

Mediatization of Corporations

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Abstract

The corporate institution has received little attention among scholars working with the notion of mediatization. In this chapter we discuss how the media is an important site not only for contestation about the corporate role in society, but also for promotion of products and services, and for influencing public policy and knowledge about business in general. We argue that the mediatization of the corporate institution can be observed by looking at the attention devoted to media coverage and the resources that are poured into public relations. Management is often made available to the press and the timing of the media often influences corporate activities. The tools of media relations are themselves examples of mediatization as they are not only adapted to the logic of the news media. They are also designed with an ambition to become a natural part of all aspects of corporate activities.

Keywords: Corporations, Public relations, Media relations, Legitimacy

Reputation, Brands, Framing expertise, Timing, Pseudo events, Edited corporation

1. Introduction

With a precious few exceptions (e.g., Pallas and Fredriksson in press), the literature on mediatization has paid little attention to what has perhaps become the most dominant institution in modern society – the corporation. Simple searches demonstrate how the revenue of many corporations surpasses the Gross Domestic Product of entire countries. For instance, the 2010 revenue of Wal-Mart made this corporation the 25th largest economy in the world (Trivett 2011). Several academic and popular books have also centered on the powerful role of the modern corporation and its (negative) impact on the public sphere and politics (e.g., Bakan 2004; Boggs 2000; Carey 1995; Korten 2001). At the same time, the increasing significance of corporations needs to be understood against the backdrop of broad socio-economic changes that have come to influence and redefine relations between corporations and their different stakeholders both at the local as well global level (see e.g., Djelic and Sahlin-Andersson 2006; Crouch 2006). Corporations are embedded in increasingly complex – and often conflicting – contexts that set normative, regulative and cognitive boundaries for what the corporations can or cannot do (Scott 2001). Corporations can no longer be seen as monolithic structures with clear boundaries and fixed goals and purposes (Thompson 1967; Christensen et al. 2008).

With the increasing focus on the multiplicity of interests that corporations are expected to relate to and act upon – the issue of accountability and responsibility has become central (De Geer et al. 2009). Corporate misbehavior has been a focus since the introduction of investigating reporting practice during the late 19th and early 20th Century (Feldstein 2006), and the last couple of decades have brought to fore a renewed interest for critical scrutiny of corporations and their activities (Kjear and Slaatta 2007). One effect of this (mostly) negative media interest has been that

corporations construct programs for corporate social responsibility (CSR) where they argue that they voluntarily “balance” concerns for profit, society and the environment so that a “win-win”-situation is created for the corporation and society (Ihlen 2011). In this chapter we will discuss the relationship between the corporation and the media in more detail, focusing on how the media is an important site not only for contestation about the corporate role in society, but also for promotion of products and services, and for influencing public policy and knowledge about business in general. The main question is, *how is the corporate institution mediatized?*

In answering the latter question we will use the notion of mediatization understood as the way that other institutions adjust to the logic of the media institution (e.g., Hjarvard 2008, 2013; Strömbäck 2011). Mediatization means that other institutions are influenced by the working practices and preferences of the media, and that the media thus crucially shape the environment and operating conditions for other institutions. Here we take a different take on mediatization than suggested for example by Hepp (2009; Hepp and Couldry 2009). Through his notion of molding forces of the media – i.e. “the idea that there are different specificities of different media that we have to have in focus while researching change” (Hepp 2009:144) – Hepp argues for situating mediatization into the context of cultural transformation rather connecting it to a single media logic (see also the introductory chapter in this volume for a more elaborated discussion on the different conceptualizations of mediatization). Having this discussion in mind, we refer in the following to mediatization as a phenomenon akin to other societal developments such as globalization, marketization, scientification and deliberative democracy (Pallas and Strannegård 2013; see also Djelic and Andersson 2006). Still, we would like to emphasize that we do not see the mediatization process as a form of monolithic and

unidirectional pressure. Different parts of the social world understand and are exposed to the media(tization) pressures differently – which has been shown for example by studies within the political sector (e.g., Kepplinger 2002; Strömbäck 2008) and the field of research and higher education (e.g., Rödder 201; Weingart 1998). In addition, mediatization – similarly to other institutional processes – is not immune to interests and contestations from parallel or competing institutions (Pallas and Fredriksson in press). The defining feature of the different mediatization processes, we would argue, is that a) they have a part in how different societal actors relate and understand each other; and b) that it is possible for other institutions like the corporation to intentionally and skillfully relate to these processes through the practice of *public relations* or more specifically *media relations*.

