non-mediated activities get dissolved because media activities merge and mingle with non-media activities (Strömback & Esser, 2014, p. 9). Virtually, the media is everywhere – this leads to the fact that the information we get from the media, blends in with information we get through interpersonal communication or personal experiences (Strömback & Esser, 2014, p. 9). As a consequence, “the media’s definition of reality amalgamates with the social definition of reality” (Shultz, 2004, p. 89). This can mean that our perception of reality really is a combination of the two, which seems a bit confusing at first. It is exemplified by Strömback and Esser (2014) who says that even though most of us has never actually met a leading politician, we still feel that we know them and their personalities.

Within the fourth process, accommodation, labelled as the most important one: the fact that media's increasing presence and importance in all parts of social and political life leads to social change and "creates incentives for social and political actors to accommodate and adapt to the media" (Altheide & Snow, 1979; Strömback & Van Aelst, 2013 in Strömback & Esser, 2014, p. 10). Strömback and Esser (2014) goes on to explain that the more important media becomes and how independently they work, the more important it gets for actors who want to communicate through media or is in a place that gets media interested in their activities, to then accommodate and adapt the media and the medias logic. Even though mediatization hold the notion of influencing most aspects of life, from individual level to organizational level to societal level of analysis, this does not mean that all political actors or social actors have lost their autonomy (Strömback & Esser, 2014). As we will discuss later in this dissertation, mediatization can be said to be a matter of degree dependent on a lot of diverse factors, as well as being situational and an empirical question.

Trying to differentiate between media influence and media effects, Strömback & Esser (2014) points to media influence from the perspective of mediatization, as "all activities and processes that are altered, shaped, or structured by the media and the perceived need of individuals, organizations and social systems to communicate with or through the media" (p. 11). As to media effects, they are different because the main focus is on media's effects on individual perceptions and opinions (Strömback & Esser, 2014). According to Strömback and Esser (2014), within mediatization there is a key aspect that points to the media permeating all social life, while media effects depend on causal logic where it is possible to divide the world into dependent and independent variables.

The first scholar that spoke on mediatization of political life was the Swedish media researcher Kent Asp (1986). He argued that mediatization was a process where "a political system to a high degree is influenced by and adjusted to the demands of the mass media in their coverage of politics" (Asp, 1986 referenced in Hjarvard, 2013). Asp sees the media's growing independence of political sources as a sign of mediatization, and that the media thereby gain more control over media content. Nevertheless, the Norwegian sociologist Gudmund Hernes (1978) spoke of the process of mediatization, but without actually using the term mediatization. He spoke about a "media-twisted society" and had a broader perspective where he argued that "the media has a fundamental impact on all social institutions and their

relations with each other” (Hjarvard, 2013). Asp (1986) and Mazzoleni and Schulz (1999) apply the concept of the media’s influence on politics. According to them, mediatization causes politics to lose its autonomy. They state that it has become independent of mass media and is continuously shaped by interactions with mass media. However, they emphasize that political institutions continue to control politics, but that the political institutions have become increasingly independent of the media and have to adapt to the logic of the media (Hjarvard, 2013).

The term “mediatization” refers to a social change process in which media have become increasingly influential in and deeply integrated into different spheres of society (Asp, 1986; Strömback, 2008 in Strömbäck and Esser, 2014), while Knudsen (2013) more generally defines it as processes which involves media’s interaction with culture and society – how this interaction changes practises within, for instance, institutions. Increased media importance and influence lies in the essence of the term. Mediatization is also a process, which means it is a development over time. We can also understand the term as broadly meaning “the influence of the media on the functioning of different sectors of society” (Lundby, 2009 in Thorbjørnsrud, 2015). I will follow those “who have focused on how the media as an institution, with its own logic, might interfere and change the practices and rationale of other societal institutions” (Thorbjørnsrud et al., 2014, p. 407). Like Hjarvard (2008) who defines it as “the process whereby society to an increasing degree is submitted to, or becomes dependent on, the media and their logic” (p. 113).

2.8 Mediatization of politics

As the media becomes more professionalized and develops their own logic, they are able to put pressure on political parties and actors (Strömback & Esser, 2014). With the media becoming more and more independent of the political parties and institutions, they have become arenas with their own power. Asp (1986) referred to the term *mediatization of politics* as how political institutions and actors are influenced by and adapting to changes in the media. An important part of this adapting is connected to Hernes’ (1978) notions on the “media-twisted” society, and that politicians must learn what he called “medievridding” (media twisting) or “medievriddingsteknikker”. When there is too much information, and a lack of attention, everyone that “wants in” in the media, has to acquire techniques on how to

draw attention to themselves: “refining, simplification, polarization, intensification, concretization and personalization” (Hernes, 1978 in Jenssen, 2007, p. 19). Journalists on their end have understood that politicians have learned media twisting and developed strategies against it (Jenssen, 2007). This can be understood as an ongoing “contest” back and forth to get the necessary attention.

Between the media and politicians, power situations may appear based on two criteria. Who is in control of the issue, and the journalists’ freedom to process and reflect on the issue. The journalists’ power increases with the possibility for processing and reflection, and with the journalists’ control over the news-material in contrast to the source, which is the politician’s control. The theses of mediatization of politics state that the situation where politicians were in control, e.g. with an active party press, controlled leaks and political advertising, was typical at first, and then has developed towards a situation with game-focused reporting, scandals and campaign journalism. In other words, a situation where journalists are in control over the issue (Jenssen, 2007). Nevertheless, even though mediatization is a theory building on politicians being more and more dependent on the media and its logic, it does not mean that the media has more power over the politicians than the other way around. The politician’s ability to deal with and exploit the media becomes crucial, and it becomes important for them to control the information and twist the news to the media “bites”. Hence, it can be expedient to only get some parts of the information out, and intentionally avoid mentioning other parts (Moen, 2007). This also applies in the case of the ministries, as how the communication professionals promote the ministries outwards. National political institution and actors find themselves under increasing pressure from both citizens and the media and no political actor can afford not to take the media into consideration. This is because the media hold the key to the public sphere and can have major influence on public opinion formation (Strömback & Esser, 2014).

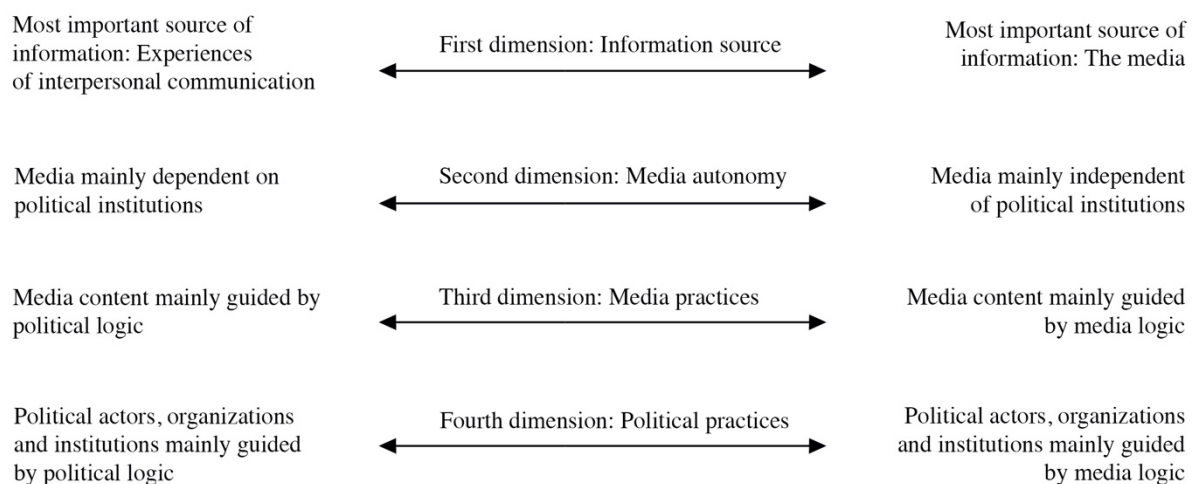
2.8.1 Mediatization as a four-dimensional concept

It is important to keep in mind that the term mediatization is distinct from the related concept of mediation. Mediation refers to the more neutral act of transmitting messages and communicating through different forms of media (Mazzoleni, 2008; Strömback, 2008 in Strömback and Esser, 2014). Strömback and Esser (2014) explains that mediation is a rather static and descriptive concept, while mediatization “is an inherently dynamic and process-

oriented concept that cannot be reduced to the transmission of messages or communication through media”.

What lies in the mediatization theory, is that mediatization is a long-term process of increasing media importance and direct and indirect media influence in various spheres of society (Hjarvard, 2013; Lundby, 2009a; Mazzoleni, 2008a in Strömback & Esser, 2014). There are four distinct, but highly related dimensions that can be identified, according to Strömback (2008, 2011a; Strömback & Esser, 2009) and followed by Strömback and Esser (2014):

Figure 2: A four-dimensional conceptualization of the mediatization of politics



In Strömback & Esser, 2014, p. 7

The first dimension: Points to that the media have to be the most important source of information about politics and society to citizens. It refers to the extent to which politics has become mediated.

The second dimension: Points to the degree to which the media have become independent from other political and social institutions, for example the party-press.

The third dimension: Points to the degree to which media coverage is guided by media logic or political logic. This dimension deals with the media’s own needs and newsworthiness, and

how this, rather than those of political actors and institutions, are decisive for what the media cover and how they do it.

The fourth dimension: Points to political institutions, organization and actors, and to the extent to which they are guided by political logic or media logic. “This dimension deals with the very essence of the mediatization of politics, that is, the ripple effects of media in political processes and on political actors and institutions” (Strömback & Esser, 2014, p. 6).

According to Strömback & Esser (2014), the framework shown above demonstrates how we can break mediatization down into discrete dimensions and that mediatization is both complex and a multidimensional process. Each of the four dimensions is a matter of degree and they are closely linked together. They explain that the first dimension takes place when the media have become the most important source and when politics becomes increasingly mediated. When this happens, it becomes more important for political actors and institutions to use the media to reach out to society. However, the second dimension happens when mediatization begin to gather pace as media institutions becomes increasingly autonomous from political institutions. Strömback and Esser (2014) further explains, within the third dimension, that the more independent media become from political institutions, “the more important the media’s needs and standards of newsworthiness-in short, media logic – will become for what the media cover and how they cover it” (p. 7). When this happens, political institutions and actors have to adapt to the media and to their logic, to be able to influence the media, and the public through the media. This is when the fourth and final dimensions take place. The extent to which political institutions and actors are mediatized is dependent on a lot of different factors and is not a linear process. The relationship between media and politics should be understood as an interactive one (Wolfsfeld, 2011 in Strömback & Esser, 2014, p. 8). This model is useful because it highlights key transformative aspects of mediatization in the realm of politics, but Strömback (2008) has stressed that even though it is based on a logical model, the relationship between the media and politics may be more varied and complex than what this model shows (Hjarvard, 2013). Though Strömback & Esser (2014) offers thorough insights, mediatization can also be characterized differently.

