Book Section:

Voltmer, K and Sorensen, L orcid.org/0000-0002-3995-2055 (2019) Media, Power, Citizenship: The Mediatization of Democratic Change. In: Voltmer, K, Christensen, C, Neverla, I, Stremlau, N, Thomass, B, Vladisavljević, N and Wasserman, H, (eds.) Media, Communication and the Struggle for Democratic Change. Palgrave Macmillan , Cham, Switzerland , pp. 35-58. ISBN 978-3-030-16747-9

https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-16748-6_2

Chapter 2

Media, power, citizenship: The mediatization of democratic change

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The democratic transitions of the late 20th century will be remembered as an assemblage of iconic images: the 'tank man' on Tiananmen Square, a lonely figure facing the approaching Chinese military to crash the democracy movement in June 1989; people dancing on the Berlin Wall after the East German authorities had opened the checkpoints on 9 November the same year; Nelson Mandela congratulating the captain of the South African Springboks at the 1995 rugby World Cup final wearing their tricot as a sign of reconciliation with one of the symbols of the Apartheid regime; the Egyptian crowds moving around Cairo's Tahrir Square and the revolution's culmination in a triumphant fireworks display when Mubarak declared his resignation on 11 February 2011; the umbrellas used by protesters in Hong Kong in 2014 to protect themselves from the tear gas and water canons of the police; and many more. These images are accompanied by a sequence of so-called colour revolutions across the globe: orange (Ukraine, 2004), green (Iran, 2009), saffron (Myanmar, 2007), rose (Georgia, 2003), and so on. The previous wave of democratization that took place during the 1970s, primarily in Southern Europe and Latin America, evokes hardly any images, probably with the exception of the carnations stuck in the rifles of soldiers during the Portuguese revolution in 1974. One reason for the extraordinary visual presence of recent uprisings is that they have taken place in a media-saturated environment. The proliferation of media channels since the 1980s, transborder broadcasting and, most significantly, the rise of the internet, have produced an abundance of images that circulate through global communication flows. In response, political actors, in particular protesters, have quickly learned to create those images – dramatic, colourful, symbolically rich – that capture the attention and imagination of an international audience.

The concept of 'mediatization' aims to describe and understand the far-reaching changes that we are witnessing as media and communication technologies increasingly become an integral part not only of daily life but also of the institutional fabric of all sectors of society. This chapter sets out to discuss the role of media and communication in the transformation of political power and citizenship in emerging democracies. It draws on the concept of mediatization as a framework to identify the dynamics of transitional politics in what Keane (2013, 1) calls a "revolutionary age of communication abundance … [that is] structured by a new world system of overlapping and interlinked media

devices". We suggest that struggles for democratic change, whether eventually successful or not, are increasingly mediatised. This not only impacts on the dynamics of the often spectacular trigger events, such as popular uprisings, but also has consequences for the outcomes of the transition and the quality of the emerging democratic order (Voltmer 2013). Indeed, we propose that the ways in which citizens and established political actors adapt political action to the dynamics of the media environment far from always results in a process that moves closer to liberal democracy. While our discussion aims to develop a broader understanding of democratization in the age of mediatization, we focus on the four countries that are studied in the project 'Media, Conflict and Democratization (MeCoDEM)' – Egypt, Kenya, Serbia and South Africa – and which provide rich empirical evidence for the consequences of "communicative abundance" on the dynamics and outcomes of recent democratic transitions. In all four countries, from South Africa's first post-Apartheid election in 1994 to Egypt's largely failed attempt of democratic transformation, the media have played pivotal, yet diverse and ambivalent, roles in key moments of the transitions by shaping the behaviour and perceptions of citizens, activists and elites. In addition and where appropriate, we also draw on examples from other countries and regions in order to provide a more comprehensive picture of the multi-faceted relationship between media change and political change.

The chapter starts off with an overview of the main arguments of current mediatization scholarship and focuses on the mediatization of political communication. We also bring in technological perspectives on media and communication to broaden the largely institutional understanding of mediatization in the political communication field. We then discuss how today's changing communication environment of multi-platform media, networked political action and professional news management has become an integral part of the dynamics of democratic transitions and what impact these developments have on two key dimensions of democratic change: the transformation of political power and of democratic citizenship.

