Understanding Journalism as Newswork: How It Changes, and How It Remains the Same

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Abstract
For a media profession so central to society's sense of self, it is of crucial importance to understand the influences of changing labour conditions, professional cultures, and the appropriation of technologies on the nature of work in journalism. In this paper, the various strands of international research on the changing nature of journalism as a profession are synthesized, using media logic as developed by Altheide and Snow (1979 and 1991) and updated by Dahlgren (1996) as a conceptual framework. A theoretical key to understanding and explaining journalism as a profession is furthermore to focus on the complexities of concurrent disruptive developments affecting its performance from the distinct perspective of its practitioners – for without them, there is no news.

Introduction

Journalism as it is, is coming to an end. The boundaries between journalism and other forms of public communication – ranging from public relations or advertorials to weblogs and podcasts – are vanishing, the internet makes all other types of newsmedia rather obsolete (especially for young adults and teenagers), commercialization and cross-media mergers have gradually eroded the distinct professional identities of newsrooms and their publications (whether in print or broadcast), and by insisting on a traditional orientation towards the nation, journalists are losing touch with a society that is global as well as local, yet anything but national. Such are the key lamentations on the fate of journalism today. Is this indeed the end of journalism? Jo Bardoel and Mark Deuze (2001) asked the question in The Netherlands, where we argued it does not have to be – as long as a new 'network journalism' adapted itself to changing social and technological realities.

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Writing mainly on developments in U.S. journalism, Michael Schudson considers the increasingly (and dangerously) critical or even outrightly cynical style of reporting and a growing role of entertainment values over sound news judgment in the field, as signalling 'an intrusion of marketplace values into the professionalism of journalists' (2003, 90). In Australia, Michael Bromley takes his answers to the same question – will journalism end – farthest. Pointing his finger at technological convergence as the main culprit, Bromley laments 'the dismantling of demarcations between journalists and technicians, writers and camera operators, news gatherers and news processors, and between print, radio and television journalism' (1997, 341). Bromley argues that the ongoing convergence of technologies undermines the basic skills and standards of journalism and fosters so-called 'multiskilling' in newsrooms, which he sees as the result of economic pressures which cut back on resources while increasing workloads. Research in digital television newsrooms in especially Spain and the UK furthermore shows that, although the younger workers seem to embrace a digital, multi-skilled future, journalists in both countries are apprehensive about becoming increasingly computer-bound 'mouse monkeys' required to keep up with the world of 24-hour news (Avilés et al. 2004).

Ultimately, journalism is not going to end because of cultural or technological convergence. There is however something to be said about the changing working conditions of journalists in different industries that are merging and to some extent collaborating in an attempt to reach new and especially younger audiences, while at the same time maintaining their privileged position in society. For a media profession so central to society's sense of self, it is of crucial importance to understand the influences of changing labour conditions, professional cultures, and the appropriation of technologies on the nature of work in journalism. In this paper, I synthesize the various strands of my own and other research on the changing nature of journalism as a profession, using media logic as developed by David Altheide and Robert Snow (1979 and 1991) and updated by Peter Dahlgren (1996) as a conceptual framework. Within this framework I consider the profession in terms of some of the developments in recent years, using media logic to frame what it is like to work in the news industry in particular. In doing so, I do not assume that the key issues affecting (and indeed: explaining) the work of contemporary journalistic professionals are particular to the news industry as indeed the issues affecting journalism are similarly felt across the media industries as a whole (Deuze, 2007). What this paper proposes to add to the existing literature, is a more stringent focus on explaining contemporary journalism through the eyes of its workforce (or rather: its talent) – a regrettably undertheorized domain in journalism studies.

Media Logic

Media work in general and journalism in particular takes place both within and outside of institutions (including salaried employees and an army of stringers and freelancers), by both professionals and amateurs (including so-called 'citizen media'), both within and across particular media (especially considering converged newsrooms). In order to adequately describe and analyze the various ways in which practitioners in journalism are affected by and give meaning to such a complex environment of cultural production, one needs a holistic, integrated perspective on the nature of media work. In this context I use the concept of 'media logic', more specifically as taken up and developed by Dahlgren, where he refers to media logic as 'the particular institutionally structured features of a medium, the ensemble of technical and organizational attributes which impact on what gets represented in the medium and how it gets done. In other words, media logic points to specific forms and processes that organize the work done within a particular medium. Yet, media logic also indicates the cultural competence and frames of perception of audiences/users, which in turn reinforces how production within the medium takes place' (1996, 63). Media logic can be medium-specific because it primarily relates to production patterns within a given technological and organizational context.