2.8.2 How do we apply and study the concept of mediatization?

Even though Strömback and Esser (2014) offers a conceptualization of the mediatization of politics, it is difficult to apply the framework here, when studying how political institutions and actors are being affected by mediatization. Being able to study mediatization on an institutional level, it is necessary to understand the concept by looking to other perspectives. In this research, it is expedient to operationalize mediatization as the impact of the news media and its logic on other social institutions (Thorbjørnsrud, 2015). Hjarvard (2013) understands the term mediatization of politics to be “the process via which the political institutions are gradually becoming dependent on the media and their logic”. He discusses the changing structural relationship between the media and politics, by studying “the implications of this for both the role of political actors and function, form, and content of politics” (Hjarvard, 2013, p. 43).

The process of the mediatization of politics can be characterized as a double-sided development. On one side it is about how the media has become integrated into the daily practices of political institutions and how they serve both internal and external communication tasks for political actors. By using for instance press meetings and websites, media come to serve political ends. But while this is being “internalized”, the political actors must accommodate media’s logic (Hjarvard, 2013). As media has become an institution independent of political parties and controls the society’s collective attention, the media has become a party responsible for various functions, not least the setting of political agendas, and also the generation of public consent for political actions and decisions. Therefore, political institutions must accommodate to media logic (Hjarvard, 2013). Thorbjørnsrud et al. (2015) argues that the issues of news media’s logic related to the format and time of the news, is visible. The reporters’ today calls for quick answers that speed up the schedule for civil servant and the continuous deadlines leads to bureaucracies using proactive strategies to anticipate the media agenda (Thorbjørnsrud et al., 2015). The format of the news is what they discuss as how the public bureaucracies make use of a language and format by being in contact with journalists, adapting to their logic (Thorbjørnsrud et al., 2015). The format and time of the news is discussed related to news media’s logic, and it is emphasized that the news media’s language and format will not only be adopted by texts which is produced for the press, but it will also affect text that are written for other purposes (Thorbjørnsrud et al.,

2015). In the forthcoming discussion in this study, the formats and time of the news media will be linked to the news media's logic to explore how this affects the communication advisors and their work. Furthermore, news media's logic will be discussed to the notions of news media logic being the "rules" of the news and also how this involves a specific rhythm.

2.9 Summary

The analytical framework in this study builds on an institutional perspective on mediatization and emphasizes news media logic opposed to a bureaucratic logic within the ministries. Meaning that the mediatization of public bureaucracies in this context focuses on the impact of news media's logic on the communication professional's role and work-tasks in the ministries. Are the communication professionals being affected by news media in a way that creates conflict with how they are supposed to communicate on behalf of the ministries and cooperate with other departments? Is the influence from the news media creating challenges on an everyday basis and if so, what are these challenges? The general emphasis withdrawn from the detailed literature review presented, is at the ministries being embedded in a public service ethos. Because civil servants are expected to act with integrity and they encounter certain formal constraints, communication can be more challenging compared to other organisations (Figenschou et al., 2020). This is expected to be found in the analysis in chapter 4. The communication is guided by information and communication mandates, and decisions being made are for instance regulated by law. All activities are morally and legally bound to be open and transparent and the civil servants in the ministries are required by law to inform citizens and the media (Thorbjørnsrud, 2015). Some of the premises for securing that those citizens get the correct information about their rights, responsibilities and opportunities, the civil servants must use well-written and clear language that is understandable to everyone (Central Government Communication Policy, 2009). They must also exploit the opportunities offered by new technology and new channels.

In addition, important notes are that the strategic communication and political public relations has been boosted by the general development within the bureaucracies (Fredriksson & Pallas, 2016; Strömback & Kiosis, 2019 in Figenschou et al., 2020). Visibility has become important, and there is goal of getting out with positive messages about the ministries. The news media has therefore been given a central position (Thorbjørnsrud, 2015). The studies of media managements distinguish between reactive and proactive media strategies, and they have found that public bureaucracies strive to adapt to the rhythm and format of the news media. These studies have also found that news stories are "always" prioritized and largely set the agendas within the ministries (Thorbjørnsrud et al., 2014 in Figenschou et al., 2020). Public bureaucracies are experiencing that the media's agenda setting impact on resource allocation and case decisions, under conditions like massive media pressure (Figenschou et al., 2020).

Journalists influence how issues are being defined, and norms in the journalistic profession and what is contributing to sell will affect what issues are being brought up and how they are presented (Christensen et al., 2007). There is also emphasized that political issues where there is conflict, gets the most attention. There is in relation to this, that the question of whether the bureaucracy is conducting political communication strategically becomes interesting (Thorbjørnsrud, 2015), and if so, what strategies are we talking about? The issue of media's agenda setting impacting resource allocation and case decisions, will be explored in the analysis in the forthcoming chapter. I am also expecting to find out in the analysis how the communication professionals are experiencing the issue of needing to be visible, and how they are experiencing conducting strategic communication. In addition, I expect to find that the communication professionals adapt to the issues of deadlines being gone, and what challenges this might lead to.

3 Methods

This chapter contains the introduction of methods and selection of study and interview objects applied in the thematic analyses of this thesis. As communication units in Norwegian ministries are a relatively un-explored topic in both media studies and political science, this research tries to explore openly without formulating a hypothesis beforehand. This study also explores what others have found beforehand, and I will argue whether there are similar patterns or if there are differences, or maybe both. Either way, I will explore by using a thorough thematical analysis exploring the communication professionals experiences.

When starting to explore different methods for my research, I first assessed the “why”, “what” and “how”. “Why” as in clarifying the purpose of the study, “what” which is obtaining pre-knowledge of the subject matter to be investigated, and “how” as in becoming familiar with different theories and techniques of interviewing and analyzing, and then deciding which to apply in order to obtain the intended knowledge (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 131). In my perspective, I wanted to explore the significance of someone’s experiences, i.e. in the people working as communication professionals, and how they are experiencing mediatization of politics, and at the same time examine how they do their job in relation to news media. The most challenging has been to stay as focused as possible during each interview, to be able to ask the best follow-up questions.

3.1 Qualitative methods: interviews

In a thesis like this, where the research questions involve personal experiences, the best approach is using qualitative methods (Walter, 2013, p. 54). The method must suit the research question and topic (Walter, 2013, p. 19). With qualitative methods, the key task is meaning-making and the focus tends to be on smaller groups of people and social units (Walter, 2013, p. 20). Being that this research is explorative, the interviews are relatively open with little structure.

My objective has been to obtain knowledge about a complex and relatively un-explored issue, and according to Brinkmann & Kvale (2015) the use of qualitative interviews can be applied when we want to know how people describe their experiences (p. 3). The method used in this research is semi-structured interviews with communication advisors in Norwegian ministries.

Qualitative methods are appropriate when seeking out meanings and understandings that individuals and groups attach to experiences, social phenomena and behaviors (Walter, 2013, p. 20). Qualitative interviews may seem like a relatively easy task, but they definitely are demanding and requires planning and structure. The structure of qualitative interviews comes close to what we perceive as everyday conversation, but Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) points out that professional interviewing involves a specific approach and technique of questioning (p. 27). Nevertheless, Berry (2003) states that during his time as a graduate student, he learned that “the best interviewer is not one who writes the best questions” (p. 679). He states that “excellent interviewers are excellent conversationalists» (Berry, 2003, p. 679). During my interviews, it was important to establish a good structure to cover relevant issues in my research, but at the same time conduct the interviews as an open conversation with me not standing in the way of getting any good answers.

3.2 Dataset

My research question is based on a relatively unexplored topic, therefore I went on with an explorative dataset.

3.3 Study- and interview objects

This research focuses on communication professionals in Norwegian ministries. They are a relatively unexplored group in our society, and confidentiality is a significant feature of their jobs. My method is based on interviews with 7 communication officials in 6 different ministries. In other words, two of the informants came from the same ministry. I am not conducting comparative research, therefore it is not expedient to reveal the different ministries that participated in this research. I have chosen to keep all informants anonymous beyond their title, either as head of communications or communication advisors. Which ministry the different informants work in, is not important to my analysis. I have selected ministries that are highly exposed in the media and some with less media coverage. This includes some of the previous ministers in the ministries that are highly visible in the news media, while other previous ministers are considered to be relatively restraint. Here I must emphasize that the inauguration of a new government has taken place during this research. Although this is not a comparative study, comparative elements are found because of the different ministries.

Nevertheless, as my analysis will show, there is no reason to believe that the different ministries differ significantly.

3.3.1 Confidentiality: keeping their identities hidden

I choose to not reveal the different ministries as it would hurt the anonymity of the interview objects, and thereby I hoped to get more informants willing to participate as interview objects. Also, keeping their identity hidden could contribute to making them answer my questions more freely, as some of my questions were going to be quite open and the whole interview would take the form of a conversation. Talking about their own experiences and telling me about different situations with journalist, would also put other people in danger of being recognized if I didn't ensure anonymity.

3.4 Selection

By selecting communication advisors in some ministries to be “represented” in this research, it seemed hard to reach equal representation; reaching out to some of the ministries would mean leaving others “in the dark”, which in turn could damage the study by not being representative of communication advisors in general. I wanted the selection to be as representative as possible, and therefore chose to contact all Norwegian ministries, knowing that not all of them would be interested or would have the opportunity to participate in the study.

Reaching out to only the head of communication in each ministry, made the selection fall under the term “snowball-selection”, meaning that the head of communication would point out or set up contact with others in the unit for me to interview, or they would choose to do the interviews themselves. The reason was that it would be time-consuming reaching out to each and every one in all of the ministries, a total of 138 people. There is also reason to believe that in many of these cases, I would be put in contact with the head of communication either way, because previous experiences has shown me that the head of communications prefers to be in control of these kind of situations. There is also reason to believe that by contacting the head of the commutation first, the whole process appeared respectful and well organized, ensuring that I would be considered a “safe” person to talk with. Getting access to

the informants is crucial, and therefore setting up contact the wrong way could be damaging to the research.

3.5 Elite interviews

The interviews fall under the term “elite-interviews”. This means that the informants can be said to be relatively skilled when communicating and answering questions. They are a part of the bureaucracy in Norway and are considered to be experts in their field.

We can also assume that they came prepared to some degree – with knowledge about the topics being questioned about. When discussing elite-interviews, Berry (2003) is emphasizing that is not an obligation of a subject to be objective and truthful. He also states that “Consciously or unconsciously, they’ve thought about what they want to say in the period between the request and the actual interview. They’re talking about their work and, as such, justifying what they do. That’s no small matter» (p. 680). To avoid this being a problem for the study, we use multiple sources, we can ask the subject to critique his own case and we can turn to another question if the source is not going to be helpful in an area because of their bias (Berry, 2003, p. 680). By asking a source to critique his or her own case, Berry (2003) states that “Don’t show skepticism and don’t challenge the subject. With subtlety, move the subject away from his case to the politics of the situation” (p. 680). This involves asking the right follow-up questions, for example stating that the answer might be unclear, and ask by using a third-party to “take the subject away from his own perspective without demonstrating one’s own personal skepticism” (p. 688). This is also an example that is valid to the notion of not asking questions that might lead the source in a direction with their answer. My probing went on quite seamlessly and was done several times to gather more depth in different topics.

