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Journalism as a profession: An impossible equation?

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Outline of presentation

- Three roles of journalism in *historical development*
- Two traditions in *sociology of professions*
- Five *modes of media and power*
- Three *dilemmas of professional journalism*
- So what?

Presentation based on the authors' chapter in Finnish *Julkisuus ja demokratia* ('Public sphere and democracy') published earlier this year, and on Kauko Pietilä's forthcoming *Journalismi ammattina: Journalismiprofession teoria* ('Journalism as vocation: Theory of the profession of journalism')

Starting point: Theory <Journalism> Practice

- Theory: concepts and knowledge institutions Practice: real life with its concerns and needs
- Thinking Action
- Idea of profession (*Beruf*) as solution to combine them

Classics: Immanuel Kant (1781), Emile Durkheim (1890), George Simmel (1908), Max Weber (1919), Talcott Parsons (1951)

Theorists: L. Brandeis (1914), A. Carr-Saunders & P. Wilson (1933)
T.H. Marshall (1939), E. Freidson (1994)

History of journalism

(according to Michael Schudson 1995):

Role of journalism as...

- Advocacy
- Market
- Trustee

Old concept (Oxford English dictionary)

- profession (1425)
- professional (1604)
- professionally (1679)
- professionalist (1794)
- professionist (1804)
- professionalism (1856)
- professionality (1861)
- deprofessionalize (1884)
- professionalized (1890)
- professionalizing (1899)
- professionalization (1901)

Sociology of professions:

Main traditions

- **Functionalist-idealist**
 - professions as specialization and development in society
 - strengthening social cohesion, replacing pre-industrial moral order and religion
 - optimistic vision, part of modernity
- **Critical-realist**
 - professions as elitistic bastions
 - weakening democracy, making citizens to passive consumers
 - turning into new religion

Modes of media and power

(Raymond Williams 1961, Hannu Nieminen 2000)

