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Public Journalism and Public Sphere(s)

Citizen-oriented public sphere at national, regional and local context

This conference paper is part of my dissertation project which focuses on public journalism and its applications in the Finnish press. Public journalism or civic journalism is a loosely organized reform movement aimed at getting the press to rethink its commitment to the ideals of democratic participation (Glasser 2002). Public journalism was developed in the United States in 1990s and since then the ideas have also been applied outside North America. In my dissertation I will analyze three citizen-oriented and participatory projects in the Finnish newspapers from 2003 to 2006. The newspapers studied are: the leading daily in Finland, *Helsingin Sanomat*; a provincial newspaper of Pirkanmaa region, *Aamulehti*; and a local newspaper in Heinola region, *Itä-Häme*.

The research data from these newspapers consists of 1) interviews of journalists and editors, 2) newspaper articles and 3) observations and participation. My aim is to find out what is Finnish public journalism in the 2000s. The research questions of my PhD project are: How and why have the participatory ideas of public journalism been received and applied in the Finnish newspapers, and how is the relationship between journalism and democracy positioned in this approach?

In this paper I will examine Finnish public sphere(s) and public journalism from a distinct point of view. I will have a look at the ways in which journalists and editors¹ in the above mentioned newspapers interpret the “civic turn” in their working environment. With “civic turn” I refer to the changes and developments that have lead to the *public journalism* projects in the newspapers.

¹ The research data in this paper consists of transcribed interviews, which I have conducted during 2004–2005. The interviews were done in groups of two or three in *Helsingin Sanomat* and individually in the other newspapers. The numbers of informants are: *Helsingin Sanomat* 11, *Aamulehti* 8 and *Itä-Häme* 5.

In addition to public journalism, another important frame in this paper is the idea of *different levels* in the public sphere. The studied newspapers are from national, provincial and local level of the Finnish media field. The aim is to examine these newspapers and their public journalism approaches in relation to the level in which they act. It is interesting to see, how the national provincial and local contexts appear in the interpretation of public journalism ideas and professional ideals of the journalists.

In this sense this paper is also much about professionalism of journalism: the negotiations that are going on about the role of the journalist and journalism in the society and the requirements that these roles pose for the whole profession. Public journalism as an attempt to rethink journalism is also an attempt to rethink journalistic professionalism. In this paper I will look at professional journalism from the setting that is offered in my research design. Professionalism is thus examined through the three levels of public sphere: local, provincial and national. This setting enables us to see the diversified nature of professionalism.

Mapping journalistic professionalism

Journalistic professionalism and professional knowledge is a much debated issue among scholars. There are various ways in which the concept of professionalism in journalism has been defined and refined. Zelizer (2004) notes that all of the traits by which sociologists usually identify professions – certain level of skill, autonomy, service orientation, licensing procedures, testing of competence, organization, codes of conduct, educational programmes – are not displayed by journalism or journalists. Yet professionalism is invoked for aims other than listing of external traits. It provides *a body of knowledge* that instructs individuals what to do and avoid in any given circumstance. For journalists, in the U.S. in particular, the idea of professionalism has provided an ideological orientation that facilitates the maintenance of journalism's collective boundaries. (Zelizer 2004, 33). Following this line of thinking, Soloski (cited in Glasser 1992, 139) argues that it is not important to argue about which occupations qualify as professions, but to ask what it means for an occupation to claim to be a profession.

Schudson (1991) points out that collective boundaries of the profession have been observed by cross-national surveys. These surveys support the view that despite different national cultures and patterns of professional education and organizational forms of the trade, the stated professional values of the journalists surveyed do not differ greatly from nation to nation. Yet Schudson emphasizes that the structural sources of these professional values may differ significantly; the Polish journalists' view on autonomy stems from a different background than that of their American colleagues (1991, 150).

Nonetheless, discussion about journalistic professionalism is still often blurred by a simplification or homogenization of the view on professional journalism. Glasser (1992) brings forward a view that professionalism and professional education particularly carry with them a trend towards unifying knowledge through bypassing differences in experience. Thus professionalization implies standardization and homogeneity and the claims of professionalism in its champion of uniformity and conformity run counter to the claims of diversity. Glasser critiques the idea that professional techniques of journalists would be translational in nature (Glasser 1992, 134–135).

Hallin and Mancini (2004) take into account the national differences and the distinctions between different media systems. In their comparative study the authors introduce professionalism as one of the key variables in media systems. They have developed a way to interpret professionalism in the frame of a political system of a given country and compare it with other countries. Hallin and Mancini single out three main dimensions in professional journalism: autonomy, distinct professional norms and public service orientation of the profession. These dimensions are apparent in differing ways in the different media systems. According to the authors, Finland is part of North/Central European Media Model. In other words the model is called Democratic Corporatist Model, which can be located in Scandinavia, Low Countries, Germany, Austria and Switzerland (Hallin & Mancini 2004, 143). The Democratic Corporatist countries are characterised by early and strong development of journalistic professionalism. In these countries the mass circulation of newspapers resulted in the quite early formation of the group employed full-time journalists. The Finnish journalists' union was established in 1921 (Hallin & Mancini 2004, 170-171), and it has a relatively strong position among the journalists. Other indicators of strong professionalization are established code of ethics, formal education of journalists in the universities and the sense of autonomy from the political or managerial pressures. During the last 20 years in the Democratic Corporatist countries, there has been a shift from politically coloured reporting and advocacy to the "critical professionalism", which has traditionally been stronger among the journalists who work in the sphere of North Atlantic (Liberal) media system. (Hallin & Mancini 2004, 172–178.)

Despite the useful framework of Hallin and Mancini, more conceptualisation and interpretation of journalism as profession within the limits of a media system or a particular country is needed. I believe that it is obvious especially for researchers who have done field work among journalists, that the interpretation of journalism as profession is diversified within the national frame. Therefore in this paper, professional cultures are observed as being connected to different scopes of the public sphere: local, provincial and national. I believe it is fruitful to compare and contrast these different levels in Finnish professional journalism, because often in the setting like this, there is a tendency to see the national level as the highest status of journalistic professionalism and to see the "big-city journalism" as the standard of all journalism (e.g. Glasser 1992, 136) It will be interesting to see, whether the "civic discourses" that are connected to public journalism approach can offer us a fresh viewpoint to the professional values of the journalists acting at different range of public sphere.

