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POLITICIAN WEBLOGS IN FINLAND

Members of Parliament as Bloggers

Master's Thesis

Department of Journalism and Mass Communication

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ABSTRACT

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This study deals with blogs written by Finnish politicians. The study is descriptive in nature, and the empirical material comprises of all blogs written by Finnish members of parliament (MPs). The method used in this research is content analysis, using both qualitative and quantitative approaches. This study examines what are the main features of these politician blogs and what factors seem to play a role in MPs' blogging.

Blogs and other forms of new media have entered into people's everyday lives in the past few years. An ongoing change in the media as a whole also includes the field of political communication. The ways of doing politics are shifting as trends like Americanization, professionalization and personalization influence the processes. The relationship between politicians and media is changing, as the way of doing politics seems to be shifting increasingly towards gaining publicity. Blogging can be seen as a part of this attempt to gain publicity. Even though political blogging is a new trend, it is on the increase in both significance and quantity in Finland. With incisive analysis and alternative viewpoints as important aspects of blogging, interactivity apparently remains its essential contribution to politics and even to society.

Out of 200 Finnish MPs 77 actively write blogs of some type. My study shows, how only 34 of these blogs are truly interactive, as most of them do not allow readers to comment the blog. The age, sex and party affiliation of the MP have some effect on their blogging, as differences were also detected between governing and opposition parties. Apart from a few MPs differentiated with actively updated and commented political blogs, most of the MPs' blogs appear to contribute little to citizen participation: it is my conclusion that the potential of the political blogosphere has not been optimally utilized by the MPs.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Blogs have entered into the field of political communication during the past few years in an ever-accelerating pace. This new media has caused some changes in the media field as a whole, society and even in the way politics is done. With the internet available to all citizens in the modern western world, the new media like blogs give people more possibilities than before to contribute to discussions and to interact with other people, including politicians.

Most expectations about 'new media' regard it as something that is necessarily liberating and democratic. It is therefore unsurprising that enthusiasts and the media have argued that blogging will be a significant feature of politics in advanced economies in the future if not already today. Such arguments typically centre on claims that blogs will enable elected or potential representatives to bypass mass media, especially media that are hostile to a certain view or that present an individual within a particular 'box' that misrepresents that person and his or her statements. Blogging can also empower politicians with a personal voice and enable "genuine engagement" between representatives and those they represent, in particular through feedback that is "authentic" and appears on the representative's blog. It is also said that political blogging allow 'citizen journalists' to ask "hard questions" that would not be asked by a passive, biased or merely lazy mainstream media. (Arnold 2008.)

Consequently, blogging among politicians has become popular in recent years. Finnish politicians are thus currently emulating peers in the United States, Canada and United Kingdom who have started blogging as a replacement for or supplement to traditional sites and newsletters. For them, it is a great way to promote themselves or issues that are important to them. In USA politician blogs have been widely used for example in raising money for election campaigns, but in Finland they mainly serve other purposes, like publicity and news management, keeping in touch with the voters, stating opinions without the middle hand of mainstream media and sometimes just to provoke people to take part in discussions.

Blogging has its roots not only in the new media technologies but also in the changes in political communication culture. According to David Swanson and Paolo Mancini (1996) the way of doing politics seems to have shifted more and more towards gaining publicity. Politics has become more commercialized, while the media has become the first target group of the political actors. The role of the traditional political party is declining while the persona of a politician is emphasized. Hence, the importance of political images has risen, and political campaigns are planned mainly to please the media. Politics has also started to take up aspects of entertainment while at the same time it has become more and more professionalized. These features are typical in modern democracies all around the world and the process has been characterized with terms Americanization, modernization and medialization.

Because of the influence of these trends in political communication and the enabling possibilities of the new technologies blogging is the new “hot potato” among both politicians and media, as well as within the research community. Therefore, the topic of this thesis rises not only from my own interests but also from a fairly young area of study that still needs more research, especially so within the national level of Finnish political blogging.

Hence, this thesis deals with blogs written by Finnish politicians. The study I am conducting is descriptive by nature, and the material that I am looking at consists of all the blogs written by Finnish members of parliament (MPs). There are 200 representatives in the Finnish parliament, out of which a little less than a half write a blog of some type. This study tries to enlighten what these political blogs are like and what factors seem to play a role in which MP writes a blog and which does not.

This thesis consists of seven chapters. After the introduction chapter I will explain my research questions. Chapters 3 and 4 form the main theoretical part of my thesis with literature review. First chapter 3 deals with political communication and publicity where I go through the recent trends in political communication, the relationship between politicians and the media, and communication and publicity strategies. Chapter 4

handles blogs, blogging and blogosphere, whereas chapter 5 introduces the method and empirical material of this research, as well as the categorization of my empirical material. In chapter 6 I will present the findings and analysis of my study. Chapter 7 concludes the thesis with a discussion.

2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This thesis focuses on blogs written by Finnish MPs. My aim is to study what these blogs are like, what are their main features and how do they relate to the publicity of politics. I wish to find out what are the factors that seem to play a role in which MP writes a blog and which does not. In other words, my thesis is descriptive in nature and an overall look to MP's blogs; comparing, categorizing and analyzing them. In more detail, the questions I am posing are:

- Are MPs' blogs internet diaries, interactive blogs or something else?
- How often are these blogs updated, and is there a possibility for the reader to make comments on the postings?
- How many comments do the readers leave on the blogs?
- What is the content of the blog writings; is it more personal or strictly political?
- What can be said about the style and length of posts, and are there any visible differences between members of different parties?
- What role, if any, does sex, age and political party play on MPs blogging?
- Is there a difference between MPs in the government and opposition when it comes to blogging?

These questions will help me in forming the bigger picture on what do the MPs' blogs contain, what are their main features. As blogging is a fairly new phenomenon, I am also going to discuss on what new elements do the MP's blogs bring to the Finnish political communication culture and how has blogging contributed in to the ongoing change in the concept of political publicity in Finland. This is done on the basis of other studies that I have read, but also by reflecting on the current political atmosphere as well as my own notions and thoughts on the matter based on the findings of this study.

One thing particularly has to be taken into account when doing a research on political blogs *written by politicians*: most of the literature on the matter generalizes political blogs to consider all the blogs that somehow deal with politics, no matter whether the

writer is a professional journalist, amateur citizen or politician. To me, this poses a dilemma. *Politician blogs* are a group of its own, slightly different from other political blogs, having also a slightly different function of being and existing at least partly for benefiting the politicians that writes them. So, in my opinion, all the literature on political blogosphere cannot be generalized to automatically include blogs written by Finnish politicians. This is also one of the reasons I am interested in studying them, to find out what they really are like.

With this research I aim to gather valuable information about Finnish MPs' blogs. However, another goal is also to form a solid ground for possible follow-up research and open new doors for further study on the matter.

3. POLITICAL COMMUNICATION AND PUBLICITY

Political communication as a term has proved to be extremely difficult to define with any precision, simply because both components of the phrase are themselves open to a variety definitions, more or less broad. Robert Denton and Gary Woodward (1990, p. 14), for example, provide one definition of political communication as

pure discussion about the allocation of public resources (revenues), official authority, (who is given the power to make legal, legislative and executive decision), and official sanctions (what the state rewards or punishes).

Denton and Woodward also add that political communication should be characterized in terms of the *intentions* of its senders to influence the political environment. This means that the crucial factor that makes communication ‘political’ is not the source of the message, but rather its content and purpose (Ibid. p. 11). Bryan McNair, however, includes *all* political discourse in his definition. By political communication, he means not only verbal or written statements, but also visual means of signification such as dress, make-up, hairstyle, and logo design, i.e. all those elements of communication which might be said to constitute a political image or identity. (McNair 2003, p. 4.)

The study of political communication usually concentrates on the relationship between three elements in the process by which political attention is conceived and realized. These elements are political organizations, media and citizens. Political organizations consist of political actors, who seek to influence the decision-making process. These organizations are, for instance, political parties, public organizations, pressure groups, governments and terrorist organizations. (McNair 2003, p. 5.)

As already said above, political communication is an extremely broad concept. However, in this chapter I will introduce some ways to approach this field of study. First, I will take a closer look into prevailing and recent trends in political communication, since my own research is also dealing with a “product” of these trends

and new technology. Secondly, I am going to introduce the concept of publicity strategies. After this, I discuss the role relationship between politicians and media before moving into the blogosphere in chapter four.

3.1 Recent trends in political communication

The modern society and the media have undergone profound changes during the recent decades. Over the postwar period they have shaped political communication in many democracies. Not only are the avenues of political communication multiplying in a process that is becoming more diverse, fragmented, and complex, but also, at a deeper level, power relations among key message providers and receivers are being rearranged; the culture of political journalism is being transformed; and conventional meanings of “democracy” and “citizenship” are being questioned and rethought (Buckingham 1997).

Blumler and Kavanagh (1999) say that the changes in political communication have happened in three distinct ages. In the first, much political communication was subordinate to relatively strong and stable political institutions and beliefs. In the second, faced with a more mobile electorate, the parties increasingly “professionalized” and adapted their communications to the news values and formats of limited-channel television. In the third stage, (still emerging) age of media abundance, political communication may be reshaped by five trends: intensified professionalizing imperatives, increased competitive pressures, anti-elitist populism, a process of “centrifugal diversification,” and changes in how people receive politics. This system is full of tensions, sets new research priorities, and reopens long-standing issues of democratic theory.

The changes in the political communication culture according to Swanson and Mancini (1999) are substantial. The way of doing politics seems to have shifted more and more towards gaining publicity. Blogging can be seen as a part of this shift, helping in attempts to gain publicity. The politics has also become more commercialized, the media has become the first target group of the political actors, the persona of a politician

is emphasized while the party's role is declining, the importance of political images has risen, and political campaigns are planned mainly to please the media. Politics has also started to take up aspects of entertainment while at the same time it has become more and more professionalized. These features are typical in modern democracies all around the world, and this kind of process has been called Americanization, modernization or medialization¹. (Ibid.)

Americanization was the first explanation to the changes of political communication. However, *Americanization* as a term is problematic: it is difficult to determine, whether certain features of political campaigning really have their origins in the USA, and from there have spread to the other parts of the world, and not the other way around. In Finnish public discussions *Americanization* is a widely used term. (Isotalus 2001, pp.7-10.)

Modernization of political communication means that social differentiation and specialization has increased, fragmenting social organization, interests, and identities; proliferating diverse lifestyles and moral stances; and fueling identity politics. This complicates tasks of political aggregation and communication and supports markets for minority media. (Blumler & Kavanagh 1999, p.210) Isotalus (2001) adds that modernization emphasizes that changes in political communication are taking place because the society is changing. The term *modernization* aims in describing a wider and more common development than terms *Americanization* or *medialization*.

Medialization emphasizes the importance of the role and power of the media. This means that the media is moving towards the center of the social process. This promotes the concept and practices of a "media-constructed public sphere," elevating the communication function and the role of communication experts in a wide range of institutions. (Schulz 2004) The term *medialization* is usually mainly used by European scholars, especially by Scandinavians (Isotalus 2001).

¹ There are also scholars who prefer to talk about *mediatization*, instead of *medialization* (Isotalus 2001). The term can also be written with the letter s instead of z, *medialisation*. The meaning of all these is the same and in this thesis I chose to use the term *medialization*.

In Finland, political communication has also adapted parts of the processes described above. Even though Americanization has landed in Finland, there can also be seen opposing trends. For instance, negative campaigning has not increased in Finland, and harmony is still important to our campaigns. This proves that in spite of international similarities, cultural differences and the state of the society have impact on the development of political communication. In fact, Finnish parties have had poor experiences on foreign campaign consultants, who have not been able to take Finnish culture into account as much as needed. (Isotalus 2001, pp.18-19.)

According to Moring and Himmelstein (1996) Finnish political culture began to develop towards a new direction in the beginning of the 1990s. The campaigns in the parliamentary elections in 1991 and the municipal elections in 1992 brought a new image of politics into the media, and especially into television. Politics was much more entertainment-like than before. However, these elements of entertainment did not seem to work on luring the Finnish voters. When analyzing television's election programs researchers noticed that reporters often neglected important political issues as short-term "hot" topics took all the space. Researchers also say that in the 1994 presidential elections there was still visible duality in the political campaigns. The old politics could still be seen in the background while importance of the new-image politics was growing making image, persona and television more important to Finnish election campaigns. (Ibid.) This development has continued ever since and with the help of new technologies it has enabled the Finnish political communication culture to add new layers into its diversity.

Since medialization, and more precisely professionalization and personalization of political communication have had such an effect on political communication arena, I will examine the phenomena more closely in the following chapters. These trends in political communication can also be seen contributing most to the process that has led to politician blogging, which is in the center of this thesis.

3.1.1 Medialization of politics and politicians

Medialization relates to changes associated with communication media and their development. According to Winfried Schulz (2004) the basic assumption of medialization is that the technological, semiotic and economic characteristics of mass media result in problematic dependencies, constraints and exaggerations. These are closely associated with three basic functions of the media in communication processes: (1) the relay function, grounded in the media's technological capacities, serving to bridge spatial and temporal distances; (2) the semiotic function, making messages suitable for human information processing through encoding and formatting; and (3) the economic function, highlighting the standardization of media products as an outcome of mass production processes. In explaining medialization with reference to basic performances and functions of the medium in communication processes makes the concept applicable to all kinds of media, old and new. (Schulz 2004.) However, medialization was originally started especially due to the influence of television in political communication. Nowadays, the internet continues the process to new and interesting levels.

Parties and their political personnel have become aware of the public sphere becoming more and more media-constructed space. On all dimensions of medialization political actors find reason enough to model themselves on a media logic that operates under economic pressure, and research shows that political actors indeed adjust to the media's aims, its selection and production routines, rules and constraints, and preferred formats and contents. (Hofer 2008.) There has been extensive work on the foundations and phenomena of these public presentations of political actors in the "third age of political communication" (Blumler & Kavanagh 1999), such as on professionalization, staging of pseudo-events, on forms and uses of symbolic politics and also on personalization.

Politicians can be seen to work within several spheres in their political action. At least three distinct spheres of action can be distinguished, even though all of them are more or less intertwined. First, there is the sphere of political institutions and processes. Within this world politicians establish their identity as politicians and develop their

careers. Second, there is the world of public and popular. In this sphere politicians are seen as 'public figures', subject to the constant attention from the media. The world of public and popular can be seen as the stage where politicians develop reputations, draw varying levels of support, are judged as good or bad, undergo advancement, decline, resign or lose their positions. (Corner 2003.) In many cases the politicians that are blogging act within this sphere, in the world of public and popular.

The third sphere is the private one. It often enters in relation with the other spheres, because the private and personal background of a politician will form their identity and career in political institutions as well as in their public projections. With reference to the world of public and popular, the private sphere is now more than ever being used as a political resource. It is being used, for instance, for manufacturing political identity and helping repair reputations after a phase of difficulties. (Ibid.) The growing cooperation or exploitation of these two spheres, the public and private, is also where the political candidates find their newest force in portraying themselves in the media. Blogging is one example on how the private and public spheres can be combined in everyday political action and self-promotion.

Because of the medialization trend, personal life of political actors is nowadays broadly reported and commented upon in 'quality' and as well as 'populist' media formats. As consequence, the line that has traditionally defined the public and private is being aggressively redrawn. This transformation has provoked an ongoing debate about whether the coverage of politicians' private lives is in the public interest and where the boundaries between the public and private should be drawn. The answers to these questions seem to depend on the news and political culture of the country in question, as well as the role of the journalists in each nation. The countries seem to fall into two broad categories. In the Anglo-American media cultures, including most importantly the United Kingdom and the United States, the exposure of politicians' private lives are considered by many journalists as fair, particularly when politicians have taken advantage of their personal lives for publicity purposes. In the U.K. and the U.S. unauthorised revelations tend to appear in tabloid-style publications. The editors of these publications justify the line of conduct by the provision which helps the public to

evaluate politicians' authenticity, trustworthiness and competence to govern. (Stanyer & Wring 2004.)

The more private group of countries when talking about politicians' personal lives in the media include autocratic regimes in the Middle East, but also established European democracies such as Spain and France. In these countries journalists have been fairly unwilling to report on politicians' private lives, even if these matters are not new to the journalist community in question. This practice is reinforced by state controls and privacy laws. When speaking of democracies, the press has been the most unwilling to intrude in countries where citizens have constitutionally guaranteed rights to privacy. (Ibid.) In this sense, the role of the journalist in these countries differs from the Anglo-American culture. Finland's political communication culture in this aspect seems to fall somewhere in between these two groups.

Due to medialization, there is clearly a trend towards a more intrusive political reporting, even if one leaves aside legislation and journalistic cultures. This change both reflects and is heightened by the growth of market-driven tabloid media and the rise of personality in politics, which is discussed closely later on. Moreover, the highly competitive tabloid news culture has helped to alter traditional journalistic cultures and deferential attitudes towards political elites. As a consequence, this more intrusive style of reporting has strengthened a more conflictual and mutually suspicious relationship between the politicians and journalists. (Ibid.)

