Public Servants' Values and Mental Mediatization – an Empirical Study of Swedish Local Government

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Abstract

Public servants' value dispositions is a central theme of inquiry in Public Administration research. Various trends and reforms in the public sector, New Public Management, the audit society, marketisation and mediatization, for example are expected to affect these values. This article analyses whether, and in what ways, mediatization affects public servants' values. Drawing on survey data from local government officials, we explore the mediatization thesis at the level of individual public servants using the concept of *mental mediatization*. Regarding their values, we empirically establish a dominance of organizational professionalism rather than democratic professionalism among local government public servants. We then analyze mediatization at the level of individual public servants in local government, in contrast to previous research which has focused on the mediatization of politics and central government. While finding an interesting gap between strong beliefs in, but little self-assessed impact of, mediatization, the article rejects an expected correlation between mental mediatization and public servants' value dispositions.

Introduction

The value disposition of public servants is crucial for a functional democracy where the implementation of political decisions should have legitimacy. It is also a central theme of inquiry in public administration research (Perry and Wise 1990; Vandenabeele 2007; Lundquist 2001; Horton 2006a). Much research has pointed out a change in public servants' value dispositions from democratic professionalism towards organizational professionalism, which prioritizes organizational interests over those of democratic public service ethos (Evetts 2009; Noordegraaf 2007; Salminen and Mäntysalo 2013). Various causes of this shift have been identified, but practices inspired by New Public Management, such as performance measurement systems (Johansson 2016), are often seen as the common root (Horton 2006b). Other related reasons include marketisation (Brunsson and Jutterström 2018; Kastberg 2005), company-ization (Brunsson 1994), the audit society (Power 1997; Johansson and Lindgren 2013; Lindgren 2006; Jacobsson et al 2019) and public servants' administrative burden, bureaucratization and red tape (Hall 2012; Forsell & Ivarsson Westerberg 2014; Agevall et al 2017). The trends and reforms have led to a landscape, where public organizations' external relations are more important than ever (Rhodes 1996; Peters and Pierre 2000) and public organizations need to make their activities and results visible and accessible in order to be regarded as legitimate and efficient in the public eye. The way in which organizations interact with, and are represented in, the mass media and social media has become a concern

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for contemporary public organizations, a phenomenon addressed in mediatization research (Schillemans 2012; Fredriksson & Pallas 2014; Pierre & Djerf-Pierre 2016; Olsson & Eriksson 2016). This articles probes into the relationship between mediatization and public servants' value dispositions by applying Marcinkowski's (2014) concept of *mental mediatization* to survey data collected among Swedish local government public servants in 2016.

Early mediatization theory, focusing in particular on representative politics, has approached mediatization from the point of view of the media, and thus presented it as a universal trend of expanding colonization of politics by the media (Schulz 2004; Hjarvard 2008). Mediatization of administrative bodies is a less explored but emerging field of research (Garland et al 2017). Some key works of Schillemans (2012), Thorbjørnsrud et al (2014), Pallas and Fredriksson (2016), Schillemans and Pierre (2019) and a special issue of *Policy & Politics* (44:1, edited by Schillemans & Pierre 2016), have discussed the mediatization of public organizations and acknowledges public organizations' agency in relation to the media. Studies have indicated how organizations incorporate the logics of media and employ specific strategies to interact with the media (Marcinkowski and Steiner 2014; Thorbjørnsrud et al 2014; Fredriksson and Pallas 2017; Figenschou et al 2019).

Most research has focused on the levels of central government and state agencies (see for example Maggetti, 2012; Reunanen et al 2010; Sanders et al 2011; Djerf-Pierre 2008; Erlandsson 2008; Figenschou et al 2019) along with several studies focusing on the interplay between the media considerations of central governments/state agencies and organizational practices (Thorbjørnsrud et al 2014; Fredriksson 2015; Schillemans 2016; Fredriksson et al 2016). Local government has not been studied extensively within mediatization research (Fredriksson et al 2018; see however Pierre & Djerf-Pierre 2016[1]) despite the fact that it is vital for public service delivery in many countries. In Sweden, for instance, education, elder-care, child-care, some healthcare and infrastructure are services for which local government is responsible. Local government is not only a relevant research locus in mediatization research, but based on findings from previous research (e.g. Schillemans 2012), its centrality in providing public services as well as its close contact with citizens also makes it a likely target of mediatization. Furthermore, empirical indications to support this expectation can be found, for instance, in the increased number of job titles dealing with the media in local government (Hall 2012; Johansson et al 2018). In addition, the fact that mediatization appears different in different organizations points towards the need to study the different levels of government and individual public servants in more detail (Marcinkowski 2014; Marcinkowski and Steiner 2014; Fredriksson & Pallas 2014).

In addition to the lack of focus on local government, we also know very little about individual public servants' beliefs and priorities with regard to mediatization. Previous research has shown that organizational practices can have a significant impact on public servants (Johansson 2016; Thorbjørnsrud et al 2014; Rawolle & Lingard 2010; Fredriksson et al 2015). Previous individual-level studies have, for example, focused on managers' various strategies and practices towards news media (Lee 2000; Klijn et al 2016; Jacobs and Wonnerberger 2019) and media-related stress (Schillemans and Karlsen 2019),

but there is a lack of research on the impact of mediatization on public servants' values. Marcinkowski (2014) has proposed the concept of mental mediatization to study public servants' beliefs and priorities regarding media and mediatization (also Kohring et al 2013; Wonneberger and Jacobs 2016; Jacobs and Wonneberger 2019). Picking up on his idea of mental mediatization this article addresses the above-mentioned gaps by focusing on local government public servants' professional value dispositions. The purpose of the article is to examine whether there is any correlation between mental mediatization and Swedish local government public servants' values by focusing on three aspects:

1. What are Swedish local public servants' values?
2. In what ways are Swedish local public servants mediatized?
3. To what extent can public servants' values be explained by mental mediatization?

The next section will present our conceptual framework building on two kinds of value dispositions and connect them to mental mediatization. We will then present our data and operationalizations followed by the findings. To preview the results, values related to organizational professionalism predominate over democratic professionalism, mental mediatization exists but is not universal among the public servants, and the correlation between mental mediatization and public servants' values is at best weak.