From mediation to mediatization

'Mediatization' has become one of the key concepts in Communication Studies but plays a particularly important role in political communication research that is concerned with investigating the changing relationship between political power and the media (Esser and Strömbäck 2014). Alongside this strand of research, a growing body of literature is emerging that views mediatization as a broader process permeating all social fields, including economics, education, religion, and so on (Hjarvard 2013; Lundby 2009; Sa Martino 2013). While the use of tools of communication has been

part of human history from the early beginnings, mediatization captures the ways in which social processes are transformed through their use of and dependency on the technological and symbolic functions of the media of communication. To highlight the specific quality of this process, scholars distinguish between 'mediation' and 'mediatization': general processes of conveying messages and constructing meaning are captured by the term of 'mediation'. In contrast, the concept of 'mediatization' is designed to describe the transformative power of mediated communication which affects all layers of society (Hepp *et al*. 2015). This transformative power is unlike the cause-effect logic pursued by media effects research, which seeks to identify the influence of specified communication variables – such as features of a text, media types or usage patterns – on particular manifestations of human orientations and behaviour. The concept of mediatization rather aims to understand 'the wider consequences of mediated communications on our present cultures and societies' (Couldry and Hepp 2013: 195). These consequences involve simultaneous interactive relationships between changes in technologies, formats and practices of communication on the one hand and social and cultural changes on the other in much messier and less unidirectional sequences of events.

Arguably, mediatization as a critical moment in the reconfiguration of social processes around new modes of communication has occurred throughout history, for example with the inventions of the printing press in the 15th century and the telegraph in the 19th century. However, the current 'wave of mediatization' is assumed to reach deeper and further due to its scope and speed, leading Couldry and Hepp (2017, 34-56) to talk about 'deep mediatization' as a phenomenon that took off in the 1980s. The proliferation of media channels, digitalization, the internet and the rise of social media platforms have brought about a complex media ecology where different communication technologies and modes of communication intersperse with and transform social practices and institutions in an unprecedented way.

However, some caution is in order here. The process of mediatization is neither uniform nor unidirectional as societies, groups and individuals interact with the institutions and material structures and affordances of media in different ways and to different degrees. For example, the complexities of a mediatised world often generate the desire for unmediated, 'authentic' spheres of interaction. Moreover, the conditions of mediatization, that is, developed technological infrastructures and the ability to access them, are unevenly distributed, and can limit or accelerate the process of mediatization, resulting in a juxtaposition of highly mediatised and largely unmediatized social spheres both within and across societies.

Media change and the transformation of politics: conceptual approaches to mediatization

So far, the mediatization of politics has been almost exclusively studied in the context of western democracies. Little is known about its manifestations and consequences in the contexts of democratising countries that are characterised by institutional fragility, persisting authoritarian practices and electoral volatility. In the following, we first reconstruct the main arguments that have been developed in the field of political communication before we move on to explore the interplay of mediatization with recent democratic transitions. In our discussion, we reflect on three claims that have been brought forward by political communication scholars: that mediatization is driven by institutional processes and the choices made by the actors involved; that mediatization manifests itself as a power struggle between political and journalistic elites; and that mediatization is specific to democratic politics where the independence of the media is guaranteed.

As in other fields, political communication scholars try to capture the unique nature and scope of mediatization by contrasting it with processes of mediation. Mazzoleni and Schulz (1999, p. 250) describe mediatised politics as "politics that has lost its autonomy, has become dependent in its central functions on mass media, and is continuously shaped by the interactions with mass media". In other words, the media are no longer external to politics, a tool that can be used or not, but have become an integral part of politics, thereby remoulding the practices of representation and decision making and even the institutional structures in which these processes take place. In a similar vein, Strömbäck (2008) distinguishes between the adaptation to 'media logic' – that is, the norms and routines that govern the media's operations (Altheide and Snow, 1979) – and its internalization by political actors that marks the unique quality of mediatization. The former is usually confined to adjustments in the daily routines of news management, like scheduling press conferences to fit editorial deadlines, providing visual material to enhance the chances of coverage, and so on; the latter affects the organizational setup and decision-making procedures of politics.

Faced with an expanding media environment and an increasingly assertive and invasive style of journalism, political actors have to find ways of (re)gaining control over the public agenda. They have done so by adopting professional PR methods, but also by developing more sophisticated methods of secrecy. As a consequence, professional communication strategists and media advisors have become an indispensable part of any political organization – from governments to political parties and NGOs. In many cases, communication advisors have moved into the inner circles of the decision

making process itself. Political parties in particular have adjusted their organizational structure in order to align with the imperatives of a streamlined media campaign. In most cases, this has led to a centralization of party organizations and the dominance of party leaders at the expense of grassroots participation. There is evidence that mediatization even affects substantial politics, as policy makers anticipate how particular policy proposals might 'sell' in the media and adjust the timing, but also the content, of policy decisions and in some cases even drop particular policy initiatives altogether (Davis, 2010; Koch-Baumgarten and Voltmer, 2010; Walgrave and Van Aelst, 2006).

These transformations have been interpreted by political communication scholars as a shift in the power balance between media and politics. In the decades following the end of WW2, the media were subservient to their political masters. This relationship shifted to establish equilibrium between the two in the wake of the proliferation of channels in the 1980s when political actors lost some of their ability to control the public agenda. More recently it has finally reached a state of 'mediatised politics' that is dominated by 'media logic' (Blumler and Kavanagh 1999). Mediatization, then, denotes a power struggle between political actors and the media, a zero-sum game where the gains of one side inevitably lead to the loss of control of the other. According to the above-mentioned definition of mediatization suggested by Mazzoleni and Schulz (1999), politics finds itself at the losing end *vis-à-vis* an increasingly pervasive and invasive media environment.

