Four media roles in organizational legitimation

News media participation in discursive legitimation processes

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Abstract

Although legitimacy scholars acknowledge that the mainstream news media play an important role in organizational legitimation processes, there has been no systematic identification and examination of a range of roles that the news media perform in these processes. Moreover, legitimacy research has not paid much attention to how the news media participate in and shape the social and discursive processes in which organizational legitimacy is constructed, contested and undermined by organizations, the media themselves, and their audiences in public arenas.

Accordingly, this dissertation sets out to explore and examine not only the various roles of the media in discursive processes of organizational legitimation, but also how different types of organizations mobilize the media in these roles for their own ends. It does so first by drawing from a foundational theoretical framework defining social and political roles of the media in sociology and mass communication literature. This framework is then applied to a systematic literature review of legitimacy studies to identify, define and theoretically elaborate four roles of conduit, facilitator, mediator and political actor that media perform in legitimation processes. Next, drawing on critical discourse analysis (CDA), this study empirically illustrates and elaborates (1) how the news media performed these four roles in the context of a discursive struggle between an activist group and a central bank over the legitimacy of a politically controversial organizational activity in 2012-2015, and (2) how the activist group and central bank made use of discursive means in the mobilization of media in these roles.

This dissertation contributes to management and organization studies literature on legitimation involving the media by developing and empirically illustrating an integrative framework through which to analyze four roles that the media play in discursive processes of legitimation. This framework shifts attention to, and sheds new light on, distinct ways in which the news media serve as a platform for and influence, facilitate and mediate discursive processes of organizational legitimation in public arenas.

Keywords conduit, discursive legitimation, facilitator, mediator, media roles, political actor

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Helsinki, April 2018
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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Arriving at my research problem

In May 2012 approximately 20,000 demonstrators marched through the streets of downtown Frankfurt chanting anti-austerity slogans and waving placards. A newly formed European activist organization called Blockupy had staged this four-day street demonstration outside the European Central Bank’s Frankfurt offices to attract media attention to the negative impact of the ECB’s austerity policy on millions of citizens in southern EU countries suffering from the 2007-2008 global financial crisis. Despite Blockupy’s message and the spectacle, only ten English-language mainstream news media reported on this event.

Five months later, a wave of intense media-led criticism of the ECB’s austerity measures began to take form without Blockupy’s involvement. During a small private ECB ceremony in September 2012 to mark completion of the main structural works of its new twin towers headquarters being built in Frankfurt, the bank revealed that its construction budget had blown out by €450 million. This led some international news media outlets to attack the ECB over its hypocrisy in forcing strict budget restrictions on some EU member governments while mismanaging its own headquarters construction budget.

When Blockupy organized a second street demonstration in May 2013 to protest against the ECB’s austerity policy, the number of news media covering the event doubled from its first event the previous year. Five months later, in October 2013, two news media outlets initiated an attack on the ECB and its controversial monetary policy by exposing more details of the central bank’s mismanagement of the construction of its twin-towered skyscraper—again without mentioning Blockupy, despite the activist group being a key critic of the ECB policy. More media scrutiny followed over the next few weeks. Particularly scathing were reports by the Irish news media; because Ireland was one of the EU countries forced to implement the ECB’s tough austerity measures, the Irish media seemed to have a stake in this issue.

During Blockupy’s third protest in March 2015 in which 10,000 demonstrators took part, violence broke out, leading to a stand-off with police in riot gear. Police arrested 350 protestors that day. This third Blockupy demonstration attracted global news headlines focusing on Blockup’s anti-austerity message. Over 50 international mainstream news media outlets covered the story. Interestingly, throughout this three-year episode the ECB remained largely silent.

Although Blockupy and the ECB were the main stakeholders in this public struggle over the legitimacy of the ECB economic policy, others who took part
in the media discussions included politicians, the police and labor unions. Media audiences too, which may also constitute the audiences of the ECB and Blockupy, gained a voice in this drama through the media’s online discussion platforms and social media sites. For example, newspaper reports critical of the ECB policy and the bank’s hypocrisy over its headquarters construction budget generated 1,469 posts from readers on two media-hosted online discussion forums.

This discursive struggle between Blockupy and the ECB illustrates the research puzzle and phenomenon that I set out to study in this dissertation: that is, how do contemporary news media organizations participate in and shape the social and discursive processes through which organizations and their activities are legitimated, delegitimated and relegitimated in society? As my dissertation will show, this case offers a particularly ideal opportunity to explore and better understand not only how the news media perform various political and communicative roles in discursive processes of organizational (de)legitimation, but also how different types of organizations (i.e., a powerful government organization and an activist group as change agent) can mobilize the media in these different roles for their own ends. In this multinational drama over the legitimacy of a controversial monetary policy affecting the livelihood of millions of citizens across the European Union, some newspapers, such as the *Irish Independent*, appeared to take on an autonomous and politically active role, initiating and leading discursive attacks on the ECB and its economic agenda. Other news media, however, seemed to adopt a bystander role in the drama, more or less objectively reporting the views of Blockupy and the ECB.

1.2 Theoretical underpinnings

In this dissertation, I view organizational legitimacy as the perceived appropriateness and social acceptability of an organization or its actions or leaders in a given social context (Suchman, 1995). Individuals form perceptions of an organization, which may then turn into judgments about that organization (Bitektine, 2011). Individuals’ judgments that are communicated en masse may subsequently emerge as a collective consensus judgment about the legitimacy or illegitimacy of the organization (Bitektine & Haack, 2015; Tost, 2011; Zelditch, 2006). Understandably, collective legitimacy judgments about a focal organization that form at macro levels of society are an important consideration to that organization (Baum & Oliver, 1991; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Dowling & Pfeffer, 1975; Zimmerman & Zeitz, 2002). When facing public challenges over its legitimacy, an organization may attempt to manage or defend its legitimacy (Suchman, 1995), such as by enacting legitimation strategies.

Specifically, I take a discursive approach to legitimation to examine various actors’ use of discursive legitimation strategies designed to attack or defend the legitimacy of an organization and its activities (Vaara et al, 2006; Vaara & Monin, 2010). An organization may employ legitimation strategies through mobilizing discursive resources to create a sense of legitimacy or illegitimacy (Fairclough, 2003: 98–100; van Dijk, 1998: 255–262; Vaara & Tienari, 2008: 987).
Further, while recognizing that some studies examine legitimacy as an asset or resource (Tsoukas, 1991) of an organization (legitimacy-as-property) and others examine legitimacy as a perception (Bitektine, 2011; Tost, 2011; Bitektine & Haack, 2015) between individuals (legitimacy-as-perception), in this study I lean towards a legitimacy-as-process perspective (Suddaby, Bitektine & Haack, 2017) to shed light on legitimation as an ongoing social and communicative process in which actors engage in constructing, negotiating and contesting the legitimacy of an organization and its activities in public arenas. The advantage of such a perspective is that it views legitimacy as emerging from negotiation and consensus between multiple actors.

From this perspective, I argue that in processes of (il)legitimacy formation taking place at macro levels in society, the mainstream news media play a key role, mediating and shaping the processes in which organizations and their activities become more understandable and accepted (Meyer & Scott, 1983; Ashforth & Gibbs, 1990; Suchman, 1995). However, the media rarely act alone in the collation, production and dissemination of legitimacy judgments about organizations. Indeed, “media stories, whether legitimating or de-legitimating, do not appear out of a vacuum” (Deephouse & Suchman, 2008: 56). There are multiple participants communicating legitimacy judgments about organizations and their activities through media reports.

Accordingly, in this dissertation I focus on three primary actors engaged in conferring organizational (il)legitimacy through the media: organizations, their audiences—which also may constitute the audiences of the news media—and the news media themselves. It is generally acknowledged in legitimacy research that organizations strive to shape audiences’ perceptions of them by attempting to manage the effect of news media coverage on their legitimacy (Fombrun, 1996; Hoffman & Occasio, 2001). Organizations with strategic access to media actors (e.g., journalists) are able to acquire standing in the media (Gamson, 2004), which is associated with gaining a media voice and thus becoming a source for media reports. The media are dependent on these organizations as official and influential sources of information (Gans, 1979; Sigal, 1978) for their news content. Indeed, because media actors engage with and are reliant on organizational sources for news content, organizations are embedded in a web of relationships with the media (Kjaer & Slaatta, 2007: 21). The audiences of organizations and the media, which may be understood as the evaluating audience (Bitektine, 2011), also become involved in expressing their views about the legitimacy of organizations through the media, particularly through online discussion forums hosted by contemporary news media organizations. The media themselves are a third actor in these legitimacy-negotiation processes; media with a stake in struggles over organizational legitimacy may also communicate their own judgments as autonomous political actors (Deephouse & Heugens, 2009; Barros, 2014).

In organization and management studies the news media is largely portrayed as a “more or less monolithic entity” (Rindova et al, 2006: 67) and remains a nebulous construct lacking clear theorizing. The media in this body of work is referred to as an institution, an arena, an organizational field (e.g., the Finnish
media), and a practice or profession (e.g., journalism). As a political or social institution, it is often identified as the mass media, the popular press, or the general news media, signifying the aggregation of media entities not bound by national or industry borders. Some organization and management studies refer to media coverage in their focus on the collective aggregation of media reports, particularly when attempting to measure organizational legitimacy. Moreover, a growing group of legitimacy scholars refers to the media as organizations, organizational actors, and information intermediaries or infomediaries (e.g., Deephouse & Heugens, 2009; Scheiber, 2015), meaning that the media are a business entity dependent on sales and advertising revenues as well as on their audience for survival (Hirsch, 1977; Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). Treating the media as organizations enables legitimacy scholars to examine the media as active participants in legitimation processes (Pollock & Rindova, 2003; Hayward, Rindova & Pollock, 2004; Johnson et al., 2005) and focuses attention on how organizational (il)legitimacy is constructed through continuous discursive interactions between the media and other actors who have secured or have been afforded a media voice.

In this dissertation I treat the media as both organizations and as an arena (i.e., as an important scene of collective discussion and debate about organizational legitimacy). When examining various roles of the media in legitimation processes, I focus on the media as organizational actors and more specifically as individual news media organizations. However, like most discursive legitimation scholars, I also treat the media as an arena to examine how organizations, audiences, and indeed the media (as organizations) take part in constructing and contesting organizational legitimacy through ongoing discursive interactions. Put another way, I seek to examine how the media (as organizations) participate with other actors in discursive legitimation processes going on in the media (as arena).

In this dissertation I adopt a communicative approach to legitimation (Harmon et al, 2015), which means that I view organizations, the media, and their audiences as ‘actors’ (i.e., ‘speakers’) rendering legitimacy judgments about focal organizations in media discussions and the ‘audiences’ of both the media and organizations as ‘listeners’ receiving these judgments and subsequently forming perceptions of these organizations (Hoefer & Green, 2016). Moreover, I perceive legitimation as an ongoing communicative process in which the media are (1) an enabler of legitimacy negotiation by organizations and audiences interactively participating in legitimation in public arenas and (2) political actors negotiating legitimacy themselves in these processes.

Although numerous legitimacy scholars acknowledge that the media play an important role in legitimation processes (Hybels, 1994; Deephouse, 1996; Lamertz & Baum, 1998; Rindova & Fombrun, 1999; Pollock & Rindova, 2003; Bansal & Clelland, 2004; Deephouse & Suchman, 2008; Pollock et al., 2008; Deephouse & Heugens, 2009; Bitektine, 2011; Barros, 2014; Bitektine & Haack, 2015), “they have neither agreed on, nor systematically investigated, how this role is performed” (Pollock & Rindova, 2003: 632). For example, Suddaby,
Bitektine and Haack’s (2017) recent systematic review and summary of legitimacy scholarship rarely mentions the media’s role in legitimation. In particular, we know little about the role of the media in the discursive processes through which organizational legitimacy is socially constructed, contested and undermined by organizations, the media, and their audiences.

1.3 Research gap

Accordingly, in this dissertation I set out to elaborate theory on the roles that news media perform in processes of discursive legitimation, which is an underdeveloped research area in organization and management studies. Although organization and management studies have explored ways in which discursive legitimation and delegitimation take place through the media (Vaara et al., 2006; Vaara & Monin, 2010), we still know relatively little about the range of various roles that are performed by the media in these processes. There is a tendency in legitimacy research of referring to the way in which organizations mobilize the news media in an information transmission (Pollock & Rindova, 2003) and information broker (Johnson et al., 2005) role. In this role media act as “…key disseminators of social, economic, and political information…” (Deephouse & Heugens, 2009: 546) emanating from influential organizations. Through media in this role organizations are able to manipulate public perceptions of focal organizations and their activities (King & Soule, 2007) and communicate with external audiences to gain legitimacy (Elsbach & Sutton, 1992) and restore legitimacy (Pfarrer et al., 2008). In this role the media act more or less as “purveyors of news and information” (Rindova et al., 2006: 56), disseminating the arguments of managers and influential stakeholders (Joutsenvirta 2013; Finch et al., 2015), indicating the media’s relatively passive participation (Johnson et al., 2005: 462) in legitimation processes. Less understood in legitimacy studies is the media’s participatory role (Rheingold, 2008) empowering and facilitating participation by organizational audiences in legitimation—a particularly important role for contemporary news media organizations. A few legitimacy studies identify the media in a political actor role (see e.g. Deephouse & Heugens, 2009; Johnson et al., 2005) and hence as a more active participant in the legitimation and delegitimation of organizations and their activities (Johnson et al., 2005; Deephouse & Heugens, 2009; Barros, 2014). In this role the media are more autonomous actors and thus less responsive to the editorial influence of external forces.

Nevertheless, although the topic of the role of the media in legitimation processes has received some theoretical attention in organizational and strategy research (Aldrich & Fiol, 1994; Bednar et al., 2013; Loundsbury & Glynn, 2001; Pollock & Rindova, 2003) and more specifically in discursive legitimation research (Vaara et al., 2006; Vaara & Monin, 2010), theory explaining the range of diverse media roles in, and their effect on, legitimation has not been adequately developed. I contend that development of theory on media roles in discursive processes of legitimation has been hampered by a ‘dual roles’ perspective dominating legitimacy research. There exists a long-standing tendency
among organization and management scholars, including legitimacy researchers, of referring to the media’s ‘dual roles’: the media both reflect and shape the opinion of the general public (Schramm, 1949; McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Fombrun & Shanley, 1990) and therefore the legitimacy of organizations (Deephouse, 2000; Pollock & Rindova, 2003; Johnson et al., 2005; Scheiber, 2015). While legitimacy studies show that the media reflect judgments of organizational legitimacy conveyed by various sources, studies also show that the media affect audience perceptions of legitimacy (Fombrun & Shanley, 1990; Deephouse, 2000; Pollock & Rindova, 2003; Johnson et al., 2005; Scheiber, 2015).

In their study of how media coverage affects the market for initial public offerings, Pollock and Rindova (2003) examine how two different roles of the media shape the legitimacy of organizations. First, the information transmission role of the media exposes organizations and their various attributes to key stakeholders. Second, through the media’s selection and subjective interpretation of events, the media’s framing role “provides audiences with visible public expressions of approval or disapproval of firms and their actions (Elsbach, 1994; Lamertz & Baum, 1998)” (2003: 634). They argue that the process of legitimation is influenced by media in the information transmission role—a reflecting role—through the volume of more or less objective information the media disseminate about organizations, and by the media in the framing role—a shaping role—through the tenor of media reports; that is, the media’s framing of information about organizations as positive or negative.

Although such conceptualization of the media’s dual roles has been helpful in highlighting two contrasting functions of the media, media legitimacy research (Hybels, 1994; Deephouse, 1996; Lamertz & Baum, 1998; Rindova & Fombrun, 1999; Pollock & Rindova, 2003; Bansal & Clelland, 2004; Deephouse & Suchman, 2008; Pollock et al., 2008; Deephouse & Heugens, 2009; Bitektine, 2011; Barros, 2014; Bitektine & Haack, 2015) has not, however, paid adequate attention to the possibility of news media adopting more than two roles, or indeed a range of roles between the two extreme poles of reflecting and shaping, in legitimation. Pollock and Rindova (2003) argue that a dual roles perspective of the media in the legitimation of organizations presents both theoretical and empirical issues that require attention if we are to advance understanding of how the media participate in and shape legitimation processes.

To my knowledge, there has been no reputable attempt in organization and management studies to systematically explore and examine the roles that the media play in discursive processes of legitimation. Hence, in this dissertation I set out to identify, illustrate and elaborate roles of the media so as to better understand not only how the news media perform these roles but also how organizations mobilize the media in these roles in discursive processes in which organizations socially construct, negotiate and contest the legitimacy of focal organizations and their activities in public arenas. In legitimation studies we understand that organizations attempt to persuade audiences to make certain assumptions about focal organizations and their activities (Suchman, 1995). How-
ever, such processes become more complex when they involve the media, because the process of legitimation through the media involves multiple organizations competing to gain a voice in media discussions according to the limitations of time, space and format in news production practices (Christians et al., 2009). Bitektine and Haack (2015) describe the judgment validation process by the media as “usually a competitive process” because the media are required to “process multiple and often conflicting legitimacy judgments of evaluators” (2015: 51). Indeed, the media have their “own rules of competition and practices of contest resolution” (Bitektine & Haack, 2015: 52). However, Bitektine and Haack (2015) do not elaborate on how the media enable or constrain the discursive means by which organizations attempt to shape media accounts affecting the legitimacy of focal organizations and their activities.

1.4 Research task and contributions

The central research question that I set out to address in this dissertation is the following: What distinct roles do the media play in discursive processes of organizational legitimation? I begin by first drawing on a foundational theoretical framework in sociology and mass communication literature of the social and political roles of the media in society. This framework serves to explain how media in certain roles shape the way organizations and their audiences engage with the media (Lasswell, 1948; Wright, 1960; McQuail, 2006; Christians et al., 2009). To provide an initial framework within which to subsequently locate the basic roles of news media in legitimation processes, Christians et al.’s (2009) model of four media roles is particularly helpful for two main reasons. First, theirs is a more recent contribution that takes into account contemporary news media functions. Second, the authors, who are highly respected in their field of mass communication, collectively make a significant contribution to this framework.

Like Christians et al. (2009), in this study I interpret media roles in terms of the basic or typical functions assumed by or played by mainstream news media organizations in Western democratic societies. The term role refers to “a composite of occupational tasks and purposes that is widely recognizable and has a stable and enduring form” (2009: 119). Roles are regulated and influenced by both internal institutional pressures (e.g., professional, commercial and idealistic) and external forces such as audiences, the state (e.g., regulatory authorities), and pressure groups (2009: 116). I also interpret media roles in terms of what media do, rather than Christians et al.’s (2009) normative interpretation of media roles (i.e., what media ought to do) such as media responsibility, duty or obligation. Hence, I identify media roles by the practices, ideals and values of media actors that shape what the media do. I also interpret media roles as either transient (i.e., a media organization may take on more than one role and may switch between roles simultaneously) or established (i.e., a media organization may predominantly adopt one or more permanent roles).
I next apply this framework adapted from sociology and mass communication literature to a systematic literature review of legitimacy studies to define, identify and theoretically elaborate four media roles of conduit, facilitator, mediator and political actor through which the news media participate in discursive processes of legitimation. This constitutes Part 1 of this dissertation: a theoretical analysis of media roles in legitimation.

In Part 2 I set out to empirically illustrate and elaborate (1) how news media organizations performed these roles in the context of a discursive legitimacy struggle between an activist group (as change agent) and a central bank (a powerful government organization) over a politically controversial organizational activity in 2012-2015, and (2) how the activist group and central bank made use of discursive means to mobilize the media in these roles for their own ends. Blockupy may be described as a change agent whose primary interest was in changing the process by which the legitimacy of the bank’s monetary policy was being constructed (Suddaby, Bitektine & Haack, 2017: 3). In analyzing the empirical case, I make use of the framework of four media roles in legitimation developed in Part 1 as an analytical tool. The research questions guiding this empirical inquiry in Part 2 therefore are:

**How do news media organizations perform their roles in the discursive (de)legitimation of a politically controversial organizational activity?**

**How do organizations discursively mobilize the media in their roles when seeking to (de)legitimate a politically controversial organizational activity?**

Methodologically, I draw on critical discourse analysis (CDA), which is useful to providing insight into the discursive activities undertaken by actors in legitimation processes, such as through the media (Vaara et al., 2006; Vaara & Monín, 2010; Vaara & Tienari, 2008). Acknowledging that there are different traditions in CDA, I draw from what Zhu and McKenna (2012: 528) call the Finnish School (namely Pasi Ahonen, Ingmar Björkman, Eric Breit, Niina Erkkama, Maria Joutsenvirta, Pikka-Maaria Laine, Juha Laurila, Janne Tienari and Eero Vaara) approach to CDA to understand the discursive-ideological basis of legitimation taking place in the media. Like most other CDA scholars of legitimation, these scholars analyze how discursive strategizing links legitimation strategies to meta-discourses—often ideologically-based—that are generally accepted in society (Tienari et al, 2003). Hence, I deploy methods of CDA to examine in this empirical setting not only how the media discursively performed their roles but also how the activist group and central bank made use of discursive means to mobilize the media in their various roles to respectively delegitimate and re-legitimate the bank’s economic policy between 2012 and 2015. The empirical data used in this study includes 77 news media texts predominantly from newspapers based in Europe and 1,469 posts from online discussion forums hosted by newspapers published between May 2012 and April 2015.

This dissertation contributes to management and organization studies literature on legitimation through the media (Meyer & Scott, 1983; Ashforth & Gibbs,
1990; Aldrich & Fiol, 1994; Suchman, 1995; Loundsbury & Glynn, 2001) by connecting organizational legitimacy literature to sociology and mass communication literature on media roles in society (e.g., Christians et al., 2009) to develop and empirically illustrate an integrative framework through which to analyze four roles that news media play in discursive processes of legitimation. This framework shifts attention to, and sheds new light on, ways in which news media participate in and influence discursive processes involving organizations seeking to construct, negotiate and contest the legitimacy of focal organizations and their activities in public arenas. Specifically, the findings from the theoretical and empirical analysis provide support for an extended framework offering a more nuanced understanding of specific ways through which news media roles (1) are linked to different actors, (2) guide varying levels of media participation in legitimation, (3) define three types of media-legitimation processes, and (4) identify media as either a primary or secondary source of legitimacy.

1.5 Dissertation structure

This dissertation is comprised of eight chapters, including this introduction (see Figure 1 below).

Chapters Two, Three and Four constitute Part 1: a theoretical analysis of media roles in legitimation. In chapter two, a review of organizational legitimacy research examines what we know thus far about news media organizations’ participation with organizations and their audiences in legitimation processes and the media roles linked to these three actors in these processes.

In chapter three I draw on sociology and mass communication literature examining social and political roles of the media in society (Lasswell, 1948; Wright, 1960; McQuail, 2006; Christians et al., 2009) to identify and articulate a theoretical framework of four basic roles of conduit, facilitator, mediator and political actor. In chapter four I apply this foundational framework to a systematic literature review of legitimacy studies to identify and define four basic roles of the media in legitimacy studies. These three chapters address the first research question: What distinct roles do the media play in discursive processes of organizational legitimation?

Chapter Five initiates Part 2 of this dissertation: an empirical analysis of media roles in legitimation. This chapter outlines the methodological approach and method adopted in this study. It expands on the critical discursive approach to the media’s involvement in legitimation formation and contestation. The theory-informed framework of four media roles in legitimation developed in chapters three and four is more fully contextualized within the empirical setting in which the ECB, Blockupy, the media, and their audiences participated in the (de)legitimation of the ECB’s austerity policy between 2012 and 2015. This framework contributes to a critical discourse analysis of (1) how the media discursively performed their roles and (2) how Blockupy and the ECB made use of discursive means to mobilize the media in their roles in this empirical setting. Detailed explanations of the research design, data collection processes, and the stages of analysis and interpretation are provided.
Chapter Six focuses on using the empirical data to identify, illustrate and elaborate the roles performed by media and mobilized by Blockupy and the ECB through use of discourses, themes and discursive strategies in the (de)legitimation of the ECB austerity policy. This chapter addresses the second and third research questions:

How do news media organizations perform their roles in the discursive (de)legitimation of a politically controversial organizational activity?

How do organizations discursively mobilize the media in their roles when seeking to (de)legitimize a politically controversial organizational activity?

Chapter Seven, the discussion chapter, moves into the more interpretive realm of this dissertation. The previous chapter’s empirical analysis provides support for an extended framework offering a more nuanced understanding of specific ways through which the news media participate in and influence discursive processes involving organizations seeking to construct, negotiate and contest the legitimacy of focal organizations and their activities in public arenas.

Chapter Eight concludes this dissertation by outlining more fully the contribution contained in the theoretical elaboration that is enabled by the findings in this dissertation. An overview of associated limitations of this study are also discussed along with an outline of a future research agenda suggesting a number of ways in which a theoretical framework of distinct media roles may be helpful.

Figure 1. Thesis structure
PART 1: THEORETICAL ANALYSIS:
Media roles in legitimation
2. MEDIA AND LEGITIMATION

2.1 Legitimacy and legitimation: an overview

I begin by elaborating on a key assumption I make in this dissertation. I take a social constructionist approach, which means that I understand legitimation as a process involving the social construction and contestation of legitimacy through social interaction (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) between individuals, organizations and the media. Studies show how the media influence and shape the social construction of reality (Gamson, Croteau, Hoynes, & Sasson, 1992; Roberts, 1992; Smith, 1995), including the legitimacy of organizations. Indeed, the media are a participant in the social construction process (Gamson et al., 1992; Smith, 1995) involving ongoing social interactions between organizations and their audiences. The media therefore may be conceived as a central interactive hub in a complex society-wide web of ongoing legitimacy construction and contestation involving multiple participants such as organizations, their audiences, and the media themselves.

Legitimacy may be understood as the “generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs and definitions” (Suchman, 1995: 574). An organization is perceived as adequately legitimate if it pursues “socially acceptable goals in a socially acceptable manner” (Ashforth & Gibbs, 1990: 177). A legitimate organization therefore is one whose values and actions are congruent with its constituents’ values and expectations for action (Calaskiewicz, 1985; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). Organizations may be described as adequately legitimate when they have largely unquestioned freedom to conduct their business (Meyer & Scott, 1983) through the endorsement and support of a segment of society large enough to ensure their effectiveness and survival (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978: 194). In contrast, organizations with fragile or weak legitimacy risk being perceived as unnecessary or irrational (Meyer & Rowan, 1977), thereby attracting judgments of illegitimacy, which can lead to negative political, social and economic outcomes.

Legitimacy is important to organizations. An organization’s pressure to deliver profits to management and owners of firms is balanced by an organization’s need to maintain wider social acceptance in order to remain politically, socially and economically viable. Organizations respond not just to market pressures, but also to institutional and cultural pressures, such as those relating to public endorsement (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Indeed,
organizations need (the conferral of) legitimacy to attract their own constituents’ support (Ashforth & Gibbs, 1990). For this reason, organization and management scholars have explored not only how legitimacy benefits organizations (Baum & Oliver, 1991; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Dowling & Pfeffer, 1975; Zimmerman & Zeitz, 2002), but also how legitimacy is socially constructed.

In this dissertation I take a strategic approach to legitimation to examine how organizations become involved in changing the process by which legitimacy is negotiated. Scholars who adopt a strategic approach and who largely treat legitimacy as an operational resource (Suchman, 1988) or asset (a legitimacy-as-property perspective) observe how organizations can often attempt to improve their state of legitimacy through a process of extracting legitimacy from their cultural environments by enacting legitimation strategies—that is, the means through which an organization may attempt to enhance its legitimacy. This managerial perspective “emphasizes the ways in which organizations instrumentally manipulate and deploy evocative symbols in order to garner societal support” (Suchman, 1995). In other words, organizations attempt to proactively influence sources of legitimacy through purposive, calculated, and frequently oppositional means because management within organizations recognize that their audiences’ judgments may lead to actions that “can generate positive (or negative) social, political, and economic outcomes” (Bitektine & Haack, 2015: 50).

Once legitimacy has been conferred on an organization, it can be threatened in a variety of ways, such as when organizations face external shocks, especially if they “either arrive in rapid succession or are left unaddressed for a significant period of time” (Suchman, 1995: 594). When this occurs, organizations may attempt to defend their legitimacy (Ashforth & Gibbs, 1990). It is this defending phase that is of particular interest in this dissertation. When an organization’s legitimacy is threatened, the organization may attempt to counter this threat through its own legitimation strategies. If an organization is not successful in (or is not capable of) defending its legitimacy in the face of attack, it can begin to lose legitimacy (Tilling, 2004). Pfeffer and Salancik (1978: 194) point out that, because an organization need only be endorsed and supported by some rather than all segments of society, it can remain legitimate in the face of external attacks by focusing its legitimation strategies on a few key segments.

Legitimacy, therefore, can increase (Maurer, 1971: 371; Suchman, 1995: 573) and decrease (Davis, Diekmann, & Tinsley, 1994). It can increase through legitimation—a process of social construction of legitimacy. Legitimation is the ongoing creation of a sense of positive, beneficial, ethical, understandable, necessary, or otherwise acceptable action in a specific setting (van Dijk, 1998; van Leeuwen & Wodak, 1999). Legitimation strategies based on discursive means, rhetoric, and collective action have received extensive attention in institutional theory (Golant & Sillince, 2007; Lawrence, 1999; Maguire et al., 2004; Sine, David, & Mitsuhashi, 2007; Suddaby & Greenwood, 2005). In this dissertation I understand legitimation strategies as specific ways of mobilizing discursive resources to create a sense of legitimacy or illegitimacy (Fairclough, 2003: 98–
100; van Dijk, 1998: 255–262; Vaara & Tienari, 2008: 987). In contrast, delegitimation is the establishment of a sense of negative, morally reprehensible, or otherwise unacceptable action or overall state of affairs (Rojo & van Dijk, 1997; van Leeuwen & Wodak, 1999), which suggests a decrease in legitimacy. Deephouse and Suchman (2008) note that delegitimation is the process by which the legitimacy of a subject changes over time (generalizing from Maurer, 1971; Ashforth & Gibbs, 1990; Walker & Zelditch, 1993). Relegitimation, then, is the process of operationalizing defensive responses to critique (Joutsenvirta & Vaara, 2009: 88) following delegitimation activities.

Despite over seven decades of theoretical development of the constructs of legitimacy and legitimation across multiple disciplines, we still do not have a clear understanding of legitimacy and legitimation in general, nor, more specifically, of the news media’s involvement in the social construction and contestation of organizational legitimacy. Suddaby, Bitektine and Haack’s (2017) recent systematic review and summary of legitimacy scholarship offers a significant contribution to theory of “one of the great unanalyzed concepts of organization theory” (Zald, 1978: 71) by offering some construct clarity (Suddaby, 2010a) to the convoluted and often confusing literature on legitimacy. Three distinct configurations of legitimacy emerge from their thematic analysis of the construct, which they term legitimacy-as-property, legitimacy-as-process, and legitimacy-as-perception. The first category—legitimacy-as-property—encompasses those scholars who tend to theorize legitimacy as a ‘thing’ — that is, a property, resource or a capacity of an entity. A second group of researchers who understand legitimacy as a form of sociocognitive perception or evaluation is placed into a second category they term legitimacy-as-perception. The third category—legitimacy-as-process—encompasses those who perceive legitimacy mainly as an interactive process, more aptly termed ‘legitimation’. In this dissertation I lean towards this legitimacy-as-process view to focus on “the purposive role of actors” in exploring how legitimacy is socially constructed (Suddaby, Bitektine & Haack, 2017: 3), such as through the media.

2.2 Media and organizational legitimacy formation

A close examination of the media’s involvement in the macro-level formation, communication, and aggregation of legitimacy judgments emanating from organizations and their audiences is important to gain a better understanding of how organizational legitimacy is constructed and contested in public arenas. Public opinion about an organization or its activities that forms in society-at-large, such as through media coverage over time, is an important source of legitimacy. On the one hand, the aggregation of individual legitimacy judgments influences wider public discourses and, over time, they may aggregate into the existence of a dominant view in society (Converse, 1987). On the other hand, public opinion conversely influences many individuals’ perceptions, such as of an organization and its activities. More specifically, authority and majority opinion profoundly influences individuals’ perceptions (Asch, 1956; Erb, Boh-

Whereas scholars in the legitimacy-as-perception camp tend to theorize micro levels of perception and judgment formation and communication between individuals and collectives, legitimacy-as-process scholarship is interested in legitimization occurring in these broader organizational and societal discursive activities. To put it another way, while legitimacy emerges as micro-level evaluative sociocognitive approval—in which an individual evaluator forms a perception and subsequent judgment of an organization or its activities as desirable and appropriate (termed propriety) (Dornbusch & Scott, 1975; Johnson et al., 2006; Bitektine, 2011; Bitektine & Haack, 2015), a more macro-level evaluative process emerges through validity—that is, “a set of collective processes that lead to aggregation of individuals’ judgments and emergence of a collective consensus judgment about legitimacy of that object (Bitektine & Haack, 2015; Tost, 2011; Zelditch, 2006)” (Suddaby, Bitektine & Haack, 2017: 33). Validity may be formed, for example, in the media where collective consensus over legitimacy of organizations emerges through aggregation of individual propriety judgments.

The media are a central hub in the process involving individuals and organizations conferring judgments of a focal organization and its activities at macro levels of society (Bitektine & Haack, 2015; Bitektine, 2011; Tost, 2011; Walker, Thomas, & Zelditch, 1986; Zelditch & Walker, 1984). The media are involved in the ongoing aggregation and dissemination of collective judgments that constitute the formation of organizational legitimacy (Chiapello, 2003). Although legitimacy is composed of multiple individuals’ subjective judgments (Bitektine, 2011; Tost, 2011), it is aggregated and objectified (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) at the collective level in a generalized, aggregated perception of an organization through media coverage over time.

As an important legitimacy-granting authority (Deephouse & Suchman, 2008; (Bitektine, 2011: 167), the media contribute to the formation of the public’s perceptions of organizations (Carroll & McCombs, 2003; Deephouse & Heugens, 2009). As such, they have a profound influence over the legitimacy of organizations. The media legitimate organizations by focusing public attention on issues or events associated with organizations, thereby increasing exposure of those organizations (McCombs, Llamas, Lopez-Escobar & Rey, 1997; Rogers et al., 1993). They also shape the way audiences interpret and evaluate information about organizations by framing descriptions of them in positive or negative terms (Golan & Wanta, 2001; McCombs et al., 1997). Media coverage affects investors’ impressions of newly public firms and hence their legitimacy (Pollock & Rindova, 2003).

### 2.3 A communicative approach to legitimation through media

In this dissertation I adopt a communicative approach to legitimation (Harmon et al, 2015) to examine legitimation as an ongoing social and communicative
process in which organizations, the media, and their collective audiences participate as ‘actors’ (i.e., ‘speakers’) (Hoefer & Green, 2016) and therefore as ‘sources of legitimacy’ (Deephouse & Suchman, 2008) conferring legitimacy on organizations and their activities in society. There is a growing body of research emphasizing the role of communication in legitimation processes (Harmon et al., 2015; Hardy, 2011; Lammers, 2011; Suchman, 1995; Suddaby, 2011; Zucker, 1977), with a particular focus on how communication (e.g., discursive and rhetorical) strategies of social actors shape the legitimacy of organizations (Elsbach, 1994; Green, 2004; Lamin & Zaheer, 2012; Lefsrud & Meyer, 2012; Phillips, Lawrence, & Hardy, 2004; Suddaby & Greenwood, 2005; Vaara & Tienari, 2008; Vaara et al., 2006; Van Leeuwen & Wodak, 1999). Scholars have argued that unless legitimacy is communicated, whether through one-on-one communication, group communication or en masse, such as through the media, it remains a hidden cognitive entity and as such it does not contribute much to the formation of an organization’s legitimacy. Bitektine (2011) argues that “constituents often take a proactive role in communicating their expectations, thereby providing the organization with guidance and giving it an opportunity to respond to their claims to achieve compliance” (2011: 158). Without the “outward expression of a mental attitude” (Grunig, 1979: 741), the legitimacy judgments of organizational audiences that are formed cognitively remain unknown to focal organizations as well as to other stakeholders who have the potential to affect the legitimacy of those organizations. Audiences’ cognitive perceptions of organizations that remain uncommunicated may be perceived by organizations as a threat to their legitimacy. In other words, how do organizations measure or gauge legitimacy to ensure their effectiveness and survival (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978: 194) if propriety assessments (Dornbusch & Scott, 1975; Johnson et al., 2006; Bitektine, 2011; Bitektine & Haack, 2015) of the organization’s audiences are not communicated, such as through the media? Indeed, “dissemination of judgments through discursive means plays a major role in the rise and fall of institutions and organizations (Maguire & Hardy, 2009; Suddaby & Greenwood, 2005)” (Bitektine, 2011: 164).

Bitektine’s (2011) enumerative definition of organizational legitimacy offers a significant contribution to a more nuanced understanding of the way legitimacy is formed and communicated at both the micro level of individual interaction and at macro levels of society. When an individual forms a perception of an organization, this perception may then lead the individual to form a judgment about the organization, which in turn may lead to a “behavioural response” (2011: 158), such as the communication of a legitimacy judgment to others. These individual judgments may be communicated to other individuals and groups of individuals (e.g. within organizations) or en masse through social media and traditional mainstream news media. Organizations interested in managing their legitimacy value the views of these individuals, who may also be conceived as the audiences who observe organizations and make legitimacy assessments of them (Deephouse & Suchman, 2008; Ruef & Scott, 1998).

Bitektine (2011) describes “media legitimacy” (e.g., Bansal & Clelland, 2004; Deephouse, 1996; Hybels, 1994; Lamertz & Baum, 1998; Pollock & Rindova,
2003) as “reflected in communications through printed media, TV, or radio broadcasts” (2011: 154). Organizations communicate judgments about the legitimacy of focal organizations through media accounts, ensuring their judgments collectively reach large audiences, who may then form their own perceptions of those organizations from these media accounts. Because these media reports reach a large quantity of people, legitimacy judgments conferred through the media can result in a great deal of impact on the legitimacy of organizations (Carroll & McCombs, 2003; Deephouse & Heugens, 2009).

These sources of legitimacy—that is, where legitimacy originates—are used by Suddaby, Bitektine and Haack (2017) to identify their three configurations of legitimacy. First, studies interested in legitimacy-as-property focus on legitimacy as a product of two primary actors: the focal organization (e.g., communicating favourable judgments about itself) and its audiences (e.g., forming favourable impressions of the organization). Second, the legitimacy-as-perception stream of research is more interested in an investigation of the role of individuals (constituting the audience of a focal organization) in the process of the social construction of legitimacy, drawing attention primarily to what happens at the individual, micro level. The third group—legitimacy-as-process—broadens its outlook to examine legitimacy as the product of the interaction of multiple actors (e.g., organizations and their audiences) operating primarily, but not exclusively, at more macro levels of analysis.

Although all three perspectives put forward by Suddaby, Bitektine and Haack (2017) imply legitimation as a communicative process, the legitimacy-as-property perspective tends to understand legitimation predominantly as a one-directional communicative process between an organization and its audiences and the legitimacy-as-process perspective understands legitimation as an ongoing multi-directional communicative process because social construction assumes interactions and reciprocal influences between organizations and their audiences constructing, negotiating and contesting legitimacy in public arenas. This research stream views legitimacy as emerging from negotiation and consensus between multiple organizations and audiences. The legitimacy-as-property and legitimacy-as-process perspectives’ focus on legitimation occurring at macro levels of society lend themselves to an examination of the media’s involvement in legitimation.

### 2.4 Actors in legitimation through media

Certain individuals and organizations are more credible and have more influence over these macro levels of legitimacy formation than others (Cameron, 2009; Hardy & Clegg, 1996) and are therefore considered influential sources of legitimacy. Any individual or organization that can influence society-wide opinion tends to have more standing and influence than others as a source of legitimacy. Meyer and Scott (1983: 201–2) refer to those “who have the capacity to mobilize and confront the organization”, classifying these sources into essentially two groups: (1) those who “have standing and license, derived from the organization’s legitimating account of itself”, and (2) those who have collective
authority over what is acceptable cultural theory (such as lawyers, accountants and doctors). Only certain actors have the standing and license to confer legitimacy (Meyer & Scott, 1983; Galaskiewicz, 1985; Baum & Oliver, 1991), such as opinion leaders (Pollock & Rindova, 2003), trade associations (Barnett, 2006; Lawrence, 1999; Rao, 2004), watchdog organizations (Rao, 1998), and government regulators (Baum & Oliver, 1991; Galaskiewicz, 1985; Meyer & Scott, 1983).

In legitimacy research the media also are identified as an influential source of legitimacy (Meyer & Scott, 1983; Deephouse & Suchman, 2008). However, a more accurate contention may be that the media primarily are a proxy source of legitimacy in which influential actors disseminate legitimacy judgments through media reports. For this reason, researchers measuring legitimacy using media texts sometimes use the tone of media reports as a “surrogate measure of an organization’s legitimacy with the general public (Deephouse, 1996)” (Bitektine, 2011: 155). Bitektine (2011) labels ‘media legitimacy’ (e.g., Bansal & Clelland, 2004; Deephouse, 1996; Hybels, 1994; Lamertz & Baum, 1998; Pollock & Rindova, 2003) as an audience-based type of legitimacy, contending that the media reflect legitimacy emanating from sources such as influential organizations.

Accordingly, the media may be conceptualized not only as a source of legitimacy but also as an enabler of other sources of legitimacy participating in legitimation in public arenas. Adopting a communicative approach to legitimation processes (Harmon et al., 2015), the media may be understood as an enabler of organizations and their audiences as ‘actors’ (i.e., ‘speakers’) participating in public processes in which legitimacy judgments about focal organizations and their activities are conveyed (i.e., sent) through media reports and that subsequent perceptions about these organizations and their activities are cognitively formed (i.e., received) by ‘legitimacy evaluators’ (Bitektine & Haack, 2015) or audiences consuming these media reports (Hoefer & Green, 2016). As such, the media enable legitimation participants to become influential sources of legitimacy.

Legitimation and delegitimation taking place in the arena of the news media is a competitive process, primarily because only a select few actors may participate in public debates over organizational legitimacy unfolding in the mainstream news media. From sociology and mass communication literature we understand that organizations and even individuals may attempt to gain “standing” in the media, which means gaining a voice in the media by persuading journalists to treat them as a credible media source (Gamson, 2004; Andrews & Caren, 2010). “Media source” is a status granted by journalists that gives organizations and individuals a greater voice in the media. Journalists grant this status to actors whose comments they value. Arguably, there are typically only a limited number of organizations and individuals with standing in the media: “From the standpoint of most journalists, the granting of standing is anything but arbitrary. Sources are selected, in this view, because they speak for serious players” (Gamson, 2004: 251). Media standing, therefore, is “contested terrain” (Gamson, 2004: 251) and many voices are excluded from media discussions.
In legitimation research we understand that organizations attempt to persuade audiences, through various rhetorical moves, to make certain assumptions about a focal organization or its activity. However, sociology and mass communication research shows that such processes become more complex when they involve the media, because audience persuasion through the media involves multiple organizations and organizational actors competing discursively to gain a media voice according to limitations of time, space and format in news production practices (Christians et al., 2009). The intertextuality of multiple media texts emanating from a multiplicity of competing voices, including those of journalists themselves, points to a complex system of news media production processes and practices constructing ongoing senses of legitimacy and illegitimacy around organizational phenomena. Moreover, because journalists and editors act as gatekeepers of media content, these media actors exercise a great deal of power in determining “what issues to raise, which perspectives to take, whom to give voice to, which voices to marginalize, and what to leave unsaid” (Vaara et al., 2006: 794).

Legitimation studies acknowledge that the media provide an important “battleground” (Bitektine, 2011) where delegitimating attacks on institutions and organizations are mounted and disputes around the social norms and regulations are played out (Ingram & Rao, 2004). Collectively, the news media is acknowledged as a legitimacy judgment validation institution that “provides some form of forum for debates over legitimacy and a mechanism for debate resolution” (Bitektine & Haack, 2015: 51). This judgment validation process by the media is “usually a competitive process” because the media are required to “process multiple and often conflicting legitimacy judgments of evaluators” (2015: 51). The media have their “own rules of competition and practices of contest resolution” (Bitektine & Haack, 2015: 52).

Vaara, Tienari and Laurila (2006) acknowledge the role of the media in the complex production, transmission and consumption processes that create senses of (il)legitimacy around specific organizational phenomena. Their study examines the media as “an important but still not very well-known legitimating arena for organizational phenomena” (2006: 789) and contend that organizational scholars have not provided a systematic view of the discursive practices and strategies employed to legitimate contemporary organizational phenomena in arenas such as the media (2006: 792). Discursive legitimation studies have shown how organizations and their representatives involved in legitimation can use the media as an arena for “discursive strategizing” (Vaara et al., 2006).

Despite this body of work, our knowledge in legitimation research of how the media influence the discursive means by which actors compete to participate in legitimation in public arenas is limited. For example, how media enable and constrain the discursive practices and strategies of actors engaged in legitimation remains unclear. We still do not know much in legitimation research of how organizations engage in struggles over access to mainstream news media channels to gain a media voice to legitimate or delegitimate focal organizations and their activities. Because the media are a central hub in society-wide legitimation and delegitimation processes, organizations compete to gain access to the media.
as a resource through which they can ‘speak’ to their constituents. Those organizations able to manipulate audiences’ perceptions of them through influencing the tone and content of media accounts have a powerful role to play in the (de)legitimation of organizations. Organizations able to influence media accounts about them stand to have a greater influence over their legitimacy.

However, not all actors wishing to confer or contest organizational legitimacy through the news media have equal standing and access to resources to influence media content. The extent of their routine access to the media and the level of control over what gets published or broadcast in media coverage differs from one actor to the next (Danielian & Page, 1994; Deephouse & Heugens, 2009). Some actors consistently exert more influence over the tone and quantity of media reporting than others. In the words of Deephouse and Heugens (2009), “the systematic unrepresentativeness of news reporting is tilted in favour of more influential stakeholders” (2009: 548).

### 2.5 Media roles linked to actors in legitimation

As noted in the introductory chapter, there has been an overwhelming tendency in organization and management studies to defer, often rather ambiguously, to the media’s dual roles: that is, media reflect judgments of organizational legitimacy conveyed by various actors and media affect audience perceptions of legitimacy (Fombrun & Shanley, 1990; Deephouse, 2000; Pollock & Rindova, 2003; Johnson et al., 2005; Scheiber, 2015). Although they are referred to as ‘roles’, they are generally used to describe what media do rather than what media are. Nevertheless, there has not been much theoretical or empirical attention paid in this stream of literature to identifying and defining media roles beyond these two general roles. One exception is Bednar et al.’s (2013) study of how media coverage influences strategic change. Their work contends three media roles or functions: (1) a ‘platform’ or ‘vehicle’ role in which organizations mobilize the media to disseminate their message to audiences, (2) a ‘reporting’ role in which the media have relatively more control over what gets published or broadcast and how reports are framed, and (3) an ‘investigator’ role in which the media actively seek out their own news content and are less responsive to external forces. However, these three roles are not the result of an extensive systematic review of media roles in any stream of literature.

Nevertheless, despite a lack of systematic identification and categorization of media roles in legitimacy research, three basic media roles emerge more or less independently in this literature. I next elaborate on these roles and identify actors empowered by media in each role to participate in legitimation in public arenas.

#### 2.5.1 Organizations mobilize media in information transmission role

Studies show that influential organizations (represented as elite institutional actors), such as multinational corporations and government institutions, are given the opportunity to express their views in the media more than others (Grafstrom & Windell, 2011: 231) because they have been granted a media voice and have
disproportionately large influence on evaluators’ perceptions of judgment validity. Likewise, the media also require access to these organizations. Because these organizations are positioned at the centre of social and political action, they can provide the media with information resources required to feed their core information mediation processes. In this mutual dependence relationship, the media rely to a disproportionate extent on these official and influential sources of information (Gans, 1980; Sigal, 1978). It is generally acknowledged that media accounts mostly convey legitimacy judgments of dominant social actors in “subject positions” with the “right to speak” (Mantere & Vaara, 2008; Maguire, Hardy & Lawrence, 2004; Phillips, Lawrence, & Hardy, 2004). Accordingly, ideology of elites tends to influence media content (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). These organizations, which tend to occupy positions that give them greater access to the media and legitimate reasons to enter into media discussions, may be identified as typically dominant actors in mainstream news media discussions (Grafstrom & Windell, 2011).

Journalists’ preferences for authoritative and influential sources tend to place many types of organizations, such as social movement organizations, at a significant disadvantage (Corbett, 1998a; Tanner, 2004). Because social movements typically struggle to convince media actors that they are “serious players”, they therefore have to fight to gain a voice in the media. Nevertheless, reporters do confer media standing to certain social movements when stories present those movements as having a legitimate moral voice or as being an authoritative expert (Andrews & Caren, 2010: 843). Social movement organizations are able to influence media accounts about organizations by occupying a position that “warrants voice” (Hardy, Palmer, & Phillips, 2000; Potter & Wetherell, 1987), such as by claiming to represent the audiences of particular news media. Hardy and Phillips (1998) refer to this characteristic as the discursive legitimacy of the actor. Examples include environmental groups such as Greenpeace “because they are understood to be speaking on behalf of the environment” (Hardy & Phillips, 1998: 219) as well as authors of consumer reports who are deemed to be neutral and independent (Rao, 1994). They speak on behalf of and for multiple constituents who have “consensually validated” them to do so (Taylor et al., 1996: 26).