Medialization of political communications has also led to worries about the state of democracy. Critics fear that the trend described would deprive politics of its autonomy and subordinate it under the rule of the mass media. Some of the accounts from the public and scholars alike blame the media to even be an irresistible power, expanding its functions, becoming the driving force in today's democratic systems, and not only subordinating, but replacing political parties (among other actors) in the configuration of accountable democratic institutions. (Schulz 2004.)

3.1.2 Professionalization of politics

The rise of political professionalism has its roots in the changing process of the political communication field as a whole, as well as in the changes that has taken place in party structures during the past few decades. According to Paolo Mancini (2007) in the new “professional-electoral party” a major role is played by professionals, public relations experts, media and polling experts, political consultants and other experts with technical skills, who are more useful when the organization moves its center gravity from party members to voters. In addition to the centrality of the specialists, today’s political parties differ from the earlier mass parties in an organizational level. Today’s parties have weaker organizational structure than the parties of the past lead by political bureaucrats. However, parties’ main function still remains the same: to catch voters at election time. (Mancini 2007.)

The professionalization of political communication suggests that it is a process of adaptation to, and as such a necessary consequence of, changes in the political system on the one side and the media system on the other and in the relationship of the two systems. These changes follow from the modernization of society, which is a development that is still going on and will take place in similar political systems sooner or later. Professionalization in this sense is a general and not culture-bound concept. Its actual appearance and the degree of professionalization in a given country are however dependent on a country’s specific social and political structures and processes (Negrine et al 2007).

More generally, professionalization can also be treated as an idea that permits us to examine issues that go beyond the immediate concern with political communication during elections. It can, for instance, provide a prism through which one can begin to explore the centralization of governmental communication, the communication strategies of governments and interest groups and the developing relationship between all political actors, including political parties, candidates and social movements and the media. (Ibid.) Professionalization thus refers to a process of change in the field of politics and communication that, either explicitly or implicitly, brings about a better and

more efficient – and more receptive – organization of resources and skills in order to achieve desired objectives, whatever they might be. (Negrine et al 2007.)

According to Mancini (2007) in the past the political professionalization has been described in terms of source of their economic resources (the party) and the area of their competence (politics). The new political professionalism is profoundly different. Nowadays professional politics is not conducted only by the politician and the party, but technicians like advertising, media and public relations experts as well as journalists and pollsters. These experts do not only work for the parties but also apply their expertise in fields such as business communication and commercial advertising. Thus, their life does not depend exclusively on politics, and therefore politics is not their only area of competence. A further difference between former and new political professionalism is that in the past the political professionalism was unconditionally dependent and motivated by esteem and respect for the leader and the party. The new professionals do not have an exclusive relationship with one party or leader; like all members of modern professions, they provide their knowledge and services to whom-ever needs it and has resources to pay for it. (Ibid.) A great example of this are the political fund raising blogs in the United States. Run by professional experts, they are used in funding electoral campaigns of parties or for example presidential candidates.

The professionalization of politics has advanced in recent years in three fundamental fields of political life: campaigning (especially fund raising in regards to campaigning, as already mentioned above), policy decision making and the connection with the mass media, more specifically media production and interaction. In particular, the development of television and later the internet required that the parties obtain – by hiring the services of professionals – technical knowledge of the medium and its language. This was absolutely necessary to operate successfully in the new political arena where the mass media are the main instruments of contacting the voters. All of this has therefore forced parties and candidates to develop strategies of “news management” that mainly are entrusted to spin doctors and media professionals. In the process, sources of political information have become more and more professionalized. (Mancini 2007.)

The criticism concerning the professionalization of politics is often pointed towards the very definition of the term *professionalization*. This means that as more and more literature focuses on the way political campaigning and communication have become professionalized, the broader the definition of the process of professionalization becomes. According to Lilleker and Negrine (2007) the term professionalization is so multifaceted and often highly subjective that it is not fully able to describe the nuances in the complex nature of political communication. They suggest that instead of a broad and ambiguous term *professionalization*, we should use more specific and accurate phrases, such as “*specification of tasks, the increase use of experts and the management of centralization of the campaign*” (Ibid. p. 131). Lilleker and Negrine argue that when talking about professionalization of politics we are only left with a normative conclusion that “politics have become more professional”, which still leaves question hanging in the air: more professional than what, since when and on whose part? (Ibid.)

3.1.3 Personalization of politics

Personalization is regarded to be one of the increasing phenomena both of mass mediated political communication and changes of party political organization and processes. Most often, political science uses *personalization* to describe power concentration in the hands of a single political person. Likewise does party research apply the term, for instance to describe organizational leadership change as one factor in the purposive-action approach to party change (Hofer 2008).

Furthermore, personalization touches on a possible dealignment of party leaders, the ‘party central office’, from the rank and file, the ‘party on the ground’. This is not just an organizational and hierarchical detachment – it also is a communicative detachment. Both levels follow different modes of communication, the ordinary members displaying an expressive and the party leaders rather a strategic logic of communication the latter’s success being largely dependent on the media coverage of their communicative efforts. Compared to party change research, electoral studies and political communication

research refer more often to such communicative element of personalization (Katz & Mair 1994).

With mass media as a more or less explicit analytical backdrop, Hofer (2008) identifies three central dimensions of the personalization: First, personalization has relevance for a voter's "personal vote". A personal vote is "that portion of a candidate's electoral support which originates in his or her personal qualities, qualifications, activities and record". For this kind of personal vote, personalization functions as an information shortcut about the complexity of politics. A blog written by a politician can also be seen to function as this kind of an information shortcut. Second, personalization marks parties' strategic focus on campaigning on persons instead of campaigning on ideology and program alone. Finally third, personalization refers to an emphasis on private characteristics of candidates or of political leaders in general. Holtz-Bacha claims that the current trend towards the personalization of politics in media reporting goes in tandem with – or is possibly a consequence of – the politicians' strategic use of their private lives (Holtz-Bacha 2004, p. 47). According to her, the portrayal of politicians' private lives caters to "humanisation", simplification and distraction, 'emotionalisation' and the striving for celebrity status" (Ibid. p. 49).

Lately, according to Holtz-Bacha (2004) the personalization and privatization of political communication has speeded up. She bases her studies on German political sphere:

A study of campaign reporting in national dailies and political magazines since the first post-war election in 1949 showed that the personalization strategy has always been on the media agenda. Since the 1990s, press interest in this topic has become more noticeable. With the election campaign in 2002, the frequency with which the media covered private lives reached its peak. (Ibid. p. 48)

However, Holtz-Bacha does not see this as a long term trend.

Hofer (2008) argues, that personalization derives from the rise of mass media (especially television) that would allow more direct communication from single politicians to voters; at the same time, those politicians would be able to avoid a rendering of that communication by their parties, and the media logic would favor “media figures” (i.e., persons who have a better command of the techniques of media communication than others) over political activists and party bureaucrats. Here, Heffernan supports this view:

While politicians use the media for the advantage of their party, they also use it for their private benefit, particularly in raising their own profile, demonstrating their utility to potential supporters within the party and wider public (Heffernan 2006, p. 597).

However, using the mainstream media is not the only possible approach to this anymore. Again, opportunities offered by the new media and especially blogging offer new ways to accomplish what used to have to go through journalists before reaching the public.

Thus at its core, the concept of personalization constitutes a development in which politicians become the main anchor of interpretations and evaluations in the political process. In campaign coverage, personalization can appear as a stronger concentration on candidates and/or a stronger emphasis of personal or appearance characteristics (e.g., credibility, rhetorical performance and likeability) rather than political characteristics (e.g., competence, leadership qualities). Hence, indicators are an increase in visibility of political leaders as well as in their centrality, a boost in emphasis on leadership qualities of political personae but also on their private life, and an increase in evaluations of political leaders. (Hofer 2008.)

Personalization as “identification of political ideas with single politicians” is by no means a new phenomenon, whereas modern campaign communications is, showing parties to increasingly concentrate their strategies on the candidates. As such, personalization is a complex interplay between personal characteristics of politicians and their mediation through various institutional practices, such as campaign strategies

and media coverage, from which voters will build their perceptions of politicians. Both may not particularly reveal to be problematic as long as person and issues are connected. However, it becomes a threat to the quality of legitimacy if the person and issues are disconnected to an extent where the issues disappear behind the person. (Ibid.)

3.2 The relationship between politicians and the media

The distinctions between political institutions' and media institutions include, according to Jay Blumler and Michael Gurevitch (1977), at least the following dimensions: bases of legitimacy, the service function and autonomy. The bases of legitimacy are different for the politicians and the media personnel. Politicians derive their legitimacy a) from the authority of the causes they represent, b) from the degree of consensus among the interests they articulate and c) from the public acceptance of the procedures by which they have been chosen to represent those interests. The media personnel are legitimated through their fidelity to central professional codes. The service function seems to be very important to the media professionals. They claim to be primarily concerned with serving the audience members' 'right to know'. Politicians are, in journalists' opinion, naturally only interested in persuasion. The media personnel's work rewards derive partly from their professional autonomy. Journalists are in many respects middlemen in the political communication process. They often stress the importance of a more empirical, skeptical and many-sided description of political reality while politicians stress the importance of the ideological criteria of political truth. (Ibid. pp. 280-281.)

In a later paper Blumler and Gurevich (1995) say that in liberal-democratic societies the relations of media personnel to communication and information sources, which in the case of political communication are political actors, are (1) problematic, (2) pivotal and (3) exceptionally difficult to analyze.

According to Blumler and Gurevitch (1995) the relations are problematic because they are not authoritatively prescribed in advance. This means, that the media content is free

from state control, there is an editorial independence and journalists are free to make their own arrangements with the sources while protecting the confidentiality toward sources, makes these relations problematic, if not even confusing at times.

Although problematic, Blumler and Gurevitch also see these relations pivotal in political communication research for two reasons. Firstly, because media-source relations typically absorb much of the time, energy and thought journalists devote to their work. Secondly, because opposing interpretations of the media-source power balance also relates to the debate of the very core functions of socio-political mass communications. According to one paradigm, the mass media are essentially lower class to the society's institutionally dominant power-holders, whose opinions are regularly sought and whose interests and ideologies are systematically reinforced. A quite contrary thesis, however, claims that the mass media themselves are powerful advocates, reality definers and sites of professional cultures, with which other institutions must then come to terms. (Ibid.)

Media-source relations are difficult to analyze, mainly because their constituent elements are not easily isolated or distangled (Blumler et al 1995). As Nimmo (1978) points out, political news is the joint creation of the journalists who assemble and report events and other political communicators – politicians, professionals and spokesperson – who promote them. Such a fusion occurs because each communicator is extremely motivated to 'study' the other when pursuing his or her interests. Politicians act as information resources for background insight, which is central to reporters running stories. However, politicians must also tailor their activities to suit the news media's conventions to make themselves more widely known; build up and sustain opinion constituencies; cultivate policy awareness and support; test public reactions to likely initiatives; and counter rivals' publicity efforts as well as damaging critical fire from other quarters. (Blumler et al 1995.) In my opinion, blogging is an excellent tool in striving for all this. It has already been seen in the Finnish political communication, that for a politician one way of making it to the news is "provocative" blogging. The mainstream media reports quite eagerly if for example an MP writes something personal, critical or otherwise controversial in his or her blog. If Erkki Tuomioja

criticizes the government's policies as being "just plain stupid", the statement is bound to end up in the mainstream media.

"In the end, the central issue in the relationship between media and political institutions revolves around the media's relative degree of autonomy and to what extent and by what means this is allowed to be constrained", Blumler and Gurevitch claim. They have identified three main sources of constraints that directly subordinate the mass media to political institutions: legal, normative and structural. Legal constraints are the rules and regulation that define the rights and obligations of media institutions. They define the boundaries of freedom of expression. These boundaries may include e.g. legally protected rights of privacy, restrictions on national security grounds or imposition of censorship on political comment. Normative constraints have to do with the expectations of political and public service by media organizations. The mass media may be held socially responsible for political and public service without falling under the direct control of state or party machinery. 'Social responsibility' refers to the media's task to provide political information and analysis suited to the needs of conscientious citizens. Structural constraints concern the degree to which formal or semi-formal linkages may be forced between the mass media and political bodies. (Ibid. 1977, p. 283).

Thus, the process whereby media constructions of political issues are shaped and produced is subtle and complex. It involves a close interaction between political advocates and media professionals, in the course of which the two sides may virtually be said to constitute a subtly composite unity.

3.2.1 Conflicts

Public conflicts between politicians and the mass media are quite common. In most cases politicians are the initiators and journalists the accused. Politicians claim that the mass media have too much power in the society. They seem to think that the media and journalists are superficial and greedy for power and sensationalism. Journalists defend

themselves by referring to mass media's role as the "essence of freedom of expression" and by saying that politicians are frustrated by their own failures and mistakes (Aula 1991, pp. 106-109). Conflicts get a lot of publicity and one question that has to be asked is: Are these conflicts "real" or just parts of the media game? Public confrontation can be a convenient way of advertising one's political opinions. Provocative blogging can fall into this category as well.

Blumler and Gurevitch think that conflicts between politicians and the mass media are role-bonded and therefore lasting phenomena. Because of politicians' and journalists' different professional and organizational roles, it is important to ask, who benefits the most from political communication. Politicians appear to be more interested in persuasion and voting behavior than in the public's intellectual needs. Journalists have noble aims to serve their public, but in reality they seem to pay more attention to the politicians' than to the public's needs. Different social roles also raise questions about agenda setting. Who is to decide, how people comprehend political events and what they talk about in their every-day lives? The topics that the mass media bring to public discussion may seem irrelevant or even disturbing to politicians. When the one party tries to extend its role to the other party's "territory", conflicts are inevitable. One of the most common questions of this role play is: Who is to blame for failures? (Ibid. 1981, pp. 485-487.)

3.2.2 Symbiosis and exchange

Politicians need the publicity provided by the mass media and journalists need the political information provided by politicians. Both groups have resources that the other group wants and needs. The balance and dynamics of the relationship depend on how completely the groups control their own resources and how interested they are in each other's resources. This can also be understood as an exchange situation where information and column space are the merchandises. According to Kent Asp (1986), the mass media's power to determine what is reported about politics depends on how completely they control the publicity channels and how interested the politicians are in these channels. Politicians' power depends on how carefully they monopolize

information that concerns political decision-making and how interested the mass media are in this information. (Aula 1991, pp. 16-17.)

The mass media's importance to politicians has grown over last decades. The possibilities for face to face communication and direct connections between politicians and the people - potential voters - have weakened. This is true, even though blogging can be seen as a step back towards more direct communication between politicians and people. In many democratic societies clear boundaries between social classes have disappeared. Flexible, unpredictable political behavior has replaced traditional party loyalty. Politicians seem to assume that the mass media have a strong, direct influence on their public (Aula 1991, p. 22). They also seem to believe that in order to have power over people (the mass media audiences) one has to have power over the content of the media.

Politicians' assumptions of communication's direct effects strengthen the mass media's position in their symbiotic relationship. Politicians are not, however, helpless victims of the superficial and power-seeking mass media. Politicians have different kinds of means to control their publicity. They can for example control their public image, control the amount and quality of the information they provide to the media, attract public's attention by "media tricks" or directly criticize the media's actions (public conflicts). (Aula 1989, pp. 16-23.) Both organizations and individuals can adopt either an active or a reactive attitude towards creating and controlling their public images (Luostarinen 1994, p. 69).

3.2.3 Power struggle

A person gets political information from various sources. The less we have direct contacts to politicians, the more dependent we become on mass media contents. According to Asp (1986), the media have a more direct effect on peoples' conceptions of truth than on their voting behavior. However, the media's set of values and picture of the truth do affect the ways in which people evaluate political activity. In this way, the

media also indirectly influence peoples' political behavior. (Ibid. pp. 343-351.) The more mass communication research has focused on individual factors (reception of messages) instead of media stimulation factors (media contents), the less influential the media have seemed (Ibid. pp. 57-59).

Blumler and Gurevitch identify three sources of media power. These sources are structural, psychological and normative in origin. The structural power comes from the media's unique capacity to deliver to the politician an audience which, in size and composition, is unavailable to him by any other means. The psychological power comes from the credibility and trust that different media and media organizations have developed with their audiences. This simply means that the media have - in some cases - succeeded in fulfilling its audience's expectations. (Ibid. 1977, pp. 274-275.)

"It is the combined influence of these structural and psychological sources of strength that enable the media to interpose themselves between politicians and the audience and to 'intervene' in other political processes as well", Blumler and Gurevitch write. Some of the forms of intervention used by the mass media are certainly unwelcome to many politicians. Normative power can be crucial at times of conflicts. It springs from the respect of freedom of expression and from the need for specialized organs to safeguard citizens against possible abuses of political authority. This source of power legitimates the independent role of media organizations in the political field and shelters them from overt attempts to bring them under political control. (Ibid. 1977, p. 275.)

