

The History of Media Policy Based on Mediatization: A Theoretical Perspective

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This article develops a theoretical perspective for studying the history of media policy. It draws on the concept of mediatization and extends it. It conceptualizes media policy as a response by social actors to the increasing significance of the media and to the functional differentiation of society. The article sets out basic assumptions of mediatization research, integrates media policy, and reflects on the historical dimension of mediatization. Finally, an example is used to demonstrate how this perspective might be applied in practice. This example refers to labor unions operating in the Federal Republic of Germany in the 1970s. In West Germany, unions attempted to adapt to structural changes of the media system in the decades following the end of World War II and intensified their involvement in press policy. The developed perspective can be used to study media policy from the 19th century, when public attention became a central resource and mass media the most effective tool for capturing that attention.

Keywords: mediatization, media policy, history, 19th and 20th centuries, mass media

In 1863, Ferdinand Lassalle, an early leader of the German labor movement and founder of Allgemeiner Deutscher Arbeiterverein, expressed the criticism that “every day” the commercial press would allegedly “disseminate lies” about Allgemeiner Deutscher Arbeiterverein and “distort the facts” (Lassalle, 1863/1965, p. 44). Lassalle (1863/1965) demanded that this grievance be remedied and proposed a law that would prohibit the inclusion of advertising in private newspapers. In the 1920s, the German Protestant Church addressed the “monopolistic character” (Bauer, 1966) of radio broadcasting and demanded participation in the new medium. Fifty years later, labor unions criticized press concentration while also objecting to the nature of the coverage they received in the press themselves (Vetter, 1976).

German history suggests that the history of media policy is related to the increased significance of mass media and social actors’ need for mass media attention since the 19th century. Communication historiography has until now explained the development of media policy with reference to the political system, technology, power constellations, economic interests, and norms (Curran & Seaton, 2003; McChesney, 2007; Pickard, 2010; Starr, 2008; Wilke, 2005). These histories of the media, for the most part political and institutional ones at base, were concerned with freedom of the press and approached the subject in two ways in this regard (O’Malley, 2015). One account stressed the gradual process of

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emancipation from government control and welcomed the commercialized press as a form of further emancipation from that control. The other emphasized that legal controls had been replaced by market forces, leading to a "new system of press censorship" (Curran & Seaton, 2003, p. 5).

In this article, I build on those studies and, at the same time, carve out a new niche for my undertaking. It may well be that those previous studies, to some extent, apart from studying media (policy) history, "interrogated and criticized" the past "in the light of a set of unexamined political concerns in the present" (Scannell, 2002, p. 199). On an analytical level, however, they raise awareness of the role of actors and interests in media policy, resource distribution, and broader social change. They go beyond stating that media policy either restricted or enabled the development of mass communication and raise the issue of why mass media structures have become the object of regulatory consideration in the first place. This article addresses this issue and integrates the above-mentioned analytical aspects into its framework, without, however, developing a sort of press freedom narrative.

I develop a theoretical perspective on media policy history. I draw on the concept of mediatization (Donges, 2008; Esser & Strömbäck, 2014; Meyen, Thieroff, & Strenger, 2014) and integrate media policy into mediatization research. I assume that media policy has been a product of mediatization since the 19th century. Media policy is conceptualized as a reaction on the part of actors to the fact that the mass media "have become increasingly influential in and deeply integrated into different spheres of society" (Strömbäck & Esser, 2014, p. 4).

My theoretical argument is, in brief, the following: From the 19th century onward, given that we can speak of a more or less differentiated media system in Western countries, the public attention provided by mass media has become a resource for more and more actors in society to legitimize their goals and mobilize consent (Briggs & Burke, 2009; G. Stöber, 2000). The gain in importance of this resource goes "hand in hand with the functional differentiation of society" (Meyen et al., 2014, p. 271). According to the concept of mediatization used here, the significance attributed to the mass media has increased with every change in media since the 19th century. Moreover, the conditions allowing social actors to gain visibility in mass media might have changed with each of these transformations of media structures.

I assume here that media attention has become a central resource for pursuing interests and conceptualize media policy as a way in which actors have been trying to influence the conditions of their own visibility in the mass media. I conceptualize media policy as an additional way of doing so apart from other strategies such as media monitoring, public relations, media training, or using one's own communication channels (Donges & Jarren, 2014; Meyen et al., 2014). Historical literature indicates that, aside from the state, various nonstate actors have become engaged in media policy since the 19th century (O'Malley & Soley, 2000). This article argues that public attention is one key to understanding their involvement. To what extent and for which kind of actors media policy has become a field for reaction in the manner described here remains an open question, one that the article at hand suggests is worthy of further study.