Social movements are able to socially construct the (il)legitimacy of organizations through the media, albeit often in unconventional ways because of their underdog status in media discussions. Van Bommel and Spicer (2011) describe how incumbent elites face resistance from challenger movements seeking to question or challenge dominant ideology. Social movement organizations, for example, can engage in this antagonistic struggle through deploying discursive resources strategically (Van Bommel & Spicer, 2011), such as through the media. Social movement studies illustrate ways in which social movements gain a media voice in order to make certain claims through the media. For example, they turn to a repertoire of media tactics (Bakker et al., 2013; McDonnell & King, 2013; Walker et al., 2008) such as street protests and boycotts to gain media attention for their claims. Nevertheless, in most settings they may be identified as typically marginalized actors in mainstream news media discussions.
The information transmission (Lasswell, 1948; Wright, 1960, 1986; Pollock & Rindova, 2003) and information broker (Johnson et al., 2005) role of the media described in the introductory chapter is well established in many streams of literature, including legitimacy studies. This role is linked to Bednar et al.’s (2013) ‘platform’ or ‘vehicle’ role. Organizations able to gain a media voice to participate in legitimation processes mobilize media in this role, such as through well-crafted press statements, exclusive interviews with selected journalists, and press conferences. A communicative approach to legitimation (Hoefer & Green, 2016) is helpful to an understanding of how media in this role are an enabler of organizations attempting to discursively participate in legitimation in the public arena. In this role organizations act as senders communicating judgments about focal organizations to their audiences (as listeners or receivers) through the media in a predominantly one-directional flow of communication. Because of limitations of time, space and format in news production practices (Christians et al., 2009), only a select few organizations are able to gain a voice in the media in this role. Organizations mobilizing media in this role tend to be influential organizations (i.e., elite institutional actors) with a media voice. However, social movement organizations also are able to engage in legitimation processes in the media in this role through use of a repertoire of media tactics to gain a media voice.

2.5.2 Media performing participatory role empower audiences

Although the audiences of organizations (e.g. customers and suppliers) and the media (e.g. readers, viewers and listeners) tend to interact in news media discussions about the legitimacy of organizations and their activities, legitimation studies have largely ignored audiences as an ‘actor’ and hence as an active participant in legitimation through the media. Institutional theory has been critiqued for its “inattention to the audience responsible for conferring legitimacy” (Zuckerman, 1999: 1398), such as through the media. This aligns with a tendency in legitimacy-as-process research to marginalize the role of ‘audiences’ in legitimation. In these research streams, audiences are treated as spectators in passive roles, when instead in some contexts they may also be conceived as ‘actors’ with agency and the social skills to influence legitimation processes, sometimes in significant ways, especially when banded together as collective actors (Suddaby, Bitektine & Haack, 2017). Legitimacy research separating ‘actors’ (implicitly represented as senders in legitimacy-as-process research) from ‘audiences’ (implicitly represented as receivers in legitimacy-as-process research) in legitimation processes suggests a rather limited view of the social interactions that occur, often at multiple levels, in discursive processes of legitimacy conferral, rebuttal and consensus involving the media. I contend that in some contexts audiences may also be conceived as ‘actors’ participating in legitimation processes at macro levels of society, sometimes in significant ways, especially when banded together as collective actors (Suddaby, Bitektine & Haack, 2017). However, typically audiences are not given much of a voice in in news media discussions about the legitimacy of organizations through traditional genres of mainstream news media.
This dissertation examines how media performing a type of participatory role (Rheingold, 2008) empower a ‘pluralization of voices’ (Castello et al., 2013)—which may be represented as audiences of organizations and yet who typically are not given a voice in traditional mainstream news media debates over legitimacy—to become actors themselves with a media voice in legitimation processes played out in the media. Whereas influential organizations (elite institutional actors) are given routine access to mainstream news media and thus are able to gain a higher share of media voice, audiences of organizations typically do not receive a legitimate voice in mainstream news media debates. Hence, they face marginalization in mainstream news media discussions over organizational legitimacy.

Although not well defined in legitimacy studies, a participatory media role (Rheingold, 2008) has received extensive attention in sociology and mass communication studies. This role is linked to the empowerment and facilitation of organizational audiences as contributors to media discussion and content. Barros’ (2014) study of the role of new media in discursive legitimation notes that social media platforms offer more participatory discursive interaction between a plurality of social actors than traditional mainstream news media (2014: 1214). Through this role audiences may play a more active part, at least as periphery actors, in legitimation and delegitimation activities that may then contribute to shaping the legitimacy of organizations.

In their study of social media’s role in legitimation, Castello et al. (2013) refer to a pluralization of voices that "emerges in societal communication as more issues are discussed and more opinions are potentially heard" (2013: 685), typically through new media environments. New media, which encompasses online discussion forums hosted by mainstream news media, enable the voices of these audiences to become more audible in news media discussions, not so much in the traditional mainstream avenues but more so in their online environments. Nevertheless, interactive online media can empower news media audiences to gain a media voice to gain clout in legitimation and delegitimation processes affecting the legitimacy of organizations (Cova and Pace, 2006; Füller et al., 2009; Shankar et al., 2006).

The mainstream media’s social media platforms and online discussion forums enable and emphasize interaction, thus empowering media audiences to engage in discursive struggles over the legitimacy of organizations. After all, “[d]ialogue and participation is what social media is all about” (Baird & Parasnis, 2011). As a result, Castello et al. (2013) argue that new media have the technological potential to enable audiences to listen to, engage in, and exchange non-like-minded views (Scheufele & Nisbet, 2012). Social media is linked to the concept of ‘participatory media’ (Rheingold, 2008) and by extension to the idea of political, democratic participation (Carpentier, 2011). ‘Participation’, then, can refer to online interaction in general and is very much inclusive of the idea of discourse as both interaction and struggle.

Accordingly, this dissertation examines a participatory role of the media that entails the empowerment and facilitation of audiences as both actors (or ‘speakers’ rendering legitimacy judgments about organizations) and as audiences (or
‘listeners’ forming perceptions of organizations) (Hoefer & Green, 2016) participating discursively in legitimation processes carried out in the media. This media role is characterized by the blurring of sender-receiver positions in an omnidirectional flow of communication and is strongly linked to the empowerment of media audiences with a media voice in legitimation processes.

2.5.3 Media perform political actor role

Only a few legitimacy studies explicitly acknowledge the media as an actor in legitimation processes carried out in public arenas (e.g., Johnson et al., 2005; Deephouse & Heugens, 2009; Barros, 2014); these studies identify the media performing a political actor role and hence they are a more active participant in the legitimation of organizations and their activities (Pollock & Rindova, 2003; Hayward, Rindova & Pollock, 2004; Johnson et al., 2005). Bednar et al.’s (2013) ‘investigator’ role is essentially the same type of role. The political actor role of the media is gaining recognition in organization and management studies, and in legitimacy research specifically (e.g., Carter & Deephouse, 1999; Chen & Meindl, 1991; Deephouse, 2000; Pollock & Rindova, 2003; Deephouse & Heugens, 2009). While influential organizations typically are able to gain a media voice to participate in legitimation processes in the public through media performing an information transmission role, and audiences are able to gain a media voice to take part in legitimation processes in public arenas through media enacting a participatory role (albeit typically in the online versions of news media), I contend that media performing a political actor role are able to engage as autonomous actors in legitimation processes.

In their study of the media’s role in linking social issues to organizations, Deephouse and Heugens (2009) adopt this political actor perspective to show how media deliberately create linkages between dysfunctional situations in the form of social issues on the one hand and organizations that control resources for issue resolution on the other. Their view of the media as “an active force that independently affects social interaction and sense-making processes (Deephouse, 2000; Fombrun & Shanley, 1990; Pollock & Rindova, 2003)” (2009: 20) contrasts with the media’s information transmission role as a passive reflector of underlying societal processes.

Despite this work, we still know little about the media’s more calculated and actively-participating role in the discursive processes through which organizational legitimacy is socially contested and undermined by multiple actors, sometimes including the media as actors themselves. Barros (2014) contends that “previous studies have focused on the media as an arena for discursive struggle, but not as a main actor in the process of defending their own political interests”—sometimes also against other organizations (2014: 1213).

There is a perceived lack of recognition of this more active role of the media in legitimation. Deephouse and Heugens (2009) contend that one reason for this may be that in the main organization scholars do not view the media as organizations themselves “each with their own biases, beliefs, and interests” (2009: 550). Rather, many scholars continue to link the news media with their societal function as a neutral disseminator of information on behalf of organizations (an
information transmission role), which is considered one of the fundamental constituting pillars of democratic societies. Hence, in legitimacy studies there remains a (mis)conceptualization of the media as an unbiased and objective transmitter of the views of other actors.

2.6 Summary

Thus far there has been no systematic identification and categorization in legitimation research of the media’s various roles in legitimation processes. Further, legitimation studies have not explored how organizations are able to mobilize the media in their various roles in discursive legitimation processes. Nor have they explored how media through certain roles are able to empower and facilitate participation by organizational audiences in these processes. This dissertation contributes to elaboration of theory addressing this gap.

The aim of this dissertation is to explore both theoretically and empirically how the media perform their roles and how organizations, particularly, are able to mobilize the media in these roles in discursive processes in which the legitimacy of organizations and their activities are constructed, contested and negotiated. In this chapter I have conducted a review of organizational legitimacy research to elaborate what we know thus far about the news media’s participation in legitimation processes involving multiple sources of legitimacy—who constitute actors in legitimation through the media—such as organizations, the media themselves, and their audiences.

From this review of predominantly legitimacy studies, three basic media roles emerge, each linked to specific actors that engage discursively in legitimation at macro levels of society. A communicative approach to legitimation provides a helpful analytical lens through which to examine how each of these actors—organizations, the media, and their audiences—engage in legitimation processes in public arenas as senders and receivers. Moreover, the legitimacy-as-process perspective adopted in this dissertation understands legitimation as an ongoing multi-directional communicative process and views legitimacy as emerging from negotiation and consensus between multiple organizations, the media, and their audiences. A select few organizations with a media voice are able to mobilize media enacting an information transmission role to communicate legitimacy judgments about focal organizations to their audiences. Through this media role organizations typically are senders communicating judgments about focal organizations and their audiences are receivers who form perceptions of these focal organizations; this role implies a predominantly one-way communication flow. Although not well defined in legitimacy studies, a second media role takes shape in the form of a participatory role. Through media performing this role audiences are empowered with a media voice to communicate their judgments about organizations among each other and with the organizations being judged; as such, this role implies a multi-directional communication flow involving interactions and reciprocal influences among audience members and organizational actors. A third role of the media gaining some attention in legitimacy studies is a political actor role in legitimation processes enabling media
to communicate their own judgments to their audiences; this role implies a predominantly one-directional communication flow between the media as actor and their audiences.

Because of a lack of recognition, systematic identification and categorization of multiple roles of the media in legitimacy research, in the next chapter I draw on sociology and mass communication studies examining a range of social and political roles of media in society (Lasswell, 1948; Wright, 1960; McQuail, 2006; Christians et al., 2009) to identify and articulate four basic media roles of conduit, facilitator, mediator and political actor. The information transmission, participatory and political actor roles that have emerged in legitimacy research are synthesized into the categorization of these four roles. In this dissertation I tap into and extrapolate what we can learn from media theory in sociology and mass communication literature to contribute to media theory in legitimacy research.
To gain a better understanding of how (1) media organizations perform their roles and (2) organizations mobilize media in their various roles in discursive legitimation processes, I turn for inspiration to sociology and mass communication literature where theory on social and political roles of the media in society has received rigorous theoretical and empirical examination. I make use of a foundational theoretical framework of media roles from this literature to systematically develop, identify and theoretically elaborate the roles media play in the discursive processes through which organizations and their activities become (il)legitimate. To guide this inquiry, this chapter specifically addresses the first research question: What distinct roles do the media play in discursive processes of organizational legitimation?

I begin this chapter by reviewing key typologies of media functions in society in sociology and mass communication literature, beginning with early categorizations of media roles in the 1940s and 1950s. I follow up with identification of a pattern of categories of media roles that shows a shift from the earliest conceptualization of the information transmission role to a more recent conceptualization of the political role of the media. Extrapolating the essence of each role in these typologies enables me to synthesize each of these typologies into one integrative typology to show theoretical development towards four basic roles of the media in society. Finally, this resulting integrative typology serves as an analytical tool for a systematic literature review in chapter four in which I identify and define four media roles in legitimacy research.

Although the media’s influence over and contribution to organizational legitimacy has been a topic of theoretical attention in organizational and strategy research (Aldrich & Fiol, 1994; Loundsbury & Glynn, 2001), very few organization studies have drawn from sociology and mass communication literature in this area (exceptions include Chen & Meindl, 1991, Deephouse, 2000, and Pollock & Rindova, 2003). Sociology and mass communication literature offers a rich source of theory on the media’s various functions in society and the media’s effect on audiences. It examines topics such as the production and distribution of media content and the resulting effects of this on audiences (Ball-Rokeach & Cantor, 1986; Gans, 1979; Shoemaker & Reese, 1996; Smith, 1995). Research into the media’s influence on the public has its origins in public opinion studies (e.g. Lippmann, 1922) and propaganda studies (e.g. George, 1959; Lasswell, Leites & Associates, 1965). Agenda-setting theory initially proposed that the salience of certain issues rises in the public’s agenda as a result of media coverage.
of those issues (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Agenda-setting theory has also examined the media’s effects on attitudes and behaviours and on the social construction of reality (Gamson, Croteau, Hoynes & Sasson, 1992; Roberts, 1992; Smith, 1995).

However, the question remains: Does the media drive the public agenda or does public opinion shape the media agenda? To put it another way, does the media shape public knowledge and opinion about organizations or does the media reflect this? The assumption emanating from mass communication and adopted in much of organization and management literature is that media coverage records and influences public knowledge and opinion about organizations, issues and events. This perspective moves conceptualization of the media beyond just the transmission function to also acknowledge that the media are an active participant in the social construction process (Gamson et al., 1992; Smith, 1995). As stated in the introductory chapter, there is a tendency in organization and management studies to assume the media have dual roles in reflecting and shaping the opinion of the general public (Schramm, 1949; McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Fombrun & Shanley, 1990) and therefore the assessments stakeholders make about organizations.

For almost seventy years sociology and communication scholars have contributed to theory on the relationship between the media and society. Harold Lasswell (1948) offered one of the earliest typologies of the social functions of the media by proposing three basic media functions in society: surveillance of the environment, correlation of the various parts of society, and transmission of cultural heritage. The surveillance function describes the news media’s primary role of reporting the news and providing information about events and conditions in society and around the world. The correlation function essentially involves helping society make sense of and respond to events and information by selecting, evaluating and interpreting the news. The transmission function describes the media’s role of transmitting cultural heritage from one generation to the next. Sociologist Charles Wright (1960) later added entertainment as a fourth social function of the media. (See Figure 4 for a summary.)

Communication theorist Denis McQuail (2006) later refined and extended Lasswell’s and Wright’s typology to propose four media roles relating to society: information, correlation, continuity and mobilization. In the information role, the media provide information about events and conditions in society and around the world and can also indicate relations of power. In the correlation role, the media explain, interpret and comment on the meaning of events and information. In this role the media also provide support for established authority and norms, contribute to census building, and set orders of priority and by so doing signal the status of a topic. In the continuity role, the media express the dominant culture while recognizing subcultures and new cultural developments. In this role the media also forge and maintain commonality of values. In the mobilization role, the media campaign for social objectives in the sphere of politics, economic development, work and sometimes religion. In this role the
media are able to bring people into particular processes of change and development. The fifth role of entertainment suggests the media’s capacity to provide amusement, diversion and relaxation as well as reduce social tension.

Development of these typologies of media roles in society correlates somewhat with studies of journalism practices. In the 1970s Johnstone, Slawski and Bowman (1972) found that the idea of the media’s primary function as information disseminator that had been dominant among sociologists going back to the 1940s and 1950s continued to reflect journalists’ perceptions of their role in the 1970s. In Johnstone et al’s study, many journalists saw themselves as neutral reporters and therefore as channels of transmission, producing and disseminating information to the widest possible audiences as quickly as possible. During this time the studies of Paul Lazarsfeld and others at Columbia’s Bureau of Applied Social Research advocated this “media as channels” role (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996: 32).

On the other hand, the Johnstone study found that other journalists identified themselves more as participants in society, whose duty was to investigate government claims, provide analysis of complex societal problems, discuss national policy, and develop intellectual and cultural interests. Later Weaver and Wilhoit (1991) extended and replicated the Johnstone study, suggesting that the participant function be extended to include journalists as adversaries of government and business. They subsequently identified three journalistic role conceptions (1991: 120-122): interpretive, dissemination and adversary. The interpretive function correlates with the participant function proposed by Johnstone et al. (1972); the Johnstone study found that print journalists valued this interpretive role more than broadcast journalists. The dissemination function followed Johnstone et al.’s (1972) neutral channel of transmission function; disseminating information to the public quickly and concentrating on the widest audience. However, the adversary function was viewed by journalists as a relatively minor role; again, according to the Johnstone study, print journalists were the most likely to value this adversarial role.

More recently, in analyses of normative theories of the news media, mass communication scholars Christians et al. (2009) summarize three basic tasks of the media in a democratic society: (1) observing and informing, primarily as a service to the public; (2) participating in public life as an independent actor by way of critical comment, advice, advocacy and expression of opinion; and (3) providing a “channel, forum or platform for extramedia voices or sources to reach a self-chosen public” (2009: 116). This third overall task lumps media roles of ‘channel’ with ‘forum’ or ‘arena’ and relates to a participatory media role (Rheingold, 2008). In this dissertation I argue, however, that there is a clear distinction between the media as a channel and the media as a forum or arena. As a channel, information and opinion may be seen to flow more or less freely in a singular direction between senders and receivers, with senders represented by “a limited number of subject positions ... understood as meaningful, legitimate and powerful” (Hardy et al., 2005: 65). On the other hand, as a forum or arena the media are situated as a hub or platform in which there is possibility for an almost limitless multiplicity or plurality of social actors to participate in
ongoing and multi-directional—even omni-directional—contestation and negotiation of information and opinion.

In what follows, I examine a typology of normative media roles put forward by Christians, Glasser, McQuail, Nordenstreng and White (2009). This typology of four media roles offers a basis on which I later build a framework to make sense of how these four types of media roles may be interpreted in organizational legitimation processes. I choose to focus initially on Christians et al’s (2009) typology because it is one of the more recent interpretations of the media’s roles in society. It has the added value of taking into account, and building on, earlier theoretical frameworks of media roles in society. The five authors of this work, each of whom are scholars respected in their fields of media and communication studies, collectively make a comprehensive contribution to media theory in mass communication research. Because their work develops a more recent typology, it also takes into consideration changes in the way media operate today. Therefore, it offers a contemporary view of the media.

3.1 Typology of normative media roles in society

Christians et al. (2009) categorize these three typical media tasks into four broader normative media roles in society that reflect the wider question of media accountability and relationships of attachment, obligation and even subordination that affect how the media’s purposes are determined. Both the internal influences of owners and editorial practices and the external pressures emanating from beyond the newsroom are reflected in their theory of media roles. More specifically, their typology of four media roles considers external influences of the media’s intended audiences and the wider public; owners, clients and sponsors; other social institutions and organizations that depend on the media; as well as the state. In proposing their four media roles, Christians et al (2009) highlight the typical issues and dilemmas the media face when surrounded by conflicting requirements and value propositions in the operating environment.

Christians et al. (2009) differentiate these news media roles in terms of the intersection of two dimensions (see Figure 2): The vertical dimension highlights contrasts between the media role as “a passive but reliable mirror” (2009: 117) of information and events in society with that of an active participant in political and social life and on occasion as a “weapon in activists’ hands” (2009: 117). Along the horizontal dimension are contrasting roles of the media as open and neutral channels or as closed and intervening channels processing and shaping content for their audiences. Along this horizontal axis access varies between open media (i.e., those that do not apply much limiting criteria to selection of content for transmission or amplification) and closed media (i.e., those that allow somewhat limited access, although usually according to restrictive yet transparent criteria).
Within these two dimensions can be found four main types of news media in a democratic society. First, internally pluralist and secular media attempt to maximize their audience numbers and boost circulation in their identified market (not necessarily a mass market), partly by appealing to a wide range of political and social groups. Second, like internally pluralist and secular media, externally pluralist commercial media seek a high circulation while also adopting a particular ideological or political line to appeal to a likeminded audience. These two roles are similar in that they predominantly reflect more or less objectively on the events and information going on in society. Third, partisan media are usually noncommercial and small in scale (e.g. local or national) and dedicated to the interests and ideas of a particular political group. A fourth type of news media is the minority media of opinion and debate dedicated to the expression and exchange of new and diverse facts and opinions. Media in these last two roles take on more subjective reporting.

Christians et al (2009) make reference to the fact that their work focuses more on the roles the media should have in today’s democratic societies and less on the actual media practices formed both by external institutional and market forces as well as by internal journalistic practices and processes. In other words, theirs are normative theories that are “culturally bound constructs or paradigms rather than actually existing systems”, thus enabling them to offer “cognitive maps” for media professionals to follow (2009: viii). Christians et al (2009) also acknowledge that at the time of publication their typology of news media related largely to print media rather than broadcast news media that had not displayed the same range of differences as, for example, newspapers. A third acknowledgement they make relates to the modal type of ‘objective’ journalism (valued and practiced by media in the internally pluralist- secular and externally pluralist-commercial roles) in which media roles are more or less value free: “Professional journalism should not be biased toward any point of view or interest group and should aim to represent the social world, as far as possible, as it is.” (2009: 118) For this reason they argue that “objectivity is more an issue of good practice than an abstract ideal. From this perspective, it does not matter that perfect objectivity is not attainable.” (2009: 118)
Christians et al. (2009) contend that some media take on distinct roles more permanently whereas other media more freely adopt or shed various roles either simultaneously in the same setting or in different settings. They also apply to the term ‘role’ the dual aspects of empirical elements, comprising the tasks journalists actually carry out in practice, and evaluative dimensions, understood as the relative value of these roles and the purposes they serve in society.

Christians et al. (2009) link two versions of the one typology in Figure 3. At the top end of the vertical axis they link the idea of the media as a passive channel of information with that of the media as being influenced by strong institutional power. In other words, at this (top) end of the spectrum the media act as channels of information flow between elite institutional actors, such as the state, and their chosen publics (audiences). At the other (bottom) end, the media are less reflexive to these institutional actors and more responsive to the communicative needs of a plurality of audiences marginalized by elite institutional actors. These audiences include activists who may collude with the media, using the media as “weapons” in their discursive struggles with oppositions of power (2009: 117).

Figures 2 and 3 demonstrate, at one end (left) along the horizontal axis, links between the media as autonomous and open entities that apply very little limiting criteria to selection and editing of content for transmission or amplification. At the other (right) end, the media are more dependent on other actors, such as elite institutional actors and a plurality of audiences, and are more likely to intervene in the shaping and editing of content for their audiences. Between these axes Christians et al. (2009) condense the various roles of the media in a democratic society into four roles that, with the exception of the facilitative role, relate somewhat to the typologies of media roles advocated by Lasswell (1948), Wright (1960) and McQuail (2000; 2006): collaborative, monitorial, facilitative and radical.

Figure 3. Christians et al's (2009) typology of four media roles
3.1.1 Collaborative role

The collaborative role is positioned in the top right quadrant in Figures 2 and 3 because in this role the media are a relatively passive entity dependent on cooperation with the state, in the case of a shared national interest. The collaborative role refers to the media directly serving the prevailing foundations of power, such as the state, typically in situations where a new and developing nation requires media collaboration in the face of immature political institutions and scarce national resources. The media also find themselves in this role during society-wide crises or emergencies such as terrorism, war and health epidemics. Such collaboration with the state provides the media with a vital role as the “guardian of the flow of information” between organs of government and its citizens, thus positioning the media organization as a legitimate institutional actor itself serving the informational needs of citizens. Christians et al. (2009) acknowledge that this role is not very well represented in current literature on media roles, “largely because it goes against the libertarian and professional journalistic grain and expresses some truths that many would rather leave unsaid” (2009: 127).

3.1.2 Monitorial role

The monitorial role is positioned in the top left quadrant in Figures 2 and 3 because Christians et al. (2009) acknowledge that in this role the media allow an element of open access by offering some comment and interpretation as a part of their editorial service. However, this access is limited as much as possible to representations of reality and the provision of objective accounts. Although journalists in the monitorial role see themselves as somewhat neutral observers reporting objectively on phenomena in society, which is why this role is positioned towards the observer-mirror end of the vertical axis, the scope of this role is rather broad, ranging from the media as a “more or less passive channel of information” for institutional actors to a watchdog role “ostensibly on behalf of the public” (2009: 125). The problem Christians et al. have with placing this role closer to the neutral observer end of the vertical axis is that the media in the monitorial role tend to be relatively active participants in democratic societies. In warning the public about corporate or political deviance and exposing transgressions, for instance, the media in this monitorial role demonstrate a more active and subjective involvement in society.

Harold Lasswell’s (1948) surveillance role relates to this monitorial role through its focus on the process of observing the external environment in order to report any events, trends or threats that may impact on society. However, the term ‘surveillance’ is today somewhat outdated and inappropriate due to its negative connotation of hidden purposes of control, such as spying and electronic eavesdropping. For this reason, Christians et al. (2009) instead adopt the label ‘monitorial’ to relate the role to all aspects of the collection, processing and dissemination of information about current and recent events, as well as warnings about future developments.
### 3.1.3 Facilitative role

The introduction of the facilitative role is an aberration from the previous typologies of Lasswell (1948), Wright (1960) and McQuail (2000; 2006). Christians et al. (2009) admit that the facilitative role is not prominent in mass communication literature either, although it is implicit in functionalist theories of media and society. It draws on notions of the media as a fourth estate in democratic societies where debate and people’s decision-making is encouraged. This role also has strong links to public sphere theory, viewing the media’s function as a forum for public deliberation and the media’s purpose as promoting active citizenship through participation in public debate. Media in the facilitative role seek to provide a platform for constituents to express themselves.

Christians et al. (2009) posit that the facilitative role is both rooted in and promotes deliberative democracy. In deliberative politics, the media facilitate the process of negotiation over the social, political and cultural agenda. Deliberation facilitated by the media frames the democratic process as interactive dialogue in which citizens engage with one another. Social conflicts are considered an important component of democratic life and therefore citizens must negotiate these conflicts through reasoned public discourse involving the media in the facilitative role.

In this role the media are more reliant on a plurality of external audiences and are an active participant in society, advocating for “inclusiveness, pluralism and collective purpose” over individual rights and interests (2009: 126). For this reason, the facilitative role is placed in the bottom right quadrant in Figure 3 between media dependency and weak institutional power.

### 3.1.4 Radical role

The radical role is positioned towards the participant end of the vertical axis (in Figure 2) because media in this role focus on actively exposing social injustice and abuses of power, raising “popular consciousness of wrongdoing, inequality and the potential for change” (2009: 126). A media organization in this role “makes every effort to ensure that no injustice is ever tolerated” (2009: 179) and “seeks to help minorities articulate an alternative set of goals that represent the needs and just moral claims of all, especially the marginalized, the poor and the dispossessed” (2009: 179). In this role the media side “with those who are developing forms of resistance and advocacy against dominant power holders” (2009: 180). The media in this role tend to seek to redistribute social power from the privileged (typically few) to the underprivileged (typically many) and, hence, they are by definition partisan. They “support activist and avant-garde movements that try to liberate intellectually repressed or indoctrinated people, helping them to participate in the process of democratic governance” (2009: 180). The media in this radical role are “generally small-scale and in many different forms, that express an alternative vision to hegemonic policies, priorities and perspectives” (Downing, 2001: v).

The radical role “implies a persuasive dimension, with attempts to mobilize public opinion and public action toward the redistribution of social power”
In this role the media help their audiences to see avenues of action in order for them to take action for or against issues. The media in this oppositional role offer an alternative vision for their audiences.

Although both the radical and monitory roles are positioned towards the media autonomy end on the horizontal axis in Figure 3, the radical role is distinguishable from the occasional critical watchdog function found in the monitory role in that the radical role champions a systematic oppositional approach to the prevailing foundations of power according to its explicit goal of fundamental or radical change in society. This critical role can be found in a minority of the printed press in democratic societies alongside social or political movements. Christians et al. (2009) acknowledge that this advocacy role may clash with standards of journalistic professionalism advocating ideals of objectivity and neutrality.

3.2 Integrative typology of media roles in society

The four media roles in Christians et al.’s (2009) typology conform to a theoretically defined pattern in communication research of mainly four roles the media play in society. In a review of theory on media roles in communication research, Eilders (2002) offers a snapshot of the shift in conceptualization of media roles from the early information transmission role propagated by sociologists in the 1940s and 1950s to the more recent depiction of the role of the media in framing and agenda-setting. In mapping seminal studies relating to media roles in society, a pattern can be identified reflecting a transition from the earliest conceptualization of the information transmission role to the more recent identification of the political and radical role of the media.

Initially, early communication scholars focused their research efforts on the traditional information dissemination role of the media and the cognitive effects this has on individuals as media audiences. Later, communication scholars turned their attention to the relationship between the media and the attitudes and opinions of mass audiences, reintroducing public opinion as a relevant factor in communication research. A more recent focus on framing research illustrates the shift towards the persuasive and evaluative dimensions of mass communication, pointing to characteristics of the media’s more active roles in persuading audiences, such as in a political and radical role. Eilders (2002) identifies an increasingly systematic incorporation of persuasive and evaluative dimensions in mass communication scholarship directing attention to the media’s political positions and the ways these are communicated (2002: 26).

An integration of the key typologies of media roles in society introduced earlier (Lasswell, 1948; Wright, 1960, 1986; McQuail, 2000; Christians et al., 2009) indicates development in conceptualization of the main roles of the media in society and shows connections between related roles as they have evolved and drawn from each other over time. Accordingly, I extrapolate the key essences of each media role from these typologies and synthesize them, as shown in Figure 4 below, to show how scholarship in sociology and mass communication studies over the last seven decades has theoretically defined a pattern of mainly four
roles the media play in society. I acknowledge, however, that the relationships between some of these roles are not always clear and are therefore open to interpretation.

To begin with, it is necessary from the outset to acknowledge several perspectives and assumptions on which such an integrative typology may be based. I acknowledge that pertinent aspects, such as news media sub-genres, political affiliations and ideologies, journalistic ideals, actors that typically influence and supply media content, and types of media produce various possibilities and limitations in determining which media roles are taken up or discarded in various settings. Some of these aspects are discussed below.

I acknowledge that each role may be considered somewhat fluid and difficult to pigeonhole. In practice, news media may take on all the roles identified and theorized in this dissertation depending on the specific context in hand. Indeed, media organizations may adopt or shed one or more of these roles in the same setting or in different settings and at the same time or at different times. Hence, the media will always be more fluid and complex than any model can depict.

A second acknowledgement relates to both the temporality and permanency of media roles. Christians et. al. (2009) contend that some media take on distinct roles more permanently whereas other media more freely adopt or shed various roles either simultaneously in the same setting or in different settings. I extend the idea that media roles can change through time (Butler, 1995; Bennett, 1990; Hallin, 1986) to suggest that news media may transition between two or more roles at the same time or at different times (I refer to these as ‘transient roles’). Media adopting transient roles may be represented by, for example, a newspaper adopting a monitorial role to offer comment on organizational corruption while later shifting to a radical role to mobilize audiences to boycott the organization if the newspaper deems the issue is of vital importance to its core audience. Furthermore, I put forward the argument that media may predominantly adopt one role (i.e. an ‘established role’) while marginalizing other roles for an extended period of time. Media in an established role, for example, may be represented by alternative media outlets aligned with the radical role of the media, including radical media and social movement media.

In this dissertation I understand sub-genres as news categories or sections, such as ‘hard’ news, financial news, opinion and editorial, that are divisions within the broader news genre. Particular sub-genres are characterized by specific conventions regarding what can or should be said and how it should be said (e.g., Fairclough, 2003). An understanding in sub-genre analysis (Matthews & Brown, 2011) that sub-genre characteristics and conventions shape news content informs my interpretations. Indeed, discourse studies acknowledge that these conventions greatly affect the use of particular legitimation strategies in a given setting (Vaara & Tienari, 2008: 987, 988).

I contend, therefore, that sub-genres of news media and journalistic ideals related to these sub-genres produce various possibilities and constraints in determining which media roles are taken up and which are discarded in various settings. Some media sub-genres allow a plurality of participants to express opinions (e.g. the letters to the editor section and online discussion forums) while
other sub-genres limit opinion expression to a select group of elite actors given subject positions with the “right to speak” (Mantere & Vaara, 2008; Maguire, Hardy & Lawrence, 2004; Phillips, Lawrence & Hardy, 2004) through the media (e.g. the ‘hard’ news and financial news sections). Media sub-genres enabling anyone to express an opinion essentially include online discussion forums, radio talkback programs and letters to the editor. Sub-genres that restrict actors with voice to, for example, representatives of corporations, politicians and union leaders include general ‘hard’ news, international news, and business news. The opinion pages are mostly filled with commentary and interpretations provided by a limited number of experts aligned with elite institutional actors who are given subject positions to voice their comments and interpretations about issues.

Journalistic ideals represented in these sub-genres include participatory journalism (Singer, Hermida, Domingo, et al., 2011) (a journalistic ideal typical in the facilitative role) that welcomes contribution of media content from all audiences (audiences typical in the facilitative role), not just elite institutional actors (typical in the collaborative and monitorial roles), as well as the ideals of objectivity (Tuchman, 1972; Schudson, 1978; Olson, 1994) (typical in the collaborative and monitorial roles), investigative journalism (Doyle, 2006; Protess et al., 1992) (typical in the monitorial and radical roles), and advocacy for marginalized audiences in society (Janowitz, 1975) (typical in the radical role). Definitions of and distinctions between each of the media’s roles take these combinations of sub-genres and journalistic ideals into account.

3.2.1 Information Transmission role: Surveillance-Information-Collaborative

The media roles of ‘transmission’ and ‘surveillance’ (Lasswell, 1948; Wright, 1960, 1986), ‘continuity’ and ‘information’ (McQuail, 2000) from typologies in sociology and mass communication literature may all be synthesized into Christians et al.’s (2009) collaborative role. In this role the media cooperate with the prevailing foundations of power (e.g. elite sources of information about organizations) and perform their primary function of reporting the news more or less objectively. This role reflects the traditional perspective in communication, mass media and sociology scholarship of media essentially disseminating information as a “passive but reliable mirror” (Christians et al, 2009: 117) and a “more or less passive channel of information” for institutional actors (2009: 125). Although this role is based on the early information transmission role propagated by sociologists in the 1940s and 1950s, it is still relevant today as part of a framework enabling scholars to view the news media through a particular lens. Indeed, this disseminator role is one of the more widely accepted roles of the media across multiple streams of literature.

Christians et. al. (2009) link this role to the way in which some media serve as a channel of public communication for the state. It also aligns well with the depiction of media as a neutral, non-partisan and less edited communication channel serving to disseminate information on behalf of elite institutional actors. This also highlights the limited use of persuasive communication tactics in
this role and indicates a one-way flow of communication between typically elite institutional actors and their audiences.

**Typical media sub-genres and journalistic ideals**

The typical sub-genre for media in this role is the general news (e.g. the ‘hard’ news section of the press) because this is where journalistic ideals of objectivity and neutrality of reporting are typically represented (Tuchman, 1972; Schudson, 1978; Olson, 1994). An understanding in sub-genre analysis (Matthews & Brown, 2011) that sub-genre characteristics and conventions shape news content informs this interpretation. Editorial practices are reflected in Christians et al’s (2009) theory of media roles. The ‘gatekeeper’ model of journalism underscores the notion of professional journalism guided by the ideals of objectivity and public service (also see Emery, 1972; Johnstone, Slawski, & Bowman, 1972–1973).

**Typical actors supplying media content**

The media predominantly depend on external sources for news content; hence these sources gain a media voice. The actors who typically supply content to the media in this role are elite institutional actors. These influential actors, such as representatives of the state, corporations and trade unions, are privileged with media voice because they have the resources to supply media content or information subsidies (Gans, 1980). Because of limitations of time, space and format in news production practices (Christians et al., 2009), only a select few organizations are able to gain a voice in the media in this role. These elite sources of information are essential for news output (Manning, 2001; Strömbäck & Nord, 2006; Tuchman, 1978). Hence, in this mutual dependence relationship journalists are dependent on them to a significant extent, “reporting what these sources tell them” (Gans, 2003: 46). Accordingly, these actors may be considered as primary sources of information in this media role. Although not considered typical elite institutional actors, marginalized groups such as social movement activists are also able to gain a media voice in media in this role through use of a repertoire of media tactics (Bakker et al., 2013; McDonnell & King, 2013; Walker et al., 2008). Nevertheless, a state agenda (Deacon & Golding, 1991) and corporate agenda (Carroll, 2010; Carroll & McCombs, 2003) therefore dominates this role.

**Key attributes**

Based on these theoretical ideas I now distil the key dimensions of the roles of ‘transmission’ and ‘surveillance’ (Lasswell, 1948; Wright, 1960, 1986), ‘continuity’ and ‘information’ (McQuail, 2000), and ‘collaborative’ (Christians et al., 2009) from typologies in sociology and mass communication literature to offer the following key attributes of this essentially information transmission role.

**Descriptor:** Information transmission

**Typical actors** (supplying media content): elite institutional actors are typically given a media voice; marginalized groups may also gain a media voice in this role

**Agenda:** corporate or state agenda

**Persuasive discursive tactics of the media:** latent

**Typical media sub-genres:** business and general or ‘hard’ news
**Journalistic ideals:** objectivity and neutrality (according to the ‘gatekeeper’ model of journalism)  

**Descriptive role of media in legitimation:** as enabler of a mostly one-way information flow between typically a select few elite institutional actors and their audiences.

3.2.2 **Interpretation & commentary role: Correlation-Monitorial**

The roles of ‘correlation’ (Lasswell, 1948; Wright, 1960, 1986; McQuail, 2000; 2006) and ‘monitorial’ (Christians et al., 2009) from typologies in sociology and mass communication literature are similar and therefore may be synthesized into one role. In this role the media purposively seek, edit and disseminate commentary and interpretations from relatively objective sources of ‘expert’ information (Bonardi & Keim, 2005; Vaara & Monin, 2010) to help audiences gather and comprehend relevant information about complex issues.

This role of the media may at first seem to straddle two opposing tensions between a more-or-less passive channel of mostly one-way information flow between elite actors and their audiences (typical in the collaborative role) and a more active participant in society—warning the public about corporate or political deviance and exposing organizational transgressions (typical in the radical role). Further, as shown in Figure 4, the aspect of the monitorial role describing media as warning the public about corporate or political deviance and exposing transgressions relates somewhat to the radical role. Nevertheless, I contend that key essences of the ‘correlation’ role (Lasswell, 1948; Wright, 1960, 1986; McQuail, 2000) correspond more strongly to the ‘monitorial’ role (Christians et al., 2009) in this integrative typology.

Overall, my interpretation of this correlation-monitorial role is that the media in this role provide commentary and interpretation on issues and events sourced from elite actors as a sense-making service to audiences. Wright (1986) put forward the idea that the correlation role helps society make sense of and respond to events and information by offering interpretations of them. Likewise, McQuail (2000) proposed that the media in the correlation role should explain, interpret and comment on the meaning of events and information.

Christians et al. (2009) propose that since the sources of information in this role are mostly elite institutional actors, the media in this role largely reflect a corporate agenda (Carroll, 2010; Carroll & McCombs, 2003). This primary source of information for the media in this role suggests then that it is elite actors’ opinions and commentary that drives this role. The opinions of this social actor group of elite actors represented by ‘experts’ that are published in the news media, especially in the sub-genres of the opinion and commentary sections of the press, help set this role apart from other media roles.

**Persuasive discursive tactics of the media**

The media in this role display some traces of persuasive and evaluative dimensions (such as scrutinizing, challenging and questioning organizational practices and policies), but these are relatively latent in this role and emerge much more in the radical role where media (represented by journalists and editors) express their own strong opinions for the purpose of persuading audiences.
Typical media sub-genres and journalistic ideals

Typical sub-genres of the media in the correlation-monitorial role include those that offer commentary and opinion, such as editorials and columns guest-authored by ‘expert’ institutional actors (Lee & Carroll, 2011: 119). A key journalistic ideal represented in this role is journalistic commentary and editorial (Bruck 1989; Cottle 1995) offering interpretations of highly contested issues and events, thereby contributing to the media’s sense-making function in this role.

Typical actors supplying media content

In this role, media rely primarily on institutional actors considered ‘experts’, including those representing corporations, as elite sources of information essential for news output (Manning, 2001; Strömbäck & Nord, 2006; Tuchman, 1978), particularly in the opinion pages where their expert commentary guides audiences’ sense-making processes. These elite institutional actors collaborate with media in this role through contributing their own social construction of reality. Accordingly, a corporate agenda (Carroll, 2010; Carroll & McCombs, 2003) and state agenda (Deacon & Golding, 1991) dominate this role.

Key attributes

Based on these theoretical ideas I now distil the key dimensions of the roles of ‘correlation’ (Lasswell, 1948; Wright, 1960, 1986; McQuail, 2000) and ‘monitorial’ (Christians et al., 2009) to offer the following key attributes of this essentially commentary and interpretation role.

**Descriptor:** Commentary and interpretation

**Typical actors** (supplying media content): experts representing elite institutional actors (e.g., economists, academics and analysts) are typically given a media voice

**Agenda:** primarily a corporate and state agenda

**Persuasive discursive tactics of the media:** somewhat latent (although traces of ‘radical’ role attributes emerge in this role)

**Typical media sub-genres:** editorials and columns

**Journalistic ideals:** journalistic commentary and editorial offering expert interpretations of highly contested issues and events.

**Descriptive role:** as enabler of experts (representing elite institutional actors) conferring commentary and interpretation as a sense-making service.

3.2.3 Participation role: Facilitative

The facilitative role (Christians et al., 2009) highlights the way the media enable a forum for public discussion of diverse, often conflicting ideas. To Christians et al. (2009), the media in this role are less reflexive to institutional actors and more responsive to the communicative needs of a plurality of audiences marginalized by elite institutional actors. The media in the facilitative role seek to provide a forum for everyday constituents or “citizens” to express themselves through interactive dialogue with one another: “In the facilitative role the media are more reliant on a plurality of external audiences” (2009: 126). Christians et al’s (2009) depiction of the ‘facilitative’ role is of the media championing opin-
ion and debate dedicated to pluralistic expression and exchange of diverse opinions. As a forum for public deliberation, the media in this role are strongly linked to public sphere theory and deliberative democracy theory.

**Typical media sub-genres and journalistic ideals**

Those sub-genres enabling anyone to express an opinion essentially include online discussion forums, radio talkback programs and letters to the editor. The journalistic ideal represented in this media role is participatory journalism that welcomes contribution of media content from all constituents, not just elite institutional actors. An understanding that sub-genre characteristics shape news content informs this interpretation.

**Key attributes**

Based on these theoretical ideas I now distil the key dimensions of the ‘facilitative’ role from Christians et al.’s (2009) typology to offer the following key attributes of this essentially participative role.

- **Descriptor:** Participation
- **Typical actors** (supplying media content): audiences of organizations who also represent media audiences
- **Agenda:** public
- **Persuasive discursive tactics of the media:** somewhat latent
- **Typical media sub-genres:** online discussion forums, letters to the editor, talkback radio
- **Journalistic ideal:** participatory journalism.
- **Descriptive role of media:** as enabler of a flow of information (e.g., news, commentary and opinion) from and between audiences.

### 3.2.4 Mobilization role: Mobilization-Radical

The roles of ‘mobilization’ (McQuail, 2000) and ‘radical’ (Christians et al., 2009) from typologies in sociology and mass communication literature are similar and therefore may be synthesized into one role in this integrative typology of four media roles in society. According to Christians et al’s (2009) depiction of the ‘radical’ role, the media in this role focus on actively exposing social injustice and abuses of power, raising “popular consciousness of wrongdoing, inequality and the potential for change” (2009: 126). In this role the media are an advocate for certain causes, issues and marginalized groups.

**Identification of mobilization-radical role in political communication and media studies**

Political communication literature also has much to say about this role, pointing to media “as political actors with genuine interests and goals trying to find resonance for their opinions in the audience and the political system” (Eilders, 2002: 26). According to Eilders (2002), the media take an active role in the political process by “selecting and structuring information, interpreting and evaluating the stream of events continuously taking place and supporting or rejecting particular policy options (Page, 1996b)” (2002: 26).
Political communication scholars examine the potential of newspaper campaigns to facilitate the political engagement of media audiences through the politics of protest (Birks, 2011; Matthews & Brown, 2011). These campaigns embody newspapers’ most emphatic claims to speak for a plurality of audiences, and as such are generally regarded as populist (Conboy, 2002; Aldridge, 2003). Journalists and journalism scholars define newspaper campaigns rather broadly, from a series of articles explicitly referring to a campaign, to discursive mobilization of audiences towards involvement in expressing support for a campaign (Birks, 2011: 130). In common with the practice of investigative journalism, newspaper campaigns can be characterized by two criteria leading to public justification for a campaign: first, wrongdoing by individuals, and second, deviant behaviour by organizations unjustly impacting individuals (Birks, 2011:132). In her analysis of seven Scottish newspaper campaigns between 2000 and 2005, Birks (2011) noted that journalists did not view their job as essentially to inform voters, but rather to effect immediate change on the basis that they were mediating popular demand from the public. Findings from Birks’ (2011) study show that newspapers were motivated to lead various protest activities, attracting significant support from readers in the form of a petition (the Evening Times), a protest march (the Daily Record drugs campaign) and letters to the editor (The Herald) (Birks, 2011: 141). Political protests, such as those led by the media, have become a legitimate form of public expression in recent years (Cottle, 2008: 857).

**Persuasive discursive tactics**

One of Wright’s (1986) definitions of the ‘correlation’ role, which in this integrative typology of media roles in society aligns with a characteristic unique to the mobilization-radical role, is of the media “persuading audiences through purposive communication”. Similarly, Christians et al (2009) describe their ‘radical’ role as implying “a persuasive dimension, with attempts to mobilize public opinion and public action toward the redistribution of social power” (2009: 181). In this role the media help their audiences to see avenues of action in order for them to take action for or against issues. They use purposive communication to frame issues, practices and actors.

**A voice for marginalized groups**

Christians et. al. (2009) describe the radical role of media as giving institutional outsiders a greater voice with the goal of helping “minorities articulate an alternative set of goals that represent the needs and just moral claims of all, especially the marginalized, the poor and the dispossessed” (2009: 179). In this role the media aim “to ensure that no injustice is ever tolerated” (2009: 179). Media in this role are partisan, siding “with those who are developing forms of resistance and advocacy against dominant power holders” (2009: 180) and, as such, they tend to seek to redistribute social power from the privileged (typically few) to the underprivileged (typically many). In this role the media are a “weapon” in activists’ hands (2009: 117). They “support activist and avant-garde movements that try to liberate intellectually repressed or indoctrinated people, helping them to participate in the process of democratic governance” (2009: 180).
**Typical actors supplying media content**

Unlike the other three roles, media in this role rely to a lesser degree on the supply of content from other actors. The media themselves are a primary source of content in this role because they actively convey their own opinions. However, content collaboration with marginalized groups in society is a central feature of this role. Although in this role a media organization essentially acts autonomously as the lead actor in discursively mobilizing audiences, other actors, such as activists, may collude—for example, through content sharing—with a media organization if their goals are aligned.

**Typical media sub-genres and journalistic ideals**

A typical journalistic ideal applicable to this role is adversarial reporting (Glasser & Ettema, 1989; Olson, 1994). Watchdog journalism (Protess et al., 1992) and investigative journalism (Doyle, 2006; Protess et al., 1992) are also typical in this role. Investigative journalism enables media to proactively uncover and reveal organizational misbehaviour. Finally, advocacy journalism (Janowitz, 1975) assigns journalists the role of participants who “speak on behalf” of groups who typically are denied “powerful spokesmen” (1975: 619) in the media. According to advocacy journalism, journalists are motivated by a desire to redress power imbalances in society and to promote perspectives that are typically under or misrepresented in the media.

**Key attributes**

Based on these theoretical ideas I now distil the key dimensions of the roles of ‘mobilization’ (McQuail, 2000; 2006) and ‘radical’ (Christians et al., 2009) to offer the following key attributes of this essentially mobilization role.

**Descriptor:** Mobilization

**Typical actors (supplying media content):** media themselves; however, marginalized groups such as social movement organizations typically are also given a media voice in this role

**Agenda:** primarily a media agenda with a minor emphasis on the public agenda represented by marginalized groups

**Persuasive discursive tactics:** high

**Typical media sub-genres:** all

**Journalistic ideals:** investigative journalism, adversarial reporting, advocacy journalism and watchdog journalism.

**Descriptive role:** as actor purposively engaged in mobilizing audiences towards some action.

So far I have distilled theoretical ideas from a synthesis of typologies of media roles in society in sociology and mass communication literature. The relationship between media roles in these typologies is shown in Figure 4 (below). Collectively these typologies offer a foundational theoretical framework from which I identify, through a systematic literature review of legitimacy studies conducted in the next chapter, four roles of the media in legitimacy research. This systematic literature review contributes to a theoretically-refined framework of four media roles in legitimation.
Figure 4. Synthesis of typologies of media roles in society
4. MEDIA ROLES IN LEGITIMATION

4.1 Review of media roles in legitimacy studies

In what follows I make use of the previous chapter’s foundational framework of media roles in the field of sociology and mass communication as an analytical framework to conduct a systematic literature review to identify and define media roles in legitimacy studies. My review is guided by the following questions:

What media roles are identified in legitimacy research?
How do legitimacy scholars articulate and define media roles?

I have four aims in this systematic review. First, through a citations search process, I aim to identify those studies that have something interesting to say about the media’s role—or indeed a range of media roles—in legitimation processes. I identify the most significant studies contributing to this research topic by searching for the most cited studies. I also search through the references of more recent studies. My second aim is to try to identify each of the media’s four roles (identified in the previous chapter) in these studies. Third, I seek to find what these studies say about how the media performing each role become involved in and contribute to legitimation processes in various contexts of application. Finally, I seek to summarize what has been said so far about roles of the media in legitimation processes to contribute to a refinement of theory explaining how media perform their roles in legitimation processes.