However, mass media interact with institutional structures, practices and communication cultures in a more complex, less uniform and non-linear way than this view would suggest. Different areas of politics merge with 'media logic' to different degrees. For example, electoral politics with its dependence on public support is deemed most vulnerable to the internalization of 'media logic', whereas some policy areas never attract the attention of the media and the wider public (Strömbäck and Esser, 2014). Regardless of how much politicians depend on the media to achieve their goals, it is unlikely that political actors accept the dominance of 'media logic'. They will therefore seek ways to defend their boundaries – or 'political logic' – from the intrusion of the media. Indeed, in many cases the consequence of mediatization is de-mediatization, for example through strategies of communicating directly with citizens to bypass the media. Thus, rather than seeing mediatization as a progressive development, it is better understood as a dialectical process where layers of highly mediatised and unmediated, largely traditional modes of political communication coexist, even within the same institution. Moreover, political actors attempt not only to neutralise and deflect 'media logic' but more importantly to transform it into a resource to control the political agenda.

The unevenness of mediatization and de-mediatization thereby co-exist with a concentration and accumulation of political power, as opposed to the uniformly shifting power balance in favour of the media that is the assumption of much political communication scholarship on mediatization. The result is a more centralised, manipulated and elite-driven process of public communication.

Mediatization and communication technologies

The mainstream approach to mediatization, as summarised above, struggles to incorporate communication technologies into its conceptual framework because it understands mediatization principally as an institutional process evolving from the strategic choices made by independent actors – politicians and the media – to shape and manipulate their relationship. The problem of neglecting the technological dimension of mediatization is particularly evident with regard to the internet. Clearly, the internet is not a media institution in the traditional sense; yet at the same time, more than any other medium before it, it is transforming political action and political organizations in ways that invite different logics of action. It is arguably even transforming mediatization itself. To account for such transformations, we need to move beyond an institutional focus in our conceptualization of mediatization.

Media scholars have convincingly pointed out that what we call 'media' cannot be separated into technologies and content, the material environment and the meaning it 'contains' (Couldry and Hepp 2017; Silverstone 1994). Instead, both dimensions are intertwined and together create a specific 'media logic' that combines (technological) structure and purposeful agency. This is particularly evident in the case of social media where technological affordances and practices of use result in the convergence of the content producer and consumer roles into 'produsers'. Klinger and Svensson (2015) suggest an emerging 'network media logic' in the case of the internet and, more specifically, social media that is characterised by inexpensive content production by lay users who also distribute and intermediate popular content and use social media in interest-bound and like-minded peer networks. These characteristics of networked political communication have facilitated the expansion and revitalization of civil society; but they have also empowered extremist politics and promote polarization and fragmentation. Thus, we have to be mindful that in spite of its unprecedented potential to give voice to previously powerless actors and access to an unlimited pool of human knowledge, the internet on its own does not engage the disengaged, neither does its network structure – as often assumed – build political communities and 'enlightened sympathy'.

If we recall the definition of mediatization as a process whereby the media become an integral part of other actors or systems with the effect that the practices of these actors and systems are increasingly shaped by the media's logic of operation, then it is possible to apply the concept of mediatization to the internet as well. Mazzoleni (2014) extends the theoretical framework of mediatization to the internet and especially social media, by introducing the term 'Mediatization 2.0', which describes a situation where "the logic of the traditional media blends with interactive modes of communication" (ibid. 2014, p. 44). 'Network media logic' thus coexists alongside and intersects with traditional 'media logic' in 'hybrid logics' (Chadwick, 2013, p. 207; Klinger and Svensson, 2015, p. 1251) that shape, constrain and enable the production of, and access to, knowledge as well as the options for political action.

Different types of political actors have adapted to and integrated 'network media logic' to different extents. Even though institutionalised politics is already deeply affected by the dynamics of digital media, it struggles to employ the logic of the internet strategically to its own advantage. And this is not just a generational problem (most current office holders are not 'digital natives' who have grown up with the internet), but lends itself to the mismatch between formalised politics and the liquid, non-institutionalised character of internet politics. Even though digital media are increasingly being used in mainstream politics, in particular in election campaigns (see, for example, Bimber, 2014 on the 2008 and 2012 Obama campaigns), with few exceptions the organizational logic of digital and social media has not saturated mainstream political parties to the extent that traditional media logic has. Rather, digital media largely function as an additional element of a communication strategy that is largely organised around the logic of established journalistic media.

