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CHAPTER V

Journalism

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 its traditional orientation on 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 I (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. Writing mainly on the developments in US journalism, Michael Schudson considers the increasingly (and dangerously) critical or even outright cynical style of reporting and a growing role of entertainment values over sound news judgment in the field, signaling "an intrusion of marketplace values into the professionalism of journalists" (2003, p. 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,

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p. 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 Spain and the UK furthermore shows that, although especially the younger workers seem to embrace their 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. Journalism is attributed a seminal role in providing the collective memory and social cement of societies – both in the eyes of academics as journalists themselves, guided by "the modernist bias of its official self-presentation" (Zelizer 2004, p. 112). John Hartley additionally notes how news must be seen as "the primary sense-making practice of modernity" (1996, p. 32), contributing to a view of journalism as essential to constituting and maintaining social order and democracy itself. Modern journalism has consistently defined and legitimized itself as such, claiming to adhere to a social responsibility of public service regarding the democratic state, "informing citizens in a way that enables them to act as citizens" (Costera Meijer 2001, p. 13). For a media profession so central to society's sense of self, it is of crucial importance to understand the influences of changing labor conditions, professional cultures, and the appropriation of technologies on the nature of work in journalism.

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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 in 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.

> It is common here that you rotate every four or five years from department to department [. . .] On the one hand it's the destruction of cultural capital, because you just invested all those years in a network and then you have to move on again. Sure, you can take your address book with you and that usually happens, but you also have to establish new personal bonds with your contacts, and you have to become knowledgeable about a whole new subject. On the other hand, if you are stuck in one section for twenty years you will have become numb, you won't be able to do anything else. It's good to look with fresh eyes to the things that are happening around you. Well, there are pros and cons I guess. (M, newspaper, NL)

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 twentieth century, these companies were

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acquired wholly or partially by even larger media firms. Of these firms Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation is the largest, owning media properties all over the world. The company started out as a local newspaper chain in Australia, owning the *Adelaide News* and the *Adelaide Sunday Mail*.[1] After expanding his newspaper holdings across Australia, Murdoch moved into England in the 1960s and in the US in the 1970s. The company started Sky TV in 1983 – the world's first satellite television news and entertainment channel. Shortly thereafter, in 1985, Murdoch became an American citizen in order to be able to buy more media outlets in the US (next to his flagship paper the *New York Post*) – as only US citizens could own American television stations. In 1993, News Corporation became a majority shareholder of STAR (Satellite Television for the Asian Region) TV, broadcasting news and entertainment across the continent (but particularly relying on its dominant market share in India). In 1996, News Corporation's subsidiary Fox established the Fox News Channel in the US, a 24-hour cable news station. The company also owns or participates in numerous other, non-news franchises, such as sports teams, film studios, record companies, book publishing houses, and social networking websites – most notably the extremely popular social networking website *MySpace*.

After the start of the war in Iraq in 2003, British newspaper The *Guardian* reported that not only did Murdoch personally came out strongly in favor of the war – so did all the editorials of his 175 newspaper holdings across the world.[2] A 2004 television documentary called *Outfoxed* (by director Robert Greenwald of Brave New Films) painted a grim picture of what it is like to work for Fox News, using interviews and statements made by former Fox news producers, reporters, bookers and writers.[3] The filmmaker argues how these former employees were forced to push a politically conservative "right-wing" point of view or risk losing their jobs. The film for example shows daily internal memos that outline specific talking points to be covered that particular day by the

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channel's main news shows. Although there are many accounts of the role and influence of Murdoch – who if anything is a political opportunist and a self-proclaimed "libertarian" – on the way news gets reported across all of his media outlets, his presence in most of his newsrooms exists mainly through reputation. In a case study on the newspaper holdings of News Corporation, Timothy Marjoribanks (2000) concludes that while Murdoch is a strong influence on decision-making processes throughout the company, the daily management of specific organizations within the corporation allows for some degree of autonomy. Considering News Corporation as the perfect example of the contemporary networked enterprise form of cultural production, Eric Louw affirms: "we find multiple (and proliferating) styles of control and decision-making being tolerated in different parts of the network, so long as those at the centre of the web can gain some benefit from allowing a particular practice and/or organisational arrangement to exist in a part of their 'networked empire'" (2001, p. 64).