3.5.1 Semi-structured interviews

By using semi-structured interviews, I could keep the interviews open to all answers that would be informing in some way to this research. Semi-structured interviews are categorized thematically, which kept me going in the direction I wanted. The semi-structured way of conducting the interview also helped me focus and to follow up with questions I wanted to ask – quite helpful to a beginner. By using semi-structured interviews, I was able to get a lot of relevant information.

Conversation-based interviews is often talked about in literature with the ideal of the researcher having a passive and listening role during the interviews (Andersen, 2006, p. 279). The interviews are characterized by open questions where the informants' answers are highly leading the conversation (Andersen, 2006, p. 279). But when interviewing elite informants, a more active and conscious researcher would be efficient to give analytic control, and by that an increase in validity and reliability (Andersen, 2006, p. 279) According to Andersen (2006), when interviewing elite informants, the interview should be more active, and the researcher should take initiative (p. 279). Elite informants often speak a lot and they often speak well for themselves, which can lead to the researcher losing control over the situation (p. 282). The semi-structured interview has a sequence of themes to cover, as well as some added questions (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 150). This gave me the opportunity to follow up on specific answers, to be able to understand them better and also to make the information clearer. By using semi-structured interviews, the informants could speak relatively freely, without "locking" their answers in predetermined categories. Open-ended questions have the virtue of allowing the subjects to tell the interviewer what is relevant and what is important, rather than being restricted by the researchers' preconceived notions about what is important (Berry, 2003, p. 681).

Due to the fact that some of the questions could be involving the clarification of different roles within the ministry, and the possibility of getting answers with sensitive information, I wanted to start by asking the most simple and easy questions. Then the transition into the more intricate questions would run smoothly. The interview-guide is based on previous research and based on the literature review in chapter 2. They are also based on the research question and the sub-questions created to get the overall understanding. The sub-questions were useful when creating the interviews guide, also because it helped divide the questions thematically. I tried to make the questions brief and simple, without being too academically formulated, so they would be understandable and answerable.

3.5.2 Conducting the interviews

The interviews were carried out by following a semi-structured interview guide that was not handed out to the informants beforehand. 7 interviews with communication professionals have been conducted and the data is collected through a recording function on two mobile devices. The mobile app that was used, was constructed for the purpose of doing research at

the University of Oslo. The recordings were automatically and immediately crypted on the devices and sent to an online form where I could listen to them afterwards. I went to the different ministries to meet with the informants, and all interviews took place in a private and quiet room in each ministry. The interviews were done separately and lasted for about 50 minutes. Some went one for about an hour, and one lasted for under 40 minutes. I started by telling them about the purpose of the project, asked if they had any questions, and told them about how I was going to use the recording devices.

To gather in-depth information about the intended issues, I used semi-structured interviews. This was done, as stated, because I wanted as much information possible that could be informing to the research, but at the same time I wanted to be somewhat in control of the situation. This also suited the thematical analysis I was going to make. The interview-guide was tested out beforehand, and some of the questions replaced and changed into better formulations. This increased the validity, by ensuring that the questions were customized to fit the research question. The test-interviews also gave me a time perspective so I wouldn't be surprised about the amount of time spent on each interview, and also so that I could provide the informants with the assumed time they would spent being interviewed.

3.6 Transcribing

Transcribing the interviews was a time-consuming job, and I was surprised to see how many hours I needed to put into it, even though I was well prepared. Transcribing is translating from speech to written text and when the interviews are being transcribed from oral to written form, the interviews become structured so that they are better suited for analysis (Kvale, 2009).

When conducting the interviews, I took some notes to during the interviews if I was noticing something I wanted to ask to follow up questions related to. Nevertheless, I was not writing notes to what they were saying. I wanted to be able to engage in the conversation and to be 100% present so that I could ask the best follow up question.

I used the "Nettskjema-dictaphone" which is developed and operated by the University Information Technology Center (USIT) at UiO. This system is used to collect and to store the data. This solution provides a high degree of security and privacy, which can be used for the

collection of sensitive data. The “Nettskjema-dictaphone” helped make the process of transcribing easier, because all the interviews were stored together in a secure place with clear overview. It was also easy to access, and it was relatively easy to use once I got the hang of it. I believe this solution saved me some time in the process of transcribing. I also used two mobile devices with the “Nettskjema-dictaphone” installed to record the interviews. This was done so I could be absolutely sure that if one of them showed technical difficulties, I had an extra for back-up when the interviews were sent to “nettskjema.no” form for analysis.

Nevertheless, the process of transcribing was difficult and took a lot of time. I was concerned with the correct understanding of everything being said and extremely concerned with detail. I believe that using the extra amount of time to assure that every sentence was correct, was positive for the analysis and for the credibility of the study. Words that are not words, were mostly taken out. For example, sounds like “hmm” and other fill words (like the word “liksom” in Norwegian). This was done because the interviews in this context were conducted to give impressions of the study objects views (Kvale, 1997). I wanted the transcribing to reflect what the informants meant in a correct and understandable way. I was assured that my transcribing was sufficient when I sent the transcribed interview back to the informants for quote checks, and there were hardly any adjustments overall.

It was important for me to assure that the informants agreed in my interpretation of their statements and explanations. This is because the study builds on their thoughts and experiences, therefore, my interpretation had to be as close to correct as possible.

The transcription ended up being 96 pages. I consider that the result from the transcriptions is useful to my research and that it represents the correct experiences and thoughts of the interview objects. I also consider the information to show context and clarity.

3.7 Analysing the interviews

I have chosen a thematical approach for the analysis of the data material. The choice of method should be picked depending on what is being analysed, the topic of the interview and what the purpose is (Kvale, 1997). I chose a thematical approach to make it easier to structure the most central and important topics to the study. Analysing the interviews was not an easy task, but because the interview objects were asked the same questions, I could sort the

questions after topics that was important to the study. The thematical approach also made it easier to compare the findings in each interview and go through the findings in all the interviews by going through the different topics. Carefully structuring the interviews, made it easier to analyse them. When you choose an explorative approach, it will be correct to explore the different interesting parts in the individual interviews, and deeply interpret them (Kvale, 1997). Kvale (1997) also emphasizes that asking the question of “how” can be formulated like this *“how can I find out what the interviews tells me about what I want to know?”*, which have been helpful analysing the findings in this study. Another question important to ask when analysing is *“how do I analyse what the study objects has told me in a way that enriches and elaborates the meaning of what they were saying?”* (Kvale, 1997, p. 117). These questions have been carefully considered and used while analysing the interviews. By doing so, I have extracted similarities between the interviews and I find that using a thematical approach has given the study finding relevant and important for the study overall.

3.8 Ethical aspects

Keeping the ethical aspects present at all times during this research has been important. One can never be 100% objective or completely free from one’s own beliefs, meanings or perceptions. This is what makes individuals who we are, and it is difficult, maybe impossible, not to consider this aspect when doing this type of research. Our own standpoint and social position will be present in some way or another. With standpoint meaning that ... and social meaning that... (p. 11).

Ethics, which is “the establishment of a set of moral standards that govern behaviour in a particular setting or for a particular group” have to be a part of the research (Habibis, 2013, p. 73). This is especially because this research involves humans, and ethical research is concerned with ensuring that ethical principles and values always govern these types of research (Habibis, 2013, p. 73). Also, “qualitative research can create tension between the wish to obtain knowledge and ethical concerns” (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 84). One important note made by Habibis (2013) is that the researcher is in control (p. 73). Meaning that even though participants, in form of study objects, have contributed to the research, they have very little control in terms of how the research is formed (Habibis, 2013, p. 73). It is the researcher who “controls the production of knowledge, including the design, data collection,

interpretation, and reporting the project” (Habibis, 2013, p. 73). According to Brinkmann & Kvale (2015), ethical problems can arise because of the complexities of “researching private lives and placing accounts in the public arena” (p. 85). It is important always to remember, when using qualitative interviews, to respect the people you are interviewing as well as the situation you are placing them in. This was particularly important in this research, because the informants share information about more than just their own experiences and lives. They share information about sensitive topics, and about the Norwegian ministries as a part of the Norwegian central administration. When discussing ethical guidelines, Brinkmann & Kvale (2015) emphasizes that “the importance of the researcher’s integrity is magnified because of the interviewer himself or herself is the main instrument for obtaining knowledge” (p. 97).

Ethical guidelines like securing informed consent and the issue of confidentiality has been followed throughout the entire process of this project. Every participant has been given information about the project and information about what I was planning on doing with the data I was getting through their participation. I was also given the voluntary participation of all the informants, with all of them knowing their right to withdraw from the study at any time, with no negative consequences.

3.9 Reflections

As stated, there are different ministries used in this research, but without it representing comparative research. Of course, testing how this has affected the answers can be interesting, but the overall conclusion is that it had no or little effect on the answers given by the informants. Overall, due to the ministries differing in how much media attention they get, it can also be said that this has given the research equal representation. Ministries with both little and much media attention has been included in this research, which gives the research both validity and reliability.

Elite-interviews are people that are leaders in a community, and they are often in powerful positions (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 171). Therefore, it has been important for me as a researcher to give every interview a neutral ground, and most importantly to secure equal terms.

4 Results

In this chapter, the empirical findings from interviews with the communication professionals will be presented. A thematic analysis is carried out in accordance with the theoretical framework in chapter 2 and with the methods stated in chapter 3, and the additional research questions. It is divided into 5 main themes and will highlight and present the most important findings related to the communication professional's role and their relationship with the political leadership and expert departments. It will also present their media management and contact with journalists, and present findings related to their own strategic methods. Even though this is not a comparative analysis, some comparative reflections will be highlighted to show both patterns, similarities and differences from the interviews. The most important findings will later be used in chapter 5 to answer the additional research question, and by doing so, answer the overall research question.

For clarity, the informants will be listed as informant 1, informant 2, and so on. They will also be presented as either communications manager or senior advisor throughout the text.

4.1 What does the communication professionals do?

The communication unit is a part of the staff in the ministry, outside the hierarchy, as shown in figure 1, in chapter 2. They are attached to the administrative leadership, and they oversee the practical facilitation, and the strategic formation, of the political leadership's contact with the media. They are advisors to the political leadership and keep track on everything related to the media. Typically, they start the day by going through the media picture and they make "press-clips" by using the mapping service "Retriever". These "press-clips" give the unit an overall collection of the news related to the ministry. They often discuss with the "press-guard" if there is anything, either in the form of inquiries or in the overall media-picture they need to focus on. Then later, the head of communications is in a morning meeting with the political leadership discussing the media-picture, the most important issues and what is going on through the day. One informant said that they can also spend time planning what issues they want to respond to and utilize to "get in" the media. The communication unit can work strategically by following up on the media-picture.