In contrast, we find a high degree of web-based mediatization in the arena of citizen politics. In fact, digital media have transformed citizenship into a vivid space of debate, self-governance and political action. Social movements like Occupy and the Arab Spring have highlighted the potential of the internet to mobilise large-scale protests and to forge collective identities across borders. Much of the literature on these new movements treat digital media as tools that empower citizens to mobilise more efficiently and with greater impact. Bennett and Segerberg (2012) go a step further by arguing that the internet, and in particular social media, have fundamentally changed the strategies of political activists and have brought about new forms of political organization. The authors make the distinction between the logics of connective and collective action, and we can relate these forms of action to the distinction between mediatization and mediation mentioned above. The logic of collective action uses digital media in a traditional, top-down organizational structure to mediate

shared political ideas and collective identities. The logic of connective action, in contrast, uses digital media in a way that changes the core dynamics of the action, creating a flat, decentralized structure of organization that enables the use of personal action frames that are inclusive of different personal reasons for contesting a situation that needs to be changed (ibid., p. 744). Thus, connective action can be viewed as a manifestation of mediatization where new media have transformational consequences upon political practice and citizen participation. However, as with mediatization that evolves around traditional media, the resulting pattern is ambivalent and fractured. Both logics of citizen politics may coexist, often within one and the same group or organization. The extent to which citizens and civil society groups can actually adopt the 'logic of connective action' depends on available resources to access and use online media, but also on existing communicative cultures that may, or may not, be conducive to virtual interaction.

To sum up the discussion so far, the current debate on the mediatization of politics has developed a compelling theoretical framework to understand how a changing media environment shapes the way in which politics is communicated and even permeates and alters the processes and outcomes of both institutionalised and citizen politics. However, little is known about how different contextual conditions – political systems, media ecologies, communication cultures – modify the degree and impact of mediatization. The project 'Media, Conflict and Democratization', which forms the focus of this volume, provides a unique opportunity to explore how the changing media environment interacts with transitional politics. As we show in the next section, the changes associated with the mediatization of politics are not only re-configuring democratic politics in established democracies but have put emerging democracies on a new pathway of transition.

Mediatization and democratization

While the term 'emerging democracies' is a convenient shortcut to refer to the large number of countries that over the past couple of decades have embarked on a transition from authoritarian rule to the implementation of democratic politics, it conceals the enormous differences that exist between, and indeed within, these countries. Some of them belong to the poorest countries of the world. Others, like South Africa of the MeCoDEM sample, have strong economies and are able to compete in global markets. Some countries struggle with weak and inefficient state institutions (for example, Kenya); others, like Egypt, suffer from a 'deep state' that suffocates any attempts of change that might challenge vested interests (for further discussion of this issue, see the chapter by Iazzolino and Stremlau in this volume). In some countries, the project of democratization – as flawed

and rocky as it may be – can rely on broad support by the population and the elites alike (South Africa would be an example here), whereas in others, such as Serbia, political practices are backsliding into authoritarianism under the facade of formally democratic institutions. Evidently, the variation between 'emerging democracies' is much bigger than the variation between advanced western democracies. This makes sensibility to context particularly pertinent when analysing trends of mediatization in transitional societies.

Yet studying mediatization in new democracies has to start with a more fundamental question: do the media in these countries have the capacity to operate in accordance with their own 'logic' to an extent that forces political actors to adapt to, and incorporate, media strategies into their own strategic and organizational setup? According to Strömbäck and Esser (2014, p. 13), media autonomy is an essential part of mediatization: "without highly autonomous media institutions there would be no mediatization of politics". Even though virtually all transitional democracies have implemented the principle of press freedom in their constitutions, the lack of respect for the autonomy of the media and attempts by political elites to bring the media under their control is endemic. Were we to follow Strömbäck and Esser's argument, this would make mediatization a less useful, if not unsuitable, concept to understand the interplay between media and politics in emerging democracies. However, the fuzziness and hybridity of emerging democracies requires more nuanced considerations.

First, a rather absolutist understanding of media independence overlooks the degree of agency that journalists have even in rather adverse conditions. For them, the downfall of the old regime unleashes a new sense of freedom, frequently giving rise to an almost anarchic public space of diverse, often extremist voices. Journalists in emerging democracies look out for new role models to reconstruct their professional identity and to reposition themselves *vis-à-vis* political power. In most cases they look westwards and adopt an understanding of journalism that emphasises the watchdog role and establishes an antagonistic relationship with political power. Demonstrating distance from a discredited state and its representatives is vital for journalists in a transitional context who have to secure their own legitimacy with a more critical and sceptical audience (Voltmer and Wasserman 2014). However, 'western' models of journalism are often integrated with the more communitarian norms and practices of the old authoritarian regime (for a detailed analysis, see the chapter by Lohner et al. in this volume). As a result, journalism in emerging democracies is characterised by a high level of hybridity that encompasses old and new, adopted and indigenous forms. It is not only distinct from journalism as we know it from established democracies but also encompasses a broad

variation of practices across countries (Mellado et al. 2017). Some of these hybrid practices are undoubtedly an impediment to an open and pluralist public debate. But it is often overlooked that the adoption of hybrid forms also enables journalists to establish and protect their independence and legitimacy under difficult circumstances.