The present article makes two contributions. First, it extends the concept of mediatization by integrating media policy and strengthening the historical dimension of mediatization. Second, it contributes

to a history that “integrates an understanding of communications media with the central issues of social, economic, political, and cultural change,” a history that addresses both “what communication tells us about society” and “what society tells us about communication” (Schudson, 1991, p. 177).

The following two sections set out basic assumptions regarding mediatization and aim to carve out the gap that can be filled with media policy. Next, I explain what has to be considered when applying mediatization to history. The final section sums up the discussion, in the process leading to theoretical categories that constitute the mediatization perspective of media policy history and provide guidance for historical study. An example showing how the perspective can be applied is laid out. This example refers to press policy in the 1970s in the Federal Republic of Germany, particularly as it related to labor unions.

This example is admittedly a specific one, just like the other examples cited in the text, most of which refer to Germany. In Germany, freedom of the press was achieved at a later point than it was in the United States or Great Britain. Throughout the 20th century in Germany, there were two alternating systems of media control, with periods featuring more or less press freedom. The stamp tax and other economic restrictions delayed the wider circulation of a popular press in comparison to the two English-speaking countries mentioned above (Briggs & Burke, 2009; Nerone, 2013; O’Malley, 2015). In spite of this particularity regarding Germany, the perspective developed here is suited for the study of media policy in other (at least Western) societies and at different times. This article draws on mediatization research to substantiate this claim.

Mediatization

Mediatization is a complex concept, and there is a complex debate about just what exactly it is (Couldry & Hepp, 2013; Donges, 2008; Esser & Strömbäck, 2014; Strömbäck, 2008). My aim in this section is to discuss aspects that are necessary for the integration of media policy history into the concept. Two major traditions have been distinguished (Birkner, 2015; Couldry & Hepp, 2013; Meyen et al., 2014). According to one, mediatization deals with how sociocultural reality is constructed and modified in relation to the development of communication tools. The other tradition focuses on how different social systems such as politics or religion are affected by the rules or the “logic” of the media system. The present article is based on this latter, “institutional” tradition (Couldry & Hepp, 2013, p. 196; Hjarvard, 2008, p. 110) because it considers the meso level of organizations and links it with micro- and macro-level phenomena (Esser & Strömbäck, 2014). Focusing on the meso level not only makes sense when one considers how organizations crystallize sociohistorical change and change in turn manifests itself in organizations (Donges, 2008). In addition to that, media policy is an institutionalized field of action in which organizations, and not merely individual actors, participate. This is true for media policy in the 20th century. In the 19th century, it must be noted that individual actors did indeed prevail (Wilke, 2005). In a broad sense, mediatization “indicates the extension of the influence of the media (considered both as a cultural technology and as an organization) into all spheres of society and social life” (Mazzoleni, 2008b, p. 3052). Mediatization means that actors in different systems of society are influenced by the reality the media construct and that social actors have to reckon with the consequences media coverage might have for them (Donges, 2008). This article is based on the following definition, according to which *mediatization*

describes reactions in social functional systems, first with respect to the mass media logic (that is changing over time and differing from country to country) and second with respect to the overall gain in significance of public communication that goes hand in hand with the functional differentiation of society. (Meyen et al., 2014, p. 271)

According to this definition, media logic is a product of the functional differentiation process of modern societies wherein more or less autonomous media systems, each with its own logic, have become differentiated (Meyen et al., 2014). A range of scholars has discussed the term *mass media logic* and whether it is helpful or not. Media logic describes the way reality is constructed and thus the way social actors are presented (or are absent) in media coverage (Mazzoleni, 2008b). It "influences the form communication takes" (p. 113), such as how politics and other systems in society are described in media content (Hjarvard, 2008). In a more concrete sense, media logic consists of the media's rules of "selection, presentation, and interpretation" (Meyen et al., 2014, p. 280). These rules define how media reality is constructed according to selection criteria, the way the selected material is organized, and which frames and perspectives are used to present issues and actors. Media logic is driven by economic structures (such as ownership, markets, forms of financing), by communication technology (new communication channels), media organizational structures, media policy, and journalistic norms and role perceptions (Meyen et al., 2014; Strömbäck & Esser, 2009). From the perspective proposed here, it makes sense to consider not only what the media logic at the time under study was, but also what drove it. This knowledge helps to explain how media policy actors perceived the "modus operandi of the media" (Hjarvard, 2008, p. 113), and particularly how they perceived media coverage about their issues and about themselves as organizations. It also helps us understand how they justified media policy measures by referring to deficits in media logic and media structures.