Review methods

I used three complimentary literature retrieval procedures to identify a large quantity of high-quality studies that offer a significant contribution to our understanding in organization and management literature of how the media participate in and shape legitimation processes.

To begin with, I conducted a manual search in Google Scholar for studies citing eleven key studies (Dowling & Pfeffer, 1975; Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Rao 1994; Baum & Powell, 1995; Deephouse 1996; Lamertz & Baum, 1998; Deephouse, 2000; Mazza & Alvarez, 2000; Pollock & Rindova, 2003; Deephouse & Heugens, 2009; Bitektine, 2011) that have made a significant contribution to our understanding in organization and management literature of how the media influence organizational phenomena, such as reputation, sense-making, legitimacy and/or legitimation. I identified these eleven seminal papers through a quick reading of the most highly cited papers that report cause and
effect relationships between media and legitimacy. I limited my search to studies published in 27 top-tier organization and management journals which I chose because of their high impact factor and because they encompass the field of organization and management studies. (A list of these journals can be found in the Appendices.) Accordingly, studies published in lower-tier journals were immediately excluded from the search, with the exception of a few studies that I determined could potentially make a solid contribution to my study (e.g., Vaara, 2014, in *Discourse & Society*). To ensure that these studies may have something important to say about the media’s involvement in organizational phenomena, I then conducted a manual keyword search in Google Scholar (using the keywords “media” or “news” or “press” or “newspapers” alongside the author’s name/s and publication date of each study). This resulted in a database of 7,067 studies. To further refine my data set to those theoretical, conceptual or empirical studies that would make a contribution to my review questions (i.e., those studies contributing to our understanding of the media’s role or roles in organizational legitimation processes), I then conducted a keyword search (using the keywords “media” and “legitimacy”) of the title, abstract and keywords list of these studies. This narrowed my database to 149 studies. Next, I undertook a keyword search (using the keywords “media”, “press”, “news”, “newspapers”, “media roles”, “legitimacy” and “legitimation”) of the full text of these studies to further refine their relevance to my review. In all, this forward-tracing process yielded a database of 78 studies focused on the media’s roles in legitimation processes.

Second, in order to minimise the odds of missing a useful study, I backward-traced references reported in these 78 studies to identify other studies not identified in the initial Google Scholar search. Third, I undertook a manual keyword search of the databases of 27 top-tier journals. I used the following keywords: (i) “media”, “news”, “newspapers”, “press”, “information intermediary”, “information intermediary” and (ii) “legitimacy”, “legitimization”, and “legitimation”. This process revealed a number of studies not identified in the initial Google Scholar search.

Following existing systematic reviews, two inclusion criteria were established as guidelines for selecting and evaluating the studies for potential inclusion (e.g., Jalonen, 2012). More specifically, to be included in the review a study had to:

- Be a theoretical, conceptual or empirical study with something to say about the media’s role in organizational life and more specifically in legitimation processes. By referring to studies that research the media’s role in contributing to organizational legitimacy, I wish to clarify that studies merely mentioning the words “media” and “role” without elaborating on these were not included.

- Include the keywords “media” (or related terms such as “the press”, “newspapers” and “journalists”) and “legitimacy” in its title, abstract, keywords list or introduction.

Although I initially identified the following studies in my data set of seminal studies because they were highly cited by legitimacy scholars with something to say about the media, they were later excluded for the following reasons:
Hynds, (1989, 1994): This study was published in *Journalism Quarterly*, however my selection of top-tier journals for this search did not include journals in the field of journalism.

Weick (1995): This study contained only a minor focus on media and no focus on legitimacy at all. (Its major focus was on sense-making.)

Bansal & Clelland (2004): This study predominantly focused on the media as a source of data for empirical analysis.

In this review I adopted two approaches to identify authors’ treatment of the media in their studies. First, when authors used media texts as data in their empirical study, they explained why media texts were chosen in their empirical analysis of phenomenon. In doing so, they indicated something about their perspective of the media and the role the media played in the context under study. In this way I was able to gain an (explicit or implicit) understanding of their interpretation of the media’s roles in society more generally or more specifically in legitimation processes, whether their study treated the media primarily as a source of legitimacy or as an indicator of legitimation, and whether their study elaborated on the ways in which the media influence the legitimacy of organizations and their activities. Second, I was also able to interpret authors’ treatment of the media in those studies that explicitly focused on the media in the theoretical discussion. For example, in this way I was able to identify whether scholars treated the media as an important stakeholder in legitimation processes or a more neutral arena where legitimation takes place between actors in certain settings.

The findings from this review are discussed below. Based on these findings, I then refine the four core media roles to better reflect the unique characteristics of media roles in a legitimation context. This enables theoretical refinement of a typology of four media roles in legitimation.

### 4.1.1 Information Transmission role: Collaborative

To assist in the extraction of relevant information from each study in legitimacy research in order to identify this essentially information transmission role, I drew on the key attributes of this role developed in the previous chapter (see 3.3.1 Information transmission role: Surveillance-Information-Collaborative) as an analytical tool for the systematic literature review. As such, I essentially looked for interpretations in legitimation studies of organizations represented as elite institutional actors having a largely unedited voice in the media. In other words, I looked for representations of the media as enabler of (il)legitimacy con-feral by elite institutional actors, although I acknowledge that marginalized groups may also gain a media voice in this role. Hence, I looked for interpretations of the media as a channel for the (de)legitimation activities of a select few influential organizations and marginalized groups given a media voice. Not surprisingly, I found numerous examples of the media in this role in legitimacy studies. Table 1 (below) shows a number of key descriptions of the media in this role identified in legitimation studies between 1992 and 2015.
Having identified the media in this role in legitimacy research through a systematic literature review, I now describe this role in the context of legitimation. The media in this information transmission role (Pollock & Rindova, 2003) are passive participants in legitimation processes, simply “purveyors of news and information” (Rindova et al., 2006: 56) disseminating the arguments of managers and stakeholders (Joutsenvirta 2013; Finch et al., 2015) and “responding to the signals being sent by entrepreneurs, state and local actors and government regulators” (Deeds et al., 2004: 31). Legitimacy research primarily identifies this role as dominated by the voices of a few elite actors who have the resources and institutional power to dominate and marginalize other actors’ voices. Accordingly, the media act as “a conduit of institutional pressure” (Bednar, 2012: 132), such as from elite institutional actors.

Although not considered typical elite institutional actors, marginalized groups such as social movement activists are also able to gain a media voice in this role through use of a repertoire of media tactics (Bakker et al., 2013; McDonnell & King, 2013; Walker et al., 2008). Findings from the systematic literature review indicate that social movement scholars who refer to the role of the media in legitimation processes display tendencies towards viewing the media as a channel or conduit through which social movement activists disseminate their claims (King, 2008). For example, King (2008) describes how the media can be used as “conduits whereby activists can transmit negative images of the target firm and challenge its legitimacy” (2008: 397). Likewise, Elsbach and Sutton (1992) show how social movement organizations use the media as “primary avenues” to communicate with external audiences and, as a result, to gain legitimacy (1992: 708). Through substantive and symbolic management, the media can be used by activists to influence boycotts (Driscoll, 2006) and transmit judgments of an organization’s illegitimacy (King, 2008). Social movements and other organizations use the news media as “…key disseminators of social, economic, and political information…” (Deephouse & Heugens, 2009: 546) to manipulate public perceptions of corporations (King & Soule, 2007), influence corporate governance practices (Bednar 2012: 132), and communicate with external audiences to gain legitimacy (Elsbach & Sutton, 1992) and restore legitimacy (Pfarrer et al., 2008).
Table 1. Key descriptions of conduit role

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Typical context of application</th>
<th>Key description</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elsbach &amp; Sutton, 1992: 708</td>
<td>Social movement organizations use the media as “primary avenues” to communicate with external audiences and thus to shape legitimacy</td>
<td>“primary avenues through which … social movement organizations communicated to external audiences…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baum &amp; Powell, 1995: 531</td>
<td>Because the media diffuse information about organizations, they are therefore a source of legitimacy for organizations and a useful measure of legitimation for scholars</td>
<td>“diffusing knowledge about” organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mazza &amp; Alvarez, 2000: 582</td>
<td>Through the process of diffusing knowledge of HRM practices, the business press legitimates these practices</td>
<td>“…an autonomous channel of production and diffusion of knowledge…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vaara &amp; Tienari, 2002</td>
<td>Through the process of news dissemination, the media play an important role in the discursive construction of mergers and acquisitions in the media</td>
<td>Media have “played an important role in dissemination of news”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pollock &amp; Rindova, 2003</td>
<td>Through the process of transmitting information about organizations, the media affect investors’ impressions and therefore the legitimacy of newly public firms in the market for initial public offerings (IPO)</td>
<td>“the information transmission role of the media”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deeds et al., 2004: 31</td>
<td>Organizations (entrepreneurs, state and local actors and government regulators) use the media by sending signals that influence media reports and accounts that influence legitimacy (evaluations of ventures)</td>
<td>“…the media do not appear to have been driving the legitimation … but rather responding to the signals being sent by entrepreneurs, state and local actors and government regulators.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rindova et al., 2006: 56</td>
<td>As “purveyors of news and information”, the media can be used by organizations (who proactively seek to manage impressions about themselves) to construct firm celebrity</td>
<td>“…fulfilling their role as purveyors of news and information…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>King, 2008: 397</td>
<td>The media can be used as conduits through which activists transmit grievances and negative images of a target firm to challenge its legitimacy</td>
<td>“…media accounts of boycotts … serve as … conduits whereby activists can transmit negative images of the target firm and challenge its legitimacy.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pfarrer et al., 2008: 732</td>
<td>The media is an elite stakeholder that can be used by organizations to restore legitimacy</td>
<td>“…print and TV media outlets disseminated information to the organization’s other stakeholders…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deephouse &amp; Heugens, 2009: 546</td>
<td>The professional news media are a special type of stakeholder that can be used by organizations to distribute information about companies and social issues</td>
<td>“…a special type of stakeholder focusing on the collection and distribution of information about companies and social issues…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bednar, 2012: 132</td>
<td>As “a conduit of institutional pressure”, the media can be used by organizations to influence corporate governance practices</td>
<td>“…the media may act as a conduit of institutional pressure”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finch et al., 2015: 269</td>
<td>The media are passive participants in legitimacy struggles, simply transmitting information provided by stakeholders</td>
<td>“The media … play an important role by monitoring other social actors and reporting information provided by stakeholders…”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.1.2 Interpretation and commentary role: Monitorial

To assist in the extraction of relevant information from each study in legitimacy research in order to identify this essentially commentary and interpretation role in legitimation processes and to refine this role to better reflect the characteristics of this role in a legitimation context, I made use of the key attributes of each role developed in the previous chapter (see 3.3.2 Interpretation and commentary role: Correlation-Monitorial) as an analytical tool for the systematic literature review. As such, I looked for interpretations in legitimacy studies of the
media as a sense-maker mediating legitimacy struggles through selectively disseminating interpretations and commentary of a select few elite actors as ‘experts’.

I found a few examples of the media in this role in legitimacy studies, although not nearly as many as the collaborative role. **Table 2** (below) shows a few key descriptions of media in a monitorial role from legitimacy research between 1998 and 2015. Having identified media in this role in legitimacy research through a systematic literature review, I now describe aspects of the media in this role in the context of legitimation. The media’s sense-making function comes to the fore in this role. When a media organization disseminates information and opinions that “guide sociopolitical legitimacy judgments of the general public” (Bitektine, 2011: 155), it “acts as a negotiator and creator of meaning (Abrahamson, 1996; Scott, 1995)” (Lamertz & Baum, 1998: 101), thus producing “sense-making activity” (1998: 93). The media are sense-makers through actively participating in “developing a meaningful framework for understanding complex phenomena…” (Hellgren et al., 2002). Bitektine and Haack (2015) describe the process in which judgments are aggregated and communicated by media as macro-level judgment validation institutions. In doing so, the media provide a sense-making service by processing “multiple and often conflicting legitimacy judgments of evaluators” (2015: 51) and then selecting and codifying in written texts the most ‘appropriate’ judgment, thereby guiding “evaluators’ future judgments and behaviors” as well as providing “a mechanism for debate resolution” (2015: 52).

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bitektine, 2011: 155 &amp; 167</td>
<td>The media provide a sense-making service by publishing information and opinions that guide legitimacy judgments</td>
<td>“...mass media provide information and opinions that guide sociopolitical legitimacy judgments of the general public...”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bitektine &amp; Haack, 2015: 51 &amp; 52</td>
<td>As judgment validation institutions, the media provide a sense-making service by processing “multiple and often conflicting” legitimacy judgments of evaluators and selecting and codifying the most ‘appropriate’ judgments, thereby guiding “evaluators’ future judgments and behaviors”</td>
<td>“…these judgment validation institutions provide … a mechanism for debate resolution” &amp; “They process multiple and often conflicting legitimacy judgments of evaluators, select and codify in written texts the most ‘appropriate’ judgment, and, by communicating it back to evaluators, provide them with an important validity cue that guides evaluators’ future judgments and behaviors.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.1.3 **Participation role: Facilitative**

To assist in the extraction of relevant information from each study in legitimacy research in order to identify this essentially participative forum role, I drew on the key attributes of this role developed in the previous chapter (see 3.3.3 Par-
ticipation role: Facilitative) as an analytical tool for the systematic literature re-
view. As such, I looked for interpretations in legitimacy studies of the media as enabler of (il)legitimacy conferral by the audiences of organizations who also constitute media audiences. Hence, I looked for interpretations of the media as a somewhat neutral arena, forum or site of discursive contestation or struggle (e.g. over legitimacy) between a multiplicity of audiences not normally given a media voice in the general or 'hard' news, business news, features or commentary sub-genres of the mainstream news media.

From an initial review of legitimacy studies, I identified the media in this role as relatively neutral participants facilitating discursive negotiation over organizational legitimacy (Hybels, 1995). As can be seen in Table 3 below, there are many references in legitimacy studies between 1995 and 2015 to the media as a public arena where legitimacy struggles occur, where legitimacy is discursively constructed through negotiation and contestation between multiple actors (Vaara & Tienari, 2008; Vaara et al., 2006), providing “some form of forum for debates over legitimacy” (Bitkentine & Haack, 2015: 51). In this way the media provide an important “battleground” where delegitimating attacks on organizations take place (Bitkentine, 2011), such as from marginalized actors who demand participation in a system that prefers insider participation (Maragia, 2002). As a judgment validation institution, the media provide “some form of forum for debates over legitimacy” (Bitkentine & Haack, 2015: 51).

Table 3. Key descriptions of facilitator role

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Typical context of application</th>
<th>Key description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hybels, 1995: 244</td>
<td>The media are a facilitator of actors’ discursive negotiation over organizational legitimacy.</td>
<td>“The media provide an arena for the negotiation of organizational legitimacy through discourse...”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mazza &amp; Alvarez, 2000: 567</td>
<td>The legitimacy of HRM practices is “produced” in the media arena.</td>
<td>“…the popular press is the arena where the legitimacy of management ideas and practices is produced.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sine et al., 2005: 210</td>
<td>The media is a facilitator for actors’ social, institutional and ideological struggles over the construction of social reality.</td>
<td>“Media are a site on which various social groups, institutions, and ideologies struggle over the definition and construction of social reality” (Gurevich and Levy, 1985: 19).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vaara et al., 2006: 789</td>
<td>The media is a “legitimating arena” where discursive legitimacy strategies are used by numerous actors in a legitimacy struggle over a merger to make sense of global industrial restructuring.</td>
<td>“We focus on the media as an important but still not very well-known legitimating arena for organizational phenomena.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vaara &amp; Monin, 2010: 5</td>
<td>The media is an arena where actors use discursive strategies in a legitimacy struggle over a merger to argue over the legitimacy or illegitimacy of specific ideas or plans (Tienari et al. 2003).</td>
<td>“…actors involved can also use the media as an arena for ‘discursive strategizing,’ that is, for arguing over the legitimacy or illegitimacy of specific ideas or plans (Tienari et al. 2003).”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bitkentine, 2011: 155</td>
<td>The media facilitates a ‘battleground’ where actors mount delegitimating attacks on institutions and organizations.</td>
<td>“[media] ... provide an important ‘battleground’ where delegitimating attacks on institutions and organizations are mounted.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joutsenvirta, 2013: 462</td>
<td>The media facilitates a “contemporary political debate” where actors publicly legitimate and delegitimate controversial corporate activities.</td>
<td>“The media provide a central arena of contemporary political debate and public will-formation...”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bitkentine &amp; Haack, 2015: 51</td>
<td>The media facilitates a forum for debates over legitimacy where actors participate in a “competitive” legitimacy process of institutional change and stability.</td>
<td>“…provides some form of forum for debates over legitimacy... judgment validation by the media ... is usually a competitive process.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
During my analysis I found that the challenge with these descriptions of media in the facilitative role is that they can just as well be applied to the other three roles of the media. That is, on one level of abstraction the media can be conceptualized in all four roles as a forum facilitating discursive construction of the (il)legitimacy of organizations. The media are often referred to in organization and management studies as an arena or forum, such as when “...prominent top managers ... representatives of the large business associations, as well as ... politicians of economy-friendly parties ... use the media as a forum” (Hartz & Steger, 2010: 775). Various actors can attempt to socially construct the (il)legitimacy of organizations in any role of the media, whether in collaborative, monitorial or radical roles, and whether they are a channel for the transmission of information on behalf of multiple institutional actors or whether they are a mediator of the competing discourses of institutional actors.

What is missing in these descriptions from legitimacy studies of the media in the facilitative role is a clear reference to legitimacy emanating from a specific actor linked to this role: organizational audiences with competing voices in the media. The main difference between this role and the three other roles—especially the collaborative role in which influential organizations are more readily able to ‘use’ the media as a discursive resource for their own legitimation activities—is that whereas the other roles are largely and typically dominated by the voices of a few actors (who have the resources and institutional power to dominate and marginalize other actors’ voices), the media in the facilitative role enable contestation of legitimacy by their audiences. When there is disagreement between judgments validated by and channelled through the media in its other roles, such as judgments from a select few organizations representing elite institutional actors, a plethora of conflicting legitimacy judgments emanating from a plurality of audiences emerges at the macro level within society, and these are typically discursively negotiated and contested in the media through sub-genres such as online discussion forums, letters to the editor, and the social media pages of mainstream news organizations.

If we conceptualize the facilitative role as one where a plurality of voices can be heard, especially during a legitimacy struggle, then we can narrow the definition to the role of the media that facilitates a plurality of participation in the legitimation process beyond just a few institutional actors typically endowed with a media voice. In contrast, the collaborative, monitorial and radical roles restrict participants in the legitimation process predominantly to a select few elite institutional actors in subject positions and who are given a media voice. The facilitative role, therefore, highlights the media’s ability to enable anyone to have a voice, not just those in subject positions due to their status. Accordingly, the public agenda (Behr & Iyengar, 1985; Carroll, 2009; Lee & Carroll, 2011: 127; Besiou et al., 2013) dominates this role. In the media’s other three roles, expressions of opinion are limited mostly to elite institutional actors, with the
exception that a media organization (represented by its journalists and editors) expresses its own opinion (e.g., in editorials) through its radical role and to a lesser degree through its monitorial role; in the monitorial role expressions of opinion are typically made by ‘experts’ such as analysts, academics and economists (e.g., in the opinion pages). The participation of all media audiences, not just elite actors, in public debates over organizational activities is a defining characteristic in this facilitative role. This role, then, is dependent on an environment where there is a plurality of competing voices and where there is a struggle or debate over an issue between a plurality of audience members.

In a follow-up search in legitimacy studies, I looked specifically for interpretations of the media as a facilitator of contestation and negotiation over the (il)legitimacy of organizations by the media’s audiences, such as through the online discussion forums of mainstream news media. I again made use of the key attributes of the facilitative role developed in the previous chapter as an analytical tool for my review. As such, I looked for interpretations in legitimacy studies of the media indicating an arena of legitimacy struggles where competing (de)legitimation activities of a plurality of audience members are evident through discursive interaction.

Of the 78 studies with a focus on the media’s roles in legitimation processes, I could detect only one study (Barros, 2014) that showed a clear example of social media as a site of discursive struggle over legitimacy involving the audiences of the media. Barros’ (2014) study identified “new social media” as “a more participatory way ... in which information is not controlled by traditional content producers, but authored collaboratively by all users in dynamic peer-to-peer interactions...” that transform “...the highly passive consumer of a one-way information flow into an active producer (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010)” of media texts. Barros links social media to a plurality of social actors in legitimation processes by referring to social media as “the foundation of the new e-democracy discourse (Ainsworth, Hardy & Harley, 2005) that involves not only recent efforts to increase citizen participation in government decisions (Lee, Chang & Berry, 2011), but also grassroots initiatives of democratic participation as it engages in public debate where ‘marginalized groups are able to develop counter-discourses that can challenge and resist domination’ (Dahlberg & Siapera, 2007, p. 6)” (2014: 1214). His study compares the traditional news media to new social media in terms of their power over discourse, arguing that the traditional media restrict participation in legitimation processes to a select few elite actors (e.g. “public figures chosen by journalists”), whereas the new social media open up access to allow “...any person (or organization)” to “...have their words 'heard' around the world and participate in a virtual public debate.” (2014: 1214)

4.1.4 Mobilization role: Radical

To assist in the extraction of relevant information from each study in legitimacy research in order to identify this essentially mobilization role in legitimation processes and to refine this role to better reflect its characteristics in a legitimation context, I made use of the key attributes of each role developed in the pre-
vious chapter (see 3.3.4 Mobilization role: Mobilization-Radical) as an analytical tool for the systematic literature review. As such, I looked for interpretations in legitimacy studies of the media as an actor purposively engaged in the (de)legitimation of organizations and their activities, actors and practices.

Given that Deephouse and Heugens (2009) contend that within organization studies generally there is a perceived lack of due recognition of this more active role of the media in organizational phenomena such as legitimation, I was surprised to find many examples of this role in legitimacy studies. Table 4 (below) shows a number of text examples from these studies indicating key descriptions of media in the political actor role from legitimacy research between 1994 and 2014. Having identified media in this role in legitimacy research through a systematic literature review, I then collated the key descriptions of media in this role into three categories describing what the media are in this role in the context of legitimation:

1. **Active participant in legitimation**: In legitimacy research, scholars whose perspective of the media is as a political actor in the main represent the media as an organization or as journalists and consider them as an independent stakeholder (Gerardo et al., 2011; Erkama & Vaara, 2010; Pfarrer et al., 2008), actor (Carberry & King, 2012; Bednar, 2012; Jonsson & Burr, 2011; Mazza & Alvarez, 2000), active agent (Schultz et al., 2013), political party (Gerardo et al., 2011; Deephouse & Heugens, 2009), organized party (Deephouse & Heugens, 2009), and an active force (Deephouse & Heugens, 2009) in their own right. In this role the media are treated as “organized parties that have a distinct and unique stake in the issues for which they broker information” (Deephouse & Heugens, 2009: 549). The media assume an “active role” in the publication of ratings of boards of directors and thus are an “active participant” in the legitimation of businesses (Johnson et al., 2005). In the mobilization-radical role the media are independent actors in their own right, directly conferring their own legitimacy judgments (Vaara & Tienari, 2008; Joutsenvirta, 2013; Barros, 2014), advocating their own viewpoints and contributing their own “authoritative source of opinion on politics and economics” (Mazza & Alvarez, 2000). The media also purposively construct the legitimacy of specific organizations and their spokespersons by “more intensively” and “more frequently” broadcasting their own viewpoints (Carberry & King, 2012; Gerardo et al., 2011).

2. **Watchdog and critical observer**: As a public watchdog for business organizations (Lamertz & Baum, 1998), the media play a critical role in exposing new practices (Strang & Soule, 1998) and corporate deviance (Carberry & King, 2012) and carry out critical evaluations of organizational practices such as managerial action (Vaara & Tienari, 2002). As a critical observer, the media play a central role in the legitimation and delegitimation of organizational practices in the public arena through promoting, questioning and criticizing issues (Sinha et al. 2015), promoting or downplaying specific discourses, warranting voice to some actors and silencing others (Vaara & Monin, 2010), and opposing requirements put forward by actors by attributing blame and praise
In this role the media scrutinize, criticize, investigate, question and expose illegitimate activities (Desai, 2011) and deviant behavior (Carberry & King, 2012).

(3) **Sense-giver**: I differentiate between sense-making and sense-giving functions, contending that the media in the mobilization-radical role are more of a sense-giver influencing the sense-making of others (a characteristic of the correlation-mobilization role). In their more proactive and partisan role of providing their own opinion that influences public opinion, the media are a sense-giver (cf. Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Weick, 1995) attempting to influence sense-making and meaning construction in society toward specific definitions of ‘reality’ (Hellgren, 2002).

Having identified the media in this role in legitimacy research through a systematic literature review, I also collated key descriptions of the media in this role into five categories describing what the media do in this role in the context of legitimation:

(1) **Use of purposive communication to frame issues, practices and actors in legitimacy struggles**: The media discursively shape reality through feature articles and editorials (Fombrun & Shanley, 1990: 240), highlighting certain issues and activities and thereby influencing the legitimacy of new market categories (Schultz et al., 2013) and corporate governance changes (Bednar, 2012). The media frame controversies as violations of institutional norms (Elsbach, 1994), frame issues to legitimate and delegitimate mergers (Sinha et al. 2015), rhetorically frame actors in corporate mergers as ‘heroes’, ‘scapegoats’, ‘winners’ or ‘losers’ (Vaara & Tienari, 2002), rhetorically frame business practices with ‘best’ and ‘worst’ labels (Johnson et al., 2005), and rhetorically frame corporate takeovers by portraying them in terms of a ‘war’ between nations (Halsall, 2008). The media also frame issues through “persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation, and presentation, of selection, emphasis, and exclusion” (Gitlin, 1980: 7; Pollock & Rindova, 2003), thus influencing legitimation processes over controversial investment projects “by mobilizing specific discourses and giving voice to particular actors and arguments and not others” (Joutsenvirta & Vaara, 2015). The media socially construct firm celebrity by actively constructing positive images of specific firms, thereby legitimating them in the eyes of their stakeholders (Rindova, Pollock & Hayward, 2006).

(2) **Discursive or material mobilization of audience contestation over legitimacy**: The media not only facilitate political debates over the legitimacy of organizations, they sometimes fuel and amplify those debates through discursively mobilizing other actors into action (Gerardo et al., 2011; Deephouse & Heugens, 2009; Pfarrer et al., 2008), such as mobilizing issue adoption by the state or other institutional actors (Deephouse & Heugens, 2009), thereby indirectly legitimating or delegitimating specific organizations and their various activities, issues or arguments.

(3) **Creation of dramatized representations of events and the individuals and organizations participating in them** (Lippmann, 1922;
Shoemaker & Reese, 1996): The media dramatize information and stir contestation as “fight promoters” (Jonsson & Burr, 2011), which then directs stakeholder interest in and attraction toward the organizations they feature (Dyer, 1979; Gamson, 1994; O’Guinn, 2000; Reeves, 1988; Rein et al., 1987), thereby socially constructing their (il)legitimacy. Mazza and Alvarez (2000) refer to the “dramatized language that characterizes the mass media” (2000: 574).

4) **Endorsement of or challenge to organizational legitimacy:** Sometimes the media directly legitimate social issues themselves by adopting and championing them and linking them to other actors with the ability to resolve those issues (Deephouse & Heugens, 2009). They actively engage in persuasion (Joutsenvirta, 2013) through campaigning against initiatives (Reast et al., 2013), blaming and scandalizing firms (Hartz & Steger, 2010; Halsall, 2008), socially constructing the illegitimacy of business practices (Siltaoja & Vehkaperä, 2010), and thereby challenging the legitimacy of organizations (Jonsson & Burr, 2011; Siltaoja & Vehkaperä, 2010; Deephouse, 1996). As protagonists of ideologies (Ainamo et al., 2006) and issues, the media may also applaud and praise firms (Hartz & Steger, 2010; Halsall, 2008) they determine worthy of support.

5) **Enactment of their own (de)legitimation strategies:** Media in this role defend (relegitimate) their own interests in response to delegitimation attacks from other actors (Barros, 2014). They not only reflect legitimation strategies of other actors in their coverage, they also enact their own legitimation strategies to contest issues and delegitimate the activities of other actors (Vaara & Tienari, 2008; Joutsenvirta, 2013; Barros, 2014).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authors</th>
<th>Typical context of application</th>
<th>Key descriptions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elsbach, 1994: 74</td>
<td>The media frame controversies as violations of institutional norms (whereas organizational spokespersons frame them differently in order to manage legitimacy following these same controversial events)</td>
<td>“…all eight controversies were framed by the media”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deephouse, 1996: 1034</td>
<td>The media confer legitimacy and have the potential to “challenge” firms</td>
<td>“…regulators and the media confer legitimacy in different ways.” P 1033 &amp; “Lower performance did not, however, result in challenges to a bank by the media.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lamertz &amp; Baum, 1998: 95</td>
<td>As a “public watchdog for business organizations”, the media endorse some “organizational activities as legitimate or denounce them as irrational (Deephouse, 1995)”</td>
<td>“The role of the press as a public watchdog for business organizations confers on it the ability to endorse organizational activities as legitimate or denounce them as irrational (Deephouse, 1995).”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shane &amp; Foo, 1999: 144</td>
<td>The media legitimate new firms through certifications, such as rankings</td>
<td>“…publications … and business magazines like Business Week and Entrepreneur Magazine legitimate new firms through rankings.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mazza &amp; Alvarez, 2000: 567, 570</td>
<td>The business press (eg &quot;prestigious journalists&quot;) contribute their own “authoritative source of opinion on politics and economics” and are “main actors” in the process of legitimating HRM practices</td>
<td>“…the role of the popular press has gone beyond the mere diffusion and account of management practices and theories.” &amp; “(Italian newspaper) … Il Corriere della Sera … is an authoritative source of opinion on politics and economics,”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Quote</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pollock &amp; Rindova, 2003: 632</td>
<td>The media do not just inform “market participants”, they also highlight and frame information in ways that affect the way organizational legitimacy is formed and evaluated.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rindova et al., 2006: 52</td>
<td>In drawing attention to specific firms through the creation of “dramatized representations” of them, the media socially construct firm celebrity by “actively constructing” positive images of them, thereby legitimating them in the eyes of their stakeholders.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Halsall, 2008: 803, 804</td>
<td>The media “attribute blame and praise” and “oppose” requirements put forward by social actors, thereby legitimating and delegitimizing firms.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deephouse &amp; Heugens, 2009: 546, 550</td>
<td>As “organized parties that have a distinct and unique stake in the issues for which they broker information”, the media sometimes directly adopt certain issues, sometimes undertaking “a collection of deliberate attempts” to link social issues with corporations that can resolve those issues, and in the process mobilizing other stakeholders to take action to help solve those issues; the media are “an active force that independently affects social interaction and sense-making processes (Deephouse, 2000; Fombrun and Shanley, 1990; Pollock and Rindova, 2003)”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hartz &amp; Steiger, 2010: 769</td>
<td>The media are able to “blame, applaud and scandalize” corporations, thus actively conferring legitimacy on corporations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Erkama &amp; Vaara, 2010: 828</td>
<td>As a stakeholder in negotiations over a corporate shutdown of a business unit in an organizational restructure, the media participate in an “intensive” discursive struggle with other stakeholders to “strongly resist” the shutdown, thereby influencing organizational legitimacy.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vaara &amp; Morin, 2010: 6</td>
<td>In “promoting or downplaying specific discourses”, “warranting voice” to some actors and “silencing” others, the media act as critical observers and play a central role in the legitimation and delegitimation of merger decisions in the public arena.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author(s)</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Media Role</td>
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<tr>
<td>Desai, 2011: 263</td>
<td>The media investigate and question corporate practices, sometimes exposing illegitimate activities</td>
<td>&quot;the reporters attempted to expose what some observers called a 'systemic failure' in safety across the industry&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jonsson &amp; Burr, 2011: 477</td>
<td>The media compete with other actors to socially construct their own versions of reality; as a scrutinizer of organizations, the media challenge institutions</td>
<td>&quot;...the business press's role as a group of external scrutinizers of organizations and markets.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gerardo, Gond &amp; Schultz, 2011: 1820, 1821, 1825</td>
<td>As a &quot;political party&quot; and stakeholder its own right, the media &quot;fuelled and amplified the political debate&quot;, attributed blame, harshly criticized a corporation, and discursively &quot;mobilized the world of fame&quot; more frequently than other stakeholders, thereby influencing organizational legitimacy</td>
<td>&quot;The media fuelled and amplified the political debate. In their editorials, left-wing newspapers tended to relate the accident to the uncontrollable situation at Chernobyl in 1986.&quot; &amp; &quot;...the media harshly criticized Vattenfall's defensive attitude.&quot; &amp; &quot;...as political parties, newspapers ... put forward a diversified mix of rationales...&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bednar, 2012: 133</td>
<td>The media (as journalists) are social arbiters and independent actors who confer their own judgments about firms</td>
<td>As social arbiters, journalists are independent actors who make judgments about firms...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carberry &amp; King, 2012: 1141</td>
<td>The media are an &quot;important field-level actor in their own right&quot;, advocating their own viewpoints and broadcasting the viewpoints of specific actors &quot;more intensively&quot;, thereby influencing organizational legitimacy</td>
<td>&quot;The media do not just broadcast the framing of other actors, however, but can function as an important field-level actor in their own right by covering the viewpoints of specific actors more intensively or by journalists advocating specific points of view.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schultz et al., 2013: 4</td>
<td>The media are &quot;active agents&quot; discursively shaping reality through feature articles and editorials, thereby influencing the legitimacy of new market categories</td>
<td>&quot;...media organizations act not only as mechanisms to advertise and mirror reality but also as active agents shaping reality through feature articles and editorials (Fombrun and Shanley, 1990)&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reast et al., 2013: 149</td>
<td>The media join other stakeholders to campaign against initiatives in a controversial industry sector</td>
<td>&quot;The national media (e.g., The Daily Mail) ... campaigned against its project...&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joutsenvirta, 2013: 459, 472, 462</td>
<td>In a legitimacy struggle with politicians and other social actors over executive remuneration in a Finnish energy company, the media actively engage in persuasion and enact their own legitimation strategies to contest schemes in an attempt to delegitimate excessive compensation</td>
<td>&quot;...legitimation strategies through which politicians, journalists, and other social actors contested these schemes...&quot; &amp; &quot;...journalists (who)... attempted to delegitimate excessive manager compensation were actively engaged in persuasion...&quot; &amp; &quot;I focus on the discursive legitimation strategies that are enacted in and by the media&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barros, 2014: 1213, 1277</td>
<td>As &quot;active actors in the battle for discursive legitimacy&quot;, the media are a &quot;main actor&quot; discursively defending their own &quot;political interests&quot; against attacks from other organizations</td>
<td>&quot;While recognizing the role of media in the legitimation process, previous studies focused on the media as an arena for discursive struggle, but not as a main actor in the process of defending their own political interests and sometimes against the organizations themselves.&quot; &amp; &quot;...active actors in the battle for discursive legitimacy...&quot;</td>
</tr>
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</table>

### 4.2 Integrative typology of media roles in legitimation

The overall purpose of this systematic review of legitimacy studies was to identify four distinct media roles in legitimacy research in order to contribute to the development of a theoretically-refined typology that articulates four ideal types of media roles in legitimation processes. The foundational framework of media
roles from sociology and mass communication literature is refined through this systematic literature review to provide a reconfigured, integrative framework to enable a more nuanced understanding of how actors mobilize media in their various roles in discursive legitimation processes.

Analysis of the findings from the systematic literature review shows that at least three of these roles are found in legitimacy studies: surveillance-information-collaborative, correlation-monitorial, and mobilization-radical. The facilitative role could only be found in one legitimacy study (Barros, 2014). I next summarize what these studies elucidate about each role, such as how the media in each role engage with actors and audiences in legitimation processes. I make use of these findings to make revisions to the foundational framework of media roles from sociology and mass communication literature to contribute to a reworked, integrative framework of media roles in legitimation. Contributing to this new framework is a communicative approach to legitimation (Harmon et al., 2015) which helps shed light on the media’s various roles in the process in which actors and audiences communicate with each other through the media.

To better reflect the unique characteristics of media roles that apply to legitimation contexts, labels identifying each media role are modified to some extent in the following integrative typology of media roles in legitimation processes. These changes are explained in the descriptions and definitions of each role below.

Overall, the labels of all four roles are switched from adjectives to nouns to focus more attention on what the media are in legitimation, not just on what they do or ought to do (which are emphasized in normative theories of media roles) in the labels of each role. Another refinement is a change of labels for three of the four roles (which are explained in the descriptions and definitions of each role below).

The aim is to construct a theoretically-refined typology of media roles in legitimation. Accordingly, I draw on the theoretical ideas and distil the key dimensions of roles of the media in society from sociology and mass communication literature (Lasswell, 1948; Wright, 1960; McQuail, 2000; 2006; Christians et al., 2009) to develop this integrative typology of four media roles in a legitimation context. The essences of the key typologies of media roles from communication and media studies are synthesized into this typology of media roles in legitimation processes. Although the analysis indicates connections between related roles in each typology, I acknowledge that the relationships between some of these roles are not always clear and are therefore open to interpretation. I posit that the monitorial role relates primarily to the mediator role because in both roles the media seek, edit and disseminate commentary and interpretations from sources of ‘expert’ information to help their audiences make sense of contested issues. Likewise, the collaborative role (Christians et al., 2009) relates strongly with the conduit role, the radical role (Christians et al., 2009) corresponds strongly to the political actor role, and the facilitative role (Christians et al., 2009) links strongly with the facilitator role, as shown in Figure 9 (at the end of this chapter). I next elaborate on these connections.
4.2.1 Information Transmission role: Conduit

The label allocated by Christians et al. (2009) to the role depicting the primary function of information-flow (i.e. the ‘collaborative’ role) has been modified in this typology. They adopt this label because theirs is a normative theory, suggesting that this is a role the media and journalists ought to have in society. However, journalists typically eschew any hint of collaboration or cooperation, especially with powerful institutional actors, because they value their sense of independence from external influence. I therefore propose an alternative label to unhinge this role from the idea of media collaborating with other actors.

To more aptly describe the ‘collaborative’ role, I latch onto the ‘conduit’ label which Christians et al. (2009) employ in their description of the collaborative role: “... a conduit for information, ideas and images that are far from evenly accessible to all because of differential access and the knowledge gap. The conduit is designed mainly for a vertical flow downward. The more powerful the interest, the more it claims the channels of publicity, on the ground that it is powerful and therefore relevant for the public to know about.” (2009: 151) Accordingly, in developing an integrative typology of media roles in legitimation processes, I assign the label ‘conduit’ to this role to highlight the way the media act as a more or less one-way, neutral channel of information flow between elite sources of information and their audiences and to better reflect the non-reflexive nature of the media in this role.

A communicative approach to legitimation (Harmon et al., 2015) is helpful to conceptualization of the media’s role enabling communication between actors and their audiences. Hence, as depicted in Figure 5 (below), the media performing this role may be seen as an enabler of actors as senders communicating legitimacy judgments about organizations and media audiences as receivers forming perceptions of organizations in a mostly uni-directional communication flow in legitimation processes. (See 2.3 ‘Legitimation as a communicative process’ in chapter 2) This role encapsulates the concept of the media as an enabler of (il)legitimacy conferral by a select few organizations (actors) with the ability to influence the media. As such, the conduit role of the media is put forward in the context of legitimation as a communicative process. In simple terms, media performing this role act as passive participants in discursive legitimation processes enabling a mostly uni-directional flow of legitimacy conferral between a select few organizations as actors (senders) and their audiences (receivers).
The actors who typically supply content to the media in this role are elite institutional actors who make use of the media in this role as a conduit for their own social construction of (il)legitimacy. Although these influential organizations typically represent elite institutional actors, marginalized groups such as activists may also gain a media voice to confer legitimacy judgments through the media in this role. Accordingly, influential organizations may be considered as the primary source of legitimacy in this media role. A corporate agenda (Carroll, 2010; Carroll & McCombs, 2003; Grafstrom & Windell, 2011: 224, 233), management agenda (Besiou et al., 2013) or state agenda (Deacon & Golding, 1991) therefore dominates this role.

Revised key attributes

I offer the following key attributes of this essentially information transmission role revised from the key attributes in the integrative typology of media roles in society developed in the previous chapter:

- **Descriptor:** Information transmission
- **Descriptive role of media in legitimation:** an enabler of (il)legitimacy conferment typically by a select few influential organizations representing elite institutional actors (and sometimes by marginalized groups in society).
- **Typical actors** (conferring legitimacy through the media): organizations representing elite institutional actors are typically given a media voice; marginalized groups may also gain a media voice in this role
- **Agenda:** corporate, management or state agenda
- **Communication flow:** mostly uni-directional from organizations as actors (senders) to audiences (receivers)
- Persuasive discursive tactics of the media: latent
- **Typical media sub-genres:** business and general or ‘hard’ news
- **Journalistic ideals:** objectivity and neutrality (according to the ‘gatekeeper’ model of journalism)

**Definition**

A proposed definition of the conduit role and distinctions between this role and other roles take into account the key attributes of this role. The conduit role
therefore can be defined analytically and in encompassing terms for a legitimation context as follows:

As a mostly one-way channel of information transmission, media performing a conduit role are a relatively passive participant in discursive legitimation processes, predominantly transmitting the relatively unfiltered legitimacy judgments of a select few organizations able to make use of media tactics to gain a media voice; organizations and their representatives mobilize media in this role through discursive means.

4.2.2 Interpretation and commentary role: Mediator

I contend that the ‘mediator’ label more aptly describes media in this role as an influential and proactive ‘mediator’ between business and society (Briscoe & Safford, 2008). In this role the media seek, edit and disseminate commentary and interpretations from relatively objective sources of ‘expert’ information to help their audiences gather and comprehend relevant business data in order to form their own perceptions about organizations. In this way, the media in this role act as ‘mediators’ in social exchange relations between firms and various societal stakeholder groups (Deephouse & Heugens, 2009). More specifically, the most appropriate elite actors to help media audiences make sense of issues—especially those that are highly contested and therefore require active sense-making participation from the media—are those considered ‘experts’ (Bonardi & Keim, 2005; Vaara & Monin, 2010: 6) on issues under debate, such as economists, analysts and academics.

As depicted in Figure 6 (below), a media organization performing this mediator role may be conceptualised as an enabler of elite institutional actors, specifically experts, as senders communicating legitimacy judgments about organizations and audiences as receivers forming perceptions of organizations in a mostly uni-directional communication flow in legitimation processes. Like the conduit role, this role encapsulates the concept of the media as an enabler of (il)legitimacy conferral by actors with the ability to influence the media. As such, the mediator role of the media is put forward in the context of legitimation as a communicative process. In simple terms, the media in this role act as relatively active participants in discursive legitimation processes (e.g. seeking, editing and disseminating commentary and interpretations from ‘experts’) enabling a mostly uni-directional flow of legitimacy conferral between these actors (senders) and their audiences (receivers).
The media’s sense-making function comes to the fore in this role. The media are a sense-maker attempting to make sense of a contested issue by collating and publishing explanations, interpretations and commentary of experts. The media choose and edit a limited number of legitimacy judgments to publish (Petkova et al., 2013: 866). For example, when they “prescreen and evaluate producers’ offerings for audiences with limited information and expertise (Zuckerman, 1999)” (Petkova et al., 2013: 872), they do so by collating and publishing expert opinions in sub-genres of opinion and commentary sections. Much of the knowledge that societal actors gain about organizations and their activities is mediated through the media. The media help to present remote and complex organizational happenings as observable, understandable and meaningful (Tuchman, 1978). As such, they are a sense-maker taking part in developing and shaping a meaningful framework for understanding organizational phenomenon within society-at-large (cf. Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Weick, 1995). Accordingly, the media are active participants in the sense-making process over business practices (Johnson et al., 2005), purposively seeking, editing and disseminating commentary and interpretations from ‘experts’. 

**Key attributes**

I offer the following key attributes of this commentary and interpretation role revised from key attributes developed in the integrative typology of media roles in the previous chapter:

**Descriptor:** Commentary and interpretation

**Descriptive role of media in legitimation:** an enabler of (il)legitimacy conferral by ‘experts’ representing elite institutional actors

**Typical actors** (conferring legitimacy through media): elite institutional actors (particularly ‘experts’ such as economists, academics and analysts) typically given a media voice

**Agenda:** primarily a corporate, management and state agenda; however sometimes a media agenda

**Communication flow:** mostly uni-directional from experts as actors (senders) to audiences (receivers)
Persuasive discursive tactics of the media: somewhat latent (although traces of ‘political actor’ attributes emerge in this role)

Typical media sub-genres: editorials and columns

Journalistic ideals: journalistic commentary end editorial offering expert interpretations of highly contested issues and events.

Definition

A proposed definition of the mediator role and distinctions between this role and other roles take into account the key attributes and other descriptive aspects of this role. Accordingly, the mediator role can be defined analytically and in encompassing terms for a legitimation context as follows:

In performing a mediator role media are relatively active participants in (de)legitimation processes, seeking, editing and disseminating interpretations and commentary of a select few elite actors as ‘experts’ on issues under debate; as such, media enacting this role are a sense-maker of contestation over legitimacy.

4.2.3 Participator role: Facilitator

In this integrative typology of media roles in legitimation processes, I have simply transitioned Christians et al’s label from an adjective to a noun, hence from ‘facilitative’ to ‘facilitator’, to place emphasis on what the media are in this role. On one level of analysis, an initial conceptualization of Christians et al’s (2009) facilitative role of the media in a legitimation context is of the media providing a forum, platform or arena for media audiences to participate in contestation and negotiation over the legitimacy of organizations. This role of the media entails the empowerment of media audiences as both actors (as senders) and audiences (as receivers) in legitimation. As shown in Figure 7 below, this role is characterized by the blurring of sender-receiver roles in an omni-directional flow of communication and is strongly linked to the empowerment of organizational audiences with a media voice in legitimation processes. (See 2.5.2 ‘Participatory role enabling audience participation in legitimation’ in chapter 2)

This role encapsulates the concept of the media as an enabler of (il)legitimacy conferral by a plurality of media audiences as actors. As such, this facilitator role of the media is put forward in the context of legitimation as a communicative process. In simple terms, in this role the media empower media audiences (e.g. as ‘senders’ and ‘receivers’) to socially construct, contest and negotiate the legitimacy of organizations (e.g. through media-hosted online discussion forums and social media pages).
The primary actor supplying media content in this role are the audiences of organizations who also represent media audiences, and who therefore represent a public agenda (Behr & Iyengar, 1985; Carroll, 2009; Lee & Carroll, 2011: 127; Besiou et al., 2013). This typically marginalized actor in the mainstream news media make use of this role as a forum for their own social construction of (il)legitimacy and to negotiate and contest others’ social construction of (il)legitimacy.

**Key attributes**

I offer the following key attributes of this participation role revised from key attributes developed in the integrative typology of media roles in the previous chapter:

**Descriptor:** Participation

**Descriptive role of media in legitimization:** an enabler of (il)legitimacy conferral by audiences

**Typical actors** (conferring legitimacy through media): audiences

**Agenda:** public

**Communication flow:** omni-directional between interchanging roles of actors and audiences (as senders and receivers)

**Persuasive discursive tactics of the media:** somewhat latent

**Typical media sub-genres:** online discussion forums, letters to the editor, talkback radio

**Journalistic ideal:** participatory journalism.

**Definition**

A proposed definition of the facilitator role and distinctions between this role and other roles take into account the key attributes of this role. The facilitator role therefore can be defined analytically and in encompassing terms for a legitimation context as follows:

*In performing a facilitator role media provide a participative forum for discursive interaction in a struggle over organizational legitimacy by audiences (of organizations and the media), typically through the media’s online inter-*
active forums; as such media are relatively passive participants in (de)legitimation processes involving omni-directional communication flow between interchanging roles of social actors as senders and receivers.

4.2.4 Mobilization role: Political Actor

Although the radical role was strongly aligned with the political ideology of Communism, with the collapse of Communism issue- and identity-oriented social movements aligned themselves with media in the radical role, such as alternative media (Atton, 2004) and community media (Howley, 2005) found outside the orbit of mainstream media (Couldry & Curran, 2003). Today the term ‘radical’ no longer suggests predominantly Marxist perspectives of the political left but “increasingly suggests those fundamentalist approaches that in the Western ideological framework are typically connected to extremist Islamist movements and international terrorism” (2009: 189). Indeed, both left and right fundamentalist approaches still exist today (Dowling, 2001: 88-91). Rather than adopt Christians et al.’s (2009) label of this role to describe the way the media sometimes proactively campaign against injustice or abuse, I assign the label ‘political actor’ to this role in deference to the political actor perspective already developed in organization and management studies (see e.g. Barros, 2014; Deephouse & Heugens, 2009) A political actor perspective is useful to an examination of this mobilization function of the media in legitimation contexts.

I build on these theoretical ideas and distil the key dimensions of this role to enable a more nuanced understanding of the media in this essentially mobilization role initially in the broader context of organization and management studies where characteristics of this role have been identified and explored both conceptually and empirically. To begin with, indicators of the media performing this role include any interpretations of the media as a more active participant in organizational processes, openly campaigning or advocating for or against causes or issues, and even exposing, blaming and scandalizing the state or corporations and their activities. Media in this role perform defensive institutional work on their own behalf, undertaking “purposive action to minimize disruptions via rhetoric that counters assertions of negative events or inappropriate practices or that otherwise communicates reassuring information regarding the ongoing activities of organizations within an impacted field” (Maguire & Hardy, 2009; Desai, 2011:264). References to rhetorical strategies enacted by media themselves also point to this political actor role. In this role the media may be seen to pull public discourses in certain directions (Palazzo & Scherer, 2006). The 1995 confrontation between Shell and Greenpeace in the Brent Spar case illustrates how media in this role endorsing one position over another can emotionalize and manipulate public discourse (Palazzo & Scherer, 2006: 83).