Another prerequisite of the mediatization of political communication is the availability and accessibility of advanced communication technologies since, as we argued above, the digitization of media structures and the 'network logic' of social media platforms are key driving forces in bringing about a new and unprecedented intensity of mediatization. Access to the internet can vary considerably across social strata and geographical regions in less developed countries (see below). Yet the most vocal and most politicised groups in these societies have become ardent users of the new communication technologies and employ them to great effect to launch anti-corruption campaigns and other initiatives to put the government under pressure. For some time, political elites tended to underestimate the importance of the internet and social media and focused their attempts to control the public agenda on traditional media outlets, like state television. However, the dynamic interplay between social media platforms, traditional journalism and transborder communication flows has forced political elites and institutions to adapt to and incorporate this new environment of high visibility, fast changing issues and emotional politicisation.

Media and journalism in emerging democracies have therefore by and large secured a level of autonomy that allows them to shape and interfere with the political debate to an extent that has been unknown before. Not without reason, then, politicians in new democracies perceive the media as powerful and potentially dangerous and have – just like their counterparts in established democracies – aligned organisational structures and decision making processes along media logics.

In the following, we explore processes of mediatization – or the lack thereof – by focusing on two key dimensions of democratic change: the transformation of power and the transformation of citizenship.

The transformation of power

To better understand processes of mediatization in emerging democracies we have to remind ourselves that these are not unilateral processes imposed by the media; they evolve from the interaction between the media and political actors. Thus, the degree of mediatization is not only a

function of the (relative) independence of the media, but also of the (relative) power of political elites and institutions. During transition – and often for a long time thereafter – the collapse of the old mechanisms of power limits the government's ability to deliver the policies people are expecting from the new regime. In other words, the capacity of political actors and institutions to determine the course of politics is considerably weakened. In addition, electoral politics generates an extraordinary degree of uncertainty which hits post-transitional actors – even those who have fought for democratic change – largely unprepared (Schedler 2013). Competition with a broad range of opponents and the volatility of the electorate in many new democracies makes elections an unpredictable gamble. A weak position in an environment of uncertainty opens up opportunities for the media to expand their capacity to shape the public agenda and to exert pressure on power holders.

At the same time, the media are also an important resource for communicating with citizens and for mobilising electoral support. Political actors have to learn to optimise this resource to succeed in a competitive environment. The degree to which political actors have to 'play the media game' depends on the range of alternative resources they have at their disposal. Two main factors moderate the degree of media dependency and thus the degree of mediatization: the existence of an effective party organization and a reliable loyal constituency of voters. Both are relatively rare in post-transitional politics. Most political parties in new democracies are centred on small groups of elites and lack significant grassroots membership (Katz and Mair 1995). The few instances of effective, mass-based parties usually have their roots in pre-transition times, either as the leading oppositional actor (like the ANC in South Africa) or as the ruling party of the old regime (for example, former communist parties in Eastern Europe, like the Socialist Party in Serbia). The Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt is another example of an old organization that used their organizational resources to gain power in post-revolutionary Egypt – even though eventually they were unable to secure their position against old elites and the military. In many cases, these pre-transitional parties can draw on a significant number of (relatively) loyal voters. Therefore, media strategies remain rather peripheral to the organizational structure and the communicative practices of these parties, which draw their strength from local networks and direct communication with their supporters. In contrast, new parties that have been founded after the regime change largely lack these resources. With brute censorship no longer an option, they have to learn to survive with the media, rather than against them, in order to influence public discourse. It is therefore not by accident that the resurgence of democracy has triggered a global demand for political marketing and media management (Plasser and Plasser, 2002).

These different constellations of mediatization and non-mediatization can be exemplified by two of the democratization conflicts studied by the MeCoDEM project: the 2015 State of the Nation Address (SONA) in South Africa and the smear campaign by the Serbian government against the ombudsman in the same year (both cases are discussed in detail in this volume; see Sorensen et al. and Vladisavljevic et al. respectively).

At the time of his annual State of the Nation Address (SONA) in 2015, then-President Jacob Zuma was under mounting pressure to reveal misuses of public money for private purposes. However, Zuma made surprisingly limited attempts to 'spin' the issue and to influence media coverage to his advantage. As shown in Sorensen et al.'s analysis, his initiative to engage with citizens on social media was half-hearted and rather unprofessional. Zuma could afford to neglect 'media logic' precisely because he could rely on powerful alternative resources: a strong party organization (the ANC) and its unrivalled legitimacy as the leader of the anti-Apartheid struggle, a comfortable, though dwindling, electoral majority, and a tamed public service broadcaster (SABC). In addition, an extensive web of clientilist bonds of favouritism penetrating the ANC from top to bottom secured (at least at that time) intra-party loyalty.

