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IN THE MEDIA ONE DEAD EUROPEAN IS WORTH 45 AFRICANS

At Trento Festival of Economics David Strömberg, Professore at IIES at the University of Stockholm, revealed the mechanisms of the fourth power. The media are important, as shown by the case of the radio in the era of the New Deal (1933-38): "The introduction of the radio in the USA made citizens better informed and more influential", explained the professor, who underlined that countries in which the media are not free have high levels of corruption.-

As the film "Citizen Kane" shows us, the media count and they also have an important political impact. This was the underlying message presented by David Strömberg, Professor at at IIES at the University of Stockholm, on the third day of the Festival of Economics in Trento. "Let us take the case of the radio in the United States, during the New Deal: before its introduction there were whole rural areas that had no access to information, because the newspapers did not arrive there. Afterwards, thanks to the radio, it was astonishing to discover how much better informed people were in the countryside. What is more, this had concrete consequences, given that politicians spent more for counties covered by the radio".

Editors can also influence politics by selecting news. "The type of media coverage of a natural disaster has an influence on the aid that governments send", explained Strömberg, who noted how all news is not equal, because for the news of a catastrophe in Africa to have the same media coverage as a catastrophe in Europe that has caused one death, 45 Africans need to have died".

The media tend to offer less coverage of minorities, and this leads to underrepresentation that has political consequences for the minorities themselves. However, at the same time the media are also subjected to limitations which weaken their effectiveness. "There are three types of country: those with censorship, such as North Korea and Iran, those where political power influences the media, such as Russia or Italy, and those with essentially free media, such as the United States or Sweden, for example. It is easier to silence the media in countries where there are lots of newspapers and hence a great deal of competition in the sector, where the advertising market is limited and where there is political or foreign control. Countries where the media are not free have high levels of corruption."

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