Conceptual Framework

The main hypothesis that emerges from the extant literature, and which is tested in this article, is that mediatization makes public servants more likely to prioritize their own organization and align with organizational, rather than democratic, professionalism. We construct this hypothesis in three steps. We will first discuss why democratic and organizational professionalism is a useful operationalization of public servants' values. We will then discuss mediatization and mental mediatization and, third, explicate the mechanism that connects mental mediatization to organizational professionalism.

Public Servants' Values: Two Types of Professionalism

Public servants are traditionally characterized by a bureaucratic role, a public ethos, and Public Service Motivation (PSM). For Woller (1998), these features constituted democratic professionalism.[2] For Perry and Wise (1990), who coined the term PSM, public servants are characterized by altruism in addition to an ethos to serve the public good (see also Vandenabeele 2007; Andersen et al 2012). Outside the US, PSM is a less used term, but other similar concepts exist. Lundqvists (2001) writing in the Swedish and Horton (2006a) in the UK context both argue that public servants are to be seen as democratic professionals who aim to serve democracy and the public good. Democratic professionalism is based on the bureaucratic ideal, where public servants are supposed to be neutral, impartial and responsibly implement political decisions while possessing the relevant policy expertise that is required for the purpose. This ideal has been particularly strong in the Swedish public sector (Pierre 1995; Szücs and

Strömberg 2005). Bureaucratic ideals of rule-following are sometimes described as opposites to democratic ideals of public interest and professional judgement, but the concept of democratic professionalism draws on both of these aspects. It is not possible to act democratic without respect for bureaucracy and vice versa. Both perspectives must be merged by the public servants and that is how democratic professionalism is defined in this article (Vigoda-Gadot & Mizrahi 2008; Woller 1998).

However, sociological research on professions (Evetts 2009) argues that a new professionalism, an 'organizational professionalism', has emerged to challenge democratic professionalism. Organizational professionalism refers to the individuals' capacity to navigate contemporary organizations and align with the priorities of the organization. It can be seen as a contrast to the ideals of democratic professionalism. Evetts's (2009) claims that professionals increasingly must adapt to the organizational interests by meeting managerial or external demands rather than solely focus on their core duties. In the context of public service, this could mean presenting information that benefit the organization rather than showing problems and challenges for the entire public sector as democratic professionalism would entail. Organizational professionalism is thus different from, and at least partially in conflict with democratic professionalism. In this article, Evetts's (2009) term *organizational professionalism* is used in contrast to *democratic professionalism*, and constitute the dependent variable of the analysis, with the aim to reflect the value dispositions of public servants.[3]

Given the Swedish public ethos tradition (Pierre 1995, Szücs & Strömberg 2005) one would expect democratic professionalism to prevail over organizational professionalism in Sweden. Yet, due to increasing complexity and external demands (Johansson and Lindgren 2013; Lindgren 2006; Jacobsson et al 2019), we also expect some presence of organizational professionalism among Swedish public servants. Evetts (2011) claims that people working with management, external forms of regulation, audit and measurement, targets and performance indicators, work standardization and financial control are more organizationally professional. These are all tasks that fit manager job description, and we therefore expect managers to show more organizational professionalism than other civil servants. These arguments form our first hypothesis:

H1: Democratic professionalism is contested by organizational professionalism, but it should prevail with the exception of managers, who are expected to be inclined towards organizational professionalism.

Mediatization and Professional Values

The main idea we elaborate on in this section is that mediatization can cause organizational professionalism – and some studies imply just such reasoning (see below). Mediatization is commonly described as an international megatrend (Hjarvard 2008; Strömbäck 2008) that makes organizations to adapt their operations to a *media logic* (Thorbjørnsrud 2015; Altheide and Snow 1979; Strömbäck and Esser 2014),). Yet, recent literature draws attention to the interaction between media and the organization, or sphere of life to be

mediatized, thus pointing out the contextual ways in which mediatization takes place (Marcinkowski and Steiner 2014; Fredriksson and Pallas 2017). This would imply different forms of mediatization in the case of different types of media. Marcinkowski (2014), approaching mediatization from Luhmann's systems theory, understands it as a process by which two distinct systems communicate in order to remedy a deficit in the system. Mediatization thus has a function. In the case of the local government, mediatization is connected to the questions of efficiency and legitimacy through its possibility to spread information, get the local government's point of view to the public, cultivate public opinion and enable democratic participation (Sjöström and Öhman 2018; Jacobs and Wonneberger 2019). Later studies have highlighted the need to distinguish between media logic(s). Klinger and Svensson (2015:1243) have argued for an important difference between the mass media and social media logic, where the former builds on expertise and professionally assessed news value and the latter for publicity and interest inducing content.

Previous studies have pointed out a number of mechanisms through which mediatization has come to affect organizational practices. Thorbjørnsrud et al (2014) point out that public organizations have used the media to pursue their own aims, that language has become more simplified to make it quicker and more accessible, that information tends to be narrated in stories with dramaturgy and that communication departments have acquired a central role in editing information from public servants before it reaches the public. Figenschou et al (2019) have studied the impact of mediatization on organizations' resource allocation and agenda. Some aspects of mediatization taking place at the organizational level may well have implications at the individual level too. For instance, Thorbjønsrud et al (2014) as well as Pallas et al (2016) show how interaction, roles, priorities, and work routines are affected. Public servants work more anticipatorily, tend to spend more time in planning and preparing media contacts. Figenschou et al (2019) also show that mediatization affects decision-making, and Fredriksson et al (2015) have even shown that public sector managers use their personal contacts with journalists to deal with public accountability demands. Jacobs and Wonneberger (2019) suggest that the agency of certain actors, such as communication managers, may be instrumental in contributing to mediatization hitherto understood mainly as a structural process. These observations indicate that individual public servants, not only their organizations, change in their interactions with the media, yet the connection between such changes in work practices and public servants' values remains largely unexplored. Furthermore, the aspect of public servants as consumers of media content about their municipality and local government is seldom recognized. By probing into the relationship between mediatization and professional values, we want to get a better view of public servants' relationship with increasing involvement of media in the affairs of the local government.

Our focus on the individual public servants requires an individual level conceptualization of mediatization rather than drawing on organizational level definitions that dominate the research field. Marcinkowski's (2014) concept *mental mediatization* puts the individual public servant at the heart of the analysis and allows us to include the impact of their media consumption, i.e. the media effects, on their values.