1. Authoritarian
2. Commercial
3. Paternal
4. Democratic
5. Postmodernist

Diagram 1. THE AUTHORITARIAN MODE

Power holders

Media professionals

Audiences

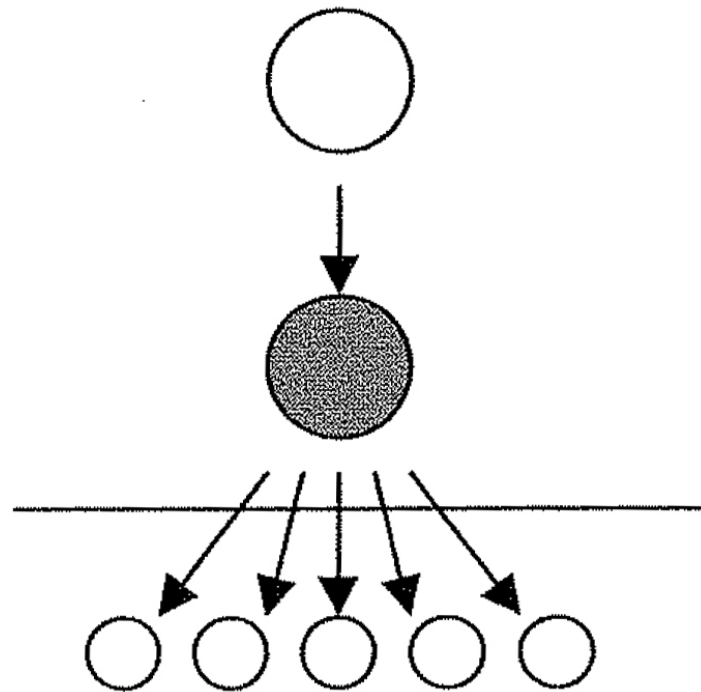


Diagram 2. THE COMMERCIAL MODE

Shareholders

Media professionals

Consumers

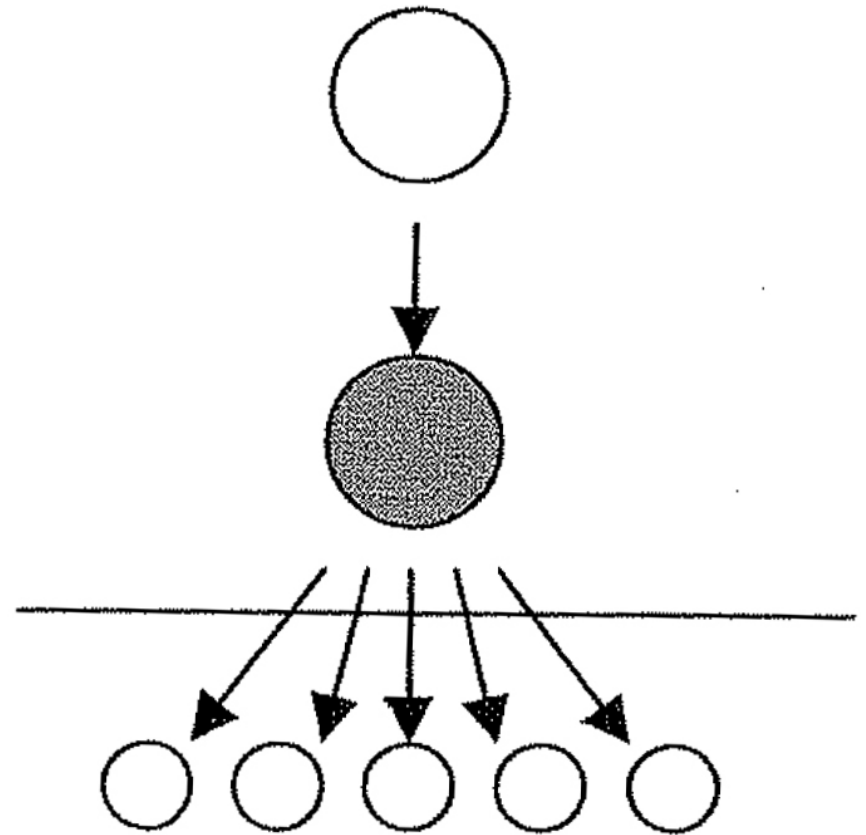


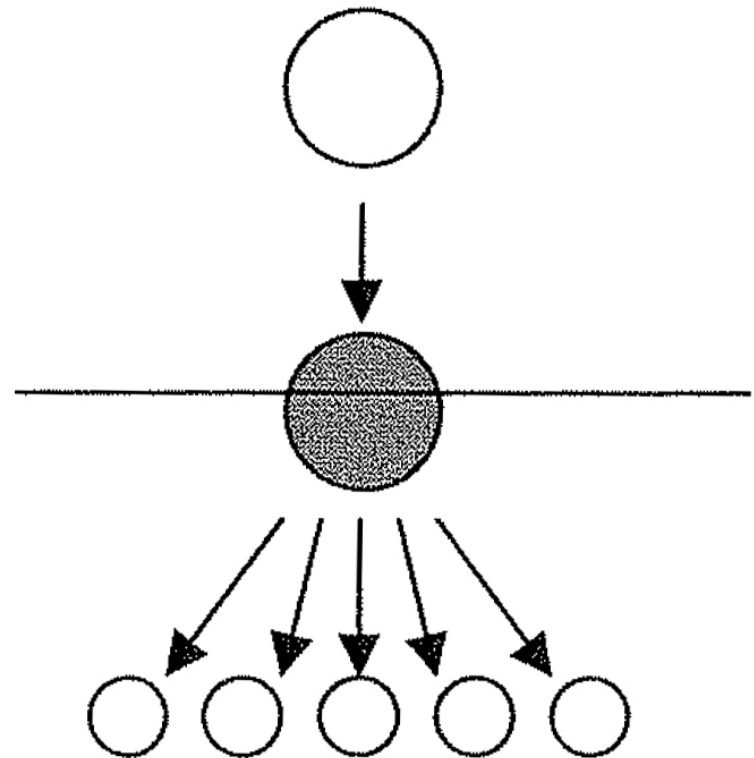
Diagram 3. THE PATERNAL MODE

a) Informative-administrative type

Power holders

Media professionals

Audiences



b) Social responsibility type

Power holders

Media professionals

Audiences

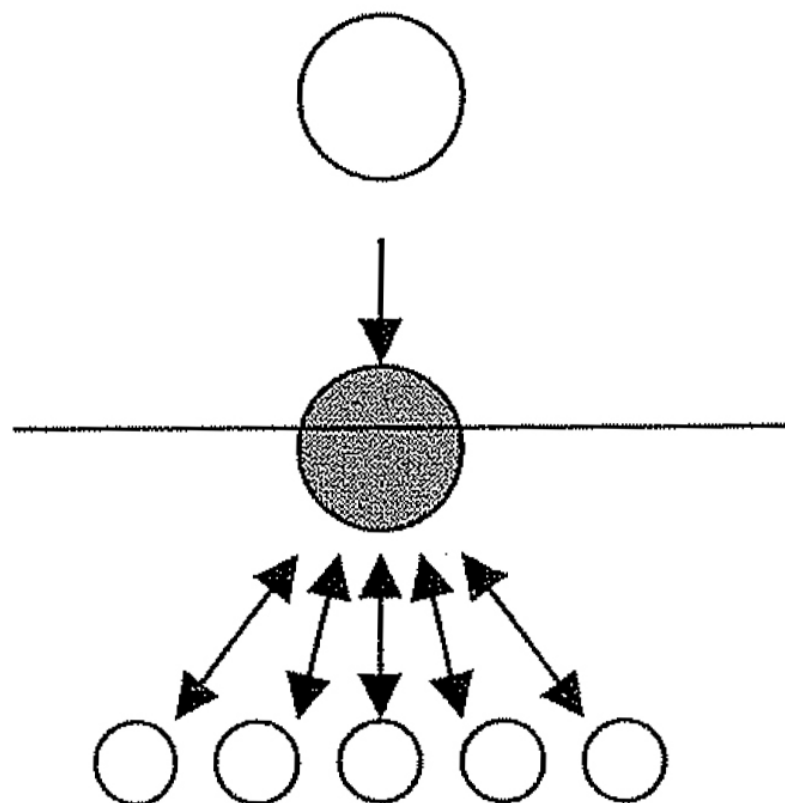


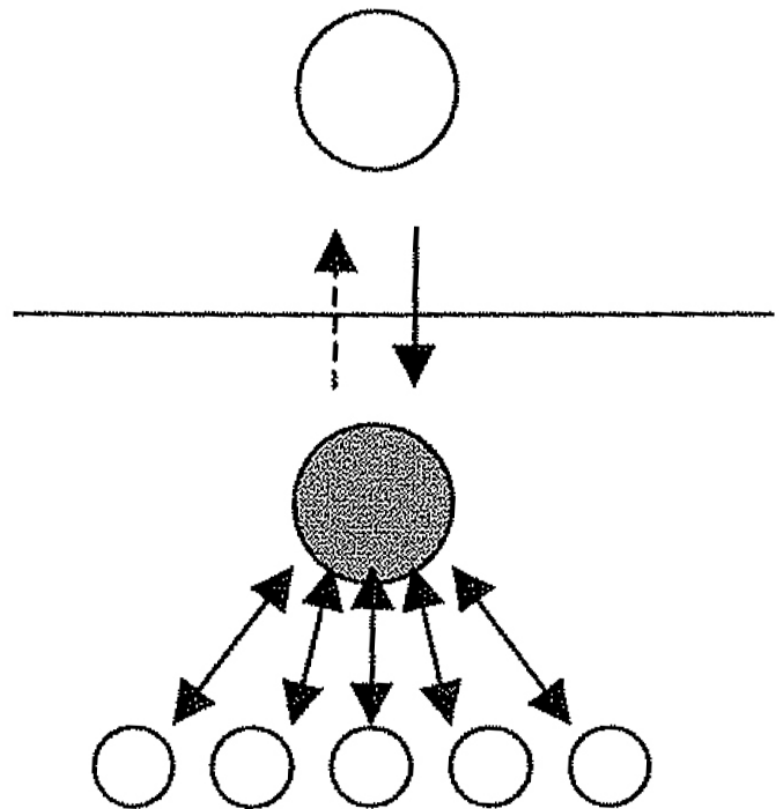
Diagram 4. DEMOCRATIC MODE

a) The representative type