“.. we go through the media-picture, and then we have a talk with the politicians and the minister. And with the Secretary General, who is the leader in the ministry. By then we have made press-clips, which we go through, and we see what concerns us. There is a bit of briefing. Different issues. And some planning – is there something we will respond to? Is there anything we can use as a way of “getting in”? This is a term, to “get in”, to be in the media. And then we must do something ourselves – make contact, and inputs, suggestions and such”. (Informant 2).

The communication professionals are performing both reactive and proactive communication, where continuous media surveillance is important to keep track on current issues on news media’s agenda. Travelling and attending different meetings are also sometimes a part of the day, especially for many of the communications managers in the unit. Some of the ministries have an open area where the communication units sit close to the political leadership. They have a close relationship during the day, they are always nearby. They have an early meeting every day, in which the communications manager normally attends. They have meetings about different issues and discuss different approaches on different issues related to the media. They work together on the design of speeches, press-releases and other matters going out of the ministry.

4.1.2 Obligations

The ministries have obligations when communicating with the media and the public. The ministries’ communication with the public, and how they do it, is embodied in the Central Government Communication Policy. This means that there are guidelines for how the bureaucratic communication is performed. The communication professionals’ job is to inform the citizens about the ministry and about the ministries work. The public is supposed to know what the different ministries do and how they can affect it. The public is also supposed to know what decisions are being made, so that they can adjust to them. Every informant interviewed stated that they are obligated to do all of the above, and that this naturally affects how they work. One of the informants said that it is all about the public in Norway having information about who is ruling them. Every informant was clear and distinct about their role and obligations. One of the informants stated that is also about the citizen’s rights to information.

“Those who are my, not employer, but more of an assigner, is the political leadership in the ministry.

And to put it bluntly, this is someone who have won an election, and now they are going to implement their policy. And I mean we have a duty, to make sure that they can explain to the world what they do and what they don't, and what choices they make. But the public also have real information needs, their rights of getting good information. So, when citizens or the media contact us, they are going to get efficient and correct information about political processes and things that have been done and things that haven't" (Informant 4)

This statement is fitting to describe the answers from every informant when asked about why they work with communication on behalf of the ministries. When asked about what they communicate, several informants said that they communicate what the ministry does within their field. Several communication professionals also pointed out communicating general information to the public and making information available and understandable to the public. Some of the informants used the ongoing pandemic as an example.

"And especially now during the corona-period, our job, as well as all the other communication-people's job, has been to simply make available and systematize a huge amount of information. So that you and I have been able to find our way through that information and find out how to act" (Informant 4).

All the communication professionals stated that their job is to help citizens understand what is being communicated about the ministries. They also spoke about how the Government Communication Policy lingers "in the walls", and emphasized the citizens needs to be given clear and correct information about their rights, responsibilities and opportunities – as explained in the policy. The informants also mentioned the importance of using language that is clear and understandable to anyone. This is also stressed in the communication policy. In addition, most of the informants also mentioned the point about transparency, emphasizing a good dialogue with the media. All the informants mentioned the media as an important part of democracy.

"(...) in these principles lies the foundation for everything we do. Especially the idea of an open government and that the press must get the information they need and have access to documents" (Informant 6).

When asked about what is being communicated, all the informants emphasized that their goal is to give the public the information they need about the ministries' different areas of

responsibility. It was also stated that the communication professionals are there to help the ministries as a resource, because the media pressure is so high.

“We do it simply because the media pressure is so big, so the civil servants, and also the political leadership, moreover, don’t have the resources to take it on. That’s one thing. The other is that we adhere to the Freedom of Information Act, which means that all information that should be public and that should be distributed publicly, we have to make sure happens (Informant 7).

The communication professionals are moreover required to use language that is understandable to everyone, to use and exploit opportunities offered by new technology and new channels, and they generally have to spread information about political decisions being made in the ministries. The communication professionals see their own role as an important part of the democracy, and an overall perception is that they take their role, communicating policies, very seriously.

4.2 The cooperation between the communication units, the political leadership and the expert departments

4.2.1 The cooperation with the political leadership

The political rhetoric is added by the political leadership, and the communication professionals should stay away from engaging in matter regarding party politics, or attacks concerning political opponents. Nevertheless, the communication professionals can end up in a cross-pressure, with the political leadership wanting to address questions regarding their own politics for instance. One senior advisors explained it thoroughly like this:

“(…) we are not a part of the political leadership, at the same time we work closely up to the political leadership. So, it’s a challenge for all the communication units in the ministries that we are giving communication advises, but we can’t help the ministers and the state secretaries with what is political rhetoric’s. That’s their job. We are loyal to the political leadership and at the same time party-political neutral and professionally independent, so sometimes we are a cross-pressure between the expert departments and the political leadership” (Informant 6).

The communication professionals all stated that it is important for them to not become party-political, and that they are aware of this in their daily function.

4.2.2 Creating a close relationship

Because of all the current media inquiries the political leadership must consider, one informant said they have to “keep doors open” somehow. To be able to keep up with deadlines, the communication professionals also communicate with the politicians on text-messages, on e-mail and by calling them. It was also stated by most of the informants that the amount of media inquiries forces them to discuss different issues while on the go. Since the communication professionals are also advisors, having to give advice on what to do in different cases, one informant stated that this is a continuous process. The same informant described how they have to check in with the politicians all the time, in different ways:

“And we are with them on the go and out in the field, So, if they are travelling or at job here in town, or anything, we often go with them. And then we must take things in between. On our way from one event to another, we have to use the car ride to talk about three other issues, which she or he has to consider. So those types of check-ups and discussions we do all the time” (Informant 4).

The communication professionals also have access to the minister’s calendar. One informant stated that in times with increased media pressure, they use the calendar to find out if there are any available moments for them to stop by the minister’s office.

Working close with the political leadership was pointed to by all the informants. They throw ideas at each other and discuss issues to focus on. The communication professionals and the political leadership work on speeches and press releases together, and the political leadership adds the political message. The communication professionals may create drafts for the political leadership to look through and edit, before they are finalized.

In periods with increased media pressure, one informant stated that they work even closer with the political leadership. Especially if there are issues or questions that are important for the minister to address or answer. Another informant emphasized that increased media pressure will not necessarily influence the collaboration with the political leadership, it is just

a normal part of the job. It was stated by the informant that they need to be ahead of upcoming media pressure, and that the informant as head of communication was concerned with always preparing the unit, through different methods:

“So, it would mean that even though it is a regular day, and it might be a slow day, we work with methods where we can, sort of, press a button and do some more work on. And it’s about systems and trying to make things less dependent on one person, and such things. I am concerned with us delivering close to one hundred percent, all the time, to the politicians. And that means that when something pops up, something explodes, they have to rely on us having control, knowing us, knowing who we are, and so on” (Informant 4).

The same informant said that the way of working might change when there is increased media pressure. They may sit down with the minister more often, have more meetings and deal with everything more crisis management like. Still, the informant emphasized that having an established collaborative work form was important. That way, when a crisis emerge, the way of working is well established.

Several of the communication professionals pointed to the media pressure on the political leadership being different from day to day. It is also a perception that the communication professionals can experience falling between their own professional independence having to be neutral regarding party politics, and how

4.2.3 The relationship between the communication units and the expert departments

The cooperation between the communication professionals and the expert departments is described by communication professionals to be good, close and efficient. When receiving media inquiries, the communication professionals get the factual basis from the expert departments, before they go to the political leadership and then work out an answer. Most media cases go through the expert departments, before being answered by the ministry. One informant stated that this is the standard procedure, unless there are inquiries aimed directly at the minister as an individual. But most of the time, the cases have root in the expert departments and need to go through them. Sometimes, the case can go back and forth between the communication professionals and the expert departments before they agree on the

message. One informant emphasized how dependent the minister is on the bureaucracy, and that he or she needs to be able to trust it – the bureaucracy delivers knowledge and factual basis to the political leadership, and they must be certain that the information is correct.

“The minister must not end up in a situation where he or she says the wrong things. We in the communication unit are generalists, we don’t know things in detail like the rest of the expert departments in the ministry” (Informant 3).

This informant points out the different roles of the communication professionals and the expert departments. The expert departments are there to deliver the factual basis of different issues, while the communication professionals edit the materiel going out, so the public understands the message. They work with language and refine, or concentrate, the message. A lot of the basis material and talking points delivered to the minister before the minister is giving an interview or such, originate in the expert departments. They cooperate on speeches, and press releases, and all the factual basis begins in the expert departments.

4.2.4 Making the message understandable

The communication unit is placed between the expert departments and the media. While the expert departments deliver the information, the communication unit is there to cooperate and deal with media inquiries, as well as provide the answers given by the expert departments. As mentioned, the communication unit needs to refine the message, making it understandable for the public, as well as for journalists. One reason why answers or other issues can go back and forth between the communication professionals and the expert departments, is disagreements about the content. They may disagree about language or the message. The expert departments can deliver content which the communication professionals find too heavy, difficult or too nuanced. And the other way around, the expert departments may find the content created by the communication professionals to be too simple. Hence, the content can go back and forth until they reach an agreement. One finding is that the communication professional’s role falls between the political leadership, the expert departments and the journalists, needing to make the message understandable. One communication manager explained it like this:

“Because here, and in most ministries, the minister is the spokesperson outward, and a politician can

also have different needs and different wishes. So, it's us in the communication units who goes in between sort of, between a journalist, a politician and a expert, and we must try to get the three groups to understand each other (Informant 4).

Several of the informants pointed to how they are there to make the message from the political leadership and the expert departments understandable, not too affected by political rhetoric or too advanced. The same informant continued to explain:

“And the ones we are thinking of then, is the target group. If we're doing an interview for instance about something related to a lot of young people, then it's important not to fall into, kind of, a tribal language that no one understands. Or a type of politician-language that can be very refined and angled” (Informant 4).

Another informant also described the importance of making the message understandable, by extracting the most important parts.

“(...) and a big part of our job is to “translate”. A lot of the stuff being written and produced, is too complicated. You can't go out there with those five pages in your hand, people don't understand it. And it's difficult to extract the main points in those five pages. “What is the basic message in this?”. So that's where we have to be, getting that through” (Informant 2).

Several informants also pointed out how important a close relationship is to getting the correct information out there; the expert departments have a lot of updated and important knowledge that the communication professionals need. The communication professionals use a lot of time on checking things with the expert departments. Getting the correct information to journalist prevents them from misunderstanding the issue and spreading wrong information. Another informant also pointed out how the expert departments gradually learn what the media wants, and some more than others.