However, Zuma underestimated the long-term effects of a highly mediatised campaign by the populist opposition party the EFF (Economic Freedom Fighters), which eventually led to his downfall in February 2018. Indeed, the EFF's campaign to unseat Zuma is an example of a markedly different relationship between political and media actors within the same institutional environment as Zuma's non-mediatised practices. It is also an example of the way in which populist political actors can use mediatisation as a resource for establishing links between political power and citizens whilst challenging the politics of liberal democracy where the institutions of intermediation are weak. In a carefully staged performance for which the EFF built up such tension through social media that it became irresistible to all but the most faithful government-supporting news outlets, they spectacularly disrupted Zuma's SONA. Their performance not only appropriated the limelight from Zuma's speech. It also performed an accountability function that was being suppressed in more mundane expressions of South African opposition politics. It gave voice to the sense of betrayal that ordinary people felt as the ANC's reign translated post-Apartheid freedom into unprecedented economic inequality.

Populism is by no means unique to emerging democracies. Established democracies too – from the U.S. to Italy and India to Australia – are increasingly seeing the rise of populist parties and even populist leaders entering government positions. But new democracies are particularly vulnerable to populism as they have an acute need for symbolic representation that can provide a simple narrative of 'who we are, where we are coming from and where we are going'. By framing itself as citizen politics, populist politics is able to speak to the motivations of a citizenry in democratic transition by emphasising those anti-establishment and anti-elitist sentiments that led them to initiate democratization in the first place. It thus provides an alternative to mainstream politics in transition by offering a symbolic vision to the people in a simplistic, often spectacular and provocative format that captures the media's imagination. This is exactly what the EFF achieved with their dramatic disruptions of institutional politics and of Zuma's SONA (Sorensen, 2019 forthcoming).

The impact of populism on democratization is likewise ambiguous. Effects have been shown to be stronger in unconsolidated democracies and depend on whether populists occupy a position of power (Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2012). In opposition, populism can have a positive effect on democratization as it serves to increase political participation, constructs cross-class political coalitions and emphasises democratic accountability (as, for example, the EFF did by holding Zuma to account for corruption). Yet populism also takes advantage of fragile institutions in transitional democracies to come to power (De la Torre, 2014, p. 7). And, once in power, it can further undermine institution building because it often disregards – even ridicules – liberal institutions of representation and prioritises majority rule over liberal democratic ideals. The results are a destabilization of democratic institutions, a challenge to the separation of powers, and eroding trust in the legitimacy of newly established institutions.

This latter effect of populism in a transitional democracy is demonstrated by our second example of Vucic's Progressive Party, SNS, in Serbia. In contrast to Zuma's non-mediatised approach, the government under Prime Minister Aleksandar Vucic unleashed a relentless media campaign against one of the key institutions of checks and balances. This campaign included the skilful use of social media tools to manipulate public opinion. It was part of a broader and longer-term strategy by the ruling Progressive Party (SNS) to hollow out the mechanisms of liberal democracy and to establish a form of electoral authoritarianism, similarly to other countries in the region (such as Hungary, Slovakia and Poland). Even though the government was in control of important resources, mediatization was central in this campaign, which was not about mobilising support for a particular election, but to destroy the 'enemy' and to lay the ground for a longterm project of authoritarian

transformation. Feeding the media, especially the tabloid press, with a series of scandalous 'revelations' and suspicions and trolling the ombudsman on social media created perfect fits with news values and traditional and network 'media logics'. The case highlights that, rather than restricting the autonomy of politics, mediatization can be a powerful resource in the hands of political leaders with authoritarian ambitions.

The transformation of citizenship

With its focus on the relationship between media and politics, mainstream political communication notions of mediatization largely ignore the impact of mediatization on citizenship. However, as Brants and Voltmer (2011) argue, theories of mediatization are incomplete without taking the active role of citizens into account. And indeed, one of the striking features of post-1989 transitions is the prominent role of large-scale popular uprisings in bringing down the old regime, which distinguishes them from the primarily elite-driven transitions of earlier waves of democratization of the 1970s. Recent democratic uprisings – most notably the so-called 'colour revolutions' – have made sophisticated use of symbolic action to attract international media coverage. The spread of user-generated eyewitness accounts uploaded through mobile devices have also been important in cases where foreign correspondents had no access to the events, for example in the 2009 Iranian anti-regime movement and the Syrian civil war. Pro-democracy uprisings have become highly mediatised events which draw their dynamic from a close interdependency between protesters and (mostly international) media.