Although many definitions of public relations have been introduced, “it is generally accepted that public relations is strategic communication between an organization and its publics” (Vasquez and Taylor 2000:324). With public relations corporations communicate with internal and external stakeholders, groups that can be important for organizational survival. In such a view the media is one important stakeholder group and the corporations thus develop subprograms for *media relations* (e.g., Bland, Theaker, and Wragg 2005). But seeing public relations as a constitutive practice that constructs the corporate environment both intentionally (i.e., by promotion of the corporate goals and aims) and by reproduction of social norms and values (i.e., communication of collectively defined and expected messages) [Lammers 2011]) enables us to go beyond the purely instrumental explanations and analyze such programs and the way they influence the management and practices of the corporation as an expression of mediatization.

To understand the process of mediatization of corporations, we focus first on

why corporations devote resources to media relations, secondly, we discuss *mediatization effects*, and thirdly, we examine the *tools* of media relations. The complexity, but also the flexibility, of the notion of mediatization is illustrated by how it is possible to argue that these aspects are interrelated and somewhat overlapping. As already pointed out, the fact that a lot of attention is devoted to media coverage can also be understood as a mediatization effect, and the tools of media relations can be seen as constituting mediatization. One basic argument that will be made is that the *character* of and *degree* to which corporations are mediatized can differ, but that it is difficult for corporations to escape mediatization altogether when other parts of society are thoroughly mediatized. Some corporations are deeply embedded in mediatized environments, whereas others, like business-to-business corporations in uncontroversial sectors, are less influenced by the practices and preferences of the media. This point serves as a bridge to the next section focusing on the type and necessity of media coverage.

2. Legitimacy, reputation, brand and policy – the necessity of media coverage

Corporations or companies, as they are also referred to, are profit-seeking legal entities that exist outside their members or shareholders, and they have certain legal rights and liabilities that differ from the latter (see e.g., Bakan 2004; Micklethwait and Wooldridge 2005). The profit motive of the corporation means that it is necessary to market the corporate goods and services in order to make the customer aware of the product in the first instance and to crave it in the next. This can be achieved with the help of controlled media like adverts and media that is not controlled, that is editorial coverage in newspapers, radio or television. The attraction of the latter media is that they provide reach and the credibility of third-party endorsement (Bailey 2009; Hallahan 2010b). For many people public relations is a

synonym for publicity, and this impression has historic roots.

When the history of public relations is analyzed, it is often focused on the *publicity* efforts of the early practitioners in the US (Broom 2013; Cutlip 1995). Among the many stories retold is one relating the exploits of the notorious circus owner, P.T. Barnum, who under false names sent letters to the local newspapers where he alternately accused the circus for fraud and praised it for its entertainment value. This caused debate and controversy that resulted in media coverage and increased ticket sales. The goal justified the means and Barnum is credited with expressions like “All PR is good PR” and “There is a sucker born every minute” (Broom 2013; Grunig and Hunt 1984).

The unethical conduct of early practitioners like P.T. Barnum, often called press agents, have continued to haunt the public relations industry to this very day. New examples are continuously added, pertaining to such practices as construction of front groups and spinning stories for questionable political regimes (Miller and Dinan 2008). While media relations tend to be the most visible part of public relations, it is probably one of the most reviled parts of the practice (Dinan and Miller 2007; Moloney 2000). As it was stated in one fiction book: “[Public relations] means getting stories into papers without paying for them” (Young 2012:251).

Still, even back in the early days of public relations, some industry pioneers recognized that something was at stake, both for the industry itself and its corporate clients. When investigative journalists turned on the corporations and public sentiment grew, the very legitimacy of corporate existence and behavior was called into question. The previous notion of “the public be damned” had to be changed and corporations would start to communicate their positions. The press release vehicle was introduced and pioneer Ivy Lee sent out so-called fact sheets. In his statement of

principles he argued that his clients should adapt to the public and that a two-way street between corporate and public interests had to be established. Nonetheless, the name of the game was still to defend corporate interests using all means necessary. When striking miners and their families were massacred, Ivy Lee helped the mining company cover it up citing, for instance, a false eye witness who stated that the deaths had been caused by an accidental fire (Ewen 1996).