> There are too many influences on our work sometimes. People outside the media think media owners, such as Murdoch, exert undue influence, but this is almost never the case. Sometimes a newspaper will have an editorial line that it runs and will require its reporters to follow that line, but even this does not affect the stories too often. Often the influences are more subtle – sponsors, spin doctors, public relations people, or friendship with the subjects of the story. This is the time when a reporter shows his or her worth by rising above other factors to write fairly and bravely. (M, newspaper, NZ)

The process of accumulation of media properties accelerated in the 1990s, resulting in a market where there are more media (and thus: news) outlets owned by a smaller number of companies. This institutional trend has been supercharged by increased worldwide government deregulation on the one hand, and the rapid diffusion of digital media technologies on

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the other. The liberalization of national and global markets by governments during the second half of the twentieth century has had particular consequences for countries with a history of dual media systems, where commercial operators (mainly in broadcasting) worked side by side to government-protected public service stations. The case of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) as a state-owned 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. 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 2004b).

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"

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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 US 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 skeptical 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), documenting the effects of convergence on media workers, 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 labor relationships (variable hours, job rotation, and flexitime). Similarly, 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.

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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. Perhaps the pioneering example is US-based Tampa Bay Online (TBO), a convergent news operation combining WFLA-TV (an NBC affiliate station), The Tampa Tribune, and a news website that provides original content plus material from print and television. The three media are housed in a special building called The News Center, where the different departments work together though a central multimedia newsdesk. After a couple of years of planning and development, in 2000 the reporters and editors of all the different media started moving in. Jane Stevens covered the transition for the *Online Journalism Review* and noted in 2002 that the gathering of breaking and daily news on all three platforms did not happen "without a lot of angst, complaints, missteps and aggravation. Some employees quit rather than change their way of doing journalism. Many more grumbled and went along. And a few rode the bull into the ring with equal parts fear and exhilaration."[4] The work at the Florida-based news organization is not completely integrated, but rather must be seen as an ongoing process of inter-firm collaborations. Michael Dupagne and Bruce Garrison (2006) for example note that the business and management operations of TBO remain separate, with staffs cooperating rather than working for a single converged organization. After spending a week at the News Center in 2003, Jane Singer (2004) found that although they were not universally enthusiastic, most journalists perceived convergence as having a number of advantages relative to the long-standing system in which each news organization is

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independent and, in the case of the newspaper and television station, competitive. At a personal level, the journalists seemed to agree that the ability to work in more than one medium can be seen as a career booster or at least an useful addition to their resume. William Silcock and Susan Keith also spent some time interviewing journalists at TBO (in 2002), focusing on the problems and challenges of convergence for everyday newswork. One of the issues they found was the lack of a common language in which to discuss, negotiate, and carry out more or less integrated news coverage. Instead, the journalists of the different media simply adopted a few words of each other's jargon, with print newsworkers (of whom there are 300+ in the newsroom on any given day) feeling in particular that they had to learn more about their ten or so colleagues in television than vice versa. "As a result, having a TV journalist write for one of the newspapers usually was, with a few exceptions, considered a waste of resources. So there was little need for TV reporters to learn the lingo of print journalism. However, in cases where print offered a dominant action, print terminology prevailed [. . .] The few television reporters who did write for print also had to adopt print's style conventions" (2006, p. 617).

> It is necessary to be multiskilled, because employers take that journalism as a whole, tv, radio, papers . . . if you write for radio you must also be able to write for the paper. When they say write a 200-word report you must produce it otherwise your chances of employment are limited. You have to have close relationships with people you work with, like with the tv people for example. [. . .] If you have a good relationship, life becomes easier. (M, freelance radio, SA)

All the researchers involved in studying and observing the ongoing operations at TBO and indeed other similar convergence journalism ventures around the world note 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'

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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 process often seem skeptical 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. Singer indeed emphasizes that cultural compatibility problems are not permanent. A number of journalists at TBO told her that anticipated problems had either not materialized or vanished with seeing the quality or successes of the work of their colleagues, eventually gaining respect for journalists in other parts of the news organization as a result of convergence.