Similar to the mediatization of power, the mediatization of citizenship is moderated by the degree to which citizens and pressure groups can draw on alternative resources to influence the course of politics. The notion of insider and outsider groups distinguishes between groups who can draw on informal channels of communication with decisionmakers and those without such access (Binderkrantz 2005; Erayja 2017; Grant 2004). As a consequence, it is primarily outsider groups who adopt highly mediatized strategies to exert pressure on political elites through the mobilization of public opinion. Anti-regime movements operate clearly outside the institutional channels of influence and thus entirely depend on the media both national and international to push for reforms or even regime change. However, the focus on global media attention often lead opposition groups to neglect domestic aspects of their strategy, such as building alliances across groups and with parts of the elites who are open to reforms, to move into the position of insider groups with enhanced

negotiating power. This might explain – at least to some extent – why some of these uprisings have been rather short-lived or were quickly absorbed by powerful elite groups.

The transformation of citizenship can therefore be seen as part of a wider process of mediatization that involves both new dependencies on the 'logic' of mediated communication and new opportunities for voice and action. The advantages of what Diamond terms 'liberation technology' (2010) have been expounded by many, especially in the aftermath of the Arab Spring: increased information access, citizens adopting the watchdog role where mainstream media are unable to (El-Khalili, 2013), mobilization and an expanded sphere of participation (Lim, 2013). Yet new communication technologies are not "imbued with some kind of irresistible agency" (Deibert and Rohozinski, 2010, p. 44). Arguably, for the first time in the history of communication media, the same technologies that are used by citizens to mobilise resistance, are also being used for control, surveillance and propaganda by post-revolutionary authoritarian regimes (for instance in Egypt and Iran; see El-Khalili, 2013; Aday et al., 2010).

Moreover, even though digital communication technologies have enabled large-scale mass mobilization, the nature of 'network media logic' means that this is often taking place without any kind of unifying force in the form of leadership, ideas, ideology or long-term strategy. The logic of connective action may result in new forms of mobilization and potentially increased participation in democratization movements as was the case in Egypt in 2011 (Bennett and Segerberg, 2012, pp. 743–4). But even where a regime is toppled, the personalised frames and networked organization of connective action fail to equip activists to move into the power vacuum that opens up after regime change and to shape the outcome of the transition. There is no leader to unify a fragmented yet expectant population, no organization to provide a framework for sustained political action once 'normal politics' returns, no vision to drive them forward towards a common goal. The structural properties of 'mediatization 2.0' exacerbate the inability – often unwillingness – of anti-regime movements to move from the politics of street mobilization to the politics of institutional bargaining. This leaves the situation open to exploitation by individual and collective sources of power that are somehow capable of providing a unifying structure – who were more often than not key players in the old regime. The striking example for the strengths and limitations of networked, mediatised citizenship is the Arab Spring and especially its tragic end in Egypt.

If we understand mediatization as a potential resource and opportunity for effective citizenship, then unequal access to the media, in particular to digital online technologies, becomes a crucial issue

for the quality and consolidation of new democracies. However, most of the countries of the recent wave of democratization are part of the developing world. They lag behind with providing the technological infrastructures of communication, such as fast broadband and mobile networks, and making them broadly accessible. The table below provides an overview of the number of internet users in the four MeCoDEM countries, compared to two advanced industrial nations and the world average.

Table 1: Internet users (% of population)

Year	World	Egypt	Kenya	Serbia	S.Africa	USA	Sweden
2010	28,7	21,6	7,2	40,9	24,0	71,7	90,0
2016	45,8	41,2	16,6	67,1	54,0	76,2	89,7

Source: World Bank (https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/IT.NET.USER.ZS)

Even though all countries have made significant progress over the period of observation, with Serbia leading the group, the level of internet use is still markedly below that of advanced economies where it has almost reached saturation. In addition to generally lower internet penetration in developing countries, access to the internet is also unevenly distributed within societies. It is mainly the urban middle classes who have become keen internet users and are able to exert pressure on the government, while large parts of the population cannot afford to buy the data that would enable them to effectively use digital resources. This discrepancy between digital haves and have-nots usually reflects and further deepens socioeconomic inequalities, resulting in large parts of the population whose citizenship is severely limited and whose voice is rarely heard in the public debate. For example, Kenya's booming internet industry, dubbed 'Silicon Savannah', coexists with conditions where traditional forms of communication still dominate social interactions. It is also noteworthy that at the time of the Arab Spring only one fifth of Egypt's population had access to the internet. Even though traditional media, especially television, played an important role in mobilising people, the numbers suggest that large parts of the population were effectively excluded from the densely networked 'connective action' that brought people together on Tahrir Square.

South Africa is again a compelling example. More than two decades after the first free election in 1994, more than half of the population still lives below the national poverty line, many without access to the very basic provisions of clean water, sanitation, electricity and housing. According to the World Bank, South Africa is now the most unequal country in the world (measured by the Gini coefficient; see https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.GINI?locations=ZA). This can only be a

blow in the face of those who had hoped for a better life after the end of Apartheid. Our analysis of service delivery conflicts that revolve around land issues and the supply of water and other provisions shows that many at the bottom of South African society feel that democracy does not exist as long as they are denied a dignified life. Over the last decade or so, service delivery protests have been a source of constant mobilization at the grassroots level. The estimated hundreds, if not thousands, of protests taking place every year have earned the country the label 'protest nation' (Duncan 2016).