Still, even though Ivy Lee and others might try to manipulate public opinion, at least public opinion was now valued to a greater extent and favorable media coverage was seen as crucial tool for the profitability of corporations. A later practitioner, Arthur Page, is often quoted saying “All business in a democratic country begins with public permission and exists by public approval” (Griswold Jr. 1967:13). Thus media coverage influences the interactions between corporations their audiences/other social actors by way of translating and leveling out the different requirements, ideas, and expectations the corporations and their stakeholders have on each other. Media, next to its direct role in providing information about organizations, is central for building normative, regulative, and cognitive bases on which corporations are evaluated both as individual organizations as well as societal institution (cf. Johansson et al. 2009). *Legitimacy* as “a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions” (Suchman 1995:574) is in the media constructed by presenting corporations in terms of fulfilling necessary legal and moral requirements and expectations. When the media grant corporations the “license to operate” it is often done on the basis of their membership in or association with(in) successful or widely recognized fields or groups of other organizations (Jonsson, Greve and Fujiwara-Greve 2009; Pollock and

Rindova 2003). This realization of the importance of legitimacy also points to the significance of the media as a site for contestation about legitimacy, and, it should be added, public opinion on what constitutes ethical business behavior is a changing entity. This in turn can be formulated as posing a call for public relations to engage in continued mapping of the corporate environment and the issues that are discussed here. Again, media coverage is important.

Research has shown how media framing influences the *reputation* of corporations too (C. E. Carroll and McCombs 2003). Corporate reputation can be briefly defined as the general estimation the public has of a corporation (Gotsi and Wilson 2001). Being visible in the media is also recognized as a prerequisite for creating a good reputation, and hence media relations are seen as a pivotal task for organizations in general (C. E. Carroll 2010; Hallahan 2010a; van Riel and Fombrun 2007). The media generated reputation is also connected to comparing corporations on the basis of their historical market performance and in relation to other corporations within same or similar field or sectors. Reputation indicates here discriminating qualities (such as price or technical standard) of entire organizations, their parts or their products. Media ranking lists and ratings reflect commonly performance in relation to such qualities (Bartlett et al. forthcoming; Deephouse and Carter 2008). A related effect is the media's evaluation of corporate status, that is to say social identity based on how corporations relate to attractive discourses, values and expectations (Rindova, Pollock, Hayward 2006).

Indeed, being granted legitimacy and achieving a good reputation is seen as something that can help corporations with myriad goals, such as increased sale, acceptance of price increases, attracting investors, help recruit and hold on to valued employees, ease government pressure and lessen media criticism (e.g., Fombrun and

van Riel 2004; Rindova, Williamson, Petkova, and Sever 2005).

But media – through public relations activities – is important also in building corporate *brands*. US public relations pioneers, like Edward L. Bernays, helped their corporate clients gain media coverage by instituting pseudo-events like jubilees but he also helped with more encompassing tasks. A classic in the annals of public relations history is how Bernays is supposed to have helped the producer of the Lucky Strike cigarette brand target women smokers. In 1929, smoking women were frowned upon. A psychologist assisted Bernays in identifying this as a taboo and that cigarettes could be “torches of freedom” against men’s inhumanity towards women. If some women opinion leaders could show themselves in public and make this argument vocally and visually, the taboo could be broken. Through his secretary, Bernays contacted some New York City debutantes and asked them to join in the freedom fight by lighting cigarettes in the Easter parade and relate their argument to the press. As the story goes, this public relations stunt was well received by the media and the smoking salons in the city were opened to women smokers only weeks later (Tye 1998).

Media coverage is also important for those who want to influence public *policy*. After the Second World War, the US public relations industry grew and jumped to the defense of corporations against government regulation, taxes, unions and public interest groups. Certain issues were promoted and public opinion was courted through, for instance, non-product advertisements. These activities were supposed to counteract “media bias” and “misleading information” and to overcome public hostility towards corporations “because of ignorance or misinformation.” While this had certainly also been the goal of Ivy Lee and other public relations pioneers, during the 1970s the work took on a more systematic and proactive character (Cheney 1991; Crable and Vibbert 1995; Ewen 1996; Heath 1980;

Marchand 1998). This way, corporations and public relations have been tied together, the latter pointing out how media coverage can help influence public policy directly or indirectly by creating knowledge about a particular corporation, an issue or corporate business in general.