Media performing this role undertake purposive pursuit of an agenda (Page, 1996). For this reason, I contend that the media agenda (Carroll, 2009; Graffstrom & Windell, 2011: 233) can be seen to dominate this role while the public agenda (Behr & Iyengar, 1985; Carroll, 2009; Lee & Carroll, 2011: 127; Besiou
et al., 2013) takes a minor role through the media’s advocacy with marginalized groups in society.

Christians et. al. (2009) describe the radical role of media as giving institutional outsiders a greater voice with the goal of helping “minorities articulate an alternative set of goals that represent the needs and just moral claims of all, especially the marginalized, the poor and the dispossessed” (2009: 179). In this role the media aim “to ensure that no injustice is ever tolerated” (2009: 179). Media in this role are partisan, siding “with those who are developing forms of resistance and advocacy against dominant power holders” (2009: 180) and, as such, they tend to seek to redistribute social power from the privileged (typically few) to the underprivileged (typically many). In this role the media are a “weapon” in activists’ hands (2009: 117). They “support activist and avant-garde movements that try to liberate intellectually repressed or indoctrinated people, helping them to participate in the process of democratic governance” (2009: 180).

A typical journalistic ideal applicable to this role is adversarial reporting (Glasser & Ettema, 1989; Olson, 1994). Watchdog journalism (Protess et al., 1992) and investigative journalism (Doyle, 2006; Protess et al., 1992) are also typical in this role. Investigative journalism enables media to proactively uncover and reveal organizational misbehaviour. Finally, advocacy journalism (Janowitz, 1975) assigns journalists the role of participants who “speak on behalf” of groups who typically are denied “powerful spokesmen” (1975: 619) in the media. According to advocacy journalism, journalists are motivated by a desire to redress power imbalances in society and to promote perspectives that are typically under or misrepresented in the media. This aligns with Christians et. al.’s (2009) description of the radical role as challenging the status quo.

I contend that media performing a political actor role may make use of all the main sub-genres to disseminate their legitimacy judgments. Fombrun and Shanley (1990) observe that media act as “active agents shaping information through editorials and feature articles” (1990: 240) and that editorials and opinion columns represent interpretations that are overt attempts to influence attitudes. Sometimes journalists and editors explicitly convey legitimacy judgments through these sub-genres, but they may also do so to varying degrees in the hard news and business news sections as well.

The political actor role of the media is put forward in the context of legitimation as a communicative process. Hence, as depicted in Figure 8 (below), this study identifies media performing the political actor role in legitimation not so much as an enabler of other actors’ legitimation activities but rather as actors themselves disseminating their own legitimacy judgments (as senders) in a mostly one-way flow of information to media audiences (as receivers) and as such they are highly active participants in legitimation.
Key descriptors
I offer the following three key descriptors of what the media are in this role in the context of legitimation, as outlined in chapter four. These include:

1. Active participant in legitimation
2. Watchdog and critical observer

The following five key descriptors of what the media do in this role in the context of legitimation include:

1. Use of purposive communication to frame issues, practices and actors in legitimacy struggles
2. Discursive or material mobilization of audience contestation over legitimacy
3. Creation of dramatized representations of events and the individuals and organizations participating in them
4. Endorsement of or challenge to other organizations’ legitimacy
5. Enactment of their own (de)legitimation strategies.

Key attributes
I offer the following key attributes of this mobilization role revised from key attributes developed in the integrative typology of media roles in the previous chapter:

Descriptor: Mobilization
Descriptive role: an actor with a stake in legitimacy struggles purposively engaged in (il)legitimacy conferral.
Typical actors (conferring legitimacy through the media): the media themselves; however, marginalized groups such as social movement organizations typically are also given a media voice in this role
Agenda: primarily a media agenda with a minor emphasis on the public agenda represented by marginalized groups
Communication flow: mostly uni-directional from the media (senders) to audiences (receivers)
Persuasive discursive tactics: high
Typical media sub-genres: all
**Journalistic ideals:** investigative journalism, adversarial reporting, advocacy journalism and watchdog journalism.

**Definition**
A proposed definition of the political actor role and distinctions between this role and other roles take into account the key attributes and descriptors of this role. Accordingly, the political actor role can then be defined analytically and in encompassing terms for a legitimation context as follows:

*Through use of purposive communication to frame issues, practices and actors in legitimacy struggles, and through the creation of dramatized representations of events and the individuals and organizations participating in them, media performing a political actor role are an organizational actor, active participant in legitimation, and watchdog and critical observer of legitimation in society, enacting their own (de)legitimation strategies, endorsing or challenging organizational legitimacy, explicitly aligning with or contesting causes or issues, discursively or materially mobilizing audience contestation over legitimacy, and offering a voice to marginalized groups in society.*

**4.3 Summary of media roles in legitimation**

In this chapter I have distilled theoretical ideas from a synthesis of typologies of media roles in society in sociology and mass communication literature to develop an integrative typology of media roles in society. The relationship between media roles in these typologies is shown in **Figure 9** (below). Collectively these typologies offer a foundational theoretical framework from which I identify, through a systematic literature review of legitimation studies conducted in the next chapter, four roles of the media in legitimation research. This systematic literature review contributes to a theoretically-refined framework of four media roles in legitimation.
Drawing on the theoretical framework of media roles in sociology and mass communication, particularly the insights from Christians et al (2009), findings from the systematic literature review indicate differing roles of the media in (de)legitimation processes. In the conduit role the media are an enabler of (il)legitimacy conferral by a select few organizations typically representing elite institutional actors; nevertheless, marginalized groups also tend to gain a voice through media performing this role. The communication flow of (il)legitimacy conferral in this role is mostly uni-directional from organizations as actors (as senders) to their audiences (as receivers). Media enacting a facilitator role may be described as an enabler of (il)legitimacy conferral by media audiences. The communication flow of (il)legitimacy conferral in this role is mostly omni-directional between interchanging roles of actors (as senders) and audiences (as receivers). In performing a mediator role the media are an enabler of (il)legitimacy conferral by ‘experts’ representing elite institutional actors. The communication flow of (il)legitimacy conferral in this role is mostly uni-directional from experts as actors (as senders) to audiences (as receivers). Finally, media performing a political actor role are an autonomous actor purposively engaged in (il)legitimacy conferral. The communication flow of (il)legitimacy conferral in this role is mostly uni-directional from the media as actors (as senders) to media audiences (as receivers).

This integrative typology of media roles in legitimation is not explicitly linked to a specific socio-political ideology nor is the intention to favour one ideology over another. Although media are shaped by ideologies and vice versa, the focus of this study, rather, is on how media in their different roles respond to external pressures from institutional actors and vice versa, rather than from ideologies,
and how in this process they shape organizational phenomenon such as legitimation processes.

This typology also recognizes that there are different types of news media. Some are state-sponsored entities, such as those operating according to a public broadcasting model. Others represent private corporations with explicit links to distinct ideologies, political parties and demographics. Still others represent community-based media such as those run by social movement organizations or local communities targeting niche audiences. Media also range between mainstream media, alternative media, activist media and other special interest media. Media fitting any of these models may be represented in this typology.

The categorization of media roles to suit legitimation contexts is not strictly based on a normative theory in the sense of prescribing how media should function in society. As such, unlike the typologies of media roles in society analysed in the previous chapter, the typology of media roles in legitimation does not point to the media’s responsibilities or accountabilities to society, the state, or organizations in society. Nevertheless, the framework developed in this study does indeed conceptualize the media’s role in a pluralistic-democratic society in order to theorize tensions between the media as a one-way communication channel for dominant institutional actors and the media’s ability to enable media audiences to gain a media voice in public debates affecting organizational legitimacy. As such, this proposed typology is applicable to empirical investigations of media roles in legitimation processes.

In order to elaborate on the integrative typology, Table 5 (below) offers definitions of each role analytically and in encompassing terms based on key attributes of these roles from legitimacy research.

Table 5. Definitions of media roles in legitimation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Roles</th>
<th>Definitions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conduit</td>
<td>As a mostly one-way channel of information transmission, media performing a conduit role are a relatively passive participant in discursive legitimation processes, predominately communicating the legitimacy judgments of a select few organizations representing institutional actors and marginalized groups given a media voice; organizations make use of media performing this role as a discursive resource for their own legitimation strategies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitator</td>
<td>In performing a facilitator role media provide a participative forum for discursive interaction in a struggle over organizational legitimacy by a plurality of audiences, typically through the media’s online interactive forums; as such the media are relatively passive participants in (de)legitimation processes involving omni-directional communication flow between interchanging roles of actors (senders) and audiences (receivers).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mediator</td>
<td>In performing a mediator role media are relatively active participants in (de)legitimation processes, seeking, editing and disseminating interpretations and commentary of a select few elite actors as ‘experts’ on issues under debate; as such, the media in this role are a sense-maker of contestation over legitimacy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Actor</td>
<td>Through use of purposive communication to frame issues, practices and actors in legitimacy struggles, and through the creation of dramatized representations of events and the individuals and organizations participating in them, media performing a political actor role are an active participant in legitimation and a watchdog and critical observer of legitimation in society, enacting their own (de)legitimation strategies, endorsing or challenging organizational legitimacy, explicitly aligning with or contesting causes or issues, discursively or materially mobilizing audience contestation over legitimacy, and offering a sense-giving service to media audiences.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.3.1 Typical actors and agendas

In this dissertation I explore and examine how media performing their various roles enable and constrain organizations and their audiences in discursive negotiation and contestation processes that contribute to the publication or broadcast of media content that shapes organizational legitimacy. Although this study does not explicitly focus on the media’s effect on legitimacy and therefore does not draw on agenda-setting theory (McCombs & Shaw, 1972), it is nevertheless interested in the way actors contribute to shaping the media agenda that shapes the public agenda.

From agenda-setting theory pioneered by McCombs and Shaw (1972) I understand that the news media have an ongoing influence on the ‘agenda’ of public discourse by assigning a higher weight to certain issues over others (McCombs, 1981; Rogers, Dearing, & Bregman, 1993). However, I also acknowledge that the media are influenced by a select few influential organizations who may gain a media voice and through this process they attempt to assign a higher weight to certain issues over others in media discussions. This describes agenda-building theory (e.g., Rogers & Dearing, 1988), which points to some level of reciprocity between the media and those actors able to influence the media’s agenda and, subsequently, both the media and influential actors influence the public agenda.

In organization and management research we understand that some sources of legitimacy are more credible and influential than others (Cameron, 2009; Hardy & Clegg, 1996). Actors who can influence validity opinion tend to have more standing and influence than others as a source of legitimacy. Only certain actors have the standing and license to confer legitimacy (Meyer & Scott, 1983; Galaskiewicz, 1985; Baum & Oliver, 1991), such as through the media. It is generally acknowledged that media accounts mostly convey legitimacy judgments of dominant social actors in “subject positions” with the “right to speak” (Mantere & Vaara, 2008; Maguire, Hardy & Lawrence, 2004; Phillips, Lawrence, & Hardy, 2004). These actors include elite institutional actors represented by experts (Bonardi & Keim, 2005; Vaara & Monin, 2010: 6), celebrities (Rindova, Pollock, & Hayward, 2006), high-status actors (Gould, 2002; Ridgeway, Boyle, Kuipers, & Robinson, 1998) and opinion leaders (Pollock & Rindova, 2003) who are in positions of greater access to communication distribution channels. These actors are a source of legitimacy in that they are able to communicate legitimacy judgments about organizations through the media, thus influencing mass audiences’ perceptions of organizations.

In this dissertation I contend that certain actors who have influence over the media (e.g. in shaping the issues being reported in media accounts) tend to reflect and shape a specific agenda and that both the actors and their agenda help to define each role of the media. For example, because media in the conduit role are a “conduit of institutional pressure” (Bednar, 2012: 132), such as from the state, corporations and trade or labor unions, they tend to reflect the agenda of these elite institutional actors, and therefore I contend that a corporate agenda (Carroll, 2010; Carroll & McCombs, 2003; Grafstrom & Windell, 2011: 224, 233), management agenda (Besiou et al., 2013) or state agenda (Deacon & Gold-
ing, 1991) dominates media performing a conduit role. In what follows I describe various agendas and the actors linked to those agendas, and how they align with each of the four roles of the media in legitimation processes. (See also Table 6 for a summary.)

**Conduit:** Elite institutional actors representing corporations, the state, central banks and politicians typically make use of media enacting this role as a conduit for their own (de)legitimating activities. Media performing a conduit role rely heavily on these elite sources of information for news output (Manning, 2001; Strömbäck & Nord, 2006; Tuchman, 1978). A corporate agenda (Carroll, 2010; Carroll & McCombs, 2003; Grafstrom & Windell, 2011: 224, 233), management agenda (Besiou et al., 2013) or state agenda (Deacon & Golding, 1991) therefore dominates this role. Nevertheless, marginalized groups are able to make use of a repertoire of media tactics to gain a media voice through media in this role—therefore a public agenda (Behr & Iyengar, 1985; Carroll, 2009; Lee & Carroll, 2011: 127; Besiou et al., 2013) may also be represented in this role.

**Facilitator:** The public agenda (Behr & Iyengar, 1985; Carroll, 2009; Lee & Carroll, 2011: 127; Besiou et al., 2013) dominates this role. The participation of all media audiences, not just elite actors, in public debates over organizational activities is a defining characteristic of media performing this role.

**Mediator:** Christians et al. (2009) propose that since the sources of information contributing to media performing this role are mostly experts representing elite institutional actors, media performing this role largely reflect a corporate agenda (Carroll, 2010; Carroll & McCombs, 2003; Grafstrom & Windell, 2011: 224, 233), management agenda (Besiou et al., 2013) or state agenda (Deacon & Golding, 1991). Media enacting this role particularly turn to those considered ‘experts’ (Bonardi & Keim, 2005; Vaara & Monin, 2010: 6) on issues under debate, such as economists, analysts and academics. These ‘experts’ typically represent a corporate agenda.

**Political actor:** Media performing this role undertake purposive pursuit of an agenda (Page, 1996) and for this reason the media agenda (Carroll, 2009; Grafstrom & Windell, 2011: 233) can be seen to dominate this role. Given that a key attribute of this role is that media act as a voice for marginalized groups, I contend that the public agenda (Behr & Iyengar, 1985; Carroll, 2009; Lee & Carroll, 2011: 127; Besiou et al., 2013) is also represented in this role.

### 4.3.2 Typical media sub-genres and journalistic ideals

In linking specific sub-genres (e.g. news categories) with each role of the media, I acknowledge an understanding in sub-genre analysis (Matthews & Brown, 2011) that sub-genre characteristics and conventions shape news content. Accordingly, particular sub-genres are characterized by specific conventions guiding media actors (e.g. journalists) as to what can or should be stated and how it should be said (e.g., Fairclough, 2003). This understanding informs my interpretation of each role.

In this study I argue that different sub-genres (typical news media sub-genres include general ‘hard’ news, international news, business news and opinion)
and the journalistic ideals attached to them point to characteristics favouring some media roles over others. For example, journalistic ideals of objectivity and neutrality of reporting are represented by sub-genres of general ‘hard’ news, international news and business news, whereas the journalistic ideal of participatory news tends to be found in sub-genres such as online discussion forums, letters to the editor, and talkback radio. In what follows I describe typical media sub-genres, and the journalistic ideals attached to them, that are aligned with each of the four roles of the media in legitimation processes. (See also Table 6 for a summary.)

**Conduit:** I contend that typical sub-genres for media performing this role are the general news (or hard news), international news and business news sections found in many mainstream news media outlets because it is in these sections where a select few organizations typically representing elite institutional actors are given a media voice and where journalistic ideals of objectivity and neutrality of reporting (according to the ‘gatekeeper’ model of journalism) are typically represented (Tuchman, 1972; Olson, 1994).

**Facilitator:** Those sub-genres enabling anyone to express an opinion in the news media essentially include online discussion forums, radio talkback programs and letters to the editor. The journalistic ideal represented in this media role is participatory journalism (Singer, Hermida, Domingo, et al., 2011) that welcomes contribution of media content from all constituents, not just elite institutional actors.

**Mediator:** Typical sub-genres of media performing a mediator role include those that offer commentary and opinion (e.g. editorials and columns), albeit typically from ‘expert’ institutional actors. A key journalistic ideal represented in this role is journalistic commentary (Bruck 1989; Cottle 1995) offering expert interpretations of highly contested issues and events.

**Political actor:** I contend that all the main sub-genres may be equally represented in this role. In other words, media performing a political actor role may make use of all the main sub-genres to disseminate their legitimacy judgments. Fombrun and Shanley (1990) observe that the media act as “active agents shaping information through editorials and feature articles” (1990: 240) and that editorials and opinion columns represent interpretations of firms that are overt attempts to influence attitudes (Fombrun & Shanley, 1990). Sometimes journalists and editors explicitly convey legitimacy judgments through these sub-genres, but they may also do so to varying degrees in the hard news and business news sections as well. Typical journalistic ideals applicable to this role are adversarial reporting (Glasser & Ettema, 1989; Olson, 1994), watchdog journalism (Protes et al., 1992), advocacy journalism (Janowitz, 1975), and investigative journalism (Doyle, 2006; Protes et al., 1992) because they enable media to expose organizational misbehaviour.
4.3.3 Persuasive discursive tactics of the media

Insights from Christians et al (2009) suggest various applications of persuasive discursive tactics of the media performing each role. In the conduit role persuasive discursive tactics are rather latent. In enacting this information transmission role, media perform their primary function of reporting the news as objectively as possible and they do so by disseminating information less selectively on behalf of organizations typically representing elite institutional actors. In performing a facilitator role, the media’s persuasive discursive tactics are a little more evident but somewhat latent. Media editors steer and mobilize debates in online discussion forums and social media platforms through texts and images inviting participation in these discussions.

Media performing a mediator role also display somewhat latent persuasive discursive tactics, although traces of ‘political actor’ attributes emerge in this role. It is in the political actor role where persuasive discursive tactics are much more evident. Christians et al (2009) describe this role as implying “a persuasive dimension, with attempts to mobilize public opinion and public action toward the redistribution of social power” (2009: 181). They understand the media performing this role as helping their audiences to see avenues of action in order for them to take action for or against issues. In organization and management studies we understand media enacting this role as actively participating in scrutinizing and exposing illegitimate corporate behaviour (Strang & Soule, 1998; Desai, 2011; Carberry & King, 2012); as framing issues, practices and actors (Gitlin, 1980: 7; Elsbach, 1994; Vaara & Tienari, 2002; Pollock & Rindova, 2003; Johnson et al., 2005; Sinha et al. 2015)); and mobilizing audiences towards some action (Gerardo et al., 2011; Deephouse & Heugens, 2009; Pfarrer et al., 2008).

Table 6. Key attributes of media roles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptor</th>
<th>Conduit</th>
<th>Facilitator</th>
<th>Mediator</th>
<th>Political Actor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Descriptive role of media in legitimation</td>
<td>Information transmission</td>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>Commentary &amp; interpretation</td>
<td>Mobilization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An enabler of (il)legitimacy conferred typically by a select few influential organizations representing elite institutional actors (and sometimes by marginalized groups in society).</td>
<td>An enabler of (il)legitimacy conferred by audiences</td>
<td>An enabler of (il)legitimacy conferred by ‘experts’ representing elite institutional actors</td>
<td>An actor with a stake in legitimacy struggles purposively engaged in (il)legitimacy conferred</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Typical actors (conferring legitimacy through the media)

| | Organizations representing elite institutional actors are typically given a media voice; marginalized groups may also gain a media voice in this role | Audiences | Elite institutional actors (particularly ‘experts’ such as economists, academics and analysts) typically given a media voice | The media themselves; however, marginalized groups such as social movement organizations typically are also given a media voice in this role |

Agenda

| | Corporate, management or state | Public | Primarily corporate, management or state, however sometimes media | Primarily media, with a minor emphasis on a public agenda represented by marginalized groups |
In this chapter a foundational framework of media roles from sociology and mass communication literature served as a useful analytical framework to conduct a systematic literature review of legitimacy studies to identify and examine four media roles of conduit, facilitator, mediator and political actor in legitimacy research. The analysis of findings from this review contributes to a theoretically-refined integrative typology of four media roles in legitimation processes. The resulting reconfigured framework of media roles in legitimation addresses the first research question: *What distinct roles do the media play in discursive processes of organizational legitimation?* This concludes Part 1 of this dissertation: A theoretical analysis of media roles in legitimation processes.

Part 2 begins an empirical analysis of these media roles in legitimation. Accordingly, in the following chapter I deploy methods of critical discourse analysis (CDA) to examine not only how the media discursively performed each of their roles but also how an activist group and a central bank mobilized media in their various roles to (de)legitimate, through discursive means, the bank’s economic policy between 2012 and 2015.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication flow of (il)legitimacy conferral</th>
<th>Mostly uni-directional from organizations as actors (senders) to audiences (receivers)</th>
<th>Omni-directional between interchanging roles of actors and audiences (as senders and receivers)</th>
<th>Mostly uni-directional from experts as actors (senders) to audiences (receivers)</th>
<th>Mostly uni-directional from the media (senders) to audiences (receivers)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Persuasive discursive tactics of the media</td>
<td>Latent</td>
<td>Somewhat latent</td>
<td>Somewhat latent (although traces of 'political actor' attributes emerge in this role)</td>
<td>High (e.g. (1) through scrutinizing and exposing illegitimate corporate behaviour; (2) through framing issues, practices and actors; and (3) through mobilizing audiences towards some action)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typical media sub-genres</td>
<td>Business and general or 'hard' news</td>
<td>Online discussion forums, social media platforms, letters to the editor, talkback radio</td>
<td>Editorials and columns</td>
<td>All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalistic ideals</td>
<td>Objectivity and neutrality (according to the 'gate-keeper' model of journalism)</td>
<td>Participatory journalism</td>
<td>Journalistic commentary and editorial offering expert interpretations of highly contested issues and events</td>
<td>Investigative journalism, journalistic commentary, advocacy journalism and watchdog journalism</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PART 2: EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS:
Media roles in legitimation
5. METHODOLOGY

The overall aim of this dissertation is to explore how contemporary news media organizations participate in and shape, through their various roles, the social and discursive processes through which organizations and their activities become legitimated and delegitimated in society. More specifically, I set out to empirically illustrate and elaborate (1) how news media organizations performed their roles in the context of a discursive legitimacy struggle between an activist group (as a change agent) and a central bank (as a powerful government organization) over the bank’s controversial austerity policy in 2012-2015, and (2) how the activist group and central bank mobilized the media in these roles to serve their own ends. To guide this inquiry I ask the questions:

*How do news media organizations perform their roles in the discursive (de)legitimation of a politically controversial organizational activity?*

*How do organizations discursively mobilize the media in their roles when seeking to (de)legitimate a politically controversial organizational activity?*

In this chapter I outline the methodological approach and method adopted in this study. Detailed explanations of the research design, data collection processes, and the stages of analysis and interpretation are provided. I begin by addressing issues of validity and reliability. I next follow this up by elaborating on this study’s critical discursive approach to an exploration of how the main actors attempted to mobilize the media in their various roles to construct and contest the legitimacy of a controversial organizational activity through discursive means in this empirical setting. Next, the media’s four distinct roles are more fully contextualized within the empirical setting in which the main actors participated in the (de)legitimation of a central bank’s austerity policy between 2012 and 2015. Finally, the theory-informed framework of four media roles in legitimation processes developed in the previous chapters contributes to a critical discourse analysis of the media roles, discourses, themes and discursive strategies used in this empirical setting.

5.1 Validity and reliability

I acknowledge that in qualitative research it is important to address issues of validity and reliability (Silverman, 2006). Validity tends to refer to the idea of truth, accuracy and objectivity in research. Indeed, Silverman (2005) points out that “validity is another word for truth” (2005: 10). However, it has been argued
that validity and reliability, concepts drawn from positivist or postpositivist research, are not particularly relevant issues for discursive or other qualitative research (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). As Moisander and Valtonen (2006) point out, in qualitative research “this way of thinking about validity is problematic because it is believed that knowledge is never value-free and that no method can deliver an ultimate truth about the state of matters in social life” (2006: 24). In taking a social constructionist perspective in this dissertation, I do not subscribe to the idea of one objective truth emerging through research. Adopting this perspective also means that there are no absolute criteria for assessing research. An understanding that the use of language not only describes the world but also constructs it implies that research texts do this as well (i.e., research texts involve discursive practices). In this dissertation, therefore, I have attempted to challenge assumptions and recognize my ethical responsibility as a researcher.

In science, reliability is concerned with whether the findings are replicable and consistent (Kirk & Miller, 1986; Rafuls & Moon, 1996). In qualitative research, reliability may be defined as the extent to which the set of meanings derived from several interpreters are sufficiently congruent (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982). However, in the social world that is studied through discourse analysis, meaning cannot be separated from context. Words can contain the same meaning in different contexts or different meanings in different contexts, which sometimes makes it difficult to assess whether or not repetition of the study will result in the same findings (Wood & Kroger, 2000). Repetition can also mean something different in discourse analysis. In discourse analysis, one researcher may draw on certain inferences or theoretical interpretations while another researcher conducting “the same study” may draw on quite different inferences or theoretical interpretations. Accordingly, repetition is not necessarily an adequate criterion of warranty for discourse analysis (ibid). Thus, it is not possible to warrant reliability in this study in a way that it is warranted in traditional qualitative studies.

As to the question of transferability (i.e., whether or not the results of the study can be transferred and applied to other contexts and situations), I have attempted to describe the empirical case with a relatively descriptive narrative in the hope that my readers will be able to “vicariously experience these happenings and draw conclusions” (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006: 29). Further, I have tried to provide a highly detailed ‘thick description’ of the research situation and methods (Geertz, 1973) to invite my readers to “see the phenomena in their own experience and research” (Dyer & Wilkins, 1989: 617).

### 5.2 Analytical focus

In this dissertation I understand legitimation as a discursive process in which the social phenomena under study is socially constructed through use of language. Accordingly, I focus on discursive practices that not only represent social reality but also constitute it. As such, I make the assumption that actors not only use language to make accurate representations of certain objects, they may also
use language to accomplish goals (e.g., Alvesson & Kärreman, 2000; Potter & Wetherell, 1987). Discourse analysis therefore involves the systematic study of texts—including their production, dissemination and consumption—in order to explore the relationship between discourse and social reality (Phillips, Lawrence & Hardy, 2004: 636). It is interested in how discursive practices—for example, of communication and information production and dissemination—shape discourses and how, in turn, discourses shape our understanding of social reality. Because social reality depends more on bodies of texts than on individual texts, discourse analysis focuses on collectives of texts, not just individual, isolated texts. Accordingly, discourse analysis involves analysis of the ways collections of texts “are made meaningful through their links to other texts, the ways in which they draw on different discourses, how and to whom they are disseminated, the methods of their production, and the manner in which they are received and consumed (Fairclough, 1992; Phillips & Hardy, 2002; van Dijk, 1997a,b)” (Phillips, Lawrence & Hardy, 2004: 636).

The relationships among discourse, text and action are important to discourse analysts exploring how socially produced ideas and objects, such as perceptions of organizations, are created and maintained (Phillips, Lawrence & Hardy, 2004: 636). Hence, discourse analysis helps us explore how things are done, such as how legitimacy is contested and negotiated by actors in power positions using discursive means to accomplish goals. Legitimation thus can be seen as a discursive process that produces senses of legitimacy or illegitimacy in texts, including media texts, and in social contexts. In this way organizations may be portrayed by various actors as “positive, beneficial, ethical, understandable, necessary or otherwise acceptable in the texts in question (Rojo & van Dijk, 1997)” (Joutsenvirta & Vaara, 2015: 4). In contrast, organizations may also be constructed in texts as “negative, harmful, intolerable or, for example, morally reprehensible” (Joutsenvirta & Vaara, 2015: 4); in other words, as illegitimate. When the legitimacy of organizations or their activities, policies and practices are questioned or challenged, such as through situated speech acts, “moments of (de)legitimation” emerge (see Hybels, 1995: 245).

A CDA approach is particularly useful in identifying socio-political struggles going on in legitimation processes. Moreover, it can provide insight into the discursive activities undertaken by actors competing to gain a media voice in legitimation processes. It does this by contributing to an ‘alternative understanding’ and to ‘giving voice’ to those normally marginalized or excluded in discursive struggles. CDA describes how (the abuse of) power is enacted, reproduced or legitimated by the (talk and) text of dominant groups and institutions (van Dijk, 1996: 84). Accordingly, some CDA studies analyse how certain groups have the right to speak whereas others are silenced and how different groups attempt to draw on discourses that give them greater rights to speak (Phillips & Hardy, 2002: 26) in order to dominate power relationships. This dissertation therefore draws from CDA whose central interest in broader social practices and power relations enables scholars to connect acts of legitimation “to ongoing political struggles in specific organizational and societal contexts” (Vaara & Tienari, 2008: 986). What is particularly important in CDA is an understanding that the
legitimacy of organizations is very much linked to the legitimacy of the power positions of social actors (Rojo & van Dijk, 1997).

Acknowledging that there are different traditions in CDA, I draw from what Zhu and McKenna (2012: 528) call the Finnish School (namely Pasi Ahonen, Ingmar Björkman, Eric Breit, Niina Erkama, Maria Joutsenvirta, Pikka-Maria Laine, Juha Laurila, Janne Tienari and Eero Vaara) approach to CDA to understand the discursive-ideological basis of legitimation taking place in the media. Like most other CDA scholars of legitimation, these scholars analyze how discursive strategizing links legitimation strategies to meta-discourses—often ideologically-based—that are generally accepted in society (Tienari et al, 2003). The Finnish School (Zhu & McKenna, 2012) likewise draws from the Lancaster School (Fairclough and Wodak and their co-authors) approach to critical theory. They particularly rely on Fairclough’s work on socio-cultural change and change in discourse (1997, 2003) to examine the role of discourse—that is, linguistically-mediated representations of the world (Fairclough, 2003)—in the social construction of (il)legitimacy. The role of discourses in these political dynamics of legitimation and delegitimation processes is important in CDA. Discourses not only reflect legitimacy, they also reproduce legitimacy in such a way that certain outcomes are realized rather than others (Fairclough, 2003; Phillips & Hardy, 2002). Discourses can mobilize certain ways of thinking and actions, and they can manipulate actions as well by hiding or marginalizing particular sociopolitical ideas (Vaara & Monin, 2010: 6).

Because discourses warrant voice to certain actors and issues in legitimation processes and silence others (Deetz & Mumby, 1990; Fairclough & Wodak, 1997; van Dijk, 1998; van Leeuwen, 2008), this makes them a potentially powerful resource for actors to draw on in attempting to persuade audiences to legitimate or delegitimate organizations. Important in CDA is the idea that specific discourses provide a more natural basis for legitimation than others if they conform to the prevailing norms and values in society (van Dijk, 1998). For this reason, actors draw on certain discourses for legitimation purposes. CDA can therefore provide insight into the discursive work undertaken by actors attempting to influence legitimation processes, such as through the media.

CDA is helpful to an examination of the specific discursive ways in which legitimation may be carried out in the media. Moreover, it allows scholars to examine the more subtle ways in which specific discursive functions and practices are used to establish or resist legitimacy in a particular media text (Vaara & Tienari, 2008: 988). This has been conceptualized as discursive legitimation strategies, which refers to specific and more or less conscious ways in which social actors make use of different discourses or discursive resources to construct or contest legitimacy (Vaara et al., 2006; Vaara & Monin, 2010). Actors employ discursive strategizing by mobilizing specific discourses to pursue certain ends in various settings. Paying attention to textual strategies played out through the news media is viewed as beneficial because “it allows us to see how senses of legitimacy are created and manipulated at the textual level” and “it is through subtle textual strategies that particular interests and voices are reproduced and others silenced” (Vaara & Tienari, 2008: 991).
The Finnish School (Zhu & McKenna, 2012: 528) of discourse scholars has conducted extensive research on discursive legitimation in the media, particularly in the context of corporate takeovers, restructures and mergers (Vaara, Tienari, & Laurila, 2006; Vaara & Tienari, 2008; Vaara & Monin, 2010). Eero Vaara and colleagues analyzed the process through which organizations constructed a macro/meta discourse through the media to legitimate potentially controversial decisions (Erkama & Vaara, 2010; Vaara et al., 2006) and the dissonant voices that challenged this strategy. Typically, the Finnish School has adopted a critical discourse perspective and has identified a range of legitimation strategies used in various types of discourse. Like most other CDA scholars of legitimation, these scholars analyzed how discursive strategizing linked legitimation strategies to meta-discourses—often ideologically-based—that are generally accepted in society (Tienari et al, 2003).

Vaara and colleagues illuminated several legitimation strategies that were based on four strategies originally proposed by van Leeuwen and colleagues (van Leeuwen, 2007; van Leeuwen & Wodak, 1999). Theo van Leeuwen and his colleagues developed ‘a grammar of legitimation’ that distinguishes between and elaborates on specific legitimating practices (Van Leeuwen unpublished manuscript; Van Leeuwen and Wodak 1999). However, van Leeuwen’s model did not extend to legitimation in contexts such as the media. Vaara and colleagues have subsequently modified van Leeuwen’s model to suit an examination of legitimation strategies identified in media texts. For example, drawing on van Leeuwen’s work (2008), Vaara and Tienari (2008) took a critical discursive perspective in their identification in media texts of five types of legitimation strategy used in the legitimation or delegitimation of a corporate merger: normalization (exemplification of ‘normal’ function or behaviour), authorization (authority construction), rationalization (rationale), moralization (moral basis) and narrativization (construction of a compelling plot). Vaara, Tienari and Laurila (2006) identified these same legitimation strategies used by various actors, including the media themselves, in a corporate restructuring situation. Vaara and Monin (2010) further modified these into legitimation and delegitimation strategies in the context of corporate restructuring: naturalization, rationalization, exemplification, authorization, moralization and denaturalization.

CDA has yet to make a significant contribution to analyses of how actors engaged in socio-political struggles persuade and convince audiences through discursive legitimation and delegitimation carried out in social media. The democratic-participation feature of the mainstream news media’s social media platforms serves to empower audiences to engage in discursive legitimation involving power struggles. Some critical scholars have begun to conduct research on social media in relation to CDA (Wodak & Wright, 2006; Mautner, 2005; Unger, 2012). Wodak and Wright (2006) used CDA to examine the European Union’s Futurum discussion forum to show “that multilingual interaction was fostered, and that the debate about language policies is politically and ideologically charged” (2006: 251). As Herring (2001: 625) states, “the discursive negotiation and expression of social relations in cyberspace including asymmetrical relations, constitutes to be one of the most promising areas of future investigation”.

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The theoretical underpinnings of critical discourse studies are not only relevant to digital media research, “but as a socially committed, problem-oriented, textually based study, CDA cannot shy away from substantially engaging with the new media communications as emerging sites of discursive struggles” (Khosravi-Nik & Unger, 2015:np).

In critical discourse studies (CDS) social power is generally understood as increasingly manifested in and through language (e.g. Fairclough, 1989) and is based on “preferential access to public discourse and communication”, such as through mass media (van Dijk, 1996) and particularly online news media environments. Access to discursive participation is particularly relevant in online contexts where such discursive interactivity can increase access to public discourse (e.g. Gee, 2015).

When conducting research on online media, it is important to avoid deterministic and simplistic representations of discourse (Thurlow, 2013; Thurlow & Mroczek, 2011) and a single-minded focus on medium specificities. Instead, it has been argued that it is important to conduct more contextualized studies, with the aim of making connections between communicative events on these media and larger economic, political and historical processes (Georgakopoulou, 2006; Kelsey & Bennett, 2014). Both CDA and CDS perspectives are particularly appropriate for bringing these kinds of macro-level contextual processes into light; at the same time, attention to micro-level contextual features is needed, because dimensions of power “shift according to the contextual environments in which they are produced and consumed” (Kelsey & Bennett, 2014).

5.3 Empirical setting

The ways in which actors mobilize the media in their various roles in discursive legitimation processes is contextualized within the empirical setting of a struggle over the legitimacy of a controversial financial austerity policy between 2012 and 2015. Essentially, this struggle was fought out between the European Central Bank, a social movement organization called Blockupy, various news media in a political actor role, and their collective audiences (i.e., the constituents of the ECB, Blockupy and the media). The focus of this struggle was the legitimacy of the controversial austerity policy adopted and enforced within the European Union in the wake of the 2007–2008 global financial crisis. Austerity is an economic policy strategy that, in the case of EU member states, commits to lowering state spending through reducing welfare benefits and public services. Austerity focuses on government frugality, self-sufficiency and fiscal prudence in contemporary economic and political life. Following the global financial crisis of 2007–2008, national governments adopted an austerity policy to enact a wide range of retrenchments and cutbacks in public spending deemed necessary to recoup the debts incurred by states as well as to finance the bailouts of banks and fiscal stimulus packages (Summers, 2009; Taylor-Gooby, 2009).

Although many European governments claimed fiscal consolidation was the right policy to pull Europe out of the economic crisis, austerity has been seen by many other governments and activist organizations, including Blockupy, as a
strategy by political and corporate elites to roll back the welfare state. According to activists like Blockupy, this policy benefits the wealthy to the detriment of the rest of the population, and it was therefore expected that the general public would resist such measures. The ECB’s tough austerity measures forced on some EU member states in exchange for fiscal bailouts led to civil unrest not only in countries suffering from sovereign debt crises but also in other EU countries whose citizens stood in solidarity with them during street demonstrations organized by Blockupy.

The rise of Blockupy as a change agent in 2012, whose main aim was to attack the legitimacy of the ECB’s controversial austerity measures, subsequently threatened the legitimacy of the ECB itself. Like many activist groups, Blockupy at first struggled to gain media attention for its claims and hence chose to stage street protests as media spectacles. Despite the large crowd size, its first public demonstration in May 2012 failed to gain much media attention. Throughout its next two street protests in May 2013 and March 2015 its crowd sizes dwindled and yet it managed to gain more attention from the media, especially when protestors became violent and destroyed property and hurt police.

During this 2012–2015 legitimacy struggle the role of three other actors came into play as proponents and opponents of the ECB’s austerity measures, each actor essentially siding with either the ECB and its austerity measures or with Blockupy and its anti-austerity claims. News media in the political actor role constituted the third actor in this setting. A few media in this role became very critical of the ECB’s management of the construction of its new headquarters in Frankfurt, especially when media investigations revealed that the ECB had over-spent its construction budget by €450 million.

A fourth actor constituted the audiences of the ECB, Blockupy and the media—everyday citizens who are rarely granted a voice in mainstream news media debates over economic policy. Nevertheless, as will be shown in the subsequent analysis of findings, these audiences were given a media voice as proponents and opponents of the ECB austerity measures. A fifth actor that took a minor role in this setting constituted experts, such as economists, statisticians and academics, whose information and perspectives helped media audiences make sense of this highly contested issue.

I chose this empirical case because it shows clear examples of news media in each of the four roles in a discursive struggle over legitimacy between multiple actors. Each of these media roles revealed the themes, discourses and discursive strategies mobilized by Blockupy, the ECB, news media in the political actor role, and their collective audiences to legitimate or delegitimate the bank’s controversial policy in the media discussions. The rich debates around the legitimacy of the ECB austerity policy and the accusations of ECB hypocrisy surrounding implementation of the policy provide an extensive pool of data in which to explore how each media role played a part in each actor’s use of discursive strategies, discourses and themes.

The Blockupy protests over austerity measures being forced on peripheral nations in the European Union is a “critical” case in the sense that it serves to “confirm, challenge, or extend the theory” (Yin, 2005: 40). It does this because it is
an “information-rich” case, with a range of media texts spread across five separate events revealing intensive contestation over the legitimacy of a controversial government policy, making it particularly suitable for theory testing (Patton, 2002: 242). This case is used both to test the theoretical framework of four media roles in legitimation and to further develop our understanding of how contemporary news media organizations performing their roles participate in and shape discursive legitimation processes. Accordingly, this chapter primarily addresses the following research questions:

- How do news media organizations perform their roles in the discursive (de)legitimation of a politically controversial organizational activity?
- How do organizations discursively mobilize the media in their roles when seeking to (de)legitimate a politically controversial organizational activity?

In attempting to investigate the legitimation process surrounding a socially contested EU government policy involving various actors, including the media, it is important to examine each relevant actor, their positions, and the discursive resources mobilized by these actors. I next elaborate on each of the five actors and their discursive participation in legitimation through the media through a description of the background to this setting.

(1) The European Central Bank (ECB)
The European Central Bank (ECB) is generally understood as an elite institutional actor with legitimate formal power to orchestrate government policy directly affecting the 19 nations that are members of the EU. Accordingly, I identify the ECB as a dominant actor in the media discussion over this monetary policy. Like most government institutions with influence over the livelihoods of citizens, central banks are often a primary focus of media attention in public discussions over monetary or economic matters. For the ECB, it is important for its central management to maintain legitimacy as a government-sanctioned financial institution with extensive influence over the financial affairs of the EU. Managing its voice in the media is thus a critical step towards legitimating its role and its key policy in EU affairs.

Two key public criticisms of the ECB stand out in this setting: (1) that the austerity measures it meted out on some EU countries were not only controversial but also harmful to the economy of those countries and therefore to the lives of citizens of those countries (characterized in the following thematic analysis as harmful austerity) and (2) that the ECB forced austerity measures on EU countries suffering economic recessions (characterized in the following thematic analysis as forced austerity), which highlights the ECB’s power over the affairs of European citizens.

The ECB is certainly a powerful player in Europe. Established in 1998, the ECB is the central bank for Europe’s single currency, the euro. It sets and implements the Eurozone’s monetary policy and maintains price stability in the euro area. The Eurozone consists of 19 European Union (EU) member states and is one of the largest currency areas in the world. The capital stock of the bank is owned...
by the central banks of all EU member states. Although it is directly governed by European law, its set-up resembles that of a corporation because it has shareholders and stock capital.

The ECB’s power over European affairs became more visible during the sovereign debt crises that hit the Eurozone between 2009 and 2011. These crises began in late 2009 when a new Greek government revealed that previous governments had been misreporting government budget data. This led to an erosion of investor confidence and fears that the fiscal positions and debt levels of other Eurozone countries were also unstable. Countries such as Greece, Spain, Portugal and Ireland found that they were unable to repay or refinance their government debt or bailout their beleaguered banks without assistance from third-party financial institutions such as the ECB.

As part of the loan agreements, countries granted bailout funds were required to meet austerity measures designed to slow down the growth of public sector debt. For example, Greece received several bailouts in exchange for adopting EU-mandated austerity measures to cut back public spending and significantly increase taxes, all while undergoing an economic recession. These measures led to social unrest in Greece, and as a result in 2015 Greek citizens voted against further bailouts and further EU austerity measures, leaving open the possibility of Greece exiting the EU.

In response to the sovereign debt crises, the ECB undertook a range of monetary policies, including a program of unlimited bond-buying, the use of negative interest rates, and a €1.1 trillion ($1.2 trillion) quantitative easing plan. The ECB’s action was considered unorthodox by many policymakers and economists and attracted a great deal of controversy. Some thought it overstepped its authority and yet others argued for it to take more aggressive action. Since then, the ECB has been granted even more power of supervision over Europe’s largest financial institutions through the creation of a Eurozone-wide banking union. However, Britain’s impending exit from the EU and the resurgence of Greece’s debt crisis has renewed questions over the future of the common euro currency and the ECB’s role in administering it. These moves serve to further threaten ECB legitimacy.

Another aspect of the ECB that faced public criticism, especially from Blockupy and the news media, is the construction of its new headquarters in Frankfurt. When the ECB was founded in 1998 it began searching for a suitable site to build its own premises in Frankfurt. In 2002 it purchased a block of land and immediately launched an international architectural competition to find a design for its new headquarters. The best design was awarded in 2005 to Coop Himmelb(l)au. The foundation stone was laid in May 2010 and the main construction work began. On 20 September 2012 a topping out ceremony was held to celebrate the completion of the main structural works on its new 45-story headquarters building project. ECB staff relocated from rented premises in the Eurotower in Frankfurt to the new building in November 2014. The new premises were officially inaugurated on 18 March 2015.

Critics labelled the ECB hypocritical because while it forced some EU countries to adopt harsh financial austerity measures, the ECB itself had not been
practicing austerity over its own building budget (characterized in the following thematic analysis as hypocrisy of austerity). Massive cost overruns and an extravagant building design embarrassed ECB management (characterized in the following thematic analysis as financial mismanagement of HQ construction). Media reports revealed that the ECB had overspent its construction budget by €450 million. Also, many claimed that the building’s design, which includes two soaring 185/165-metre skyscrapers joined by an atrium, is needlessly extravagant. A Blockupy press release on 18 March 2015 referred to the building as a “fortress-like twin tower building, surrounded by a fence and castle moat. This intimidating architecture of power is a perfect symbol of the distance between the political and financial elites and the people” (characterized in the following thematic analysis as inequality of status). The building’s designer stated that ECB management had wanted to create a building that would become an icon within the EU (characterized in the following thematic analysis as injustice of vision), which further suggests that its status may be more important that its budget. Overall, the ECB’s management of this construction project to house its headquarters called into question the ECB’s legitimacy as a fiscal manager.

During the 2009-2011 debt crises, the ECB attracted harsh criticism in the news media over the building of its new headquarters. This led to essentially four key criticisms related to its management of the construction project: (1) that the building’s extravagant design points to the injustice of the ECB’s overly ambitious vision for its new headquarters and, by implication, its role in the EU (i.e. an injustice of vision theme), (2) that the ECB is hypocritical in not applying austerity principles to its own construction budget (i.e. an hypocrisy of austerity theme), (3) that the building’s extravagant design implies that the ECB justifies inequality of status between bankers and ordinary citizens (e.g. that bankers deserve better office premises than ordinary citizens) (i.e. an inequality of status theme), and (4) that the ECB has not been a responsible fiscal manager of its headquarters construction project (i.e. a financial mismanagement of HQ construction theme).

(2) Blockupy
The ECB’s nemesis was Blockupy, a relatively new political actor in Europe whose goal was to delegitimate the ECB’s austerity policy and, by implication, the ECB itself. Blockupy therefore may be described as a change agent because its primary interest was in changing the process by which the legitimacy of the central bank’s monetary policy was being constructed (Suddaby, Bitektine & Haack, 2017: 3). Blockupy was founded in early 2012 as an alliance of over 90 leftist national groups across Europe whose collective aim was to protest against austerity measures being implemented in Europe. Blockupy’s name is derived from the Occupy movement that sprang up in Wall Street, New York, in 2011. One of the offshoots of the Occupy movement is Occupy Frankfurt, a founding member of the Blockupy alliance. Blockupy’s member organizations include the
activist group Attac, Greece’s leftist alliance party Syriza, Spain’s anti-corruption Podemos, the German political party Die Linke (The Left), and Germany’s second biggest union (Verdi).

Blockupy is identified in this dissertation as a marginalised actor in media discussions over monetary policy. To Blockupy, the news media was an important arena in which to actively delegitimate the ECB’s controversial fiscal policy by staging street protests designed to appeal to the news media’s demand for drama. While individually many of the disparate organizations that made up the Blockupy alliance had struggled to gain a legitimate voice in the media debate over the austerity measures in Europe, Blockupy united these groups under one umbrella organization, giving them more clout as a single media actor with the collective voice to speak in the media against austerity measures forced on EU countries by what it referred to as the troika of the ECB, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the European Commission (EC). Its goal was to transition from a new and marginalized actor on the periphery of media discussions about austerity to a legitimate actor with the right to speak in media debates about the austerity measures affecting countries in Europe. This points to Blockupy’s power struggle to gain legitimacy as an actor with the right to speak in the media debate over the ECB’s handling of its austerity policy.

However, in sometimes resorting to violent tactics to gain the attention of the news media, Blockupy courted controversy and attracted extensive criticism in the media over the (mis)management of its protests. Almost every year since its inception, Blockupy organized an annual street protest designed to gain media attention by actively positioning protesters in streets outside ECB office buildings either in Berlin or Frankfurt. Appealing to news values of mainstream news media, protesters waved banners, wore masks, linked arms, and some damaged property and injured people, such as by throwing stones and paint at police and buildings and setting fire to vehicles. They also tended to aggravate the police by attempting to break through security fences set up to protect ECB and public property. Given that Blockupy openly stated in a press release that its March 2015 protest would be “a disobedient mass action”, these actions may be seen as deliberate attempts to gain as much publicity as possible.

In all its public communications, including media statements, Blockupy and its many spokespeople regularly criticized the ECB in two main areas: (1) that the austerity measures the ECB meted out on some EU countries were not only controversial but also harmful to the economy of those countries and therefore to the lives of citizens of those countries (i.e. harmful austerity); (2) that the ECB’s power over European citizens is dangerous, as demonstrated in the harsh austerity measures it was able to force on some EU countries (i.e. forced austerity). In relation to its claim of harmful austerity, Blockupy vehemently opposed the economic austerity policy that aims for balanced budgets at the expense of what Blockupy referred to as ‘the poor and middle class’. Organisers verbally parroted criticism by Greece’s ex-finance minister Yanis Varoufakis that the ECB policy towards Athens is “asphyxiating”. In a press statement dated 18 March 2015 the activist organization declared that its resistance was “against European crisis policies and their catastrophic consequences, especially for the
people in the European south” (March 18th 2015: Transnational actions against the European Central Bank’s opening gala – Let’s Take Over The Party!, 2015). One of its main themes regularly pronounced in media statements was that it stands in solidarity with the citizens of southern EU countries who are suffering from the repressive monetary policies of the ECB and its troika partners in the EU. In relation to its claim of forced austerity, Blockupy stated in a press statement on 18 March 2015: “They have even had no hesitation in blackmailing elected governments in order to enforce their attacks on the social rights of the people.”