The "civic turn" in journalism

The "civic turn" in journalism is connected with the development of the public/civic journalism movement. The initial take off for public journalism was the critique of the election coverage in 1988 presidential election in the United States. The "horse race" style of reporting left issues relevant to the majority of the voters uncovered. Journalists started to ask, if they had "remembered" the public often enough in their routines. Concluding that the answer was "no", they set out to find the public again by changing journalism. (Rosen 2000, 680)

According to professor Jay Rosen (2000, 680) – one of the founders of public journalism – achieving a genuine public is the great democratic project, and the press is a major part of that project, although realizing this requires a critique of the media. Rosen also stresses the importance of experimenting and co-operation of academics and journalists. (Rosen 1999, 36–39) Public journalism coverage was more concretely “invented” through a series of practical experiments in the early 90’s. It was extended through attempts to develop daily and weekly routine from the mid-90s on. And with the advent of the Internet, new interactive approaches to civic coverage have emerged. While the earliest initiatives were aimed at expanding the scope of election coverage beyond the campaign offices’ agendas, the later projects have been designed to cover the problems and to address specific community issues. To this date at least 600 public journalism experiments and projects in 320 newspapers have taken place in the U.S. (Friedland and Nichols 2002; Friedland 2003, 119). Several U.S. news organizations have made public journalism a part of their daily work. They have restructured their newsrooms from conventional beat system revolving around institutional sources of information to include multiple teams focusing on specific issues of concern to citizens. They have also started to cover issues from the perspectives of citizens rather than politicians or experts. (Haas 2003, 92)

Friedland (2003, 129–130) has divided the development of public journalism into three periods: 1) experimentation and innovation 1988–1993; 2) a movement-identity formation (institutions such as Pew Center for Civic Journalism) in 1993–1997 and 3) period of routinization from 1997 onwards. The diffusion of the news practices has by now taken place to some degree, but the movement identity has largely disappeared.

Public journalism has also faced a lot of criticism. Firstly, most of the criticism is targeted at the role of the journalist. Many critics resent the idea of the reporter becoming too much involved in the community life, not being able to retain her independency and objectivity. The critics see that public journalism merely originates in an attempt to protect the news organizations’ profitability by pandering to audiences, and therefore the role of the journalist as the advocator of the public good is questionable. (e.g. Buckner & Gartner 1998; Hardt 2000, Haas & Steiner 2003) Another area of criticism is the idea of deliberative democracy; the critics think that the idea of public journalism is too centered on discussion and thus the benefits of the experiments are left on the level of face-to-face communication. (Peters 1999; Pauly 1999) Third set of critical points comment on the content of the stories produced along the public journalism ideals. The critics claim that the stories can’t offer anything new to the readers, that they are homogenous and too rational for the taste of ordinary readers. (Woodstock 2002; Davis 2000) The fourth theme – and probably the strongest area of criticism among the academics – deals with the incoherency of the public journalism theory and its strong dependence on experiments and projects, its inability to create something permanent. (Meyer 1995, Glasser 2000) The critics say that public journalism scholars never tried to build a real theory for the movement, and therefore without a guiding philosophy, public journalism advocates cannot criticize the existing practices or develop new practices. (Haas & Steiner 2003, 34)

As the vigorous criticism points out, public journalism has touched upon something essential about the state of journalism today. Despite the criticism and the fact that the movement in its most concrete form seems to

have lost its peek in the USA, the ideas of public journalism are still discussed especially among the scholars.

In Finland – partly due to the active participation of the researcher community and partly due to the general reader-oriented trend – the term public journalism is still in the vocabulary of the acting journalists, even though the definitions may not always be very clear. Participatory methods of public journalism are being used by the Finnish journalists, and many of the institutions giving journalism education have taken public journalism part of their curricula.

The ideas of public journalism first arrived to Finland in the late 1990's. The experiences from the early public journalism experiments in Finland (e.g. in regional newspapers called Savon Sanomat and Aamulehti, see Heikkilä & Kunelius 1999) showed that the citizens have usually proved to be productive and competent participants in the projects, thus pointing that they are an underused source for journalism. This also indicates the need to develop new genres of writing: story formats and generic innovations can be a way of defining new, participatory roles for ordinary people in journalistic products. (Heikkilä & Kunelius, manuscript)

In Finland journalism researchers have largely been the ones who introduced the public journalism vocabulary to the newsrooms in the 1990's. However, news organizations and journalists have started to develop their own citizen-oriented approaches in the Finnish newsrooms in the 2000's. Thus it can be seen that in comparison to the above mentioned development in the U.S. (Friedland 2003, 129–130) the period of public journalism as a movement hasn't ever emerged in Finland. This study therefore concentrates on diffusion of the ideas and routinization of public journalism practices.

In the following chapters I will interpret the discourses about the Finnish civic turn in more detail. I will discuss the public journalism approaches of Itä-Häme, Aamulehti and Helsingin Sanomat respectively. In the beginning of every chapter I will first shortly describe 1) how the journalists themselves interpret the **arrival of public journalism** into their newsrooms. By analysing the discourses I will also be able to identify the 2) **prevailing conditions of the journalistic culture** against which public journalism is being mirrored. I will also consider 3) how the civic turn is used as a point of departure for **critical professional self-reflection**. The fourth interesting is to compare 4) the ways in which the national, provincial and local context appears in the **interpretations about the role of the public or citizens**.

Itä-Häme and the local public sphere

A local newspaper in Heinola, Itä-Häme, has a circulation of about 12 000 and it is published 6 days a week. It has a relatively strong position in Heinola and the four neighbouring small towns. Itä-Häme is published by a media company that also owns *Etelä-Suomen Sanomat*, a larger regional paper published in a nearby city of Lahti. The regional paper is also actually a competitor for Itä-Häme.

Itä-Häme is the first Finnish newspaper to establish a special post for a so called civic reporter (kansalaistoimittaja) in the spring of 2004. The task of the civic reporter is summarized in a logo which is always published with the “civic articles”:

The topic of this article came from the readers. Would you have in mind a theme that would concern the readers of Itä-Häme? The theme can be critical or positive, if it only somehow is connected to your everyday life. We can for instance go and meet the decision-maker or a politician who is in charge of the issues. The ideas and tips can also be delivered anonymously.

The public journalism approach of Itä-Häme started from the journalists' own observations in the newsroom and in the field and from the newspapers own will to change its working routines. The whole organisation has undergone restructuring, and the format of the paper was changed from broadsheet to tabloid in 2005. These developments have all been part of a strategy to build up a newspaper that would be local and close to its readers. On the background of this reform there are concerns about circulation figures, media competition and loss of young readers. Therefore a strongly market-influenced viewpoint has framed the whole development process, and the top management are strongly advocating public journalism. In fact, audience strategies and strong commitment by the management are generally connected to whether public journalism is likely to be tried in a newspaper. (Friedland 2003, 122–124).

