I nationens och marknadens intresse
Journalister, nyhetskällor och EU-journalistik

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ABSTRACT:


This is a study of news journalism - how news about the European Union, the EU, are produced. The purpose of the study is to describe and try to understand how the EU is produced journalistically; how news about the EU is generated and the factors that condition the journalistic work. Two professional groups are interviewed. First, journalists and, second, the group of people which function as news sources of journalists’, press agents, representing a broad range of political interests. The emphasis of the study is on how coverage of and reporting on the EU is practised, what considerations are made, which strategies come into play, and on the difficulties and problems journalist and press agents face in their work. In other words, how is the EU constructed and what determines these constructions.

The journalists depend on the press agents for a steady flow of relevant information, updates, and constant access to people and events that can be constructed into news. And when press agents know the character and conditions of journalistic work, it seems like the interactions are not between two independent parties, but more a collaboration in which press agents greatly part-take in the production of EU-journalism. They can initiate and arrange, and so legitimize news work, and they can suggest how the news world should be ordered and structured. They can exert agenda control and publicity control. The relation between journalist and news source is one of imbalance and that enables the press agents to be the primary definers and to set the agenda - the imbalance is institutional in its character. Notwithstanding, source organizations’ superiority has yet another structural explanation. It lies within changed conditions for the media and journalism, changes within the media institution itself. Contemporary journalism is market-driven. The logic of the market demands easily and constantly accessible, and news worthy (in the sense of news media aptness) sources.

Those are the structural conditions and institutional imperatives which, via journalists and press agents, shape the mediated images of the EU.

The concrete everyday depictions of the European Union is based on a limited number of popular themes. The most important theme is the Swedish, national perspective and the most obvious feature of EU-journalism is its national character. But citizens do not, in news media, find descriptions and problematizations of the European Union as a transnational project, or as part of the political economy of the world system. Journalism is unable to deal with the transformation of time-space, that the place we are in right now is both local and global at the same time. The EU-journalism does not serve the interest of the citizen, but it is far from disinterested: It serves the interest of national politics and the market.

Key words: News reporting, journalistic rules and routines, European Union, news net, news and globalization, nationalizing news, news sources, source strategies, press agents, publicity control, power and the public sphere.