In summary, politicians' and journalists' roles in the society are very different. They have different professional and social interests and conflicting expectations concerning each other's functions and actions. However, politicians and the mass media also have some common interests. Both parties need to attract public's attention. In order to do that, they have to both cooperate and compete with each other.

3.3 Communication and publicity strategies

Organization's communication strategy consists of those definitions, choices and goals, which in action and adaptation work in making the organization's communication more successful. The strategy's main attention is usually in the future. The two levels of the strategy are according to Juholin (2001) strategic and operational planning.

Ikävalko (1996) defines communication and publicity strategies as being organization's main guide lines in how it endeavors to get to its goal public image. Organizations can have several of these strategies. One is usually the official, followed by the executives or the board, whereas units on a lower level may follow their own strategy. In every case, however, there is a common policy or certain conventions, on how people in that organization should be in contact with the media. This applies of course also political parties. Ikävalko says that the strategy should be based on the features of the organization and their position both in the media publicity and in the society as a whole. Organizations should also acknowledge their own composition and place in the public sphere. If the organization's strategy is the right one for them, they are in a better balance with their environment and the media. This way it is also easier to get their messages and viewpoints published. (Ibid.) There is not a one right way of conducting a publicity strategy, every community and organization have to determine the best approach for them in different situations. Juholin (2001, p.191) recommends big and important organizations to take a proactive stance in their communication strategy, whereas small organizations are better to be conciliatory toward the media. There is no official information, at least not to my knowledge, whether the Finnish political parties have blogging included in their publicity strategies. However, I assume that the parties at least encourage if not advice their MPs to blog.

3.3.1 Political publicity and image

Politicians are in the public eye because it is beneficial to them. Publicity is politicians' way to increase their popularity. Appearing in the publicity makes them more

recognizable and helps voters to get to know them. However, all publicity is not good for politicians. The most extreme options are no one knowing you and being a celebrity, which can alienate voters or label the politician shallow. Politicians should not keep too long distance to the voters but, on the other hand, by revealing too much about their personal life they can make themselves appear shallow again. (Isotalus 1998)

Nowadays great publicity in the eyes of the voters can in practice only be achieved with the help of the media. Already existing publicity and popularity is often taken advantage in politics. If a person striving to get into the politics is already a well-known TV-personality or a celebrity of another kind, he or she does not have to invest a great deal of money in gaining more publicity (Karvonen 1999.) This also explains so-called celebrity candidates.

A political candidate is usually most visibly in the publicity of his or her own region. Only nationally well-known candidates get visibility in the nationwide media. In principal, politicians are always a certain level celebrities, but it is possible to distinguish so called national and local celebrities. Studies have shown that politically inexperienced candidates with popular celebrity value get a great deal of publicity, but not necessarily on the topics they would like to discuss. For candidates operating on a national level the quality of publicity is important, not just the quantity of publicity. (Kemiläinen 1998.) When talking about Finnish MPs and their blogs, similar tendencies can be recognized. Nationally well-known MPs get issues from their blogs taken into the mainstream media as news a lot more easily than MPs with no celebrity status.

Conception and visual factors such as image and reputation have long been important in the quest for the voters' attention. Already back in the 1950s politicians started to use marketing strategies that were at the time used in selling cars. Parties' success depends on their image and reputation, in other words, how do people see them. The same way, an individual politician is dependent on his or her reputation. Image and reputation are important because they guide people in their decision-making, such as voting. In the USA productizing of the politicians has already come a long way. Medialization of politics and especially television's strong presence in politics has changes the conditions

of doing politics. Television has brought more demands to politicians' agendas, and at the top one must be in control and perform professionally while being appealing at the same time. This kind of new demand favors a new type of politicians. Even though image building is important, it is not everything in politics. (Karvonen 1999.)

Karvonen (Ibid.) says that media is the most powerful image builder, even though journalists do not want to call themselves that. However, the media does not always build a positive image from its subject politician. Journalists may perceive the subject's image as an embellished sales talk or even propaganda. Journalist is, in a way, in a position of a critical consumer when he or she tries to find out how things are really like. In marketing image or conception is not considered as sending messages, but it is rather the perception that the message receivers get. Juholin (2001) adds that the image and reputation of a politician develops from everything he or she says and does, and what other people tell from that person. This, of course, includes what that person writes in his or her blog. All these messages are mediated to the receivers either directly and consciously or unconsciously.

Mental images are formed all the time whether the sender wants it or not and that is also the reason why politicians try to control them. The public also has an opinion on Finnish members of parliament. This image can be based on several things, such as political activity and visibility, other kind of celebrity status, or even looks. Nowadays the internet has a big impact on what people think of our politicians. This has also been noted in the parliament as more and more MPs write their own blogs and keep their own web sites as appealing as possible.

3.3.2 Managing publicity

The growing power and importance of the media has made people living in the public eye think about how they can survive in the media society, and whether the power of media can be neutralized or even turned into their own advantage. Because of the powerful status that media has in a society, publicity management has become an

important expertise. While publicity management has become professionalized spontaneity has had to make room for orderliness. (Uimonen 1996, pp. 50-51.) For politicians publicity management is crucial especially when they want to raise up certain issues or achieve a more visible role in the eyes of the voters.

According to Heikki Luostarinen (1998) publicity management is close to terms like *news management*, *image building*, *information coordinating* and *public relations (PR)*. Publicity management describes a situation where various actors in a society try to influence the image the mass media is portraying. This is often done in a very goal-oriented and professional way. This “game for publicity” has also been noticed in the academic research community. In this game the media is competing to get the biggest news and the most powerful sources. Sources, on the other hand, are competing on the journalists’ attention. They also have to compete with the journalists on whose point of view and concepts become a priority in the story.

There are at least three dimensions in managing the news and journalistic publicity. Luostarinen (1994, p.67) says that these are getting into the public eye, control of the outgoing message and making an impact or influence. First of all, the source is looking for publicity especially in a place with a suitable audience. Secondly, the timing should be right and publicity should be gained from the right media when there is a special need for it. Controlling the outgoing message consists of three elements: first, the source decides what to say, which can not be edited or commented on. In addition, the source tries to influence the journalists, other organizations and the public. These influences can be direct or implied. We are talking about direct impact when the source attempts to influence the media agenda, his or her own recognizability or the public’s opinion. Implied influencing means that the sources goal is, for instance, to strengthen his or her societal value.

In managing the publicity organizations can work either actively or passively. In addition, the source can attempt to operate in the publicity in two different roles: either as a person making the news or as a person commenting on the news as an expert. Tight control of the outgoing message is guaranteed by letting only few authorized person

from the organization to be in contact with the journalists. Decentralizing organizations give more freedom also to actors in lower levels to express their opinions to the media, but in issues that effect the organization as a whole are still directed to executives and PR experts. The source can manage information distribution openly or secretly, so that both journalist and the public can see where the information came from, so that only the medium knows the source, or finally, so that either media or the public can not find out who the source was. (Luostarinen 1994, pp. 69-72.)

The publicity can also be managed by using restrictive methods or pressure. The pressure can be direct physical violence towards the journalist, political or economical pressure which means most often consumer- or advertising boycott. When speaking about “professional pressure” Luostarinen means the different kinds of actions and conventions aiming to demonstrate insufficiencies in journalist’s work or lacks in the media’s independency or expertise. In publicity management the restrictive methods are, for example, friendship between the source and the journalist, information leaks or bribery. (Ibid. pp. 73-85.)

Managing media publicity successfully also often needs exogenous observation, monitoring existing publicity. It is valuable for the organization to monitor who or which facet is covered in the media and in which emphasis is this done. This way the organization (or a political party or an individual politician) knows their own place and status in the eyes of the media and therefore also in the society. (Juholin 2001.)

3.3.3 New opportunities for political self-promotion

Modern democracies of today have very competitive media markets due to the multiplication in outlets, mostly in radio, television and electronic media, such as internet. This multiplication has led to an aggressive pursuit of both audiences and advertising revenue. Media outlets seek to turn changes in popular taste into commercial gain. In Western democracies, the public’s principal source of political information is naturally the media, television being the most significant of them. Voters also consider television as the most reliable source of political information, oppose to, for example,

internet. For politicians the multiplication of media outlets has meant new possibilities to distribute information through a wide spectrum of channels as well as improved opportunities for the promotion of their personal image.

The purpose of political self-promotion is to gain visibility for oneself and for one's party or organization. When used intentionally and strategically, self-promotion can be rewarding for individuals as well as the organization. Many leaders in business life expect visibility and recognition to result from doing good work, but simply doing good work may not be enough to achieve those results. (Hernez-Broome 2006.) The same applies to politics: just by doing a good job does not guarantee positive publicity or image for the politician.

Self-promotion is an additional component that creates visibility and communicates value, and thus it is an essential part of being a professional politician. Hernez-Broome (Ibid.) claims that it is a key to effectiveness and long-term success to a person in a leading position. To develop strong, effective self-promotional skills, politicians need to find the sweet spot between bragging and being overly modest. In doing so, staying focused on the value of the work is the best policy.

Benefits for political self-promotion are evident. First of all, successful self-promotion enhances the credibility of a politician. This is extremely important, because credibility is the basis of the voters trust on politicians. With credibility the politicians have the ability to motivate, to inspire, and to be worthy of the public's trust. However, both trust and credibility are difficult to earn and very easy to lose. (Hernez-Broome 2006.)

With authentic self-promotion politicians try to help ensure that their reputation matches their accomplishments, or maybe even exceeds them. But political self-promotion does not singularly aim at polishing one's image in the eyes of the voters, but among other political actors as well. Much of the work in today's organizations, political and beyond, involves persuading and negotiating. Politicians' ability to influence others is, in many ways, tied to what others think of them. If a politician is seen as ineffectual, isolated, lacking in confidence, or limited in knowledge or expertise, he or she will have

little influence compared with others who are viewed as effective, well connected, powerful, knowledgeable, and up-to-date. When others are open to your influence, you can negotiate for scarce resources, generate support, affect organizational decisions and outcomes, and gain access to crucial people and information. (Ibid.)

Political blogging by the members of the parliament can also be seen as a means of self-promotion. Internet provides an open arena for discussion, and by writing your own blog politicians can “skip over” the mainstream media and address the public directly.

4. BLOGS, BLOGGING AND BLOGOSPHERE

4.1 What is a blog?

Blogs, it seems, are everywhere. Like few media phenomena, and certainly like no media form since the emergence of the World Wide Web itself, blogs seem to have captured public attention. Even the word “blog” was chosen as Merriam-Webster’s word of the year in 2004. (Bruns & Jacobs 2006, pp.1-3.) But what does this phenomenon contain? A simple definition of a blog is difficult to determine, because on the one hand we are dealing with a form of technology, and on the other, a genre of writing. When making a definition about blogs, one also has to take into account the aspects of citizen journalism and new media that are often related to the discussion about blogs and the blogosphere.

A famous blog veteran and movement historian, Rebecca Blood, defines blogs, or weblogs as they are also called, as simple internet publications that are regularly updated by the author of the web page (Blood 2000). The posts written on the blogs are automatically updated and time-stamped so that the latest post appears at the top of the weblog. (Gillmor 2004, p.28.) Blogs are distinguished from other websites because of their dynamism, reverse chronological presentation and dominant use of first person by the writer. On many blogs, the readers of the blog can leave comments in response to the author’s posts. (Tremayne 2007.) However, this interactive feature that many blogs have is not present in all of them. There is even some debate going on whether these kinds of blogs, with no possibility for the reader to interact, should be called blogs at all.

An obvious feature or advantage that blogs have compared to traditional websites is the fact that one can update them in real time. This means that updating a blog happens with one push of a button, and the post is sent and published immediately. Unlike in traditional websites that are so called “page-centric”, blogs function with smaller units called “posts”, and are therefore called “posting-centric” websites. (Gillmor 2004.)

Even though it is maybe better to define blogs this way through their structural features rather than their textual content, some features of the content can also be helpful in defining blogs. According to Gillmor (2004, p.29) the style of the blogs can vary a lot. However, in most blogs a unifying stylistic factor can still be found: that is the author's commentive and self-reflective style of writing. In addition to their structural features and technological format, blogs also have cultural and sociological features (Heinonen 2006). Heinonen mentions an interpretive, subjective and personal style as well as a high level of community between bloggers as examples of these features.

According to Tremayne (2007) the term "blogger" refers to the person who writes the blog as opposed to those who read them. Bloggers emerged in large numbers during the early 2000s, along with easy-to-use, often free weblog publishing software (Heinonen 2006). As of June 2008, the blog search engine Technorati was tracking more than 112 million blogs worldwide (Technorati). However, an exact number of blogs is impossible to establish, since many of the blogs are not active anymore. Because starting a blog these days is so easy, leaving one is easy as well. This means that the lifespan of blogs varies a great deal. A-lehdet executive and blogger, Matti Lintulahti, estimates that approximately one third of all blogs are active, leaving two thirds abandoned, and no longer updated (Lintulahti 2005).

In their blogs, bloggers usually use hyperlinks to other web content and also often have something called a "blog roll". This means a list of links to other blogs as part of site navigation. Links can also be used inside the individual posts made by the blogger. Collectively, blogs and the links that connect them are referred to as "blogosphere", a term that is clearly derivative of the public sphere. (Tremayne 2007.) The growing of the blogosphere is a phenomenon in the network that relies mostly on hyperlinks. Because of this development, the media has also started to build links to the blogosphere, in order to better serve its own needs, e.g. in the form of fast sources and expert commentaries. (Drezner & Farrell 2004.)

As Tremayne (2007) points out, one cannot make generalizations about the blogosphere because of its size, diversity of content and variation in format. The blogs that are

situated at the center of this network have characteristics that those on the periphery often do not share. When one makes a claim about the nature of the blogosphere, it is vital to take into consideration which part of it is under investigation. In my own study, I am concentrating only on Finnish political blogs, written by Finnish Parliament members. Therefore the results of the study are not to be generalized to cover all blogs or even all political blogs.

4.2 Short history of blogging

Weblogs are relatively new phenomena. However, there are some disagreements on when were the very first blogs actually developed, like there disagreements on how a blog should be defined. Despite the fact that there are no unanimously accepted theory on how blogs came to exist, journalist Rebecca Blood's studies on history of blogs are widely approved and quoted by many scholars of the field. Therefore, I am also going to use mainly Blood's theories in elaborating the history of blogs.

In the history of internet predecessors of blogs were newsgroups, email-lists and chat forums where internet users could communicate by sending messages for the other users to read. Also wikis can be seen as predecessors of blogs. All these are still in use, but none of them achieved the popularity of weblogs before blogs came as big as they are today. (Gillmor 2004, pp. 23-32.)

According to Rebecca Blood (2000) first weblogs appeared online in the late 1990s. In 1998 there were just a handful of sites of the type that are now identified as weblogs. One of the first pioneers of blogging, editor Jesse James Garrett, began compiling a list of 'other sites like his' as he found them in his travels around the web. In November 1999, he sent that list to Cameron Barrett. Barrett published the list on Camworld, and others maintaining similar sites began sending their URLs to him for inclusion on the list. Garrett's 'page of only weblogs' lists the 23 known to be in existence at the beginning of 1999.

The first person to define a blog was Brigitte Eaton, who listed all the blogs that she knew in her website Eatonweb Portal in early 1999. She evaluated all submissions by a simple criterion: that the site consists of dated entries. Webloggers debated what was and what was not a weblog, but since the Eatonweb Portal was the most complete listing of weblogs available, Eaton's inclusive definition prevailed. (Blood 2000.)

At this point, the bandwagon jumping began. More and more people began publishing their own weblogs. This rapid growth continued steadily until July 1999 when Pitas, the first free build-your-own-weblog tool launched, and suddenly there were hundreds. In August, Pyra released Blogger, and Groksoup launched, and with the ease that these web-based tools provided, the bandwagon jumping turned into an explosion. Late in 1999 software developer Dave Winer introduced Edit This Page, and Jeff A. Campbell launched Velocinews. All of these services were and still are free, and all of them are designed to enable individuals to publish their own weblogs quickly and easily. (Blood 2000.) Also, the fact that at the same time internet started to become an every household commodity helped blogging spread into its full glory. These 21st century free-style blogs can also be seen as an outbreak of self-expression. Each is evidence of a staggering shift from an age of carefully controlled information provided by sanctioned authorities, to an unprecedented opportunity for individual expression on a worldwide scale. Each kind of weblog empowers individuals on many levels.

The original weblogs were link-driven sites. Each was a mixture in unique proportions of links, commentary, and personal thoughts and essays. But the influx of blogs has changed the definition of weblog from 'a list of links with commentary and personal asides' to 'a website that is updated frequently, with new material posted at the top of the page.' (Blood 2000.)