The idea of a civic reporter in Itä-Häme was first announced to be a two-year experiment, but the position was made permanent in August 2004 and the reporter wishes to develop her work further. The civic articles can be categorised into four main groups: 1) citizen–decision-maker encounters, 2) everyday life stories, 3) activation/motivation stories and 4) questions and answers -columns. None of the earlier Finnish public journalism projects have concentrated on developing routines for a single reporter and none have similarly created a permanent post for the task. In this sense the approach of the small Itä-Häme is significant.

Interpreting the arrival of public journalism. The phrases that the journalists and editors in Itä-Häme use about their approach are “public journalism” and “reader-oriented journalism”. The reporters in Itä-Häme see public journalism in a two-fold manner. On one hand it is seen as an idea initiated by the management level: the editor-in-chief and the local area manager. The civic turn is interpreted to be a part of the chain of reform projects that have taken place in the newsrooms, and in that sense it is seen as an approach or a choice of strategy that touches everyone among the staff. In the interviews the journalists mention that many of the “civic” goals are mentioned in the official documents such as the strategy paper of Itä-Häme. On the other hand, the civic turn is – quite naturally of course – centred on the role of the civic reporter. The public journalism approach of the newspaper is thus personified and very much on purpose, too. Mostly public journalism is seen as the work that belongs to the civic reporter. Even so, the interviewed journalists have a positive attitude towards public journalism, but the eagerness to apply the ideas and the adopted practices varies among individuals.

Well I haven't heard that anyone would be anyhow against this approach. But maybe then when we turned into tabloid and were planning the reform, there were discussions about not going to far, that there has to be a certain limit. But the idea has never been anyhow totally dismissed. (Journalist, Itä-Häme)

There are some conventions about the division of work, but applying public journalism is by no means restricted. But in practice only few have time to do civic stories, because the working pace is so strict. (journalist, Itä-Häme)

The permanent position of the civic reporter and the reform projects have prepared a soil in which discussion about the ideas of public journalism have become easier, but the civic turn of Itä-Häme is by no means total, even if the newsroom is quite small and the approach better defined than in Helsingin Sanomat, for instance.

Another clearly articulated frame in the civic turn of Itä-Häme is the economic pressure. The interviewees, especially the civic reporter herself, express that the economic demands affect their work and the newsroom culture. In a small newspaper with a small staff the economic realities of the newspaper are manifested quite concretely: for every reporter there are pressures to produce at least a story per day, the working tempo is tight and the routines rotate, as the reporters are also doing lay-out shifts. The civic journalist is also part of the lay-out rotation. After the shift into tabloid she has been required to write two large articles per week instead of one. It is clear, that the civic reporter and the whole newsroom are struggling in between two logics behind (public) journalism: on the one hand, the approach is justified by the logic of the market economy, and on the other hand by the logic of the democratic role of journalism. (e.g. Hujanen 2005). The market logic has been clear in Itä-Häme from the start of civic reporter's work, and the economic discourse has spread throughout the staff, presumably for top-down.

It is worth to notice that Karin Wahl-Jørgensen (2002) has found similar patterns in the ways U.S. editors in local newspapers view readers' letters. On a normative side, the letters to the editor are seen as part of deliberative democracy and the letters section as a public forum. But on a financial side, the letters act as a customer service and as a local material they can boost the economic success of the paper. The editors see that it is possible and desirable to combine the democratic interests of the community with the financial interests of the newspapers (Wahl-Jørgensen 2002, 130). This kind of normative-economic combination is clear in Itä-Häme, and it is obvious that the journalists are aware of it and they accept it without too many questions.

Prevailing conditions of the journalistic culture. The way in which journalists in Itä-Häme interpret the civic turn in their newsroom reveals few rather prevailing interpretations about local journalism and its relation to the local public sphere. One of the strong prevailing conditions is the closeness of the local newspaper with the local authority. Already in 1976 David Murphy titled his book on local journalism and politics as "The Silent Watchdog" and Michael Schudson (1991, 148) points out that for journalists the bureaucrats have for a long provided a reliable and steady source of news: One study after another comes up with essentially the same observation – and it matters not whether the study is at the national or local level – that the story of journalism is the story of the interaction of reporters and officials. In fact, one of the clearest discourses about the civic turn in Itä-Häme is the discourse about the need to turn away from the dependence on officials, agenda-driven journalism and elitism. Public journalism methods are primarily interpreted against this background.

We use to have a strong orientation to local politics in the paper. The municipal decision making was in the centre and local organisations and un-organised civic activity were absent from the paper. (Journalist, Itä-Häme)

The journalists express that the paper used to have the label of elitism and distance. The distance was also strongly connected with the physical location of the newsroom. The editorial building was “a castle” in the outskirts of the town. The journalists point out that moving back to the city centre in the 1990’s was a significant change for better, but they also point out that the central location does not automatically lead to enhanced citizen–journalist relations.

Professional self-reflection. The critical reflection that is aroused by the civic turn in Itä-Häme is connected with the close ties to local authorities. When the journalists evaluate the civic turn they also evaluate the role of the newspaper as a critic and a watchdog. Wahl-Jørgensen (2006, forthcoming) points out that the drift of news content in local papers is generally away from controversy and openly political content, but letters sections stand out as a last bastion of rigorous discussion. Heated political debates are not particularly popular with editors in local papers in Britain, though the editors celebrate the letters section as the place for the airing of views and opinions by “regular people”. They also profess a clear preference for the personal stories and anecdotes of readers, rather than the expression of views on local issues. (Wahl-Jørgensen 2006, forthcoming) Following these lines the management level in Itä-Häme underlines that an important function of the civic reporter’s articles is to arouse feelings; the target, as mentioned by the management, is that the reader either cries or laughs after she has read a story by the civic reporter.

However, another function of the civic stories is expressed as strongly as creating feelings. The stories are wished to have a lot of impact on the local affairs. Thus the division that is somewhat clear in the British editors’ views on readers’ letters is not that evident in the case of a Finnish local paper. Public journalism frame seems to bring along an idea about journalism that should “have an impact on local affairs”. The interviewees (including the management) in Itä-Häme stress that the civic articles are at their best when they lead to concrete changes or have an impact on the local community. Journalists wish that the stories would at least have an impact on the public agenda. However, they are hesitant about starting to advocate certain solutions over another, but they express criticism towards the public journalism style that is “too soft” and more concentrated on the feature reporting than on “hard news”.