Media logic is a useful perspectival tool to overcome what may be the most crucial problem in my discussion of what it is like to work in the (news) media: the notion, that what a journalist does is guided by distinctly different ideas and factors of influence than what informs the work of a game developer, television producer, or advertising creative – and vice versa. One thing all these fields have in common is the fact that journalism, advertising, broadcasting, film, and game development are all examples of the production of culture. The stories told in the news, in the movies and in games or advertisements all build upon and contribute to the collective memories, traditions and belief systems of a community or society. This does not mean that a news report on CNN and a Nike advertisement produced for the soccer World Cup are equally important or valuable in informing and thus sustaining people's sense of community; it does mean that I wish to move beyond such normative concerns about the distinctions between different kinds of media content to focus on what people actually do when they work in the media, and how they give meaning to their actions and beliefs. In turn I presuppose that this process of giving and articulating meaning has consequences for the way media are made, for the kinds of news that end up on our pages, on the air, and across our screens.

Applying media logic as a mapping tool for contemporary mainstream newswork means I examine the [1] institutional, [2] technological, [3] organizational and [4] cultural features of what it is like to work in journalism. Ultimately, this approach may be a useful way to consider journalism as part of (and tied into) a broader media ecosystem, as operating in a wider context of social, economical and technological forces, and as a profession that has its own unique ways of dealing with such influences.

Institutions

Ownership in the news industry has traditionally been segmented by medium type. Often starting out as vehicles for political, religious, or corporate interests, newspapers, radio and television stations have gradually consolidated into large newspaper chains or broadcast news networks. Throughout the history of such chains or networks run concerns among journalists about media concentration, particularly fearing what some see as the inevitable consequences of being subsumed by a bigger company: downsizing, loss of editorial control over the creative process, and homogenization across the older and newly acquired titles. Although research does not suggest that either independent or corporate ownership is a significant predictor of quality in news reporting, one specific result of this wave of media mergers has been the implementation of job rotation practices – not just between different departments of a newspaper, but rather between different titles owned by the same firm. In the news industry rotation also means that the editors of large newspapers or directors of television stations in the bigger markets tend to prefer hiring reporters who first proved themselves working in 'the provinces' for smaller papers and stations generally owned by the same company. In the last decades of the 20th century, these companies were acquired wholly or partially by even larger media firms.

The process of accumulation of media properties, while always a staple of media business practices, accelerated in the 1990s, resulting in a market where there are more media (and thus: news) outlets owned by a smaller number of companies (Bagdikian 2004). This institutional trend has been supercharged by increased worldwide government deregulation on the one hand, and the rapid diffusion of digital media technologies on the other. The liberalization of national and global markets by governments during the second half of the 20th century has had particular consequences for countries with a history of dual media systems, where commercial operators (mainly in broadcasting) worked side by side with government-protected public service stations. The case of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) as a publicly funded entity next to commercial enterprises like ITV is considered the textbook example of such a system. Public media organizations such as the BBC (or the ABC in Australia, ZDF in Germany, SABC in South Africa, and NOS in The Netherlands) are increasingly operating like commercial ones, whereas commercial companies have begun to offer competitive programs and titles similar to their public counterparts (in some instances, they did so from the beginning). By opening up the media market to transnational ownership, foreign investments and cross-media mergers in local markets, the formerly quite stable news companies started to shift towards what became an industry-wide buzzword in the 1990s: convergence. The institutional characteristics of convergence can be summarized as: companies developing partnerships with other (journalistic and non-journalistic) media organizations to provide, promote, repurpose, or exchange news, and the introduction of cross-media (integrated) marketing and management projects (Deuze 2004).

It is important to note that the concentration of media ownership with the deliberate goal to integrate different departments and sections of the industry into cross-media enterprises is and always has been a top-down strategy. Studying the institutional and cultural contours of innovation at two Dutch newspapers owned by publisher PCM, Sierk Ybema (2003) typified management strategies in this context as 'postalgic', noting how the industry's executives tend to come up with all kinds of far-reaching plans and futuristic ideals that are primarily interpreted by the journalists involved as unfair criticisms on their work. The direct result is the cultivation of some kind of nostalgia about the 'good old days' among reporters and editors, which in turn leads to resistance to the proposed changes in the newsroom. A recent survey among hundreds of managers and journalists at U.S. daily newspapers about change initiatives showed that the implementation thereof caused conflict and hurt morale (Gade 2004). Studies among processes of innovation and change in broadcast and Net-native newsrooms are rare, but suggest that the more teamwork-oriented, technology-dependent, and project-based nature of work in broadcast and online media facilitate more successful employee cooperation and buy-in (Quinn 2005). Ultimately, however, journalists tend to be cautious and sceptical towards changes in the institutional and organizational arrangements of their work, as lessons learnt in the past suggest that such changes tend to go hand in hand with downsizing, lay-offs, and having to do more with less staff, budget, and resources.