In addition to these two main criticisms, Blockupy also raised the following two criticisms that relate to the (mis)management of the construction of the ECB’s headquarters: (3) that the ECB was hypocritical in not applying austerity principles to its own construction budget (i.e. hypocrisy of austerity) and (4) that the building’s extravagant design implied that the ECB justified inequality of status (e.g. that bankers deserve better office premises than ordinary citizens) (i.e. inequality of status). In relation to its criticism of the ECB’s endorsement of inequality of status, Blockupy claimed that austerity measures had favored the rich over the poor, the banks over ordinary people, and the creditor class over debtors - policies that it said had amounted to bailing out irresponsible financiers at the expense of ordinary citizens. “The ruling elites have nothing left of value to offer for us,” a Blockupy spokesperson said. (March 18th 2015: Transnational actions against the European Central Bank’s opening gala – Let’s Take Over The Party!, 2015).

In relation to its criticism of ECB’s hypocrisy of austerity, Blockupy chose to protest outside the ECB’s new headquarters in Frankfurt to highlight the contradiction between the ECB’s lavish spending on its own building while forcing cuts and market reforms on countries like Greece. In a press statement dated 18 March 2015, Blockupy declared:

“On March 18th 2015 the European Central Bank (ECB) wants to open its new headquarters in Frankfurt. A dizzying €1.3 billion was spent on a 185-meter-high fortress-like twin tower building, surrounded by a fence and castle moat. This intimidating architecture of power is a perfect symbol of the distance between the political and financial elites and the people. There is nothing to celebrate in austerity and impoverishment! Thousands of angry people and determined activists from all over Europe will therefore block the roads around the ECB and interrupt this celebration of power and capital.... We will take over their party and turn it into an articulation of transnational resistance against European crisis policies and their catastrophic consequences, especially for the people in the European south.” (Blockupy press statement: March 18th 2015: Transnational actions against the European Central Bank’s opening gala – Let’s Take Over The Party!, 2015).

The theme of solidarity with citizens in southern EU countries was a popular one in Blockupy communication material. Vaara (2014) refers to this theme in his study of the discursive underpinnings of the legitimacy crisis faced by the Eurozone (2014: 515). In this setting it linked with the theme of democracy, which was at the heart of Blockupy’s fight against austerity. The movement
linked the economic injustice of the austerity measures in Europe with the lack of political representation in EU bodies such as the ECB (whose set-up resembles a corporation). Blockupy appeared to take pride in contrasting the lack of democratic participation in ECB affairs with Blockupy’s own democratic management style. In a statement to the German news media outlet Deutsche Welle on 31 May 2013, Ani Dießelmann, a spokesperson for Blockupy, stated, "What’s unique about Blockupy is that it’s not organized from anyone above." (31 May 2013 - http://www.dw.de/europeans-blockupy-the-ecb-in-frankfurt/a-16851232) In its 18 March 2015 press statement, Blockupy declared that “the EU has become more and more of an authoritarian regime with an obvious lack of democratic participation” and that in response Blockupy’s aim is to "build democracy and solidarity from the bottom up... It will be our task to build solidarity and real democracy from below. They want capitalism without democracy, but we want democracy without capitalism!" (March 18th 2015: Transnational actions against the European Central Bank’s opening gala – Let’s Take Over The Party!, 2015). This call for more democratic participation in EU affairs was a fight for a greater voice in determining the best economic policy for EU citizens. Blockupy’s overriding ambition was for greater democratic accountability in the European Union. To Blockupy, the representational political system in Europe—particularly in the affairs of the EU and its troika partners - was inadequate.

(3) The media
In this empirical setting I identify news media in a political actor role as a third actor. Although the three other roles of the media also are identified in this setting, media in these other roles are not portrayed as a main actor in this setting. Instead, media in the other three roles are linked to the discursive (de)legitimation activities of the other main actors, namely the ECB, Blockupy, their audiences, and experts representing elite institutional actors.

Overall, some media outlets were shown to be proponents of the ECB’s austerity measures, others were opponents to these measures, and still others were more or less neutral. In other words, the media were either relatively neutral or they took sides with either of the two main actors in this discursive struggle: Blockupy and the ECB. However, in taking sides, some media adopted a political actor role. Referring to the definition of media in a political actor role offered in the previous chapter, I looked for media as highly active participants in the (de)legitimation process (e.g., discursively mobilizing their audiences towards forming certain perceptions of the ECB policy and predominantly communicating their own legitimacy judgments). (Detailed explanations of how media in this role are identified in media texts are offered below in ‘5.4.2 Media role analysis’.)

My analysis found a number of Irish newspapers, including the Irish Independent and the Irish Mirror, and the German news media outlet de Spiegel showing clear signs of media in a political actor role through overwhelmingly attacking the legitimacy of the ECB, its austerity policy, and its mismanagement of its headquarters construction project without explicitly leaning on the voices
of other actors. Moreover, they took an active lead role in (de)legitimation processes, and those that opposed the ECB’s measures often appeared as an advocate for Blockupy.

(4) Audiences
The audiences of these main actors (e.g., of the ECB, Blockupy and the media) participating in these discursive processes were given a voice through the media performing a facilitator role. The voice of these audiences was primarily captured through posts in online discussion forums hosted by mainstream news media such as The Guardian (in its discussion forum called ‘GuardianWitness’) and The Telegraph. Some audience members were shown to be proponents of the ECB’s austerity measures, others were opponents, and still others appeared to be relatively neutral. Details of audience members are not made known in this setting beyond their usernames.

On 18 March 2015, during one of the Blockupy street protests, editors of the ‘GuardianWitness’ forum invited protestors to submit text and visual material demonstrating their experiences while marching on the streets. At the same time, the newspaper published an article about the protest. This resulted in 1,239 posts, representing audiences gaining a media voice on The Guardian’s online discussion platform. Nevertheless, in spite of ongoing heated discussions in online forums hosted by news media, because its members’ voices collectively did not dominate overall mainstream news media discussion over the ECB policy, audiences in this setting occupied an overall marginalized position in the media discussions.

(5) Experts
Certain news media drew on the commentary and interpretations of experts (representing elite institutional actors) as a sense-making service to their audiences. In a 2014 study showing the UK media’s bias towards austerity (Mercille, 2014), the background of ‘experts’ commenting in the media, most of whom came from or shared the ideology of elite institutions, point to the biased nature of the UK news coverage of austerity. Among all those considered experts in the study, excluding regular journalists, most were economists or worked in the financial sector. Others included politicians (virtually all from the establishment parties), academics and trade union representatives.

5.4 Data collection
Data gathered for the analysis of this case included news media reports, posts in online discussion forums hosted by the media, press releases, speeches, newsletters, and other communication material produced by the main actors. In my view news media content, including posts in online discussion forums hosted by the media, provides an increasingly important context for the study of discursive (de)legitimation of a controversial government policy (see also Vaara (2014) for a critical discourse analysis of legitimacy struggles in the Eurozone.
crisis in which legitimation strategies are identified in media discussions). Media texts were the primary data for my analysis for three reasons. First, because media texts are both the input (e.g., press statements, newsletters and speeches) and output (e.g., news reports) of the news media, analysis of media texts is important to this study which is primarily about how contemporary news media organizations participate in and shape the social and discursive processes through which organizations and their activities are legitimated and delegitimated in society. Second, media texts reveal the main themes and discourses each actor drew on in the discursive strategies they employed in the public battle over the legitimacy of the ECB’s austerity measures. Third, the large number of media texts collected for this study provided sufficient background information and thus a ‘meta-narrative’ of the (de)legitimation process surrounding this struggle and also allowed me to zoom in to a closer analysis of individual texts in order to examine textual strategies played out in the media.

English-language newspapers, such as the Financial Times and The Guardian, offer a rich snapshot of global voices as they reach a broad audience around the world. The Financial Times is published in four editions – the UK, continental Europe, USA and Asia – and is printed in 23 cities across three continents. Even though the print edition of The Guardian has a lesser global reach in comparison with the Financial Times, the majority of its readers online are from abroad. As these newspapers transcend geographical boundaries, they influence public debates far outside of Britain.

I acknowledge a limitation in this study of reliance on English-language news reports to examine a phenomenon that took place in countries where English is not the main language. As such, the data collected for this study may not adequately reflect the themes, discourses and discursive strategies that emerged through media coverage from non-English language media outlets. The main actors in this study – particularly the ECB and Blockupy – target their messages to specific audiences in languages other than English. Nevertheless, many multinational organizations based in Europe rely on English language communication to reach wide-ranging audiences across multiple European countries. Blockupy and the ECB both fit this category of a multinational organization based in Europe whose goal is to communicate with a wide range of European audiences in English. For instance, the websites of both organizations offer newsletters, reports, press releases and other media texts in English. For this reason, the extensive quantity of English-language media texts surrounding the five events in this study offer sufficient data for a critical discourse analysis of the themes, discourses and discursive strategies around the struggle over the legitimacy of the ECB’s austerity measures.

To gather a corpus of media texts around the five events that make up this three-year legitimacy struggle, I first searched for the term ‘blockupy’ within the key dates 1 January 2012 and 31 December 2015 in LexisNexis. This search led to 91 articles from international news media outlets that mentioned Blockupy within this timeframe. These articles were largely centered around the three Blockupy-initiated events (the street protests in May 2012, May 2013 and March 2015). After the removal of duplicates, I also narrowed my collection of media
texts to those produced by mainstream national and metropolitan news media outlets in Europe, USA and Australia. For instance, I removed articles published by a newswire service called Plus Media Solutions, a media monitoring and analysis service in Ireland called Business World, a Turkish newspaper called Today's Zaman, and a Tunisian press agency called Agency Tunis Afrique Press. This yielded 31 media articles.

Second, to find other media texts not identified in the LexisNexis search, I conducted a custom search in Google using date range searches for each of the three Blockupy-initiated events and using the keywords ‘blockupy’, ‘ecb’, ‘protest’, and ‘austerity’. For the May 2012 event, this resulted in 77 results. For the May 2013 event, this resulted in 138 results. For the March 2015 event, this resulted in 1,040 results. I then read and determined whether each article dealt with Blockupy’s protest over the ECB’s austerity measures.

I also conducted a custom search in Google using an appropriate date range search for each of the two remaining events (September 2012 and October-November 2013) that did not involve Blockupy and using the keywords ‘ecb’, ‘headquarters’ and ‘cost’. In September 2012 the ECB held a topping out ceremony to mark completion of the main structural works of its building project and when cost overruns and delays were revealed the news media published critical reports. In October and November 2013 certain media outlets published reports scathing of the ECB’s management of the construction project for its headquarters. For the September 2012 event, this Google search resulted in 73 results. For the October-November 2013 event, this resulted in 87 results. I read each article to determine whether each one dealt with the construction costs of the ECB’s new headquarters.

In total, 1,415 media texts were collected from this Google search across all five media events. From this I conducted a manual search of these results to identify media texts not covered in the LexisNexis search. This left 46 media articles that had not been identified in the LexisNexis search and which I included as my data. In total I collected 77 news media texts relating to all five media events. Although much of the media attention emanated from German news media, I specifically sought out English-language texts relating to the case.

In addition, I collected a total of 1,469 posts as textual data from online discussion forums linked to news reports of two newspapers spanning three events. In the September 2012 event, 104 posts were published by readers directly responding to an article in The Telegraph dated 20 September 2012. In the May 2013 event, 126 posts were published by readers directly responding to an article in The Guardian dated 31 May 2013. In the March 2015 event, an online article dated 18 March in The Guardian attracted 1,239 posts. The Guardian newspaper’s online discussion platform, called ‘GuardianWitness’, invites readers to contribute videos, pictures and text, and to browse all the content submitted by other posters and reporters.

Online discussion forums hosted by the media enable anyone to post a comment and for others to respond. Hence, as theorized in earlier chapters, all participants in online discussions may assume the role of both writer (e.g. actor)
and reader (e.g. audience). In other words, it allows turn-taking by all participants, including discussion forum editors. The collection of online textual data enabled the capture of ‘media voice’ by audiences of the main actors empowered and facilitated by media in a facilitator role.

To gain additional contextual background information of the legitimacy struggle over the ECB austerity measures, I collected other available communication material produced by both Blockupy and the ECB. I collected nine documents from Blockupy, including protest plans, event leaflets and meeting reports. The ECB produced and made available on its website nine newsletters dedicated to information about the new ECB headquarters construction project (subtitled ‘Information on the new premises of the European Central Bank in Frankfurt’ and divided into sections such as ‘milestones’, ‘editorial’, ‘news’, ‘construction’ and ‘forum’) between March 2008 and March 2015. Other ECB communication material gathered included fact sheets, press releases, construction plans and speeches delivered at key construction events. Speeches and press releases were particularly helpful in uncovering the intertextual nature of some media texts. If press releases do not provide adequate information to journalists, they sometimes turn to speech texts to gain additional information and statements, and texts from these additional materials often end up in published news media texts. In total I collected 16 ECB documents that offered rich background material to the (de)legitimation process surrounding this struggle over the legitimacy of the ECB austerity measures in the years from 2012 to 2015.

ECB representatives who were given a voice in some of these communication materials included ECB President Mario Draghi, former ECB President Jean-Claude Trichet, current and former members of the Executive Board, the Governing Council and the General Council of the ECB, Project Coordinator of the New ECB Premises, and Project Manager of the New ECB Premises project. Deputy Minister President of the State of Hesse and Lord Mayor of the City of Frankfurt am Main both delivered speeches at key events. Politicians in and around Frankfurt published commentaries in the ECB construction newsletters. Architects and planners involved in the construction project also published reports in the construction newsletters.

### 5.5 Data analysis

Out of a total of 129 documents collected, 77 news media texts and 1,469 social media posts from online discussion forums of two newspapers were chosen for a detailed and systematic analysis. The media material was useful to identify the main actors and the critical phases in this (de)legitimation process, as well as to place the media discussions in their broader context.

I followed an abductive (Erkama & Vaara, 2010; Wodak, 2004) analysis process in which there was continuous feedback between theory and data. This approach enabled me to conduct increasingly focused empirical analyses while refining my theoretical ideas relating to the media’s roles in discursive legitimation. In a preliminary phase of the analysis, I constructed my narrative of the key events, actors, themes, discourses and discursive strategies (Langley, 1999).
I also followed the discursive legitimation analysis approach of Vaara and colleagues (Erkama & Vaara, 2010; Vaara et al., 2006; Vaara & Tienari, 2008) and inspired by Van Leeuwen’s ‘grammar of legitimation’ (Van Leeuwen, 2007; Van Leeuwen & Wodak, 1999), but adapted to suit the specificities of online discussion forums. I proceeded in three stages of reading, coding and analysing with five different goals: (1) an analysis focused on identifying the key media events and main initiators of each event, (2) an analysis focused on identifying each of the media’s four distinct roles in the empirical setting, (3) a thematic analysis focused on identifying recurring themes, common wording and narrative patterns that characterized the discourses of the main actors, (4) an inter-discursive analysis to identify the broader discourses referenced in the media by the main actors, and (5) a textual analysis to identify the most important discursive strategies the main actors made use of in this (de)legitimation process.

5.5.1 Identification of key events

I next lay out a chronological order of the key media events that are distinctly characterized by media coverage initiated by press statements synchronized with staged events (with the exception of the fourth event on October-November 2013). Table 7 below summarizes descriptions of each event, including the main initiator of each event.

I began with a Google search using the terms ‘Blockupy’, ‘ECB’, ‘European Central Bank’ and ‘austerity’ to identify key events that attracted critical attention towards the ECB’s austerity measures. From this initial search I identified five main events between May 2012 and March 2015:

(1) in May 2012 Blockupy held a protest outside the ECB;
(2) in September 2012 the ECB held a topping out ceremony to mark completion of the main structural works of its building project and when cost overruns and delays were revealed the news media published critical reports;
(3) in May 2013 Blockupy organized another two-day blockade outside the ECB;
(4) in October and November 2013 certain media outlets published reports scathing of the ECB’s management of the construction project for its headquarters;
(5) in March 2015 Blockupy staged a protest outside the newly built ECB headquarters in Frankfurt.

Each event was punctuated by a burst of news media attention, including heated discussions in online forums hosted by news media. Three of the events (May 2012, May 2013 and March 2015) were initiated by Blockupy which organized street protests to gain media attention. Ironically, the other two events (September 2012 and October/November 2013) did not involve Blockupy or protests at all and instead were initiated by news media in a political actor role critical of ECB and pointing to the ECB’s hypocrisy surrounding the seemingly extravagant construction costs of its new headquarters.
**Event 1: May 2012**

Only months after establishing itself in Europe, on 16 May 2012 Blockupy organized a four-day demonstration outside ECB’s office building in Frankfurt to protest against the ECB’s austerity policy. Although the ECB did not directly respond to the protest, despite being the primary focus of this media event, it did offer a brief downbeat statement to the media simply announcing that the protest had not affected its normal operations. Seven media reports from mainstream English-language news organizations, including *The Guardian, New York Times, USA Today, Reuters* and *The Telegraph*, covered this event.

**Event 2: September 2012**

On 20 September that same year the ECB held a traditional ‘topping out’ ceremony to mark the completion of the main structural works on its 185-meter twin-towered skyscraper in Frankfurt. Hidden deep within its press release announcing the ceremony, a statement revealed major cost overruns and delays. The original budget of €850 million had risen to €1.3 billion due to costlier materials and unexpected site problems. In addition, an ECB spokesperson stated that “owing to the complexity of the requisite restoration works on the original fabric of this listed building” the project would be approximately six months behind schedule. Seven media reports from mainstream English-language news organizations, including the BBC, *New York Times, Financial Times* and *The Telegraph*, covered this event. Surprisingly, Blockupy did not publicly participate in or comment on the ceremony and the cost overruns and therefore it was not mentioned in media reports.

**Event 3: May 2013**

Blockupy protesters surrounded the ECB building in Frankfurt to block access to the ECB and other banks in protest against the ECB’s role in encouraging eurozone governments to impose austerity measures to cut debt. German police reported that between 1,000 and 2,500 people gathered in the rain linking arms and blocking streets. Protesters held up signs while police wearing riot gear brought in trucks with water canons to prevent trouble. As in the first event, despite being the focus of this event, the ECB did not respond directly to the protesters’ grievances. Instead, in a press release it stated that it had taken measures to remain operational and to ensure the safety of its staff. Seventeen English-language news reports emanated from this event. Some reports linked the protest with recently released youth unemployment figures in Europe.

**Event 4: October-November 2013**

On 26 October 2013, just over one year after the topping out ceremony, the Irish Independent, in its opinion section called ‘The Punt’, criticized the ECB’s planning abilities, referring to new information released by the ECB that the central bank had miscalculated the size of the office space it needed for its new building and that as a result the bank would need to find alternative office space for the rest of its staff. Two days later, the English-language version of German news
media outlet *de Spiegel* published a scathing feature article uncovering extensive details of the ECB’s mismanagement of its headquarters construction project. Opponents critical of ECB’s management of the project included politicians and news media. Over the next two weeks, four other news media outlets also covered the story, some referring to *de Spiegel’s* article as the source of the story. Like the September 2012 event, in this event Blockupy surprisingly played a minor role, leaving criticism of ECB to politicians and the media.

**Non-event: November 2014**
The official opening of the ECB headquarters had been set for November 2014, and Blockupy had been planning a major protest event around this date. However, the ECB announced that although staff would move into the new premises in November, the official opening ceremony would be postponed to March 2015. For this reason Blockupy decided to postpone its protest until March 2015.

**Event 5: March 2015**
During the official opening ceremony in which invited dignitaries delivered speeches and sipped champagne in a secluded area of the new building in Frankfurt, Blockupy held a major protest rally outside the building to campaign against the ECB’s austerity measures. Approximately 10,000 protesters reportedly took part. Thousands of police stood ready to protect the safety of property and residents. However, violence broke out as demonstrators clashed with police. Police cars were set alight and stones were thrown. Police in riot gear used water cannons to clear hundreds of protesters from the streets around the new ECB headquarters. Ninety police and firefighters were injured by stones or tear gas. As a result, 350 people were arrested. Although the ECB did not directly respond to Blockupy’s protest message in its press release that day, again despite being the primary focus of the event, the ECB president acknowledged the protesters and responded to their criticism in his speech at the inauguration ceremony. The protest gained extensive publicity due largely to the violence, with 40 mainstream English-language news media covering the event.

Accordingly, the data set was divided into the following five time periods (with their corresponding number of media articles): May 2012 (7); September 2012 (7); May 2013 (17); October/November 2013 (6); March 2015 (40).

**Table 7. Chronology and description of events**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Event description</th>
<th>Initiator of event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Event 1 (May 2012)</td>
<td>Blockupy protests austerity measures</td>
<td>Blockupy initiates event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event 2 (September 2012)</td>
<td>ECB holds topping out ceremony</td>
<td>ECB initiates event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event 3 (May 2013)</td>
<td>Blockupy protest blocks access to ECB offices</td>
<td>Blockupy initiates event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event 4 (October/November 2013)</td>
<td>Media reveal increasing costs to construction of ECB’s new headquarters</td>
<td>Media initiates event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event 5 (March 2015)</td>
<td>Blockupy protests outside new ECB headquarters</td>
<td>Blockupy initiates event</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.5.2 Media role analysis

Next I conducted an analysis focused on identifying each of the media’s four distinct roles in the empirical setting. In a close reading of all 77 media reports and 1,469 posts relating to all five events, I sought to categorize media into each of the four roles identified and defined in the previous chapters. I identified the entire media organization in a certain role based on a single report (and on audience members’ online posts relating to a single report) produced by a single journalist. In other words, my task was to show that although one journalist was largely responsible for producing the text of the report, for the purposes of my study I identified the media organization as a whole performing a role in that empirical setting through a single media report relating to that setting (in this case, the struggle over the legitimacy of the central bank’s austerity policy between 2012 and 2015). Identifying media organizations’s roles was an important step to trying to make sense of (1) how the news media performed these roles in a specific context and (2) how organizations made use of discursive means in the mobilization of media in each of these roles. I particularly made use of key attributes of each role developed in the previous chapters as an analytical tool to aid in identification of each role within the media texts.

(1) Political actor

To identify the political actor role, I also drew on three key descriptors of what the media are in this role in the context of legitimation, as outlined in chapter four. These include:

(1) Active participant in legitimation
(2) Watchdog and critical observer
(3) Sense-giver.

The following five key descriptors of what the media do in this role in the context of legitimation also aided in the identification of media in this role:

(1) Use of purposive communication to frame issues, practices and actors in legitimacy struggles
(2) Discursive or material mobilization of audience contestation over legitimacy
(3) Creation of dramatized representations of events and the individuals and organizations participating in them
(4) Endorsement of or challenge to other organizations’ legitimacy
(5) Enactment of their own (de)legitimation strategies.

Based on the key attributes and key descriptors related to this role, I identified numerous news media in this role. On 28 October 2013 de Spiegel, a German news media outlet, led the charge in destabilizing the ECB’s austerity policy through a lengthy expose of its mishandling of the construction of the ECB’s new headquarters in Frankfurt. Over the next ten days, this de Spiegel report led to
a wave of other news media articles vehemently criticizing the ECB’s mismanagement of its construction project. Adopting a form of investigative journalism (a key attribute of the political actor role), the report exposed the ECB’s mismanagement of its construction project, highlighting a watchdog and critical observer function (one of the key descriptors of this role): ‘So far, the monetary watchdogs have failed to convincingly explain to the public why their estimates were wrong.’ In doing so, it made use of purposive communication to frame the ECB in very critical terms (another key descriptor of this role). It also made use of dramatized representations of the construction project (a key descriptor of this role), such as the building plans, and of the ECB itself in order to challenge the legitimacy of the ECB and its policy (a key descriptor of this role): ‘The skyscraper looks more like a giant sculpture than an office building’ … ‘It’s the kind of space that might accommodate a global government in a science fiction film.’

Other example texts from the report that highlight some of these key attributes and descriptors of the political actor role include:

"This will be a symbol of the European Union," he raved in 2009. Four years later, the building has become a symbol of waste and inadequate control."

‘With a number of euro countries groaning under their debt burdens, provoking angry protests from Greece to Portugal, the aesthetics and features of the ECB tower seem oddly inappropriate. Do the taxpayer-funded central bankers really need a headquarters building that is 30 meters (98 feet) taller and twice as expensive as the twin towers of Deutsche Bank, Germany’s largest bank?’

‘Europe’s monetary watchdogs had long cherished the dream of having their own, prestigious headquarters. When the ECB was founded in 1998, they initially occupied a 40-story building on Willy-Brandt-Platz in downtown Frankfurt … not exactly befitting the social status of self-assured central bankers.’

Overall, these example texts showed de Spiegel as an active participant in the delegitimation of the ECB (a key descriptor of this role). It also points to de Spiegel’s role as an advocate for underprivileged and marginalized actors who had not yet been able to gain a legitimate media voice as opponents against the ECB’s fiscal policy. In doing so, it sided with Blockupy, although it did not name the activist group in its report. As will be shown later, de Spiegel enacted its own (de)legitimation strategies (a key descriptor of this role) while drawing on specific discourses to delegitimate the ECB and its austerity policy. This is one example of the news media as political actor discursively mobilizing its audience (a key descriptor of this role) to delegitimate the ECB’s discourse of austerity.

By overwhelmingly attacking the legitimacy of the ECB and its austerity policy, other news media were identified in the political actor role. For example, the Irish Independent in its report on 26 October 2013 showed itself in this role by advocating its own viewpoint and contributing its own authoritative source of opinion on the ECB’s (mis)management of the construction of its headquarters building. The following text example exemplifies this:
‘Planning is one activity we thought the European Central Bank was good at ... the bank now admits the new building will be too small, with only enough room for about half of its employees. This, quite frankly, is ridiculous.’

The *Irish Mirror* in its report on 29 October 2013 showed similar attributes of media in a political actor role. The following text example shows it advocating its own viewpoint and contributing its own authoritative source of opinion on the ECB’s (mis)management of the construction of its headquarters building:

‘The ECB fatcats blamed the spiralling costs on “a number of unforeseen challenges that needed to be dealt with”.

**2) Facilitator**

Identification of the facilitator role was relatively straightforward. I looked for online discussion forums hosted by the media in which audiences engaged in the debate over the ECB’s austerity policy. I found a number of examples. Of the 1,469 posts collected as textual data from online discussion forums of newspapers, 104 posts were published by readers of *The Telegraph* responding to an article dated 20 September 2012 about the ECB’s new headquarters, 126 posts were published by readers directly responding to an article in *The Guardian* dated 31 May 2013 about the Blockupy protests, and 1239 posts were published in response to an online article dated 18 March 2015 in *The Guardian* about the Blockupy protests. *The Guardian* newspaper’s online discussion platform, called ‘GuardianWitness’, invites readers to contribute videos, pictures and text, and to browse all the content submitted by other posters and reporters. ‘GuardianWitness’ editors state in an online information page: “Posts will be reviewed by our team and suitable contributions will be published on GuardianWitness, with the best pieces featured on the Guardian site – you could even help shape the news agenda.” (GuardianWitness: What it is and what it does, 2015). Reader contributions fall into three categories: textual, photographic or video assignments allocated by the newspaper; live news blogs; and open suggestions from readers, including story ideas and assignment suggestions. Interestingly, on the day of one of the Blockupy street protests editors of the ‘GuardianWitness’ invited protest participants to submit text and visual material demonstrating their experiences at the protests.

**3) Mediator**

Identification of the media in a mediator role proved more difficult. For example, I essentially looked for expert commentary and interpretations relating to this empirical case. I subsequently found two examples of the media in this role. One was *The Guardian*. In May 2013 *The Guardian’s* Katie Allen authored an article that clearly was primarily designed to help the newspaper’s audiences make sense of Blockupy’s protest. Sense-making is a key attribute in this role—i.e., a focus on helping readers make sense of highly contested and complex issues through relatively balanced commentary or interpretation based on expert knowledge of the topic under discussion. Numerous reports about the protest by *The Guardian* and other media outlets in the days prior to the publication of
this article were dominated by emotional accusations from opposing actors in this media event. In contrast to these controversy-laden reports, Katie Allen’s article was characterized by lengthy expert commentary from economists, statisticians and a human resources executive outlining the background to, and presenting reasons behind, the growing dissatisfaction of the ECB’s austerity moves.

(4) Conduit
Finally, I identified the role of the media as conduit. Key attributes of this role point to the media essentially reflecting in a relatively unedited fashion the claims of the main actors. Accordingly, I looked for reports predominantly quoting verbatim claims made by Blockupy and ECB representatives in their press statements or speeches. I also looked for evidence of journalistic ideals of objectivity and neutrality in the reports. Numerous examples of this role could be identified in the reports of the media in the sub-genre or sections categorized as ‘hard’ news, business news, and international news. In a close reading of all the media texts, this role of the media was more obvious and more numerous than the other three roles. Arguments made by ECB executives, Blockupy spokespeople, politicians and the police were clearly in evidence in reports by the media in this role.

I found that elements of both the conduit and political actor roles were sometimes in evidence in single articles. For example, differentiating between the media as active and passive participant in (de)legitimation sometimes proved difficult. Also, clearly demarcating the media between conduit and political actor through key attributes such as ‘use of purposive communication to frame issues’ and ‘creation of dramatized representations of events’ often proved challenging. Accordingly, whenever I could not clearly differentiate between these roles, I excluded them from my analysis. The media reports that more readily and obviously demonstrate the media in one of the four roles have been included in my analysis.

5.5.3 Thematic analysis
I next conducted a thematic analysis focused on identifying recurring themes, common wording and narrative patterns that characterized the discourses of the main actors. My goal was to uncover the issues that were more prominent in the (de)legitimation of the ECB’s austerity measures in the media debate by the main actors. This led to a better understanding of what kinds of topics seemed to be brought up more generally when dealing with criticism of EU-sanctioned austerity measures. Important themes emerged from repeated reading of the material. I found eight main discursively constructed themes. Some of them were relevant across all five media events (e.g. harmful austerity and hypocrisy of austerity) while others appeared only in the protest events of May 2012, May 2013 and March 2015 (e.g. protest (il)legitimacy). This initial analysis allowed me to pinpoint and narrow down media texts that were more relevant to my research. These offer specific examples where themes were central to and dominant in the arguments in the text.
As shown in Table 8 below, I categorized these themes according to three different objects of legitimation going on in the overall discursive struggle over the legitimacy of the ECB austerity policy. Two themes were more closely linked to the legitimacy of the ECB austerity policy. First, I identified *harmful austerity* as a central theme dominating the discourses. One of the more prominent claims made by certain media, politicians, economists, trade unions and Blockupy was that the austerity measures the ECB meted out on some EU countries were harmful to the economy of those countries and therefore to the lives of citizens of those countries. This was what made austerity such a controversial strategy in Europe. Second, I identified *forced austerity* as a key theme: certain actors claimed that the ECB’s austerity measures were unduly forced on some EU countries, highlighting the danger of the ECB’s power over the lives of European citizens.

Four more themes tied to the overall struggle over the legitimacy of the ECB austerity policy, however, were more directly linked to the legitimacy of the ECB as a fiscally responsible manager of its new headquarters construction project. I identified *financial mismanagement of headquarters (HQ) construction* as one of these themes. When revelations surfaced in the media that the central bank had massively overspent its construction budget, certain actors strongly argued that the ECB had not been a responsible fiscal manager of its headquarters construction project. Another theme tied to this was identified as *hypocrisy of austerity*: claims were made that the ECB had been hypocritical in not applying its strict austerity principles to its own construction budget. I also identified *injustice of vision* as an important theme characterizing the discourses of some of the main actors. For example, some news media joined Blockupy in claiming that the ECB’s overly ambitious vision of its place in the EU, reflected in the extravagant design of its new headquarters building, was unjust. Blockupy’s argument was that the staff and premises of a central bank in a democratic society should be more reflective of the working and living conditions of the majority of the citizens in that society. Hence, another theme that emerged in the discourses was *inequality of status*: arguments were made by some actors that the ECB building’s extravagant design and cost implied that the management of the ECB considered themselves at an elevated status over ordinary citizens of the EU (e.g. bankers deserve better office premises than ordinary citizens).

Finally, I identified two themes that related primarily to the legitimacy of the street protests as the appropriate means through which Blockupy should make its claims heard. *Protest (il)legitimacy* was one of these themes. Claims were made by some actors, particularly by politicians and media audiences, that Blockupy’s protests were illegitimate, especially when violence broke out resulting in costly damages to public and private property and endangering people’s lives. Blockupy had to constantly justify its reasons to hold large street protests, and one of the themes tied to this was *solidarity with southern EU countries*: one of the key claims made by Blockupy spokespeople during the protests was that its protestors were out on the city streets marching in support of those citizens in southern EU states suffering under harsh austerity measures imposed
by the ECB, and that people in other EU states also should stand in solidarity with them.

Table 8. Themes highlighting prominent issues in the (de)legitimation of the ECB’s austerity measures in the media debate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes based on object of legitimation</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Theme descriptions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Legitimacy of ECB’s austerity policy</td>
<td>Harmful austerity</td>
<td>Certain actors claimed that the ECB’s austerity measures the ECB meted out on some EU countries were harmful to the economy of those countries and therefore to the lives of citizens of those countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Forced austerity</td>
<td>Certain actors claimed that the ECB’s austerity measures were unduly forced on some EU countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legitimacy of ECB as a fiscally responsible manager of its new headquarters construction project</td>
<td>Financial mismanagement of HQ construction</td>
<td>Certain actors argued that the ECB was not a responsible fiscal manager of its headquarters construction project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hypocrisy of austerity</td>
<td>Claims were made that the ECB had been hypocritical in not applying austerity principles to its own construction budget</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Injustice of vision</td>
<td>Some actors claimed that the ECB’s overly ambitious vision of its place in the EU, reflected in the extravagant design of its new headquarters building, was unjust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inequality of status</td>
<td>Arguments were made by some actors that the ECB building’s extravagant design and cost implied that the ECB considered itself at an elevated status over ordinary citizens of the EU (e.g. bankers deserve better office premises than ordinary citizens)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legitimacy of street protests as the right means to attract public attention for Blockupy’s claims</td>
<td>Protest (il)legitimacy</td>
<td>Claims were made by some actors that Blockupy’s protests were illegitimate, especially when violence broke out resulting in costly damages to public and private property and endangering people’s lives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Solidarity with southern EU countries</td>
<td>One of the key claims made by Blockupy spokespeople, especially in defence of the protests, was that the protestors were marching in support of those citizens in southern EU states suffering under the ECB’s harsh austerity measures, and that people in other EU states also should stand in solidarity with them</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.5.4 Inter-discursive analysis

I then moved on to an inter-discursive analysis to identify the broader discourses referenced in the media by the main actors in the (de)legitimation process surrounding this struggle when dealing with the main themes identified above. As a researcher I am compelled to look for the prevailing discourses in the empirical phenomenon under investigation. My task as a critical scholar is to identify the discourses being “used” by particular actors in power relations over other actors so I can better understand the discursive struggle going on between actors.

Using a multi-level approach espoused by CDA, I connected the themes identified above to the macro societal discourses that dominated the media debate. I particularly drew on Vaara’s (2014) study in distinguishing four discourses (“financial capitalism”, “humanism”, “nationalism” and “Europeanism”) through which representatives of Blockupy, the ECB, news media (e.g., journalists and editors), political parties, the police, and audiences repeatedly attempted to legitimate or delegitimize the ECB’s austerity measures. The four
Discourses identified in Vaara’s (2014) study were particularly appropriate for my analysis because both our studies examine themes, discourses and discursive strategies in a similar empirical setting: legitimacy of the EU and its institutions. Vaara’s (2014) study looks at struggles over legitimacy in the Eurozone crisis involving European nation states and my study examines struggles over the legitimacy of austerity measures implemented by an EU institution. In many of the (de)legitimation acts examined in my empirical setting, I found that some discourses overlapped, which is typical in CDA.

Drawing particularly on the work of Vaara (e.g., 2014), I understand the discourse of financial capitalism as characterized by a focus on global capitalism promoting and naturalizing neoliberal ideology. The dominance of the free-market economy and the principal role of global financial markets and therefore central banks is an essential feature of this type of discourse. It is shown especially in the central role of economic expertise, the dominance of economic arguments, the nature of future economic and financial projections, and the sense of fiscal inevitability often associated with globalization (Vaara, 2014: 505).

The discourse of humanism displays a focus on human, social and societal implications, as opposed to the dominance of financial logic in financial capitalism discourse. It is exemplified by, for example, concerns over unemployment, poverty and general human dignity, and therefore tends to prioritize the interests of employees over employers, labour unions over corporate management, citizens over states, and protestors over bankers.

Nationalism discourse (Anderson, 1983; Wodak et al., 1999) is linked to nationalist ideology and sometimes shows itself in expressions of banal nationalism (Billig, 1995), such as colourful nationalistic language and national stereotypes. This discourse emphasizes the national interest over, for example, the multinational interests of a European identity.

The discourse of Europeanism is characterized by the belief that Europeans have common values and interests that transcend national identity (Majstorovic, 2007). It favours an over-arching European identity, or what could be called Europeanism, through explicit articulations of pro-European views or European interests over, for example, the concerns of a single nation within Europe.

I found that the most dominant discourse used by those actors opposed to austerity, such as Blockupy and media audiences, was humanism. This is not surprising given that these actors were concerned with austerity’s human and social impact. Financial capitalism, with its focus on the key role of global financial markets and central banks, was the dominant discourse used by the ECB and those who sided with austerity as the right policy for Europe to tackle its fiscal challenges. The discourse of Europeanism tended to be used only on a few occasions by Blockupy when dealing with the theme of solidarity with southern European citizens; Blockupy’s claim was that the notion of Europeanism called on all EU citizens to stand up for, and hence protest for, those EU citizens suffering in peripheral EU regions.

I did not find evidence of the discourse of nationalism in this setting, which then narrowed the number of key discourses to just three: financial capitalism,
humanism and Europeanism. In the context of this Europe-wide struggle between the ECB as champion for the dominant fiscal strategy of austerity to solve Europe’s debt woes and an activist group speaking on behalf of those considered marginalized throughout Europe and who are opposed to austerity, it is perhaps not surprising that nationalism—with its emphasis on the rights of individual states—did not surface as an important discourse in this debate.

5.5.5 Textual analysis

Finally, I conducted an increasingly targeted textual analysis to identify the most important discursive strategies the main actors made use of in this (de)legitimation process. I looked for the explicit or implicit discursive means that were used for legitimation and delegitimation purposes. I drew on Van Leeuwen’s ideas (e.g., 2008) refined by Vaara (2014) when attempting to make sense of and categorize my findings. In particular, I used the theoretical models of Vaara et al. (2006) and Vaara (2014) as a starting point for my coding. Such a CDA approach is particularly helpful in examining the legitimation tensions, struggles and strategies between the media and organisations, and between organisations themselves, through media discourse. Vaara et al. (2006) identified “normalization”, “authorization”, “rationalization”, “moralization”, and “narrativization” strategies while Vaara (2014) identified “position-based authorizations”, “knowledge-based authorizations”, “economic rationalizations”, “moral evaluations”, “mythopoietic future scenarios”, and “cosmological inevitability claims”. This led to a rough coding of the empirical material to identify such strategies in the media texts. However, when proceeding with the analysis, I modified these categories in order that they would best fit my empirical material.

Initially I identified authorization as a possible legitimation strategy that might be particularly linked to the mediator role in which the media draw on the commentary and interpretations of ‘experts’. Vaara’s (2014) analysis of legitimation strategies that emerged in the legitimacy struggle over the Eurozone crisis identified authorization as based on expertise and knowledge, such as from economists. The study found that experts such as economists either defended or opposed the Eurozone, and in doing so they made use of authorization as a strategy. However, in this dissertation I contend that the mediator role draws on experts’ knowledge as a sense-making mechanism, in essence to calm debates, especially those surrounding contentious issues. Accordingly, experts’ statements in the media in a mediator role are not as likely to persuade audiences one way or another. Hence, discursive strategies are not obvious in media texts published by media in a mediator role. Experts may potentially still have a persuasive voice through media in a conduit role where they may use legitimation strategies to move audiences. But in the mediator role legitimation strategies are not apparent. For this reason, I discarded authorization as a strategy in this study.

This led me to distinguish just three characteristic legitimation strategies of the main actors: rationalization, moralization and mythopoiesis. Rationaliza-
tion arguments concentrate on rational and economic arguments, such as overcapacity, profitability and cost-cutting (Vaara, 2014). This type of legitimation is often linked to the ideology of financial capitalism. Moralization strategies refer to specific values and moral bases of decisions made based on issues of unfairness, injustice, inequality, and so on (Vaara, 2014). This type of legitimation is often linked to humanistic discourse.

I found that the strategy of mythopoiesis was initially difficult to pin down and to differentiate with narrativization. According to Vaara (2014), mythopoiesis involves alternative future scenarios and cosmology is used to construct senses of inevitability. Narrativization is also described as legitimation conveyed through narratives (Vaara et al., 2006), which are often small stories or fragments of narrative structures about the past or future (Vaara, 2014: 503). Mythopoiesis is very much linked to narrativization as a legitimation strategy. Both mythopoiesis and narrativization are legitimation achieved through the telling of stories where a story is taken as evidence of acceptable, appropriate or preferential behavior and may convey moral or cautionary tales (Van Leeuwen & Wodak, 1999). Vaara et al (2006) pay specific attention to ‘dramatic narrativizations’, such as when particular organizations or persons are portrayed in a drama as winners, losers, heroes, adversaries or culprits: “The texts in question were often entertaining in tone and thus attracted readers in a special way” (Vaara et al, 2006: 802).

Zhu and McKenna (2012) are critical of mythopoiesis as a legitimation strategy. Their argument is that this is a genre whereas the others described above are substantive. In other words, whereas the other strategies are classified according to the content of the message, mythopoiesis is conveyed through narratives—a genre and a literary rhetorical device. Although I respect their argument, I include mythopoiesis as an appropriate legitimation strategy in this study for two reasons. First, given that legitimation strategies are explicit or implicit discursive means used for legitimation and delegitimation purposes, mythopoiesis can be said to be a legitimation strategy through its use as a rhetorical means in the legitimation and delegitimation of organizations. Second, this strategy is a suitable rhetorical means for use by media as a political actor in legitimation processes. I elaborate on this argumentation below.

After distinguishing these three strategies, I recoded the material accordingly. I then conducted a closer analysis of multiple illustrative textual examples, which is typically done in CDA (Fairclough, 2003). Subsequently, I exemplified discursive strategies and their characteristic discursive features in the discussion around the ECB’s austerity policy.

It gradually became apparent that mythopoiesis was the dominant legitimation strategy used by media in a political actor role and by other main actors in the media roles of conduit and mediator. This began to make sense, given that the media typically are in the business of storytelling through dramatic narrativization. Drama is one of the constituting elements of an issue’s newsworthiness (Galtung & Holmboe, 1965; Hilgartner & Bosk, 1988). As an exemplary example, I found evidence of this legitimation strategy in an article published on 28 October 2013 by de Spiegel that helped to initiate the fourth media event in
October and November 2013 exposing the cost overruns and delays in the construction of the ECB’s new headquarters. Multiple connecting mini-dramas within the overall drama of the ECB’s mismanagement of its headquarters construction unravelled in this article. For example, the headline stating ‘Skyrocketing costs for skyscraper project’ highlights the dramatic connection between the high towers and high fiscal cost of the project. The subheading ‘Luxury in an age of austerity’ contrasts the extravagance of the bank’s building with the money-pinching nature of its key monetary policy. Finally, the article brought to light the dramatic irony of the building’s location: the physical foundation of the exquisite building showcasing Europe’s banking elite is a former fruit and vegetable market that in the 1920s was popularly known as the ”Kappeskathe-drale,” which translates as "Rubbish Cathedral" or "Nonsense Cathedral". As a form of legitimation conveyed through narratives (Vaara et al., 2006), which are often small stories or fragments of narrative structures about the past or future (Vaara, 2014: 503), mythopoiesis is an apt discursive strategy for use by the media as a political actor in legitimation processes.

I then focused on unravelling the legitimation and delegitimation arguments of the protagonists, antagonists and other actors from the media texts. I identified all data segments that I saw as containing an implicit or explicit justification by the main actors for or against the ECB’s austerity measures, including justifications relating to the construction costs of the ECB’s new headquarters. The length of each data segment, which served as my unit of analysis, varied between a single phrase within a sentence to several paragraphs. I found myself following an iterative method of moving between theory, categories and data, which served to constantly refine my analysis of the findings as well as the theoretical framework on which my analysis and subsequent discussion of the findings was built.

My analysis proceeded as follows. I first identified and collected all textual material that I saw as representing acts of discursive (de)legitimation. The total number of these texts was 1,546, which included 77 news media texts and 1,469 social media posts from online discussion forums. Following the study by Vaara et al. (2006), the main criterion I used to identify discursive legitimation patterns was strategic importance.
Following the previous chapter’s contextualization of the empirical setting and an explanation of the research design, data collection processes, and the stages of analysis and interpretation, I now provide an analysis identifying, illustrating and elaborating the roles performed by the media and mobilized by the main actors through use of discourses, themes and discursive strategies in the (de)legitimation of the ECB austerity policy. The (de)legitimation process within this empirical setting involved five main actors: (1) the media themselves performing a political actor role; (2) the European Central Bank (ECB), which on a few occasions mobilized media in a conduit role for relegitimation purposes; (3) the activist group Blockupy, which mobilized media in a conduit role to delegitimate the bank’s policy; (4) audiences of these main actors, which were empowered and facilitated by media performing a facilitator role for legitimation purposes, and (5) experts as representatives of elite institutional actors who offered commentary and interpretations as a sense-making service to media audiences through media performing a mediator role.

I draw on critical discourse analysis (CDA) to provide insight into the discursive activities undertaken by these actors. Accordingly, in this chapter I deploy methods of CDA to empirically illustrate and elaborate (1) how news media organizations performed their roles in the context of a discursive legitimacy struggle between Blockupy (as change agent) and the European Central Bank (a powerful government organization) over a politically controversial organizational activity in 2012-2015, and (2) how Blockupy and the ECB mobilized media in certain roles for their own ends. In analyzing the empirical case, I make use of the framework of four media roles in legitimation developed in Part 1 as an analytical tool. The research questions guiding this empirical inquiry in Part 2 are:

- How do news media organizations perform their roles in the discursive (de)legitimation of a politically controversial organizational activity?
- How do organizations discursively mobilize the media in their roles when seeking to (de)legitimate a politically controversial organizational activity?

In sum, the empirical study shows how certain media performed a political actor role in (de)legitimating the ECB austerity policy through predominant use of mythopoiesis strategies—legitimation through the telling of stories. In delegitimating the ECB policy, media enacting this role used mythopoiesis strategies based on financial capitalism discourse, especially when referring to themes of
financial mismanagement of ECB headquarters construction’ and ‘ECB hypocrisy over austerity’. A few media were identified performing a facilitator role, thus empowering and facilitating audience participation in (de)legitimating the ECB’s politically controversial austerity policy through discursive means. Motivated primarily by moral arguments, audience members mostly drew on humanism discourse to expose the social and human impact of the bank’s fiscal policy. Only a few media were found to perform a mediator role; in this role media drew on the opinions of experts such as statisticians and economists as well as their own interpretation of the struggle as a sensemaking service to their audiences. However, legitimation strategies were not overtly apparent in this mediator role.

The study also shows that Blockupy mobilized media in a conduit role to delegitimate the ECB austerity measures using moralization strategies based largely on a humanism discourse. Motivated by rational and financial arguments, the ECB also mobilized media in a conduit role to relegitimate its economic policy by drawing on financial capitalism discourse—characteristic of debates over economic policy—using rationalization strategy.

This analysis seeks to shed light on how contemporary news media organizations in their various roles serve as a platform for and influence, facilitate and mediate the social and discursive processes of legitimation in society. The empirical case described in the previous chapter offers a particularly ideal opportunity to explore and better understand not only how the news media perform their roles in processes of organizational legitimation, delegitimation and re-legitimation, but also how various types of organizations (i.e., a powerful government organization and an activist group as change agent) can mobilize the media in these different roles for their own ends.

6.1 How media performed political actor, facilitator & mediator roles

The following analysis examines how various news media performed three roles in the (de)legitimation of the ECB’s controversial austerity policy. As such, it addresses the second research question: How do news media organizations perform their roles in the discursive (de)legitimation of a politically controversial organizational activity? A separate analysis of how media performed a conduit role is offered later and specifically addresses the third research question: How do organizations discursively mobilize the media in their roles when seeking to (de)legitimate a politically controversial organizational activity? Hence, this subsequent analysis examines how two organizations made use of media in a conduit role for their own discursive (de)legitimation purposes.

6.1.1 How media performed political actor role

My analysis of the political actor role examines how certain media performed this role in (de)legitimating the ECB austerity policy through various discursive
means. I looked for examples in media accounts showing how discursive strategies, discourses and themes were made use of by media in this role. I identified media performing a political actor by drawing on the key attributes and key descriptors that were theoretically refined and examined in Chapter 4. For example, I looked for examples in media texts of media proactively mobilizing audiences through persuasive discursive tactics. I also found examples of media using investigative-type reporting to expose the ECB’s mishandling of its headquarters construction project and related budget, and to overtly attribute blame to some actors and praise to others. Most examples of media enacting this role were found in texts within editorials and opinion pieces where the media’s voice as an autonomous actor is more clearly evident.