4.3 Types of blogs

Weblogs can be divided into groups and categories based on different criteria. The way content is delivered or written in a blog is one way of differentiating blogs. Even though

many blogs provide commentary or news on a particular subject, others function as more personal online diaries. A typical blog, if there is such a thing, combines text, images, and links to other blogs, web pages, and other media related to its topic. Although most blogs are primarily textual, other media types are also represented in the blogosphere. For instance, podcasts, videocasts and photoblogs are so called non-textual blogs and part of a wider network of social media (Blogging 2008). This type of categorising of blogs by the media type is one way of approaching the variety of blogosphere. Another possibility to view the blogosphere is from a journalistic starting point.

When considered from the perspective of journalism, bloggers can be divided into four categories. According to Ari Heinonen (2006) these categories form a continuum which illustrates their relationship with institutional media and professional journalism: citizen, audience, journalist, and media bloggers.

Citizen bloggers are publishers of weblogs who operate outside of media companies (Heinonen 2006). These bloggers do not usually even try to produce journalism, but when publishing current affairs information they may “commit journalism” (Lasica 2002). That is to say that citizen bloggers may adopt roles as media commentators, specialized writers, or amateur reporters. Some bloggers even monitor professional journalists, writing so-called watchblogs that criticize journalists’ work (Glaser 2004). Furthermore, sometimes eyewitnesses can turn into occasional citizen reporters by publishing on blogs first-hand information of news events, such as happened after the Boxing Day tsunami in 2005. This way, citizen bloggers have also become a source of story ideas for professional journalists. (Heinonen 2006.)

Audience bloggers, on the other hand, contribute to weblogs that media organizations provide either within or attached to their core publications. The audience contributions may appear closely linked to newsroom reports, but most of them are located in areas separate from newsroom contents. Communities of audience bloggers that gather around a certain online publication have been shown to strengthen user loyalty resulting in improved regard for the media brand name. Audience bloggers may also generate a

mutually beneficial dialogue between the newsroom and the audience, enhancing the quality of journalism by increasing the transparency of the reporting process. (Heinonen 2006.)

The third category of bloggers consists of journalist bloggers. They are professionals who publish journalistic weblogs outside their home media institutions. Heinonen (Ibid.) suggests that the blogosphere lures them in by promising uncontrolled self-publishing space to deal with and comment on issues from different viewpoints and in a freer way stylistically than would normally fit into the journalists' home institution and its policy. In another variation, some journalists use blogs to showcase their work: they may be aspirants seeking to work in journalism or may be seasoned freelance professionals.

The last group of bloggers according to Heinonen (2006) is the media bloggers. They are also professional journalists, but they contribute to weblogs that their media employer maintains related to its online publication. Media bloggers may not follow as strict a journalistic code as they do in news writing, but while allowing a more personal approach, the employer nevertheless applies some editorial judgment to the media bloggers' output. Media bloggers may not like to use some characteristics of weblogs, such as the freedom of readers to comment on blog postings. However, media blogs add their own unique input to the blogosphere by, for example, covering some special events for their publications, such as elections or big sports events. They may write blog entries to publish more personal or less newsworthy musings about the event. (Ibid.)

Weblogs can of course be divided into groups and categories based on different criteria, not just from the journalistic starting point that was discussed above. Blog search engines all have their own describing categories defining and dividing blogs into lists. These, such as blogdigger.com, blogilista.fi and technorati.com, are used to search blog contents using key words. Blog search engines provide current information on both popular searches and tags used to categorize blog postings (Technorati 2008).

While taking the above categorization into account, the most important division for my own study is perhaps still dividing blogs into categories based on their genre. This means that most weblogs can be recognized to focus on a particular subject such as politics, traveling, fashion, different kinds of projects, music or legal matters. By turning the focus towards one particular genre, political blogs, one gets closer to the essence of this thesis.

4.4 Political Blogs

A political blog is, as its name already indicates, a common type of blog that comments on politics. To date, there has been little academic research on political blogs and the politics of blogging, probably due to the fact that the phenomenon is relatively novel (Bahnisch 2006, p.139). Recently, however, the American political blogosphere has started to interest researchers mainly because of the emergence of blogging in American politics in the 2004 presidential elections (Glance and Adamic 2005). Despite this, practically no academic studies on the Finnish political blogosphere have been conducted, at least not to my knowledge. Therefore, the following observations are mostly taken from the studies done on the American political blogosphere. These studies can be applied to the Finnish political blogosphere to a certain extent, as long as we keep in mind the fact that the Finnish blogosphere is not nearly as large or powerful as the American one. Also, one has to take into account other differences between the political communication cultures of Finland and the U.S when making generalizations concerning their blogospheres.

According to Joe Graf (2006, p.3), political blogs have, in just a few years, become “a finger in the eye of mainstream media and a closely watched forum of political debate”. He argues that political blogs have exposed lapses in mainstream media coverage, made journalists aware that there might be an angry online response to sensitive stories, and at times have even the power to set the media agenda. Drezner and Farrell (2004, p.22) also agree that blogs may frame political debates and create focal points for the media as a whole. Because certain opinion-makers within the media take blogs seriously, they

can have a much wider impact on politics. However, this kind of indirect influence on the media and the political public sphere sets limits on the power the blogs have. Even so, Drezner and Farrell (2004, p.23) admit that blogs are important to politics, although they also predict that blogs will lose some of their disruptive impact as politicians and others learn to take better account of them.

Many political blogs often have a clearly stated political bias, and for example in the US political blogosphere this bias is relatively open and well-defined, either liberal or conservative. Although mainstream media news is often presented as impartial, bloggers believe that it does in many cases have a hidden political agenda. Stating political bias at the outset is therefore seen as being more honest. (Graf 2006.) On the other hand, blogs are often seen as being too anonymous and lacking in factual reliability to be trustworthy. Nevertheless, they can serve as a soapbox for opinions not represented in mainstream media.

The increasing popularity of political blogs by independent commentators has led to their adoption by media companies, politicians and other organizations hoping to be seen to be more accountable to their audiences. However, these blogs are often not considered to be "proper" blogs by the blogging community.

Political blogs have also been used as effective tools in raising money for political candidates and pushing select races into the national spotlight (Graf 2006, p.3). Recognizing the importance of blogs, several candidates and political parties set up weblogs during the 2004 US presidential campaign. Notably, Howard Dean's campaign was particularly successful in harnessing grassroots support using a weblog as a primary mode for publishing dispatches from the candidate to his followers. Dean's campaign raised nearly 15 million dollars via the Internet, with a remarkably modest average donation of under 100 dollars. Even though Dean was not finally chosen to be the democrats' presidential candidate, he is still often referred to as the pioneer of fundraising via blogging. Although official campaign blogs played a lesser role in the Bush and Kerry campaigns – with the Bush campaign's blog being criticized as little more than a place to post press releases – both parties launched innovative online

campaigns to boost their grass-roots efforts. (Glance and Adamic 2005.) In contrast to Dean's online success, some politicians have greatly suffered due to the increased exposure political blogs provide. For instance, President George W. Bush is frequently followed by blog sites online. His follies and everyday mishaps are recorded without restraint. In most cases, they only serve as comic relief, being seemingly harmless to the Bush administration, although damaging his public image.

The growing interest towards the political blogosphere has inspired Joseph Graf to study the readership of political blogs. He conducted an online survey in cooperation with the IPDI, the Institute for Politics, Democracy & the Internet. In the investigation, he studied the audience of American political blogs, concentrating mainly on "heavy users", the daily readers of these blogs, which was 9 % of the people who answered the survey. Daily readers are, according to Graf, most likely men, with an average age surprisingly high – 49, as well as a high educational level and socioeconomic background. These daily users see blogs mainly as an alternative news source. They are also heavily involved in politics and think that blogs encourage and improve political discussion. (Graf 2006.)

When we look at both the fundraising done with the help of political blogs, and the audience study on them, it is easy to see the connection between the two. The heavy users of political blogs are interested and involved in politics, and therefore also quite likely to donate money for the cause or candidate that they support. At least all the signs point in this direction.

Graf (2006) continues explaining political blog readership by concluding that there are three main reasons people seem to follow political blogs. They see them as a news source, as a political expression and as entertainment. Whether the reason for following a political blog is one or another of these, the fact is that they attract more and more people on a daily basis. For example Daily Kos, a popular political blog operating from the USA, has at the time of writing in 2008 an average weekday traffic of about 650 000 visits, and has between 12 to 16 million visits per month (Sitemeter). In Finland, the numbers of visitors to political blogs are of course much more humble. As a

comparison, a popular political blog written by MP Jyrki Kasvi attracts about 3500 visitors per day, which is considered to be a great amount of traffic in the Finnish political blogosphere. (Kaarto 2007.) In general, political blogs are not on the top of the lists in popularity in the Finnish blogosphere. In March 2009 the most popular political blog according the blogilista.fi was indeed Jyrki Kasvi's blog, which reached position 111 in the list of that week's most popular blogs in the nation. (Blogilista 2009.)

In conclusion, it could be said that blogging is a new platform for political persuasion, and for making a sustained argument over time in a way that the mainstream media rarely do. The other major difference is that in an age of declining public interest in politics, the interactivity and virtual community that blogs bring with them are a small protest against the disconnect between citizens and the political process. Even though sharp analysis and alternative viewpoints are important aspects of blogging, interactivity is perhaps the key contribution it brings to politics and to society. (Bahnisch 2006, pp.145-146.)

5. METHODOLOGY

5.1 Content analysis as a method

Content analysis is a research tool used to determine the presence of certain words or concepts within texts or sets of texts. Researchers quantify and analyze the presence, meanings and relationships of such words and concepts, then make inferences about the messages within the texts, the writer(s), the audience, and even the culture and time of which these are a part. It can be defined as the study of recorded human communications, such as books, websites, paintings and laws. (Colorado State University) Harold Lasswell (1967) formulated the core questions of content analysis as who says what, to whom, why, to what extent and with what effect? Ole Holsti (1969), on the other hand, offers a broad definition of content analysis as "any technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages."

As a method specifically intended for the study of messages, content analysis is fundamental to mass communication research. Intercoder reliability, more specifically termed intercoder agreement, is a measure of the extent to which independent judges make the same coding decisions in evaluating the characteristics of messages, and is at the heart of this method. Also important is to make a distinction between two ways of doing content analysis: it can be either prescriptive analysis or open analysis. In prescriptive analysis, the context is a closely-defined set of communication parameters (e.g. specific messages, subject matter), whereas open analysis identifies the dominant messages and subject matter within the text. (Lombard, Snyder-Duch and Bracken 2002) However, content analysis can also be divided into two other basic methods: conceptual analysis or relational analysis. Conceptual analysis can be thought of as establishing the existence and frequency of concepts – most often represented by words or phrases – in a text. In contrast, relational analysis goes one step further by examining the relationships among concepts in a text and then determines what different meanings emerge as a result of these groupings. (Colorado State University)

Perhaps due to the fact that content analysis can be applied to examine *any* piece of writing or occurrence of recorded communication, it is currently used in a dizzying array of fields, ranging from marketing and media studies, to literature and rhetoric, ethnography and cultural studies, gender and age issues, sociology and political science, psychology and cognitive science, and many other fields of inquiry. Additionally, content analysis reflects a close relationship with socio- and psycholinguistics, and is playing an integral role in the development of artificial intelligence. (ibid.)

Content analysis suits well to my own study of MPs' blogs, because it looks directly at communication via texts and postings, and hence gets at the central aspect of social interaction. It also allows for both quantitative and qualitative operations, as well as closeness to text which can alternate between specific categories and relationships and also statistically analyzes the coded form of the text. All in all, content analysis provides insight into complex models of human thought and language use. (ibid.)

In other researches done on blogs, content analysis has been widely used. It has been used to analyze the structure, themes and purpose of both high-profile and so-called ordinary blogs. (Herring, Scheidt, Kouper and Wright 2005) Just to mention a few content analysis studies done on blogs, Lawson-Borders and Kirk (2005) analyzed campaign blogs of political candidates during the 2004 U.S. presidential election. They found that the blogs were primarily social diaries and organizing tools for the candidates. Trammell and Keshelasvili (2005) found in their content analysis of 209 A-list blogs that male writers produced mainly filter blogs and female writers wrote more blogs in the styles of diaries. They also found that all of the A-list blogs included elements of self-revelation, and that metadiscourse about blogging was a common theme. Also Herring et al. (2004, 2005) employed content analysis as a means to characterize weblogs as a genre. In a random sample of 203 blogs from spring 2003, they found that the average English-language blog was single-authored, focused on personal events in the blogger's life, contained relatively few links, and received few comments. In a second study that added 154 blogs to the sample ordinary bloggers were found to be female nearly as often as male, and young (teens or young adults) as often as adult. However, gender and age of bloggers varied according to blog type, with adult

males writing almost all filter blogs, and young females writing the largest proportion of personal journals or diary-type blogs. (ibid.) Papacharissi (2007) conducted a quantitative content analysis of a random sample of 260 blogs and found results similar to those of Herring et al. (2004, 2005).

In conducting this research, I use both quantitative and qualitative methods within my content analysis. First, quantitative method is used in counting and coding the material and placing them in categories, which will be further analyzed with qualitative methods. These methods are explained in detail in the following chapter 5.2.

5.2 Research material

The empirical material of my research consists of all the blogs written by members of the Finnish parliament. There are 200 representatives in the Finnish parliament, out of which a little less than half write a blog of some type.

In my opinion, this thesis gives a lot of new information on MPs' blogs. However, one thing must be said about this study as a whole. Even though this research tells us a thing or two about MPs' blogs, what it fails to show, is the fact that there is no certainty that the MPs indeed write the blogs themselves. In most cases I believe that the writer of the blog is the MP himself or herself, but I am also sure that there are cases where at least some postings of the blog are written by an assistant or someone other than the actual MP. What does this mean in the context of this study then? Nothing really, since I am studying the blogs, not the MPs. However, this issue is good to notice here, and to keep in mind when drawing conclusions from the results.

The following subchapters explain the empirical material, how it was chosen and how this research was conducted.

5.2.1 How the material was chosen

When I first started to think about what blogs to choose for my material, I had to take into consideration several factors. I wanted to study blogs written by Finnish politicians, which already ruled out a lot of political blogs written by journalists and other citizens. Then, I considered studying only few blogs that I knew were active and popular within the audience. That posed a dilemma: a study with only few blogs can not be generalized and posing precise research questions was also problematic. Since the most important and also coherent group of politician blogs are the ones written by MPs, selecting them as my study material also came quite naturally. In looking at MPs' blogs in Finland, I should be able to get results and make some conclusion that can also have scientific value.

In this thesis the MPs' blogs are studied from Monday the 14th to Sunday the 20th of April 2008, week number 16. Blogs that have not been updated for a month or longer time are not taken into closer examination. However, some MPs have not written anything in his or her blog during week 16, but there are posts in the week before and after. In a case like this, I feel that it was best for the validity of the study to include also these blogs into the examination by looking at them during week 15 or 17. This way the empirical data as a whole is valid, and all active blogs are taken into account in the research.

Since there are 200 MPs and nearly a hundred blogs in my research I chose to examine them only during one week. This kind of relatively short period is most suitable for my study, so that the amount of textual material is not too wide. Also, in my opinion, one week is still a long enough time to capture the basic structure, essence and content of each blog.

My idea was originally to choose a random week in early 2008 to study the MPs' blogs. However, a political sex scandal in early 2008 that finally led into discharging of the Finnish foreign minister Ilkka Kanerva dominated the political discussion and media at such a level, that I thought it was best to let things calm down before choosing my

empirical time period. This way, a sporadic incident does not distort my analysis and findings, since the blogs are “in their normal state” and not all focusing on Ilkka Kanerva’s case during the time period of my research, week 16 of 2008.

Another thing worth noticing here, is a dilemma I faced during searching the MPs blogs. In most cases finding the right blogs was easy. However, the members of The Green League have a shared blog (The Green Blog) in the party’s website in addition to their own blogs. The Green Blog has many writers, but you can also view the blog by searching for posting by a particular author, so that the blog shows only what that person has written, like in a “regular” blog (e.g. The Green Blog written by only MP Tynkkynen). So, in this research I am evaluating The Green League MPs’ own, private blogs if they have any, and if not, I will look at that person’s contributing on The Green Blog. Even though The Green Blog is a group blog, it is best not to disregard it in this research. This way the study is most valid and no MPs that are blogging are left aside.

I saved all the blogs’ internet pages into my computer and into a memory stick during week 17 in 2008. This way I have access to the blogs as they were at the time, even though web pages would have been updated or altered afterwards.

5.2.2 The categorization of the material

I started the categorization of the research material by creating a large table with the help of excel programme. In this table (appendix 1) I have all the MPs lined up in order, so that the biggest party (The Center Party with 51 representatives) comes first and the smallest party (True Finns with 5 representatives) is the last. Within this order, MPs are lined up in an alphabetic order. The second excel table (appendix 2) includes only the MPs who actively write a blog.