We focus on public servants' beliefs and experiences of mediatization, i.e. whether and how public servants' beliefs and experiences of mediatization are affected by mediatization itself. Mental mediatization for Marcinkowski represent the individual level communication between the media and, in our case, the local government. Our take on Marcinkowski's concept emphasizes its reflective nature, and has thus to be qualified in relation to two nearby concepts. First, mental mediatization in the sense we use it is not equal to media effects – the direct outcomes of media's impact on public servants, but it is rather a specific type of effect concerning the self-reflections of the subjects of media. Media effects are generally taken to affect the recipient of news, but mental mediatization refers to the changes in the *subject* of reporting; media effects concern the content of the media, but mental mediatization addresses the public servants' *anticipation* of news content; and finally, media effects affect the recipient's view on the object of reporting, but mental mediatization addresses the *public servants' view* on the media itself (Marcinkowski 2014). Second, mental mediatization emphasizes the reflective nature of what Wonneberger and Jacobs approach as "media orientation" (Wonneberger & Jacobs 2016). For them, media orientation primarily refers to public servants' assessment of media; for us mental mediatization refers to how public servants assess their own orientation to media and anticipate the effects of media publicity in their own work and value dispositions. In a later study Jacobs and Wonnerberger (2019) also take on a more reflective view on media orientation arguing that it refers to public servants' "media related attitudes... perceptions of [...] the importance and impact of the role of media coverage for their organization" (Jacobs & Wonneberger 2019, 921). Marcinkowski uses the metaphor of mirror to discuss mental mediatization: when public servants are watching the news, they are as if watching into the mirror – in addition to the news, they see themselves (or their organization) being presented in a particular way. From the systems theory perspective, mental mediatization refers to the changing nature of how public servants understand and react to what media is publishing about the local government (see Luhmann 1996). In other words, mental mediatization refers to the aspect of public servants "testing" and reflecting on how media represents information produced by the local government. To understand the dynamics of mental mediatization of public servants, we also apply research on third-person effect (Davison 1983) that focuses on the differential anticipation of media effects upon oneself and others. This will be discussed in more detail below.

As not all public servants are directly involved in producing media content, we approach mental mediatization through public servant's beliefs as well as experiences of mediatization. By linking this to public servants' value dispositions, we want to return the analysis to a more structural level concerning the local government as a distinct system. To capture this reflective aspect of mental mediatization, our research items approach mediatization from two different angles, that of public servants' beliefs about mediatization and that of their self-assessed impact of mediatization on their work and organization (see also Kohring et al 2013).

But what is the connection between mental mediatization and public servants' value dispositions? As discussed above, sociological studies have indicated a tendency of public servants to shift to or add an organizational

professionalism to their democratic professionalism. Below, we present three arguments implying that mediatization can be used to explain the emergence of organizational professionalism.

First, the local government organizations need to appear as successful in the media (Schillemans 2012; Fredriksson & Pallas 2014). Public servants evaluate this when consuming media content since they look in the "mirror" (Marcinkowski 2014). Their perception of how their organization is represented in the media influences their attitude to the media. This leads to a perceived need to manage organization's media relations (Kolltveit 2019), not least because the news narrative prefers moral scandals to political or structural explanations (Djerf-Pierre et al 2013). Public servants, having become more careful with what information reaches the media, may withhold information that is not favorable to their organization leading to a skewed and non-transparent image of the organization. (Figenschou and Thorbjørnsrud 2015).

Second, public servants often find the media to report negatively on them (Schillemans 2012, Lee 2000) and tend to treat all media attention as negative attention (Kolltveit 2019). Lee (2000) claims that there is a common dramaturgy in the narrative of the news media. Common archetypes of the media narrative of public organizations include, for instance the "underdog vs goliath" story, where the public servant is a bureaucrat with absolute power, "suffering victim vs inflexible rigid bureaucrat" setting, where the public servants has no situational understanding, or stories where the bureaucrats' solutions to citizens' problems imply only more bureaucracy (Schillemans 2012, Lee 2000). This leads to a defensive attitude towards journalists in line with organizational professionalism. In addition, such processes seem to be intensified through the rise of social media use (Pierre and Djerf-Pierre 2016; Olsson and Eriksson 2016). Such a defensive approach works similar to the first mechanism, but instead of public servants controlling the *kind of information* that reaches the media, this mechanism leads to public servants to limit the *amount of information* media has access to.

Neither of these mechanisms, however, mean that the public servants have a negative view on the importance of media in communicating with the public. The mechanisms concur with research on third-person effect in media research (Davison 1983; Perloff 2009). Public servants' media perception takes place in a triangle between their own position and organization, media coverage, and the population. Davison's argument goes that media content is perceived to affect others more than oneself, especially when the content is perceived as something negative. This leads to an incongruence between perceptions of one's own non-affected relation to media and other's presumed affected relation. As Perloff puts it: "one of the strongest influences of media is the presumption that they have influences, stipulating that this perception can itself engender a series of actions that would have been unthinkable in the absence of mediated communications." (2009:252). Consequently, the management of media relations turns towards managing the perceptions of the audience, which in this case is possible only by limiting the amount of information.

Third, public servants' values can be affected through the internal work processes of their workplace, that change due to mediatization (Thorbjørnsrud et al 2014; Agger Nielsen & Houlberg Salomonsen 2012). For example,

communicators have acquired more power by editing public servants' language and forging templates for communiques (Thorbjørnsrud 2015). Such changes in working methods and workplace routines can push public servants' values towards organizational professionalism (Maesschalck 2004; Mazur 2013; Ahlbäck Öberg & Bringselius 2015; Johansson 2016; Rawolle & Lingard 2010; Fredriksson et al 2015), since it becomes naturalized that organizational considerations are given priority over the expertise of the public servants.

Given the compound effects of the need to appear in a positive light in the media, the perceived negative bias and pressure of media coverage of the public sector, and finally the adaptation of organizational practices, it seems plausible to expect that mediatization affects public servants' values and gives incentives to align with organizational rather than democratic professionalism. This leads to our second hypothesis:

H2: The more mentally mediatized public servants are, the more they align with organizational professionalism over democratic professionalism.