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) we 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

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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 reporter's 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 that 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-institutional 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, p. 109). It is important to note that this kind of streamlining of the news agenda is not a kind of working behavior 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

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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 (or rather: news isomorphism) 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 (as in the case of the TBO example), 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.

The ongoing concentration of media ownership does not just extend the ties between different news operations across different media – it is also an institutional trend that makes news departments part of larger, sometimes transnational corporations that seek to pull the work journalists do into other sections of the industry.

> I firmly believe that all major media companies should be looking into ways to expand into console, mobile and pc gaming. The hardest part is evangelizing this type of work to those who hold the purse strings. I feel strongly that any media company that is not exploring the game space right now is not only ignoring the future but the here and now. I'm rather shocked at the apathy I meet, and yet it reminds of me of the climate we all faced when we started our online sites ten years ago. (M, media manager, US)

Several examples can be found in Australia, Japan, and the United States where journalists have collaborated with game developers to tell news stories.[5] Jon Burton (2005) shows that in the online news industry, interactive graphics have become a viable way to explain complex information and contextualize reporting, while several games developers such as Uruguay-based game studio Powerful Robot with its site

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Newsgaming.com produce games that reflect real world events, using elements of journalistic practice to inform their design. The bottom line of such initiatives is the additional resources they require in news organizations, and the impact convergence of media (including forms, genres, and cultures) have on the working lives of journalists.

On an institutional level journalists face many changes – although it is still possible to argue that the concentration of media ownership and the convergence of news operations do not fundamentally challenge the fundamentals of basic news reporting (such as gathering and selecting news, interviewing sources, and fact-checking stories). However, as reporters and editors increasingly have to do their work in a context of individualized (and often contingent) contracts, cultural clashes, and increased economic pressures, it is safe to say that newswork for its practitioners has become more uncertain, stressful, and market-driven than in the past.

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 analog 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

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executive personnel and any political regulators" (Ursell 2001, p. 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.[6]

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. 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 the 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

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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, p. 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, p. 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

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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 neighborhood 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 professional 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.

In a telling conclusion to three years (2004–2006) of closely monitoring the American news media, researchers at the US-based Project for Excellence in Journalism signaled "a seismic transformation in what and how people learn about the world around them. Power is moving away from journalists as gatekeepers over what the public knows. Citizens are assuming a more active role as assemblers, editors and even creators of their own news. Audiences are moving from old media such as television or newsprint to new media online. Journalists need to redefine their role and identify which of their core values they want to fight to preserve - something they have only begun to consider."[7] The same report also signals how news outlets have been reducing their newsrooms in an effort to cut

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costs, adding fuel to the argument that the current situation in many news organizations is one of having to do more with less (or only freelance) staff. 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 personalized news delivered online and on mobile devices;
- The reorganization of newsrooms optimized 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.[8]

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, p. 234). The success or failure of journalists to deal with the role of technology in their work

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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 center of the city or region their core audience is located. Broadcast organizations are most likely to cluster together in a single location, such as the "Media Park" in Hilversum, The Netherlands (just south of Amsterdam). 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 centers such as Brussels (to cover European Union affairs), New York (United Nations), and Washington, DC (US 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

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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 twentieth century. Chris Paterson (2003) correspondingly argues that fewer major news providers are informing more people and doing so from fewer sources. Reuters, AP, and other smaller news agencies such as the French Agence France Presse (AFP), or United Press International (UPI) take advantage of the ongoing convergence within the news industries primarily through the formation of strategic alliances that increase their news gathering and distribution reach.