Catherine McKercher (2002) argues that technological convergence and corporate concentration must be understood as part of the strategy of media owners to acquire new sources for profit, extending their control over the relations of production and distribution of news, and aiming to undermine the collective bargaining position of journalists through their unions by shifting towards a model of individualized and contingent contracts. Gregor Gall (2000) further notes that the introduction of such personal contracts in the news industry, though allowing individual journalists some freedom to negotiate their own terms and conditions of employment, in fact resulted in a deterioration of the working conditions of journalists: lower wages, less job security, and more contingent labour relationships (variable hours, job rotation, and flextime). Similarly, Tim Marjoribanks (2003) notes that the contemporary organization of work in transnational and converged news enterprises has allowed for the creation of a more flexible, multi-skilled and highly moveable – at least in the eyes of management – workforce.

A structure of convergent multimedia news organizations has been emerging since the mid-1990s, with companies all over the world opting for at least some form of cross-media cooperation or synergy between formerly separated staffers, newsrooms, and departments. According to a survey commissioned by the World Association of Newspapers (WAN) among 200 news executives worldwide in 2001, in almost three-quarters of these companies integration strategies were

planned or implemented at that time. Researchers involved in studying and observing convergence journalism ventures around the world note however how the biggest obstacles to seamless integration always boil down to cultural clashes. This goes especially for the print reporters, citing their deep distrust of broadcast journalists' work routines, scepticism about the quality of newswork, of them having to do stand-ups for television or write blurbs for the Web, and their critical view on the quality and level of experience of their television and online counterparts. On the other side, television people reportedly feel their print colleagues to be conservative, slow, and oblivious to the wants and needs of their audiences (for instance as expressed through market research, sales figures and daily ratings). Kenneth Killebrew (2004) even reports how news managers charged with implementing the convergence processes often seem unprepared, sceptical and ill-prepared for the job. These kind of mutual stereotypes are not just the products of a stressful and confusing convergence experience, but are exponents of the historical separation of different professional identities and work cultures – which also suggests that interpersonal relationships and communication across the different media may resolve some of these clashes.

The implementation and consequences of convergence differ from organization to organization. These different approaches can be explained by several factors. In an overview of new media innovation efforts in five European countries (Sweden, Denmark, The Netherlands, Switzerland, and Austria) researchers found a general lack of consensus or even vision regarding the nature of changes brought about by convergence among the editors, reporters, and managers involved (Bierhoff et al. 2000). Although several authors suggest that multimedia integration does not get realized across the board because of issues like (the remaining limitations on media ownership) legislation and the role of unions, ethnographers of the industry invariably note how traditional, carefully cultivated differences in organizational structures and work practices in specific news institutions correlate with critical perceptions of former competitors who are now supposed to be colleagues. Furthermore, convergence efforts tend to be seen as forced onto the reporters' plate (on top of everything else she is supposed to do), and the technology-driven enterprise frustrates and confuses many of the newsworkers involved. Observers note that multimedia production processes generally are seen as time consuming and inefficient, and technical support is portrayed as insensitive to the reporters' needs. On the other hand, journalists who are among the earliest adopters and those leading the charge of innovations in their organization tend to be excited about the ongoing changes in the way they do their work. The point remains that from an institutional perspective convergence comes in different shapes and sizes, strongly influenced by both internal (practices, rituals, routines, cultures) as well as external (regulation, competition, stakeholders, publics) factors. Overall, convergence occurs throughout the news industry, affecting most if not all practitioners in the way they work.

A second feature of work on an institutional level is described by Schudson as a growing inter and intra-institutional news coherence, a development running parallel to processes of concentration and convergence in the news media:

> Newsmagazines and newspapers preview their next editions on Websites that reporters and editors at other news institutions examine as soon as they are available. Newspapers advertise the next day's stories on cable news stations. The result is interinstitutional news coherence (2003, 109).

It is important to note that this kind of streamlining of the news agenda is not a kind of working behaviour caused by media concentration or convergence. Scholars have noted in the past how newsworkers tend to mirror each other closely, always treading a fine line between attempts not to miss out on important or breaking news stories covered by competitors, and the quest for the 'scoop': to be the first to report an unique event, to uncover something nobody else reported on before. Convergence of different media organizations operating in the same local or regional market thus effectively solidifies news coherence across the media, even though reporters working in different departments still aim to score with a scoop for their respective newsrooms. Intra-institutional news coherence happens when the departments of converging or newly converged organizations synchronize their news agendas, use a common story budgeting system, and coordinate the workflow across departments using a single content management system – a piece of software that enables automatic transfers and design of text, images, video and audio.

Technology

The success of journalism in reporting news across all media has always been influenced if not determined by technological advances: from manual typesetting to desktop publishing, from bulky cameras to handheld devices, from analogue recording to digital editing, from single-medium to multimedia. At different times in the history of the profession, technology was (and still is) heralded as the bringer of all kinds of new threats and possibilities. However, technology is not an independent factor influencing the work of journalists from the 'outside', but rather must be seen in terms of its implementation, and therefore how it extends and amplifies previous ways of doing things.