The public journalism approach goes hand in hand with this development of being a better watch dog. It is important to demand clarifications from the municipal authorities and cause discussion. (Journalist, Itä-Häme)

Another set of critical reflection is directed at the activity of the staff. Especially the civic reporter, but other journalists too, mention that all of the journalists could and should be more active in developing the citizen-oriented approach together, since it is positioned as a common goal for the paper. The journalists realize that they could be more supportive in relation to the civic reporter and that they could for instance think up story ideas for “civic stories” more as a group. The work of the civic reporter sometimes becomes separated from

the rest of the news work. However, the journalists also mention that it is not merely a question of will, but rather a reality of the work situation, because everyone is so busy with their own work.

There is no time for anything extra, even if discussion about goals would be welcomed. There is not enough discussion within the newsroom. (Journalist, Itä-Häme)

Role of the citizen at the local level. As mentioned above, journalists in Itä-Häme regard citizens as actors in the public sphere, who can and should have a role in the news too, and not just in the lifestyle pages. Civic action and active contacts form the public are articulated as being something positive, something to look for. The journalists seem puzzled by the fact that the public considers them so distant. One of the journalists raised a simple question: “I don’t know why we are so hard to be approached?” In fact, approachability was an important motivation behind the civic reporter concept. The paper wanted to have a reporter who would become a familiar face among the public and would also create more natural interaction between the newsroom and the readers. In all, the idea of public journalism grounds on the fact that social, moral and ideological barriers that journalists have created to protect their independence, should be countered in order to break up the detached and distant reputation that journalists have (Meyer 1995).

The smaller the paper, the closer the public, is one of the myths of local journalism. Some of the interviewees repeated this view and noted that the local paper is usually closer to its public than the national papers are. Journalists working for the national media are thought to “pop in among the public every once in a while”, whereas the local newsrooms are close to the public by definition. The journalists, however, realised that there is a contradiction: their everyday experience and interpretations point out to another direction than the myth. The citizen–journalist relationship is not in any sense more “natural” in the local setting than in national or provincial.

There was a lot of discussion that we write about wrong issues if there they don’t cause any reactions among the readers. And that is why we now have to go where the people are and get the issues from there, because before we had the problem that our contacts with the local people were so poor. (Journalist, Itä-Häme)

The role of the citizen in the local context is connected to the symbiotic relationship with local officials. Local journalists wish to have the public as a backup when they choose topics or angles to their stories, so that the paper could try to loosen up the traditionally strong ties with the local authorities. The agenda of the public discussion is wanted to be built on the citizens concerns and not on the issues that are offered by the municipal officials. Civic reporter’s networks, SMS-messages, letters-to-editors and internet questionnaires are used as methods for mapping the citizens’ agenda.

Before it might have been possible that there was a weeklong discussion in the letters-to-editor section, but no-one from the newsroom reacted to that. Now we can more easily grasp those issues as well, get story ideas from the reader’s letters, even if they sometimes turn out to be empty shells. But it still works relatively well. (Journalist, Itä-Häme)

The local citizens are considered hard to be approached and the general view seems to be that it is difficult to get them to comment on current affairs in public. It is also mentioned that in some of the smallest villages it is almost impossible to raise public discussion about issues that are sensitive to the community.

Aamulehti and the provincial public sphere

Aamulehti is the provincial leader of its region and it is published in Tampere. The provincial newspapers have a historically strong role in the Finnish media field. The end of the politically coloured party press system led to a press structure, where one dominant newspaper usually practices “neutral” journalism and presents itself as the voice of the province. There has been rather lasting bond between the readers and the newspaper often decided for them by the area in which they live. The provincial public discussion has to a large degree taken place inside the dominant provincial newspaper. (Kunelius 1999, also Hallin & Mancini 2004) This structure is about to change due to the restructuring of the media ownership, and now the provincial papers are more or less owned by larger media corporations. In addition, the tie between the reader and the newspaper is not that close anymore. (Kunelius 1999) There is a constant fear of declining circulation, even if Aamulehti has benefited from the growth of Tampere region and it has maintained its circulation at around 136 743, and it is in fact the third largest newspaper in Finland measured by circulation.

In Aamulehti there is an extensive trend of citizen-oriented journalism. The first steps towards public journalism projects were initiated and led by journalism researchers. These experiments in the 1990's centred on reader–newspaper relationship, e.g. specialized suburb reporting and citizen panel discussion about the city budget (Heikkilä & Kunelius 1999; Kunelius 1999). Nowadays public journalism is part of the paper's strategy and some elements of public journalism frame the everyday work of the journalists, but at the same time the approach has merged with the broader idea of reader-orientation, which can be interpreted to be the more market-driven version of the citizen-based reporting.

During the past ten years Aamulehti has developed a series of citizen-based reporting methods. They organize public discussion sessions, which gathered together the decision makers and the citizens. Aamulehti has also published stories where citizens were taken to interview the ministers of the government and to discuss with them. The purpose in these stories has been to bring together the ideas and viewpoints of citizens and the top-level decision-makers. A third distinctively citizen-based method is the so called news van, which tours around the province to get the views and opinions of the public.

Interpreting the arrival of public journalism. The terms that journalists and editors in Aamulehti refer to the civic turn are “public journalism”, “citizen-oriented journalism” and “reader-oriented journalism”. The approach has become such an integral part of the newspapers work that the journalists have difficulties in identifying the early roots of public journalism in their paper. It is even a bit funny that many interviewed journalists or editors mentioned their own department as the home of citizen-based methods. The journalists, however, quite consistently and in fact quite accurately trace back the idea of citizen-oriented journalism to the last two editors-in-chief.

These projects have developed along the way, as you can see. These are things that we have been thinking for a long time, but I cannot really say very precisely, when or where these started. (Journalist, Aamulehti)

The use of many differing terms to interpret the civic turn is a bit problematic. The term reader-orientation is sometimes used as a synonym for public journalism even though the meaning, I assume, is slightly different. The connotation of “reader” in the term reader orientation is closer to “consumer” than “citizen”. The market logic is most clearly apparent in the answers of the executive level. Therefore I am inclined to say that the term reader orientation is used in Aamulehti to refer to the needs of the readers as consumers and subscribers. The terms public journalism and citizen orientation, in contrast, are used to refer to situations where people are actively taken along in the news-making process. This division is not, however, very clear at all times.