The Not-So-Homogenous Group of Public Servants – Position and Occupation Matters

Despite general traits, ideals, education and structural conditions for public servants (Perry and Wise 1990; Lundquist 2001; Vandenabeele 2007; Peters and Pierre 2000), the local government offices are heterogeneous working places. We have two reasons to expect variation between occupational groups regarding mediatization.

First, occupational changes have taken place within public sector. Communicators and administrative staff have, in general, increased in numbers. Second, communicators have moved up in the hierarchy and operate often close to central decision-making (Johansson et al 2018; Forsell and Ivarsson Westerberg 2014; Hall 2012), which can be expected to make managers pay substantial attention to media considerations. Communicators' work is media-centered since their work is oriented towards making the organizations' activities visible in the mass and social media landscapes. Similarly, as Kantola (2014) shows, mediatization has become an important tool for corporate managers to deal with their external relations. We therefore expect public servants working with communication and information as well as those dealing with business relations to be more mediatized than others. We, thus, expect variation with regards to the level of mental mediatization between positions among the public servants. This is also supported by Pallas et al (2016), who show that media considerations were understood differently between occupational groups in "one of Sweden's most mediatized governmental agencies" (Pallas et al 2016:1666). This leads to our last hypothesis:

H3: Public servants working with communication and/or business relations, as well as managers are more mediatized than other public servants.

Methodology

Above it has been argued, first, that mediatization is to be expected among Swedish local governments and that previous research lends support to this

expectation. Second, we have argued that by focusing on mental mediatization (Marcinkowski 2014) we can study the correlation between alignment with media logics and public servants' values. The analysis will first explore public servants' preferences for organizational or democratic professionalism, then describe the mediatization and, finally, test whether the relation between organizational and democratic professionalism correlate with mediatization. Although mediatization is best understood as a process, Kohring et al. (2013) argue that the effects of mediatization appear in synchrony with organizational changes. Our data from Swedish local government public servants provides a snapshot picture of mediatization. Given the argument of Kohring et al. (2013) the data gives a reliable view of mediatization at a given moment of time (2016) even if it does not enable us to trace how mediatization of the public servants has changed over time. Moreover, in the absence of previous comparable data, it is worth exploring through logistic regression analysis whether mediatization can be a fecund explanation of organizational professionalism.

A Note on the Data

The survey "Local government public servants 2016"[4] was conducted within the project "Have roles and value patterns among local government public servants changed in the last thirty years?".[5] The data was collected during spring 2016. A survey form was digitally distributed to circa 2200 public servants in 50 Swedish local government offices, strategically selected to represent the typical municipality of Sweden. 959 responses were collected which gives a response rate of 43,6 %. This response rate is similar to contemporary surveys in Sweden, and high in international comparison. There is no information about the size or variation of the population, since there are no registers on local government public servants. Open information on official municipality websites was used to compile the sample. Such an approach may contain a bias as not all public servants are equally visible on web pages. It is likely that managers and communicators may be overrepresented in the sample, which is also in line with our third hypothesis. This potential bias in our material – as well as the findings of previous studies – provide a methodological as well as an empirical reason for controlling for potential occupational differences in our study. As of the background data, the variation in the dataset is satisfactory with regards to sex and municipality.

The questionnaire contained 109 items on contemporary Swedish local public servants' values, beliefs and experiences. The survey covered areas such as local government organization, tensions between democracy and efficiency, relations between politicians and public servants, working conditions, and other topics. Most questions were replicated from an earlier survey that, however, did not cover items on the media. These questions were included in the 2016 survey, as qualitative empirical material from the same research project showed increased media attention in local government offices.

Groups of Public Servants

In order to capture the different impact of mediatization among different occupational groups, the respondents were divided into three groups based on their likely contact with media. Communicators and public servants working

with business relations were classified as having to deal with media directly, managers, as discussed above, have to deal with media indirectly, mainly through, or together with, communicators, and all other operative and technical staff we classified in the third group without any direct contact with media in their explicit work tasks (Table 1).

Table 1. Occupation titles and relation to mediatization

Direct contact	Indirect contact	No explicit contact
- information and communications - economy and labor market	- manager	- general administrator - health and care - committee secretary - social work - case officers, coordinators, planning officers, general developers - security - IT - economist/accountant - technical staff - other qualified staff - international relations and others - HR-staff
n=62	**n=299**	**n=602**

*n is the total number of respondents in each group in the sample. Not all have answered the questions analyzed in this study.

Dependent Variables

Values appear when priorities must be made. Mental mediatization implies that public servants alter their priorities as they accommodate different media logics. In this article, such priorities are represented by survey items reflecting organizational and democratic professional values. We approach public servants' preference for organizational professionalism or democratic professionalism from two different angles. First, we focus on the dimension of organizational professionalism versus policy expertise through the question: "*It is more important that public servants are anchored in their local government organization than having knowledge about their policy area of expertise*".[6] Answers varied along a four-stage ordinal scale from "completely disagree" to "completely agree". Instead of a neutral middle option, there was a choice of "no opinion" coded as a missing value. Agreeing with the question indicates alignment with organizational professionalism. Second, to capture the dimension of organizational professionalism versus political allegiance, we used the question: "*Public servants are primarily responsible to the political leadership of the community and only secondarily to the organization they are employed by.*"[7] Here, the same responses were provided as above, but disagreement with the question indicates alignment with organizational professionalism. Although both questions measure organizational professionalism, they contrast it with two different aspects of democratic professionalism and were therefore kept separate in the analysis. The dependent variables are ordinal, but we have recoded them to binary variables and applied logistic regression in our study (Menard 2002).

Independent Variables

Mediatization research has been criticized for skipping the step of empirically validating that mediatization has occurred (Bolin 2019). In this article, five independent variables from the dataset indicating mediatization are used. Four of them derive from the previously presented conceptual definition of mental mediatization and focuses on public servants' self-reflections on mediatization. We will, in addition, include one research item that focuses on the concrete interaction between public servants and journalists. We use this as a control variable to check for differences between mental mediatization and more "explicit" measures of mediatization. (see Table 2). The first two questions map the public servants' beliefs about mediatization; the remaining three their experiences of mediatization.