This article does not propose a framework for studying the historical change of media logic, but instead proposes a framework for studying social actors' reactions to that logic, particularly in the area of media policy. Therefore, a study following this framework considers the media logic and the media structures present in the time under study. It takes them as a starting point but focuses on reactions to media logic. To conceptualize media policy as a reaction, I therefore explain in the following why social actors react to the mass media system, according to mediatization research, and how their responses have been conceptualized so far.

Mediatization processes have been explained by first-order media effect approaches. The impact of presumed media influence, third-person effects, and reciprocal effects help us understand the significance mass media have gained for social actors (Kepplinger, 2008; Strömbäck, 2011). According to that body of knowledge, social actors are aware of mass media effects on individuals, believe in these effects at the least, and know that other actors do so as well. They try to take advantage of these effects in order to serve their interests. Consequently, they adapt their strategies to the media, shift resources, or try to change the programs of their system to receive media attention (Meyen et al., 2014). Depending on the specific system logic, resources, and dependencies on other systems, some actors have a "greater need to accommodate and adapt to the media logic than others" (Strömbäck & Esser, 2009, p. 216). According to Donges and Jarren (2014), organizations' perceptions are decisive in terms of whether and how said organizations react to the media. Organizations observe media change, decide whether this change is relevant, and if they have

to act accordingly. Organizations may, however, "misinterpret their social environment, or may follow some overdrawn assumptions of the effect of mediated communication" (Donges & Jarren, 2014, p. 189).

Mediatization research has identified several ways in which social actors react to the media logic. This research has primarily been concerned with distinguishing between changes in organizational structure (e.g., recruitment of specialized personnel, establishment of press offices, media training, the arrangement of events, and choice of venues) and changes in communication behavior (promoting issues and frames, press conferences, diversification of channels; Donges & Jarren, 2014; Mazzoleni, 2008a; Mazzoleni & Schulz, 1999; Meyen et al., 2014). The supposition of these studies is that actors "adapt to, internalize and accommodate media logic" (Deacon & Stanyer, 2014, p. 1035).

There are two points of criticism in the literature regarding the conceptualization of reactions. First, "adaption," "accommodation," or even "adoption" all imply a passive reaction on the part of mediatized actors. Actors can, however, actively use and influence the media for their own purposes (Birkner, 2015; Donges, 2008; Donges & Jarren, 2014). Mazzoleni and Schulz (1999) have even argued that political actors attempt "to gain control over the media" (p. 251). Therefore, mediatization is "not a one-way street" (Birkner, 2015, p. 455). Second, the set of possible responses to the media is too narrow, thus preventing researchers from getting the full picture (Deacon & Stanyer, 2014). Some scholars have noted that actors might try to bypass mass media and use their own channels, and others have mentioned media policy: For instance, states could "respond by regulating agents of mediatization or censoring them in various ways" (Deacon & Stanyer, 2014, p. 1036; cf. R. Stöber, 2010). Mediatization research has not developed this line of thought in terms of media policy. Referring to the strand of literature that has focused on adaptations (or reactions) to media logic, I suggest that adaptations can also be conceptualized as attempts to indirectly influence media logic by means of media policy.

Mediatization and Media Policy

This section elaborates on the conceptualization of media policy as potential response to the increasing significance of mass media as well as to structural changes within the media system. It provides arguments for the idea that media policy is a strategy for dealing with social actors' need for media attention.

Media policy as a subsystem in modern Western societies deals with "the formulation and implementation of collectively binding decisions regarding media structures, media organizations, and media performance" (Puppis & d'Haenens, 2012, p. 223). This definition focuses on "collective rules" for the media or media sectors and excludes rules "existing at the level of a single media organization" (Puppis, 2010b, p. 138). Within the subsystem of media policy, "rules that aim to organize media systems" (Puppis & d'Haenens, 2012, p. 224) are established, abolished, or changed. Different social actors with specific resources and ideas try to influence rules for the media.

Unlike other policy fields, media policy is "metapolitics" (Sarcinelli, 2009, p. 33). It plays a decisive role regarding the way people think and speak about politics, and, according to the mediatization concept, also about other systems of society. Not surprisingly, media policy literature has found that apart from state and media organizations, various actors contribute to media policy debates (McQuail & Siune, 1986). As

systems differ with regard to the extent they depend on public attention and legitimation (Esser & Strömbäck, 2014), it can be assumed that certain organizations have been more intensely involved in media policy than others, particularly those that live from the dissemination of ideas, public approval, and attracting people to their cause. Political parties, churches, and labor unions are examples of such organizations. Considering media policy as metapolitics, I conclude that focusing on media policy can potentially become a strategy organizations adopt in order to influence media reality and to generate public attention for themselves and their ideas. Actors develop this strategy independent of or instead of practicing strategies of adaptation to the media described above.