The following analysis is separated into an examination of how media performing this role were involved in legitimating or delegitimating three objects linked to the overall discursive struggle over the (il)legitimacy of the ECB’s austerity policy. Primarily, media enacting a political actor role were active in (de)legitimating the ECB austerity policy. However, a second object of (de)legitimation in this setting emerged when certain media revealed a budget blowout over the bank’s headquarters construction project in Frankfurt, thus raising important questions over whether the ECB was acting as a fiscally responsible manager of its headquarters construction project and by implication of the overall EU budget. A third object of (de)legitimation became evident when Blockupy’s protests against the austerity measures turned violent; politicians and media enacting a political actor role subsequently called into question the legitimacy of the protests as an appropriate means for Blockupy to attract public attention for its claims against the ECB austerity policy.

**(1) Media delegitimated ECB’s austerity policy**

Although evidence of media performing a political actor role became more obvious in the second event (September 2012) identified in the previous chapter, there was one media outlet that turned to the political actor role two days before Blockupy’s first protest on 16 May 2012. *The Guardian* ran an opinion piece on 14 May 2012 blaming the ECB austerity policy for one man’s suicide a month earlier. It performed a political actor role to attack the ECB’s austerity policy while at the same time claiming the legitimacy of the upcoming protests. In this opinion piece dramatic narrative turns-of-phrase were used as a legitimation strategy (characteristic of mythopoiesis) to portray the austerity policy in a very negative light. The article linked the theme of ‘harmful austerity’ with ‘protest (il)legitimacy’, using moral arguments (e.g. moralization) highlighting the negative social impact of austerity. Here is an example (underlining is used to indicate the focus of the discussion):

‘Popular protests such as Blockupy offer an alternative to capitalism for those facing a life hunting through garbage cans. Now, more than ever, the world looks two ways at once. Which way it turns will depend significantly on the protests announced for the days that come: Blockupy Frankfurt on 16 to 19 May, and all the explosions of creative anger that will follow. One face looks towards a dark, depressing world. A world of closing doors. A world of closing doors. A world of closing doors. A world of closing doors. A world of closing doors. A world of closing doors.'
hopes. These are times of austerity. You must learn to live with reality. You must obey if you want to survive, give up your dreams. Do not expect to live by doing what you like. You will be lucky to find a job at all. ... There is no alternative, just the reality of the rule of money, so forget your dreams. Work hard in whatever scrap of employment you can find, or else look forward to a life of hunting through garbage cans, because there will be no welfare state to protect you. Look at Greece and be warned. This is what the governments of Europe and the world are trying to impose on the people—all the governments are the servants of money, whether they speak from apparent positions of power, like the German government, or whether they are the simple functionaries of the international bank system... The austerity measures do not just impose poverty, they cut the wings of hope. In his suicide note [Dimitris Christoulas, 77-year-old ex-pharmacist who shot himself in Athens on 4 April after his pension was wiped out by the austerity measures imposed by the governments of Europe] writes: "I believe that young people with no future will one day take up arms and hang this country’s traitors upside down in Syntagma Square just as the Italians hanged Mussolini in 1945." ... The basis of that hope is a simple no: no, we will not accept your austerity. No, we will not accept the obscene inequalities of this world we live in; no, we will not accept a society that is hurling us towards our own destruction. And no, we will not suggest alternative policies. ... Christoulas speaks of young people taking up arms and hanging the politicians from the lampposts...’ (The Guardian, Opinion section; by-line: John Holloway, 14 May 2012)

Some Irish media enacting a political actor role appealed to moral arguments to highlight the human cost of the ECB’s fiscal policy. For example, in pointing to the harm the policy was causing in the EU (‘harmful austerity’ theme), the Irish Independent enacting a political actor role mostly drew on humanism discourse while using mythopoiesis strategy to delegitimate the ECB austerity measures, as articulated in this text on 31 May 2013:

‘Governments struggling with large debt burdens have cut spending and raised taxes, contributing to widespread recession across the euro zone, while many families are deep in debt or have lost their homes after property bubbles burst.’

(2) Media delegitimized ECB as a fiscally responsible manager of its headquarters construction project

The political actor role became much more evident when media discovered the budget blowout relating to the ECB’s new headquarters construction in September 2012 and again in October/November 2013. Media enacting a political actor role mostly sided with Blockupy (i.e., predominantly conveying the same claims made by the activist group) in dealing with themes of ‘financial mismanagement of headquarters (HQ) construction’, ‘harmful austerity’, ‘hypocrisy of austerity’, ‘inequality of status’ and ‘injustice of vision’. In repeatedly referring to the theme of ‘financial mismanagement of headquarters (HQ) construction’, media performing a political actor role drew on financial capitalism discourse using mythopoiesis strategy—the dominant discursive strategy in this role. Drawing on fiscal arguments and dramatic narrativization (characteristic of mythopoiesis as a strategy) to address this theme, media enacting a political actor tried to
portray the ECB as an irresponsible manager of both its own headquarters construction budget and, by extension, the finances of the European Union. The following excerpt from de Spiegel on 28 October 2013 illustrates this:

’Sofar, the monetary watchdogs have failed to convincingly explain to the public why their estimates were wrong. Likewise, the ECB, which likes to insist on its independence, has not presented any prognosis of expected future costs. The annual reports it sends to the European Parliament contain only cryptic information, in small print, on the new building.’

Also using mythopoiesis strategy, the Irish Independent on 26 October 2013 performed a political actor role in leading a scathing attack on the ECB over its mismanagement of the headquarters construction project, as exemplified in this text:

‘Planning is one activity we thought the European Central Bank was good at ... surprised to hear that it can’t even work out how much space it needs for an office. ...the bank now admits the new building will be too small, with only enough room for about half of its employees. This, quite frankly, is ridiculous.’

Like the Irish Independent, the Irish Mirror and Irish Daily Mail (in its opinion section) also appealed to a fiscal argument to criticize the ECB’s (mis)handling of the headquarters construction project and by implication of its EU fiscal policy. In performing a political actor role, they typically used mythopoiesis as a legitimation strategy, for example through dramatic narrativization, as shown in these texts on 29 October 2013 and 2 November 2013 respectively:

‘The ECB fatcats blamed the spiralling costs on “a number of unforeseen challenges that needed to be dealt with”.’

‘And the ECB lectures us? We are used to regular tellings-off from our EU/ECB/IMF Troika masters about the need for tighter control of public spending. But how good are key members of the Troika at controlling their own spending? Not very good... The vain plutocrats running the ECB are building a new HQ for themselves in Frankfurt.’

The Irish media were harsh in their criticism of the ECB. In enacting a political actor role, the Irish Examiner in an opinion piece on 19 March 2015 appealed to moral arguments, linking the theme of ‘financial mismanagement of HQ construction’ to themes of ‘ECB hypocrisy’ and ‘harmful austerity’. For example, in the article the Irish Examiner drew on humanism discourse using moralization as a strategy. In calling the new ECB headquarters “grotesquely lavish” and a “glass tower” and its policy as “inhumane” and a “regime”, the Irish Examiner sought to expose the ECB’s misbehaviour through framing ECB as a ‘hypocrite’ and its policy as ‘harmful’. In doing so, it conveyed the same claim as Blockupy’s, calling into question the bank’s “celebration” of its new headquarters in the face of its “moral imperative” to the “welfare of EU citizens”, as articulated in this text:
Anti-austerity protesters yesterday clashed with riot police near the new, grotesquely lavish headquarters of the European Central Bank. Yesterday was meant to be a celebration at the official opening of the 185-metre skyscraper—a glass tower that took five years and €1.3bn to build. Instead, it became the focus of a demonstration against the inhumane operations of the bank, which has insisted on a regime of austerity in indebted countries such as Ireland and Greece. The ECB’s moral imperative is that the welfare of EU citizens should be subordinate to paying back debt owed mainly to German banks.’

Repeatedly pointing to the main theme of ‘hypocrisy of austerity’, other international media performing a political actor role predominantly drew on financial capitalism discourse using mythopoiesis strategy. The powerful use of dramatic imagery (typical of mythopoiesis) aided media in rhetorically emphasizing the hypocrisy of the ECB, as demonstrated in these example text fragments:


‘[The ECB] ... spent months lecturing governments in Greece, Portugal and Ireland about the need to force through tough spending cuts’ (Financial Times, World News section, 21 September 2012).

‘Austerity put aside in ECB’s new (EURO) 1.2 billion headquarters ... The European Central Bank’s new headquarters reflect stability for the common currency but lack the austerity the bank preachers to countries like Greece and Spain.’ (The International Herald Tribune, Finance section; byline: Jack Ewing, 22 September 2012).

The Irish Mirror performing a political actor role also brought to the public’s attention the extravagance of the ECB’s new headquarters, highlighting the contrast in ‘inequality of status’ between elite bankers who “work in luxury” and citizens “living in poverty”. The following excerpt published on 29 October 2013 illustrates this:

‘While health and education budgets have been slashed on their orders the banking elite are determined to work in luxury. ... Critics have claimed that the new building is an outrage waste of public money when tens of millions of EU citizens are living in poverty.’

The German media outlet de Spiegel was a key player in exposing the ECB’s mismanagement of its new headquarters construction. Other international media followed suit. de Spiegel performed a political actor role to point out the injustice of ECB’s overly ambitious vision for its new headquarters and for the part it played in the EU (‘injustice of vision’ theme). It did so by drawing on the discourse of Europeanism (characterized by the belief that Europeans have
common values and interests beyond national interests). The following texts published on 28 October show typical examples of this:

‘Prix, the architect, was initially working under ideal conditions. When he began developing his designs, the Europeans were still proud of the euro and dreamed that it could one day supplant the US dollar as world’s reserve currency of choice. There was still plenty of money and ambition to go around. Prix was thrilled that his client had not made any attempts to trim his plans. “This will be a symbol of the European Union,” he raved in 2009. Four years later, the building has become a symbol of waste and inadequate control.’

‘Europe’s monetary watchdogs had long cherished the dream of having their own, prestigious headquarters. When the ECB was founded in 1998, they initially occupied a 40-story building on Willy-Brandt-Platz in downtown Frankfurt … not exactly befitting the social status of self-assured central bankers.’

Appendix 2 provides excerpts of texts illustrating media performing a political actor role in delegitimating the ECB policy.

(3) Media delegitimated Blockupy protests
When violence broke out in the protests in May 2013 and again in March 2015, news media turned to the political actor role to criticize the protests. Bloomberg, for example, predominantly drew on financial capitalism discourse using economic arguments (e.g. rationalization strategy) through its opinion section to both criticize the protests and defend the austerity policy of the ECB (referred to below as Quantitative Easing or QE):

‘Blockupy’ Protests at ECB Are Absurd
With garbage, cars and tires burning all over the place, the German financial capital looked for a moment like Kiev during last year’s revolution. The Frankfurt protesters, however, were barking up the wrong tree: The ECB is, for now, the leftists’ best friend. … If the demonstrators—and rioters—in the streets of Frankfurt today actually meant these slogans, they were seriously deluded. The ECB is the most democratically governed central bank in the world, and it has nothing to do with austerity…. A more meaningful place for the leftist protesters to burn tires and cars would be outside the Bundesbank, whose president Jens Weidmann steadfastly opposed QE, or the German Finance Ministry, whose head Wolfgang Schaeuble has described QE as “not the solution, rather the cause” of economic problems.’ (Bloomberg, Bloomberg View Opinion section; by-line: columnist Leonard Bershidsky, 13 March 2015)

German news media also criticized the March 2015 protests through performing a political actor role. Using the opinion pages, they combined mythopoiesis (e.g. dramatic narratives) with moralization (referring to specific values and moral bases of decisions based on issues of inequality and unfairness), as illustrated in this excerpt from an editorial in Die Welt, a German right-wing national daily broadsheet, on 19 March 2015:
‘[Left wing leaders in politics and media are] middle class children, inheritors of fortunes, self-benefactors, who want to be the good soldiers fighting against the evil. They march in line, singing workers songs. But the only working class children there are the police, who they attack with stones. There’s your class struggle.’

Appendix 3 provides excerpts of texts illustrating media performing a political actor role in delegitimizing Blockupy’s protests.

6.1.2 How media performed a facilitator role

This analysis identifies media performing a facilitator role and examines how audiences who were proponents and opponents of both Blockupy and the ECB in this empirical setting made use of discursive strategies, themes and discourses through this role. The role of the media as facilitator empowered and facilitated audiences of organizations such as the ECB and Blockupy with a voice through the news media’s online discussion forums, letters to the editor, and social media pages.

I particularly searched for examples of media offering audiences a forum to post a comment or respond to others’ comments in online discussion forums hosted by the media. I found 1,469 postings in online discussion forums linked to media articles published by three newspapers: The Telegraph in September 2012 (104 postings), The Guardian in May 2013 (126 postings), and The Guardian in March 2015 (1,239 postings). In these postings I looked for examples of texts showing evidence of those in support of or against the ECB’s austerity measures. Within these postings I also found text examples showing those for or against the protests and those with something to say about the ECB as a fiscal manager of its headquarters construction project.

The analysis shows that media performing a facilitator role empowered audiences to delegitimate the ECB in a number of ways. I identified moralization as the predominant legitimation strategy used by audiences to delegitimate the ECB as a responsible fiscal manager of its new headquarters project. As shown in Table 9 below, moralization strategies used by these audiences were linked with financial capitalism discourse when dealing with the theme of ‘financial mismanagement of HQ construction’. Moral arguments also were predominantly linked with humanism discourse when referring to themes of ‘hypocrisy of austerity’ (i.e., that the ECB had been hypocritical in not applying austerity principles to its own construction budget) and ‘protest (il)legitimacy’ (i.e., that Blockupy’s protests were not the right means to attract public attention for its claims, especially during events in which violence broke out resulting in costly damages to public and private property and endangering people’s lives).

The Telegraph performing a facilitator role on 20 September 2012 published an article titled ‘ECB’s new HQ will cost €200m more than expected’ and subsequently facilitated audiences’ participation, through its online discussion forum, in the delegitimation of the ECB as a fiscally responsible manager of its new headquarters project. Readers responded to the article with 104 postings
primarily attacking the ECB over its ‘hypocrisy of austerity’ and ‘financial mis-
management of HQ construction project’, as the following excerpts illustrate
(underlining is used for emphasis):

‘An edifice for the crumbling edifice... Pourquoi?’ – ExasperatedMe.

‘When I (and other taxpayers in Europe) are being stiffed for 1.2 billion on a fucking building for Bankers, I kind of expect ALL eventualities to be covered... Bankers need the biggest and most expensive new cribs that reflect their importance in our World—they’re way more important than Governments, Universities or Town Halls.’ – donkeylogic.

‘A hell of a lot of money for a sandcastle!’ – oldandfast.

In March 2015 The Guardian published an article titled ‘At least 350 people arrested in protest at ECB HQ in Frankfurt’ and 1,239 posts emanated from this article through its GuardianWitness online discussion platform. As noted in the previous chapter, the GuardianWitness had invited readers to contribute texts and visual material demonstrating their experiences at the protests. Audiences were empowered by The Guardian in the facilitator role to participate in dele-
gitimating the ECB fiscal policy using the dominant theme of ‘hypocrisy of au-
terity’. The newspaper’s readers primarily did so by drawing on humanism dis-
course (characterized by human and societal impact) while using moralization as a strategy, as exemplified in this posting that generated 17 responses from other readers:

‘Indeed, especially when the bastard bankers have just moved into a billion euro building? During time of austerity? Is this serious? If it is its disgusting. I hope they set fire to it.’ – ID2929549 (replying to leonisk).

Table 9. Examples of media performing a facilitator role in the delegitimization of the ECB as a fiscally responsible manager

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actor (poster)</th>
<th>Dominant themes</th>
<th>Dominant discourse</th>
<th>Dominant discursive strategy</th>
<th>Example in media texts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Username: donkeylogic</td>
<td>Hypocrisy of austerity &amp; Financial mis-management of HQ construction</td>
<td>Financial Capitalism</td>
<td>Moralization</td>
<td>‘When I (and other taxpayers in Europe) are being stiffed for 1.2 billion on a fucking building for Bankers, I kind of expect ALL eventualities to be covered... Bankers need the biggest and most expensive new cribs that reflect their importance in our World – they’re way more important than Governments, Universities or Town Halls.’ – The Telegraph, 20 September 2012</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Guardian performing a facilitator role empowered and facilitated participation by audiences in the relegitimation of Blockupy’s protests. As shown below in Table 10, the bulk of the posters defended the protests as an appropriate strategy for Blockupy to make its claims heard. Again, they primarily drew on humanism discourse using moral arguments to do so, as evidenced in these text examples (underlining is used to indicate the focus of the discussion):

‘The ECB affects the lives of people in Greece and around the eurozone. It is only right that these people may have the right to protest its policies’ – leonis (replying to Spitnswordus; 83 responses to this post).

‘The ECB is not democratically elected yet is acting in place of democratically elected governments like Greece. There is no mechanism by which they reflect public opinion. Therefore there is some validity to people taking recourse to this kind of action. If the ECB stops interfering directly in the running of countries or its governance is reorganised to reflect a European consensus then people will have a voice and this kind of protest will be illegitimate.’ – theworm (replying to BrianPie; 21 responses to this post).

‘Hooray! Let’s hear it for the working classes fighting back!’ – AlabamaSamurai (85 responses to this post).

Others defended the protests while addressing the theme of ‘financial mismanagement of HQ construction’, such as shown in this text:

‘Institutions who don’t respect other people’s humanity—like the ECB—don’t deserve to exist at all. Let alone have a party to celebrate their shiny new glass building without some resistance.’ – RicardoFloresMagon (replying to CaroLaLina; 2 responses to this post).
In March 2015, when violence erupted during a Blockupy protest, a minority of readers of *The Guardian* were empowered by the newspaper performing a facilitator role to attack the legitimacy of the Blockupy protests, primarily making use of rationalization arguments (e.g., that protests are a waste of taxpayer money). (See Table 11 below for text examples.) The following two excerpts illustrate this:

‘Built with our taxpayer money. The same way those police cars set on fire were paid for with German taxpayer money. Peaceful protest is one thing and the sign of a healthy democracy. Violent destruction of public property we all pay for is another. It is people like you who genuinely have no sense of social responsibility!’ – SocalAlex (replying to ID2929549; 7 responses to this post).

‘As a citizen of Frankfurt, suffering from massive disruptions and destruction of city infrastructure by idiots like you—sod off!’ – barca2002 (72 responses to this post).

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Table 10. Examples of media performing a facilitator role in re legitimating the March 2015 protests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actor (poster)</th>
<th>Dominant themes</th>
<th>Dominant discourse</th>
<th>Dominant discursive strategy</th>
<th>Example in media texts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Username: leonisk</td>
<td>Protest (il)legitimacy</td>
<td>Humanism</td>
<td>Moralization</td>
<td>‘The ECB affects the lives of people in Greece and around the eurozone. It is only right that these people may have the right to protest its policies’ – <em>The Guardian</em> (‘GuardianWitness’ online discussion forum), 18 March 2015 (replying to Spitswords; 83 responses to this post)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Username: theworm</td>
<td>Protest (il)legitimacy</td>
<td>Humanism</td>
<td>Moralization</td>
<td>‘The ECB is not democratically elected yet is acting in place of democratically elected governments like Greece. There is no mechanism by which they reflect public opinion. Therefore there is some validity to people taking recourse to this kind of action. If the ECB stops interfering directly in the running of countries or its governance is reorganised to reflect a European consensus then people will have a voice and this kind of protest will be illegitimate.’ – <em>The Guardian</em> (‘GuardianWitness’ online discussion forum), 18 March 2015 (replying to BrianPie; 21 responses to this post)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Username: Alabama-Samurai</td>
<td>Protest (il)legitimacy</td>
<td>Humanism</td>
<td>Moralization</td>
<td>‘Hooray! Let’s hear it for the working classes fighting back!’ – <em>The Guardian</em> (‘GuardianWitness’ online discussion forum), 18 March 2015 (85 responses to this post)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 11. Examples of media performing a facilitator role in delegitimizing the protests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actor (poster)</th>
<th>Dominant themes</th>
<th>Dominant discourse</th>
<th>Dominant discursive strategy</th>
<th>Example in media texts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Event #5: March 2015</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Username: Spitnewswordus</td>
<td>Protest (ii)le-gitimacy</td>
<td>Humanism</td>
<td>Moralization</td>
<td>‘Rent a crowd shipped in from Greece!’ – The Guardian (‘GuardianWitness’ online discussion forum), 18 March 2015 (35 responses to this post)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Username: barca2002</td>
<td>Protest (ii)le-gitimacy</td>
<td>Humanism</td>
<td>Moralization</td>
<td>‘As a citizen of Frankfurt, suffering from massive disruptions and destruction of city infrastructure by idiots like you—sod off!’ – The Guardian (‘GuardianWitness’ online discussion forum), 18 March 2015 (72 responses to this post)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Username: Schtroumpf</td>
<td>Protest (ii)le-gitimacy</td>
<td>Humanism</td>
<td>Moralization</td>
<td>‘The ECB happens to be a symbol and is attacked as such (by rather stupid and gratuluous violence against tax-paid objects and human beings who happen to do their job for the community wearing a uniform), although its own role has been to attenuate austerity and to do a maximum to make the situation of the crisis states more bearable.’ – The Guardian (‘GuardianWitness’ online discussion forum), 18 March 2015 (15 responses to this post)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Username: Abertiawe</td>
<td>Protest (ii)le-gitimacy</td>
<td>Humanism</td>
<td>Moralization</td>
<td>‘These protesters are unlikely to be members of the working class, but rather left-wing anarchists intent on destruction’ – The Guardian (‘GuardianWitness’ online discussion forum), 18 March 2015 (9 responses to this post)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Username: ardequelle</td>
<td>Protest (ii)le-gitimacy</td>
<td>Humanism</td>
<td>Moralization</td>
<td>they have destroyed a few sidewalks --&gt; taken out the stones so they can throw them. – The Guardian (‘GuardianWitness’ online discussion forum), 18 March 2015 (34 responses to this post)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Username: DeadLetterOffice</td>
<td>Protest (ii)le-gitimacy</td>
<td>Humanism</td>
<td>Moralization</td>
<td>‘I'm in Frankfurt. People have been throwing burning stuff at the trams and setting cars alight with a total disregard to the safety of passengers on their way to work/school. Traffic is totally disrupted. No one is more disappointed than those who, like me, actually support the aims of people like Blockupy. This is not the right way to go about protesting. There are just gangs of people who have attached themselves to the protest causing trouble, it's really sad. People who were interested in joining the rally at the Römerberg this afternoon after work like myself will stay away’ – The Guardian (‘GuardianWitness’ online discussion forum), 18 March 2015 (60 responses to this post)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In March 2015, when violence erupted during a Blockupy protest, a minority of readers of The Guardian were empowered by the newspaper performing a facilitator role to attack the legitimacy of the Blockupy protests, primarily making use of rationalization arguments (e.g., that protests are a waste of taxpayer money). (See Table 11 below for text examples.) The following two excerpts illustrate this:

‘Built with our taxpayer money. The same way those police cars set on fire were paid for with German taxpayer money. Peaceful protest is one thing and the sign of a healthy democracy. Violent destruction of public property we all pay for is another. It is people like you who genuinely have no sense of social responsibility!’ – SocalAlex (replying to ID2929549; 7 responses to this post).

‘As a citizen of Frankfurt, suffering from massive disruptions and destruction of city infrastructure by idiots like you—sod off!’ – barca2002 (72 responses to this post).

Table 12. Examples of media performing a facilitator role in delegitimizing the protests

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Actor (poster)</th>
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<th>Dominant discourse</th>
<th>Dominant discursive strategy</th>
<th>Example in media texts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Username: Spik-nawordus</td>
<td>Protest (il)egitimacy</td>
<td>Humanism</td>
<td>Moralization</td>
<td>‘Rent a crowd shipped in from Greece!’ – The Guardian (‘GuardianWitness’ online discussion forum), 18 March 2015 (35 responses to this post)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Username: barca2002</td>
<td>Protest (il)egitimacy</td>
<td>Humanism</td>
<td>Moralization</td>
<td>‘As a citizen of Frankfurt, suffering from massive disruptions and destruction of city infrastructure by idiots like you—sod off!’ – The Guardian (‘GuardianWitness’ online discussion forum), 18 March 2015 (72 responses to this post)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Username: Schtrumpf</td>
<td>Protest (il)egitimacy</td>
<td>Humanism</td>
<td>Moralization</td>
<td>‘The ECB happens to be a symbol and is attacked as such (by rather stupid and gratuitous violence against tax-paid objects and human beings who happen to do their job for the community wearing a uniform), although its own role has been to attenuate austerity and to do a maximum to make the situation of the crisis states more bearable.’ – The Guardian (‘GuardianWitness’ online discussion forum), 18 March 2015 (15 responses to this post)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Username: Abertawe</td>
<td>Protest (il)egitimacy</td>
<td>Humanism</td>
<td>Moralization</td>
<td>‘These protesters are unlikely to be members of the working class, but rather left-wing anarchists intent on destruction’ – The Guardian (‘GuardianWitness’ online discussion forum), 18 March 2015 (9 responses to this post)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Username: ardeyquelle</td>
<td>Protest (il)egitimacy</td>
<td>Humanism</td>
<td>Moralization</td>
<td>they have destroyed a few sidewalks --&gt; taken out the stones so they can throw them. – The Guardian (‘GuardianWitness’ online discussion forum),</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6.1.3 How media performed mediator role

The analysis identifies media performing a mediator role and examines how ‘experts’ participated in the (de)legitimation of the ECB austerity policy through this role. I essentially looked for evidence of media drawing on expert commentary and opinion from elite sources of information, especially from experts such as economists, relating to the controversy surrounding the ECB policy. Linked to this I looked for examples of media in a sense-making role, providing media audiences with background and wider context to the ECB policy to balance the controversial nature of the highly emotional debate surrounding the policy.

The mediator role was only in evidence in two of the five media events identified in this study. In the third event in May 2013, in which Blockupy held its second protest, The Guardian’s Katie Allen authored an article that offered a contrast in style to the numerous previous reports about the protest by The Guardian and other media in the days prior to the publication of this article. These earlier reports were dominated by hyperbole, widely-ranging crowd numbers, and exaggerated statements by some of the actors—all rhetorical moves to discursively construct the legitimacy or illegitimacy of the ECB austerity policy. This May 2013 article by The Guardian contrasted with these other media reports by offering a lengthy and balanced précis of the situation, explaining in detail the various reasons behind the protest. The article drew on the expert voices of Eurostat (the statistics office of the EU) as well as two economists and a human resources executive to deal with the theme of the ECB’s harmful austerity measures. In doing so, the article drew on financial capitalism discourse linking the theme of the ECB’s ‘harmful austerity measures’ with a new theme of ‘high unemployment’ to explain a key reason for the growing dissatisfaction with austerity in Europe. The following text examples illustrate a media organization performing a mediator role; that is, as a sense-maker offering experts’ commentary and interpretations.

In the following text (The Guardian, 31 May 2013) the reporter makes use of unemployment statistics provided by the statistics office of the EU to link the
protests’ goals to the underlying cause of civil unrest in Europe—especially among young people:

‘Protesters who picketed the European Central Bank on Friday are planning a second day of action across European cities as anger grows over austerity measures that many blame for taking eurozone unemployment to an all-time high. ... Unemployment in the crisis-stricken currency bloc rose to 12.2% for April, according to Eurostat, the statistics office of the EU. At 24.4%, youth unemployment was double the wider jobless rate and up from 24.3% in March. The problem was most extreme in Greece where almost two-thirds of those under-25 are unemployed. The rate was 62.5% in February, the most recently available data.’

In this text from the same article an economist is given a voice, again to help make sense of the civil unrest surfacing in the protests:

‘The numbers come days after eurozone leaders unveiled plans to get more young people into work as they faced warnings about the risks of civil unrest, long-term economic costs and fears that a generation could lose faith in the European project. ... "An end to the eurozone labour market downturn is not yet in sight," said Martin van Vliet, at ING Financial Markets. "Even if the eurozone economy exits from recession later this year, the labour market is likely to remain in recession until next year."

A human resources executive also offers his expert opinion in this text in the same article, again providing context to the Blockupy protests over the controversial policy:

”Germany and Austria have the strongest economies in Europe by some margin, but there are structural reasons the rates are low too," said Gary Browning, chief executive of Penna, a global human resources group.'

The second example of media performing a mediator role identified in the analysis was not linked to experts but to a media outlet itself. When Blockupy held its final protest outside the newly built ECB headquarters in Frankfurt in March 2015, Germany’s public international broadcaster Deutsche Welle (DW), a German right-wing national daily broadsheet, showed itself enacting a mediator role when it published a balanced question-and-answer report about Blockupy’s protests against the ECB austerity policy. The article essentially authored answers to a series of questions its audiences would have been asking about Blockupy’s protests. In this way DW purposively provided its audience with a sensemaking service to help them better understand this highly visible and contentious discursive struggle between Blockupy and the ECB over the legitimacy of the ECB’s austerity measures. Here DW dealt with the theme of the ECB’s ‘harmful austerity measures’ by drawing on financial capitalism discourse while using rationalization as a strategy. In the article titled ‘EUROZONE CRISIS: Rage against the ECB: What’s Blockupy against?’ published on 17 March 2015, DW addressed the following questions in the text:
What’s Blockupy against? ... What is Blockupy’s mission? ... How does Blockupy relate to Occupy? ... What role does the ECB play in Greece’s on-going economic drama? ... What were the consequences to Greek citizens? ... Did the ECB’s support help Greece’s people or only the banks?’

Like the previous report by *The Guardian*, this report showed *DW* in the mediator role by providing its readers with a sensemaking service. Supplying answers to these questions gave readers a better understanding of the struggle.

I found that legitimation strategies were not overtly apparent in the texts of media performing this role. One possible reason for this is that in performing a mediator role media offer commentary and interpretations aimed at providing wider contexts of legitimacy struggles, not discursive strategies aimed at manipulating audience perceptions of organizations. I contend that argumentation for or against issues and organizations are less suited to the media’s sensemaking function than to the media’s other roles.

6.2 How the ECB and Blockupy discursively mobilized media in a conduit role

The following analysis examines how organizations and organizational actors mobilized media in a conduit role in their attempts to legitimate, delegitimate or relegitimate the ECB austerity policy through various discursive means. In doing so, I looked for examples in media accounts showing how discursive strategies, discourses and themes were made use of by Blockupy, the ECB and politicians who typically are able to present their claims through media in this role. Accordingly, this analysis addresses the research question: *How do organizations discursively mobilize the media in their roles when seeking to (de)legitimize a politically controversial organizational activity?*

I found that the role of conduit was in evidence in much of the media coverage in this empirical case. As shown in Chapter 4, media performing this role are a somewhat neutral channel for the (de)legitimation activities of a select few organizations and their representatives with access to mainstream news media channels. I therefore looked for examples of media texts reflecting more or less unfiltered the claims made by the ECB and politicians in their press statements. Acknowledging that media texts also reflect the claims of typically marginalized actors, such as activists, who manage to gain a media voice through street demonstrations, I also looked for media texts reflecting in a relatively unfiltered fashion the claims made by Blockupy spokespeople in the organization’s press statements.

(1) Blockupy mobilized media in a conduit role to delegitimate ECB policy through discursive means
The analysis shows that Blockupy spokespeople mobilized media in a conduit role to delegitimate the ECB policy through discursive means during three of the five media events. As shown in text examples in Table 13 below, the activist group mostly drew on humanism discourse to make the moral argument that
EU citizens are needlessly suffering under the central bank’s tough austerity measures. Blockupy made use of this moralization strategy to criticize the ECB austerity measures. For example, in attempting to delegitimate the ECB austerity measures during its first street demonstration in May 2012, the activist group relied primarily on moral arguments in repeatedly referring to the theme of ‘harmful austerity’ (i.e., that the austerity measures were harmful to the economy of certain EU countries and therefore to the lives of citizens of those countries). This is demonstrated in the following text by USA Today on 19 May 2012 reflecting the claim of a Blockupy spokesperson made in a press statement released by the activist group. Here the Blockupy spokesperson, making use of media in a conduit role, claimed that people are not just “gravely suffering” under austerity, but that their “very existence” is being threatened (underlining is used for emphasis):

“We are in solidarity with the people of Greece and other European countries who are already gravely suffering from (budget) cuts across the board which threaten their very existence,” Suess said.’

This text also reflects one of Blockupy’s more repeated claims in the media: that the protests were aimed at symbolically standing alongside citizens of southern European states suffering under the ECB austerity measures. The above text demonstrates Blockupy’s use of the theme of ‘solidarity with southern EU countries’, which was often linked to the discourse of humanism while making their moral arguments against the ECB policy.

In its attempts to delegitimate the ECB austerity measures through mobilizing media in a conduit role, Blockupy also drew on humanism discourse to deal with the theme of ‘forced austerity’, referring to the way in which austerity—as a strategy to deal with the debt problems of some EU states—was forced on these states by the central bank. This is exemplified in this text by the BBC on 31 May 2013:

‘The demonstrators are angry at what they say is the ECB’s role in encouraging governments to impose austerity measures to cut debt.’

Blockupy repeatedly constructed the theme of ‘hypocrisy of austerity’ (e.g., contrasting skyrocketing costs of the new ECB twin towers in Frankfurt with cost-cutting measures imposed on some EU states) alongside a ‘harmful austerity’ theme. This ‘hypocrisy of austerity’ theme was first introduced by a few media performing a political actor role during the second event (October-November 2013). Blockupy, although not given a voice during that event, took up this same theme through mobilizing media in a conduit role in the remaining three events. The following text published by Newsweek on 19 March 2015 offers such an example of Blockupy raising the ‘hypocrisy of austerity’ theme to make its predominant moral argument against the austerity measures. Blockupy’s spokesperson contrasted the bank’s “party” and “celebration” of the completion of its new building with the bank’s mismanagement of its construction budget:
Trumbo Vila says that Blockupy is campaigning against what the movement describes as “the EU crisis regime”, austerity measures, and the cost of the new ECB building, which totaled €1.3bn (£930m). “A party was held, but we believe there is nothing to celebrate, that is why we chose to mobilise,” says Trumbo Vila.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dominant themes</th>
<th>Dominant discourse</th>
<th>Dominant discursive strategy</th>
<th>Example in media texts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Harmful austerity &amp; Soli-darity with southern EU countries</td>
<td>Humanism</td>
<td>Moralization</td>
<td>‘Organizer spokesman Roland Seuss said the protest is “against the Europe-wide austerity dictate by the (creditor) troika of ECB, the EU Commission and the International Monetary Fund.” … “We are in solidarity with the people of Greece and other European countries who are already gravely suffering from (budget) cuts across the board which threaten their very existence,” Seuss said. (USA Today, 19 May 2012)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forced austerity</td>
<td>Humanism</td>
<td>Moralization</td>
<td>‘The demonstrators are angry at what they say is the ECB’s role in encouraging eurozone governments to impose austerity measures to cut debt.’ (BBC, 31 May 2013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harmful austerity</td>
<td>Humanism</td>
<td>Moralization</td>
<td>‘Blockupy has called for two days of action to protest against what it calls the “poverty policy” of the German government and the so-called “troika”—the ECB, the European Commission and the International Monetary Fund.’ (BBC, 31 May 2013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protest (il)legitimacy</td>
<td>Humanism</td>
<td>Moralization</td>
<td>‘“The aim of this blockade is to prevent normal operations (at the ECB),” said Blockupy spokesman.’ (Irish Independent, 31 May 2013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forced austerity</td>
<td>Humanism</td>
<td>Moralization</td>
<td>‘In Frankfurt, protestors blamed the troika of institutions it says is pushing austerity measures on southern Europe: the ECB, the EU and the International Monetary Fund.’ (The Guardian; byline: Katie Allen, 7 June 2013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solidarity with southern EU countries</td>
<td>Humanism</td>
<td>Moralization</td>
<td>‘Blockupy’s Roland Suss said: “It’s an expression of our solidarity with the people in southern Europe whose existence is threatened by the austerity programmes.”’ (The Guardian; byline: Katie Allen, 7 June 2013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harmful austerity</td>
<td>Humanism</td>
<td>Moralization</td>
<td>“Our protest is against the ECB, as a member of the troika, that, despite the fact that it is not democratically elected, hinders the work of the Greek government. We want the austerity politics to end,” Ulrich Wilken, one of the organisers, told Reuters.’ (The Guardian, 18 March 2015)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harmful austerity</td>
<td>Humanism</td>
<td>Moralization</td>
<td>“This is an expression of anger,” says Sol Trumbo Vila, who facilitates the international coordination of Blockupy. “There is anger at the way in which European policies are affecting European citizens.”’ (Newsweek; by-line: Felicity Capon, 19 March 2015)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protest (il)legitimacy</td>
<td>Humanism</td>
<td>Moralization</td>
<td>“We are glad that we were able to gather this movement today,” Trumbo Vila continues. “The turnout was very positive. Unfortunately some tactics were deployed today that were not part of the Blockupy consensus,” he says, referring to the acts of violence perpetrated by a minority of protesters. But Trumbo Vila also condemned the police. “There has been a strong determination to suppress the protests,” he says. (Newsweek; by-line: Felicity Capon, 19 March 2015)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Harmful austerity & Hypocrisy of austerity | Humanism | Moralization | “Trumbo Vila says that Blockupy is campaigning against what the movement describes as “the EU crisis regime”, austerity measures, and the cost of the new ECB building, which totalled €1.3bn (£930m). “A party was held, but we believe there is nothing to celebrate, that is
(2) ECB mobilized media in a conduit role to relegitimate its policy through discursive means

The analysis shows that ECB executives and politicians—typically elite institutional actors who are able to dominate media debates over economic policy—mobilized media in a conduit role to respectively relegitimate and delegitimate the ECB’s monetary policy through use of rationalization strategies. Motivated predominantly by financial and rational arguments, ECB executives and politicians drew mostly on financial capitalism discourse—characteristic of debates over economic matters—to either defend or criticize the policy.

As shown in text examples in Table 16 below, the ECB mobilized media in a conduit role to defend its policy and to criticize the protests. In defending itself against accusations of mismanagement of its headquarters construction project, the ECB primarily used rational financial arguments to explain the cost overruns in its headquarters construction project, as shown in this text by the Irish Examiner on 22 September 2012 which quoted verbatim the ECB claims from an ECB press release dated 20 September 2012:

“It is anticipated that increases in the price of construction materials and construction activities from 2005 until the completion of the project in 2014 will lead to a €200m increase in the overall investment cost,” the ECB said. “In addition, there have been a number of unforeseen challenges that needed to be dealt with” that are “likely to account for additional costs of about €100-€150m,” it said.’

The ECB also used rational financial arguments to defend its policy in claims made through media in a conduit role. Drawing on discourses of Europeanism and humanism, the bank president, although acknowledging that EU citizens were facing financial challenges (e.g., “people are going through very difficult times”), made use of a rationalization strategy to try to convince audiences about the legitimacy of the bank’s austerity measures. For example, he argued that it would not be fair for some EU citizens to “permanently” pay for the debts of other EU citizens. This is exemplified in the following text published by The Guardian on 18 March 2015 (underlining is used to indicate the focus of the discussion):

“European unity is being strained,” Draghi said... “People are going through very difficult times. There are some, like many of the protesters outside today, who believe the problem is that Europe is doing too little. But the euro area is not a political union of the sort where some countries permanently pay for others.”

Despite a constant bombardment of discursive attacks against it throughout a three-year period, the ECB rarely responded to criticism from media performing a political actor role and from Blockupy mobilizing media in a conduit role. Interestingly, it did not make use of its standing as a media source for journalists reporting on monetary policy to respond to these constant accusations in the media. At one point, however, in a lengthy speech delivered at the inauguration
ceremony marking a final stage in the construction of its new headquarters, the ECB president briefly defended the bank’s austerity policy in just two sentences, using economic argumentation reflecting the discourse of financial capitalism. Some media in a conduit role reflected the ECB president’s claim, as shown in this text by Newsweek published on 19 March 2015:

‘ECB president Mario Draghi defended the bank, saying at the inauguration of the new building: “As an EU institution that has played a central role throughout the crisis, the ECB has become a focal point for those frustrated with this situation. This may not be a fair charge—our action has been aimed precisely at cushioning the shocks suffered by the economy.”’

On another rare occasion, the ECB mobilized media in a conduit role to respond to the Blockupy protests—not to overtly attack the protests or even to respond to Blockupy’s claims—but to imply, in one line of text in a media release, that the protests were potentially dangerous for its staff (e.g., that the protests would impact staff “safety” as they walked to and from the bank’s premises) and hence by implication that the protests could be considered illegitimate. This is displayed in the following text published by the Irish Independent on 31 May 2013:

‘The ECB said it had taken measures to remain operational and ensure the safety of its staff.’

It is worth noting that I found very few supporters of the ECB austerity measures mobilizing media in a conduit role. Most proponents of austerity who were not members of the media voiced their arguments through media performing a facilitator role (as shown in 6.1.2 above). A few news media were austerity proponents and these presented their arguments in a political actor role.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dominant themes</th>
<th>Dominant discourse</th>
<th>Dominant discursive strategy</th>
<th>Example in media texts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Harmful austerity</td>
<td>Financial capitalism</td>
<td>Rationalization</td>
<td>‘The ECB is at the center of the policy response to the crisis and has faced calls from politicians, investors and protesters to do more. The central bank says it has already headed off a major credit crunch with unprecedented funding operations in December and February that unleashed over 1 trillion euros ($1.3 trillion) into the financial system.’ (Reuters; by-line: Sakari Suoninen and Joern Poltz; 19 May 2012)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial mismanagement of HQ construction</td>
<td>Financial capitalism</td>
<td>Rationalization</td>
<td>“It is anticipated that increases in the price of construction materials and construction activities from 2005 until the completion of the project in 2014 will lead to a €200m increase in the overall investment cost,” the ECB said. “In addition, there have been a number of unforeseen challenges that needed to be dealt with” that are “likely to account for additional costs of about €100-150m,” it said. (Irish Examiner, 22 September 2012; quoted from ECB press release dated 20 September)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protest illegitimacy</td>
<td>Humanism</td>
<td>Moralization</td>
<td>The ECB said it had taken measures to remain operational and ensure the safety of its staff. (Irish Independent; byline: Edward Taylor, 31 May 2013)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 14. Examples of ECB mobilizing media in a conduit role to defend its austerity policy and to criticize the protests
Another typically elite institutional actor constituted politicians throughout Europe who were given a voice in this setting through media performing a conduit role. The majority of politicians with a media voice in this debate criticized the ECB over its austerity policy and the fiscal mismanagement of its new headquarters construction project. In doing so, they primarily made use of rational and economic arguments, as exemplified in these texts:

‘German MP Frank Schaeffler said... "The ECB prints its money out of thin air. ... Everybody who has euros in his pocket or in his bank pays for the ECB’s building..."’ (The Sunday Telegraph, 30 September 2012)

‘Richard Ashworth, leader of Britain’s Conservative MEPs, said: "Sadly it is not unusual for major building projects to overshoot on cost—but to do so by so many millions on a single complex is a spectacular overspend. ... "At a time when the whole of the rest of Europe are tightening their belts, the ECB of all people ought to be setting a good example; not squandering funds in this manner.”’ (The Sunday Telegraph, 30 September 2012).

When violence marred the final Blockupy protest in March 2015, politicians criticized Blockupy over the management of its protest by mobilizing media in a conduit role. They did so primarily by drawing on moral arguments, such as social responsibility for public safety during the protest, as shown in this excerpt from The Local (Germany’s news in English) on 19 March 2015:

““We knew of the fact that violence was going to be used there. That was known for a long time in the [activist] scene,” Interior Minister Thomas de Maizière told ZDF TV on Wednesday morning. “That's why the organizers can’t act as if they aren't guilty today.””

I next move onto the discussion chapter where the empirical analysis contributes to an extended framework offering a more nuanced understanding of specific ways through which the news media participate in and influence discursive processes involving organizations seeking to construct, negotiate and contest the legitimacy of focal organizations and their activities in public arenas.
Although organization and management studies have explored ways in which organizations discursively legitimate, delegitimate and relegitimate focal organizations and their activities through the media (Vaara et al., 2006; Vaara & Monin, 2010), we know little about the various roles of the media in these processes. The motivation, therefore, was to seek a more nuanced understanding of the different ways in which contemporary news media organizations, through their roles, participate in and shape the social and discursive processes through which organizational legitimacy is socially constructed, contested and undermined by organizations, the media, and their audiences.

Accordingly, this dissertation sets out to explore and examine the various political and communicative roles that news media perform in discursive processes of organizational (de)legitimation. Hence, the first research question in Part 1, the theoretical section, was: What distinct roles do the media play in discursive processes of organizational legitimation? Drawing on sociology and mass communication literature I made use of a foundational framework of four media roles in society (Christians et al., 2009) to conduct a systematic review of legitimacy literature to identify, define and theoretically elaborate four roles through which the news media participate in discursive processes of legitimation. The findings from this review contribute to organization and management studies literature on discursive legitimation through the media (Vaara et al., 2006; Vaara & Monin, 2010) and are elaborated below under ‘7.1 Four media roles in legitimation’.

In Part 2, drawing on critical discourse analysis (CDA), this dissertation empirically illustrated and elaborated (1) how news media organizations performed political actor, mediator and facilitator roles in the context of a discursive struggle between an activist group and a central bank over the legitimacy of a politically controversial organizational activity in 2012-2015, and (2) how the activist group and central bank made use of discursive means to mobilize media performing a conduit role for their own ends. In analyzing the empirical case, I made use of the framework of four media roles in legitimation developed in Part 1 as an analytical tool. The research questions guiding this empirical inquiry in Part 2 therefore were:

How do news media organizations perform their roles in the discursive (de)legitimation of a politically controversial organizational activity?
How do organizations discursively mobilize the media in their roles when seeking to (de)legitimate a politically controversial organizational activity?

Findings from the previous chapter’s empirical analysis contribute to organization and management studies literature on discursive legitimation through the media (Vaara et al., 2006; Vaara & Monin, 2010) and are elaborated below under ‘7.2 Four media roles in discursive (de)legitimation of a controversial organizational activity’.

7.1 Four media roles in legitimation

This dissertation contributes to media legitimacy theory (Hybels, 1994; Deephouse, 1996; Lamertz & Baum, 1998; Rindova & Fombrun, 1999; Pollock & Rindova, 2003; Bansal & Clelland, 2004; Deephouse & Suchman, 2008; Pollock et al., 2008; Deephouse & Heugens, 2009; Bitektine, 2011; Barros, 2014; Bitektine & Haack, 2015) by developing and empirically illustrating a framework of four roles that news media play in discursive processes of legitimation. To do so I first drew from a foundational framework defining social and political roles of the media in sociology and mass communication literature. This framework was then applied to a systematic literature review of legitimacy studies to define, identify and theoretically elaborate four media roles of conduit, facilitator, mediator and political actor through which the news media participate in discursive processes of legitimation. This addressed the first research question: What distinct roles do the media play in discursive processes of organizational legitimation?

In organisation and management studies generally and in legitimacy studies specifically there is a lack of recognition and systematic identification of distinct roles that the news media play in legitimation processes. Instead, there has been a dominant assumption among organisation and management scholars that the media occupy dual roles in legitimation (Deephouse, 2000; Pollock & Rindova, 2003; Johnson et al., 2005; Scheiber, 2015). Pollock and Rindova (2003) argue, however, that a dual roles perspective of the media in the legitimation of organizations presents both theoretical and empirical issues that require attention if we are to advance theoretical understanding of how the media performing their various roles shape organizational phenomena, such as the process in which multiple actors strive to form and contest the legitimacy of organizations through discursive means.

The diversity of interpretations of the media’s dual roles indicates a level of ambiguity and vagueness in defining these roles. Table 15 (below) shows a selection of contrasting conceptualizations of these dual media roles in organisation and management studies. Two of the earliest proponents of this dualistic perspective in organization studies emanating particularly from mass communication scholarship are Fombrun and Shanley (1990) who observe that the media reflect and shape the opinion of the general public (Schramm, 1949; McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Fombrun & Shanley, 1990) and therefore the legitimacy of organizations (Pollock & Rindova, 2003). In other words, the media act
as mirrors of reality reflecting firms’ actions as well as “active agents shaping information through editorials and feature articles” (Fombrun & Shanley, 1990: 240).

Acknowledging that media roles are norms, not universals, Deephouse (2000) points to those dual roles of the media as a “two-part assumption that the media record public knowledge and opinions about firms and influence public knowledge and opinions about firms” and argues that this assumption of dual roles emanates from mass communication research (2000: 1094, 1095) (italics added here for emphasis). His study examines the duality of media roles between the media as “a provider of signals” and as “a participant in the social construction process” (2000: 1097). He argues on the one hand that “a thorough, unbiased recording of events, issues, and opinions about them is an important practice norm” of the media and on the other hand that agenda-setting theory points to the media’s influence on public opinion (2000: 1097).

In their study of how media coverage affects the market for initial public offerings, Pollock and Rindova (2003) also examine two different roles of the media in organizational legitimation. First, the information transmission role of the media serves to expose organizations and their various attributes to key stakeholders. Second, through the media’s selection and subjective interpretation of events, the media’s framing role “provides audiences with visible public expressions of approval or disapproval of firms and their actions (Elsbach, 1994; Lamertz & Baum, 1998)” (2003: 634). They argue that the process of legitimation is influenced by media in the information transmission role through the volume of more or less objective information the media disseminate about organizations and by the media in the framing role through the tenor of media reports. In line with existing research, Pollock and Rindova (2003) refer to media in the information transmission role as passively reflecting public evaluations of firms and media in the framing role as affecting organizational legitimacy as an active force in legitimation processes (2003: 632).

Johnson et al. (2005: 461) also promote the media’s two “general, not necessarily incompatible” roles as, first, infomediaries between business and society recording and disseminating information about business activities and, second, as active participants producing awareness, understanding and evaluation of businesses and business practices in society (Pollock & Rindova, 2003; Hayward, Rindova & Pollock, 2004). Likewise, in his recent study on the media’s role in processes of practice diffusion, Scheiber (2015) subscribes to this dual role perspective in which the media both reflect the understanding of the worth of organizational practices through the transmission of information and the media shape understanding of the worth of organizational practices through their sense-giving function.