Table 2. Variables indicating mediatization

Indicators	Survey items	Type
Importance of communication and information control	Local government should be more proactive towards media (Q1_6)	Belief
	Local government should advance government activities in social media (Q1_12)	Belief
Importance of reputation	The media image of the municipality affects my daily work (Q7_5)	Experience
Importance of social media	Debates in social media affects my daily work (Q7_15)	Experience
Frequency of contact with journalists	How often are you in contact with journalists (Q12_11)	Control (Experience)

*The variables Q1_6, Q1_12, Q7_5 and Q7_15 all range from 0 to 3. The variable Q12_11 ranges from 0 to 4.

The belief-variables are Likert-type questions with four options ranging from totally disagree to totally agree. Experience-questions concerning social media's and (the mass) media's impact on work range from "not at all" (0) to "very much" (3) and the control question on contacts with journalists from "never" (0) to "daily" (4). We have divided the items into beliefs and experiences heeding to Bolin's (2019) observation that mediatization is often an assumed rather than demonstrated phenomenon. Keeping public servants' beliefs as of mediatization distinct from their answers on their self-assessed experiences is a small step towards demonstrating to what extent mediatization is a process that explicitly changes public servants' work in the municipal administration in Sweden.

SES control variables (age, sex and education level)

The regression analysis controls for the standard biographic socioeconomic (SES) variables of age, sex and education level, where age is a categorical variable and sex and education are dummies. Education level controls for the presence of higher education degree (at least Bachelor's degree from a university). As it was earlier noted, managers may be overrepresented in the data. We have decided, however, not to control for different positions in the

regressions; instead we present descriptive data between groups of public servants, and control for interaction effects between different occupational groups (Table 1) and the main independent variables measuring mental mediatization.

Findings

The findings will be presented in two parts. First, we will cover the descriptive data of dependent and independent variables (H1 and H3). Second, we will present the regression models exploring our main hypotheses on mental mediatization and public servants' value dispositions (H2).

Descriptives: Values and Mediatization

Table 3 below shows that despite the arguments of public ethos and Public Service Motivation, most Swedish local public servants prioritize their own organization over democratic professionalism. At the aggregate level, organizational professionalism gets support over two-thirds (67 %) of the public servants when contrasted to policy expertise and over three-fifths (61 %) when contrasted with the political leadership of the community.

Table 3. Descriptives on the dependent variables. Response distribution in percent.

	Completely disagree	Disagree	Agree	Totally agree
It is more important that public servants are anchored in their local government organization than having knowledge about their policy area of expertise	(C&B) 8% (M) 7% (TO) 11% (tot.) 10%	22% 22% 24% 23%	47% 54% 43% 47%	24% 17% 22% 20%
Public servants are primarily responsible to the political leadership of the community and only secondarily to the organization they are employed by	(C&B) 35% (M) 13% (TO) 23% (tot.) 21%	35% 38% 41% 40%	27% 39% 30% 33%	4% 10% 6% 7%

*Table 3 first reports the percentage for communicators and business relations (C&B), second for managers (M), third for the technical and operative staff (TO) and finally for all respondents (tot).

These results indicate a preference for organizational rather than democratic professionalism and runs counter to our expectations derived from previous research. The disposition is observable among all three occupational categories, but it assumes slightly different forms depending on how organizational professionalism is understood. When contrasted to policy expertise all groups indicate similar levels of organizational professionalism (between 65 and 70%). When organizational professionalism is contrasted to political allegiance, managers are rather evenly divided (51% in favor of organizational professionalism) but communicators and staff working with business relations (70%) and technical and operative staff (65%) give clearer support for organizational professionalism. These findings question our first hypothesis (H1) on two accounts. First, a shift to organizational professionalism among the

Swedish local government public servants is an undeniable fact, but, second, managers do not stand out in this group. Rather, managers are more nuanced than other groups especially when it comes to considering the importance of political allegiance for the democratic anchoring of the local government

Distributions of mediatization responses are shown in Table 4. At the aggregate level, the most obvious difference emerges between the beliefs and experiences of local government public servants.

Table 4. Mediatization variables. Response distribution in percent.

Beliefs	Completely disagree	Disagree	Agree	Totally agree	
Local government should be more proactive towards media	(C&B) 0%	0%	40%	60%	
	(M) 0%	13%	52%	35%	
	(TO) 1%	13%	60%	27%	
	(tot.) 1%	12%	56%	32%	
Local government should advance government activities in social media	(C&B) 2%	3%	28%	67%	
	(M) 1%	9%	52%	39%	
	(TO) 1%	9%	53%	37%	
	(tot.) 1%	8%	51%	39%	
Experiences	**Not at all**	**A little**	**A lot**	**Very much**	
The media image of the municipality affects my daily work	(C&B) 8%	32%	34%	26%	
	(M) 23%	57%	19%	3%	
	(TO) 31%	51%	16%	2%	
	(tot.) 27%	52%	18%	4%	
Debates in social media affects my daily work	(C&B) 12%	31%	43%	14%	
	(M) 35%	52%	11%	2%	
	(TO) 40%	48%	9%	2%	
	(tot.) 37%	49%	12%	3%	
	Never	**Sometime per year**	**Sometime per month**	**Sometime per week**	**Every day**
How often are you in contact with journalists	(C&B) 4%	12%	37%	39%	8%
	(M) 4%	37%	46%	11%	3%
	(TO) 21%	49%	23%	6%	2%
	(tot.) 14%	43%	31%	9%	2%

*Table 4 first reports the percentage for communicators and business relations (C&B), second for managers (M), third for the technical and operative staff (TO) and finally for all respondents (tot.).

An overwhelming majority of public servants' beliefs score high levels of mental mediatization whilst their self-assessed experiences of mediatization's effects are much weaker. In other words, public servants reflect upon the importance of media, but when asked how much the media actually affects their work, apart from communicators and staff working with business relations, the answers indicate little impact. The clear difference between communicators and staff dealing with business relations and the rest indicates that the concrete effects of mediatization in the work of individual public servants seem to be compartmentalized to those in direct contact with the media. Even among managers the concrete effects of mediatization upon their work were not as high

as could be expected on the basis of previous research. This evidence leads us to reject our third hypothesis since all groups display equally strong beliefs in media visibility and are thereby equally mediatized. Also, managers do not stand out as more mediatized than others when it comes to the self-assessed impact on their work.