In Aamulehti, the larger framework of public journalism is thus viewed from varying angles. More than half of the interviewed reporters name the term public journalism difficult to define. Thus, there is a discourse about “getting close to the reader” in all the reporters answers, but the more precise definition of public journalism is not that evident.

The word public journalism is fancy, but to my understanding, you can fit many things under that heading. I don't even try to remember the definitions for it, but for me it is the point to get the voice of the people, we should listen to them more. (Journalist, Aamulehti)

The journalists in Aamulehti pointed out that ideas never come out of nothing, and thus the roots of public journalism are connected to historical developments of journalism in general. Many journalists mentioned the roots of journalism in the ideas of being a public forum for discussion and a provider of useful information. They saw that the tradition of citizen-based journalism is part of this continuum.

The general view among journalists in Aamulehti seems to be that the staff has quite widely accepted the citizen-oriented approach as the way of doing journalism. Since Aamulehti – in contrast to the two other newspapers in this study – has the longest history of public journalism approach, there has been more time for the journalists for socialization to the particular newsroom culture and its values, routines and rituals (see e.g. Shcudson 1991). There are critical voices, too, but even the criticizers have adopted the guidelines of reader-oriented approach as employees of the organization – and as professionals.

Even those who have the strongest doubts, still do what they are told, they have a sense of self-protection. It is part of professionalism, and it is paid work. (Journalist, Aamulehti)

Prevailing conditions of the journalistic culture. The professional culture of Aamulehti has determinately been developed towards reader-orientation. The editors refer to the concept as a certainty.

I don't know how to explain these certainties; it is like the sun rises from the East. It is just as it is. -- The newspapers used to be established to advocate certain thoughts or ways of

thinking, and in this case the thought is that of the citizens and readers, their matters. (Editor, Aamulehti)

For the journalists it was also easy to identify the idea of reader-orientation. Whereas the term public journalism was difficult to define or explain, the idea of reader or citizen-orientation was well captured. Few of the journalists mentioned that compared with the previous papers they had been working, the difference was clear. The reader-oriented goals become apparent “in between the lines”, but they are also clearly articulated in the staff meetings and education.

Citizen-orientation is part of the journalistic objectives of the paper. It became clear in the first days of the work, in the tutoring sessions but also in between the lines, in the practical work. (Journalist, Aamulehti)

In addition to reader-orientation another prevailing element in the journalistic culture of Aamulehti is evident: activating the civic life. The ideas of activating people, encouraging them and helping them to create their own agenda are repeated often in the answers of the journalists. Such clear articulations point out that this kind of trend has not been a central aspect of journalistic professionalism of Aamulehti before. The journalists – and even more so, the editors – saw that the main task of Aamulehti is to foster the public discussion in the province. The remarks about the role of journalism as the activator of civic life clearly originate from the normative models of public journalism theory.

This is connected with the idea that people don't value politics any more, and the decision makers have drifted away from the citizens. When we started, I saw this approach as answering to these questions. (Managing Editor, Aamulehti)

Professional self-reflection. As it can be seen from above, the two competing logics behind the civic turn are evident in the discourses of the news staff in Aamulehti. Journalists clearly identify the central role of journalism in civic life, but they also identify the market-logic and the element of “branding” in reader-oriented journalism. The interpretations of the civic turn therefore bring forth also a critical discourse about the justification of the approach. Some of the critical views are connected to the provincial role of the paper. The news van tours and the discussion events that are held in the province are interpreted mainly as a way to make Aamulehti visible in the areas where it wishes to reach more subscribers.

The main idea of the news van tours is to bring visibility for Aamulehti, it is very simply and clearly the point. The story is only a secondary purpose. (Journalist, Aamulehti)

I think Aamulehti has clearly built itself a brand as newspaper that is close to its readers. All these discussion events and news vans are not just public journalism, but it is all part of the marketing side too, to make Aamulehti visible in the province. (Journalist, Aamulehti)

The combination of normative-economic justification that is viewed acceptable by the journalists is Itä-Häme, is not easily swallowed by that reporters in Aamulehti. This critical ethos of the reporters can be seen to

rises from the tradition of the democratic corporatist system: the business logic should be bracketed into its own field, and business, like other similar fields, should be the work for distinct professionals. In societies where the idea of professional communities with special qualifications, rules and practices and autonomy is widely diffused, it is more likely that journalists, too, will adapt to professional ideals such as autonomy (e.g. Hallin & Mancini 2004, 196). The management level of Aamulehti seems to have no problems in combining the normative justifications with the economic. They are very aware of media competition and in their answers the normative and economic justifications go hand in hand.

Reader-orientation is the first thing that defines the way Aamulehti is done. The strategy of the whole company is based on that. When the reader is in the focus, the paper will succeed mentally and economically. (Managing Editor, Aamulehti)

The critical discourse connected with the marketing purposes is clearly stronger in Aamulehti than in other two papers. Even in the case of Itä-Häme, where public journalism approach is strongly rooted in the financial needs of the paper, the journalists seem more understanding to the economic pressures than in Aamulehti. Could the explanation be as simple as the direction of the circulation figures? Aamulehti has been able to secure its position, but the circulation of Itä-Häme is declining.

Another point of critical self evaluation is brought up by journalists who think that public journalism is just a fancy word and nice phrase for the gala speeches, but the methods are actually quite superficial. They mention that doing public journalism is hard work and quite challenging and it should be shown as an attitude in the daily work, but the reality is different. The election projects and big events are just show offs, and in the everyday work public journalism methods are not used due to their challenging nature or their poor usability. Editors seem more positive about the fact that public journalism is part of the reporters' toolkit and that citizen orientation has been assumed as a mentality by the staff.

Role of the citizen at provincial level. In contrast to the local Itä-Häme, the position of the citizen in the provincial level is not to act as the partner for the journalists in their search for autonomy. Aamulehti, as the third biggest newspaper in Finland, seems quite sure of its role as a critic and watchdog, so that the citizens are not harnessed to that purpose. However, in the so called encounter stories, in which citizens from the province, are taken to discuss with the ministers in Helsinki, the citizen is seen as a representative of the province and the grass root level. In this sense the provincial citizens are taken positioned as a counterforce to the governmental politics orchestrated from Helsinki, but it seems that the paper doesn't need the citizens to boost its own position as a watchdog but rather as a common voice of the province.

A goal is to increase reader-activism, it means that the reader cannot only be the object, but that he needs to act as well. He needs to be the voice of the ordinary inhabitant of this province, too. (Journalist, Aamulehti)

Aamulehti clearly positions itself as the main actor in the provincial public sphere. The public sphere needs to be vitalized and the citizens need to be activated to take part in the public life, in that sense the citizens are actually positioned as objects that need to be helped. The idea becomes evident when the journalists talk about the discussion events that are organized around the province. The journalists see that if it wasn't

for Aamulehti, no one in the region would be willing to organise public debates in some of the smallest towns.