“The ones that work most of those cases going to the media, eventually knows that you have to turn around quickly, and write as simple as possible” (Informant 5).

The same informant pointed out how the expert departments are becoming quicker, especially during the pandemic. They know that they cannot come back the next day with a reply. It needs to happen right away. Several of the informants pointed to the cooperation between the

expert departments and themselves; it needs to be efficient and quick, as it must towards the political leadership. The challenge appears when the communication professionals, the political leadership and the expert departments disagree internally about how to communicate the issue.

4.3 Media management

The Norwegian ministries are frequently in contact with the media. The overall purpose of the communication units is to deal with press relations, to reply to questions from journalists, write press releases and inform the public about the ministries work. They are supposed to be the link between the ministry and the public and convey the ministries decisions and work. The communication unit is responsible for each ministry's homepage on the governments' website, and they are responsible for all the different ministries' social media accounts. One conclusion from the interviews is the overall understanding by all the communication professionals that their main job is to be ready to answer media at all times and give as many answers as they can. One of the communications managers answered the question on whether they spend more time on media inquiries than they usually plan to in the morning. The informant explained that it depends whether the inquiries concern issues they might not have seen coming. If so, they probably spend more time than expected. The informant also said that this is event-driven and depends on whether it is their initiative or not. It depends on whether they know about the issue beforehand or not, if they have pitched something to the media themselves, and if something is demanding media attention that they know about.

(...) So, it kind of depends whether or not it's your own initiative. I never know if I'm going to be woken up by something that has happened and then there is full steam ahead. So that's what it's like too, it's also event-driven" (Informant 1).

The time spent on communicating with the media does not particularly affect the resources spent on other tasks during the day, but this is event-driven and depends on each case. The same informant explained that when something big happens that requires lasting communication, not just with the media, things are put on hold for a calmer period. But in general, there is capacity to manage it.

“(…) It will be like that all of the time. Sometimes it can be a single journalist with a single case that occupies a lot of time and energy, which you must handle right there and then. And of course, then you won’t be able to do the other things you planned to do. But it’s not a problem, we are here to handle on-going things, and sometimes more than we planned. So, put together, we do have that capacity” (Informant 1).

The communication professionals are there to answer the media, and every communication professional stated that this is their main job. Different types of requests can take up different amount of time, and it varies, as informant 1 stated. This also entails that communication professionals must handle several requests at the same time, as well as being able to work efficiently. They are following the rhythm of the media, trying to meet different demands. The overall understanding is that the communication professionals are prepared to deal with everything related to media and media inquiries. All the informants stated that they don’t necessarily spend more time on this than they were planning to in the morning. Nevertheless, they can put things on hold to be able to answer journalist when there are increased media pressure. I will come back to that later, in the section about increased media pressure.

4.3.1 Cooperating with journalists

Several of the communication professionals emphasized the close relationship with the media. They work together on issues, and one informant also stated that they sometimes do give advice on what articles should look like and what journalists should emphasize on. However, this was usually done if the communication professional meant that the journalist was turning the article in a direction where the issue itself was overshadowed by for instance the minister’s private life. The communication units spend a lot of time answering journalists, and they are available almost all the time. Most of the time, the conversations happen over e-mail, and if the questions are not too complicated, one informant stated that it is a matter of an e-mail in and an e-mail out. If the journalist is working on a bigger case, the communication professionals would often talk with the journalists on the phone.

Responding and working together with journalists is a big part of the job-description of the communication professionals. Close relationships may develop over time, and many of the communication professionals talk with the same journalist multiple times about one specific

case. They may also interact with one specific journalist on multiple issues – sometimes enough to recognize the different journalists and their way of working.

The normal procedure when communication professionals are cooperating with journalists is that the journalist contacts the ministry. They may have questions, they may have created a case where the minister has a right to answer, or they may have a case where they ask if the political leadership wants to comment. Sometimes the requests can be an e-mail to the ministry, where the communication professionals reply with an e-mail. Communication also takes place over the phone. When a journalist is working on a bigger case, the communication professionals themselves can call the journalist, wanting to know more about the case. This also happens if the communication professionals do not understand what the journalist wants or is asking about. Then they contact the journalist to ask how they can help them, or what the case is about. One informant stated that they may have to say no sometimes, if the issue concerns something they cannot discuss or simply will not give an answer to. However, the same informant stated that when this happens, they try to offer comments on something else.

It is also quite common for communication professionals in the ministries to take initiative themselves by contacting journalist directly. This involves media pitches, press releases and such. They can call journalists and suggest or tip them about a case. They can also ask them if they are interested in writing about or interviewing the minister. The communication professionals can contact local media when the minister is out travelling to smaller places, or regional media when they are going to bigger cities. They can also make contact during press conferences. Communication and cooperation between journalist and the communication professionals happens in many different ways.

The overall impression is that the communication professionals have a great respect for journalist as well as the media and the job they do. Several informants stated that journalists are crucial for securing that important information reaches the public. One informant stated that they are playing the role of transmitter, but even when they try to reflect on what is important for the public to know about, they may not always make it. The informant stated that there might be perspectives that are important for people to know about that they might not be the carrier of, and said:

- “That’s why we have the press, and they have an important role to play on behalf of a lot of people, or on behalf of the public. They explain the issues and ask the questions that are natural to ask. So that type of propaganda where we get through with our story, or narrative, from A to Z, is not necessarily the most effective if it’s not communicated to the people on the receiving end. It has to be understood by the ones receiving it. And often I think journalists are good at translating and to make information relevant to the readers, so that they get interested and understand that it concerns them – that they get the point” (Informant 1).

The informant also emphasized that it’s not always them, in the transmitting role, who are the best to communicate all issues. The best scenario is when they are able to work together with the journalist, when they are able to tell the story with their perspective also coming through. The informant added that when there are competing narratives and understandings, it is not always their story that gets communicated. Several of the informants described a balance as being the best scenario and that they depend on each other for communicating something to the public.

4.3.2 Challenges

The communication professionals described the cooperation between them and journalist as generally good. The communication professionals experience journalist to be good at translating the message the ministry want to get out, and that journalist understand their role as civil servants. However, journalists may not always understand their position. One informant said that on occasion they would have to explain and remind journalist that they are a part of the bureaucracy and cannot go into discussions about, for instance, party-politics. The informant explained the challenge like this:

“But after all, the minister is the one who fronts the ministry, and that person is responsible for conveying party politics. I don’t experience us struggling with that role, but often we have to clarify to people we are in contact with, and media and actors out there, that you have to remember that we are part of the bureaucracy and don’t go into discussion about this or that” (Informant 4)

The informant kept telling that journalist might understand their position better than most people, but the communication professionals do still get in situations where they have to state to journalist what role they do have, and what role they do not have. This includes the communication professionals having to carefully maneuver between answering questions they

are obligated to, and having to be aware about their position and what questions they cannot get into discussions about.

“We can answer questions that touches the ministries field of responsibilities. If a journalist wishes to ask a minister about something that lies outside the ministries area, for instance party politics, it will be natural to refer them to the ministers’ political advisor for instance or possibly the political party office” (Informant 3).

Several of the informants stated that journalists sometimes don’t know what the issue they are communicating is about. The communication professionals experience that journalists contact them wanting an answer, and then the communication professionals end up teaching journalist about the issue they are asking about. Several informants pointed to them teaching journalists about political issues and processes and one informant expressed it like this:

To get the dynamics between the communication professionals to be as good as possible, it needs more competence with the journalists. That is my statement. I basically experience that journalist knows too little about public bureaucracies” (Informant 7).

All informants were clear about what lies outside of their area of work-tasks, but the communication professionals can still experience pressure from journalist that wants answers, and they can also experience that the political leadership wishes to answer these questions from journalist regarding party politics. This can lead to the communication professionals having to step in explain why this cannot be done. Nevertheless, most informants stated that these issues are not a problem in the daily, and that overall, the political leadership understands the communication professional’s role.

4.3.3 Reactive media management

The reactive media relations concern how the communication professionals in the ministries are dealing with media requests. How they are logged and dealt with. The communication professionals are there to be of service to the journalists and other interest groups, and they spend a considerable part of their day on receiving requests, passing them on to either the expert departments or the political leadership, or both. Several of the informants pointed out that sometimes there would be too many requests for them to handle and answer. They

emphasized that one ministry had to increase their staff to be able to answer the inquiries within the given deadline, as communication professionals are often working with rolling deadlines 24/7, which I will come back to. One informant stated that they sometimes spend more time on dealing with media requests than they would like to and that they often end up with performing reactive communication.

“Our role actually means that we have to practice proactive communication, but it usually ends up with us being quite reactive. Because suddenly there is a case we have to deal with and then we end up being pushed from one side to the other.” (Informant 7).

The same informant stated that over the last years, during covid, they have spent more time on reactive communication than proactive. This is related to the number of inquiries. The routinised reactive media management involves operating a 24/7 press service and receiving media requests which they take to the expert departments so they can prepare background and talking points. These are then edited by the communication professionals, and then presented in the media.

The communication professionals also have other work tasks. These includes managing social media and updating the governments website. In periods with increased media pressure, one informant stated that they would like to spend more time on these tasks. The communication professionals have an obligation informing citizens about the ministries business. Being on social media and other platforms, is a part of this job, in the purpose of reaching people. In periods with increased media pressure, they can experience having to place more people on handling the press-phone for instance and prioritize some issues at the expense of others.

“We have placed more people handling the press-telephone for instance. So, I would say that we must give less priority to some issues. It not we should have used a bit more time on regjeringen.no (governments website) and social media and such.” (Informant 5).

4.3.4 Proactive media relations

The proactive media management is related to the communication professionals offering exclusivity and involving the minister. It also involves how the communication professionals are working with proactive pitching of news to the news media and how they choose different

journalist and media outlets to be on the receiving end. Proactive media managements also occurs when the communication professionals are trying to put something on the agenda. Several of the informants stated that they spend considerable time discussing how they are going to set the agenda. When questioned about this, one informant stated:

“If we think of topics we want up and going, then very much so. Because that is a big part of our job, setting the agenda. Because whoever manages to do so, has usually won, in a way - that decides what we discuss, and which track we are on.” (Informant 2).

Another informant also described how they discuss agenda setting by looking through the press-clips each morning, studying the most important issues related to the different ministries. If there are topics which are big and important, then they sets the agenda for how they work, one informant stated.

It is important for the ministries to be able to get information out to the public. In order to do so, they must cooperate with the media. Most of their press relations evolve around reactive media managing, but when there are bigger issues, they have methods to place that issue on the agenda. They work strategically when they wish to set the agenda or get a debate going on what they believe is an important issue.

“It can simply be press conferences, it can be press releases and what we call media pitches – we contact journalists we know to be especially interested in the area. I believe these are the most common.” (Informant 3).