Another argument is that media policy gives social actors the opportunity to become involved in the establishment of legally binding rules for the media (instead of nonbinding strategies such as public relations). Rules can directly or indirectly target media content. In Western democratic societies, direct interventions of the state into media content are restricted (Puppis, 2010a). Therefore, policy goals for media content are pursued mostly in an indirect manner by attempting to influence media structures (McQuail, 1992). A precondition for this conceptualization of media policy is that nonstate actors are able to get involved in policymaking. The state is the decisive actor with the capability to make collectively binding decisions for the media or at least to threaten them with "hierarchical statutory forms of regulation" (Puppis, 2010b, p. 137). Actors have distinct chances to articulate and gain acceptance for their concerns. The outcome of decision making depends on the constellation of actors and invested resources, as well as on public communication structures, regulatory traditions, and media policy structures. These structures determine who is heard and who is granted access to the centers of legislation (Galperin, 2004; McQuail & Siune, 1986). Mass media coverage (or its absence) may play an important role. Media coverage provides not only an arena, but is also used by media organizations to influence public opinion and exert pressure on decision makers (Gilens & Hertzman, 2000; Turow, 1994).

The self-interests and power interests involved in formulating media policy further substantiate the conceptualization of media policy as a product of mediatization. The role of such interests in media policy is acknowledged (Freedman, 2008; Galperin, 2004; McQuail & Siune, 1986). Media politicians' obligations to the public interest tend to conflict with their political interests in the media (Sarcinelli, 2009; Schmid, 2001), at least in Western democracies, where regulatory legitimacy rests on the claim that media policy serves the public (Lunt & Livingstone, 2012). Politicians want to receive good press, while at the same time they are responsible for media policy.

These arguments suggest that media policy can be regarded as a subsystem in which the conditions for gaining media attention are negotiated. This article does not contend that media policy can be reduced to disputes about public attention. Media organizations, for example, which are major actors in media policy, obviously have economic motives. From studying German press history, we know that in the 18th century more newspapers were banned or penalized because of complaints by competitors than because of outright censorship (R. Stöber, 2010). This article, however, sheds light on one aspect of media policy that has been neglected so far.

There is a difference between media policy as a way actors react to the rules of media reality construction and other possible reactions. Media policy "cannot be considered decoupled from the

institutional setting" (Donges, 2007, p. 327) that constitutes media policy as a subsystem. Objectives, norms, the role of state actors, and procedures are institutionalized, as well as the "perception about which regulatory decisions are legitimate and which are not" (Donges, 2007, p. 328). Media policy, as a strategy employed by actors dealing with the media, is both limited and enabled by those rules.

Mediatization and Media Policy History

Findings of historical research suggest that studying mediatization in the period leading up to the last 20 years of the 20th century is both possible and fruitful (Bösch & Frei, 2006; Strömbäck, 2008). In the following, I discuss the historical applicability of mediatization as a concept and then provide arguments showing that media research should place much greater emphasis on its historic dimension.

Media policy history from a mediatization perspective is a history of mass media policy. This focus on the era of mass media is grounded in the idea that media policy could only become a reaction to the media logic from the point in history when

- "a vast reach of mass media contents in society" (Meyen et al., 2014, p. 276) was achieved,
- a "more or less autonomous mass media system" (Meyen et al., 2014, p. 282) existed, and
- actors believed in the resources that mass media provided (public attention and legitimation).

Communication historians concur that the mediatization perspective is applicable from the 19th century on, when the mass press began circulating in society (Birkner, 2015; Bösch & Frei, 2006; Nerone, 2008; R. Stöber, 2010). The 19th century was the decisive period in terms of the quantitative expansion of the press, the range of issues and events people learned of, and the development of journalistic routines (Nerone, 2008; R. Stöber, 2010). In Germany, approximately every 30 years since the late 19th century, there has been a fundamental change in the media system, increasing the reach of mass media and influencing social structures (Bösch & Frei, 2006).