Some personal background information about each MP is also included in my research, and in the excel table (appendix 1) as well. First, every MP’s sex is marked down: naturally M stands for male and F for female candidates. Secondly, MPs are placed in

an age group, marked in the table with numbers 1-3. Age group number 1 includes all the MPs that are under 40 years of age. Group 2 consists of MPs between the ages of 40 and 55, whereas group 3 belongs to the MPs who are 55 or older. These categorizations are made so that it can be studied, whether age and sex are factors in MPs' blogging and if so, to which extent.

After the personal information comes the section where the blog elements are studied. In the first column I made a categorization with the different types of blogs that the MPs write. Here, I use the term 'type of blog' because it best describes my categorization and the differences between each group. In my study, the blog types are divided into 5 groups: MPs in group 1 does not have a blog of any kind and MPs in group 2 have an inactive blog, which has not been updated for more than a month, and therefore is not taken into closer examination in this study. Group 3 consists of MPs who write a diary-type, more personal blog. Blog type 4 is for the MPs whose blog is a mixture of personal and political content and finally group number 5 is for MPs whose blogs consists of political content only. This categorization is the last that is made for all 200 MPs: the following aspects of blog elements are only conducted for MPs that actively write a blog, meaning blog type groups 3, 4 and 5. However, what needs to be noted here is that this categorization to 5 blog types is made on the basis of my own evaluation of the blog texts, and naturally, differentiating the blogs to these groups was not always simple or clear. However, I trust that this categorization still gives us further information about the blogs as a whole.

Next, looking at the level of interaction in the blogs, I divided them into 3 categories, marked with numbers 0-2. MPs who got 0 do not have any interaction what so ever in their blogs. MPs in level 1 have some interaction, for example e-mail address or feedback form in their blogs, but not a possibility to leave comments on the postings of the blog. The last level 2 is for MPs with a truly interactive blog that has a possibility to leave comments on the postings of the blog. As explained earlier in the chapter 4, there is some debate going on whether blogs with no possibility for the reader to interact, should be called blogs at all. However, in this study the level of interaction of the blogs is taken into account but not as a determining factor.

The last 3 columns of the table (appendix 1) are quite simple. First one includes the number of posts in the blog, e.g. how many times did the MP write his or her blog during the week of examination. The second one states the number of comments in the blog left by readers during the week of examination. In the last column you can find the URL of each blog of the study, for the possibility of a further investigation.

The table shown in appendix 2 consists of all the MPs that were actively writing a blog at the time of this research. First column in appendix 2 has all the topics of each blog from the week of examination whereas the second column consists of other, more free, remarks I had concerning the blogs.

After these categorizations were made and the results of the quantitative part of the content analysis was marked down in the tables (appendix 1 and 2), I started analysing the material with more qualitative methods. Results of my study based on the material on appendix 1 are explained in the following chapters 6.1 and 6.2. This analysis also includes smaller tables that illustrate the findings as well as shows exact numbers and calculations concerning the content analysis of the material. The information shown in appendix 2, on the other hand, is discussed in the last analysis chapter 6.3.

6. THE RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

This chapter on analysis of the MPs blogs is divided into three different parts. First part is dominated by the blog types the MPs are writing. Secondly, I will present the results of the investigations on the level of interaction of these political blogs. The third part consists of the textual content of the MPs' blogs as well as other remarks on the matter. The first two parts are based on the content analysis shown on appendix 1 and the third part bases its analysis on information shown on appendix 2.

Before going into the results and analysis, I want to point out that the MPs' blogs are evaluated in the form that they existed in April 2008. There is a possibility that by the time this thesis is finished, the situation might be quite different, because of the short lifespan of blogs in general.

6.1 Different types of blogs

With 200 MPs in the Finnish parliament, it is clear that in such a large amount of people there are many different personas, backgrounds, views and ways of doing politics. All this also plays a role in what type of blogs are they writing. The term *blog type* is used here to categorize all 200 MPs' blogs into five different groups. *Blog type* best describes the nature of these categorized groups, even though one of the groups consists of all the MPs who do not write a blog of any kind. So, even though when we generally talk about blog types we might mean something a little different (e.g. please see chapter 4.3) than what is meant here. However, I believe that in this context *blog type* is the best term to use.

In this chapter the MPs' blog types are examined in different ways. First, we take a general overlook on the issue, which is followed by an investigation where blog types are viewed in comparison to different parties, age groups and sexes.

The following table shows my findings in what type of blogs do the Finnish MPs write.

Blog type	Number of MPs	Percent of MPs out of blogs
No blog (1)	94	47 %
Blog that is not updated (2)	29	14,5 %
Diary-type blog, personal (3)	18	9 %
Blog with mixture of personal and political content (4)	17	8,5 %
Blog with political content (5)	42	21 %
total:	200	100 %

Table 1. MPs and blog types

If blog type groups 1 and 2 are counted together, we get 123 MPs who do not have an active blog. That is 61,5 % of all the MPs. This means that blog type groups 3, 4 and 5 include 77 MPs, who write a blog of some type, being 38,5% of all the MPs.

Since writing a blog is quite easy to start, it is also easy to abandon (Lintulahti 2005). This development can also be seen in MPs' blogs. In my opinion, 29 MPs not updating their blogs anymore is a high number. In most cases their blogging ended already after the parliamentary elections in 2007, which indicates that these blogs were set up just to support the election campaign. Some blogs dried out a little later. Also, it seems that even though political blogging has become more popular in Finland in recent years, with 94 MPs not writing a blog of their own makes it clear that blogging trend has not reached all the MPs. On the other hand, it is still possible that some of these 94 MPs write a blog after all, with the help of an alias. However, I do not believe this is very common, or even if it would be, it would not serve the same purpose as MPs' political blogging openly does. If a politician wants to write a private blog for example for his or her family and friends about his or her personal life, the blog does not serve the society as a whole, and is therefore something else than a traditional MP blog that are also featured in this research.

What was common among the writers of blog type 3, was that the MPs often mentioned something about their daily routines as a political actor but also as a person: mother, father, husband, wife etc. MPs that write this kind of diary-type blogs often also wrote

about their hobbies, children and every day life at home and in the parliament. Some even seemed to use their blogs mainly just to report in a few sentences what he or she had done that particular day. At least I got a feeling after reading these blogs that these MPs wanted to prove to the audience how active they were and that they were doing their work. Whether this is good or interesting blogging is another question. If one wants to see in a few glances what his or her representative has done recently in the parliament, then these blogs filled their task. However, I personally would rather read something with an opinion or a story, despite whether it would be a political one or more personal one.

The second largest group of MPs in the blog type categorization are the ones writing a blog with only political content. These 42 MPs dedicate their blogs solely to politics, with posting their opinions on current affairs, legislation and taxes etc, and in many case they also posted their speeches held in the parliament in their blogs as well. MPs in blog type group 4 write a blog that is a mixture of the more personal diary-type blog and strictly political blog. In many case these blogs included mostly political content, but had also personal features, such as MP mentioning something about his or her sporting activities or commenting popular culture in a personal level. In other words, the 17 MPs in a blog type group 4 are there because I felt they did not strictly belong to either group 3 or 5. However, as I already mentioned before, putting the blogs into these categories was not a simple task, as one blog could contain many different type of postings. Even so, I trust that this categorization still gives us further information about the MPs blogs as a whole.

6.1.1 Party and blog type

The Finnish parliament has eight political parties. The Centre Party, National Coalition Party, The Green League and Swedish People's Party form together Matti Vanhanen's second government, whereas Social Democrats, Left Alliance, Christian Democrats and True Finns are in the opposition. The following table shows the number of MPs in each party and how they situate in the categorization of blogs into 5 different types.

Blog type:	No blog (1)	Blog, not updated (2)	Diary-type blog (3)	Mixture blog (4)	Political content blog (5)	Total
The Centre Party	26	9	8	4	4	51
National Coalition Party	18	12	4	2	15	51
Social Democrats	30	2	3	2	8	45
Left Alliance	10	0	1	1	5	17
The Green League	0	6	0	3	5	14
Swedish People's Party	5	0	1	2	2	10
Christian Democrats	2	0	1	1	3	7
True Finns	3	0	0	2	0	5
Total:	94	29	18	17	42	200

Table 2. Parties and blog types

The three biggest parties seem to have a lot of MPs that do not have an active blog, whereas the small parties seem to be more active. However, there are exceptions. MPs of Left Alliance and True Finns stand out from the rest of the small parties in their inactivity, whereas members of The Green League, Swedish People's Party and Christian Democrats are distinctly more active bloggers. From the two biggest parties The National Coalition Party wins The Centre Party in amount of blogs, with NCP having 21 active blogs against CENT's 16. The Centre Party also seems to clearly have the most number of personal diary-type bloggers, whereas NCP leads the group of blogs with political content with 15 MPs.

None of the parties have all their MPs blogging. The Green League is the only party, which members have all written a blog at some point, but even in that group 6 out of 14 MPs are not currently actively writing a blog. When comparing percentages, the most active party is the Christian Democrats with 5 out of 7 MPs actively writing a blog.

When sorting the parties into the ones in the government and the ones in opposition, one might suspect differences between them. The following table 3 plays out this categorization.

	No blog (1)	Blog, not updated (2)	Diary- type blog (3)	Mixture blog (4)	Political content blog (5)	Total
Governing parties	49 (38,9%)	27 (21,4%)	13 (10,3%)	11 (8,8%)	26 (20,6%)	126 (100%)
	Not active: 76 (60,3%)		Active blogs: 50 (39,7%)			
Opposition parties	45 (60,8%)	2 (2,7%)	5 (6,8%)	6 (8,1%)	16 (21,6%)	74 (100%)
	Not active: 47 (63,5%)		Active blogs: 27 (36,5%)			

Table 3. Governing and opposition parties and blog types

There are no striking differences in blogging at large between governing and opposition parties. However, some notions can be made. Rather surprisingly opposition parties are less active in blogging and there is a big difference when comparing the number of MPs who do not have a blog at all. In opposition almost 61% of MPs belong to this group, when in governing parties the adequate number is only 39%. However, in governing parties the amount of MPs that are not actively writing a blog anymore is vastly larger than in opposition, balancing the total percentages of not active blogs to nearly equal (60,3% and 63,5%) number. In the 3 groups of active blogs, there are no significant differences between opposition and governing parties. Only the diary-type personal blogging seems to be slightly more popular among the governing parties.

This kind of similarity between the opposition and the governing parties can be a little surprising. One might assume that the opposition needs to be more active, aggressive and vocal in getting their opinions out and voices heard than the governing parties that also form the majority. However, at least in the Finnish political blogosphere this is not the case.

6.1.2 Sex and blog type

The Finnish parliament has 118 male representatives and 82 female MPs. In the following tables 4 and 5 you can find the results on what type of blogs do members of

each sex write. First, the table 4 shows results and percentages among the whole parliament, and secondly, table 5 demonstrates the same results with percentages among each sex group, meaning within female and male MPs. This way it is easier to compare the sexes that are not equally represented in the parliament.

Sex	No blog (1)	Blog, not updated (2)	Diary- type blog (3)	Mixture blog (4)	Political content blog (5)	Total
Male MPs	61 (30,5%)	15 (7,5%)	11 (5,5%)	6 (3%)	25 (12,5%)	118 (59%)
Female MPs	33 (16,5%)	14 (7%)	7 (3,5%)	11 (5,5%)	17 (8,5%)	82 (41%)
total:	94 (47%)	29 (14,5%)	18 (9%)	17 (8,5%)	42 (21%)	200 (100%)
	Not active: 123 (61,5%)		Active blogs: 77 (38,5%)			

Table 4. Sex and blog types

As we can see, male MPs are in the lead with 61 people who do not have a blog of any type. This is the only sticking number than stands out of the table at first glance. However, the following table gives more light to the issue, as the percentages are in proportion to each group.

	No blog (1)	Blog, not updated (2)	Diary- type blog (3)	Mixture blog (4)	Political content blog (5)	Total
Male MPs	61 (51,7%)	15 (12,7%)	11 (9,3%)	6 (5,1%)	25 (21,2%)	118 (100%)
	Not active: 76 (64,4%)		Active blogs: 42 (35,6%)			
Female MPs	33 (40,2%)	14 (17,1%)	7 (8,5%)	11 (13,4%)	17 (20,7%)	82 (100%)
	Not active: 47 (57,3%)		Active blogs: 35 (42,7%)			

Table 5. Sex and blog types, percentages

As table 5 shows, the differences between male and female MPs and their blogs are if not outstanding then at least very visible. Female MPs seem to be quite a lot more active bloggers than their male colleagues. Among male MPs only 35,6% write a blog, whereas the equivalent number for female MPs is 42,7%. Likewise, the number of male MPs without a blog is significantly higher than among female MPs. However, female MPs are leading the statistics in the group of the blogs that are not updated anymore (type 2). Still, the total number and percentage of not active bloggers is 64,4% among male MPs and 57,3% among female.

Among blog type groups 3, 4 and 5 there are no sticking differences between male and female MPs. Diary-type blogs seem to be nearly as popular in both groups. Type 4 blogs are somewhat more common among female MPs, whereas type 5 blogs with political content are slightly more popular among male MPs.

What do these differences between male and female MPs' blogging mean then? I find that question quite difficult to answer. On the one hand, it could be that this information endorses the assumption that female MPs still need to "work harder" to be taken seriously and in getting their voices heard in a male dominant society, and blogging could be considered as being an active MP, going the extra mile. On the other hand, it is also quite justified to assume that the sex of the MP is not the most important factor in whether that person writes a blog or not. I would imagine that the differences between male and female MPs in this sense are mostly not due to the sex of the blogger, but some other personal feature. In other words, just by basing on these results, the cause-effect relation cannot be proven to be prevailing.

6.1.3 Age and blog type

The age distribution of MPs in the Finnish parliament is similar to many other western countries: representatives in their fifties are in the majority, and the average age of an MP has been rising in recent elections. The oldest MP in the Finnish parliament is currently 71 years of age, as the youngest is 25. Altogether, there are 41 MPs who were

under 40 years of age at the time of this study taking place. The MPs between the ages of 40 and 55 form the biggest age group with 85 MPs, whereas representatives who are 55 or older have 74 people in their category.

In the following table 6 you can find the results of each age group and their blog types.

Age groups	No blog (1)	Blog, not updated (2)	Diary- type blog (3)	Mixture blog (4)	Political content blog (5)	Total
MPs under 40	16	6	4	7	8	41 (20,5%)
MPs between 40 and 55	34	13	7	9	22	85 (42,5%)
MPs who are 55 or older	44	10	7	1	12	74 (37%)
total:	94	29	18	17	42	200 (100%)

Table 6. Age and blog types

Since the three age groups have such varied number of MPs in them, it is again best to contemplate the findings if you look at the percentages of each result in proportion to the number of people in the age group. This is shown for all three age groups in the following table 7.

Age groups	No blog (1)	Blog, not updated (2)	Diary- type blog (3)	Mixture blog (4)	Political content blog (5)	Total
MPs under 40	16 (39%)	6 (14,6%)	4 (9,8%)	7 (17,1%)	8 (19,5%)	41 (100%)
	Not active: 22 (53,7%)		Active blogs: 19 (46,3%)			
MPs between 40-55	34 (40%)	13 (15,3%)	7 (8,2%)	9 (10,6%)	22 (25,9%)	85 (100%)
	Not active: 47 (55,3%)		Active blogs: 38 (44,7%)			
MPs who are 55 or older	44 (59,5%)	10 (13,5%)	7 (9,5%)	1 (1,3%)	12 (16,2%)	74 (100%)
	Not active: 54 (73,0%)		Active blogs: 20 (27,0%)			

Table 7. Age and blog types, percentages

What the above table shows us is not surprising: the most elderly group of MPs are also the least active bloggers. With almost 60 % of MPs older than 55 do not write a blog, and when counted together with the blogs that are not updated anymore the number rises to 73 %. The equivalent numbers with the younger groups are 55 % and 54 %. Between the age groups the most similar percentages can be seen in the category of blogs that are not updated anymore, with each age group between 13,5 – 15,3 %. The biggest difference between age groups and blog types is with the youngest MPs that do not have a blog and the oldest MPs not blogging. There, the percentages are 39 % for the MPs under 40 and nearly 60 % for the ones over 55, as already mentioned above. This is most likely best explained with the technology: younger generations are more accustomed to use computers, internet and technology than the older generations. This seems to apply to blogging as well.

Even though the MPs over 55 stand out from my result tables, the differences between the two younger groups are not substantial. Age group 1 has 46,3 % of its members blogging actively, whereas age group 2 has 44,7 %. Both groups also have similar number of MPs writing diary-type blogs. Strictly political content blogs are somewhat more popular among the MPs between the age of 40 and 55, but then again type 4 blogs are more preferred with the group of younger MPs.

The fact that there is this kind of visible variation between the blogging of these three age groups is not surprising, in my opinion. Studies have shown that younger generations are more involved with also other social networks online, such as Facebook, MySpace and instant message providers, so it is only natural that blogging is a continuum of this culture for younger MPs as well.