> The new technologies make possible changes in news production and news outputs, but there is no reason to expect that the impact of the new technologies will be uniform across all news providers. Rather we might expect to find that there are differing impacts, contingent upon different technological applications which in turn are contingent upon the goals and judgments of executive personnel and any political regulators (Ursell 2001, 178).

I would like to extend Gillian Ursell's argument to include any and all workplace actors into the process of adopting and adapting to new technologies – including those who do not work physically in the newsroom and who are quickly becoming the majority in the field of newswork: freelancers, stringers, correspondents, and other non-permanently employed journalists. In an April 2006 survey on the changing nature of work in the news media in 38 countries, the International Federation of Journalists for example concludes that these 'atypical' media workers make up around 30% of the membership of IFJ affiliates, and are especially to be found among the younger, female and ethnic minority colleagues in the industry.[1]

Several studies have noted how the introduction of new technologies in newsrooms such as a content management system, desktop internet access, and the increased emphasis on so-called 'multiskilling' (often involving retraining programmes or expectations of reporters in one medium to be schooled in the production techniques of other media) leads to increasingly pressurized production arrangements, to higher stress levels and burn-out rates, an ongoing recasting of specialists into generalist reporters, coupled with a widely shared sense among newsworkers that the newly introduced technologies translate into more work without providing added value for them (see e.g. the contribution by Paulussen and Ugille in this issue). However, these reports are generally based on interviews with fulltime employees who in fact work inside newsrooms of provincial, national and global broadcast organizations and newspapers. Two important caveats must be made. First, that there is a significant cross-section of reporters and editors (in any organization), who can be considered to be enthusiastic early adopters of new technologies. Often these reporters are among recent arrivals in the industry, and seize the chance for exploration and promotion the relatively 'unclaimed' terrain the online environment offers to them (Deuze and Dimoudi 2002). A second caveat must be made regarding the role of the fastest growing segment of journalists: the freelancers, stringers, correspondents, and otherwise contingently employed newsworkers. For many of them, networked technologies, standardized software systems and the integration of newsflows across different media has potentially increased their chances of finding work, securing albeit temporary assignments, and working 'on the go'.

Even though the impact of new technologies in the news industry is varied, two general conclusions can be drawn: the process increases demand for and pressures on journalists, who have to retool and diversify their skillset to produce more work in the same amount of time under ongoing deadline pressures for one or more media. A second conclusion must be that technology is not a neutral agent in the way news organizations and individual newsworkers do their work – hardware and software tend to amplify existing ways of doing things, are used to supplement rather than radically change whatever people were already doing, and take a long time to sediment into the working culture of a news organization. The

contemporary drive towards some kind of convergence across two or more media thus tends to offer little in terms of radically different forms of journalism or ways in which to gather, select or report the news.

Jim Hall (2001) and John Pavlik (2001) place news and journalism in the social context of an evolving information society best typified by the dismantling of carefully cultivated hierarchical relationships between (mass) media consumers and producers. Hall for example emphasizes 'the reciprocal links between news providers and readers' (2001, 25) in this 'new' journalism environment, whereas Pavlik boldly states how 'technological change is fundamentally reshaping the relationships between and among news organizations, journalists and their many publics, including audiences, competitors, news sources, sponsors and those who seek to regulate or control the press' (2000, 234). Contemporary journalism will have to come to terms with their audiences as co-authors or co-producers of the news (Bruns 2005). Instead of having some kind of control over the flow of (meaningful, selected, fact-checked) information in the public sphere, journalists today are just some of the many voices in public communication, including but not limited to professionals in public relations and marketing communications, advertisers, and citizens themselves through weblogs, podcasts, and using all kinds of other online publishing tools. Disintermediation removes the journalist as the traditional intermediary between public institutions – notably business and government – and news consumers. Although it is safe to say that this trend is not unique to the last few decades – people distributing their own neighbourhood newsletters or broadcasting so-called 'pirate' radio have been around for quite a while – new technologies like the internet propel such activities to the same (or even bigger) limelight as the work of journalists. In this context, technology indeed can be seen as severely disruptive, challenging the foundations on which work in journalism (and indeed, in the media as a whole) is built: media are made for audiences. Once the audience disappears or has gone off to make its own media (while freely and illegally copying, pasting, editing and remixing the work of professional media producers), the professional identity of the media worker gets significantly undermined.