In order to influence issues a first step is to call attention to the issue and a second to present it in a certain way that is in line with your perspective. Well-known concepts such as agenda setting and framing (Maher 2001; McCombs and Ghanem 2001) help extoll the importance of media coverage. Certain issues are put on the public or political agenda and thus deemed worthy of discussion. This happens at the expense of other issues, since public attention is limited. A particular frame then points to something as a problem, and indicates causality, solutions and moral evaluations (Entman 1993). Again, a chosen frame necessarily relegate other perspectives or interpretations a secondary role at the most.

To sum up, corporations often need media coverage to help come across as legitimate actors, to evaluate and judge their performance, to promote goods and services, and to influence understanding of particular positions or values. Thus, as a building block in the public sphere, media coverage is more or less indispensable for corporations both as social entities as well as institutions.

3. Mediatization effects

Some have argued that we are increasingly living in “promotional times” (Cottle 2003:3). Media coverage is what counts. This preoccupation in itself can be seen as a mediatization effect. And although people and organizations have been preoccupied with their reputation since ancient time, corporations seem to attach more significance to this aspect than ever before (C. Carroll 2010). With this increased attention also comes increased attention and significance attached to media coverage.

There is by now a growing stream of consulting and academic literature devoted to legitimacy and reputation management (e.g., Aula and Mantere 2008; C. E. Carroll 2013; Fombrun 1996; Illia, Sonpar, Bantimaroudis 2013). Today, it is more or less unthinkable that corporations should not have public relations departments to handle media relations and work with the corporate reputation. Activists have also singled out corporate *brands* as the weak spot of corporations that can be attacked in order to have corporations change their behavior (e.g., Klein 2000). It is particularly corporations that operate within the business-to-consumer segment where damage to the brand is felt the most and it is necessary to gain positive media coverage. Negative coverage can influence sales and stock prices and thus hurt corporate profit.

Beyond noting the effect of increased attention to the media, it is also possible to single out other mediatization effects that follow from this. The media practices and preferences have been integrated in the operations of corporations through the allocation of resources, both financial and human. Public relations as an industry, both in-house and the consulting industry, has grown tremendously since the Second World War. This trend can be observed in many countries across the globe (Miller and Dinan 2000; Sriramesh and Verčič 2009). More people are involved working with public relations and the communication staff has more influence in the organization than previously (Zerfass, Verčič, Verhoeven, Angeles, and Tench 2012). Said another way, the much sought after seat at the decision-making table has increasingly been secured. Corporations and organizations in general seem to put more emphasis on public relations than ever before (Pallas 2007). This then, serves to illustrate how the media not only influence the corporation, but also that this influence has more profound effects that we can call mediatization effects.

Tracking the history of mediatization of the corporation by looking at how the

discipline and practice of public relations have grown, the growth of the practice of public relations can be read either as a consequence of increased importance of communication in general and the media in particular or as a consequence of how public relations has outgrown the traditional media relations function. At the same time, however, public relations theorists and practitioners are often eager to separate public relations and media relations, arguing that the latter only forms part of what public relations is all about (White and Dozier 1992). Junior staff is often assigned to pitching stories. Nonetheless, as argued by several observers, in many organizations public relations is really media relations. Getting publicity is still a major task despite the managerial ambitions (Hallahan 2010a; Moss, Warnaby, and Thame 1995; Young 2012).

Mediatization effects can be traced to other corporate practices as well, for instance the way that management is made available for the media (Graham 1997). Journalists typically want access to the decision makers and regularly complain about being put off by public relations staff. Still, there has been an increased focus on management in the media (Park and Berger 2004), and this has also given rise to the phenomenon of the superstar CEO that is loved by the press. While the superstar CEO brings some attention to the corporation, research has typically shown that the net effect is negative as the CEO often underperforms as they spend more time on public and private activities such as book writing and board seats (Malmendier and Tate 2009). Indeed, the mediatized CEO has also been called “the curse of the superstar CEO” (Khurana 2002; see also Petrelius and Karlberg 2007).