6.2 Level of interaction of the blogs

The level of blog interaction in this research means that there are MPs whose blogs allow comments on entries, and MPs that do not allow these comments from the readers. MPs' blogs can be divided into these two categories based on their level of

interaction. In many researches, including this one, the political blogs that do not offer a possibility for the reader to post comments are considered if not “less of a blog” but at least having less value as a tool for citizen participation and not being as democratizing as the blogs that are truly interactive and do indeed allow readers’ comments. Surely, these blogs with two different levels of interaction serve different purposes.

In this chapter the level of interaction of MPs’ blogs is contemplated in different ways. First, we take a general overlook on the issue. Secondly, the level of blog interaction is investigated in comparison to different parties, age groups and male versus female MPs.

The following table 12 shows, how the MPs’ blogs situate within the categories of blog interaction. Blogs that have not been updated anymore are not included among the following calculations, just active blog types 3, 4 and 5.

Level of interaction	Number of blogs	Percent of blogs
No interaction	0	0 %
Some interaction: e-mail address or feedback form, but NOT a possibility to leave comments on the blog	43	55,8 %
An interactive blog: possibility to leave comments on the postings of the blog	34	44,2%
total:	77	100%

Table 8. Level of interaction in MPs blogs

None of the 77 active MPs’ blogs have totally excluded reader feedback possibilities. In other words, all the MPs’ blogs have at least some possibility for interaction. However, in more than half of the cases, there is no possibility to leave actual comments on the postings of the blog. In 55,9 % of the blogs the readers’ comments can be given through feedback forms or by sending e-mail to the MP, whose contact information was available in the blog. In these cases, the reader’s comment is not posted on the blog, but goes privately to the author of the blog. The fact that all the MPs’ blogs are interactive

at least in some level, is not surprising, however. All the MPs introduce themselves on their blogs, so that the reader knows whose blog he or she is reading. Bloggers who wish to remain anonymous, do not attach their contact information on their blogs, this not being the case when talking about MPs.

44,1 % of the MPs' blogs are truly interactive, with a possibility to leave comments. However, if the number of interactive blogs (34) is compared to the total number of MPs (200) we find out a lot less admiring percentage: 17 % of all the MPs write an interactive blog. Same way, MP bloggers that allow some interaction but not comments (43), the equivalent percentage is 21,5 % out of the 200 MPs.

Similarly to this thesis research, Herring et al. (2004, 2005) found in their studies on political blogs that about half of the blogs in each of their study sample did not allow comments on entries because that was the default setting of the blog software or because the author of the blog had deactivated the comment option. So, it looks like Finnish MPs are blogging the same way with the rest of the political blogosphere in this sense.

When looking closer at the 34 interactive blogs, I found out that the average number of posts during the week of examination was 2,0. Altogether there were 155 posts. The number of posts varied between 1-12. The highest number of posts wrote MP Ulla-Maj Wideroos from the Swedish People's Party. She was by far the most active writer, since the second most active MPs (3 MPs from the Christian Democrats and 1 MP from National Coalition Party) wrote 7 times during the week of examination. The number of comments on interactive blogs during the week of examination varied between 0-36. The highest number of comments got, again, MP Ulla-Maj Wideroos from the Swedish People's Party, while the second most commented blogger was The Green League's Jyrki Kasvi. Altogether, there were 100 comments in 34 blogs making the average number of comments on an interactive blog during the week of examination 2,9. However, 20 MPs got no comments at all during the whole week of examination, which means that only 14 MPs got readers to comment their postings. (For closer examination, please see appendix 1.)

Therefore, one can say that the variation between MPs' blogs on the number of posts and on the number of comments they received is remarkable. Most bloggers wrote only once a week receiving no comments, while some were obviously really into blogging. However, when the average percentages from all this are counted, we, once again, get results that are similar to findings in other studies done on blogs. In their research Herring et al. (2004, 2005) found that the average number of comments left on the blog postings were low, just like shown in this study on Finnish MPs' blogs.

6.2.1 Party and blog interaction

What has become clear so far is that the number of people writing blogs in each party varies a lot. The following table 13 portrays how the blogs of each party situate in the blog interaction categories.

Party	No interaction	Some interaction	An interactive blog	Total
The Centre Party	0	11	5	16
National Coalition Party	0	15	6	21
Social Democrats	0	9	4	13
Left Alliance	0	3	4	7
The Green League	0	0	8	8
Swedish People's Party	0	2	3	5
Christian Democrats	0	1	4	5
True Finns	0	2	0	2
total:	0	43	34	77

Table 9. Party and blog interaction

As we can see from the table 13 the blogging of the two biggest parties The Centre Party and National Coalition Party are heavily leaning towards the not-so-interactive blogging: CENT has 11 blogs which do not have comments from the readers against only 5 that does, and NCP with 15 blogs not allowing comments against 6 blogs that do so. Also The Social Democrats' blogs are less interactive than the average MP's blog. However, the least interactive bloggers can be found from The True Finns with total of 2 blogs, neither allowing commenting from the audience.

The most interactive blogs out of the Finnish parliamentary parties has The Green League with all of its' 8 MP bloggers allowing readers to comment their blogs. In my opinion, this is quite remarkable, when taking into account the results of other Finnish parties. Also, The Christian Democrats are writing more interactive blogs than most of their colleagues. Reasons behind both of these parties writing interactive blogs can be many. They are both small parties trying to get the voters to participate, could be one explanation, but then again this does not explain why other small parties like The True Finns are doing exactly the opposite. The cultures of doing politics, the ideologies behind the parties or other explanatory reasons are most likely to influence parliament members also in their blogging. Of course, there is a possibility that this interactivity especially among the Green League's MPs is just a coincident, even though I highly doubt it.

The two remaining parties, The Swedish People's Party and Left Alliance belong to the middle class in this sense, with nearly equal number of MPs blogging on both levels of interaction, which also follows the average percentage of bloggers on each level.

When comparing the governing parties and opposition parties and their blogs level of interaction we get the following results shown in table 10.

	No interaction	Some interaction	An interactive blog	Total
Governing parties	0	28 (56,0%)	22 (44,0%)	50 (100%)
Opposition parties	0	15 (55,6%)	12 (44,4%)	27 (100%)

Table 10. Governing and opposition parties and blog interaction

Even though the differences between the parties were obvious when looking at the level of interaction in MPs blogs, the difference between blogs of the governing parties and the opposition parties is nearly none existing. Interactive blogs allowing readers' comments are written by 44,0 % of the MPs in the governing parties and 44,4 % of the MPs in the opposition. In the light of these results, it can be said, that the Green League seems to even out the results that otherwise would have been less admiring for the governing parties, since the Centre Party and National Coalition Party are mainly not shining with their blog interactivity.

Some interesting notions about the blogs of members of different parties can also be made at an individual level. The Centre Party already established their position as one of the least interactive group of bloggers, and among their 5 interactive blog writers only MP Mika Lintilä got comments on his blog from the readers. Hence, all 6 comments for CENT can be found in Lintilä's blog. It does not look much brighter for The National Coalition Party either: out of their 6 interactive blogs, altogether only 10 comments were given for 2 blogs, written by MPs Lyly Rajala and Raija Vahasalo. For Social Democrats Jukka Gustafsson and Liisa Jaakonsaari were the only MPs who got comments. The same trend continues with the smaller parties as well: two members of The Left Alliance got comments as well as two MPs from The Green League. However, The Green League's Jyrki Kasvi stands out from the crowd with 19 comments during the week of examination. Also two MPs from The Swedish People's Party received comments on their blogs, with MP Ulla-Maj Wideroos getting solely 36 comments. On the other hand, Christian Democrats although being a small party, received 11 comments on 3 blogs out of the 4 interactive blogs that the party members write.

6.2.2 Sex and blog interaction

As we already found out in chapter 6.1.2 when looking at the differences between male and female MPs in relation to the blog types that they are writing, female MPs stood out as more active bloggers than their male colleagues. The following table 11 shows, if female MPs are also “in the lead” when viewing the interactivity of their blogs.

Sex	No interaction	Some interaction	An interactive blog	Total
Male MPs	0	27 (35,1%)	15 (19,5%)	42 (54,5%)
Female MPs	0	16 (20,8%)	19 (24,7%)	35 (45,5%)
total:	0	43 (55,8%)	34 (44,2%)	77 (100%)

Table 11. Sex and blog interaction

Just by looking at the amount of interactive blogs and blogs that do not allow commenting on each sex’s columns, we can clearly see that female MPs are writing interactive blogs more often than male MPs. To get more comprehensive view of the matter, we must again look at the results in relation to the amount of members in each sex group. The following table 12 shows these percentages in proportion to both groups.

	No interaction	Some interaction	An interactive blog	Total
Male MPs	0	27 (64,3%)	15 (35,7%)	42 (100%)
Female MPs	0	16 (45,7%)	19 (54,3%)	35 (100%)

Table 12. Sex and blog interaction, percentages

As it can be seen from this table, male MPs are clearly writing less interactive blogs than their female colleagues. When 64,3 % of male MPs write a blog that does not allow comments, the equivalent percentage with female MPs is only 45,7 %. This also

means, that female MPs are similarly leading interactive blogging with 54,3 % while only 35,7 % of male MPs allow instant feedback to be shown in their blogs.

If we compare these results to the earlier findings of the differences between male and female MPs in relation to the blog types (please see pp. 50-52) that they are writing, we can see that female MPs are both writing more blogs as well as letting also readers make comments on their posting more often than their male colleagues.

To me, it is quite surprising to get such clear results and differences in between female and male MPs' blog interactivity. Again, thinking of reasons for this difference between male and female MPs' blogs in this aspect is hard. In fact, without going more deeply inside the issue and for example without interviewing the MPs about their motives concerning their blogging, no exact conclusions can not be made in regards to the sex of the MP blogger, and why does it seem to effect on the interactivity of the blog.

As already discussed briefly on pages 56-59, even though altogether 34 MPs allow readers to leave comments on their blogs, only few actually got any. If comparing the comments that female and male bloggers got, we find out that from the 100 comments given, 63 were for female MPs' blogs and 37 for male MPs's blogs. Out of the 14 MPs who got comments, 8 were female and 6 were male bloggers.

6.2.3 Age and blog interaction

The final aspect about the MPs' blogs that is studied here is the MPs' age and level of blog interaction and their correlation. If the correlation is similar to the one when viewing the age's influence on blog types (please see pp. 52-54) we can expect the younger MPs writing more interactive blogs than the MPs senior to them. The following table 13 shows the results.

Age groups	No interaction	Some interaction	An interactive blog	Total
MPs under 40	0	8 (10,4%)	11 (14,3%)	19 (24,7%)
MPs between 40 and 54	0	24 (31,2%)	14 (18,2%)	38 (49,4%)
MPs who are 55 or older	0	11 (14,3%)	9 (11,7%)	20 (26,0%)
total:	0	43 (55,8%)	34 (44,2%)	77 (100%)

Table 13. Age and blog interaction

When looking at the amount of interactive blogs and blogs that do not allow commenting among each age group, we can already see that MPs that are under 40 are writing interactive blogs more often than their older colleagues. However, since the group of MP bloggers between the ages of 40 and 55 is twice the size of the other age groups, it is once again useful to view these results in proportion to the size of each age group. The following table 14 shows these percentages in proportion to each group.

Age group	No interaction	Some interaction	An interactive blog	Total
MPs under 40	0	8 (42,1%)	11 (57,9%)	19 (100%)
MPs between 40 and 55	0	24 (63,2%)	14 (36,8%)	38 (100%)
MPs who are 55 or older	0	11 (55%)	9 (45%)	20 (100%)

Table 14. Age and blog interaction, percentages

As table 13 already indicated, MPs under 40 years of age clearly writing more interactive blogs than the MPs in older age groups. While 57,9 % of them are writing interactive blogs, the equivalent percentages with MPs senior to them are 36,8 % and 45 %. In this sense, the results seem to follow the same pattern as the correlation with MPs' age and blog type, where the youngest MPs were also the most active bloggers.

However, when looking at the level of blog interaction, we can also see, that the MPs older than 55 are blogging in a more interactive level than the largest age group, with MPs from 40 to 55. In comparison to the age and blog types, this is not following the same pattern, where the most senior age group was also the one least involved in blogging.

Within the age groups the comments on interactive blogs were divided as follows: The MPs under 40 write 11 blogs that allow commenting, and they got 7 responses that were given to 2 different blogs. The second age group with MPs from 40 to 55 writes 14 interactive blogs, and the number of comments directed to them was 49 in total, given to 7 blogs. The MPs from 55 up write 9 interactive blogs, and their amount of feedback was 44, given to 5 blogs. From this we can conclude, that even though the youngest MPs write interactive blogs most often, they only get a few comments from the readers, whereas the elder MPs collect a lot more reader commenting on fewer blogs. However, in case of Finnish MPs just one or two active MPs' blogs getting a lot of feedback can make a difference: without MP Jyrki Kasvi's blog the age group 2 would have gotten only 30 comments instead of 49. Even more big impact has Ulla-Maj Wideroos' blog that collected 36 out of 44 comments given to the blogs of the MPs older than 55.

6.3 Textual content and other notions about the MPs blogs

Even though I am unfortunately not able to go very deep into the textual content of MPs' blogs in this study, an overall look is still given in this chapter. Most of the information that I am basing this analysis on can be found in appendix 2. Also, other noteworthy information concerning MPs' blogs that did not come up in the previous chapters is presented in this one. These notions are mostly based on my own observations and interpretations.

Besides the information received from the blog type categorization presented earlier in chapter 6.1 some other remarks about the content of the blogs can be made. The post topics of the 77 blogs that are viewed closely in this study are variable, to say the least.

However, common factors can also be found. In 11 blogs the topic was named after the date of the post or in case of two blogs, according to the week of the postings. Otherwise popular topics on week 16 in 2008 in MPs' blogs were the new government's first birthday, taxation, regional issues and the spring finally arriving to Finland. Several MPs also posted their speeches given earlier that day or week in the parliament to their blogs.

Five MPs wrote their blogs at least once a day, whereas there were 2 MPs included in this research that wrote only about once a month. In general, pictures and photos in the MPs' blogs were unusual, but there were also exceptions. The Green League's MPs Outi Alanko-Kahiluoto and Janina Andersson both had many picture in addition to texts in their blogs, as well as did Centre Party's Hannakaisa Heikkinen and National Coalition's Timo Heinonen.

One MP who stands out from the rest is Minna Sirnö from the Left Alliance. She writes a blog that she herself calls "an anti-blog". In her blog she explains that her "intention is not to comment on any current issues, talk about her colleague MPs or even update the blog in a regular basis". By this, I assume Sirnö wants to differentiate her blog from the rest of the MPs' blogs. Also, one otherwise unique blog among the MPs is written by Timo Kaunisto from the Centre Party. His blog includes poems in addition to texts. On the other hand, the True Finn party leader Timo Soini could also be mentioned here, since he has come up with his own Finnish translation to the term *blog*. He has transformed the Finnish term *blogi* into more informal version that he calls "*ploki*". However, this is the only context where I have seen the term "ploki" used.

At least one MP has also herself given some thought to the issues also discussed in this research concerning what type of web page can be called a blog and what can not. NCP's Henna Virkkunen writes in her blog that "this is more like a diary than a blog, since you cannot leave comments on my postings". To me, this is an interesting notion coming from an MP, since after having spent quite a lot of time studying these very blogs, she turned out to be the only one to reflect on her blogging.

Also, what stands out from the Finnish MPs' blogs is the fact that all the MPs from the Swedish People's Party write their blogs in Swedish. Even though this naturally makes sense, since they are mainly representatives of the Swedish speaking minority in Finland and their own mother tongue is Swedish, it is still a fact that because of the language the amount of potential readers for these blogs is a lot smaller than the blogs written in Finnish. However, I must wonder if the readership would be even smaller if these blogs would be written in Finnish, since the "target audience" (Swedish speaking voters) could not follow them anymore.

As already came up in the previous analysis chapters, Jyrki Kasvi stood out from the rest of the MPs in his blogging. Kasvi is aware of his reputation as a blogger, and he has said in an interview, that "it is as common, that people come to me in a street to talk about blogging as they come to say 'hey, aren't you that MP'". (Kaarto 2007) Kasvi also says that in his opinion, a good political blog also has to have a personal dimension to it; otherwise it easily becomes dry and boring. What also came up earlier in this research was the fact that not many MPs allow people to leave comments on their blogs. Jyrki Kasvi commented on this by saying that Finnish politicians should have a thicker skin and not be so sensitive when it comes to comments on their blogs. He adds that in his opinion the ability to comment is the key factor in blogs and blogging. (Ibid.)