Newsrooms, whether in print, broadcasting or online, look remarkably the same all over the world.[9] Between 1999 and 2003 I have visited the offices of newspapers and television stations in places as varied as Lisbon, Helsinki, Amsterdam, Hilversum, The Hague, Johannesburg, Windhoek, Los Angeles, San Diego, and Perth, and found similar circumstances everywhere. 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 US, Frank Esser (1998) found that centralized newsrooms with a high division of labor 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

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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, p. 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"

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(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 includes 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, p. 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 and discordancy 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 reporters, 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 are a vital part of doing newswork. "This is a competition centered around an

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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, p. 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.

> My time in print coincided with my years as a junior reporter. The media is mercilessly hierarchical and being at the bottom of the pile always comes with frustrations and heartache. So I am not sure I experienced as many joys as a print journalist., but I think that was largely an age and status thing. But TV was terrifically exciting. It was great to be part of a close knit team, (camera, editor, reporter) and, to be honest, good fun to be working for a medium that is so powerful. (F, tv news, NZ)

Although rivalry, creative conflict, and competition do play an important role, the professional socialization and generally quite bureaucratic structure of most mainstream news organizations in fact prevent any major deviancy. With the ongoing proliferation of niche markets and corresponding hyperfragmentation of audiences across different media titles, channels and forms, it is possible to argue that more spaces are opening up for individual journalists to get their stories out. On the other hand, these developments must be seen in the context of increasing commercial pressures and an overall problematic economic situation for most news outlets, thus limiting their cultural and financial potential to experiment with different, alternative, minority, or otherwise marginalized voices.

Culture. The twentieth 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

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evaluations subtly shift over time, yet always serve to maintain the dominant sense of what is (and should be) journalism (Deuze 2005b). 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, p. 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. The concepts, values and elements said to be part of journalism's 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

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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 ownership) where ideological values can be deployed to sustain operational closure, keeping outside forces at bay. Randy 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, p. 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.

Comparing results from surveys among journalists in twenty-one countries, David Weaver (1998) found support for claims that the characteristics of journalists, including their demographics, are largely similar worldwide. Weaver however concludes there is too much disagreement on professional norms and values to claim an emergence of universal occupational standards in journalism. 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. The surveys in these countries were all conducted via phone or face-to-face interviews. The scholars involved worked together in constructing and wording the questionnaire, exchanging data

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and interpreting results. Interviews yielded data on three sets of characteristics: occupational characteristics (contract, salary, type of media organization, specialization, relationships with colleagues and the audience, daily practices on the job); professional characteristics (media role perceptions and views on ethics); and basic demographic characteristics.

In the five countries examined one finds median ages of 32 in Australia, 35 in Germany, 41 in the United States, 42 in The Netherlands and 38 years in Great Britain. Newcomers in journalism tend to start out in jobs in local media, or find temporary positions and internships at (commercial) broadcast and online media. In print and among the more prestigious titles, journalism tends to be dominated by forty- and fifty-somethings. In a recent interview with the *Listener* – a popular New Zealand weekly current affairs and entertainment magazine – Linda Clark, one of the most prominent news professionals in her country, explained why she was quitting journalism after an award-winning career of 22 years referring specifically to the issue of age: "I've begun to think that journalism is a job you do best when you're twentysomething, strangely. When you're twenty-something the world is villains and heroes, issues are black and white and that's how journalism works now. It's how the media has to see issues a lot of the time. So when you're 25 and you're full of energy and your worldview is monochromatic, journalism makes a lot more sense. When you get older and nothing is black and white, and you realise that even the people you hound have redeeming features and even the people you really like do terrible things, it becomes so much more complicated."[10]

Generally about one third of journalists are women. Among younger reporters in the Netherlands (those who are still in their twenties) the gender ratio is 46 percent male to 54 percent female. The situation is similar in Germany, where 42 percent of journalists under 30 are women. The gender balance is more equal in (commercial) television newsrooms and among those working for popular magazines – both

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professional groups dominated by part-time, flexitime and freelance professionals.

