The Geography of Media - Economic Crisis and Newspapers in a Regional Context

The aim of this work is to examine how regional newspapers construct the regional public sphere during the economic crises of the 1990s in Finland. The present study forms a part of a research project 'Economic Crisis in Finland in the 1990s' and its subproject 'Media Coverage versus Citizens' Experiences in the Crisis'. The Academy of Finland has financed the project. The starting point of the study has been to examine the relationship between the news agenda and the content in four regional newspapers in relation to the regional economic development during the economic crisis. The selected newspapers are seen as institutions constructing and maintaining the sense of 'we', regional identity. The news content and regional economy interact in a process which shape the interpretations and frameworks of the economic crises in regional context. For this research project, four newspapers were selected from regions that were different both economically and culturally. The research question was approached with the help of data collected from the newspapers between 1988-1997. Additional data was sought from statistics collected by Statistics Finland and survey data portraying media use produced by MDC-Gallup Finland. The data was supplemented by interviews. The research methods are a comparative content analysis of the news agenda, a textual analysis and a close reading of interviews.

The study shows that the portrayal of the economic crisis forms an equation that is affected by several variables. The regional agenda reflects the political, cultural, spatial and economic structures at a regional as well as a national level. Furthermore the internal journalistic culture of the newspaper as well as its policy-line and earlier bindings has an impact. Especially influential are the economic wealth of the region, the regional policies pursued by the state and the types of economic activity typical to the region. The main results are presented in a matrix describing four spheres of the newspapers: the political, the regional, the economical and the cultural sphere.

As a result of the research process a fifth sphere, "the meaning market" was developed as a tool for assessing how the regional relational system affects journalism.

**Avainsanat-Nyckelord-Keywords**
- regional identity - regional newspapers
- economic crisis - regional newspapers - Finland - 1990's
- media economy

**Säilytyspaikka-Förvaringsställe-Where deposited**

**Muita tietoja-Övriga uppgifter-Additional information**