Another effect of mediatization is the influence on timing. Corporations will often adjust its communication efforts to the rhythm of the media to maximize or minimize attention (Grünberg and Pallas in press; Pallas and Fredriksson 2011).

When is good news dispersed and when is negative information released? Public companies have to adhere to the rules of the stock market, but will carefully time the publication to the media in order to suit their needs. As an example, a huge Norwegian corporation twice released negative news the same day as the state budget was published. The strategy of attempting to hide one story behind others more noteworthy ones is also commonly observed internationally (Palmer 2000). Similarly, Grünberg and Pallas (in press) illustrate how corporations publish their quarterly reports in well-synchronized manners. The corporations coordinate their releases, both timely and thematically, with activities of different media outlets as well as a number of other news-producing actors such as financial analysts and specialized news agencies.

However, the effects of mediatization are also traceable outside the boundaries of public relations/communication departments and their activities. One of the most obvious examples is how changes are made in the composition of corporate boards and senior management teams: communication and media issues are almost always represented either directly by heads of corporate communications or indirectly as they get inscribed into strategy documents and policies (Ranft, Ferris, and Perryman 2007). But there are also other parts of contemporary corporations that bear witness of the increased importance of (understanding) the media. Human Resources and Investor Relations practices, Legal Issues and CSR departments are commonly being re-structured and staffed in relation to prevailing corporate media strategies (Engwall et al. forthcoming). Also studies on implementation of managerial models and concepts have shown that corporate business in general is dependent on the way media understands and describes its activities (Sahlin-Andersson and Engwall 2002; see also Alvarez, Mazza, and Strandgaard Pedersen 2005).

In summing up, the mediatization of the corporate institution can be observed by looking at the attention devoted to media coverage and the resources that are poured into public relations. Management is often made available to the press and the timing of the media often influences corporate activities. Both the two latter examples are also illustrative of how corporations manage their media relations. The tools that are used for this job is discussed next.

4. The tools of media relations

Mediatization in corporations is constituted through the tools of media relations, but this is also where another important point is crystalized: The corporation is influenced by priorities of the news media, but also attempts to turn the journalistic logic to its own advantage. Mediatization can be “shaped, reproduced and reshaped” by corporate actors (Pallas and Fredriksson in press). Much attention has also been directed at the ways that corporations and public relations influence the news (Carey 1995; Cottle 2003; Davis 2000; Dinan and Miller 2009). The tango-metaphor is used to describe the negotiation that takes place; the parties take turn leading (Gandy 1982, 1992). Still, the resource drain in most editorial offices have led to a worry about the media’s ability to full-fill its role without depending too much on the sources (e.g., Davies 2009; Dinan and Miller 2009). This section looks closer at some of the tools corporations use to gain media coverage.

Pallas and Fredriksson (in press) have argued that the interactions between corporations and the media differ as to their formality, time frame, content and setting. The authors introduce three different forms of corporate media activities – providing, promoting and co-opting. By way of providing corporations that operate in strong normative and regulative regimes are expected, due to legitimacy reasons, to provide evidence of following the “rules of the game”. Media activities in such a

context protect corporations as they present themselves as recognized and legitimate actors. A major aim of such media efforts is to provide information on which organizations can be evaluated in relation to industry norms and regulation or professional values and expectations. Promoting as a media strategy, on the other hand, is used by corporations that seek to change, challenge or criticize the prevailing context in which they conduct their activities. Promoting includes well-orchestrated formal as well as informal media efforts that aim at introducing novel ideas, norms, products or technologies through dramaturgically appealing texts, messages and formats, often in forms of pseudo-news (see also Fredriksson 2008; Suddaby 2011).

The corporations also seek to integrate their interests with needs of other societal actors. Co-opting as media strategy has as a goal to create strong collaborative contexts where long-term societal effects and consequences are brought to fore (i.e., in dealing with health and energy issues). Thus media activities of corporations are here focused on communicating collective good rather persuading own interests. Such media efforts are often based on co-operation with intermediaries such as public relations-consultants or a variety of experts groups (Larsson 2005).