Another interpretation of this dominant dual roles perspective is that the media operate under two broad roles between passive and active involvement in organizational life generally and in legitimation specifically—that is, as arena in which actors participate in society-wide legitimation processes and as actors themselves participating to varying degrees in legitimation. Critical discourse scholars in legitimacy research particularly view the media as a more or less
neutral arena—e.g., as a “sense-making arena” (Vaara et al., 2006: 5) and “legitimating arena” (Vaara et al., 2006: 2) for contemporary organizational phenomena. Vaara and Monin (2010) contend that actors can make use of the media as an arena for discursive strategizing—that is, “for arguing over the legitimacy or illegitimacy of specific ideas or plans (Tienari et al., 2003)” (2010: 5). On the other hand, they also contend that the media are actors promoting or questioning the legitimacy of organizations by highlighting and weighing into specific issues. Grafstrom and Windell (2011) argue that a comprehensive understanding of the media must take into account both roles of the media as arena and actor.

Table 15. Contrasting conceptualizations of the media’s dual roles in legitimation formation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reflecting</th>
<th>Participating in shaping</th>
<th>Studies</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“mirrors of reality reflecting firms’ actions”</td>
<td>“active agents shaping information through editorials and feature articles”</td>
<td>Fombrun &amp; Shanley, 1990: 240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“a thorough, unbiased recording of events, issues, and opinions”; “a provider of signals”</td>
<td>“a participant in the social construction process”</td>
<td>Deephouse, 2000: 1097</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“reflects public evaluation”; “records public knowledge and opinions”</td>
<td>“active force that firms need to manage strategically in the pursuit of legitimacy”</td>
<td>Pollock &amp; Rindova, 2003: 632</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“recording and disseminating information about business activities”; “a passive, invisible conduit of information”</td>
<td>“active participant producing awareness, understanding and evaluation of businesses and business practices in society”</td>
<td>Johnson et al., 2005: 461, 462</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“collection and distribution of information about companies and social issues”; “independent, unbiased, and objective ... record and transmitters of the day’s events”</td>
<td>“organized parties that have a distinct and unique stake in the issues for which they broker information”; “a force to be reckoned with”</td>
<td>Deephouse &amp; Heugens, 2009: 549, 550</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The problem with this dominant perspective in organization and management studies of the media’s dual roles in legitimacy formation processes is that it has offered up a range of broad definitions and ambiguous positioning that has led to some vagueness and subsequent reduction in their utility. Further, it has contributed to a limited understanding of the multiple ways in which the media influence and participate in legitimation processes alongside various other actors with a stake in legitimacy struggles. Overall, what is missing in legitimacy research is an acknowledgement that the news media may adopt one or more of a number of specific roles in legitimation processes at the same time or at different times. Legitimacy scholars acknowledge that the media play an overall role in legitimation processes (Hybels, 1994; Deephouse, 1996; Lamertz & Baum, 1998; Rindova & Fombrun, 1999; Pollock & Rindova, 2003; Bansal & Clelland, 2004; Deephouse & Suchman, 2008; Pollock et al., 2008; Deephouse & Heugens, 2009; Bitektine, 2011; Barros, 2014; Bitektine & Haack, 2015), yet “they
have neither agreed on, nor systematically investigated, how this role is performed” (Pollock & Rindova, 2003: 632). The media’s adoption of one or multiple roles in legitimation processes deserves more theoretical and empirical attention if we are to gain a more nuanced understanding of how contemporary news media organizations in their various roles serve as a platform for and influence, facilitate and mediate the social and discursive processes of organizational legitimation in society. Accordingly, this dissertation sets out to identify, define and theoretically elaborate four media roles in discursive legitimation processes.

In what follows I discuss and elaborate the findings from this theoretical analysis, which constituted Part 1 of this dissertation. To begin with, it is important to acknowledge that the news media will always be more fluid and complex than any model can depict. Hence, some roles may be considered somewhat difficult to identify or pigeonhole. In this dissertation I interpret media roles in terms of the basic or typical functions assumed by or played by mainstream news media organizations in Western democratic societies (Christians et al., 2009). The term *role* refers to “a composite of occupational tasks and purposes that is widely recognizable and has a stable and enduring form” (2009: 119). I understand roles as regulated and influenced by both internal institutional pressures (e.g., professional, commercial and idealistic) and external forces such as audiences, the state (e.g., regulatory authorities), and pressure groups (2009: 116). I also interpret media roles in terms of what media *do* rather than what media *ought to do* (i.e., a normative interpretation of media roles), such as media responsibility, duty and obligation. Hence, I identify media roles by the practices, ideals and values of media actors that shape what the media do. I also interpret media roles as either transient or established. By *transient*, I mean that a media organization may take on more than one role and may switch between roles simultaneously. By *established*, I mean that a media organization may predominantly adopt one or more permanent roles. In their typology of media roles, Christians et al. (2009) largely take the perspective of media in established roles. Media organizations in an established role may include alternative news media outlets permanently aligned with a political actor role. Examples of media in an established role are provided below in ‘7.1.1 How organizations mobilize media in a conduit role’ and ‘7.1.4 How media perform a political actor role’.

### 7.1.1 How organizations mobilize media in a conduit role

The systematic literature review conducted in Chapter 4 identified what is generally acknowledged in legitimacy research as an information transmission role of the media (Pollock & Rindova, 2003). This role dovetails what Christians et al (2009) identify as the collaborative role of the media in society. Legitimacy research refers to the media in this role as rather passive participants (Johnson et al, 2005: 462) in legitimation processes. That is, they are “purveyors of news and information” (Rindova et al., 2006: 56) emanating from influential organizations with access to mainstream news media channels. As such, they disseminate the arguments of managers (Joutsenvirta 2013; Finch et al., 2015) and re-
spond to “signals being sent by entrepreneurs, state and local actors and government regulators” (Deeds et al., 2004: 31). Organizations use the news media as “…key disseminators of social, economic, and political information...” (Deephouse & Heugens, 2009: 546) to manipulate public perceptions of corporations (King & Soule, 2007), influence corporate governance practices (Bednar 2012: 132), and communicate with external audiences to gain legitimacy (Elsbach & Sutton, 1992) and restore legitimacy (Pfarrer et al., 2008).

Studies show that influential organizations (represented as elite institutional actors), such as multinational corporations and government institutions, are given the opportunity to express their views in the media more than others (Grafstrom & Windell, 2011: 231) because they have been granted a media voice and have disproportionately large influence on evaluators’ perceptions of judgment validity. The media rely to a disproportionate extent on these official and influential sources of information (Gans, 1980; Sigal, 1978), indicating the news media’s mutual dependence relationship with influential organizations. These organizations, which tend to occupy positions that give them greater access to the media and legitimate reasons to enter into media discussions, may be identified as typically dominant actors in mainstream news media discussions (Grafstrom & Windell, 2011).

Although not considered typical elite institutional actors, social movement activists are also able to gain a media voice through use of a repertoire of media tactics (Bakker et al., 2013; McDonnell & King, 2013; Walker et al., 2008). The media are a “conduit” of negative images and grievances brought by activists against a company in order to challenge its legitimacy (King, 2008). Through substantive and symbolic management, the media can be mobilized by activists to influence boycotts (Driscoll, 2006) and transmit grievances and negative images of a target firm to challenge its legitimacy (King, 2008).

Examples of media performing an established conduit role may include those operating according to the public broadcasting model in Western democratic societies, such as the BBC in the UK, ABC in Australia, and NPR in the USA. Media performing an established conduit role may also operate under a trustee model (McQuail, 2006). I also contend that media may take on a transient conduit role. That is, media may choose to enact this role in one setting and discard it in another setting. For example, media performing an established political actor role may temporarily enact a conduit role when disseminating an influential organization’s legitimacy judgments in a more or less unfiltered way.

**Definition:** I here offer a definition of the conduit role analytically and in encompassing terms based on key attributes of this role developed in Chapter 4:

> As a mostly one-way channel of information transmission, media performing a conduit role are a relatively passive participant in discursive legitimation processes, predominantly transmitting the relatively unfiltered legitimacy judgments of a select few organizations able to make use of media tactics to gain a media voice; organizations and their representatives mobilize media in this role through discursive means.
7.1.2 How media perform a facilitator role

Christians et al (2009) identify a participatory role of the media in which media seek to provide a platform for audiences to express themselves. The media role of facilitator put forward as one of four media roles in legitimation processes in this dissertation highlights the important role of media involving the audiences of organizations, which may also constitute the audiences of the media, in (de)legitimation processes. This role of the media empowering the audiences of organizations to participate in legitimation in a public arena has not received much attention in legitimacy research. Legitimacy studies have paid scant theoretical and empirical attention to organizational audiences as legitimate participants in legitimation processes involving traditional news media. Although the media increasingly enable a plurality of voices to be heard on their online platforms, media legitimacy research has not yet given adequate theoretical and empirical consideration to the role of the media as an enabler and facilitator of audiences negotiating and contesting the legitimacy of organizations in online news media environments.

There is a longstanding acknowledgement of the existence of pluralism within legitimacy literature (D’Aunno, Sutton, & Price, 1991; Kostova & Zaheer, 1999; Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). Stakeholder theory particularly outlines that organizations should, for both normative and performance reasons, acknowledge a range of stakeholders and their potentially divergent legitimacy demands. Successfully managing the demands of a plurality of audiences as a stakeholder group can be an important performance determinant for organizations (Kraatz & Block, 2008). For example, in pluralistic contexts an organization’s legitimation strategies aimed at persuading one stakeholder group can lead to judgments of illegitimacy emanating from another group (Elsbach & Sutton, 1992; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978; Seo & Creed, 2002; Stryker, 2000). Legitimacy is also threatened, and therefore is difficult to maintain, in an environment of mass constituency fragmentation because organizations then become vulnerable to multiple and conflicting demands from constituents, which makes management of legitimacy in such environments difficult.

Despite increasing interest in pluralism (Denis et al., 2007; Jarzabkowski & Fenton, 2006), Glynn, Barr and Dacin (2000: 732) point out that there is a need for organization studies to increase a theoretical and empirical focus on pluralistic contexts: “the world is changing and becoming more pluralistic; as organizational students, we have to keep pace.” This dissertation contributes to this need by linking stakeholder pluralism with media legitimacy theory. This contribution is also aligned with Deephouse and Suchman’s (2008: 54, 68) contention that the future of legitimacy research lies in exploring “the various internal and external audiences” who make legitimacy demands and the corresponding “struggles over what is legitimate.” Accordingly, incorporating pluralism into media legitimacy theory highlights both the role of multiple—indeed, a plurality of—stakeholders in media legitimacy as well as the tension between their competing legitimacy judgments in media environments. I contend that situating media legitimacy within a pluralistic context will enable more ‘accurate’ and ‘nuanced’ theory (Glynn et al., 2000; Jarzabkowski & Fenton, 2006; Rescher,
As such, the contribution envisaged here is one of theoretical extension and refinement (Dubois & Gadde, 2002). Today’s media audiences tend to engage with traditional news media through online environments such as social media pages and online discussion forums hosted by news media organizations. Most contemporary news media organizations make use of social media platforms and invite audiences to participate on these sites. Because wider audience engagement is important to media organizations for economic reasons, a plurality of actors given a voice to speak through the news media—such as through online discussion forums and social media pages hosted by mainstream news organizations—may be considered a key stakeholder group for media organizations. As organizations themselves, news media outlets tend to attract increased subscription and advertising revenues as the number and engagement level of their audiences grow. This is often achieved, for example, when they publish reports on issues that, according to news value theory, are locally relevant, sensational, or combative, or that attribute values of good and bad (Luhmann, 1996). The publication of issues that are sensational, combative or attribute bad news foster participation of an increasing quantity of actors in public debates hosted by the news media (see also Hansen et al., 2011).

I contend in this dissertation that although this plurality of media actors struggles to find a legitimate voice in media texts published in traditional sub-genres such as the hard news, business news, and opinion sections of mainstream news outlets, audiences are nevertheless empowered with a media voice through online platforms of news media outlets, such as a newspaper’s Facebook page or a broadcaster’s online discussion forum. New media technologies, including those connected to mainstream news media channels, empower this typically marginalized social actor group with a media voice, as recently observed around the emergence of the “Arab Spring” in 2011 and in the rise of the Occupy Wall Street movement starting in the US in 2010. Through social media any citizen, in principle, can participate in legitimation processes through media-hosted online platforms. As such, a plurality of actors today is less dependent on traditional gatekeepers such as journalists and journalistic selection logics (Friedland et al., 2006).

In my systematic review of legitimacy studies, I looked specifically for interpretations of the media as a facilitator of contestation and negotiation over the (il)legitimacy of organizations by a plurality of social actors. Of the 78 studies with a focus on the media’s roles in legitimation processes, I could detect only one study (Barros, 2014) that showed a clear example of social media as a site of discursive struggle over legitimacy involving a plurality of actors. Barros’ (2014) study identified “new social media” as “a more participatory way ... in which information is not controlled by traditional content producers, but authored collaboratively by all users in dynamic peer-to-peer interactions...” that transform “...the highly passive consumer of a one-way information flow into an active producer (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010)” of media texts. Barros links social media to a plurality of social actors in legitimation processes by referring to social media as “the foundation of the new e-democracy discourse (Ainsworth,
Hardy & Harley, 2005) that involves not only recent efforts to increase citizen participation in government decisions (Lee, Chang & Berry, 2011), but also grassroots initiatives of democratic participation as it engages in public debate where ‘marginalized groups are able to develop counter-discourses that can challenge and resist domination’ (Dahlberg & Siapera, 2007, p. 6)” (2014: 1214). His study compares the traditional news media to new social media in terms of their power over discourse, arguing that the traditional media restrict participation in legitimation processes to a select few elite actors (e.g. “public figures chosen by journalists”), whereas the new social media open up access to allow “...any person (or organization)” to “...have their words ‘heard’ around the world and participate in a virtual public debate.” (2014: 1214)

The main difference between this role and the conduit role is that whereas media performing a conduit role are largely and typically dominated by the voices of a few actors (e.g., organizations with the resources and institutional power to dominate media content), media performing a facilitator role enable contestation of legitimacy by a plurality of actors. When there is disagreement between judgments validated by and channelled through media performing other roles, a plethora of conflicting legitimacy judgments emanating from a plurality of actors as media audiences emerges at the macro level within society, and these are typically discursively negotiated and contested in the media through sub-genres such as online discussion forums, letters to the editor, and the social media pages of mainstream news organizations.

If we conceptualize the facilitator role as one where a plurality of voices can be heard, especially during a discursive struggle over organizational legitimacy, then we can narrow the definition of facilitator to the role of the media that facilitates a plurality of participation in the legitimation process beyond just a few actors typically endowed with a media voice. In contrast, media performing conduit, mediator and political actor roles restrict participation in legitimation processes predominantly to a select few elite institutional and media actors in subject positions and who are given a media voice. The facilitator role, therefore, highlights the media’s ability to enable anyone to have a voice, not just those in subject positions due to their status. Accordingly, a public agenda (Behr & Iyengar, 1985; Carroll, 2009; Lee & Carroll, 2011: 127; Besiou et al., 2013) dominates this role. In the media’s other three roles, expressions of opinion are limited mostly to elite institutional actors, with the exception that a media organization (represented by its journalists and editors) expresses its own opinion (e.g., in editorials) through the political actor role and to a lesser degree through the mediator role; in the mediator role expressions of opinion are typically made by ‘experts’ such as analysts, academics and economists (e.g., in the opinion pages of newspapers). The participation of all media audiences, not just elite actors, in public debates over organizational activities is a defining characteristic in this facilitator role. This role, then, is dependent on an environment where there is a plurality of competing voices and where there is a struggle or debate over an issue between a plurality of actors.
**Definition:** I here offer a definition of the facilitator role analytically and in encompassing terms based on key attributes of this role developed in Chapter 4:

*In the facilitator role media provide a participative forum for discursive interaction in a struggle over organizational legitimacy by audiences (of organizations and the media), typically through the media’s online interactive forums; as such media are relatively passive participants in (de)legitimation processes involving omni-directional communication flow between interchanging roles of social actors as senders and receivers.*

7.1.3 **How media perform a mediator role**

Christians et al (2009) define the monitorial role in terms of media offering commentary and interpretation. Similarly, McQuail (2000) proposed that media in a correlation role explain, interpret and comment on the meaning of events and information. A synthesis of these roles suggests a sensemaking role in which media draw on the opinions of ‘experts’ to help audiences make sense of contested issues. The systematic literature review of legitimacy studies conducted in Chapter 4 identified a few studies acknowledge media in this role. For example, Bitektine (2011) describes media organizations disseminating information and opinions that “guide sociopolitical legitimacy judgments of the general public” (2011: 155). A media organization in this role “acts as a negotiator and creator of meaning (Abrahamson, 1996; Scott, 1995)” (Lamertz & Baum, 1998: 101), thus producing “sense-making activity” (1998: 93). Bitektine and Haack (2015) describe the process in which judgments are aggregated and communicated by media organizations as macro-level judgment validation institutions. In doing so, the media provide a sense-making service by providing “a mechanism for debate resolution” (2015: 52).

I contend that, like the facilitator role, it would be rare for media to take on an established mediator role. It is more likely that media performing an established conduit or political actor role would enact this mediator role from time to time (i.e., a transient mediator role), such as when highly contested issues in the public arena require the contribution of experts to provide a wider context.

**Definition:** I here offer a definition of the mediator role analytically and in encompassing terms based on key attributes of this role developed in Chapter 4:

*In the mediator role media are somewhat active participants in (de)legitimation processes, seeking, editing and disseminating interpretations and commentary of a select few elite institutional actors as ‘experts’ on issues under debate; as such, media performing this role are a sense-maker of contestation over legitimacy.*

7.1.4 **How media perform a political actor role**

Christians et al (2009) define media performing a political actor role (which they term ‘radical’) as predominantly focused on advocating for certain causes,
issues and marginalized groups in society. As such, media enacting this role seek to actively expose social and organizational injustice and abuses of power.

Deephouse and Heugens (2009) contend that within organization studies generally there is a perceived lack of due recognition of this more active role of the media in organizational phenomena such as legitimation. Barros (2014) contends that “previous studies have focused on the media as an arena for discursive struggle, but not as a main actor in the process of defending their own political interests” (2014: 1213)–sometimes against other organizations as well. Deephouse and Heugens (2009: 550) argue that one reason for this may be that in the main organization scholars do not view the media as organizations themselves “each with their own biases, beliefs, and interests”. What remains, then, is a rather “unorganizational view” of the media (Deephouse & Heugens, 2009: 550).

Surprisingly, despite this contention, in my systematic review of legitimacy literature I found many studies either implicitly or explicitly acknowledging media enacting such a role. Nevertheless, despite a growing focus on a political actor perspective of the media in legitimacy research (see also e.g., Carter & Deephouse, 1999; Chen & Meindl, 1991; Deephouse, 2000; Pollock & Rindova, 2003), the news media’s political actor role has not been theoretically or empirically identified and explored much in legitimacy studies. Legitimacy studies have implicitly explored how the political actor role is utilized by the media in certain legitimation settings, such as to contest issues and delegitimate the activities of other actors (Barros, 2014; Joutsenvirta, 2013; Vaara & Tienari, 2008), when the media determine that they can help resolve societal issues (Deephouse & Heugens, 2009), and when the media are attacked by other actors and subsequently move to defend themselves (Barros, 2014).

Deephouse and Heugens (2009) demonstrate a ‘mobilization’ and ‘coalition-building’ process involving media performing a political actor role (see also Protess et al., 1992). News media organizations as political actor engage in ‘coalition-building’ through linking organizations with causes to help solve societal issues (Deephouse & Heugens, 2009). When engaging in discursive ‘mobilization’ of audiences towards specific action, such as through actively engaging in persuasion (Joutsenvirta, 2013), they fuel and amplify legitimacy struggles (Gerardo et al., 2011; Deephouse & Heugens, 2009; Pfarrer et al., 2008), they legitimate issues as social problems to be resolved and connect actors to a social problem by disseminating information and opinion about it among previously unaware observers (Deephouse & Heugens, 2009; Mutz, 1994).

Media enacting a political actor role discursively attack or endorse organizations through blaming and scandalizing or applauding and praising firms they determine worthy of support (Hartz & Steger, 2010; Halsall, 2008). They challenge the legitimacy of organizations (Jonsson & Burr, 2011; Siltaoja & Vehkaperä, 2010; Deephouse, 1996) through socially constructing the illegitimacy of business practices (Siltaoja & Vehkaperä, 2010), advocating their own viewpoints and contributing their own “authoritative source of opinion on politics and economics” (Mazza & Alvarez, 2000) through “more intensively” and “more
frequently” broadcasting their views (Carberry & King, 2012; Gerardo et al., 2011).

Christians et. al. (2009) describe this “radical” role of the media as giving institutional outsiders a greater voice with the goal of helping “minorities articulate an alternative set of goals that represent the needs and just moral claims of all, especially the marginalized, the poor and the dispossessed” (2009: 179). In this role the media aim “to ensure that no injustice is ever tolerated” (2009: 179). Media performing this role are partisan, siding “with those who are developing forms of resistance and advocacy against dominant power holders” (2009: 180) and, as such, they tend to seek to redistribute social power from the privileged (typically few) to the underprivileged (typically many). In this role the media are a “weapon” in activists’ hands (2009: 117). They “support activist and avant-garde movements that try to liberate intellectually repressed or indoctrinated people, helping them to participate in the process of democratic governance” (2009: 180).

In this dissertation I contend that media organizations that perform a political actor role more readily and frequently—for example media in an established political actor role rather than a transient political actor role (see the final paragraph under “7.1 Four media roles in legitimation”)—tend to portray more obvious ideological and political leanings. In their depiction of the ‘radical role’, Christians et al (2009) link this role to partisan media dedicated to the interests and ideas of a particular political group. Some media organizations tend to be more aligned with certain ideological and political perspectives than others through the influences of their owners or their audiences (or both). Barros’ (2014) study of Brazil’s neoconservative news media presents a revealing analysis of how a media organisation’s ideological slant is contested through a corporation’s own media in the form of a blog. Gentzkow and Shapiro’s (2010) analysis of ideological slant measured through daily newspapers in the USA demonstrates that not only do media audiences tend to choose their media sources according to their own biases (Schulz & Roessler, 2012), but that media organizations also choose their own biases in order to appeal to specific audiences for economic reasons. To improve their chances of economic survival, media organizations continuously seek to align themselves with expectations held by other actors in their organizational field (Scott, 1987) and they may achieve this through ideological and political alignment. Of course, some media organizations primarily choose their partisanship based on their core mission as an advocate (Christians et al., 2009) for certain causes and ideologies. Accordingly, they become more involved in legitimacy struggles tied to their own ideological or political leanings, and in doing so they actively confer legitimacy on or deny legitimacy from certain subjects as part of their routine operations as a political actor.

Media that perform a political actor role more frequently (as an ‘established’ role) include media representative of alternative media, activist media and other special interest media outlets that practice advocacy journalism, a genre of journalism that intentionally and transparently adopts an explicitly subjective viewpoint on issues. Like alternative media, media enacting an established political
actor role challenge existing institutional powers and represent marginalized groups.

Examples of media enacting an established political actor role include The Young Turks, New Internationalist, L’Humanitie, Charlie Hebdo and The Huffington Post. Huffington Post’s RYOT News is an interesting example of a news media organization performing the established role of political actor. The Huffington Post acquired RYOT News, a virtual reality and immersive news storytelling company, in April 2016. RYOT’s mission is to “inform, entertain and activate to ignite change” by linking every news story to an action (Mooser & Huffington, 2016). RYOT News enables its readers to get involved in the stories it reports on by featuring a ‘Take Action’ button with every story, giving readers a chance to sign a petition, make a donation or volunteer for a cause.

Definition: I here offer a definition of the political actor role analytically and in encompassing terms based on key descriptors and key attributes of this role developed in Chapter 4:

Through use of purposive communication to frame issues, practices and actors in legitimacy struggles, and through the creation of dramatized representations of events and the individuals and organizations participating in them, media performing a political actor role are an organizational actor, active participant in legitimation, and watchdog and critical observer of legitimation in society, enacting their own (de)legitimation strategies, endorsing or challenging organizational legitimacy, explicitly aligning with or contesting causes or issues, discursively or materially mobilizing audience contestation over legitimacy, and offering a voice to marginalized groups in society.

Findings from the theoretical analysis of media roles in legitimation, which constituted Part 1 of this dissertation, make a theoretical contribution to legitimacy literature by developing a theoretically-refined framework of four media roles in legitimation. This framework shifts attention to, and sheds new light on, distinct ways in which the news media serve as a platform for and influence, facilitate and mediate processes of discursive legitimation in public arenas.

7.2 Four media roles in the discursive (de)legitimation of a controversial organizational activity

I next discuss the empirical analysis illustrating and elaborating how four roles of the media played a part in an empirical setting in which an activist group (as a change agent) and a central bank (as a powerful government organization) participated in the (de)legitimation of a controversial organizational activity. I deployed methods of CDA to examine in this empirical setting (1) how the news media discursively performed three roles of political actor, mediator and facilitator, and (2) how the activist group and central bank mobilized news media performing a conduit role to (de)legitimate, through discursive means, the bank’s economic policy between 2012 and 2015. The following questions served to guide the empirical analysis:
How do news media organizations perform their roles in the discursive (de)legitimation of a politically controversial organizational activity?  
How do organizations discursively mobilize the media in their roles when seeking to (de)legitimate a politically controversial organizational activity?

In the following section I discuss more explicitly how this study advances knowledge by elaborating on these two questions. This discussion addresses underdeveloped research into the media’s influence over the discursive processes in which organizations attempt to shape audience perceptions of focal organizations and their activities. More specifically, there is a lack of theoretical and empirical focus in legitimacy-as-process studies with a discursive approach to legitimation (Bitektine & Haack, 2017) on the way media performing their various roles shape legitimation participants’ use of discursive strategies in media debates. Critical discourse scholars have explored several discursive strategies—“subtle textual strategies” through which “particular interests and voices are reproduced and others silenced” (Vaara & Tienari, 2008: 991)—that are used by multiple actors in media discussions over organizational phenomena such as corporate takeovers (Zhu & McKenna, 2012), restructures (Vaara et al., 2006; Vaara & Monin, 2010) and mergers (Vaara & Tienari, 2008). Vaara (2014) explored discursive legitimation strategies used in the media by multiple actors in the context of the Eurozone’s legitimacy crisis.

However, these studies have not investigated the ways in which media performing specific roles may have affected how actors—whether organizations, their audiences, or the news media themselves—discursively legitimate, delegitimate or relegitimate organizations and their activities through the media. The empirical analysis in this study addresses this research gap, for example by illustrating and empirically elaborating how five different actors made use of discursive strategies in their attempts to (de)legitimate a controversial organizational activity through mobilizing media in each role. First, the analysis illustrates how Blockupy mobilized media extensively in a conduit role to delegitimate the ECB austerity measures predominantly through use of moralization strategies based largely on a humanism discourse. Second, the ECB, primarily motivated by rational and financial arguments, also mobilized media enacting a conduit role to relegitimate its economic policy by drawing on financial capitalism discourse using rationalization strategy. Third, audiences, whose participation in the (de)legitimation of the ECB’s politically controversial austerity policy was empowered and facilitated by a few media performing a facilitator role, mostly used moralization strategies while drawing on humanism discourse. Motivated primarily by moral arguments, audience members mostly drew on humanism discourse to expose the social and human impact of the bank’s fiscal policy. Fourth, media performing a mediator role drew on the commentary of experts such as statisticians and economists as well as journalists’ own interpretation of the struggle as a sensemaking service to their audiences; legitimation strategies, however, were not overtly apparent in this mediator role. Finally, the analysis illustrates how media organizations performing a political actor role to
(de)legitimate the ECB austerity policy predominantly used mythopoiesis strategies. The contribution these findings make to management and organization studies literature on discursive legitimation through the media is elaborated below.

7.2.1 How ECB and Blockupy mobilized media in a conduit role

Media performing a conduit role were in ample evidence in this setting. Examples were found in media texts of media reflecting—largely unfiltered—the claims made by the ECB and Blockupy in their own press statements in a predominantly objective style of reporting. News media such as the Financial Times, Newsweek and the Sunday Telegraph often enacted a conduit role in this setting.

Blockupy was able to mobilize media in a conduit role to delegitimate the ECB’s austerity policy. Motivated by moral arguments, Blockupy spokespeople predominantly used moralization strategies linked to humanism discourse to criticize the ECB policy through media enacting a conduit role. The analysis also shows how ECB executives mobilized media in a conduit role to relegitimate the ECB’s monetary policy through use of rationalization strategies. Motivated largely by financial and rational arguments, ECB executives drew predominantly on financial capitalism discourse—characteristic of debates over economic matters—to defend the policy.

7.2.2 How media performed a facilitator role

As discussed earlier under ‘7.1.2 How media perform a facilitator role’, the role of the media empowering organizational audiences to become participants in discursive legitimation in a public arena has not received much attention in legitimacy research. This dissertation contributes to this gap by identifying and defining the facilitator role of the news media in legitimation processes. The empirical analysis in this study illustrates and empirically elaborates how media performing the facilitator role enabled audiences to gain a voice in this debate. The Telegraph enacting a facilitator role on 20 September 2012 published an article titled ‘ECB’s new HQ will cost €200m more than expected’ and subsequently enabled audiences to attempt to delegitimate the ECB over its new headquarters project through its online discussion forum. Readers responded to the article with 104 postings primarily attacking the ECB over its ‘hypocrisy of austerity’ and ‘financial mismanagement of headquarters construction project’. Although there was a multiplicity of viewpoints among the media audiences, they mostly made use of moralization as a legitimation strategy while drawing on humanism discourse to expose the social and human impact of the ECB’s fiscal policy.

7.2.3 How media performed a mediator role

Although I found evidence of media performing a mediator role to draw on expert commentary, I also found an example of a media organization performing
this role to offer its own commentary as a sense-making service to its audiences. Further, I found that experts representing influential organizations (as elite institutional actors), such as statisticians and economists, did not overtly legitimate or delegitimate the ECB austerity measures through mobilizing media in this role. In other words, legitimation strategies were not clearly apparent in the mediator role. One possible reason is that various actors’ argumentation for or against issues and organizations is less suited to the media’s sensemaking function than to media enacting a conduit role. In performing a mediator role media offer their own and experts’ commentary and interpretation aimed at providing wider contexts of legitimacy struggles, not discursive strategies aimed at manipulating audience perceptions of organizations.

7.2.4 How media performed a political actor role

A focus on legitimation strategies adopted by the media themselves—as organizations and by representatives of the media (e.g. journalists)—remains underdeveloped in legitimation studies with a discursive emphasis. Critical discourse scholars predominantly have shed light on legitimation strategies of various social actors such as managers, union representatives and politicians involved in struggles over legitimacy played out in the media. However, the media’s own legitimation strategies have not been a central focus. Nevertheless, drawing on van Leeuwen’s work, Vaara, Tienari and Laurila (2006) identify five legitimation strategies used, albeit unconsciously, by media actors in a corporate restructuring situation. Vaara and Tienari (2008) also identify legitimation strategies used by both journalists and organizational management during a corporate merger. Barros (2014) identifies discursive legitimation strategies of media organizations in Brazil in a battle over the legitimacy of the state-owned oil company Petrobras.

This dissertation contributes to research on the media’s use of discursive legitimation strategies by exploring, through critical discourse analysis, a number of discursive legitimation strategies of media performing a political actor role. The analysis in this study illustrates how media performing a political actor role set out to expose flaws in the ECB policy and in the bank’s handling of the construction of its new headquarters through subjective use of their own voice. Examples were found of media using investigative-type reporting to attribute blame on the ECB for the suffering of EU citizens in countries like Greece because of the bank’s overly tough austerity measures. Of particular interest was evidence that the Irish media enacting a political actor role were overwhelmingly ferocious in their criticism of the ECB as a hypocritical actor in this setting. This may be an understandable reaction, given that at the time of their discursive attacks against the ECB in late 2012 and 2013, Ireland’s economy was reeling from the effects of harsh austerity measures forced on the country by the ECB and its troika partners the IMF and the European Commission beginning in late 2010. Hence, ample evidence was found of Irish media performing a political actor role in constructing the illegitimacy of the ECB as a fiscally responsible manager of EU monetary policy as well of its own headquarters construction project.
Media performing a political actor role predominantly used mythopoiesis as the means to both legitimate and delegitimate the ECB austerity policy. Mythopoiesis is described as legitimation conveyed through narratives (Vaara et al., 2006)—often small stories or fragments of narrative structures about the past or future (Vaara, 2014: 503). It is legitimation achieved through the telling of stories in such a way that the story is meant to be taken as evidence of acceptable, appropriate or preferential behavior. It may also convey moral or cautionary tales (Van Leeuwen & Wodak, 1999) designed to persuade audiences one way or another. Vaara et al (2006) pay specific attention to ‘dramatic narrativizations’, such as when particular organizations or persons are portrayed in a drama as winners, losers, heroes, adversaries or culprits. Mythopoiesis is in evidence in texts that are often entertaining in tone and thus attract readers in unique ways (Vaara et al, 2006: 802).

Zhu and McKenna (2012: 530) are critical of mythopoiesis as a legitimation strategy because they consider it a genre, whereas other legitimation strategies identified in the work of the Finnish school of discourse scholars are substantive. In other words, they argue that while other strategies are classified according to the content of the message, mythopoiesis is a genre and a literary rhetorical device because it is conveyed through narratives.

Despite their argument, I include mythopoiesis as an appropriate legitimation strategy in this study for two reasons. First, given that legitimation strategies are explicit or implicit discursive means used for legitimation and delegitimation purposes, mythopoiesis can be said to be a legitimation strategy because it is used as a rhetorical means in the legitimation and delegitimation of organizations and their activities. Second, this strategy is a suitable rhetorical means for use by news media performing a political actor role in legitimation processes because the media typically are in the business of storytelling through dramatic narrativization. Drama is one of the constituting elements of an issue’s newsworthiness (Galtung & Holmboe, 1965; Hilgartner & Bosk, 1988). For this reason I found ample evidence of media performing a political actor role making use of mythopoiesis. As a form of legitimation conveyed through narratives (Vaara et al., 2006), which are often small stories or fragments of narrative structures about the past or future (Vaara, 2014: 503), mythopoiesis is an apt discursive strategy for use by media performing a political actor role in legitimation processes. As an exemplary example, I found evidence of this legitimation strategy in an article published on 28 October 2013 by the German media outlet de Spiegel performing a political actor role exposing cost overruns in the construction of the ECB’s new headquarters. The article brought to light the dramatic irony of the building’s location: the twin skyscrapers designed to house Europe’s banking elite is built on top of a former fruit and vegetable market that in the 1920s was popularly known as the "Kappeskathedrale," which translates as "Rubbish Cathedral" or "Nonsense Cathedral".
7.3 Integrative framework of four media roles in legitimation

This study’s empirical analysis provides support for an extended framework offering a more nuanced understanding of specific ways through which the news media participate in and influence discursive processes in which organizations seek to construct, negotiate and contest the legitimacy of focal organizations and their activities in public arenas. By integrating organizational legitimacy literature with sociology and mass communication literature on media roles in society (e.g., Christians et al., 2009), this dissertation develops and empirically illustrates an integrative framework through which to analyze four roles that media play in discursive processes of legitimation. This framework shifts attention to, and sheds new light on, distinct ways in which the news media serve as a platform for and influence, facilitate and mediate processes of discursive legitimation in public arenas.

In what follows I elaborate on aspects of this framework showing how news media roles (1) are linked to different actors, (2) guide varying levels of media participation in legitimation, (3) define three types of media-legitimation processes, and (4) identify media as either a primary or secondary source of legitimacy. Development and elaboration of this integrative framework addresses the research questions:

- How do news media organizations perform their roles in the discursive (de)legitimation of a politically controversial organizational activity?
- How do organizations discursively mobilize the media in their roles when seeking to (de)legitimate a politically controversial organizational activity?

7.3.1 Media roles are linked to different actors

The first contribution to the integrative framework of four media roles in legitimation is that each of the four media roles are linked to different actors each attempting to make use of media for their own (de)legitimation purposes. I next elaborate on a framework showing how each media role may be identified according to (1) the media’s dependency on and autonomy from external discursive influences and (2) the media’s reflexivity to the discursive activities of various actors positioned between weak and strong institutional power in discursive legitimation processes. I draw on and adapt Christians et al’s (2009) model of intersecting dimensions (see Figure 3 in ‘3.1 Typology of normative media roles in society’) to show the typical tensions media face in reflexivity to institutional influences emanating from their external environments. The way media react to these discursive influences of institutional forces attempting to influence them determines the role they find themselves playing. Put another way, each role of the media may be identified from the way media respond to discursive attempts at legitimacy conferral through the media from actors positioned between strong and weak institutional power. As shown in Figure 10 below, I therefore position each of the four media roles into two intersecting dimensions of (1) media roles positioned between the media’s dependency on and autonomy from the discursive influences of actors (horizontal dimension) and of (2) media
roles in reflexivity to discursive acts of actors involved in legitimation positioned between strong and weak institutional power (vertical dimension). In Figure 10 the larger shaded ovals linked to each media role represent various actors attempting to discursively engage in legitimation through the media.

The vertical dimension points to the tensions media face in reflexivity to the discursive activities of actors positioned between strong and weak institutional power. At the top end, media performing a conduit role are more open to the discursive influences of organizations that typically exert strong institutional power. Media adopting this role typically rely to a disproportionate extent on these official and influential sources of information (Gans, 1980; Sigal, 1978). Here they are more responsive and hence display a low level of reflexivity to the discursive legitimation activities of organizations that are typically elite institutional actors with access to news media.

The differentiator between the conduit and mediator roles, however, is that media performing a mediator role respond to the discursive acts of one particular group of elite actors: those considered ‘experts’ (Bonardi & Keim, 2005; Vaara & Monin, 2010: 6) who have legitimate standing to offer commentary and interpretation when hotly contested issues are being debated in the public arena. Media performing this mediator role, however, show a relatively high level of autonomy from experts’ discursive activity because in this role the media display a high level of agency in purposively seeking out a select few institutional actors with an appropriate level of expertise and legitimacy on topics under discussion.

At the bottom end of the vertical axis, media performing facilitator and political actor roles respond to the discursive influence of those with typically weak institutional power. Media enacting a facilitator role are characterized by their dependence on discursive participation from media audiences in legitimation processes and who are typically aligned with weak institutional power. Although audiences generally enjoy unhindered freedom of expression in online discussion forums hosted by the media, the media’s online discussion forum editors become involved to a degree through inviting media audiences to actively take part in online discussion forums and subsequently managing these discussions. They rhetorically mobilize and steer participation in online discussions and they edit discussions and respond to audience debate over legitimacy by deleting comments and enabling ‘recommendations’ between participants (i.e., ‘posters’).

Media performing a political actor role, on the other hand, are more autonomous and are typically aligned with actors with weak institutional power in society. For example, media enacting this role display tendencies of advocating for marginalized groups in society, such as by aggregating and harnessing their discursive legitimation activities to mobilize audience action.
The findings from my theoretical and empirical analysis examine and illustrate how media performing each role are aligned with different actors (as depicted in Figure 10). In other words, each media role was identified according to the media’s reflexivity to the discursive activities of (1) organizations (typically representing strong institutional power)—thus organizations mobilize media in a conduit role, (2) audiences (representing weak institutional power)—thus media performing a facilitator role empower and facilitate their participation in legitimation, (3) experts (representing strong institutional power)—thus media performing a mediator role draw on their commentary, and (4), marginalized groups in society (representing weak institutional power)—thus media performing a political actor role advocate for and are aligned with them.

**Conduit:** The analysis in this study illustrates and examines how ECB executives mobilized media performing a conduit role to reestablish or defend the bank’s policy. Examples were found in media texts of media reflecting—largely unfiltered—the claims made by the ECB in their own press statements in a predominantly objective style of reporting. As such, these media appeared open to the discursive influence of a central bank (typically exerting strong institutional power), even though the bank did not engage much in the media discussion.

However, media performing a conduit role also appeared open to the discursive influences of Blockupy as a typically marginalized organization (typically exerting weak institutional power). Blockupy mobilized media performing a conduit role to delegitimize the ECB’s austerity policy. Social movement studies show that marginalized groups in society, such as activists, are able to make use of a repertoire of media tactics (Bakker et al., 2013; McDonnell & King, 2013; Walker, 2008), such as boycotts and street demonstrations, to have their claims heard through the media (i.e., to mobilize media in a conduit role). Thus media enacting this role respond to the discursive activity of actors with weak institutional power and yet who have the discursive and material capacity to gain a media voice.
Facilitator: The analysis shows examples of media performing a facilitator role enabling audiences (typically representing weak institutional power) to gain a voice in the debate. Media performing a facilitator role empowered and facilitated audiences to both delegitimate and relegitimate the controversial austerity policy through discursive means. As noted above, media enacting a facilitator role are characterized by their dependence on participation from media audiences in legitimation processes. For example, on the day of one of the Blockupy street protests editors of the Guardian’s online discussion forum, ‘GuardianWitness’, invited protestors to submit text and visual material demonstrating their experiences at the street demonstrations.

Mediator: The analysis shows examples of media performing a mediator role drawing on the commentary of experts such as statisticians and economists (typically representing strong institutional power). However, in another example, media performing this role offered their own interpretation about the politically controversial ECB policy as a sense-making service to their audiences. This was a clear example of media attempting to offer readers a wider and more balanced context to the debate over the austerity measures between Blockupy and the ECB. However, as noted earlier in this chapter, I also found that experts and reporters did not overtly legitimate or delegitimate the ECB austerity measures through media in this role. As such, I conclude that actors aligned with media performing this role (i.e., experts and reporters) did not engage in actively legitimating or delegitimating the ECB policy.

Political actor: In the empirical analysis I found examples of certain media performing a political actor role predominantly presenting similar claims to Blockupy’s—that austerity was the wrong strategy to deal with the debt problems of some EU member states. Media performing a political actor role initially ignored Blockupy, in effect silencing the activist’s voice. However, media enacting this role later helped to amplify Blockupy’s voice. Two roles of the media collectively contributed to Blockupy’s dominant voice in this empirical setting. Media performing a political actor role and Blockupy mobilizing media in a conduit role helped Blockupy achieve an overall dominant voice. This shows the tendency of media performing a political actor role to advocate for marginalized groups in society—those with typically weak institutional power. Christians et al (2009) note that media performing this role actively expose social injustice and abuses of power, raising “popular consciousness of wrongdoing, inequality and the potential for change” (2009: 126). A media organization enacting a political actor role “seeks to help minorities articulate an alternative set of goals that represent the needs and just moral claims of all, especially the marginalized, the poor and the dispossessed” (2009: 179). In performing this role, media side “with those who are developing forms of resistance and advocacy against dominant power holders” (2009: 180). Hence, although media performing this role are autonomous actors, they typically side with actors representing weak institutional power in society.
7.3.2 Media roles guide varying levels of media participation in legitimation

Elaboration of theory on media roles in legitimation—largely distilled from media theory in sociology and mass communication literature—contributes to a framework that offers further insight into the media’s varying levels of participation in legitimation processes. Legitimacy scholarship acknowledges that media performing a conduit role (e.g., the information transmission role) are relatively passive participants (Johnson et al., 2005: 462) in legitimation processes and that media performing a political actor role are more active participants in legitimation processes (Pollock & Rindova, 2003; Hayward, Rindova & Pollock, 2004; Johnson et al., 2005). Organization and management research shows that the media are “most influential when assuming an active role in the collection and presentation of information” (Johnson et al., 2005: 470). Accordingly, I argue that media performing a political actor role have potential to be more influential in legitimation processes. I further contend, therefore, that organizations seeking legitimacy enhancement through media coverage may place a high value on gaining a better understanding of how media roles guide varying levels of media participation in legitimation.

Nevertheless, legitimacy studies have not adequately examined the media’s varying levels between passive and active participation in legitimation. The framework of four media roles in legitimation developed in this dissertation extends legitimacy theory on media participation in legitimation by contending that the level of media participation in legitimation processes depends to a large extent on which role the media perform in any given setting. That is, media roles determine varying levels of media participation in legitimation.

To begin with, media performing a conduit role may be described as displaying a low level of participation in legitimation processes. This is because in this role they are highly dependent on information supplied by elite institutional actors. Christians et al (2009) refer to media in this role as a more passive entity dependent on cooperation with the prevailing foundations of power and perform their primary function of reporting the news more or less objectively and without much reflexivity to the discursive influences of these powerful elite. This role reflects the traditional perspective in mass media, sociology and organization scholarship of media essentially disseminating information as a “passive but reliable mirror” (Christians et al, 2009: 117) and a “more or less passive channel of information” for institutional actors (2009: 125). In this role the media are a neutral, non-partisan and less edited communication channel disseminating information in a largely unfiltered way on behalf of elite institutional actors. In sum, media performing this role are highly dependent on information supplied by influential organizations representing elite institutional actors and hence respond more or less passively to discursive legitimation activity of these actors. (See Table 16 below.)

Christians et al. (2009) describe media performing a facilitator role as less reflexive to the influences of institutional actors and more responsive to the communicative acts of a plurality of audiences marginalized by elite institutional actors. In performing this role media, to a degree, seek audience participation in
legitimation. Hence, in the facilitator role media display a relatively low level of participation in legitimation processes. For example, the media’s online discussion forum editors rhetorically mobilize and steer participation in online discussions; they also edit discussions and respond to audience debate over legitimacy by deleting comments and enabling ‘recommendations’ between posters.

On the other hand, media performing a mediator role may be described as more participative in legitimation processes. Christians et al (2009) note that in performing this role (their monitory role) the media are quite active participants in democratic societies. In performing this role they respond to their audiences’ need for the media to help make sense of socially contested issues. Hence, to provide further balance and wider context in media reporting, they selectively seek, integrate and disseminate the interpretations and commentary of a select few ‘experts’ representing elite institutional actors, such as economists, analysts, lawyers and academics.

Finally, media performing a political actor role may be described as highly active participants in legitimation processes, such as when they have a stake in certain legitimacy struggles. The previous chapter’s empirical analysis illustrates this characteristic of media performing a political actor role as a highly active participant in legitimation. For example, media performing a political actor role enact their own legitimacy strategies to persuade their audiences one way or the other. Media performing this role also tend to welcome the discursive legitimation activities of marginalized groups (e.g. social movements) such as by aggregating and harnessing their discursive activities to mobilize action among their audiences. Christians et al (2009) assert that media enacting this role are highly active participants in legitimation because this role “implies a persuasive dimension, with attempts to mobilize public opinion and public action toward the redistribution of social power” (2009: 181).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Roles</th>
<th>Conduit</th>
<th>Facilitator</th>
<th>Mediator</th>
<th>Political Actor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level of media participation in legitimation</td>
<td>Low: Media respond passively to elite institutional actors’ legitimation activity</td>
<td>Relatively low: Media seek audience participation in legitimation. The media’s online discussion forum editors rhetorically mobilize and steer participation in online discussions; they also edit discussions and respond to audience debate over legitimacy by deleting comments and enabling ‘recommendations’ between posters</td>
<td>Relatively high: Media purposively select, integrate and disseminate interpretations of ‘experts’ representing elite institutional actors</td>
<td>High: Media enact their own legitimacy strategies as well as respond to discursive legitimation activities of marginalized groups (e.g. social movements) such as by aggregating and harnessing their discursive legitimation activities to mobilize audience action</td>
</tr>
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Table 16. Varying levels of media participation in legitimation
7.3.3  Media roles define three types of media-legitimation processes

This study’s empirical analysis suggests that various media roles define three types of legitimation processes involving the media: legitimation through the media, legitimation by the media, and legitimation with the media. These three types of legitimation processes may be identified as *media-legitimation processes*. This third contribution to an integrative framework of media roles in legitimation serves to elaborate how news media organizations sometimes engage in legitimation processes on their own and at other times with other actors. In doing so it addresses the research questions:

*How do news media organizations perform their roles in the discursive (de)legitimation of a politically controversial organizational activity?*

*How do organizations discursively mobilize the media in their roles when seeking to (de)legitimate a politically controversial organizational activity?*

**(1) Legitimation through the media**

The process of ‘legitimation *through* the media’ describes the way in which organizations and individuals that are able to gain a media voice participate in legitimation through some level of engagement with the news media. In other words, the news media act as some kind of channel, arena or mechanism through which organizations and individuals are able to convey their legitimacy judgments. As shown in Table 17 (below), media performing a conduit role participate in legitimation processes typically as a relatively passive channel for the discursive activities of organizations representing elite institutional actors and for the discursive activities of marginalized groups able to make use of a repertoire of media tactics to gain a media voice. Media performing a facilitator role participate in legitimation processes as an arena for the discursive activities of audiences. Media performing a mediator role participate in legitimation processes as a mechanism to make sense of highly contested legitimacy struggles by drawing on experts’ interpretations. In other words, through the media roles of conduit, facilitator and mediator, organizations and their audiences can discursively legitimate or delegitimate focal organizations and their activities through media texts. This aligns with the process understood in legitimacy research, particularly in discursive legitimation studies (e.g., Vaara and colleagues), in which the media are viewed as an arena where legitimacy struggles are fought out between multiple actors.