As a contrast to these notions, it is interesting that the position of the citizen in the public journalism approach of Aamulehti is quite demanding. Because the approach is mainly based on discussions and dialogue, the role of the public is central. Without them there would be nothing to write about. Citizens are wished to be active and well prepared. Sometimes the expectations are so high that the journalists become disappointed by the low level of participants in the discussions of the auditoriums or by the news van. Thus, active participation of the citizens is like return gift for the newspaper's troubles to organise public discussions in the province or meetings with ministers. Some journalists in Aamulehti mention that it is sometimes very difficult to get people discuss and comment local issues in public. Some even consider the Finnish "underdeveloped discussion culture" as the main obstacle for practicing public journalism.

Helsingin Sanomat and the national public sphere

Helsingin Sanomat is a national newspaper and it has an overwhelming position in the Finnish media field with its circulation of 430 785. The second largest newspaper is a tabloid, Ilta-Sanomat (195 673), but it is left far behind Helsingin Sanomat. The structure of the national press market is quite unique. The electronic media and the tabloids are seen as the closest competitors for Helsingin Sanomat in the national level of the public sphere.

During the Finnish parliament elections in 2003 Helsingin Sanomat wanted to base its pre-election reporting on "citizens' agenda" rather than on the agenda of the political elite. With the project the newspaper wanted to come closer to the "ordinary citizen". The election project was a result of the discussions within the department of politics in Helsingin Sanomat and the relatively vague idea of "doing something different" was developed further by the chief of the politics department. He had been inspired by public journalism and sought examples of election coverage from the public journalism style projects in the United States and from the American journalism literature, for example the Poynter Election Handbook.

After the planning period Helsingin Sanomat ordered a telephone survey from a research company. In the survey about 1000 voters were interviewed. They were asked an open question: What is the most important question that you would like to have an impact in this election? And they also gave 40 formulated statements, which the voters were able to evaluate on a scale of very important – not important at all. The most important themes turned out to be health care, taking care of elderly and the unemployment issue. These themes were then covered in a series of stories that were done as a team work. The approach followed quite systematically the American election projects which have been based on the "citizens' agenda" (see e.g. Potter), but on the other hand, nothing as thorough as this had not been done before in the Finnish press, and in that sense the approach was a sign of the civic turn of journalism at the national level.

Interpreting the arrival of public journalism. Most if the journalists in Helsingin Sanomat were familiar with the term “public journalism”, but a clear label of public journalism was never given to the election project. The phrases that are used by the journalists in Helsingin Sanomat are “the view of the readers” and “activating the citizens”. In Helsingin Sanomat the citizen-based election coverage is seen as a distinct project, thus in a way as a deviation from the normal political reporting. Journalists underline that the citizen-oriented election coverage was a planned intent with a beginning and an end. The interviewees expressed that journalists are usually willing to take part in clearly defined projects especially if they are connected to central tasks of journalism such as parliamentary election coverage, which is a high point of national journalism and quite distinguishable from the everyday routines.

The arrival of public journalism to Helsingin Sanomat is connected to the central role of the (former) chief of the politics department. Central role of the chief and the project frame are the clearest dimensions in the journalists’ own interpretations of the election coverage. However, some suggestions about the wider shift – the broader civic turn – in the professional values are hinted by few journalists:

In the domestic affairs department we have had this focus for a few years now about the ordinary people, you have to get the ordinary people in the story. In that sense, this project didn’t seem that new to me. (Journalist , Helsingin Sanomat)

I think in general the journalists as professionals have started to think more about the process of doing a story. For instance the questions about public: Who are you writing for? This discussion is nowadays more active. (Journalist, Helsingin Sanomat)

The civic turn is thus interpreted to be a wide trend in the field of journalism, and the shift is connected to emphasised role of the reader. Inside the large newsroom of Helsingin Sanomat the shift is being exemplified by increased co-operation between the different departments and by the removal of the old division between politics and domestic affairs sections in the paper. The journalists interpreted such a division as old fashioned and saw that it prevented ways to report the political decisions and the effects those decisions in the same story.

According to the interviews, after the turn of the millennium there had been more talk about the “ordinary people”, but the discussion was mostly been on the level of “serving the readers”. A group of interviewees summarised the shift in this way:

- We have got closer to people during the past years due to many reasons; people have become more enlightened, they contact us more vigorously with e-mail...
- The circulation figures have gone down.
- Yes they have gone down, and they have made us think how we could, so to speak, serve the readers better.

The circulation pressures are apparent in this quotation, but as mentioned, that is not a substantial dimension in the general interpretation of the civic turn in Helsingin Sanomat. However, it is interesting to see that the journalists see that the readers have become more “enlightened”, and thus also more demanding.

Prevailing conditions of the journalistic culture. The journalists’ interpretations about the election project and about the civic turn illuminate some prevailing elements of the newsroom culture in Helsingin Sanomat.

The evaluation of the election coverage brought up a discourse about the flow of news vs. planning the news coverage. It is very clear that the election coverage of 2003 was valued by the journalists for its organized and well-planned structure. Journalists valued the way in which the citizens' agenda created with the survey gave a way for the newspaper to define its own practice in the election coverage. On the other hand some journalists mentioned that heavy planning might also work against itself due to the fact that journalism at its best should follow the flow of the news and react to the changing situations.

I remember that some journalists thought this was a shockingly stupid way to do election coverage, to chain the reporter into this plan. (Journalist, Helsingin Sanomat)

The emphasis on planning indicates that the usual way of doing political journalism in Helsingin Sanomat is not that organized and does not follow any scripted plans. Normally work concentrates on following the flow of potential news material that is provided by the political apparatus and the public administration. In the democratic corporatist countries the strong administrative system functions as a reliable source of information and thus forms the basis of professional, "neutral" journalism. The interplay between the authorities and the press is based on mutual understanding about serving the ends of social progress; the corporatist idea of consensus and social partnership. Journalistic professionalization thus goes hand in hand with the professionalization of public administration. (Hallin & Mancini 2004, 194–195, 244).

Political journalists in Helsingin Sanomat express the value of objective or neutral reporting. Objectivity has been firmly rooted in the Finnish journalists' professional values after the gradual decline of the party press system and movement towards the "catch all" mass circulation press system. What is more interesting than the notions about objectivity, however, is the fact that in the context of the civic turn the journalists also recognize quite clearly that media and journalists are active players in the national public sphere; they can and will affect the public discussion. Thus a slight shift in the firm status of the administration as the primary source of news is apparent.