The communication professionals work strategically to set some issues on the agenda if they consider it to be important for the public to know about, but they are not always successful. One informant stated that they have opinions about how things are, and about what is the correct way to present it. That the main issue can be how to get this information out:

“That’s the challenge. Vi have something called a “microphone stand”. A journalist won’t let him- or herself get used, they will not be dictated. “This is how it is, and you have to write this and that”. Of course, they have their job to do. They may very well be critical towards us and ask tough questions. So, this is a kind of balance. If we manage to communicate our intentions by and large, and get that through, we’re satisfied.” (Informant 2).

One informant stated that they often see the media getting tips from other actors who demand answers about something. Of course, other actors in society might have agendas too, wanting something to be covered in the media. These actors might also have something to gain by the ministries commenting or answering inquiries from the media. It might not be the ministries, or political actors, or the media who promote issues on the agenda. The communication professionals also describe how they work with a message by adjusting it to the media. One informant said that they sometimes intentionally make the message more personal and relatable, because the media often show more interest if there is focus on the individual.

Several of the informants stated that the media clearly tries to set the agenda, and one also emphasized that this is what they should be doing as well. The media often contacts the ministry, wanting answers to different issues. Different ministries might get challenged within different political areas of discussion and naturally get relevant questions from journalists. Journalists emphasize different aspects of different cases and can also be interested in the minister as a person. The ministries' agenda and the medias agenda are not necessarily the same. They may want different results. But when journalists contact the ministries, they may be working on a case and are seeking answers or information. Many of the informants described how the minister's personality or private life would be interesting to journalists. Several also pointed out how a journalist chooses to position their case is ultimately their own decision; they have the last word at the end of the day.

The communication units are very much affected by what the media find interesting and what issues they place on the agenda. They discuss the issues and prepare to answer questions. They especially feel the pressure when the media has revealed something that is a result of investigative journalism. One informant stated that it completely dominates the news picture if the issue being revealed is somehow shocking. If it is something that concerns the ministries, it affects the communication professionals and how they work – when the pressure increases. Several of the communication professionals commented on media's focus on issues that contain conflict.

“The media is very much driven by conflict, right. So they are interested if there are disagreements or inconsistencies between a ministry and professional departments.” (Informant 6).

The same informant also described how the media, or journalists, can work in “packs”. If an issue containing conflict is brought to the surface, other journalists also find it interesting and want answers and information about the same issue. This creates a media picture where different news media cover the same issues, and communication professionals are forced to answer the same questions over and over during the entire day or over a certain period.

Sometimes a case may dominate the media-picture that does not concern the ministry. A result may be that there is less space for the issues which the communication professionals wish would get attention. The communication professionals can also experience that the media focuses on issues they don't want to spend a lot of time on or issues they simply can not discuss. This can for instance involve the minister or it can involve party-politics.

4.4 Increased media pressure

The increased media pressure is mentioned by most of the informants. The communication professionals spend a lot of time on media inquiries and press relations, as this is their job. Nevertheless, the number of inquiries has increased over the years. One informant pointed to the fact that there weren't any communication professionals in ministries in the 1970s at all, and that there was only one TV-channel. The same informant stated that how the media has developed has changed how the ministries work with communication. Several informants pointed to how the staff size has increased alongside the increasing media pressure. One informant also emphasized how society is becoming an information society, and that the ministries are a part of that. The same informant pointed to people consuming more news today, and therefore, they must use more capacity related to that. Other informants pointed to digitalization, more TV- channels and more journalists.

Some of the informants stated that the corona pandemic led to a need for more resources. The increase in media inquiries in that period made it difficult for them to be only one person handling the press calls. The dramatic increase in the number of calls made it difficult to get through them all, one informant stated. The same informant described how journalists from the same media house called several times a day, wanting answers as quick as possible. This was described as a challenge.

“They don’t always understand how many journalists that are contacting us, or how much traffic there is” (Informant 5).

The communication professionals send some of the cases to the expert departments, if the question has not been answered earlier. It was stated by one informant that this can take time if the case is comprehensive. The informant had experienced that smaller media outlets often ask tough academic questions that needs forwarding to the expert department. In addition, the expert departments can be quite busy with other issues that need answers; the communication professionals now have to wait, which leads to journalists having to wait. The informant stated that some journalists do not understand why it takes time to answer them. The same challenge occurs if there is an issue that needs to be passed through other underlying agencies before going to the political leadership. The political leadership can be busy, which also leads to journalists having to wait.

4.4.1 No more deadlines

The issue of not having deadlines anymore was brought up by most informants. Today the word “deadline” might be practically gone among communication professionals. Today they are expected to be open to all inquiries most of the day, at any time. Together with the fact that inquiries from journalists increases, several of the communication professionals stated that they have had to increase their staff to be able to handle all of them. With increased media-pressure, the landscape has changed completely within the Norwegian ministries. In the 1970s and 1980s, the few people working with communication in the ministries were called “information-secretaries”:

«.. she worked mainly with creating brochures and stuff like that on paper. And now we are 6-7 people, more or less.” (Informant 2).

The communication professionals work in a completely different way today than before. They must adapt to the media’s ways, especially related to the issue of deadlines. In 2022, journalists may contact the different ministries from 06.30 am to 10 pm, more than 15 hours a day. And this is just when the press telephone is open and available. It is not uncommon for journalist to call after 10 pm. They can also send an e-mail whenever they want to, and the

communication professionals may answer, off duty. This can in some ways lead to communication 24/7 between the ministries and the media. One informant said that it is not a “news-day” anymore, but rather a “news-hour”. Explaining that they have to work very fast, moving from one inquiry to the next.

“The media landscape is completely different than what it was 20 years ago, we almost don’t print our newspapers anymore, with deadlines at ten in the evening. The ongoing deadline is all the time. We have a press guard that goes 24/7. The press telephone opens at 6.30 am and closes at 22 pm” (Informant 7).

The same informant stated that every journalist know that they usually work from 8pm to 4am, but still contact them at 10am. The informant also explained that if there is something urgent, or a crisis, and the journalist gives a short deadline, they can work on solving the issue through the night.

Journalists can call the ministries and get their answers immediately. Several of the informants stated at one point during the interviews that they are available most of the time, because journalists contact them at all hours. This creates new ways of working, both for the communication professionals and the media. Before the internet, the communication professionals mainly worked by following the newspapers deadlines, to be able to get in with their answers or messages. One informant put the issue like this:

“We didn’t have internet, so deadlines were central back then, to get in the paper the next day. Now it’s completely different. The media landscape is much more diverse, and the media works 24/7, around the clock. VG often calls 11.30 in the evening and wants an answer before midnight. This never happened before. The wheel kind of spins all time” (Informant 2).

The same informant also said:

“Before, you could wait to answer until the next day, cause then it was a new newspaper. That’s not how it’s like now, now it’s constant. So, you need to adjust» (Informant 2).

By not having deadlines anymore, the communication professionals adjust to news media needing answers quickly. This also affects the political leadership and the expert departments,

as they too have to turn around quickly and adjust to the disappearance of deadlines. The rhythm of the ministries has changed, to be able to answer all the inquiries. One informant said that they would choose written answers more now than before. Journalists might wish for an oral interview but get written answers instead. This is being done to shield the minister from the media pressure and because of the time pressure.

“In our case, there has been an enormous pressure on the minister. It hasn’t been possible. If the minister was going to be sent out to everyone wanting an oral interview, then the minister wouldn’t have time for anything else. It’s a much faster process if we suggest written answers, which can be handled by the state secretary and sent out” (Informant 5).

One informant stated that not only has the media pressure increased, there has also been an increase in their own channels, and the digitalization has created new time perspectives in relation to communication:

“A colleague told me that when they used to send out press releases, they did it by fax or sent out a letter”. And then, the time perspective is a bit different” (Informant 7).

In addition, the ministries also have their own channels which need continuous updating, also without deadlines. They are working with communication in different ways, in different channels and on social media. This is neither depending on deadlines nor time. The media and the public can access this information at any point of the day.

4.4.2 New ways of communicating

The communication professionals constantly work with press relations. They also need to adjust their communication to different channels and use different instruments than before to reach the public. They must be where the public are, which today includes using social media. Social media operates with a new set of rules and new ways to communicate. From not having internet at all when communicating with the press, things have changed. There are multiple platforms where the government can be visible. New technology and social media also set the standard in some cases. In general, the repeated notion from the communication professionals is that it has created both new opportunities and challenges:

“You can say that we breath heavily sometimes. We often think that we have issues which are more important than that Instagram-thing. But then we’re back to, at least when you are the minister, that people have to know about you” (Informant 2).

Also, in addition to getting the ministers into the media, the ministries must communicate differently according to the medium they are using. Informant 2 says in the quote above that they often think they have more important issues to handle than how to use Instagram. The same informant also said that social media set guidelines on how they communicate. When using social media, they must often make the communication even simpler.

“The media generally takes up more place in society today, in total. What people are concerned about and use their time on – they do it in completely different ways. We don’t sit around reading the newspapers anymore, we sit on our phones. It is not many years we’ve been doing social media. It’s a completely new way to communicate. And then you must simplify even more. Because there it has to be 4 sentences at most” (Informant 2).

The ministries have to use different channels to reach the public, as well as adjusting language, amount of text and the message to the social medium:

“We have a website, we have Facebook, Twitter, and it’s Instagram. It’s all kinds of stuff that we need to maintain because there are people there. And after all we have to reach everyone. Well not everyone, but in principle we are” (Informant 7).

It is also stated in the General Government Communication Policy (2009) that the communication professionals shall use and exploit new technology. This is linked to them reaching the public, and also for their own sake as being visible actors in society. There was emphasizes in the interviews regarding the even simpler communication, and that they have to create content being fitted to the exact medium they are communicating in. This shows that not only the news media, but also social media, have guidelines regarding how they are supposed to be used. In addition, news media being on social media can arguably make the communication even faster, which creates new discussions about public bureaucracies must adapt to the media and their logic.

4.5 Getting through with messages

When interacting with the media, the communication professionals do not always get through with the issues that they want to, the way they want. The focus by the media on some aspects of an issue can get in the way of the focus the communication professionals want to have emphasized. How the case is presented in the end is mostly the journalists' decision, even though the communication professionals try to influence it in some way. Most of the time the communication professionals get through with what they want to communicate, but one informant explains how they get through to the public with their issues:

“It depends on how vi operate and if we're prepared well enough. That we have thought through what it is we want to communicate and that it is clear, and that what we communicate also has news value. That it is interesting to the media, and in that way to the public. This is important for whether or not we actually get through. And it also depends on – is it a case with a conflict of interest then it of course will be a discussion about getting one's view across, but it isn't always our perspective that turns out to be the winning issue. So, there are a lot of different factors that matter” (Informant 1).