Without some degree of autonomy, there is neither the need to adapt to media logic (Meyen et al., 2014) nor the option of suggesting that media structures be reformed. Studying reactions to media logic therefore makes sense from the point in time when the political ties of the media loosened—in other words, when the direct steering of the media on the part of the state begins to be restricted by law and the principle of press freedom begins to be applied (Puppis, 2010a). Each country has "its own landmark date" (Briggs & Burke, 2009, pp. 182–183) regarding press freedom. The loosening of political ties has been a process with alternating periods of greater or lesser control. The 1874 Reichspressgesetz in Imperial Germany is seen as an important step toward the liberalization of the press. State control and censorship, however, were not completely abolished. The censorship that occurred during World War I is one example of how such practices continued to play a role (Wilke, 2005). Mediatization is not a linear process (Couldry & Hepp, 2013).

There is no contradiction in first assuming that media logic was able to develop when press freedom was established, and then studying how media policy became a strategy to deal with the media.

Mediatization is not a process with a simple causal logic. The behavior of media system actors reflected changes in political structures (as well as those in new communication technologies, the economy, media norms, power constellations; Meyen et al., 2014). Media actors adapted to the abolition of censorship. Their adaptation resulted in the differentiation of content, journalistic role perceptions, forms of presentation, and sometimes in press concentration, trends to which other actors then reacted in turn through media criticism and media policy. Historical findings suggest, moreover, that stages of mediatization (Hjarvard, 2008; Strömbäck, 2008) might not be that clearly distinguishable from one another but may overlap instead. Parts of the press remained an instrument in the hands of other institutions throughout the 20th century in Germany. The Social Democratic press and labor union press did not disappear until the 1960s and 1970s (Schütz, 2004).

When did media attention become “a strategic resource, for which anyone with a message” (Hjarvard, 2008, p. 107) had to compete? The vast reach of newspapers and magazines in the 19th century was attended by proliferating discussions about press effects. In Germany, intellectuals from the Catholic Church, itself in the process of losing its power to censor, initiated a debate about the power of the press. They regarded the press as a disseminator of lies and attempted to counter it by publishing their own Catholic newspapers (Große Kracht, 2010; Wilke, 2011). Wilke (2005) found that media policy debates “remained almost uninterrupted since the pre-March era, creating many reform ideas for the media system” (p. 61). The German labor movement had a media policy program from its inception, and the British labor movement articulated its concerns regarding the commercial press from an early stage (O’Malley & Soley, 2000). As more and more parts of society were included in news coverage, public attention became an object for calculation for a range of social actors. Within the political system, there was early realization that public communication was a space for gaining attention and legitimation, a space that had to be observed at the very least (R. Stöber, 2010; Wilke, 2011).

Both the forms of reaction to the media and actors’ perceptions of useful media strategies have changed. When the German state, for example, lost censorship as a potential measure in the mid-19th century and later also ceded economic instruments of press control (such as the stamp tax), it turned to what was then called *Presspolitik* (press relations) and court proceedings to regain a measure of control (R. Stöber, 2010). Only after administrations led by Chancellor Konrad Adenauer in West Germany had failed several times to restrict the media by legislation was this idea of controlling the media gradually abandoned at last (Bösch & Frei, 2006). Media policy emerged as a term denominating democratically legitimized media regulation (Roegele, 1973). The Catholic Church modified its view on mass communication in the 1960s. Realizing that Catholic newspapers could not compete with the commercial press, it increased public relations efforts and began to participate in media policy (Große Kracht, 2010). When by 1970 almost all of the Social Democratic newspapers had gone out of print, the party gave up the idea of influencing public opinion via its own newspapers for good. At the same time, it began to develop a media policy program (Roegele, 1973; Schütz, 2004).

An important insight that historical research provides is that mediatization is not a phenomenon that transcends time. The rules of media reality construction and the reactions to these rules differ depending on specific circumstances (Bösch & Frei, 2006; Meyen et al., 2014). This insight can be provided by a case study on a particular mediatization episode in the past as well as by a country comparative

approach. Although scholars have emphasized that mediatization is a long-term process (Couldry & Hepp, 2013; Hjarvard, 2008; Mazzoleni & Schulz, 1999), comparisons of today's situation with earlier incarnations of the media system are rare. By means of such comparison, current mediatization can be assessed; research does not have to depend "on a presumption rather than a demonstration of historical change" (Deacon & Stanyer, 2014, p. 1037). In sum, historical research helps to differentiate societies' increasing dependence on mass media.