Another finding concerns the difference between the mass media and social media. Although most public servants believe that the local government should be more active in social media as well as towards the mass media (90% and 88% respectively), fewer felt that their work is affected by social media debates (15%) than by the mass media image (22%) of the municipality. This difference becomes greater if we filter out communicators and staff working on business relations. The desire for more activity in both social and the mass media speaks of the felt need to appreciate different media sources, but the difference with regard to the impact on their own work also points out the lesser significance of what goes on in – user induced – social media compared to the – professionally edited – mass media.

The indication from previous research, that public organizations employ more and more communicators, highlights the seriousness of media relations, but the findings above could perhaps add that these communicators have also successfully buffered the media from the rest of local government. Together with communicators, the public servants responsible for business contacts show high degree of mediatization.

Considering the overall mediatization thesis, the stark difference between beliefs and perceived effects can be interpreted as a support for the more organizational understanding of mediatization: it takes place in indirect ways, and most public servants know about it, understand its importance, but cannot easily point out where or how it happens. This would also be in line with the third-person effect, something we will elaborate later on.

Regressions: Can Mediatization Explain the Prevalence of Organizational Professionalism?

Above we have first shown that the values corresponding to organizational professionalism indeed predominate over those connected with democratic professionalism. The data also reveals that mental mediatization, especially regarding beliefs has occurred among most public servants, and within occupations that are in contact with the media, clearly affects their work. Next, we will probe into the relation between mental mediatization and public servants' values, i.e. type of professionalism.

Tables 5a and 5b present summaries of logistic regressions, where a positive correlation between mediatization and organizational professionalism is expected. Because the dependent variable measures organizational professionalism from two different angles we decided to keep the variables separate. Table 5a displays the regression models with policy expertise as dependent variable and table 5b with allegiance to political leadership as dependent variable. The regression models are run among all public servants (n=631 and 612 respectively) and controls for interaction effects between different occupational groups (see Table 2) and the main independent variables. The analysis also controls for the clustered nature of the data.

Table 5a. Regression analysis with mediatization and organizational professionalism as contrasted with policy expertise

It is more important that public servants are anchored in their local government organization than having knowledge about their policy area of expertise (coded as 0=disagree; 1=agree)	P	OR	95% Conf. Interval	
			Lower	Upper
Local govt. should be proactive to the media (totally disagree)		1		
Disagree	.267	.267	.026	2.755
Agree	.715	.651	.065	6.511
Totally agree	.946	1.083	.106	11.056
Local govt. should pursue their view in social media (totally disagree)		1		
Disagree	.496	.534	.088	3.243
Agree	.524	.568	.100	3.234
Totally agree	.583	.611	.105	3.548
The media image of the municipality affects my work (not at all)		1		
A little	.857	1.045	.645	1.694
A lot	.655	.868	.465	1.617
Very much	.995	1.004	.327	3.081
Debates in social media affect my work (not at all)		1		
A little	.430	1.189	.774	1.826
A lot	.907	.963	.515	1.803
Very much	.919	.941	.288	3.068
Contacts with journalists	.968	1.004	.822	1.227
Age groups (25-39)		1		
40-54	.827	1.056	.649	1.718
55 or above	.598	.874	.530	1.441
Sex (female=0)	.657	.920	.638	1.328
Education (0=no BA/MA)	.539	.880	.586	1.323
Interaction occupation*proactiveness towards media (Q1_6)	.682	1.029	.899	1.177
Interaction occupation*advancing activities in social media (Q1_12)	.310	1.069	.940	1.216
Interaction occupation*media image affects work (Q7_5)	.540	.938	.764	1.152
Interaction occupation*social media debates affect work (Q7_15)	.975	1.004	.804	1.252

Table 5b. Regression analysis with mediatization and organizational professionalism as contrasted with political allegiance

Public servants are primarily responsible to the political leadership of the community and only secondarily to the organization they are employed by (coded as 0=agree, 1=disagree)	P	OR	95% Conf. Interval	
			Lower	Upper
Local govt. should be proactive to the media (totally disagree)				
Disagree	.665	.588	.053	6.491
Agree	.412	.373	.035	3.934
Totally agree	.521	.460	.043	4.930
Local govt. should pursue their view in social media (totally disagree)				
Disagree	.762	1.291	.246	6.769
Agree	.599	1.530	.314	7.460
Totally agree	.550	1.628	.329	8.068
The media image of the municipality affects my work (not at all)				
A little	.714	.917	.575	1.461
A lot	.026	**.501***	.273	.921
Very much	.913	.941	.312	2.840
Debates in social media affect my work (not at all)				
A little	.089	**1.427**	.948	2.148
A lot	.303	1.383	.746	2.565
Very much	.917	.940	.294	3.007
Contacts with journalists	.060	**1.204**	.992	1.460
Age groups (25-39)				
40-54	.004	**.479 *****	.292	.785
55 or above	.000	**.358 *****	.214	.597
Sex (female=0)	.238	.810	.571	1.149
Education (0=no BA/MA)	.071	**.699**	.474	1.032
Interaction occupation*proactiveness towards media (Q1_6)	.181	.919	.812	1.040
Interaction occupation*advancing activities in social media (Q1_12)	.244	.931	.826	1.050
Interaction occupation*media image affects work (Q7_5)	.311	.901	.737	1.102
Interaction occupation*social media debates affect work (Q7_15)	.356	.904	.730	1.120

$*p < 0.10$ $**p < 0.05$. $***p < 0.01$

*Tables 5a and 5b. Logistic regression analysis (odds ratio) with mediatization and organizational professionalism as contrasted with policy expertise (Table 5a) and allegiance to political leadership (Table 5b). In both tables, organizational professionalism in the dependent variable is coded as 1 and democratic professionalism as 0. The main independent variables are categorical and the position "totally disagree" is set as the reference point against which the impact of other answers are

measured. The variable "Journalists – how many times you have been in contact with them" is treated as a continuous variable. In the variable "sex" woman is coded as 0, and in the variable "Education" no university degree is coded as 0. The interaction effects between different occupational groups (Table 2) and the main independent variables have been controlled for one at the time. Even if no significant interaction effects exist, this data is reported as previous research points towards such effects. The model has also been controlled for the clustered nature of the data. Significance (P) at 90% level is shown in bold font, at 95% level with an asterisk, and 99,9% level with three asterisks.