**(2) Legitimation by the media**

The process of ‘legitimation *by* the media’ describes the way in which news media performing a political actor role engage in legitimation activities as autonomous actors, yet typically also as advocates for marginalized groups in society. In this process media performing a political actor role actively engage in legitimating or delegitimizing a focal organization or its activities with very little reflexivity to the discursive influences of external forces, particularly from influential actors positioned with strong institutional power.
(3) Legitimation with the media

The third process of ‘legitimation with the media’ describes a context in which two sets of actors—media performing a political actor role and marginalized groups mobilizing media through the conduit role—become aligned in advocating for or against objects of legitimation (e.g., causes, organizations or their activities). According to Christians et al (2009), media performing this advocacy role collaborate with marginalized groups (e.g., activist and avant-garde movements) in actively exposing social injustice and abuses of power, and raising “popular consciousness of wrongdoing, inequality and the potential for change” (2009: 126). A media organization performing a political actor role “seeks to help minorities articulate an alternative set of goals that represent the needs and just moral claims of all, especially the marginalized, the poor and the dispossessed” (2009: 179). While media performing a political actor role tend to advocate for marginalized groups, marginalized groups also are able to gain a media voice to mobilize media in a conduit role as “weapons” in their discursive struggles with oppositions of power (2009: 11).

Therefore, one may conclude that when the aims of the media (performing a political actor role) and a marginalized actor (mobilizing media performing a conduit role) are aligned, a third process of ‘legitimation with the media’ emerges. Hence, ‘legitimation with the media’ takes place when a marginalized group engages in ‘legitimation through the media’ (by mobilizing media in a conduit role) alongside media performing a political actor role engaged in ‘legitimation by the media’. Put another way, ‘legitimation through the media’ describes the way in which the media provide an arena for public contests over legitimacy and ‘legitimation by the media’ describes the way in which at times media organizations performing a political actor role also step into this arena to actively engage in public contests to influence issues they themselves have a stake in.

Table 17. Three media-legitimation processes linked to four media roles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Media role</th>
<th>Conduit</th>
<th>Facilitator</th>
<th>Mediator</th>
<th>Political Actor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type of media</td>
<td>Legitimation through</td>
<td>Legitimation through</td>
<td>Legitimation through</td>
<td>Legitimation by the media &amp; legitimation with the media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>legitimation process</td>
<td>the media</td>
<td>the media</td>
<td>the media</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Descriptive role</td>
<td>Channel for (de)</td>
<td>Arena for (de)</td>
<td>Mechanism for media to make sense</td>
<td>Actor (de)legitimating other institutional actors and their activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of media in</td>
<td>legitimation activities</td>
<td>legitimation activities of</td>
<td>of legitimation by drawing on</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>legitimation process</td>
<td>of elite institutional</td>
<td>elite institutional actors &amp;</td>
<td>experts’ interpretations of highly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>activities</td>
<td>marginalized groups with a media</td>
<td>contested issues</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>voice</td>
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Interestingly, the empirical analysis illustrated how at times media performing a political actor role seemed to ignore Blockupy as an actor attempting to convey the same legitimacy judgments attacking the ECB’s austerity measures. As shown in Table 18, media performing a political actor role delegitimated the ECB policy autonomously (with no involvement from Blockupy) in the second and fourth events. However, at other times their delegitimation of the policy
seemed aligned; that is, in the two final protest events both Blockupy (mobilizing media in a conduit role) and media performing a political actor role were the main driving force in the delegitimation of the ECB policy. This empirical case demonstrated how when the aims of media performing a political actor role and a marginalized group mobilizing media in a conduit role were aligned in the same legitimation process through the simultaneous occurrence of (1) ‘legitimation through the media’ and (2) ‘legitimation by the media’, the process of (3) ‘legitimation with the media’ emerged.

In adopting a communicative approach to legitimation (Harmon et al, 2015), we may view media performing roles of conduit, facilitator and mediator as an enabler of various actors (as senders) communicating legitimacy judgments about focal organizations and their activities through news media texts and their audiences receiving these judgments and subsequently forming perceptions of these organizations and their activities. (See Figure 11.) Findings from the empirical analysis illustrate how Blockupy (as a sender) was able to mobilize media performing a conduit role to communicate the activist’s judgments about the illegitimacy of the ECB austerity policy, thus potentially affecting audience perceptions of this policy. Findings also illustrate how a few media performing a facilitator role empowered and facilitated audiences (as senders and receivers) predominantly to communicate their judgments about the illegitimacy of the austerity policy among themselves in online forums hosted by the media. Media performing a mediator role drew on the commentary of a few experts and reporters (as senders) to communicate their legitimacy judgments about the austerity policy; however, as discussed earlier, these judgments were not overt and thus obvious in the media reports. As shown in Figure 11, this process describes ‘legitimation through the media’.

A communicative approach to legitimation also helps to shed light on how media performing a political actor role are themselves actors (as senders) typically aligned with marginalized groups (as senders) communicating their own and marginalized groups’ judgments to their audiences through media texts. Findings illustrate how media performing a political actor role predominantly communicated their own judgments—and those of Blockupy—about the illegitimacy of the austerity policy to their audiences. This process describes ‘legitimation by the media’ and ‘legitimation with the media’ (as shown in Table 17).

Table 18. Evolution of phases in media-legitimation processes

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<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Event description</td>
<td>Blockupy protest against ECB austerity measures</td>
<td>Tapping-out ceremony for ECB HQ construction</td>
<td>Blockupy protest against ECB austerity measures</td>
<td>Media revelations of increasing costs of ECB HQ construction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media-legitimation processes</td>
<td>Blockupy mobilized media in a conduit role in ‘legitimation through media’</td>
<td>‘Legitimation through media’ (performing in a political actor role)</td>
<td>Blockupy mobilized media in a conduit role in ‘legitimation through media’</td>
<td>‘Legitimation through media’ (performing in a political actor role)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>= ‘Legitimation through media’ (performing in a political actor role)</td>
<td></td>
<td>= ‘Legitimation with media’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Theoretical elaboration of these three types of media-legitimation processes extends theory of media legitimacy (Hybels, 1994; Deephouse, 1996; Lamertz & Baum, 1998; Rindova & Fombrun, 1999; Pollock & Rindova, 2003; Bansal & Clelland, 2004; Deephouse & Suchman, 2008; Pollock et al., 2008; Deephouse & Heugens, 2009; Bitektine, 2011; Barros, 2014; Bitektine & Haack, 2015) by drawing on the work of journalism scholars Protess et al. (1992) and organization and management scholars Deephouse and Heugens (2009). Protess et al. (1992) examine the ‘mobilization’ and ‘coalition’ explanatory models of media performing a political actor role effecting public policy changes. The ‘mobilization’ and ‘coalition’ models put forward by Protess et al. (1992) contribute to theoretical development of the ‘legitimation by the media’ and ‘legitimation with the media’ processes.

The ‘mobilization’ model contributes to elaboration of the process of ‘legitimation by the media’. In their analysis of cases of investigative journalism reports that drove positive societal change, Protess et al. (1992) describe how, in response to media performing a type of political actor role exposing organizational misbehaviour, media audiences were ‘mobilized’ by news media to influence policy makers to address issues of concern. Hence, this mobilization model of the news media synthesizes with the political actor role of the media and with the process of ‘legitimation by the media’. Their ‘coalition’ model also contributes to elaboration of the process of ‘legitimation with the media’. They describe a ‘coalition’ model in which media performing a type of political actor role form a ‘coalition’ with marginalized stakeholders to influence policy makers towards
policy change. Hence, Protess et al.’s (1992) ‘coalition’ model aligns with the process of ‘legitimation with the media’ in which media adopting the advocacy role of political actor collaborate with marginalized groups in actively exposing social injustice and abuses of power and raising “popular consciousness of wrongdoing, inequality and the potential for change” (2009: 126). A common element in both their ‘mobilization’ and ‘coalition’ models is that the media performing a political actor role maintain pressure for policy change by constantly widening their “circles of influence to new allies and observers, using their cumulative responses to drive a first-level agenda (‘this affair is important’)” (Besiou et al., 2013: 722).

Deephouse and Heugens (2009) demonstrate these ‘legitimation by the media’ and ‘legitimation with the media’ processes alongside similar ‘mobilization’ and ‘coalition-building’ processes in their study of the mobilization role of media organizations influencing firms to embrace issues. In adopting the political actor perspective to examine the mobilization function of media organizations in information exchange processes between actors, Deephouse and Heugens (2009) point to two ways in which the media can mobilize action. First, media organizations do so by legitimizing social problems or issues in the eyes of previously disconnected actors. This describes the process of ‘legitimation by the media’. Second, media organizations mobilize action by connecting external organizations to a social problem or issue through dissemination of information among previously unaware observers on the moral intensity of an issue. This describes the process of ‘legitimation with the media’ because media performing a political actor role align with other actors (typically marginalized groups in society) in mobilizing audiences toward some intended action. Their study then describes how ‘legitimation by the media’ can work alongside ‘legitimation with the media’: according to Deephouse and Heugens (2009), ‘legitimation by the media’ occurs when media organizations performing a political actor role legitimate an issue by raising awareness about it and highlighting the urgency of the issue as a societal problem. ‘Legitimation with the media’ takes place when, as a result of this first step, media performing a political actor role also connect organizations concerned with the issue and in this process they stimulate those same organizations to adopt the issue.

In social movement literature, King (2008: 340) implicitly offers an example of ‘legitimation with the media’ in describing the way in which media performing a type of political actor role effectively allied with Cesar Chaves in the 1960s to generate national excitement about the grape boycotts. Additionally, according to communication scholars Brüggemann and Wessler (2014), during the 2009 UN climate conference in Copenhagen many media organizations, possibly performing a political actor role, seized the opportunity to align themselves with environmental NGOs, governments and the UN over this global issue that at the time promised to become a positive turning point in the history of climate change.
7.3.4 Media roles identify media as either primary or secondary sources of legitimacy

The framework of four media roles in legitimation processes challenges conceptualization of the media as a source of legitimacy (Deephouse & Suchman, 2008). In shedding light on the types of actors making use of media in their various roles for legitimation purposes, this framework poses the question: When are media the predominant or primary source of legitimacy and when are the actors mobilizing the media the predominant or primary source of legitimacy? A fundamental premise in this dissertation is that the media rarely act alone in the collation, production and dissemination of legitimacy judgments about organizations and their activities. Deephouse and Suchman (2008) note that “media stories, whether legitimating or de-legitimating, do not appear out of a vacuum, but instead are produced by organizations” (2008: 56). Adopting a communicative approach to legitimation processes (Harmon et al., 2015), I understand that the media are a channel or arena through which actors (e.g., organizations and individuals) can participate in public processes in which they communicate (e.g., send) legitimacy judgments about focal organizations and their activities through media texts and that subsequently perceptions about these organizations and their activities are cognitively formed (e.g., received) by ‘legitimacy evaluators’ (Bitektine & Haack, 2015) or audiences.

Each type of actor conveying legitimacy judgments through media in their various roles represents essentially three different sources of legitimacy. First, I have argued in this dissertation that media accounts disseminated through media performing a conduit role mostly convey legitimacy judgments of organizations representing elite institutional actors. The judgments of experts representing these elite institutional actors are reflected in media accounts of media performing a mediator role. Accordingly, media performing these two roles could typically be identified as a proxy or surrogate source of elite institutional legitimacy—that is, legitimacy predominantly reflecting the judgments of elite institutional actors. (See, for example, Figure 12.) This legitimacy, then, is biased towards the judgments of influential organizations.

Second, because the audiences of organizations (who also constitute media audiences) participate in legitimacy conferral through the media performing a facilitator role, arguably media performing this role may be considered to reflect a wider, more public and society-wide legitimacy. Empowered by media performing a facilitator role, these audiences tend to confer a plurality of legitimacy judgments about organizations through online discussion forums hosted by the media. Third, legitimacy conveyed through media performing a political actor role reflects judgments about a focal organization emanating predominantly from media with a stake in struggles over the legitimacy of that particular focal organization. Because media performing this role tend to advocate for marginalized groups in society, legitimacy conveyed through media performing this role would then also reflect the judgments of this marginalized group.
Accordingly, as shown in Figure 12, media performing a facilitator role may be considered a source of public legitimacy, media performing conduit and mediator roles may be considered a source of elite institutional legitimacy, and media performing a political actor role may be considered a source of media legitimacy and marginalized-public legitimacy. Bitektine’s (2011) identification of various types of legitimacy—such as legitimacy with regulators (legitimacy conferred by regulators) (Baum & Oliver, 1991; Deephouse, 1996; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978; Rao, 2004; Singh, Tucker, & House, 1986), legitimacy with investors (i.e., legitimacy conferred by investors) (Certo, 2003; Rao, Greve, & Davis, 2001), and legitimacy with advocacy groups (Rao, 1998; Rao, Morrill & Zald, 2000)—is in effect an identification of the sources of legitimacy. In referring to legitimacy with regulators, Bitektine is referring to legitimacy conferred by regulators. As such, regulators are the primary source of legitimacy in this context. His identification of media legitimacy as a type of legitimacy (2011: 154) indicates the media as a reflector of legitimacy conferred by the media’s audiences, rather than as an autonomous actor in a political actor role.

Just as stakeholders are of varying importance to organizations (Mitchell, Agle & Wood, 1997), not all sources of legitimacy are equally credible and influential (Cameron, 2009; Hardy & Clegg, 1996). Thus the legitimacy judgments various actors convey through the media carry varying weights. (See Figure 12.) For example, Bitektine (2011) notes that regulators are a credible and influential source of legitimacy for certain organizations because they have a strong influence over organizations and their legitimacy (2011: 156). For this reason, organizations take a strategic interest in deciding which legitimacy sources to attend to and subsequently in attempting to manage legitimacy conferred by legitimacy sources.
This has implications for scholars attempting to measure legitimacy using media texts as their data source. Bitektine (2011) observes that “media reports have been widely used as an operationalization of organizational legitimacy (see, for example, Brown & Deegan, 1998; Deephouse, 1996; Deephouse & Carter, 2005; Elsbach, 1994; Lamertz & Baum, 1998; Pollock & Rindova, 2003)” (2011: 155). Researchers have been measuring legitimacy using media texts for over two decades. For example, the tone of media communications—or the “evaluative” aspect (Wry, Deephouse, & McNamara, 2007)—is sometimes used by both legitimacy scholars and management within organizations as a “surrogate measure of an organization’s legitimacy with the general public (Deephouse, 1996)” (Bitektine, 2011: 155). This is why media legitimacy theory refers to the media as a source of legitimacy (Meyer & Scott, 1983; Deephouse & Suchman, 2008).

However, I argue that a more nuanced understanding of the media’s roles in the conferral of legitimacy in public arenas may be helpful in identifying the primary sources of legitimacy—that is, where legitimacy originates. I contend that the media should be identified as either a primary or secondary source of legitimacy. The media sometimes perform a political actor role in legitimation processes, thus communicating their own legitimacy judgments, and hence they are a primary source of legitimacy. At other times the media may be a channel or arena for other actors’ dissemination of legitimacy judgments, and hence a secondary source of legitimacy. Each role of the media largely depends on which actors—whether organizations or experts representing elite institutional actors with a media voice, audiences of organizations (also constituting media audiences), or media as political actors themselves—are typically the primary source of legitimacy.

Hence, each media role has much to say in more accurately identifying the sources of legitimacy in legitimation processes. As shown in **Figure 12**, the typical primary source of legitimacy in the conduit role are a select few organizations as elite institutional actors who are given a media voice and therefore who reflect a corporate agenda (Carroll, 2010; Carroll & McCombs, 2003; Grafstrom & Windell, 2011: 224, 233). The typical primary source of legitimacy in the facilitator role are the audiences of organizations and the media and therefore who reflect a wider public agenda (Behr & Iyengar, 1985; Carroll, 2009; Lee & Carroll, 2011: 127; Besiou et al., 2013; McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Rogers et al., 1993). Likewise, the typical primary source of legitimacy in the mediator role is restricted largely to ‘experts’ representing elite institutional actors and who therefore may be considered to reflect a corporate agenda. Finally, the primary source of legitimacy in the political actor role are the media themselves. In performing this role media tend to advocate for, and reflect the voice of, marginalized groups in society, such as social movement organizations. Accordingly, in performing this role media tend to reflect a media agenda (Carroll, 2009; Grafstrom & Windell, 2011: 233) and, to some extent, a marginalized-public agenda.
7.4 A communicative approach to media roles in legitimation

These theoretical ideas build on Bitektine’s (2011) process model of social judgment formation to offer a contribution to a more nuanced understanding of the way legitimacy is formed and communicated at macro levels of society. However, one point of difference is that while Bitektine refers to ‘audiences’ as the primary source of legitimacy, in my study I refer instead to ‘actors’ as the primary source of legitimacy. This is because I take a communicative approach to legitimation processes to view the original source of communicative acts as ‘actors’. According to this approach, audiences are traditionally viewed as more or less passive recipients (or listeners) in a one-way communication process. Nevertheless, these audiences become actors when they adopt a “behavioural response” (Bitektine, 2011: 158), such as when they convey their own judgment about the legitimacy of organizations.

In conclusion, a communicative approach to legitimation (Harmon et al., 2015) is helpful to shedding light on how four media roles contribute to legitimation processes (as depicted in Figure 13). As a secondary source of legitimacy, the media are an enabling actor in legitimation; they enable other actors to communicate (i.e., ‘send’) legitimacy judgments and audiences to form perceptions (i.e., ‘receive’ legitimacy judgments) of organizations as listeners (Hoefer & Green, 2016). In this way, the media are an actor involved in legitimacy-constituting processes as an enabler of actors (performing ‘conduit’ and ‘mediator’ roles) as senders and audiences as receivers. As depicted in Figure 13, in this dissertation I contend that as an enabler of senders and receivers in a uni-directional communication flow in legitimation processes the media may do so in two distinct roles:

(1) In performing a conduit role and hence as a relatively passive participant in discursive legitimation processes (e.g. transmitting and thus reflecting relatively unedited legitimacy judgments of organizations typically but not exclusively representing elite institutional actors), the media enable a mostly one-way flow of legitimacy conferral between influential organizations (as senders) and their audiences (as receivers). In performing this role, therefore, the media are a secondary source of predominantly elite institutional legitimacy. This describes the process of ‘legitimation through the media’.

(2) In performing a mediator and hence as a somewhat active participant in discursive legitimation processes (e.g. undertaking a sense-making service by actively seeking and disseminating commentary by ‘experts’ on issues under debate), the media enable a mostly one-way flow of legitimacy conferral between typically elite institutional actors as ‘experts’ (as senders) and audiences (as receivers). In performing this role, therefore, the media are a secondary source of elite institutional legitimacy. This describes the process of ‘legitimation through the media’.
A third role of the media is characterized by the blurring of sender-receiver roles in an omni-directional flow of the communication of legitimacy judgments:

(3) In performing a facilitator role and hence as a somewhat passive participant in discursive legitimation processes (e.g. through inviting media audiences to actively take part in online discussion forums and subsequently managing these discussions), the media empower and facilitate audiences (as senders and receivers) to discursively contest and negotiate the legitimacy of organizations, often in the blurring of sender-receiver roles in an omni-directional flow of legitimacy conferral. In performing this role, therefore, the media are a secondary source of public legitimacy. This describes the process of ‘legitimation through the media’.

A fourth role of the media is characterized by the media as an actor initiating legitimacy conferral (as sender):

(4) In performing a political actor role and hence as a highly active participant in discursive legitimation processes (e.g., discursively mobilizing audiences towards forming certain perceptions of organizations), the media predominantly communicate (as senders) their own legitimacy judgments in a mostly one-way flow of communication to their audiences (as receivers). In performing this role they also tend to advocate for, and reflect legitimacy judgments of, marginalized groups in society (e.g., activists). In performing this role, therefore, the media are a primary source of media legitimacy and marginalized-public legitimacy. This describes the process of ‘legitimation by the media’ and ‘legitimation with the media’.
These theoretical ideas contribute to the growing body of research emphasizing the role of communication in legitimation processes (Harmon et al., 2015; Hardy, 2011; Lammers, 2011; Suchman, 1995; Suddaby, 2011; Zucker, 1977), with a particular focus on how communication (e.g., discursive and rhetorical) strategies of social actors (e.g., organizations and the media) shape the legitimacy of organizations (Elsbach, 1994; Green, 2004; Lamin & Zaheer, 2012; Lefsrud & Meyer, 2012; Phillips, Lawrence, & Hardy, 2004; Suddaby & Greenwood, 2005; Vaara & Tienari, 2008; Vaara et al., 2006; Van Leeuwen & Wodak, 1999). This dissertation contributes to theory on media roles in legitimation as a communicative process in which judgments about the legitimacy of organizations and their activities are conveyed and contested by organizations, the media, and their audiences at macro levels of society.
The purpose of this dissertation was to contribute to a clearer understanding of the various ways in which the news media participate in and influence the social and discursive processes through which organizations and their activities are legitimated and delegitimated in society. More specifically, this dissertation set out to identify, define and elaborate roles of the media in processes of legitimation. I argue that the roles the news media play in these processes demand more rigorous and systematic investigation in organization and management research if we are to better understand not only how the news media perform these roles but also how organizations—and to some extent their audiences—are able to mobilize the media in these roles in discursive processes in which they socially construct, negotiate and contest the legitimacy of focal organizations and their activities in public arenas. I contend that organizations seeking to enhance or defend their legitimacy through news media coverage, particularly when facing public delegitimation attacks, would place a high value on gaining a better understanding of how the media tend to behave when performing their various roles.

The empirical case that I set out to study offered a particularly ideal opportunity to explore and shed some light on how the news media perform various political and communicative roles in discursive processes of organizational (de)legitimation, and also how different types of organizations (i.e., a powerful government organization and an activist group as change agent) can mobilize the media in these different roles for their own ends. This area of investigation is important to gain a better understanding of how organizational legitimacy can be damaged by contemporary activists able to mobilize the news media for their own delegitimation purposes. Mainstream news media organizations, whether mobilized by external forces such as activists or whether acting autonomously, can profoundly shape discursive legitimation processes.

Jonsson and Burr (2011) refer to the media as “fight promoters” that increase public attention to specific issues and amplify their importance (2011: 465). I extend their boxing analogy to conceptualize media performing a conduit role as more or less objective fight reporters on the side-lines, in a facilitator role as fight umpires in the ring managing the struggle, in a mediator role as fight commentators analyzing the contest to help audiences make sense of it all, and in a political actor role as the actual fighters slugging it out in the ring.
In this dissertation I have treated the media as both organizations and as an arena of collective discussion and debate on organizational legitimacy. In examining various roles of the media in legitimation processes, I have focused on the media as organizational actors and more specifically as individual news media organizations. However, in examining how organizations, audiences, and indeed the media (as organizations) participate in discursive processes of constructing and contesting organizational legitimacy, like most discursive legitimation scholars I also have treated the media as an arena. In other words, I have sought to investigate how the media as organizations participate with other actors in discursive legitimation processes going on in the media as arena.

The media’s ubiquitous role as an arena of discursive struggles over legitimacy enables the legitimacy of organizations to be negotiated, contested and undermined by multiple actors, including media organizations themselves in a political actor role. In this sense, media organizations performing a conduit role may be conceptualized as introducing a public contest over legitimacy by drawing attention to it, in a facilitator role as providing an arena for wider audiences to participate in the struggle, in a mediator role as offering expert commentary on the contest, and at times also stepping into the arena in a political actor role to more actively engage in the contest to influence the legitimacy struggle they may have a stake in.

8.1 Contributions

This dissertation offers three contributions to organization studies literature on legitimation. First, it does so by developing a theoretically refined framework of four media roles in legitimation processes. By connecting organizational legitimacy literature to sociology and mass communication literature on media roles in society (e.g., Christians et al., 2009), this dissertation develops and empirically illustrates an integrative framework through which to analyze four roles that the media play in discursive processes of legitimation. This framework shifts attention to, and sheds new light on, distinct ways in which the news media serve as a platform for and influence, facilitate and mediate processes of discursive legitimation in public arenas. Specifically, it shows how news media roles (1) are linked to different actors, (2) guide varying levels of media participation in legitimation, (3) define three types of media-legitimation processes, and (4) identify media as either a primary or secondary source of legitimacy, thus challenging Deephouse and Suchman’s (2008) conceptualization of media as a source of legitimacy.

Second, this study offers a contribution to legitimation research by shedding light on how four media roles define three types of legitimation processes involving the media (identified as media-legitimation processes). These three media-legitimation processes help to explain how media roles are linked to different actors; how media engage autonomously and with other actors in legitimation processes depending on the role they perform. The first process of legitimation through the media’ describes the way in which organizations and audiences participate in legitimation through media texts by mobilizing media in
conduit, facilitator and mediator roles. Media performing a conduit role participate in legitimation processes typically as a channel for the discursive activities of a few influential organizations with access to the media and those marginalized groups able to make use of a repertoire of media tactics to gain a media voice. Media performing a facilitator role may be seen to participate in legitimation processes as an arena for the discursive activities of audiences. Media performing a mediator role participate in legitimation processes as a mechanism to make sense of highly contested legitimacy struggles by drawing on experts’ interpretations of these struggles.

The second process of ‘legitimation by the media’ describes the way in which media performing a political actor role engage in legitimation activities as autonomous actors. The third process of ‘legitimation with the media’ describes a context in which media performing in a political actor role typically act as advocates for marginalized groups in society and thus become aligned with marginalized groups in advocating for or against objects such as causes, organizations or their activities. Analysis of the empirical case in this dissertation demonstrates that when the aims of media performing a political actor role and a marginalized group mobilizing media in a conduit role are aligned in the same legitimation process through the simultaneous occurrence of (1) ‘legitimation through the media’ and (2) ‘legitimation by the media’, the process of (3) ‘legitimation with the media’ (e.g. collaboration between media performing in a political actor role and a marginalized group) emerges. Therefore, one may conclude that when the aims of the media (in a political actor role) and a marginalized actor (mobilizing media performing a conduit role) are aligned, a third process of ‘legitimation with the media’ emerges.

The third contribution this dissertation makes is to a communicative approach to legitimation (Harmon et al., 2015). Such an approach elucidates how four media roles of conduit, facilitator, mediator and political actor contribute to various actors’ participation in legitimation processes. In other words, I perceive legitimation as a communicative process in which media organizations (1) are an enabler of organizations and audiences attempting to participate as ‘actors’ in legitimation through the media (i.e., as senders communicating legitimacy judgments about organizations) in conduit, facilitator and mediator roles and (2) are actors themselves (i.e., senders of legitimacy judgments) in a political actor role. As an enabler of organizations and audiences attempting to participate as ‘actors’ communicating legitimacy judgments through the media, the media are an arena. As actors themselves, the media communicate their own legitimacy judgments through the media arena. I adopt this communicative perspective to examine how media organizations interact with other actors in discursive legitimation processes going on in the media as arena.

8.2 Limitations and future research

There are a number of limitations relating to this study. First, I acknowledge both methodological and conceptual challenges in identifying media roles in
media texts. To begin with, in my analysis I largely identified entire media organizations in a certain role based on a single report produced by a single journalist (and commented on by audience members in online discussion forums). In other words, I attempted to show that the entire media organization, not just one journalist, was performing a political actor role in that empirical setting through a single media report relating to that setting (in this case, the struggle over the legitimacy of the central bank’s austerity policy between 2012 and 2015). Nevertheless, this type of analysis was useful to identifying media organizations performing certain roles in media texts to try to make sense of (1) how the news media performed these four roles in a specific context and (2) how organizations made use of discursive means in the mobilization of media in each of these roles.

One limitation of my analysis is that I was only able to identify media organizations in a transient role (i.e., media organizations in a transient role may switch between conduit, facilitator, mediator and political actor roles simultaneously within a single media report and within a single edition, publication or program) rather than an established role (i.e., media organizations in this type of role may establish themselves in one or more permanent conduit, facilitator, mediator or political actor roles over an extended period; e.g., The Young Turks—an American news and commentary program on YouTube which co-creator and host Cenk Uygur asserts is aimed at the 60% of Americans who hold progressive views and the "98 per cent 'not in power'" (Burrell, 2014)—may be identified in an established political actor role). As noted earlier, this is because I set out to identify each of the four roles within individual media reports (including audience posts in online discussion forums linked to individual online media reports) based on a specific empirical setting—i.e., a struggle over the legitimacy of the ECB’s austerity policy between 2012 and 2015. Hence, particular news media were identified performing either conduit, facilitator, mediator or political actor roles based largely on their reports about that particular context. It is not adequate to identify a media organization in an established role—i.e., to determine if a media organization predominantly performed a certain role over an extended period of time and across multiple contexts—based solely on media reports about a single issue. Identification of a media organization in an established role would require analysis of multiple reports about many issues or events published by that media organization over an extended period of time. For example, identification of media in an established political actor role, and hence with a stake in a particular issue or struggle, may be based on factors such as frequency and intensity of reporting on a certain issue over a period of time. A media organization’s mission statement may also indicate its alignment with a more established or transient role. Future research may attempt to systematically identify and define these transient and established roles and subsequently examine how the media’s established and transient roles shape legitimation processes.

A second limitation of this study is that it does not necessarily contribute much to our understanding of the media’s effect on the outcome of these processes: organizational legitimacy. For example, the analysis does not address whether
or not the legitimacy of the ECB’s austerity policy was destabilized in this empirical setting. Instead, this study primarily contributes to the discussion on how the media participate in and shape legitimation processes (Meyer & Scott, 1983; Ashforth & Gibbs, 1990; Aldrich & Fiol, 1994; Suchman, 1995; Loundsbury & Glynn, 2001), such as through their various roles. Nevertheless, the framework of four media roles in legitimation may open up new avenues through which legitimacy scholars may explore how the media in their various roles participate in organizational legitimation processes and hence how this may subsequently affect the legitimacy of organizations and their activities.

This study contributes to a research agenda in the hope of discovering and identifying new ways in which media organizations perform their various roles in processes of legitimation. As noted earlier in this chapter, research into the news media’s political actor and facilitator roles would particularly contribute to addressing under-researched areas in legitimation literature. Identification of media performing a political actor role as an advocate for marginalized groups in society may offer promise for future research examining how social movements engage with mainstream news media in legitimation processes. For example, the ‘legitimation with the media’ process put forward in this dissertation may open up possibilities for further research into how social movements collude, whether intentionally or serendipitously, with news media performing a political actor role for their own (de)legitimation purposes. This study did not examine whether Blockupy, as a typically marginalized actor in media debates over economic policy, intentionally sought to mobilize media in a political actor role to delegitimate the ECB’s austerity policy. Although organizations may attempt to legitimate or delegitimate focal organizations and their attributes through mobilizing media in a conduit role, this dissertation suggests that marginalized actors such as activists may gain a more level playing field and a dominant actor position in such processes when media performing a political actor role take their side and advocate for them (e.g., through the process of ‘legitimation with the media’). It would therefore be interesting to examine how media performing a political actor role sometimes actively play a part in an activist group’s transformation from a marginalized actor into a dominant force for change in society (change agent).

Another area of investigation that may prove fruitful is an examination into how organizations undertake defensive institutional work (Barnett & King, 2008; Maguire & Hardy, 2009; Desai, 2011) under conditions in which a media organization adopts a political actor role in purposively attacking the legitimacy of that organization. Questions guiding this inquiry may include: Can media organizations performing a political actor role undertake offensive institutional work to maximize disruptive events through discursive means at their disposal? How do organizations undertake defensive institutional work in response to the offensive institutional work of media organizations performing a political actor role?

A focus on media performing a facilitator role empowering and facilitating audience participation in legitimation processes also offers promise of future research in a number of areas. As noted earlier in this dissertation, the active role
of audiences in legitimation processes played out in the media has been largely missing in organization studies literature on legitimation. Although media audiences—who may also constitute external stakeholders of organizations—tend to interact in news media discussions about the legitimacy of organizations and their activities, such as through online discussion forums hosted by contemporary news media organizations, legitimation studies have not yet given adequate theoretical and empirical consideration to the role of the media as an enabler of these audiences as ‘actors’ and hence as active participants negotiating and contesting the legitimacy of organizations in online environments. This is despite contemporary news media increasingly seeking to better engage with their audiences (e.g., through the facilitator role) and to amplify their voice by drawing them into public debates. Numerous news media, such as The Telegraph newspaper in the UK, have recently undergone organizational reviews of the way they engage with their audiences. In February 2016 The Telegraph conducted research to try to better understand the best way to support reader engagement. Further, contemporary news media are increasingly integrating the audience’s social media posts and tweets into their news reports. When discussing audience opinions about popular issues, media actors (e.g., television newsreaders) read aloud and/or display audience members’ texts or posts. They also conduct online polls of audience attitudes and then focus in on individuals’ comments emanating from those polls.

Accordingly, questions that may be relevant to future research investigating media roles influencing audience participation in legitimation process may include: How does audience participation in legitimation processes through media performing a facilitator role contribute to discursive struggles over legitimacy played out in public arenas? How can audiences gain a more dominant voice in media debates over organizational legitimacy through one or more of the media’s roles? How do new online media platforms hosted by mainstream news media shape the way media perform their roles in legitimation processes?

8.3 Implications for organizations

This dissertation contributes to a better understanding of how social movements, particularly protest movements, can attack the legitimacy of high profile organizations and their activities (1) through mobilizing media in a conduit role and (2) aligning with media performing a political actor role. This dissertation has shown how media performing a political actor role display tendencies to advocate for marginalized groups such as social movements. Accordingly, social movements wanting to gain news media support for or against a public cause or issue may benefit from actively collaborating with media in a political actor role while simultaneously mobilizing media in a conduit role.

This has implications for organizations facing public attacks through the news media from protest movements. To enable such organizations to more effectively manage legitimacy through the media, they may find it beneficial to identify media organizations performing various roles when dealing with an issue or
cause important to the organization, particularly those media performing a political actor role. For example, a media organization may be identified in a political actor role for or against an issue important to the organization. The organization may then be in a better position to plan and implement defensive institutional responses to deal with the external threat. If it is determined that media in a political actor role and the organization have aligned interests in that issue, collaboration may be beneficial to both organizations. Accordingly, one response may be to co-opt media in a political actor role as an ally in shared attempts to legitimate, delegitimate or relegitimate the issue under threat. However, if it is found that the media’s support for the issue conflicts with the interests of the organization, the organization should prepare to defend itself from possible delegitimation attacks from both the media and protest movements.
References


References


APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: Journals included in systematic literature review

I limited my systematic literature review (conducted 20-23 February 2016) to studies published in these 27 top-tier journals which I chose because of their high impact factor and because they encompass the field of organization and management studies.

Academy of Management Annals (impact factor 7.769)
Academy of Management Review (impact factor 7.475)
Academy of Management Journal (impact factor 6.448)
Journal of Management (impact factor 6.071)
Annual Review of Sociology (impact factor 5.019)
American Sociological Review (impact factor 4.390)
Organizational Research Methods (impact factor 4.148)
Econometrica (impact factor 3.823)
Organization Science (impact factor 3.775)
Journal of Management Studies (impact factor 3.763)
American Economic Review (impact factor 3.673)
Journal of Political Economy (impact factor 3.593)
American Journal of Sociology (impact factor 3.545)
Strategic Management Journal (impact factor 3.341)
Administrative Science Quarterly (impact factor 3.333)
Organization Studies (impact factor 2.886)
Management Science (impact factor 2.482)
Organization (impact factor 1.809)
Public Opinion Quarterly (impact factor 1.775)
Journal of Politics (impact factor 1.705)
British Journal of Management (impact factor 1.584)
Business & Society (impact factor 1.468)
Journal of Management Inquiry (impact factor 1.446)
Strategic Organization (impact factor 1.400)
Journal of Business Ethics (impact factor 1.326)
Journal of Business Research (impact factor 1.306)
European Political Science Review (impact factor 1.154)
### APPENDIX 2: Examples of media performing a political actor role in delegitimating the ECB policy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actor</th>
<th>Dominant themes</th>
<th>Dominant discourse</th>
<th>Dominant discursive strategy</th>
<th>Example in media texts</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Event #1: May 2012</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>The Guardian</em></td>
<td>Protest (il)legitimacy &amp; Harmful austerity</td>
<td>Humanism</td>
<td>Moralization</td>
<td>Frankfurt is a glimmer of hope in times of austerity. Popular protests such as Blockupy offer an alternative to capitalism for those facing a life hunting through garbage cans... This lesson of despair was learned by Dimitris Christoulas, who shot himself in Syntagma Square in the centre of Athens on 4 April. A 77-year-old ex-pharmacist whose pension was wiped out by the austerity measures imposed by the governments of Europe... This is the meaning of austerity. This is what the governments of Europe and the world are trying to impose on the people...’ (<em>The Guardian</em>, Opinion section; by-line: John Holloway, 14 May 2012)</td>
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<td><strong>Event #2: September 2012</strong></td>
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<td><em>Financial Times</em></td>
<td>Hypocrisy of austerity &amp; Forced austerity</td>
<td>Financial Capitalism</td>
<td></td>
<td>‘[The ECB] ... spent months lecturing governments in Greece, Portugal and Ireland about the need to force through tough spending cuts’ (<em>Financial Times, World News section, 21 September 2012</em>)</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Irish Examiner</em></td>
<td>Financial mismanagement of HQ construction &amp; Hypocrisy of austerity</td>
<td>Financial Capitalism</td>
<td></td>
<td>‘The cost blowout comes as the ECB castigates profligate European governments for failing to control their own spending’ (<em>Irish Examiner, 22 September 2012</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Sunday Telegraph</em></td>
<td>Financial mismanagement of HQ</td>
<td>Financial Capitalism</td>
<td></td>
<td>‘[The design and] cost of Icon towers for EU bankers... has not gone down well with those who are paying for...’</td>
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<tr>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>The International Herald Tribune</em></td>
<td>Financial mismanagement of HQ construction &amp; Hypocrisy of austerity</td>
<td>'Austerity put aside in ECB’s new (EURO) 1.2 billion headquarters ... The European Central Bank’s new headquarters reflect stability for the common currency but lack the austerity the bank preachers to countries like Greece and Spain.' (<em>The International Herald Tribune</em>, Finance section; byline: Jack Ewing, 22 September 2012)</td>
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<td>Event #3: May 2013</td>
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<td>de Spiegel</td>
<td>Harmful austerity</td>
<td>'... devastating policies of poverty' (<em>de Spiegel</em>, 31 May 2013)</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Irish Independent</em></td>
<td>Harmful austerity</td>
<td>'Governments struggling with large debt burdens have cut spending and raised taxes, contributing to widespread recession across the eurozone, while many families are deep in debt or have lost their homes after property bubbles burst.' (<em>Irish Independent</em>, 31 May 2013)</td>
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<td>Event #4: October 2013</td>
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<tr>
<td>de Spiegel</td>
<td>Injustice of vision</td>
<td>'The demands of the project’s European managers were apparently as sky-high as the new tower. Vienna-based architect Wolf Prix and his firm, Coop Himmelblau, had designed the building as two twisted towers connected by hanging gardens, made almost entirely of glass and steel. The skyscraper looks more like a giant sculpture than an office building.' (<em>de Spiegel</em>, 28 October 2013)</td>
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<td><em>Irish Mirror</em></td>
<td>Forced austerity</td>
<td>'ECB demands austerity across Europe ... imposed savage cuts on this country [Ireland] ... [the ECB] has been lambasting EU states for overspending ... the ECB has been demanding severe austerity measures from Ireland, Greece and Portugal. ... health and education budgets have been slashed on their orders... forced Ireland into the bailout...' (<em>Irish Mirror</em>, 29 October 2013)</td>
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<td>de Spiegel</td>
<td>Injustice of vision, Inequality of Humanism</td>
<td>'With a number of euro countries groaning under their debt burdens, provoking angry protests from Greece to Portugal, the aesthetics... taxpayers in the Eurozone.' (<em>The Sunday Telegraph</em>, news section; byline: Harriet Alexander, 30 September 2012)</td>
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<tr>
<td>de Spiegel</td>
<td>Injustice of vision &amp; Financial mismanagement of HQ construction</td>
<td>Humanism</td>
<td>Mythopoiesis</td>
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<td>de Spiegel</td>
<td>Injustice of vision &amp; Financial mismanagement of HQ construction</td>
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<td>Mythopoiesis</td>
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<td>de Spiegel</td>
<td>Injustice of vision &amp; Inequality of status</td>
<td>Europeanism</td>
<td>Mythopoiesis</td>
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<td>de Spiegel</td>
<td>Financial mismanagement of HQ construction</td>
<td>Financial Capitalism</td>
<td>Mythopoiesis</td>
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and features of the ECB tower seem oddly inappropriate. Do the tax-payer-funded central bankers really need a headquarters building that is 30 meters (98 feet) taller and twice as expensive as the twin towers of Deutsche Bank, Germany's largest bank? (de Spiegel, 28 October 2013)

'The high point is the large ECB assembly hall for the ECB Council, under a glass dome on the 43rd floor, 150 meters above the ground. It’s the kind of space that might accommodate a global government in a science fiction film.' (de Spiegel, 28 October 2013)

'Prix, the architect, was initially working under ideal conditions. When he began developing his designs, the Europeans were still proud of the euro and dreamed that it could one day supplant the US dollar as world’s reserve currency of choice. There was still plenty of money and ambition to go around. Prix was thrilled that his client had not made any attempts to trim his plans. "This will be a symbol of the European Union," he raved in 2009. Four years later, the building has become a symbol of waste and inadequate control.' (de Spiegel, 28 October 2013)

'Europe’s monetary watchdogs had long cherished the dream of having their own, prestigious headquarters. When the ECB was founded in 1998, they initially occupied a 40-story building on Willy-Brandt-Platz in downtown Frankfurt ... not exactly befitting the social status of self-assured central bankers.' (de Spiegel, 28 October 2013)

'So far, the monetary watchdogs have failed to convincingly explain to the public why their estimates were wrong. Likewise, the ECB, which likes to insist on its independence, has not presented any prognosis of expected future costs. The annual reports it sends to the European Parliament contain only cryptic information, in small print, on the new building.' (de Spiegel, 28 October 2013)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Narrative</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>de Spiegel</em></td>
<td>Financial mismanagement of HQ construction &amp; Inequality of status</td>
<td>Financial Capitalism</td>
<td>‘… the part of the building that will open to the public became significantly more expensive than originally estimated. A visitors’ center with an exhibition hall and restaurant is being built in the old market hall at the base of the tower. The reinforced concrete structure from the 1920s is popularly known as the &quot;Kappeskkathedrale,&quot; which translates as &quot;Rubbish Cathedral&quot; or &quot;Nonsense Cathedral.&quot;’ (<em>de Spiegel</em>, 28 October 2013)</td>
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<td><em>Irish Mirror</em></td>
<td>Inequality of status</td>
<td>Financial Capitalism</td>
<td>‘Fatcat EU bankers … the banking elite’ (<em>Irish Mirror</em>, 29 October 2013)</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>de Spiegel</em></td>
<td>Financial mismanagement of HQ construction</td>
<td>Financial Capitalism</td>
<td>‘Had the bankers allowed themselves to be bamboozled?’ (<em>de Spiegel</em>, 28 October 2013)</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Irish Independent</em></td>
<td>Financial mismanagement of HQ construction</td>
<td>Financial Capitalism</td>
<td>‘Planning is one activity we thought the European Central Bank was good at … surprised to hear that it can’t even work out how much space it needs for an office. …the bank now admits the new building will be too small, with only enough room for about half of its employees. This, quite frankly, is ridiculous.’ (<em>Irish Independent</em>, 26 October 2013)</td>
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<td><em>Irish Daily Mail</em></td>
<td>Hypocrisy of austerity</td>
<td>Financial Capitalism</td>
<td>‘And the ECB lectures us? We are used to regular tellings-off from our EU/ECB/IMF Troika masters about the need for tighter control of public spending. But how good are key members of the Troika at controlling their own spending? Not very good… The vain plutocrats running the ECB are building a new HQ for themselves in Frankfurt.’ – (<em>Irish Daily Mail</em>, Opinion section; byline: Cormac Lucey, 2 November 2013)</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Irish Mirror</em></td>
<td>Financial mismanagement of HQ construction</td>
<td>Financial Capitalism</td>
<td>‘The ECB fatcats blamed the spiralling costs on “a number of unforeseen challenges that needed to be dealt with”’ (<em>Irish Mirror</em>, 29 October 2013)</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>de Spiegel</em></td>
<td>Injustice of vision</td>
<td>Europeanism</td>
<td>‘They gathered in front of the building pit, from which a futuristic tower was to arise: an architecturally thrilling, 45-story skyscraper, a symbol of the power of Europe’s shared currency’ (<em>de Spiegel</em>, 28 October 2013)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Issue</td>
<td>Domain</td>
<td>Theoretical Framework</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Irish Mirror</em></td>
<td>Hypocrisy of austerity &amp; Forced austerity</td>
<td>Financial Capitalism</td>
<td>Mythopoiesis</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Irish Independent</em></td>
<td>Hypocrisy of austerity &amp; Forced austerity</td>
<td>Financial Capitalism</td>
<td>Mythopoiesis</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Irish Mirror</em></td>
<td>Hypocrisy of austerity, Inequality of status &amp; Financial mismanagement of HQ construction</td>
<td>Humanism</td>
<td>Mythopoiesis</td>
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**Event #5: March 2015**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Theoretical Framework</th>
<th>Citation</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Irish Examiner</em></td>
<td>Injustice of vision, &amp; Harmful austerity</td>
<td>Humanism</td>
<td>Moralization</td>
<td>‘ECB ignores debt dilemma—Frankfurt protests. Anti-austerity protest-ers yesterday clashed with riot police near the new, grotesquely lavish headquarters of the European Central Bank. Yesterday was meant to be a celebration at the official opening of the 185-metre skyscraper — a glass tower that took five years and €1.3bn to build. Instead, it became the focus of a demonstration against the inhumane operations of the bank, which has insisted on a regime of austerity in indebted countries such as Ireland and Greece. The ECB’s moral imperative is that the welfare of EU citizens should be subordinate to paying back debt owed mainly to German banks.’ (<em>Irish Examiner</em>, Viewpoints section, 19 March 2015)</td>
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<td><em>Democracy Now!</em></td>
<td>Inequality of status &amp; Harmful austerity</td>
<td>Europeanism</td>
<td>Moralization</td>
<td>‘There was a real sense of a Europeanization of the struggle from below against the austerity diktats from above. You have to imagine Europe or the eurozone right now as a huge laboratory for austerity policies, which is the word we use in Europe to describe what maybe folks in other countries have called neoliberalism...’</td>
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or what for countries in the Global South used to be called policies of structural adjustment. The eurozone is being used by European elites to push back labor rights... Everything is on the table in the euro crisis, whether it’s pensioners’ rights, workers’ rights, student rights, the right not to be evicted from your housing, healthcare. Everything is on the table for a sort of neoliberal offensive from the top.

Countries of the European periphery in the south are suffering the most—Spain, Italy, Portugal and especially Greece.’ (Democracy Now! Daily Independent Global News Hour with Amy Goodman & Juan González, 19 March 2015)
**APPENDIX 3: Examples of media performing a political actor role in delegitimating Blockupy protests**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actor</th>
<th>Dominant themes</th>
<th>Dominant discourse</th>
<th>Dominant discursive strategy</th>
<th>Example in media texts</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bloomberg</strong></td>
<td>Protest (il)legitimacy</td>
<td>Financial capitalism</td>
<td>Rationalization</td>
<td>“Blockupy’ Protests at ECB Are Absurd With garbage, cars and tires burning all over the place, the German financial capital looked for a moment like Kiev during last year’s revolution. The Frankfurt protesters, however, were barking up the wrong tree: The ECB is, for now, the leftists’ best friend. ... If the demonstrators—and rioters—in the streets of Frankfurt today actually meant these slogans, they were seriously deluded. The ECB is the most democratically governed central bank in the world, and it has nothing to do with austerity.’ (Bloomberg, Bloomberg View Opinion section; by-line: columnist Leonard Bershidsky, 13 March 2015)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bloomberg</strong></td>
<td>Protest (il)legitimacy</td>
<td>Financial capitalism</td>
<td>Rationalization</td>
<td>‘A more meaningful place for the leftist protesters to burn tires and cars would be outside the Bundesbank, whose president Jens Weidmann steadfastly opposed QE, or the German Finance Ministry, whose head Wolfgang Schaeuble has described QE as “not the solution, rather the cause” of economic problems.’ (Bloomberg, Bloomberg View Opinion section; by-line: columnist Leonard Bershidsky, 13 March 2015)</td>
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<td><strong>Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung</strong> (centre-right, liberal-conservative German daily newspaper based in Frankfurt, known as FAZ)</td>
<td>Protest (il)legitimacy</td>
<td>Humanism</td>
<td>Moralization</td>
<td>‘A 19-year-old can be excused for his naivete, he only wanted to demonstrate. The same cannot be said of Wilkens [Ulrich Wilken, member of the Hessen state parliament for Die Linke (Left Party) and organizer of the demonstration] and his ilk. They knew exactly what they were doing. They toyed with death. First police cars burn, then people.’ (Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Editorial, 19 March 2015)</td>
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| **Die Welt**  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(German right-wing national daily broad-sheet)</th>
<th>Protest (il)legitimacy</th>
<th>Humanism</th>
<th>Moralization</th>
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<td>’[Left wing leaders in politics and media are] middle class children, inheritors of fortunes, self-benefactors, who want to be the good soldiers fighting against the evil. They march in line, singing workers songs. But the only working class children there are the police, who they attack with stones. There's your class struggle.’ <em>(Die Welt, Editorial, 19 March 2015)</em></td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Deutsche Welle (DW)</strong></th>
<th>Protest (il)legitimacy</th>
<th>Humanism</th>
<th>Moralization</th>
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<td>'ECB protests hit the wrong target ... left-wing and left-autonomous quarters appear to be frustrated because the Occupy or Blockupy movements are no longer in their prime. For them, renewed self-assurance is most welcome, and it is linked to the hope that Frankfurt might provide new momentum for the movement. Violence has discredited the cause. However, cat-calls, slogans and banners are one thing, whereas setting cars on fire and hurling stones at police, fire department members, or trams are an entirely different ballgame. This sort of violence cannot be justified at all, and it has already discredited the protests.’ <em>(Deutsche Welle, Opinion section; by-line: by Christoph Hasselbach, 18 March 2015)</em></td>
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