Categories and an Example for Studying Media Policy History

A history of media policy from a mediatization perspective focuses on actors in social systems and the constellation of actors as well as the structures they are embedded in. Actors pursue system-specific interests (Meyen et al., 2014). Instead of conceptualizing mediatization "as an all-encompassing primary phenomenon" (Esser & Strömbäck, 2014, p. 224), it considers the distribution of resources and of rule-setting capacities among actors as well as political, economic, social, and cultural structures. To make the idea more accessible that media policy can be a strategy for pursuing mass communication interests, I propose a set of categories that can be used to help conduct such a study:

- *Perceptions* encompass the mass communication problems that actors assume they have (such as access to or representation in the media), the actors' knowledge of media logic and structures, and the media's deficits and effects, as well as assessments regarding the importance of the media for the actors.
- *Strategies* denote the media policy position actors develop, the way this position is articulated and justified in the subsystem of media policy (framing, forums such as experts' circles or mass media), and other reactions to media (e.g., public relations, communication channels of one's own).
- *Resources* refer to money, expertise, and access to the state and the media that actors have at their disposal and invest in media policy or in other reactions to the media.
- *Constellation of actors* refers to access to the media of the actors, dependencies on other systems apart from the media, and actors in a particular media policy debate.
- *Structures* include media system structures (influencing media logic), the political system (particularly of the subsystem media policy, for instance, legitimate norms, laws, and traditions of media regulation), and other relevant systems' structures.

This kind of media policy history requires the collation of in-depth knowledge. Therefore, studies may be designed as case studies focusing on the role of one particular organization in media policy, for instance, on the role of a political party, a church, or a social movement. This kind of media policy history requires a variety of sources, such as internal documents, membership publications, public relations material, policy papers, conference reports, draft laws, minutes, media coverage, and sources providing insight into strategies of leading personnel.

A historical study can proceed in the following way: It first identifies the media policy controversy and the participating actors in the mediatization episode in the particular country under study. At the same time, it compiles the literature about the media system to identify the driver behind that particular debate. The next step involves determining which actor is to be selected for a case study. The differences between subsystems regarding mediatization guide this decision. The constellation of actors in the media policy debate (and if present, in the subsystem of media policy), as well as media, political, and other systems' structures contextualize findings. These categories help us understand the actor's involvement in media policy, the opportunities emerging from that involvement for other actors, and the outcome of the debate.

The example presented here refers to the role of the labor unions in press policy around 1970 in the Federal Republic of Germany. By drawing on an organization that lives from the dissemination of ideas, one is able to almost ideally illustrate in a typical manner how perceived mass communication problems, media policy, and other strategies were related. I do not present a complete analysis of labor unions in West German media policy, but focus instead on central categories. I start by describing media structures and actors, identify the perceptions and the media policy strategy of the labor unions, and, finally, turn to the structures of media policy in effect at that time.

The media policy debate around 1970 revolved around press concentration. Between the 1950s and the mid-1970s, the number of independent daily newspapers with a main editorial department halved and the number of people living in so-called one-paper districts tripled. The term *one-paper district* refers to those administrative districts in which the majority of the population has access to only one daily newspaper that provided regional and local information (Schütz, 2005). Media scholars have concluded that the plurality of the West German press after 1945 reached its low point in the mid-1970s (Kraiker, 2015). Press concentration was attended by media expansion, not only regarding the spread of television, but also in increasing circulation numbers, magazine diversification, and growing time for media usage. Journalism became more critical and skeptical of government (Hodenberg, 2006). These changing structures in the media system, influencing media logic, account for the mediatization drive in the first decades after World War II.

The government coalition of Social Democrats and Liberals established in 1969 put press policy on the agenda. Several legislative steps were planned, the two most important being a press law securing the internal freedom of the press and legal safeguards to prevent further press concentration. Internal freedom of the press (*innere Pressefreiheit*) was related to press concentration. This political catchword of the time referred to the power relation between publisher and editorial staff and—depending on how it was interpreted—aimed at securing editors a certain independence from economic influences or at gaining more extensive codetermination rights regarding personnel and economic decisions. The press law failed to pass; a merger control was established in 1976 (Kraiker, 2015). With the establishment of this merger control, only a small portion of the originally proposed press concentration measures was realized.

The labor unions took up press concentration and the internal freedom of the press in the second half of the 1960s when the debate became public. This debate was initiated by a constellation of actors consisting of publishers, liberal media, the 1968 student movement, press experts, and other actors (Kraiker, 2015). Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund (DGB) had been a large actor in the labor union movement

since 1949. Its aim was to unite workers' organizations under one roof. Media workers were split into different interest groups: the printers' union (IG Druck und Papier) within DGB and its subunit, the journalists' union (Deutsche Journalisten-Union [DJU]), the professional association for journalists (Deutscher Journalistenverband), and the union of broadcast and film journalists within DGB. The latter did not play a role in shaping press policy.