Having stated the different aims and strategies of corporate media work, what are the tools PR-practitioners employ in their efforts to influence media coverage? In a previous section, the use of corporate pseudo-news was mentioned. This type of news is based on artificially created events that only exist to create publicity – so called pseudo-events (Boorstin 1962/1992). Boorstin saw the flourishing of such events as marking a shift in American culture: everything was now staged, “packaged,” and scripted for publicity. Instead of changing the product as such, a competition or a celebration will be announced to get media coverage. According to Boorstin, the question “does this have news value?” has replaced “is this correct?”

Thus, Boorstin argued, the pseudo-events created images or illusions that bore little to no relationship with reality. The creation of pseudo-events is still a common practice among corporations, along with the use of press releases, press meetings/conferences, and exclusive interviews (Bland et al. 2005; Young 2012).

Public relations and media relations are often practiced by former journalists that have excellent knowledge about how the media operates and what is of interest to journalists. This has also been shown to have a positive impact on the trustworthiness of the public relations practitioner and leads to shared evaluations (Sinaga and Callison 2008). Several studies point out that the success of strategic media work is dependent on the ability of practitioners to exploit journalistic news conventions (e.g., Dunwoody and Griffin 1993; Hertog and McLeod 2001; Ihlen and Allern 2008). This means that practitioners will adjust their communication to meet the news media's demand for conflicts, faces and feelings. The more news values, the greater the chance that the story will attract media attention (Carragee and Roefs 2004; Ihlen and Nitz 2008; Sheafer and Gabay 2009). Moreover, practically oriented texts are full of advice about the value of visuals and how to target different media (Bland et al. 2005).

Additionally, textbooks and trade magazines urge practitioners to respect journalists' deadlines and be responsive if they want to succeed (e.g., Cutlip, Broom, and Center 2002; Desiere and Sha 2007; Grabowski 1992). Relational principles like honesty, openness and accuracy are also singled out as important to build good relations with journalists. Journalists for their part indicate that they appreciate media relations staff that have a realistic perception of the newsworthiness of the story they are trying to pitch (Desiere and Sha 2007; Gandy 1982; Palmer 2000; Zoch and Molleda 2006). Making the programs of media relations more professional typically

involves taking a long-term perspective looking beyond the pitch of individual stories and publicity, in order to cultivate good relationships with journalists. Many public relations practitioners are eager to overcome the traditional journalistic skepticism by emphasizing honesty and the sometimes-shared interests. At the same time, they make appeals to how they two professions fulfill different roles that should be respected.

As pointed out, it is necessary for corporations to present frames that are favorable to a particular corporate position. Thus, framing of issues are a particular important task of the public relations staff. The hope is also that the frame is adopted by the media and, in the ultimate instance, by the public (Hallahan 1999). The potency of frames can be enhanced actor-bound elements like status, resources (Carragee and Roefs 2004; Entman 2004; Sheafer and Gabay 2009), individual/organizational strengths and vulnerabilities (Ryan, 1991), strategic alliances (Pan and Kosicki 2001; Ryan 1991), and not at least a stock of knowledge and skills (Pan and Kosicki 2001). The latter could be called *framing expertise* (Dan and Ihlen 2011).

Framing expertise includes that ability to construct frames that are resonant with the underlying culture and draws on widely accepted beliefs, codes, myths, stereotypes, values or norms (Bennett 1993; Entman 2004; Gamson 1992). Thus, framing expertise also involves drawing on and appealing to culture (van Gorp 2007). In short, “public relations practitioners stand good chances to succeed with their framing when they are able to conceive a message in a way that: is resonant with the underlying culture; appeals to psychological biases; and conforms to journalistic needs” (Dan and Ihlen 2011:372).

The ability to be *proactive* is lauded as a hallmark of professionalism by many observers (Johnston 2008; Zoch and Molleda 2006). The goal is to make the often

unpredictable days more predictable, and successful adaptations of the news rhythm include establishing archives and databases for media requests. Active scanning of media coverage is also part of what is called issues management (Heath and Palenchar 2008) and, in times of crisis, crisis communication (Coombs and Holladay 2009). The assumption goes that issues that will have importance for the corporation will surface in the media and that by being proactive, it is possible to avoid that such issues turn into crisis that are costly for the corporation in terms of attention and other resources. When an issue *has* turned into a crisis or something unexpected has caused a crisis, corporations can also monitor the media to evaluate the effectiveness of their crisis response. For instance, a strategy of “stealing thunder,” of proactive disclosure of information before a third party like the media has the information, increases credibility (Arpan and Roskos-Ewoldsen 2005).