> You know what is really good about being a woman? You can use it. No, I'm kidding, it is really a lot of fun. It just does not seem like such a men's world. Now when I think about it, most of the professionals I have contact with are men. But that does not bother me at all, men are easy-going. I think it is an advantage of being a women. At our organization there are more women who are difficult to work with than men. (F, online, NL)

Regarding the media careers of women in general and in (Western) journalism in particular, Romy Fröhlich (2007) warns against what she calls a "friendliness trap" in the cultures of news organizations. On the one hand, supposedly "feminine" skills are legitimized in the increasingly market-driven, project-based teamwork environment of contemporary global cultural production. Certain evolutionary expectations of women such as being better communicators, having a greater capacity for empathy and inclusiveness, and a talent for dealing with (difficult) people seem to open more doors into the media professions. However, argues Fröhlich, "sooner or later [. . .] the supposed feminine values, attributes, and behaviors will be associated with a lack of assertiveness, poor conflict management, and weak leadership skills. And suddenly, the apparent head start turns out to be a career killer" (p. 174). Indeed, research on the position of women across mass communication shows clearly how age-old inequalities remain firmly intact well into the twenty-first century: a glass ceiling, the wage gap, sexism and harassment on the workfloor, gendered divisions of labor, and an overall lack of professional development opportunities (Creedon and Cramer, 2007).

In all countries the percentage of ethnic or racial minorities is well below the respective national averages. In The Netherlands two percent of journalists explicitly indicated having a migrant background (coming mainly from Turkey, Morocco, and Surinam). The British survey reported 1 percent journalists with a black Caribbean or black African ethnic

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origin. The surveys in Australia and Germany did not ask about ethnic backgrounds. Weaver and Wilhoit reported 9.5 percent of US journalists in fulltime jobs having an African-American, Hispanic, Asian-American or Native American background. Education levels are particularly high among Dutch and US journalists (79 percent and 89 percent), both countries with a long tradition of formal journalism education programs. In Germany (65 percent), Great Britain (49 percent) and Australia (35 per cent), journalistic newcomers predominantly flow into the newsrooms via on-the-job and in-house training, although that situation is changing with the rapid development of all kinds of schooling options in those countries. In general it seems clear that today a bachelor's degree is the minimum qualification necessary for entering journalism. In most countries around the world, journalists seem politically a bit more left-leaning that the population in general. Reporting on studies in the United States, Britain, Germany, Sweden, and Italy, Thomas Patterson (1997) concluded that journalists generally are mainstream progressive rather than radical liberals, whose political beliefs work to "shade" rather than "color" the news.

Most journalists 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 mentioned "beat-system" in journalism tends to be quite gendered. Consider for example the situation in The Netherlands, where the specific beats mentioned show women most likely (64 percent) to specialize in health and lifestyle issues and men dominating the sports (96 percent), crime (86 percent), and new media (87 percent) beats. Additional analyses show that minority journalists are more likely to work in "minority beats" (such as news about their

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"homeland," asylum seekers, or minority youths in metropolitan areas). 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 even 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.

One indicator of the way journalists see their function in society is to ask them how important they rate a number of possible roles journalists are supposed to play in society. Topping the charts in all countries is an orientation towards explaining the news and getting the news out quickly. More recent surveys in the US, The Netherlands, and Germany show that the interpretive role of journalists is becoming increasingly popular. Although most countries do not have a similar history of longitudinal surveys among journalists, the available publications suggest that this conclusion can be drawn for most countries.

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. "Culture is a potent influence in any organization, but particularly so in media

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ones. It can act as a powerful constraint, limiting acceptance of new products and processes, but it can also be a motivator, an enabler, a liberator of organisational energy" (Kung-Shankleman 2003, p. 77). 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 twentieth 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. Another example of journalism's self-reference can be found in the way ethical and professional problems and critiques are channeled through self-appointed accountability mechanisms such as press councils, ombudsmen, and readers' representatives, and trade publications (Van Dalen and Deuze 2006).

After interviewing more than a thousand journalists in Germany, Siegfried Weischenberg and Armin Scholl (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 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 in 2002.[11] Ramdjan concludes 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 untransparent 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 to either get a job or keep 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 twentieth 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.