The labor unions criticized the commercial organization of the press and perceived press concentration as a threat to information plurality and the freedom of expression. As the member journal of the DJU *Die Feder* argued, journalistic work had become increasingly influenced by the economic and political interests of a diminishing number of publishers ("DGB kritisiert Zeitungsverleger," 1973; "Kompetenzabgrenzungsvertrag," 1972). Press freedom was to be achieved through economic independence and expanded codetermination rights. Labor unions strongly advocated for a press law ("Innere Pressefreiheit sichern," 1971; "Nicht nur den Verlegern helfen," 1967). The press should be controlled publicly, they argued, at least those newspapers with a local monopoly position (i.e., those operating de facto in one-paper districts). Encouraged by the social-liberal government, media labor unions, in addition, continued to pursue contract negotiations with the newspaper publishers' association. These negotiation efforts were ultimately unsuccessful.

When Eckart Spoo (1971), president of the journalists' union, justified a law for editorial codetermination as a safeguard against the "monopolization of power over public opinion" (p. 129), he was speaking from his own experience with the media. In an article entitled "Why We Need Internal Freedom of the Press," he complained that "over and over again, labor unions have experienced that it is impossible to articulate themselves by means of the press" (pp. 130–131). The influential news magazine *Der Spiegel*, however, published by the liberal Rudolf Augstein, provided the DGB president a platform to vent his anger about employers who "made sure that reports about working conditions are suppressed" (Vetter, 1976, p. 85). Attracting mass media attention was so crucial for the labor unions because their own periodicals had not managed to exert the influence on public opinion that they originally expected. This problem had already been pondered by union officials in the 1920s, after 1945 (Böckler, 1950), and then again when several federal meetings of the DGB compared the "effectiveness of union's press" with its costs ("Dokumentation zu Fragen der gewerkschaftlichen Publizistik," 1973). Labor unions' belief in media effects is proven for the Weimar period (Merkel, 1996), and gains theoretical underpinning around 1970 through the critical theory of the Frankfurt School (Pinl, 1973). When the director of a left-wing publishing house urged the unions to finally develop a media policy master plan in the pages of the DGB discussion journal *Gewerkschaftliche Monatshefte*, he argued that the labor unions would "in the long run lose the public fight over influence on the consciousness of the masses and also on the consciousness of their own members" (Pinkall, 1973, p. 309). They would "underestimate the consciousness-creating power of private media enterprises" (Pinkall, 1973, p. 309). Labor unions openly discussed media policy as a strategy for solving communication problems. The regulatory measures they suggested are one indicator that the unions' engagement in media policy was (also) motivated by their own communication interests:

- Abolition of the publisher's right to "determine the overall political standpoint and tendency of the paper" (Kraiker, 2015, p. 67), enshrined in the Works Constitution Act in 1952 (Spoo, 1972; "Weg mit dem Tendenzschutz," 1971).

- Closely linked to the measure cited above: installing works councils in editorial departments' representative committees (Pinl, 1973; Tonnemacher, 1976).
- Establishing public control, including unions (and other relevant social groups), of those publishing houses with positions of market dominance. This was a decision of the federal meeting of delegates of DJU in 1973 ("Zeitungskontrolle gefordert," 1973). IG Druck und Papier had suggested some years previously that press committees be established for the control of cooperation and concentration at the national and federal levels ("IG Druck und Papier zu den Problemen der Presse," 1969).

These measures, if realized, would have brought unions more or less close to the role of content producers or at least given them the capability to influence the overall political tendency of a newspaper.

The attempts to convince journalists to get involved in shaping media policy are another indicator. A congress, co-organized by media labor unions and a socialist reform group, was explicitly dedicated to journalists, who, in the view of the unions, had not yet realized that union work was all about their own interests:

The working world will only become an issue for the press, if it is no longer a taboo, in a case where journalists regard this removal of a taboo as a common fight for more rights in the working world. In sum: if they take up the fight for internal freedom of the press as a co-determination fight and bring this fight to an end. (Rabbow, 1971, p. 185)

This fight for legal protections, however, was of little relevance for journalists even if labor union membership was in the process of increasing at that time (starting from a low level), signaling some degree of growing employee awareness (Langenbacher, Roegele, & Schumacher, 1976). In some publishing houses, so-called editorial bylaws were voluntarily agreed on between editorial departments and publishers to regulate relations and competencies (Kraiker, 2015).

Statements from high-ranking officials explicitly linking media policy and the labor unions' lack of media attention are a further indicator. The DGB president said that the "latest experience of the election campaign" made him aware that labor unions had to deal "more seriously than before with media policy" (Vetter, 1976, p. 85). The press market was dominated by conservatives, and alternative voices had no access to it. He added that society had to "get into the risk that workers' interests enter the newspaper, that they influence the political tendency of the newspaper" (Vetter, 1976, p. 88).