Reports on the shrinking of budgets and newsroom staffs, as well as dwindling and ageing audiences for news are quite common across countries in Europe, Australia, New Zealand, Southern Africa, and the Americas. In June 2006, the World Association of Newspapers released a strategy report called '*New Editorial Concepts*', exploring the ways in which affiliated news companies around the world are coming to terms with the changing media landscape. The report mentions six trends that are influencing newsrooms worldwide:

- The explosion of participative journalism, or community-generated content;

- The rise of audience research by media companies to learn new patterns of media usage;
- The proliferation of personalised news delivered online and on mobile devices;
- The reorganisation of newsrooms optimised for audience focus;
- The development of new forms of storytelling geared toward new audiences and new channels;
- The growth of audience-focused news judgment and multimedia news judgment.[2]

What all the mentioned changes, challenges, promises and problems of new technologies and convergence culture mean for the individual journalist differs widely across different news outlets and media organizations. Overall, journalists tend to embrace technology as long as they perceive it to enhance their status, prestige, and the way they did their work before. Resistance to a wholehearted embrace of innovative communication technologies as an instrument to foster community-generated content or connectivity tends to be grounded in a 'reluctance by management to lead toward adoption, lack of resources to invest in new technology, lack of training, little or no access to the new technology, fear of lost time required to learn, and not enough time in the work schedule' (Garrison 2001, 234). The success or failure of journalists to deal with the role of technology in their work must therefore also be set against the history of their professional identity, the changes in the institutional structure of the industry, and the fragmentation and even disappearance of their audiences (and thus advertisers).

Organization

Newspaper, magazine, television, radio and online media organizations, newsrooms, or individual journalists tend to have quite different work practices. As a rule of thumb, news outlets are located near the centre of the city or region in which their core audience is located. Broadcast organizations are most likely to cluster together in a single location. Even competing newspapers sometimes occupy office buildings across the street from one another. Since the introduction of news websites in the mid-1990s, an ongoing debate in the industry has been whether to integrate these online journalists into the main radio, television or print newsroom, or to set up separate office space for them. Although industry observers tend to advocate integration – especially considering the global trend towards convergence of multiple media companies – most online newsrooms are located elsewhere in the building, city or even country. Several larger news organizations additionally operate specific bureaus – geographically assigned crews that tend to be stationed near government centres such as Brussels (to cover European Union affairs), New York (United Nations), and Washington, D.C. (U.S. politics and the White House). Groups of smaller organizations tend to pool resources and use the same bureau, consisting of one or more correspondents and

video and sound technicians. Most news outlets have greatly reduced the numbers of foreign correspondents in an effort to cut costs. Instead, they rely on the services of two global multimedia information conglomerates that dominate world news, particularly regarding video footage of events and happenings across the globe: Reuters and the Associated Press (AP) – both primarily based in New York and London. Considering the dominance of these global agencies in the field of international reporting, Oliver Boyd-Barrett and Terhi Rantanen (2001) go as far to say that they should be seen as 'news instructors', setting the standards of (western) news values across the globe during the 20th century.

Newsrooms, whether in print, broadcasting or online, look remarkably the same all over the world.[3] Newsrooms tend to be quite open, with separate cubicles per reporter or per department (or 'news beat'). The workspaces tend to look a bit chaotic: papers everywhere, cell phones and regular phones scattered across the desk, with a constant hum of desktop (and, increasingly, laptop) computers in the background. Comparing newspaper newsrooms and editorial structures in Germany, Great Britain and the U.S., Frank Esser (1998) found that centralized newsrooms with a high division of labour were more particular to the Anglo-Saxon companies he visited. Continental European newspapers maintain many more branch offices which produce complete sections or localized versions of the paper. Although Esser reported that American and British journalists were more likely to be specialized and limited in the range of their responsibilities and range of tasks, later studies suggest – as noted earlier – that the trend toward media convergence in these and other countries puts increasing demands regarding the multiskilling of journalists involved.

Although journalists, much like other professionals in the media industries, like to think of themselves as autonomous and creative individuals, in fact most of the work at news outlets is based on a set of routine, standardized activities. Summarizing the ways in which journalists generally report the news, Lance Bennett (2003, 165ff) suggest they confront three separate sources of incentives to standardize their work habits:

- Routine cooperation with (and pressures from) news sources, such as public relations officials, spokespeople for organizations, celebrities, and politicians;
- The work routines (and pressures within) news organizations that especially newcomers learn about by having to adapt themselves to mostly unwritten rules and conventions about the 'house style' way of doing things;
- Daily information sharing and working relations with fellow reporters, which in the case of certain beats results in journalists moving as a pack from event to event, encountering their competitor-colleagues at the same places, covering the same issues.

As the number of media outlets and sources of information increases, journalists tend to spend more of their time at their desks than in the past. This can contribute to newsroom socialization on the one hand – as reporters spend more time with each other indoors – as well as it facilitates telecommuting and other flexible work practices for 'wired' correspondents and freelancers on the road. With wireless internet-enabled laptops, high speed telecommunications networks, and other portable communications devices, many employees today can work almost anywhere at least some of the time. In broadcast and converged news operations this has for example led to the growing importance of so-called 'one-man-bands' or the less gendered 'backpack journalists' (Stevens 2002). These reporters are sent out on assignments alone, being solely responsible for shooting video, recording audio, writing text and putting it all together in a coherent news package. Although this practice is not new – in the 1960s and 1970s newspaper journalists would for example also at times take photographs for their stories – new technologies and the flexibilization of work have propelled this kind of individualized reporting into the news mainstream.