Due to poverty and a lack of infrastructure, these protests are largely unmediatised. As Bosch et al. show in this volume, activists are using very basic, often makeshift forms of communication, to express their grievances and demands. Not surprisingly, the media are hardly taking any notice. Even violence seems to have 'normalised' and lost its news value. In some instances, however, activists have learned to be more strategic and started to design their actions around the logic of media attention, for example by staging spectacular symbolic performances like publicly washing dirty laundry or pouring buckets of excrement onto the steps of parliament. For such actions, though, people have to travel to the urban centres where the media are.

The improvised and unmediated service delivery protests that are based in poor communities and rural areas coexist alongside highly orchestrated and carefully designed actions performed by urban, media-savvy activists at the institutional centres of power. The disruptive performance of the EFF in parliament at the State of the Nation Address (SONA) described above employed the affordances of a multi-layered media ecology in a highly sophisticated way, encompassing broadcasting, social media, mobile technology and live performance. The event can be read as an example of the widening gap between the media-rich and the media-poor and the consequences unequal access to the resources of mediatisation has for being able to participate in the public debate.

Conclusion

Over the last quarter of a century, innovations in communication technology have fundamentally changed the way in which information is produced, shared and consumed. In fact, it is no exaggeration to talk about a communication revolution that has changed human relationships at every level, be it between individuals, between governments and citizens or even between states.

In this paper we set out to explore the impact of the new communication environment on the politics of newly emerging democracies that, unlike earlier instances of democratization, develop their institutions and political culture under conditions of 'communicative abundance' (Keane 2013). To analyse the transformation of the relationship between politics and the media in emerging democracies, this paper draws on the concept of mediatization as the process of political actors incorporating the logic of media institutions – their norms and routines – into their own organizational forms and decision-making processes. Mediatization has so far been exclusively applied to political communication in advanced western democracies and mainly to institutionalised politics. However, we have discussed how mediatization also plays a role outside institutional politics, in citizen and contentious politics, and how this often happens through non-institutional media like social media. This broadening the concept of mediatization enables it to account for hybrid and network media logics and the role of different types of political actors. It demonstrates how such actors can appropriate different forms of media logic as a resource of power and even change the direction of mediatization. While mediatization takes on similar forms as in established democracies –it is multi-layered and can co-exist with non-mediatised politics – the particular conditions of transitional politics lead it to yield different outcomes.

In transitional politics political actors – from protest movements to governments – rely heavily on the media as a central, often exclusive resource to enhance influence and to achieve political goals. Digital communication technologies and media strategies are highly effective tools to mobilise public opinion. But they are more than tools; they also shape and often replace the building of organizational structures. An example of this process is the emerging 'logic of connective action' (Bennet and Segerberg 2012) that follows the norms and structures of social media. Individualised participation and the resistance against hierarchical structures have made 'connective action' an incredibly powerful way to mobilise citizens. However, it has widely failed to influence institutional politics in the aftermath of regime changes where it was not complemented and supported by sustainable organizational structures to ensure the ability to coordinate action over time.

Mediatization has therefore proven to be a highly ambivalent force, opening up both opportunities and constraints to political action, enabling voice and transparency, but also playing in the hands of authoritarian leaders. This ambivalence is particularly evident with regard to populist politics. In an increasing number of new (but also established) democracies, representative politics has been challenged by the rise of populist leaders who flourish in media-saturated environments. Being highly dependent on the resonance of the media, populist politics shapes its rhetoric, messages and

organization around 'media logic'. Even though populist leaders in emerging democracies often use exclusionary, nationalist appeals to mobilise support, they also seek new ways of connecting directly with citizens and building a sense of community. This apparent contradiction – between a direct connection with citizens and a highly mediatised form of politics – is disguised behind anti-elitist rhetoric that has allowed populist leaders in new democracies to use symbolic representation to outmanoeuvre opponents and to contain and control public spaces of expression.

Thus, mediatization in transitional politics has opened up new opportunities for citizen politics but has also undermined the establishment of sustainable and effective institutions. As with populism, it has often created excitement around new means of participation and voice for citizens who feel left behind but has rarely translated into a transformation of power and of citizenship in a direction consistent with (liberal) democratization. Mediatization provides ways of challenging political authority, but at the same time serves the authoritarian ambitions of political leaders. It increases the power of the media in politics but forces political actors to develop strategies to instrumentalise and muzzle them. These profound, complex and ambivalent implications for the democratization process have created a unique situation for recent– and future – transitions.

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