This relates to the notion that media are interested in issues where there is conflict. At the same time, the informant points to what they are communicating needing to have news value to get through. It must be interesting to the media, because that it what's interesting to the public. This notion has been made by several informants: the media knows what the public wants. Nevertheless, informant 1 also points to how they most of the time manages to get their issues across. Even so, a typical challenge for the communication professionals is that journalists may ask for more than the communication professionals can give them. This might include private details about the minister, and other thing the ministries cannot talk about publicly. This of course differs between the ministries, but some informants describe journalists asking for things they simply must decline.

4.6 A struggle to get attention?

The ministries have to adapt to media's ways when wanting to get the citizens attention. They often have specific issues they want on the agenda, but the issues do not always get through. Sometimes, the communication unit can promote different issues, trying to get the media to be interested and then put it in the newspaper the next day. It might be about policy issues and new proposals, about the minister, or just general information. If the media, or journalist, does not find it interesting, it is possible that the information does not get through to the public. The communication professionals state that whether issues actually get through to the media, depends on how well they do their job. Sometimes the journalists are interested, sometimes they are not. Finding out what might interest them, and then the public, is an ongoing process and no easy task for the communication professionals. Nevertheless, the communication professionals generally knows what interests the media, and they can exploit this:

“If it's tabloid media like VG, Dagbladet or Nettavisen, or TV2 or something, then the issues should be captivating pretty easy.” (Informant 7).

The notion of getting the different ministers into the media, has been repeated by several of the informants. They state that journalists often find them interesting, as well as getting the minister in the media is important in the ongoing fight for media's attention. An experienced informant put it like this:

“Because a minister who is invisible, has lost, simply said. And the way things are now, if you're not in the media, or if people don't know about you, then you have lost in the first place. And that goes for ministers and politicians, and it also applies to the field of interest. It's important to be visible and to be an actor in the society” (Informant 2).

To be visible and an actor in society helps getting peoples' attention. It is easier to inform people if they know where the information comes from, and if they know the people connected to the issue. In a lot of cases, this might be the face of a well-known minister.

5. Discussion and conclusion

The research question in this thesis is: How does mediatization affect the communication advisors in Norwegian ministries? In this chapter, I will try to answer that question. To be able to do so, I have used 3 additional research questions to bring me closer to the understanding of mediatization, public bureaucracies, news media, different logics, and how they in the end are related in terms of answering the research question. In the discussion of how the communication professionals are affected by mediatization, I will go through the findings to each of my additional research questions: “*How are the communication professionals experiencing their own role*”?, “*How is the relationship between news media and the communication professionals balanced out in their daily work?*” and “*What logic is being followed and in what way?*”. After presenting answers regarding each question, answering the overall research question towards the end, I will be closing the discussion with some further considerations.

In my theoretical framework, I have presented definitions of mediatization and how it is possible to apply the concept on an institutional level. I have discussed how mediatization should be operationalized, to at all be able to discuss its effect on public bureaucracies. By doing so, I have a starting point in the discussion of how mediatization can affect the communication professionals in government ministries. I have also presented the main characteristics of the role of a civil servant, the communication professional’s cooperation with news media, and the communication professional’s relationship with the political leadership and expert departments. This will function as a starting point to answer how the communication professionals experience their own role in the ministries. By answering this question, it is possible to highlight potential problems or challenges that the communication professionals are experiencing and see if this is linked to mediatization. Linked to the third research question, I have presented different logics, to explore how news media logic and bureaucratic logic function side by side and how they are followed within the communication units. As each of them serves as guidelines and are based on each sphere’s purposes, interest, needs and institutional structure (Strömback & Esser, 2014), they are highly important to discuss how media logic is perceived to be the engine of mediatization (Mazzolini, 2008c; Schrott, 2009 in Strömback and Esser, 2014).

5.1 The mediatization of public bureaucracies

The public bureaucracies are with no doubt affected by the news media, by the central place the news media have been given in the ministries. This central place makes up the increasing importance of the news media, hence how the ministries need to be visible and to get out positive messages about the ministries (Thorbjørnsrud, 2015). The gradual intensification of the mediatization of public bureaucracies can be seen from superficial adaptations to media requests to more substantial organization changes (Thorbjørnsrud et al., 2014). Superficial adaptations to media requests can be seen as how the communication professionals have developed systems to effectively answer journalists when they are being asked about the same questions multiple times, with their databases for media requests. Extracted from the findings, this is being done to save time and to ensure that the journalists do get answered, as the communication professionals are required to do. As one informant stated, they have to use these types of methods because answering the same questions over and over takes up an enormous amount of time that they cannot afford. Especially when there are issues that overshadow other issues and are on the news media's agenda. The amount of pressure varies in the different ministries, because some ministries do get more media attention than others. Nevertheless, these variations in media pressure and attention do not differ enough between the ministries related to the use of methods, to claim that a comparative analysis would give different results. Meaning that even though there are differences in media pressure, I argue that the communication professionals overall have the same experiences related to it.

The different ministries can experience different amounts of media attention, but once an issue is on the news media agenda, the overall understanding is that the communication professionals experience pressure related to that issue and that these types are helpful. Substantial changes can for instance be seen as the increasing amount of communication professionals in the ministries, often with journalistic backgrounds. Changes can also be seen as to how the ministries have specialized communication units and that the general development within public bureaucracies has boosted the importance of strategic communication and political public relations (Kolltveit & Figenschou, 2020). Substantial changes are also seen in the findings related to the relationship between the communication professionals, the political leadership and the expert departments. The findings state that the relationship between the three can be closer in times with increased media pressure. Several of the informants described sharing the same understanding of how to present the issue is

crucial for the communication professionals to experience that they successfully manage to both serve the media and to place issues on the agenda. In addition, the findings indicate that the communication professionals experience that the political leadership and the expert departments spend more time on dealing with the media in times with increased media pressure. The findings point to them having to place other tasks on hold, to serve the media. Even though this is not directly related to how the communication professionals are being affected by mediatization, it is still relevant for how the ministries as a political institution experience increased media pressure. Even though the communications units are placed in the ministries to see to media relations and reduce the workload for the rest of the ministry, media pressure is still highly noticeable by the political leadership and expert departments.

The media has developed into its own institution with power, providing the public with crucial information about political issues. The media holds the key to the public sphere and can have major influence on the public opinion formation, and political institutions find themselves under increasing pressure from both the media and citizens. Therefore, no political institution can afford not to take the media into consideration (Strömback & Esser, 2014). This applies to the ministries needing to be visible to get through with their positive messages. The communication professionals actively make use of the news media by placing issues on the agenda. This can either be by pitching issues into the media, talk to them directly, or offer something exclusively.

5.2 Between the political leadership, the expert departments and the journalists

The communication professionals are in between the political leadership, the expert departments and the journalists, almost as a negotiator. They have an important job to get the three groups of actors to understand each other and complete each other. Journalists also function as a receiver, but they set the standard for how issues are communicated. Nevertheless, the expert departments function as the bureaucratic language, arguably because the bureaucratic language is neither simple nor short (Thorbjørnsrud et al., 2014). The expert departments are there to provide the correct and factual basis, while the communication professionals look through it and makes it into something the political leadership can present, or answer, and the political leadership adds the political rhetoric. As this can go back and

forth, the communication professionals adapt the content to the news media. Arguably, their role within the ministry related to this is highly adjusted to or influenced by news media logic. The bureaucracy builds on norms of correctness and comprehensive information and the bureaucratic language is neutral and detached, which is a contrast to the personal and emotional morality of the news (Thorbjørnsrud, 2014). While the expert departments hold on to these norms, the communication professionals have to “grind” the content fitting to both news media and to the public. How the language is made short and simple to fit news media’s demands, shows how issues moves from following a bureaucratic logic and moves towards a news media logic. This also points to how the communication professionals are experiencing being in a cross-pressure.

Overall, answering my first research question: *“how are the communication professionals experiencing their own role?”*, the communication professionals can experience cross-pressure by being dragged to different directions by the expert departments and the political leadership. This is in relation to how they all emphasize different aspects of the content. The communication professionals are experiencing close and efficient cooperation with both parts but can sometimes fall in between – between political loyalty and the technical aspects and professional independence. The expert departments on their end emphasizes the technical and nuanced, while the political leadership wishes for the political, more refine messages. The communication professionals on their end work with adjusting the message to fit the general public, which is both citizens and the media. The informants participating in this study states that they don’t experience this a problem, but more so as a challenge when they disagree. The cross-pressure that becomes visible, seems to get more complicated when journalists get involved as well, because the news media on their end “demands” that the content is fitting to their form and format. As one informant stated, they work with trying to get these three groups to understand each other. The language can neither be too political, too technical, and it must fit the form and format of the news media.

As of research question nr two: *How is the relationship between news media and the communication professionals balanced out in the daily?* The results shows that the communication professionals in the ministries have great respect for news media and their role in our democracy. The news media make up an important part of our democracy and they

have an important role on behalf of the people, which is also emphasized and stated repeatedly by the communication professionals in the interviews.

This role according to the informants, includes that journalist almost have to be critical to the role of the communication professionals. I argue that the communication professionals both respects and value the role of journalists as an informer of important messages to the public. This comes to show for instance by how far the communication professionals go about their way in trying to answer journalist. At the same time, I argue that the relationship between the journalists and the communication professionals are characterized by professionalism, but that at the same time, journalist function as “pushers” within the ministries. By “pushers” I refer to journalist creating new work environments not only for the communication professionals, but also for the expert departments and the political leadership because of the internal cooperation. The relationship between the communication professionals and the news media are arguably creating new ways for the ministries to relate to the public. They need to function differently to be able to follow the rhythm of the news media. That if, they wish to be visible and reach out to citizens with their business. This pushing from the news media, results in the communication advisors having to be available almost at any point, working effectively both with the political leadership and the expert departments to answer journalist as quick as possible. If the communication professionals use too long to answer, the media requests will gather up to the point of being to many too handle. Which then arguably can create difficulties because the media has a right to get an answer from the ministry – this is important that the communication professionals contribute to.

The relationship between the communication professionals and journalists can be discussed as being balanced in some ways, due to how both journalist and their sources need each other. Both journalist and the communication professionals initiate possible news stories and follow-ups (Allern et al., 20202). Nevertheless, what seems like being a balanced relationship is still influenced by the final decision concerning editorial responsibility (Allern et al., 2020), and journalists have power in how issues are being framed. Even though the communication professionals place issues on the agenda, the final decisions in terms of publishing lies with the media outlets, moreover journalists.

5.3 Simplifying issues

The simplification of issues is from the communication professional's point of views, is both evident and a part of their job. As one informant stated, their job is to translate. Translating the complex political issues are necessary when trying to inform and communicate with the public. Findings show that communication professionals are highly aware of news formats and language, and the interviews show that there is a general perception among the communication professionals that a too bureaucratic and technical language will not capture news media's attention nor the public's, the same way that it does when language is adjusted to these receivers. This is confirming the notion of news media's logic including a format of everyday language, to describe things in ways familiar to the public (Thorbjørnsrud et al., 2014).