Aside from attempting to shape media policy, there were other strategies for dealing with media change. Despite doubts regarding the effectiveness of such a thing, discussion about establishing a national daily or weekly newspaper was revived (Merkel, 1996; Vetter, 1976). DGB officials instructed their public relations departments to intensify their work and initiated a debate about a future media union that would unite all factions ("Dokumentation zu Fragen der gewerkschaftlichen Publizistik," 1973). A united media labor union was seen as the "strongest weapon in the fight for internal freedom of the press" (Spoo, 1971, p. 136), as the DJU president put it, adding that such a union could alter the "media policy landscape" (p. 136).

One can observe a range of media policy activities present at that time: the establishment of a permanent DGB press law and press freedom commission and of a media policy working group within the DJU ("Auch DGB will sich mit Presserecht befassen," 1969), motions at union conventions, congresses, a special edition of *Gewerkschaftliche Monatshefte* (1973), and media policy analyses and papers (Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund, 1975; IG Druck und Papier, 1977). The boom in media policy activities in the 1970s seems to stand out within the longer historical view. Studies about the Weimar Republic and recent times agree that unions had long mistrusted mass media. They regarded the mass media as executors of power at first and then later as power themselves. This led to a dilemma for labor unions: They were caught between their distrust of the media on the one hand and the need for public visibility on the other. Their solution was to turn away from the broader mass media debate and produce their own newspapers (which failed in the competition on the commercial market). This might explain why public relations have long been rejected as promotion (Hemkes, 2011; Merkel, 1996) and serves as inspiration to study whether media policy, in the long run, has become a stable strategy for labor unions to integrate references to the mass media logic or whether the mentioned dilemma has stood in their way.

Taking the constellation of actors into consideration helps explain how the interest in gaining media attention encountered other interests in media policy and how, due to mediatization, specific opportunities emerged to oppose regulatory interventions that were (also) driven by public visibility interests. The Social Democratic Party entered government with the slogan "Dare More Democracy" and set the participation of social groups on its agenda. It included the labor unions' regulatory ideas in its draft press law. The publishers campaigned heavily against the draft law, supported by a broad range of leading newspapers. When, during a strike, unionized printers removed unwelcome articles, publishers jumped on the opportunity to publicly delegitimize labor unions by suggesting they were not concerned about press freedom, but instead about controlling the press. High-ranking union officials had to defend themselves from charges of having sympathized with leftist radicals and challenging the free democratic order. The acting administration of the time continued to announce intentions to pass the law; from 1976 on, it had become clear that all attempts to do so had petered out (Löblich, 2018).

Conclusion

This article proposes a theoretical perspective for studying the history of media policy as a response by social actors to the increasing significance of mass media and to the functional differentiation of society. It extends mediatization research and integrates media policy as a way in which organizations have tried to achieve, change, or maintain public visibility provided by mass media.

In a first step, I developed several arguments that suggest the advisability of integrating media policy into mediatization research. These arguments are derived from mediatization and media policy literature. Integrating media policy contributes to the attempt to conceptualize mediatization as an active and nonlinear process: Social actors do not merely react to media logic, but instead also try to influence how the media operate. Moreover, by integrating media policy, a broader range of responses to the increasing significance of the media can be studied. The focus on a broader range of responses helps to form a more differentiated picture of mediatization phenomena. Media policy research provides arguments to justify the conceptualization of media policy as a phenomenon of mediatization: the role of self- and

power interests in media policy, the idea that media policy, as a form of “metapolitics,” determines access to an important resource in society. Getting involved in media policy could have been an interesting option for social actors because, in contrast to other reactions to the media, it involves the development (or abolishment) of binding tools for the media. It is up to historical research to study to what extent actors have tried to propose and influence media regulation at all, and to what extent there were unequal power conditions for attempting to do so.

In a second step, this article demonstrates that a mediatization perspective can be applied to a history of mass media policy. For that purpose, three basic assumptions of the mediatization concept were discussed against the background of communication history: the vast reach of mass media, the development of a relatively autonomous media system, and the belief in mass media effects since the 19th century. The literature review on (mostly German) communication history concludes that historical research helps to differentiate and assess current mediatization processes. The present article contributes to that and suggests the further study of regulatory demands in the past initiated by actors in different social systems who needed media attention to realize their interests. The perspective developed here proposes categories (perceptions regarding the media, media policy and other strategies, resources, constellation of actors, and structures) and steps for such a historical investigation.

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