The organization of newswork follows certain rules, contributing to the effective management of information overload. Different news genres have established conventions and deadline structures, newsroom hierarchies tend to be based on seniority and status, and the majority of news is prescheduled (press conferences, business budget reports or sports events) or delivered to the reporters through press releases. Conventional wisdom suggests that at least 80 percent of all the information that flows into a news organization gets discarded instantly. This included pitches of freelancers and struggles at editorial meetings between different departments or individual reporters to get their story into the broadcast, paper, magazine or onto the site. Stuart Allan (1999, 50) suggests that the capacity of a particular news organization to present a wide range of information and viewpoints to some extent is preserved by the ongoing clash of interests which exist between owners, managers, editors and reporters. In an overview of the ways in which organizational and professional constraints influence the agency of individual reports, Liesbet Van Zoonen (1998) argues that journalists working for less institutional and more audience-oriented outlets – such as popular magazines, local news stations, human interest and infotainment genres – experience more room for their personal interests and opinions when deciding on what to report. Studies among journalists consistently show how social and cultural competition, peer criticism and even conflict within and among news organizations is a vital part of doing newswork. 'This is a competition centered around an ethos which holds that it is right and inevitable to measure one's performance consistently against that of others and that one should thrill in victory and agonize in defeat' (Ehrlich 1997, 314). Competition in the newsroom is generally not perceived by journalists as a source of conflict, and indeed sometimes is seen as part of a professional team spirit.

Culture

The 20th century history of (the professionalization of) journalism can be typified by the consolidation of a consensual occupational ideology among journalists in different parts of the world. Journalism's ideology serves to continuously refine and reproduce a consensus about who counts as a 'real' journalist, and what (parts of) news media at any time can be considered to be examples of 'real' journalism. These evaluations subtly shift over time, yet always serve to maintain the dominant sense of what is (and should be) journalism (Deuze 2005). An occupational ideology develops over time, as it is part of a process through which the sum of ideas and views of a particular group about itself is shaped, but also as a process by which other ideas and views are excluded or marginalized. In this context Barbie Zelizer (2004, 101) refers to ideology as the collective knowledge journalists employ in their daily work. The key characteristics of this professional self-definition can be summarized as a number of discursively constructed ideal-typical values. Journalists feel that these values give legitimacy and credibility to what they do – they talk about them every time they articulate, defend or critique the decisions they and their peers make, or when they are faced with criticisms by their audience, news sources, advertisers, or management. Although such a professional self-definition may vary depending on which type of organization the individual journalist works for, the concepts, values and elements said to be part of journalisms' ideology in the available literature can be categorized into five ideal-typical traits or values that are generally shared among (or expected of) all journalists:

- Public service: journalists provide a public service (as watchdogs or 'newshounds', active collectors and disseminators of information);
- Objectivity: journalists are impartial, neutral, objective, fair and (thus) credible;
- Autonomy: journalists must be autonomous, free and independent in their work;
- Immediacy: journalists have a sense of immediacy, actuality and speed (inherent in the concept of 'news');
- Ethics: journalists have a sense of ethics, validity and legitimacy.

One has to note that these values can be attributed to other professions or social systems in society as well, and that these values are sometimes inevitably inconsistent or contradictory. To journalists this generally does not seem to be a problem, as they integrate such values into their debates and evaluations of the character and quality of journalism. In doing so, journalism continuously reinvents itself – regularly revisiting similar debates (for example on commercialization, bureaucratization, 'new' media technologies, seeking audiences, concentration of ownership) where ideological values can be deployed to sustain operational closure, keeping outside forces at bay. Randal Beam (2006) for example finds that '[r]ank-and-file journalists are more dubious about the business goals and priorities

of their organization than are their supervisors' (2006, 180), showing that journalists in general tend to be more satisfied with their jobs if they perceive that their employer values 'good journalism' over profit. Research by Tracy Russo (1998) additionally suggests that journalists identify themselves more easily with the profession of journalism than for example with the medium or media company that employs them. She especially notes how socialization and largely similar work-group demographics contribute to this identification process, through which journalists adopt the current and dominant way of thinking about the profession, its role in society and in the community it serves. This ideology of journalism gets expressed in everyday practices in the newsroom through the culture of the news organization: its historically and socially (i.e. ideologically) constructed shared routines, knowledge and 'values that experienced members of a group transmit to newcomers through socialization and is used to shape a group's processes, material output, and ability to survive' (Mierzjewska and Hollifield 2006, 46). In this context, who journalists are becomes a fundamental element in understanding journalism.