The interviews also clearly indicate that journalists are very well aware of the leading role of Helsingin Sanomat as the site for national public debate. Journalists in Helsingin Sanomat recognise the power of the national newspaper as agenda setter and as the catalyst of public discussion. This public discussion is, however, largely identified as the debate of the elites. The journalist mentioned that they had seen results from a reader survey, and based on those they had the idea that the readers see Helsingin Sanomat as a powerful but distant newspaper. The sense of distance was articulated also by the frequent notions about the importance of setting the citizens in the focus more actively. Therefore journalist welcomed public journalism especially as a method which could make the readers react to the stories more actively. Direct reader feedback was generally mentioned to be quite scarce, even though e-mail and internet have made it easier to give feedback.

According to the interviews, another prevailing characteristic of professional political journalism in Helsingin Sanomat is the autonomy of an individual journalist. In the politics department the nature of the work is usually individual and also quite self-directed. Pair work or teamwork with journalists from different departments is considered to be a useful yet underused method of working.

Professional self-reflection. The evaluation of the citizen-oriented approach of Helsingin Sanomat brings up two sets of critical self-reflections. The first one is targeted at the “old way” of doing election coverage. In many accounts the election project of 2003 was compared with the previous handling of the parliamentary election. According to journalists the previous election coverage had been shapeless and disorganized. Simply: the election coverage has traditionally been about the election as an event, whereas the citizen-based coverage was about election as issues that make a difference for the voters. It seems that criticism was directed at the traditional election coverage because the usual way of handling the election coverage in Helsingin Sanomat was more reactive than proactive. With the election project the paper was able to step aside from the continuous flow of (institutionally defined) news supply that it usually follows and stand out as an active agenda setter on its own.

During the last election we did things really differently. We went to the events the political parties held and it was just like that, we repeated their sayings. - - This time it was good, at least we tried to do it in a citizen-based way. (Journalist, Helsingin Sanomat)

The second set critical reflection deals with the abstract nature of political reporting. Some argued that the stories produced during the project were still too abstract and were not linked with the actual election clearly enough. According to journalists it would be ideal to have a more concrete connection between the thematic issues and the views of the parties and the general situation in the election. Most of the critical notions about abstractness were, nonetheless, directed at the usual way to cover politics as an abstract game of political players or legal matters as spectacle that takes place in the court house:

This project acted as a reminder of the fact that journalists should more often look at things (criminal issues) from the streets of the suburbs than from the lobby of the court house. It is so easy to stay in the position where you talk in an abstract manner and on a general level and about very big issues. So in this sense, the project was a reminder. (Journalist, Helsingin Sanomat)

Role of the citizen at national level. In the leading national daily, readers are positioned in a different way than in the local or provincial press. The main role for citizens in Helsingin Sanomat is to provide the stories with “citizen angle”, which has been neglected earlier in the political reporting and election coverage. The journalists acknowledge that they should pay more attention to the citizens and have more respect for them.

It is important to give attention the opinions of ordinary people. The newsrooms should really follow and listen to people’s everyday lives more carefully and write stories about that. Journalist, Helsingin Sanomat)

Sometimes ordinary people are just like elements that we use in a dramaturgic way, but they can also have very good knowledge about their own field, and in that sense they are also experts. (Journalist, Helsingin Sanomat)

In the local setting of Itä-Häme the public is seen as a partner of journalism against the machinery of the decision-makers, and in Aamulehti the central role of the public is to discuss and interact with the politicians. In contrast, the position of the citizen in Helsingin Sanomat is less concrete. Ideally, citizens would act as

experts in their own lives, but in practice the citizens are often positioned as elements in the stories. Thus compared with the situation in Itä-Häme or Aamulehti the journalists in Helsingin Sanomat seem to view citizens in a bit more symbolic way. For the journalists in Helsingin Sanomat citizens are in many ways device that are needed for writing a story that has the “citizen angle”: citizens make up a nice beginning for a story or act as examples.

This might result in the situation where civic action is lifted out of its larger context rather than it would be integrated into the journalistic practices. Citizens may be asked to prepare (anonymous) questions for the politicians or act as informants in a survey, but the relationship between the journalists and the citizens is not very operational or active, even though the methods of public journalism were valued for their possibilities to enhance citizen–journalist interaction.

Is it simply due to the very nature of the national public sphere that the citizens are positioned in a symbolic way? I am hesitant to make such direct conclusions, but it is possible that the rather monopolistic role of Helsingin Sanomat as *the* forum of national public discussion poses more demands on journalists to justify as to why certain citizens are given access to the public sphere and others are not. In other words, at the national level of public sphere there are more pressures for the citizens to represent a larger group than in a local setting. Therefore it might be less controversial for journalists in Helsingin Sanomat to “use” citizens as anonymous voices or examples of something rather than to adopt truly participatory ways of doing citizen-based journalism.

Conclusion

In this paper I looked at the role of local, provincial and national contexts and the interpretation of public journalism in three different newspapers. The professional journalistic culture was thus studied from a view that takes into account the diversified nature of the professional values within a certain country. The analysis pointed out that the arrival of public journalism – the so called civic turn – is interpreted in various ways in the newsrooms. The findings are summarised in Table 1.

It is evident that the context of the newspaper provides different kinds of challenges to professional journalism on each level of the public sphere. For instance the financial situations of the newspapers cast different kinds of shadows to each of the newspapers and their way to frame the civic turn. It is rather interesting that the economic aspect were minimal in the answers of the journalist from Helsingin Sanomat compared with Itä-Häme, which also struggles with declining circulation. Moreover, Aamulehti is the only one of the three newspapers that has a steady circulation, but the economic pressure was clearly articulated as a force behind the reader-oriented approach. The economic situation of the newspapers cannot thus be used as direct explanations to the interpretations of journalists. The market logic in the discourses of the journalists is rather a result of the existing newsroom cultures than a result of the actual financial situation. It seems that in Aamulehti the sense of competition is more concrete than for instance on the national – and rather monopolistic – level of the media field, where the points of comparison are not that easily found. At

least in a large organisation like Helsingin Sanomat the journalists do not have to take into consideration the market logic as part of their professional evaluations.