Power holders

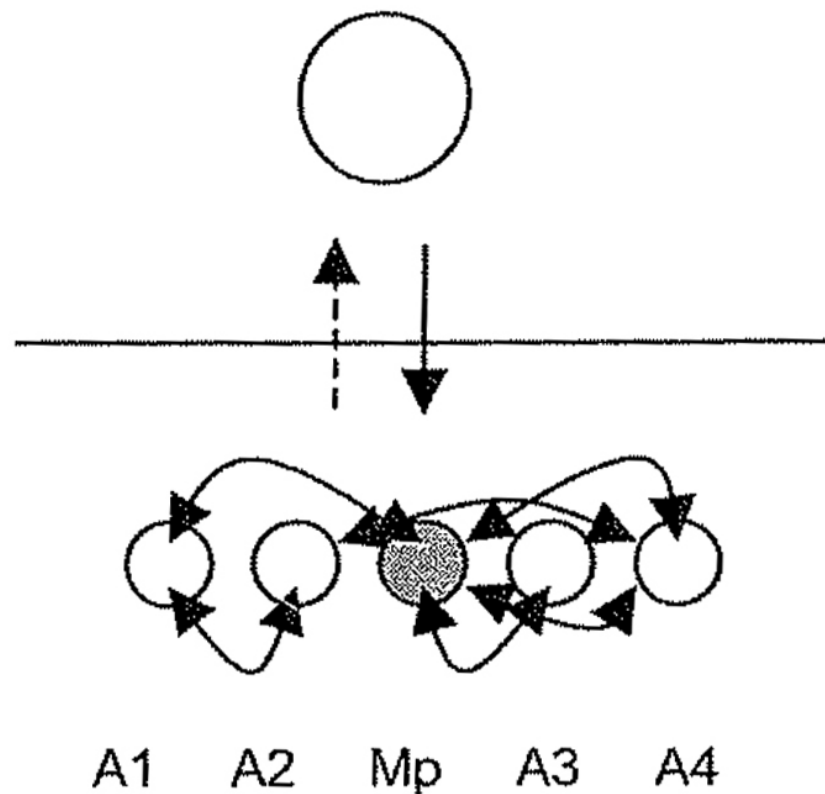
Media professionals

Audiences



b) The participatory type (media professionals as articulators)

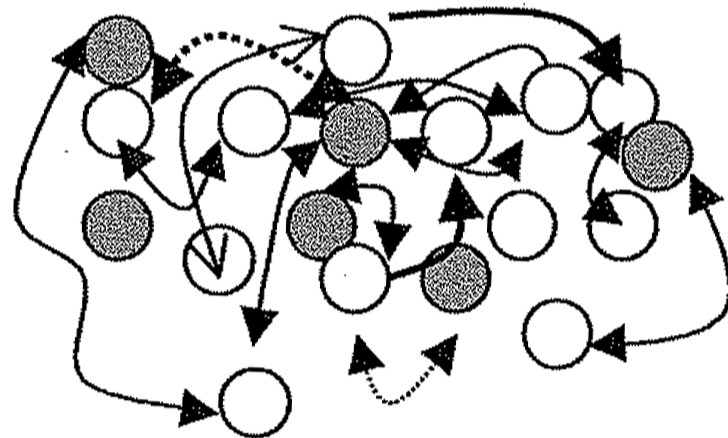
Power holders



Mp = Media professionals
A1...n = Audiences

Diagram 5. THE POSTMODERNIST MODE: The end of journalism

Power holders



Individuals (media professionals, media consumers, customers,
audience members)

Dilemmas of professional journalism

1. Citizenship

- civic journalism and social media shrink the profession
- liquid media work disperse the profession

2. Self-regulation

- codes of ethics and courts of honor support narrow autonomy
- professional autonomy helps industry against democracy
- self-regulation removes media outside democratic control

3. Journalism education

- professional training nurtures narrow professionalism
- multimedia needs in curricula push liberal arts aside

So what?

- Such dilemmas and paradoxes are real and healthy as intellectual stimulation for the field which suffers from self-sufficiency ('Fortress journalism syndrome') and technological fascination ('Nokia syndrome')
- Challenge to professionalism is welcome as a cure against the fortress journalism syndrome
- Equation is impossible by definition – and good so!



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Thank you!

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