The active and skillful involvement of corporations in the way media (logic) shapes their social reality is also related to the importance of how corporations are presented and re-presented at the more general level. The concept of the edited corporation (originally suggested by Engwall and Sahlin 2007) points in this context to the activities of corporations and the media that are geared to editing of texts that are intended for corporate stakeholders – both internal and external. Such efforts include more or less clearly established procedures and day-to-day routines that enable both parties to partake in creation of the images and texts about the corporations and their activities (Pallas 2007). Thereby the term captures activities in which the corporations and the media interact with one another with intention to manage the external assessment and perceptions of the corporations. Underlying the notion of edited corporation is the existence of corporate legitimacy and reputation that requires active protection from the pressures to which corporations are exposed

by various actors and developments in their surroundings. Thus corporate media activities not only protect the corporations from different pressures and requirements, they also channel those demands and expectations to corporate managers. Likewise, the media edit presentations of corporations by for example emphasizing, combining or downplaying prevailing or future demands and expectations.

The edited corporation is a corporation in which a great many activities are devoted to managing and organizing for its embeddedness and dependence on the context in which it is operating. The edited corporation is thus a corporation in which the very core of the corporate business is its brand, with the result that any presentation and report in the media has a direct and profound impact on the corporate business (Sahlin-Andersson and Engwall 2007; Pallas and Strannegård 2013)

To reiterate, the tools of media relations involve developing good relations to the media in order to present and proliferate stories and frames in which corporations appear newsworthy, legitimate and relevant. The tools of media relations are themselves examples of mediatization as they are not only adapted to the logic of the news media. They are also designed with an ambition to become a natural part of all aspects of corporate activities.

5. Conclusion

This theoretical essay has discussed the history of the relationship between the media and the corporate institution and whether the notion of mediatization describes the present day corporation in a fitting way. In what ways are the corporate sector mediatized? We have pointed to a number of observable effects of this phenomenon, but also indicated how the corporation tries to take advantage of the media through use of public relations. Indeed, many observers would like to talk about corporate domination, also of the media (Carey 1995; Dinan and Miller 2009). This then, turns

our opening question around. Perhaps the corporate institution more than any other institution is able to turn the news logic to its own advantage. The resource issue has already been mentioned and we could argue that this puts the corporation in the driving seat.

The corporation has economic rationality as its overriding logic. In the mediatization processes, this logic is pitted against the news logic; the media's preferences and practices. Negative news coverage can hamper the profitability of a corporation and steal attention and human resources. On the other side, positive media coverage can yield a number of positive results for the corporation; it can be a platform for promotion, legitimacy, reputation and influence on policy and knowledge. Still, media coverage is only of interest if it can serve such instrumental purposes for corporations. Thus, many large corporations thrive outside of the media spotlight and, indeed, wishes to stay out of this spotlight. They are still doing brisk business. Several business-to-business corporations seem to fall into this category (Ihlen and Karlsen 2009).

On the other hand, the argument can be made that it is impossible to totally escape the 'iron cage of mediatization'¹. When other parts of society are mediatized, this will have an effect for all corporations depending on how embedded the corporation is in mediatized environments. Again, however, it is difficult to find corporations that do not have a designated communication function. And while social media is welcomed by corporations as a way of bypassing journalists in order to communicate directly with the public, traditional mass media has not vanished. Nor is

¹ This notion refers to P. J. DiMaggio & W. Powell (1983) "The iron cage revisited" institutional isomorphism and collective rationality in organizational fields. *American Sociological Review* 48: 147-60, where they discuss how institutional processes force social actors to resemble other actors that face the same set of environmental conditions.

the element of control more prominent. Still, this offers up exciting research opportunities into the mediatization of corporations. Another fruitful avenue for research that has not been touched upon in this chapter is also the question that is raised by the fact that media outlets are also corporations: Are we facing corporatization or mediatization? Perhaps it could be said that it is the economic logic that is prevailing in society? This also ties into the question of how corporations influence the media generally. As always, more research is needed.

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