	Framing civic turn	Prevailing conditions	Critical reflections	Role of citizens
Itä-Häme	Civic approach as organizational development (+recruitment), connected with circulation pressures	Tight relations with local authorities, but the paper is distant from the readers.	More sharpness is needed in reporting, also in "civic articles". More activeness required from the whole staff.	Citizens help the paper to maintain distance from the local authorities.
Aamulehti	Longer development of reader-oriented methods in the paper, connected to economic pressures and sense of competition.	Reader orientation articulated as the basis of all work, and the need to activate the provincial public sphere.	Public journalism and the projects are also a tool for "branding", the big events are show-offs.	Paper helps to activate civic life, and citizens are required activeness in return.
Helsingin Sanomat	Own approach seen as distinct project, but larger civic turn is sensed.	Usual way is to follow the flow of news and material provided by authorities. The paper is seen as a centre of national public discussion.	The "old way" of covering the elections is too shapeless. Still too much abstractness in reporting.	A clear wish to get the ordinary citizens interested in and represented in journalism. Citizens still more in a symbolic role.

Table 1. Summary of the interpretations of "civic turn".

Prevailing conditions of the journalistic cultures against which the civic turn is compared are also connected to the level of public sphere. The local newspaper wishes to separate itself from the influence of the local administration, which has become too close an ally for the paper during the past decades. The provincial paper, meanwhile, wants to continue in its acquired positions as the central public actor in the provincial public sphere. According to the findings in this paper, the national newspaper is at crossroads: it is pondering whether to continue following the agenda set by the national political and administrative apparatus and keep itself in the role of the transmitter of that information, or whether to identify itself in a more proactive way as an actor in the public sphere and build up its strong role on the basis of that.

The interpretations about the civic turn also acted as a tool of critical self evaluation. The criticism of the journalists in each newspaper was in many cases directed to the role of the management or the tightly scheduled newsroom culture, but this cannot be said to be a clear pattern. Local, provincial or national contexts together with different histories with public journalism in each of the newspaper resulted in various critical reflections about the watchdog role of the paper, the marketing purposes of the public journalism and about the traditional ways to write about political affairs. The critical reflections point out that the way in which public journalism approach is justified in the paper affects the direction of criticism.

The public service orientation, which according to Hallin and Mancini (2004) is one of the key factors in professionalism, is nowadays continuously been contested by the market logic that is crossing the borders between marketing departments and editorial office. Public journalism is by no means free of this market logic, and some claim that public journalism is actually in the centre of this transformation. According to observations in this paper it is possible to say that public journalism is being justified by the market-logic as well as the democratic logic at the same time. The context of the newspaper – the level of public sphere and

the economic situation of the paper – seems to affect the intensity in which the either of the logics is being articulated.

The clearest differences are apparent in the ways in which the position of the citizen is interpreted at different levels. In the local context the public is viewed as the partner of journalism in the attempts to revitalise the local public sphere and in the attempts of the local journalism to maintain its autonomy in relation to the local administration. In the provincial context journalism does not need the public similarly as partners as in the local context. The public is sooner seen as a resource for journalism and therefore the newspaper is willing to activate and help the public. On the national level, the citizens are positioned more traditionally as readers, and the interaction between the citizens and the journalists is therefore less active.

There were also a lot of similarities in the ways the news people interpreted the civic turn. The first and most obvious one is the problematic citizen–journalist relationship. Regardless of the level of public sphere in which the newspaper acts the citizen–journalist relationship was considered problematic. The aim of getting closer to the readers and their everyday lives is very strongly apparent in all of the studied newspapers. Another clear trend in the interpretation of the civic turn is the pace of the development. No matter how many reform projects or how many different civic methods had been applied, in all the newspapers the civic turn was described as a slow process that is still going on. The challenging nature of public journalism approach was also apparent in all of the cases. Some hesitations were also expressed in every newsroom about the usefulness of the methods or the possibilities to apply the public journalism approach. These similarities can be put down to the nature of the journalistic work in general. Some aspects of professional journalism are similar in every newsroom.

In the light of this analysis, the tools that public journalism provides for development of journalism seems more appropriate for local and provincial levels. Or rather, the public journalism approach of Helsingin Sanomat in this case appears to be less connected with its public than the approaches of Aamulehti and Itä-Häme. The potential of public journalism is better appropriated in the more extensive and permanent approaches than in the short term projects. The smaller newspapers have developed their citizen-oriented approaches towards more interactive and dialogical direction than Helsingin Sanomat. In the local level the public is seen as a suitable partner for journalism in the efforts to activate and diversify the local public sphere to include viewpoints and voices outside the administrative field. It is also worth to note that more important than the national–regional–local context are in some cases the underlying thematic decisions and framings of public journalism approaches. For instance it is clear that in Helsingin Sanomat the public journalism approach in this case was strongly connected to election coverage, and the views about public journalism and public sphere were therefore defined by the “election frame” rather than by a broader civic frame.

It is clear that the closest point of reference to the newspapers and their staff is their immediate circulation area whether it is local, provincial or national. That area is most often used as point of departure in the journalists’ interpretations. But is the circulation area same as the public sphere in which the newspaper act? The simple answer to that is: the journalists seem to think that it is. According to the interviewed journalists,

the public spheres in which the newspapers act have the press in the centre. The journalists see that public discussion is led by the newspaper and the public agenda is set in the newspaper.

Thus, in the Finnish public journalism cases the public sphere is by definition a *journalistic* public sphere. It is not natural for the journalists to explicate that other kinds of public spheres might also exist, since the role of the newspaper is seen so central. Journalists see that associations, organizations, parents, students, activists, political parties and so forth exist and function quite actively in their own fields, but they need the (journalistically steered) public sphere in order to gain established position and via that position take part in the public discussion. The inclusion of unorganized civic activity is clearly a challenge for the newspapers at every level. The tradition of democratic corporatism might have led to the situation, where journalists as professionals see themselves being closer to the state and to the organizations than to unorganized citizens. In the democratic corporatist countries there exists interplay between rational-legal authorities and journalistic professionalism. The development of rational-legal authority has led to the situation where the bureaucratic systems form a common source for news and criteria for newsworthiness. (Hallin & Mancini 2004, 195)

The idea of the journalistic public sphere stems of course partly from the public journalism theory, which by definition positions journalism as the mediator between civic field and political field, and it is therefore the very task of journalism to act in the centre as the catalyst of the public sphere. It is interesting to notice that the interviewed journalists do not clearly explicate the much repeated criticism towards public journalism: that public journalism poses a threat for professionalism in the sense that the citizens are taking over the roles of the journalists. In this case, the journalists seem to interpret the civic turn within the boundaries of professional journalism.

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