The Finnish Prime Minister Matti Vanhanen's blog situates in the Centre Party's main website. Besides the Green League's Green Blog that situates in their party's website, this is the only blog that has such an apparent role in the party's website. In an interview in fall 2007 The Prime Minister Matti Vanhanen talked about his blog and how "it emphasizes the most important phases and periods of political life, such as election time". This he said, when asked why he has not written much after the parliamentary elections earlier that year. Vanhanen explained himself by saying that he is planning on reactivating his blog little by little, and that the most important thing for him is the *possibility* to be able to blog, if he wants to. (Kaarto 2007) In my opinion, the same reasoning could be used when justifying why people should be able to leave comments on politicians' blogs: it is a nice *possibility* to have. However, what we have already found out is that in most MPs' blogs, including Vanhanen's blog, leaving comments is

not allowed. Helsingin Sanomat journalist Kaarto (Ibid.) defends Vanhanen in this case by saying that he being the Prime Minister the potential blog comments would have to be pre-read by the authorities before posting on the internet, which again would require time, effort and resources not available to him. However, at the same time pre-viewing of the blog comments is in fact in practice with at least some other politician bloggers.

Outside of the group of Finnish MPs an important political blogger in a national level is the Minister of Foreign Affairs Alexander Stubb. He has written an interactive political blog for years, in which he mainly writes about his work in the Finnish government and in the European Parliament before that. Now, as a Finnish minister, he has started a discussion by stating that he will not allow people to comment his blog anymore with an alias but only with their real name. According to him, however, 99 % of all the comments he received to his blog were published in the blog. This validates the assumption that MP bloggers check the readers' comments before publishing them on their blogs. How many of the posts, if any, are censored, altered or deleted, is difficult to predict. However, this topic was shortly discussed in the Finnish media in fall 2008. Foreign Minister Stubb also plans to publish his blog as a book later in 2009. To my knowledge, this will be the first Finnish politician blog published in a book format.

The length of MPs' blog postings varied a great deal. The shortest posts must have been in NCP's Outi Mäkelä's blog, with only one or two sentences each. For example, in April 16th she writes that "From what the opposition is saying, one might get the picture that the day care payments are raising for everyone. However, the truth is that with 48 % of people they are going down." In my opinion, this is more like a statement, than a blog posting, leaving the reader with practically nothing. On the other opposite when talking about the lengths of MPs' blogs posting is The Green League's Janina Andersson. She writes her blog every day, reporting from her trip to Africa, where she is to attend the 118th Assembly of the Inter-parliamentary Union. She writes several pages long postings and reports like she was telling a story, which makes the blog easy and interesting to read. Even though the posts are very long, pictures within the text makes it not too heavy to follow. The most common length of MPs' blog posting seems to be 2-3 relatively short paragraphs. However, finding out an exact, accurate length of

these posting would still need more research: in this study I have not counted the words in each post which would be required for giving an exact answer to this question.

While conducting this research, I regularly came across news on the mainstream media that were taken from MPs' blogs. In other words, blog postings were transformed as news. These news dealt almost every time something controversial, harsh criticism towards other politicians or something very personal to the MP in question. Of course, this makes sense: only the "most interesting" blog postings will end up in the mainstream news feed. The politicians also know this. I am sure that the MP bloggers are aware of the fact that their blogs are being read by journalists and that when they for example write about how some politician is a huge idiot, or about their love life, that this information will appear in the papers later on. Sometimes it seems that the media reads some of the MPs blogs even a little too closely. For example Centre Party's Tanja Karpela wrote in her blog how "nice" it is that very expensive international luxury stores are finally landing in Finland. The following day's papers reported on how Karpela does not value Finnish design etc. making Karpela forced to correct her blog writing and state that she was trying to be sarcastic. Also, blog postings of nationally well-known MPs with a celebrity status seem to have easier getting picked up into the mainstream news feed than blog postings of less well-known politicians.

7. CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

As we discovered in chapter 6, out of 200 Finnish MPs 94 of them do not write a blog and from the 106 MPs that do, only 77 were more or less actively updated. Whether this information is surprising or not is another question. I personally anticipated results close to what was also found, but some might argue that the state of MPs blogging is more dismal than the public's actual conception concerning it. The content of MPs' blogs' was, as one might suspect, mainly political but some personal aspects could also be detected. However, the personal dimension in MPs' blogs varied a great deal between different individuals.

My study shows that there were great differences between different political parties when it comes to their members' blogging. The representatives of small parties were more active in writing blogs, whereas The Centre Party, National Coalition Party and The Social Democrats were at the bottom of the list in this sense. However, between the division of governing and opposition parties there were no outstanding differences. The most active party in blogging was the Christian Democrats with 5 of its 7 MPs writing a blog.

According to my findings, there were differences in how male and female MPs blog. Female representatives are quite a lot more active bloggers than their male colleagues and they also write more interactive blogs. Likewise, female MPs get more comments on their blogs than male MPs. However, such a clear difference between the two sexes' blogging is not totally unambiguous. As already discussed in chapter 6, it is not easy to prove the cause-effect relation when talking about the MPs' sex and their blogs. Hence, just by basing on the findings of this research, one can only speculate the reasons behind the female MPs blogging more actively than their male colleagues.

What also came out from the results of this study was the fact that the MPs' age plays a role in their blogging. Young MPs in their twenties and thirties write blogs more often than their elderly colleagues, and their blogs are also more interactive than the blogs

written by the MPs senior to them. However, the younger bloggers did not receive more comments than the older ones. In fact the MPs over 55 years of age got the most feedback in their blogs. Even though it is easy to understand why age can play a role in MPs blogging, the amount of comments given to the blogs can be a little surprising.

When looking at the level of interaction in Finnish MPs' blogs I discovered that out of the 77 active blogs the truly interactive blogs with a possibility for the reader to comment on the postings were in the minority with 34 blogs. When this is compared to the total number of MPs we get only 17 % on all the MPs write an interactive blog. Also, the variation between individual MP's blogs was remarkable in many aspects. Most bloggers wrote only once a week receiving no comments, while some were updating their blogs daily and getting a lot of feedback. From the political parties The Centre Party was possibly the least interactive party in blogging, whereas the Green League and the Christian Democrats were writing the most interactive blogs.

So, when gathering up all this we might come to a conclusion that the average blog written by a Finnish member of parliament consists of mainly political content, with a few personal aspects. It is written by a young female MP, who is a member of a small party. The party is most likely The Christian Democrats, if judged by the likelihood based on the percent count. The blog is likely not to have a possibility for the reader to leave comments, and the blog is updated twice a week. However, it is obvious that this kind of a generalization should not be made, as nor the topic or the results are so black and white. In fact, if you would just pick the most likely result percentage wise in each category and topic of this research, you would find out that such an MP does not even exist in real life. Also, the blogosphere, even when talking about the much defined political blogosphere of MPs' blogs, is evolving fast and in a constant movement and development. All this has to be taken into account when drawing conclusions from the results of this study.

All in all, the results of this study can be interpreted in many ways. Some might see the Finnish political blogosphere and the situation of MPs' blogs as a whole quite satisfying. However, to me, the current state of blogs by the members of the parliament

is at least nothing to be celebrated on. Apart from a few MPs differentiated with actively updated and commented political blogs, most of the MPs' blogs appear to contribute little to citizen participation or political discussion: it is my conclusion that the potential of the political blogosphere is not optimally utilized by the Finnish MPs. By this I do not mean that the MPs' blogs are without any use or purpose, quite the contrary. However, the results of this study are a little frustrating to a certain extent, since with a little more effort things could be a lot "better" in my opinion.

Doing this research on Finnish MPs' blogs turned out to be quite an interesting but also a challenging task. I am still extremely happy that I chose this topic for my thesis, as I continue to find it intriguing and important in many ways. The relationship between politicians and media is so complex in many ways and levels that it could be studied from numerous different viewpoints. Hence, one of my goals with this thesis was also to form a basis for further study on the same field. In my own opinion, this research could function well in that sense.

While writing this thesis I noticed how MPs' blogs were quoted in the mainstream media quite often: how Matti Vanhanen is blogging about selling his house, how Erkki Tuomioja is criticizing the government and so on. To me, this would have also been an interesting aspect to study: to what extent are the blogs quoted, what blogs make it to the news, how often and in what media are blogs presented in? These questions still intrigue me. However, finding reliable answers to these questions would require more time, effort and research than was possible within this thesis. Therefore, these questions could work as a starting point for a new research topic.

Also, one could go a lot deeper in studying the textual content of MPs' blogs, for example with rhetorical or discourse analysis. Likewise, it would be interesting to know how much traffic each MP's blog gets. In the light of my own findings of this thesis I would predict that the MPs' blogs do not attract readers in significant numbers, but rather little traffic. However, this is only my speculation and again an idea for a possible follow-up research.

My study also has some weaknesses, however. It took me a little longer time to finish this thesis than I originally anticipated and since the blogosphere is evolving so fast, one might ask, whether the findings of this study are of current interest anymore. A year is a long time in the world of blogs, so are the MPs blogs even close to what they were at the time when this thesis was started?

Also, one shortcoming of this study is that the choice of data limits its generability. My results concern obviously only MPs' blogs in Finland and the findings should not be applied to other countries as such. Also, my thesis is in a way a description of one phenomenon tied in time, culture and place. However, I do not see this necessarily as a something negative and the study still has value as it is.

Looking back at the whole process of writing a thesis, I have to admit that personally my main struggle was to find the perseverance and motivation to complete the thesis. After spending almost six years in the academic circle and studying in three different universities, I was quite ready to continue to working life. However, doing the research and especially completing the thesis has also been very fulfilling. At times the process was going forward quite fast due to an inspiration to write, analyze and study, but there were also times, when I was going nowhere with my thesis. Luckily, at those times help has not been far away, thanks to my fellow students and professors Kaarle Nordenstreng and Ari Heinonen.

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APPENDIX 1

Personal information:		Blog elements:							URL the blog
Number	Name of MP	Party	Sex	Age 1-3	Type 1-5	Interaction 0-2	Posts	Comments	URL the blog
1	Ahonen, Esko	CENT	M	2	3	1	1	0	http://www.eskoahonen.fi/Paivakirja.aspx
2	Alatalo, Mikko	CENT	M	3	1				
3	Anttila, Sirkka-Liisa	CENT	M	3	1				
4	Autio, Risto	CENT	M	2	1				
5	Haapoja, Susanna	CENT	F	2	1				
6	Heikkinen, Hannakaisa	CENT	F	1	5	2	3	0	http://www.hannakaisaheikkinen.fi/blogi.html
7	Hoskonen, Hannu	CENT	M	2	1				
8	Hyssälä, Liisa	CENT	F	3	1				
9	Hänninen, Tuomo	CENT	M	2	4	2	1	0	http://www.tuomohanninen.net/blogi.html
10	Kaikkonen, Antti	CENT	M	1	3	1	1	0	http://www.anttikaikkonen.fi/
11	Kalli, Timo	CENT	M	3	1				
12	Kalmari, Anne	CENT	F	2	4	1	2	0	http://www.annekalmari.net/index.php?sivu=paivakirja
13	Kaltio-kumpu, Oiva	CENT	M	3	2				http://www.oivakaltio-kumpu.com/nettipaivakirja.htm
14	Karjula, Kyösti	CENT	M	3	3	1	2	0	http://www.karjula.net/?pageId=23
15	Karpela, Tanja	CENT	F	1	5	1	1	0	http://www.tanjakarpela.fi/blogi.php
16	Katainen, Elsi	CENT	F	2	3	2	1	0	http://www.elsikatainen.fi/blogi.php
17	Kaunisto, Timo	CENT	M	2	3	1	1	0	http://www.timokaunisto.fi/paivakirja.htm
18	Kerola, Inkeri	CENT	F	2	2				http://www.inkerikerola.net/paivakirja.html
19	Kiviniemi, Mari	CENT	F	1	2				http://www.marikiviniemi.net/?cat=3
20	Kiviranta, Esko	CENT	M	3	1				
21	Komi, Katri	CENT	F	1	1				
22	Korhonen, Timo	CENT	M	2	1				
23	Korkeaoja, Juha	CENT	M	3	2				http://www.korkeaoja.com/index.php?id=5
24	Kääriäinen, Seppo	CENT	M	3	1				
25	Laukkanen, Markku	CENT	M	3	2				http://www.markkulaukkanen.fi/index.php?page_n=blogi
26	Lehtomäki, Paula	CENT	F	1	1				
27	Leppä, Jari	CENT	M	2	1				
28	Lintilä, Mika	CENT	M	2	5	2	1	6	http://www.lintila.net/frames.html
29	Manninen, Hannes	CENT	M	3	1				
30	Mieto, Juha	CENT	M	3	2				http://www.juhamieto.fi/blogi/
31	Oinonen, Lauri	CENT	M	3	3	2	1	0	http://www.laurioinonen.blogspot.com/
32	Pakkanen, Markku	CENT	M	2	1				
33	Paloniemi, Aila	CENT	F	2	2				http://www.ailapaloniemi.net/vaalit/blogi.htm
34	Pekkarinen, Mauri	CENT	M	3	1				
35	Pentti, Klaus	CENT	M	3	1				
36	Puumala, Tuomo	CENT	M	1	1				
37	Rantakangas, Antti	CENT	M	2	1				
38	Rehula, Juha	CENT	M	2	3	1	3	0	http://www.juharehula.com/main.php?page_id=5
39	Reijonen, Eero	CENT	M	3	4	1	1	0	http://www.eeroreijonen.net/index.php?option=com_content&task=blog
40	Rossi, Markku	CENT	M	2	1				
41	Salovaara, Pertti	CENT	M	1	1				
42	Seurujärvi, Janne	CENT	M	1	1				
43	Sihto, Paula	CENT	F	2	2				http://paivakirja.paulasihto.net/
44	Tiilikainen, Kimmo	CENT	M	2	1				
45	Tölli, Tapani	CENT	M	3	3	1	1	0	http://www.tapanitolli.net/
46	Uusipaavalniemi, Markku	CENT	M	2	1				
47	Vanhanen, Matti	CENT	M	2	5	1	1	0	http://www.keskusta.fi/Suomeksi/Matti.iw3
48	Vehkaperä, Mirja	CENT	F	1	4.	1	2	0	http://www.mirjavehkaperä.fi/blogi.html
49	Vehviläinen, Anu	CENT	F	1	2				http://www.anuvehvilainen.blogspot.com/
50	Vilkuna, Pekka	CENT	M	3	1				
51	Väyrynen, Paavo	CENT	M	3	1				
52	Akaan-Penttilä, Eero	NCP	M	3	2				http://www.eeroakaan-penttila.fi/blogiarkisto.htm
53	Asko-Seljavaara, Sirpa	NCP	F	3	1				
54	Forsius, Merikukka	NCP	F	1	1				
55	Hakola, Juha	NCP	M	2	1				
56	Häkämies, Leena	NCP	F	2	1				
57	Heinonen, Timo	NCP	M	1	5	1	7	0	http://www.timoheinonen.fi/index.php?page=blogi
58	Hemmilä, Pertti	NCP	M	2	5	1	1	0	http://www.perttihemmila.net/index.asp?action=1&type=14&id=100627
59	Hemming, Hanna-Leena	NCP	F	2	4	1	2	0	http://www.hemming.ws/?option=com_content&task=blogcategory&id=7
60	Holmlund, Anne	NCP	F	2	2				http://www2.eduskunta.fi/fakta/edustaja/630/blogi.htm
61	Häkämies, Jyri	NCP	M	2	2				http://www.hakamies.fi/ajankohtaista/blogi/body0=446
62	Jaskari, Harri	NCP	M	2	5	2	1	0	http://www.harrijaskari.fi/nettipaivakirja/
63	Kanerva, Ilkka	NCP	M	3	1				
64	Karhuvaara, Arja	NCP	F	2	1				
65	Karvo, Ulla	NCP	F	2	1				
66	Katainen, Jyrki	NCP	M	1	2				http://www.jyrkikatainen.fi/main.site?action=siteupdate/view&id=10
67	Kataja, Sampsa	NCP	M	1	5	2	1	0	http://www.sampsakataja.fi/blogi.php
68	Koskinen, Jari	NCP	M	2	1				
69	Larikka, Jari	NCP	M	2	5	1	1	0	http://www.jarilarikka.fi/fi/paivakirja
70	Lauslahti, Sanna	NCP	F	2	5	1	1	0	http://www.lauslahti.net/paivakirja.php