Comparing results from surveys among journalists in 21 countries, David Weaver (1998) found support for claims that the characteristics of journalists, including their demographics, are largely similar worldwide. In earlier work (Deuze, 2002) I had the chance to compare the findings from recent surveys among journalists in five countries: The Netherlands, Germany, Great Britain, Australia and the United States, all similar Western democracies with at least a century-old tradition of established media roles in society. Several striking conclusions stand out, most notably the general homogeneity among journalists in the different countries:

- journalists tend to share a distinct middle class background;
- are generally college educated;
- have socio-economic backgrounds firmly grounded in the dominant cultural and ethnic sectors of society;
- and thus newsrooms exhibit an overall low minority representation;
- there exists a distinct glass ceiling in terms of gender issues: women are overrepresented in 'feminine' news beats (lifestyle, education, fashion, health and beauty), and are underrepresented in managerial functions;
- reporters and editors in modern Western democracies hold similar views on what is important in their work (in recent years for example privileging interpretation over breaking news as the most crucial aspect of their jobs).

In this context it is safe to argue that the professional group of journalists tends to be populated by generally the same kind of people as in the past – with just a slightly higher percentage of women and ethnic minorities – even though the

world around them – culturally, economically, politically, and technologically – has changed fundamentally from just a few decades ago.

Most journalists today, likewise, still work for traditional print media, newspapers in particular, although reports over time show that the fields of broadcasting and new media are gaining ground in terms of new openings and jobs offered to newcomers. Magazine, broadcasting and online newsrooms tend to be significantly smaller in staff size than newspaper newsrooms, and the work for these newsmedia gets done almost exclusively on a contract by contract, freelance or stringer basis. The surveys show that journalists in Germany, the United States, Great Britain and Australia agree that their influence on (the formation of) public opinion is greater than it should be. Such findings indicate a sensitivity among journalists about their impact on contemporary society, though the extent of that impact is unclear and one may wonder whether these answers might reflect a preference for a neutral role, or are an exponent of a rather negative image of a gullible audience.

What these overall findings and conclusions suggest is that journalists in elective democracies share similar characteristics and speak of similar values in the context of their daily work, but apply these in a variety of ways to give meaning to what they do. Journalists in all media types, genres and formats carry the ideology of journalism. It is therefore possible to speak of a dominant occupational ideology of journalism on which most newsworkers base their professional perceptions and practices, but which is interpreted, used and applied differently among journalists across media. These interpretations and applications of what it for example means to be ethical, to provide a public service, or to break the news as quickly as possible are largely determined by the culture of the newsroom of publication one works for. The culture of newswork is a crucial element in the way journalism operates, not in the least because of the relative stability of the news industry throughout much of the 20th century, creating the conditions for a firmly sedimented 'way of doing things' in many companies, newsrooms, as well as among senior reporters and journalism educators. It is through this culture that the values of journalism's occupational ideology get their practical, everyday meaning. By doing things a certain way and privileging certain rationales for those actions and editorial decision-making processes over others, reporters and editors at specific news outlets sustain what can be called operational closure: the internalization of the way things work and change over time within a newsroom or at a particular outlet. Outside forces are kept at bay primarily by the rather self-referential nature of newswork, as expressed through the tendency among journalists to privilege whatever colleagues think of their work over criteria such as viewer ratings, hit counts or sales figures.

After interviewing more than a thousand journalists in Germany, Armin Scholl and Siegfried Weischenberg (1998) have further pointed out that the more or less consistent and routine-based organization of newswork within specific outlets is realized mainly through internal circular communication, where reporters and editors constantly reinforce, reiterate, and thus reproduce certain ways of doing things. Following Niklas Luhmann (1990), it is possible to argue that the culture of journalism functions as an autopoietic or 'self-organizing' social system. Newcomers are primarily expected to adapt themselves, and to adopt the dominant (ideological) perception of what journalism is. A specific implication of this mindset is addressed by Farin Ramdjan (2002) in her investigation of the role and position of ethnic minority journalists in the boardrooms and newsrooms of all the main news outlets in The Netherlands.[4] Ramdjan concluded that newcomers in general and minorities in particular suffer from an existing closed, and hard to penetrate Dutch newsroom culture, characterized by a rather homogeneous professional population, a relatively non-transparent editorial hierarchy, and a lack of mechanisms to encourage and promote new talent. In an earlier study, researchers (Becker et al. 1999) found that the most likely explanation for the difficulties women and ethnic minorities experience in either getting or keeping their jobs at American news organizations is the fact that hiring decisions in journalism are primarily based on informal membership of existing self-similar networks of journalists.

It is important to note that this more or less oppressive news culture is not consistently nor necessarily wholeheartedly underwritten by all journalists equally. With the numbers of minorities slowly but surely growing in newsrooms, an ongoing fragmentation of titles, channels, outlets (and thus jobs), the emergence of new work practices in convergent journalism, the proliferation of all kinds of citizen's, alternative and community media both online and offline, and the growing importance of freelance and part-time work in the field, it is safe to argue that the culture of journalism is becoming more diverse, open, and dynamic all the time. Journalists today enter a workforce that is built on the heyday of the 20th century era of omnipresent mass media, but that is expected to perform in a contemporary news ecology where individualization, globalization, and the pervasive role of corresponding networked technologies challenge all the assumptions traditional newsmaking is based upon.

