”Nokia Meets Society – Intertwined economic and political narratives of multinational corporations”

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Starting point

• The purpose of corporate speech, and its position in affecting public discourse and political speech

• The economization of language – when the linguistics and vocabulary of economics become the de facto language to legitimize policy.

Case study


• Focus of Finland, but with room to expand to e.g. Germany.

• Materials: 1) Nokia press releases; 2) Related newspaper articles in Helsingin Sanomat, Kauppalehti, and Iltalehti/Iltasanomat; 3) political debate transcripts from the Finnish Parliament
Discussions in the Finnish parliament

Texts in the Finnish printed media

Nokia press releases

Empirical material: levels of analysis

To start in July 2013; only preliminary findings

Planned for 10-11/2013

90% done on second round of analysis
The foundation of economic language in society, and achieving the status of common sense (Gramsci)

Impetus in an ideological frame, realized through discourse. Here for example the media lends "common sense" pervasiveness and staying power

Example of pervasive common sense based on economic terms: the public sector is wasteful and massively in debt → this common sense enables limited interpretations and invites policy decisions based on this common sense alone

Related also to personal narratives (=personal psychology), but this is beyond the scope of my dissertation (possible post-doc hypothesis?)
Preliminary content analysis of press releases 1992-2012 1/1

- Encoding almost complete, with emphasis on codewords for categorizing each release, such as *consolidation* and *divestment*

- Some 1480 press releases analyzed. *Divestment* and *consolidation* releases only account for 2% of the total number.

- In some cases these messages were hidden; Nokia announced acquisitions into Nokia on the part of other companies to indirectly mask their divestment of a business area

- Nokia CEO (Ollila, Kallasvuo, Elop) most often the spokesman of the company both in times of growth and decline

- The narrative structure of the press release seemed to evolve into a highly standardized mode throughout the years; signs of message control within the narrative increased.
Divestment and consolidation decisions seek to achieve legitimacy status.

Certain discursive tropes highly common in relation to divestment:
- Market or competitive pressure
- Efficiency claims
- Core business protection
- Savings necessity
- Unavoidable, tough decisions, for the sake of the future

Very few references to public support/political intervention relating to these decisions.

Most political/regulatory references related only to business acquisitions.
Preliminary content analysis of media coverage of Nokia’s restructuring cases in Finnish newspapers 1992-2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Number of articles (N=535)</th>
<th>% of N</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1996-1999</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>5.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>2000-2003</td>
<td>56</td>
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<tr>
<td>2004-2007</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>25.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>2008-2012</td>
<td>293</td>
<td>54.8</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Conclusion & next steps

- A specific way of talking about business within business.

- The media does not have a strong role in driving critique; only after 2007 we could see more diverse and critical reporting.

- Variety of sources; interdisciplinary nature of the dissertation is also its most likely weakness.

- Theoretical foundations still need solidification.

- If Nokia press releases contain no recognizable signal to be followed in public discourse (newspapers), what then?