The first observation is that there are very few significant relations between mental mediatization and the inclination to favor organizational professionalism. When organizational professionalism is measured against policy expertise (Table 5a) no significant relations emerge, not even at 90% confidence. It is also noteworthy that despite previous research being clear that mediatization translates differently among different occupational groups, no significant interaction effects emerged between occupational groups and mediatization variables.

When organizational professionalism is measured against political allegiance (Table 5b) some significant relations emerge. First, we observe a negative relation between municipalities media images and inclination to favor organizational professionalism. This relation is, though, significant only among those who feel that the municipality's media image affects their work a lot. In other words, if the respondent felt that media image of the municipality affects his/her work a lot, there was a tendency to favor democratic professionalism. Indeed, it is mainly communicators and staff working on business relations who have answered that media image affects their work a lot. The second significant relation, this time positive, emerges with regard to the impact of debates in social media on one's work. This relation is significant only at 90% confidence level and valid for those who feel that social media debates affect their work a little. This finding makes in fact little sense in reality; one would expect significant relations to emerge between the reference and the more distant answers, not between the reference and a nearby answer. In "real life" this relation means that if the respondent felt that social media debates affects his/her work a little in contrast to not at all, the person has 1,4 times higher likelihood to favor organizational professionalism than the person who claimed that social media debates do not affect his/her work at all. One reason why this relation has become significant is that about 85% of all answers fall within the first two answers, i.e. not at all or a little, making it also difficult for the remaining answers to score significant relations. Looking at the control variables, it appears that age has a negative impact on organizational professionalism. In other words, the older one gets, the more likely one is to favor democratic professionalism – reflecting the tradition of strong public service ethos in Sweden. Altogether, these relations give a conflictual picture of how mental medialization would impact public servants' inclination towards organizational or democratic professionalism. We will discuss this contradictory evidence further in the conclusions.

To sum up our findings, there appear no clear patterns in the regression models. This speaks to the observations in previous research that mediatization is translated differently in different organizations. Looking at the descriptive data, however, some observations can be made. The fact that there is a clear

difference between the beliefs and experiences of mental mediatization and those few significant and mainly negative relations we found with regard to experiences points to two possible explanations, which are explored briefly in the conclusions. The positive relations, i.e. mediatization is positively related to an increased inclination towards organizational professionalism, mainly emerge when mediatization has little impact on the public servant.

Conclusion

The findings of our study lead us to reject our three hypotheses. They also require some reconsideration of two central thesis in extant literature. Firstly, despite the long tradition of democratic professionalism in Sweden, the contemporary public servant is predominantly aligned organizationally contrary to our H1. Evetts (2011) has argued that managers ought to be most organizationally oriented in their value disposition. Pallas et al. (2016), similarly, show that media logics were translated differentially between different occupational groups and that in their study, managers recited values closely in tune with what we call here organizational professionalism whilst scientific and more operative staff were more in line with democratic professionalism. In our study, the managers were in fact less organizationally professional than other public servants. In our data, managers scored highest in democratic professionalism (49%) when measured along political allegiance versus organizational priorities. However, when democratic professionalism was measured along policy expertise versus organizational priorities managers showed equally weak democratic professionalism (29%) as other groups. Despite the dominance of organizational professionalism in our data, some ideas of democratic professionalism concerning the political steering of the local government, still seem to linger on among the managers, at least more than among other groups used in this study. The difference in our findings to Pallas et al. (2016) findings, may be attributed to the fact that their study was carried out in an expert government agency, one of "most mediatized governmental agencies" (2016:1666) in Sweden. It is likely that a typical local government – our object of study – is subject to very different level and kind of mediatization, and consequently also reactions to mediatization differ.

Secondly, our descriptive analysis shows that mental mediatization is a fact among the public servants, but it also showed that it is primarily the beliefs that have become "universally" mentally mediatized; when it comes to self-assessed experience, there is more variation. Only public servants working with communication and information or business relations think that they are affected in practice by the media in their work. Managers were not, contrary to our H3, more mediatized than other groups.

The difference between mental mediatization of beliefs and experiences can be approached from two different angles. The first is that public servants are conscious of mediatization processes and their potential impact on public servants and therefore take precautionary actions to avoid any mediatization effect in their own work. The other potential explanation draws on the so-called "third-person -effect" (Davison 1983). The third person -effect holds that people tend to over-estimate the impact of media on others, whilst deny its impact on

themselves. Consequently, mental mediatization of local government public servants' beliefs corresponds to the over-estimated impact on others (it is important to be active in media, as that affects the citizens), whilst the weaker mental mediatization on experiences reflects the fact that mental mediatization is less acknowledged when it concerns one's own work. Explanations as to why this is so varied, but most go back to individual motivational and cognitive processes like the need to perceive oneself in more positive terms than others, the need to claim control over otherwise uncontrollable forces, and differential access to and ways of processing information (Perloff 2009).

Thirdly, the prevalence of organizational professionalism gave a reason to pursue our main hypothesis of testing if mental mediatization could be a cause for this value disposition. We expected a positive relationship between mental mediatization and organizational professionalism (H2). Yet, the findings give little if any support to this. There is no support at all for mental mediatization to affect organizational professionalism when it is contrasted with policy expertise, and only weak support in the case of organizational professionalism measured against political allegiance.

Other significant relations, however, could be found among our control variables including one research item on contacts with journalists, and standard background variables of sex, age and education. Contact with journalists showed a significant positive relation with preference for organizational professionalism at 90% level. This can possibly be attributed to the findings in previous research (Schillemans 2012, Lee 2000) that public servants often find journalists reporting negative stories about their organization. Age and education also turned out to be significant: the older one gets, or if one has a university degree, the less one tends to support organizational professionalism. In the final section, we turn to the gap between beliefs and experiences of mediatization and discuss the concept of mental mediatization.

Discussion: Increasing Gap Between Beliefs and Practices?