Discussion

When considering the current developments in the lived reality of newswork, evidence can be found both of things staying the same, and of trends producing profound change. On an institutional level, journalism is converging its channels and modes of production, a trend which seems to correlate with an increase in intra- and inter-institutional news coherence, even while (or to some extent

perhaps because of how) the formerly sedimented practices of separate media platforms get disrupted. This trend towards news isomorphism[5] is fuelled by an increased reliance on global news agencies such as Reuters and the Associated Press. Technology further amplifies these trends as it primarily gets introduced in news organizations to standardize existing ways of doing things, and to act as a cost-cutting measure by enabling reporters to do more general work with less specialized staff or resources (other than portable, networked equipment). Within organizations, newsroom socialization has long been a staple of the production of culture. As part of this, the routinization of newswork becomes a crucial strategy in managing the accelerated newsflow – a flow further supercharged by the addition of citizens as producers next to consumers of news through online platforms. On a cultural level, the widely shared occupational ideology of journalism serves to reproduce the dominant self-understanding of journalism among its practitioners, allowing the profession to remain operationally closed through processes of self-reference – up to and including a homogenization of the workforce.

All of this adds to a distinct depersonalization of journalism, and can be seen to contribute to the real or perceived disconnection the profession currently experiences with its constituencies. However, following Paul Du Gay (2000), it is not bureaucracy per se that is the culprit here, as one could argue that the bureaucratic organization of journalism as a profession protects it against corruption, allows it to sustain a sense of moral order, and of recruitment of new believers in the 'real' values of an ideal-typical journalism as being objective, fair, true, ethical, and self-sacrificingly serving the public. On the other hand, several disruptive trends allow for a more liquid understanding of the field:

- the dissolution of the boundaries between makers and users of news (especially online);
- a fragmentation of the workforce across an endless variety of titles, genres and media (a process amplified by the trend towards increasing 'atypical' news employment);
- and the creative exploitation of technological affordances by a new generation of reporters and editors unfettered by lifelong experience or socialization processes.

And perhaps this is the main insight that the media logic of contemporary journalism allows for: a necessary retooling of our research agenda and our teaching approaches in journalism studies and education towards the creative potential of contemporary trends and developments. Admittedly, several or indeed most of the points raised in this paper are well-known. Integrating the sketched developments into the framework of media logic, it perhaps becomes a bit clearer how the changes and challenges of the contemporary news industry impact – or in many ways do not seem to affect – the everyday working lives of the professionals involved. Within each component of media logic we find evidence for journalism

as a rather operationally closed, self-organizing, and self-defensive social system, communicating social and technological affordances in terms of the various ways in which they might 'fit' existing (informal) hierarchies, and traditions of doing newswork. As an institution, journalism retreats into increasing news coherence, while convergence efforts fall flat through the reification of cultural boundaries between formerly distinct news divisions. The implementation of technological change in news organizations tends to be guided by an effort to reproduce established practices, and if anything coincides with ongoing outsourcing of skills, competences, assignments, or even jobs away from the newsroom. As organizations, news companies seem to be highly effective in scrutinizing each other's operations closely, or in the case of networked or joint ownership copy-paste office designs onto each other. Culturally, the profession maintains internal coherence by invoking journalism's occupational ideology, which in turn shapes the professional news culture both inside and outside of the industry. This social shaping is not without clear, 'visible' evidence, as the relative homogeneity of the population of newsworkers generally suggests.

At the same time, on all these levels of journalism's logic, we can see openings, tears on surface: the system is porous. Several online or enthusiast multimedia reporters experience institutional or technological change as empowering and liberating. The precarious labour situation also opens up new markets and audiences for a more contingent and individualized newswork. This in turn suggests one could argue for an empirical reconceptualization too – one that takes the deviant, marginal or otherwise tactically different ways of doing and organizing newswork as its primary object of study, as it is at the fringes where the visibility of agency (of reporters and editors) is clearest. For communication theory this would lead us to combine approaches that focus on institutional and cultural reproduction and isomorphism with those that identify and disrupt existing ways of doing things. Ultimately I would venture that such a perspective comes much closer to articulating what journalism perhaps should be all about: 'to kick against the pricks' (Bible, Acts 26:14).

Notes

[1] Report available at http://www.ifj.org/pdfs/ILOReport070606.pdf.

[2] See WAN report available at http://www.wan-press.org/article11168.html.

[3] For an overview of international newsrooms (including pictures), see the entries titled 'Real Newsrooms' at the *What's Next* weblog, available at http://www.innovationsinnewspapers.com.

[4] See Farin Ramdjan (2002), *Hoge Drempels*. Mixed Media foundation report, available (in Dutch) at http://www.miramedia.nl/media/files/hogedrempels.doc.

[5] This concept has been coined by Pablo Boczkowski (in 2007), see http://www.slis.indiana.edu/news/story.php?story_id=1404.

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