71	Laxell, Jouko	NCP	M	3	2				http://www.joukolaxell.net/?sivu=blogi
72	Lehti, Eero	NCP	M	3	5	1	2	0	http://www.eerolehti.fi/sivu.php?id=50
73	Lindén, Suvi	NCP	F	2	2				http://www.suvilinden.com/blogi.html
74	Matikainen-Kallström, Marjo	NCP	F	2	5	1	1	0	http://www2.eduskunta.fi/fakta/edustaja/775/index.html
75	Mäkelä, Jukka	NCP	M	2	2				http://jukkamakela.fi/blog/
76	Mäkelä, Outi	NCP	F	1	4	2	4	0	http://www.outimakela.com/kuulumisia.html
77	Mäkinen, Tapani	NCP	M	2	1				
78	Nepponen, Olli	NCP	M	3	1				
79	Niinistö, Sauli	NCP	M	3	2				http://www.niinisto.net/blogi.html
80	Nurmi, Tuija	NCP	F	2	1				
81	Ollila, Heikki	NCP	M	3	5	1	1	0	http://www.haollila.fi/blogi/
82	Orpo, Petteri	NCP	M	1	3	1	3	0	http://www.orpo.fi/index.html?n=5803
83	Paajanen, Reijo	NCP	M	3	1				
84	Perkiö, Sanna	NCP	F	2	1				
85	Pihlajaniemi, Petri	NCP	M	1	1				
86	Rajala, Lyly	NCP	M	3	3	2	1	2	http://blog.lylyrajala.fi/
87	Ravi, Pekka	NCP	M	3	1				
88	Risiko, Paula	NCP	F	2	1				
89	Salo, Petri	NCP	M	2	5	1	1	0	http://www.petrisalo.net/blogi_kaikki.html
90	Salolainen, Pertti	NCP	M	3	2				http://www.perttisalolainen.fi/?cat=7
91	Sarkomaa, Sari	NCP	F	2	2				http://www.sarisarkomaa.net/
92	Sasi, Kimmo	NCP	M	3	2				http://www.kimmosasi.net/blogi/index.php
93	Satonen, Arto	NCP	M	2	3	2	1	0	http://www.satonen.fi/blogi/
94	Tiura, Marja	NCP	F	1	2				http://www.marjatiura.net/template_page1.asp?lang=1&sua=1&s=348
95	Toivakka, Lenita	NCP	F	2	1				
96	Ukkola, Tuulikki	NCP	F	3	3	1	1	0	http://www.ukkola.net/
97	Vahasalo, Raija	NCP	F	2	5	2	3	8	http://www.vahasalo.fi/
98	Vapaavuori, Jan	NCP	M	2	5	1	1	0	http://www.vapaavuori.net/?blogi&y=2008
99	Vijjanen, Ilkka	NCP	M	2	5	1	1	0	http://www.ilkkavijjanen.fi/ajankohtaista.php
100	Virkkunen, Henna	NCP	F	1	5	1	1	0	http://www.hennavirkkunen.fi/?action=arkisto&RYHMA=1&ID=174
101	Virolainen, Anne-Mari	NCP	F	2	5	1	2	0	http://www.annemariviolainen.fi/paivakirja.php
102	Zyskowitz, Ben	NCP	M	2	1				
103	Ahde, Matti	SDP	M	3	1				
104	Asell, Marko	SDP	M	1	1				
105	Feldt-Ranta, Maarit	SDP	F	2	1				
106	Filatov, Tarja	SDP	F	2	1				
107	Gustafsson, Jukka	SDP	M	3	5	2	1	3	http://www.jukkagustafsson.net/index.php?Itemid=52&option=com_content
108	Guzenina-Richardson, Maria	SDP	F	1	1				
109	Heinäluoma, Eero	SDP	M	2	2				http://www.heinaluoma.net/sivu.php?id=3
110	Hiltunen, Rakel	SDP	F	3	1				
111	Huovinen, Susanna	SDP	F	1	1				
112	Hurskainen, Sinikka	SDP	F	3	1				
113	Jaakonsaari, Liisa	SDP	F	3	5	2	1	2	http://www.liisajaakonsaari.net/
114	Kallio, Reijo	SDP	M	3	1				
115	Kallioma, Antti	SDP	M	3	1				
116	Kantola, Ilkka	SDP	M	2	5	1	1	0	http://www.ilkkakantola.net/blog/
117	Karhu, Saara	SDP	F	2	1				
118	Kiljunen, Anneli	SDP	F	2	1				
119	Kiljunen, Kimmo	SDP	M	3	5	1	1	0	http://www2.eduskunta.fi/fakta/edustaja/464/viikkokiljunen.htm
120	Kiuru, Krista	SDP	F	1	3	1	1	0	http://kristakiuru.net/V07/blogi/
121	Koski, Vaito	SDP	M	3	1				
122	Koskinen, Johannes	SDP	M	2	5	1	1	0	http://www.johanneskoskinen.fi/
123	Koskinen, Marjaana	SDP	F	2	1				
124	Kumpula-Natri, Miapetra	SDP	F	1	3	1	1	0	http://www.miapetra.net/
125	Kuusisto, Merja	SDP	F	2	1				
126	Kähkönen, Lauri	SDP	M	3	1				
127	Lahtela, Esa	SDP	M	3	1				
128	Laitinen, Reijo	SDP	M	3	1				
129	Lipponen, Päivi	SDP	F	2	1				
130	Ojala-Niemelä, Johanna	SDP	F	1	1				
131	Paasio, Heli	SDP	F	1	1				
132	Paatero, Sirpa	SDP	F	2	1				
133	Peltonen, Tuula	SDP	F	2	3	1	3	0	http://www.tuulapeltonen.net/?page=paivakirja
134	Rajamäki, Kari	SDP	M	3	1				
135	Rönni, Tero	SDP	M	2	1				
136	Saarinen, Matti	SDP	M	3	1				
137	Skinnari, Jouko	SDP	M	3	1				
138	Söderman, Jacob	SDP	M	3	5	1	2	0	http://www.jacobsoderman.fi/index.php?option=com_content&task=blog
139	Tabermann, Tommy	SDP	M	3	1				
140	Taimela, Katja	SDP	F	1	1				
141	Taiveaho, Satu	SDP	F	1	4	2	1	0	http://www.satutaiveaho.blogspot.com/
142	Tuomioja, Erkki	SDP	M	3	5	1	1	0	http://www.tuomioja.org/
143	Urpilainen, Jutta	SDP	F	1	2				http://www.juttaurpilainen.net/
144	Viitamies, Pauliina	SDP	F	1	4	2	5	0	http://pauliinaviitamies.blogspot.com/
145	Viitanen, Pia	SDP	F	2	5	1	1	0	http://piviitanen.typepad.com/

146	Vuolanne, Antti	SDP	M	2	1					
147	Väätäinen, Tuula	SDP	F	2	1					
148	Andersson, Claes	LEFT	M	3	5	2	1	0	http://www.claesandersson.fi/blogi.html	
149	Arhinmäki, Paavo	LEFT	M	1	4	2	1	6	http://www.punajuuri.net/	
150	Kangas, Matti	LEFT	M	3	1					
151	Kauppi, Matti	LEFT	M	3	5	1	3	0	http://www.mattikauppi.fi/blogi.html	
152	Korhonen, Martti	LEFT	M	3	1					
153	Kuoppa, Mikko	LEFT	M	3	1					
154	Kylönen, Merja	LEFT	F	1	1					
155	Laakso, Jaakko	LEFT	M	3	1					
156	Lapintie, Annika	LEFT	F	2	5	2	1	1	http://lapintie.vuodatus.net/	
157	Mustajärvi, Markus	LEFT	M	2	5	1	1	0	http://www.markusmustajarvi.net/index.html	
158	Puhjo, Veijo	LEFT	M	3	1					
159	Sirnö, Minna	LEFT	F	2	3	1	1	0	http://www2.eduskunta.fi/fakta/edustaja/788/jalka00.htm	
160	Tennilä, Esko-Juhani	LEFT	M	3	1					
161	Tiusanen, Pentti	LEFT	M	3	5	2	1	0	http://ptiusanen.vuodatus.net/	
162	Valpas, Unto	LEFT	M	3	1					
163	Virtanen, Erkki	LEFT	M	3	1					
164	Yrttiaho, Jyrki	LEFT	M	3	1					
165	Alanko-Kahiluoto, Outi	GRE	F	2	5	2	2	0	http://outialanko.blogspot.com/	
166	Andersson, Janina	GRE	F	1	4	2	5	0	http://janina.vuodatus.net/	
167	Brax, Tuija	GRE	F	2	2				http://www.tuijabrax.fi/?cat=1	
168	Haavisto, Pekka	GRE	M	2	2				http://blogitus.net/haavisto/	
169	Hautala, Heidi	GRE	F	2	2				http://heidi-hautala.livejournal.com/	
170	Järvinen, Heli	GRE	F	2	5	2	1	0	http://www.vihreat.fi/fi/blog/219	
171	Karimäki, Johanna	GRE	F	1	5	2	1	1	http://johannakarimaki.blogspot.com/	
172	Kasvi, Jyrki	GRE	M	2	4	2	2	19	http://www.kasvi.org/index.php?blog	
173	Niinistö, Ville	GRE	M	1	5	2	1	0	http://www.villeniinisto.blogspot.com/	
174	Ojansuu, Kirsi	GRE	F	2	2				http://www.vihreat.fi/fi/blog/396	
175	Pullilainen, Erkki	GRE	M	3	2				http://www.vihreat.fi/fi/blog/398	
176	Sumuvuori, Johanna	GRE	F	1	5	2	1	0	http://www.vihreat.fi/fi/blog/198	
177	Sinnemäki, Anni	GRE	F	1	2				http://www.annisinnemaki.net//blogi/index.php	
178	Tynkkynen, Oras	GRE	M	1	4	2	1	0	http://www.orastynkkynen.fi/?page_id=64	
179	Blomqvist, Thomas	SPP	M	2	1					
180	Gestrin, Christina	SPP	F	2	5	2	1	0	http://gestrin.blogspot.com/	
181	Henriksson, Anna-Maja	SPP	F	2	4	2	6	5	http://www.bloggen.fi/annamaja/	
182	Nauclet, Elisabeth	SPP	F	3	1					
183	Nordman, Håkan	SPP	M	3	1					
184	Nylund, Mats	SPP	M	2	1					
185	Nyländer, Mikaela	SPP	F	1	1					
186	Thors, Astrid	SPP	F	2	4	1	3	0	http://www.astridthors.net/astrid_sv/index.php?action=nyhetsarkiv&tal=	
187	Wallin, Stefan	SPP	M	2	5	1	1	0	http://stefanwallin.blogspot.com/	
188	Wideroos, Ulla-Maj	SPP	F	3	3	2	12	36	http://www.bloggen.fi/UMW/	
189	Kallis, Bjarne	CD	M	3	3	1	7	0	http://www.bjarnekallis.net/fi/etusivu/nettipaivakirja/?id=67	
190	Kankaanniemi, Toimi	CD	M	3	5	2	4	1	http://www.kankaanniemi.net/blogi	
191	Kärkkäinen, Kari	CD	M	1	1					
192	Palm, Sari	CD	F	2	5	2	7	1	http://www.saripalm.vuodatus.net/	
193	Rauhala, Leena	CD	F	3	1					
194	Räsänen, Päivi	CD	F	2	4	2	7	9	http://www.karkkainen.net/	
195	Tallqvist, Tarja	CD	F	3	5	2	1	0	http://www.tarjattallqvist.com/blog.htm	
196	Oinonen, Pentti	TF	M	3	1					
197	Ruohonen-Lerner, Pirkko	TF	F	2	4	1	1	0	http://pirkko.blogspot.com/	
198	Soini, Timo	TF	M	2	4	1	2	0	http://timosoini.fi/ploki/	
199	Vistbacka, Raimo	TF	M	3	1					
200	Virtanen, Pertti	TF	M	3	1					

Explanations considering the abbreviations of the above table, empirical data:

Party:

The Centre Party = CENT
National Coalition Party = NCP
Social Democrats = SDP
Left Alliance = LEFT
The Green League = GRE
Swedish People's Party = SPP
Christian Democrats = CD
True Finns = TF

Sex:

M = male
F = female

Blog type, 1-5:

1: No blog
2: Blog, which has not been updated
3: Diary-type blog
4: Blog that is a mixture of personal and political content
5: Blog with political content only

Age groups, 1-3:

1: all the MPs under 40 years of age
2: MPs between the ages of 40 and 55
3: all the MPs who are 55 or older

Level of interaction, 0-2:

0: no interaction
1: some interaction, for example e-mail address or feedback form, but not a possibility to leave comments on the blog
2: truly an interactive blog, possibility to leave comments on the postings of the blog

Posts:

Number of posts in the blog during the week of examination

Comments:

Number of comments in the blog left by readers during the week of examination

APPENDIX 2

Textual content of the MPs' blogs		
Number of MP	Blog topics, titles	Other remarks
1	Thoughts on a sunny Saturday	
6	Supporting administration and agriculture is the best developmental aid, Diabetes-bomb is ticking also in third world countries, Home sweet home?	One picture with each text
9	Developing Slovenia - one of Tito's former republics	
10	19.4.	
12	At the county of energy, Today as an MP of radiopeili	
14	Lumijoki-series is back, Raising quality levels is the key question	
15	20.4.2008	
16	Springtime and excitement	
17	The smell of spring	Text and a poem
28	Justice for taxation	
31	On a Monday morning	
38	Stop, both politics and every day life in a package	
39	18.4.2008	
45	At a party comission	
47	On a Tuesday	Blog is situated in the party's main website
48	You learn by doing, A lot of noise about payments	
57	Sunday 20.4., Saturday 19.4., Friday 18.4., Thursday 17.4., Wednesday 16.4., Tuesday 15.4., Monday 14.4.	Writes every day, a lot of pictures within the text
58	Tuesday 8.4.	
59	I like this!, Education	
62	Govenmental aid to sustainable energy in practice	
67	Guarantees for the safety guarantee	
69	You have to be able to talk about your commissioner	
70	Berries instead of candy	
72	There are plenty of takers for salmon, The sunny cost's NCP is doing well	
74	14.4.	
76	A scream of silence, A rational decision, Distortion, Come along to the bee of hope!	Texts are really short, just a couple of centences
81	Don't play with your food	
82	Bee of hope at Puolala park, NCP spring seminar on a boat, Every other family's daycare payments are lowered	
86	Accross Norway and Finland	
89	Congratulations and thank you to the one-year-old	
93	Years 1918 and 2008	
96	What makes Matti and Ilkka different	
97	Alcohol lock for cars is coming, 41 days of hunger, Google chasing child porn distributors	
98	Clearness to election reform	

99	People with low income are the winners of the day care reform	
100	Good old politics	She writes: "This is more like a diary than a blog, since you cannot leave comments".
101	Gloves on and to work, A speach	
107	My thoughts on April	Writes only about once a month
113	Something fair after all	
116	Only entrepreneurs working hard?	
119	Hot day care discussion	
120	Week 16	
122	Social security for the most poor must be higher	"Kossu's comment"
124	Sunday evening on a bus	Writes only about once a month
133	Question: Are the all-terrain vehicles safe?, Question: Taxation on emigrants?, Question: How are teachers checked?	
138	One can ask but there are no answers, Lipponen strikes under the belt	
141	A lot to do: trip to prison and customer payments	
142	Government's first birthday	
144	First time, Citizens' know-how-office, Bishop's ride, Chamber of secrets, Quality living	
145	Let's speak SDP-language	
148	Private funding of universities will unequalize	
149	People know!	
151	9.4., 10.4., 11.4.	
156	Turku inhabitants compose ideas for using the parking money	
157	Framing kills democracy	
159	The day of heroes	"Anti-blog"
161	Parliament is now deciding on climate change politics	
165	Minister's TATUSOTU-letter, Forests in Herttoniemi	A lot of pictures
166	Trafficking, On womens cause in Capetown, Coexisting or no existing, Greeting from all over the world, Mothers' and babies health, In Nelson Mandela's footsteps in prison	Reports from a conference in Africa, lot of pictures and long texts
170	The skill or being a representative or a human?	
171	Two trips to Kemi	
172	Three years time, MP3-players for MPs	
173	More rights for consumers in Nordic countries	
176	International relations back to the political agenda	
178	Week 16	
180	Election reform	Writes in Swedish
181	Important message, VR Bennäs station, "Klacklös", Alcohol-lock is here to stay, A nice visit, Clear signs of spring	Writes in Swedish
186	Snow in Oulu and sun in Helsinki!, Nowone understands but veryone's responsible, Unholy safety-promises	Writes in Swedish
187	Where are we going?	Writes in Swedish

188	FST touched tonight, Grandma!, I forgot, On the way, SFP's regional meeting, Finnish on Swedish?, A lot going on, Handball's enemy, Komossa scholl, 05.00!, Womanly networks	Writes in Swedish, writes every day
189	Monday 14.4., Tuesday 15.4., Wednesday 16.4., Thursday 17.4., Friday 18.4., Saturday 19.4., Sunday 20.4.	Writes every day
190	Information systems are not working, Comments and disagreements, Multiple policies and will, Taxation is all wrong!	
192	About nursing relatives, Shall we translate?, VAT-value added tax, Lovely ringing neighbour, Tibet, A message is a message even electronic one	Writes every day
194	A sad message, First report for the government, Repeating ten commandments, Political ties of the board members need to be cut, Insulting website, Customer payment -law got under the feet of a scandal, Every-day troubles	Writes every day
195	My speach at the parliament 15.4.2008	
197	Porvoo absolutists' society visit at the parliament	
198	CENT's deception and mothernity package, We need to remember SMP	"Ploki"