The three hypotheses tested in this study built upon extant literature; yet we had to reject them all in the face of the results from the data. Our findings complicate the picture on mediatization of individual public servants. Approaching mediatization through Marcinkowski's lens of mental mediatization allowed us to examine how individual public servants' value dispositions correlate with their reflections on mediatization. We broke mental mediatization into beliefs concerning what should be done about mediatization and perceived experiences concerning how mediatization affects public servants' work. The observable difference between mental mediatization of beliefs and experiences necessitates a further discussion. Public servants seem to be unanimous as of the importance of mediatization and media relations, yet neither really seems to be reflected in their daily work. Thorbjørnsrud (2015) used the concept of administrative loyalty to describe the schizophrenic conflict between democratically aligned values, and organizational practices that reflect prioritizing the organization itself, that many public servants experience in relation to the media. Administrative loyalty might consequently be an adequate description of a split between values and practices, but at the same time, hard to operationalize and

nuance. Our distinction between beliefs and experiences of mental mediatization can grasp the split described under administrative loyalty, but is also easier to operationalize and test empirically. Moreover, the distinction between beliefs and experiences also provide possible insights to the dynamics of mental mediatization among public servants. By drawing on media research and the third person effect our distinction between beliefs and experiences of mediatization is sensitive to the split Thorbjørnsrud describes, but places this ambivalence within the media logics and their impact on individual psyche. Mental mediatization as a *reflective* relation to mediatization – the mirror effect of a public servant watching the news but seeing him/herself – captures the Janus-faced nature of mediatization from the point of view of individual public servant in relation to broader context within which mediatization takes place. On the one hand, one has to be tuned in to the times and follow what goes on in the broader public sphere, yet this *awareness* does not need to translate into changes in one's own work. Davison's observations leading to his formulation of the third-person effect show that it is possible, even likely, that presumed media effects on others are not understood as affecting oneself. This can explain why mental mediatization does not translate directly to changed value dispositions. On the contrary, increased awareness may well trigger contradictory values – something we also observe in our data in the case of communicators.

Yet, the third-person effect was not just about the perceived stronger effect upon others, but also actions committed to by the third person (Davison 1983, Gunther and Storey 2003, Cohen, Tsfati and Sheafer 2008). If, following Davison's line of argument, the gap between public servants' beliefs and experiences is due to the tendency to emphasize media's impact on others, one is then also inclined to ask what is that *effect* that we should expect among them? From systems theory perspective, mediatization is understood as a remedy to a deficit in the system. Marcinkowski's own studies have concerned especially mediatization of politics where answers to the lack of public interest have been sought through media. In the case of the local government, mediatization as a remedy could be understood as serving for two deficits. One has to do with information spread and efficiency, the other with maintaining public legitimacy. Being "present" in the media and social media has a lot to do with information spreading and the cultivation of a conducive public opinion. One of our research items (advance local government activities in social media) captures this dimension. Yet, the other questions address already potentially conflictual relations between the local government, the media, and citizens (being proactive towards media) or focusing on how information already in society (debates in social media, municipality's media image) affect their work. These questions address also the aspect of perceived legitimacy of the local government. The high levels of mental mediatization may, on the one hand indicate that public servants anticipate the media to have an important role to play for the local government in terms of efficiency but also legitimacy. Yet, the lack of clear correlation between value dispositions and increased mental mediatization would, on the other hand also mean that for the public servants, the media management is not the sole perceived source of legitimacy or information spread.

Our study on the local government shows that measuring mental mediatization through beliefs and experiences enables us to grasp the two different levels of reflexivity that the concept contains in the gap between these two dimensions: one concerning the perceived impact on others and the other the impact on the self. This distinction, then, allows us to draw the conclusions that although mental mediatization is a fact, public servants do not see their legitimacy depend on media. The result of "no-correlation" we observe in our data indicates that information spread and presence in the media are valuable in themselves for the public servants, but the way how media affects the legitimacy of the local government has become even more difficult to handle, and the unpredictable ways in which third-persons may become affected eludes the possibility of control by the local government. As Perloff argues (2009), given the third-person effect, it is now more important to scout the public perceptions of media than what the media itself says.

There are limitations to this study too. One is that we study mediatization using snapshot data while mediatization as a process would naturally yield better to longitudinal studies. The many obstacles with studying mediatization are, however, well known, and Schillemans (2012) argues that studying snapshots may be an adequate way to approach mediatization. Another shortcoming is related to the fact that whilst focusing on the individual public servant's beliefs and experiences we have had to leave out the "less conscious" effects of mediatization, such as changed working routines. That is however an aspect that has been better grasped by qualitative studies (see Thorbjørnsrud 2015, Pallas et al 2016, Schillemans 2012) and one contribution of this article is generating more general knowledge quantitative data enables.

It is important to note that quantitative studies where operationalizations are difficult because of the natural complexity of the measured phenomenon, should be regarded as indications rather than definitive, hard, evidence. Such indications can however be important contributions to the public administration literature – in this case we clearly indicate that the influence of mediatization on public servants' value dispositions should not be taken for granted.

This leaves the initial question still unanswered: what can account for the preference for organizational professionalism which is so palpable among the Swedish local government? One tentative answer could be drawn from the occupational categorization and different effects of mediatization and organizational professionalism. Looking at the descriptive statistics, mediatization as well as organizational professionalism is high among communicators and those public servants working with business relations. The increasing number of such occupations may impact the value dispositions of public servants on a general level since communicators intrinsically focus on the organizations' image rather than being public servants first and foremost. Further, there is a difference between studies focusing on highly mediatized governmental agencies and local government receiving much less media attention. This may point towards a certain threshold before mediatization becomes an important factor for people's values. Lastly, much of perceived organizational professionalism can also be an effect of different reforms connected to NPM that may at times be hard to distinguish from certain tenets of mediatization.

Acknowledgements

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Notes

[1] Pierre & Djerf-Pierre (2016) deals with mediatization of local government but focuses only on social media.

[2] Also known as civic professionalism (Pallas et al, 2016).

[3] Some researchers focus on hybrid forms between the two (Nordegraaf, 2007; Karlsson, 2014), but they are conflictual when interests of the public or democratically elected politicians and the organisation are not aligned with each other. For the purpose of operationalizing a value disposition, we treat them as conflicting

[4] In Swedish: Kommunala Tjänstemän 2016

[5] In Swedish: Har roller och värdemönster bland kommunala tjänstemän förändrats under de senaste trettio åren?

[6] In Swedish: Det är viktigare att tjänstemännen är välförankrade i den kommunala organisationen än att de har god kunskap om sin nämnds verksamhetsområde. Q6_8

[7] In Swedish: Tjänstemännen har primärt ett ansvar mot den politiska ledningen och i andra hand mot den verksamhet man bedriver och de som berörs av den. Q6_7