An important distinction from chapter 4, is that the communication professionals are concerned with the citizens' understanding of the issue they are presenting. In order to successfully inform citizens, the language in press-releases for instance and other matters going out of the ministry, is also simplified and shortened. Arguably, the communication professionals are concerned with the amount of people receiving their information, and their job is to reach everyone. Therefore, the use of overly technical language would exclude, not only the media, but also other social groups in society. In the interviews, the communication professionals mentioned citizens as needing translating of issues to be able to understand them. From this perspective, the content being simplified by the communication professionals, is not only a result from taking the media into consideration, but also citizens as an important part of it.

Thorbjørnsrud et al. (2014) stated that news needs faces and images to illustrate the case, and it tends towards personalization, featuring stories which involves emotional cues and a moral. How the communication professionals are affected by this can be seen in how they offer issues exclusively, and how they can tend to make some messages more personal relating the minister. The communication professionals arguably adapt to the format of the media by following the issue of being visible, by also offering interviews exclusively.

5.4 Continuous deadlines as a main challenge

Public bureaucracies have as mentioned hired more communication professional. This is a reaction to increased media pressure, in order to meet the news media's demands. As stated, this is also linked to the professionalization of public bureaucracies. The establishment of more advisors is also a repetitive notion in the findings, in addition to being a result of an increased media pressure and having to protect the minister and the political leadership. This is clearly shown in the example where one ministry had to hire more advisors in the communication unit, because of the corona pandemic. The corona pandemic increased the media pressure in some ministries, if not all, in periods. Nevertheless, these findings in chapter 4 confirms that developments within media in general, leads to an increase in liability for the ministries by not having deadline anymore (Difi, 2011).

Because of the increased media pressure, and how the communication professionals are experiencing not being able to always follow, or serve, the journalists' demand, they have established routines and processes. It is confirmed in the findings in this study as well, the ministries have a routinized ongoing media management (Figenschout et al., 2020) and the ministries are following media's rhythm by adapting to their deadlines. The deadlines today, are not what they were before. This is something the communication professionals are noticing and largely affects their day. One surprising find in the analysis is the notion one informant made about how they can work through the night if a journalist contacts them minutes before closing the press telephone. This certainly confirms the notion about the communication professionals operating a 24/7 press service. In addition, the communication professionals are also available on their own private telephone, and on e-mail, this creates opportunities for journalists to get answers or information wherever and whenever.

Studies looking at how media management impact organization priorities, routines and practices, have found that public bureaucracies strive to adapt to the rhythm and format of the news media. In addition, these studies have found that news stories are "always" prioritized and that they largely set the agenda within ministries (Thorbjørnsrud et al., 2014 in Figenschou et al., 2020).

By following the ongoing deadlines, the communication professionals are also following news media's agenda. What the media want to discuss, the communication professional's

discuss as well. In addition, the communication professionals start off their day by going through press clips. This is being done to know what questions are coming, and to generally follow what issues the media have chosen to focus on.

Studies looking at how media management impact organization priorities, routines and practices, have found that public bureaucracies strive to adapt to the rhythm and format of the news media. In addition, these studies have found that news stories are “always” prioritized and largely set internal agendas within the ministries (Thorbjørnsrud et al., 2014 in Figenschou et al, 2020). By following the ongoing deadlines, the communication professionals are also following news media’s agenda. What the media want to discuss, the communication professional’s discuss as well. In addition, the communication professionals start off their day by going through press clips. This is being done to know what questions are coming, and to generally follow what issues the media have chosen to focus on.

Asking what logics is being followed, and how the news media affect the communication professionals, I have discussed news media’s logic and the bureaucratic logic. All matters considered in this discussion, point to how the news media logic has become more important within the bureaucracies. As I have narrowed down the definition of media institutions to apply to news media, some factors become more visible than other. The fact that news media and its logic involve a specific rhythm and certain relation to time and timelessness (Thorbjørnsrud et al., 2015), this study confirms this notion to affect the communication professionals in the ministries. I argue that communication professionals to a high degree, follows news media logic by looking to the findings I have presented. As of how we weight news media’s logic up against the bureaucratic logic, the guidelines following a bureaucratic logic seems not to have disappeared but being under constant pressure.

If the bureaucracy moves in a direction where the influence of the news media increases, who and what are given less priority? (Thorbjørnsrud, Figenschou & Ihlen, 2014). This question would be interesting to discuss further in another study, and becomes highly relevant.

5.5 Final considerations to the study

This study has based the empirical results on a qualitative exploratory design, which involved in depth interviews with seven communication professionals from six different ministries. The main goal of this thesis was to develop a better understanding of how communication professionals are affected by mediatization, which entails that the results were extracted from personal experiences and thoughts. Therefore, it needs to be emphasized that the results might not be representative for all ministries in Norway. Six ministries out of 16 ministries, including the Office of the Prime Minister, were represented. The remaining ministries were either unavailable or declined the request to participate. Even though all informants are considered to be reliable and gave detailed information, the study can only in a limited sense present a complete picture of the communication units and how they are affected by mediatization.

I would also like to stress that to get closer to that complete picture, the expert departments, the political leadership and journalists would be included in a possible forthcoming study. My focus was in-depth exploration of the experiences of the communication professionals, which is why it was expedient to conduct interviews with only this group. Nevertheless, results have shown that it would for instance be interesting to look at structural changes within the ministries related to mediatization, by also including the remaining actors. It would also be interesting to explore how cooperation internally in the ministries are being affected by media's rhythm and format. Unfortunately, these issues had to be removed from this study due to the scope and time limit of this thesis.

One informant in one of the interviews stated that today's scene is totally different from before, and told me that earlier, a journalist might even walk straight into the minister's office asking him or her a question. I was told that today, you are lucky if you can get a prescheduled meeting. News media has changed, and political actors and institutions both wish to and need to adjust to these changes. Studying how this development has emerged over time, linked to possible democratic issues, would indeed be interesting to explore in the future.

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Appendix

Appendix 1: Semi structured interview guide (Norwegian)

Tema: Jobben som kommunikasjonsrådgiver i departementet

1. *Hva er din arbeidstittel?*
2. *Hva går arbeidsoppgavene dine ut på?*
3. *Hvordan ser en vanlig dag ut?*
4. *Hvorfor må departementene drive med kommunikasjonsarbeid?*
5. *Hva er det som kommuniseres?*
6. *Hva er kommunikasjonsavdelingens viktigste oppgaver?*
7. *Hvordan jobber dere med å nå målene i statens kommunikasjonspolitikk?*

Tema: Kommunikasjon med media

8. *Opplever du at dere bruker mer tid enn planlagt på mediehenveler?*
9. *Går tiden dere bruker på kommunikasjon med media utover andre ting dere skulle gjort? I så fall hva slags oppgaver er dette?*
10. *Når dere er i kontakt med media, hvordan foregår denne kommunikasjonen?*
11. *Opplever du at dere klarer å kommunisere budskapet deres (sakene deres) effektivt i kontakt med media?*
12. *Hva tror du er grunnen til at dere får til dette?*
13. *Er det noen klare utfordringer i kontakt med media?*

14. *Er det noe som oppleves som mer vanskelig enn annet?*

15. *Er det noen klare utfordringer for kommunikasjonsenhetene i kontakt med media når det gjelder politikkformidling?*

16. *Opplever du at dere må formidle sakene deres på en spesiell måte når dere kontakter media eller når dere vil ha noe ut til folket?*

Tema: Agenda setting

17. *Er agenda setting noen dere bruker tid på å diskutere i løpet av en dag?*

18. *Er det å sette dagsorden noe dere jobber målrettet mot i løpet av en dag?*

19. *Opplever du at dere klarer å sette dagsorden i kontakt med media?*

20. *Hvilke metoder blir brukt for å sette dagsorden?*

21. *Opplever du at dere når frem med saker dere vil ha gjennomslag for?*

22. *Medienes dagsordenfunksjon. Opplever du at dette påvirker kommunikasjonsarbeidet deres?*

Hvorfor?

Er det noe du opplever at mediene fokuserer mer, eller mindre, på enn annet i kontakt med dere?

Andre spørsmål:

23. *Hvordan foregår samarbeidet med politisk ledelse?*

Hvordan foregår det i perioder med stort mediepress?

24. *Hvordan foregår samarbeid med fagavdeling?*

Hvordan foregår det i perioder med stort mediepress?

25. *Hvordan påvirkes kommunikasjonsavdelingens arbeidsoppgaver nå når for eksempel en statsråd skiftes ut?*

Opplever dere økt mediepress?

26. *Hva tror du er grunnen til økningen i antall kommunikasjonsrådgivere i norske departementer? (fra 68 i 2001 til 138 i 2011).*

Avslutningsvis

27. *Noe annet du vil legge til?*

Hvis du skulle trekke ut tre ting som du mener er det viktigste vi har snakket om, hva ville det vært?

Appendix 2: Semi structured interview guide (English):

Topic: Working as a communication professional in the ministries

1. *What is your job title?*
2. *What is your work-tasks?*
3. *What does a regular day look like?*
4. *Why must the ministries work with communication?*
5. *What issues are being communicated?*
6. *What is the communication unit's most important tasks?*
7. *In what way do you work to reach the goals in the Central Government Communication Policy?*

Topic: Communication with news media

8. *Are you experiencing using more time on media requests than you were expecting during the day?*
9. *Does the time you use on communication with the media affect other tasks you should be doing?*
In that case, what tasks?
10. *When you are in contact with the media, how does this communication play out?*
11. *Do you experience that you are able to communicate your message (or your cases) effectively in contact with the media?*
12. *Why do you think you manage to do so?*

13. *Are there any clear challenges in contact with the media?*

14. *Is there anything that you experience to be more difficult than the rest?*

15. *Are there any clear challenges for the communication unit in contact with news media when it comes to policy formulation?*

16. *Do you experience having to communicate in a certain way when you are in contact with the media or when you want to communicate something to the citizens?*

Topic: Agenda setting

17. *Is agenda setting something you discuss during the day?*

18. *Is putting something on the agenda something you work strategically with during the day?*

19. *Do you experience that you are able to set the agenda in contact with the media?*

20. *What methods do you use to set the agenda?*

21. *Are you experiencing that you reach the public with issues you find important?*

22. *Medias agenda setting. Do you experience that this affect your communication?*

Why?

Do you experience the media focuses on some issues at the expense of others?

Other questions:

23. *How is the cooperation with the political leadership?*

How does it play out with increased media pressure?

24. *How is the cooperation with the expert departments?*

How does it play out with increased media pressure?

25. *How are the communication professional's work task being affected with the shift in minister?*

Are you experiencing an increased media pressure?

26. *What do you believe is the reason behind the increase in the number of communication professionals? (from 68 in 2001 to 138 in 2011).*

Final

27. *Is there something that you wish to add?*

If you were to pick three issues of what we have discussed at the most important ones, what would it be?