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Journalism in change
Journalistic culture in Poland, Russia
and Sweden

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Abbreviation

M mean

N number

SD standard deviation

Introduction: Journalism professionalization and journalistic culture as a matter of research

Gunnar Nygren

Bogusława Dobek-Ostrowska

General background

Journalism is a kind of social invention. It was born and developed with industrialism, enlightened then and strive for democracy. The link between these factors is well described by Schudson:

“Journalism is the business or practice of producing and disseminating information about contemporary affairs of general public interest and importance (...), normally presented as true and sincere to a dispersed and anonymous audience so as to publicly include the audience in a discourse taken to be publicly important.” (Schudson, 2003:11)

Journalism is for society and to serve the public sphere, but it is also a business to create the necessary economic conditions. Journalism is supposed to be autonomous from state and to be able to act freely. According to the liberal theory it shall be to the fourth estate of power (Burke, 1989). Independence from the political and economic pressure, constitute the role of journalism in a democratic society

Today journalism is in crisis. The development of a network society (Castells, 1999), new notions of media (media-like services) as well as changes of the traditional one-way communication towards more interaction, and a system of ‘many-to-many’ (Jakubowicz, 2009). Business models of media industry are under pressure; American researchers have just noted: “there is no such thing as the news industry anymore”! (Anderson et al, 2012). The professional roles of journalists are questioned by social media and by users who have become the producers of media content (Lewis, 2012).

Convergence creates new kind of interactive media systems, and has a profound impact on the functioning of traditional media firms (printed press, television and radio). The media workplace is changing in the same directions as in other industries – the workers have to be flexible, the demands on re-skilling and multi-skilling increases and the commercial pressure

is much more heavy (Deuze, 2007; Quandt and Singer, 2009). At the same time ideals and values are sluggish, old ways of thinking clash with new demands in the daily work. The journalistic culture is perhaps stronger than many spokesmen of convergence assume (Fenton, 2010; Witschge and Nygren, 2009).

This development is most visible in the US and the Western part of Europe. There are both differences and similarities between countries and media systems; still newspapers are flourishing in big economies like India and China and the traditional TV is the main media format in most countries. Globalization has also created a convergence in journalistic orientations and practices in different parts of the world. Traditional Western ideals of objectivity and impartiality seem to dominate in many newsrooms, and there are many similarities in professional routines and editorial processes (Hallin and Mancini, 2004, 2012; Hanitzsch, 2007; McQuail, 2013; Waisbord, 2013). But still there are also many differences among journalists in their ways of being professional, as reflections of societal influence more than from media organizations and professional norms. Journalism is still very national in many ways, still connected to history and political traditions (Weaver, 2005).

Main concepts – definitions

In journalism studies, scholars talk about journalism as a profession from different perspectives. Zelizer (2004) defines five sets of perspectives in studies of journalism – as a profession, as an institution in society, as text (content), as people and as a set of practices. These perspectives are not mutually exclusive; the project “Journalism in change” covers at least three of them:

- Journalism as a profession: a sociological perspective on journalism covering issues like autonomy, professional standards and values.
- Journalism as people: who is a journalist today, and what does this tell us about the position of journalism?
- Journalism as a set of practices: how is journalism produced today, and how changing processes influence thinking among journalists?

Journalism is this area of human activity which has changed dynamically during the last few decades (see more Chapter 1). What is journalism today? One of the most important factors is technology which provoke many implications both for society and journalism (McQuail, 2013: 13). Waisbord (2013) argues for a need to “reinvent professionalism.” He further shows dilemmas and ambiguities, and defines “the professional logic of journalism.” In this context,

model of the three tradition of journalism presented by Donsbach – subjective, public service and commercial one (2010:41), seems very interesting and useful for our studies.

Professional (journalistic) culture is a key concept which has been used in the project. In social and humanistic research culture is a “whole way of being,” common ideals and practices in a group that separate it from other groups. Culture is socially constructed, and is carried by the people living in the culture as both values and ideals and as tacit knowledge hidden in the daily routines. So the culture is not only a question of ideology, it is also visible in the practices – in journalism it also materialize in the working processes. With the words of Zelizer:

“For recognizing journalism as a culture – a complex web of meanings, rituals, conventions and symbol systems – and seeing journalists... as its facilitators offers a way to think about the phenomenon by accounting for its changing, often contradictory dimensions.” (2005:198)

The journalistic culture is an arena where different ideologies and practices can compete and live side by side. The journalistic culture has some common traits, but also big differences. It can be visible from the global level to national journalistic cultures, down to cultures in different media companies. In comparative research project “Worlds of Journalism” (Hanitzsch, 2007) the notion “journalistic culture” has been deconstructed into three levels of analysis where culture is articulated:

- At a *cognitive level*, thanks this way journalists shape way journalists shape the world, the interpretation of news and news work in general.
- *Journalistic ideals* – beliefs and values about the role of journalists, the relation to external power and owners (political and economic), the relation to the audience and the role of journalism in a new media environment, professional ethics among journalists.
- *Journalistic practices* – the daily work and what a journalist in supposed to do (multiskilling, newsroom organization), autonomy and decision processes (the grade of power in the work), norms and routines in the work (tacit knowledge), what the journalists think about changes in their workplace.

Hanitzsch (2007) presents three dimensions of journalistic culture, such as: institutional roles, epistemologies and ethical ideologies, which have been useful when creating research tool for our analysis. The purpose of the project “Journalism in change” is to identify common parts of transnational journalistic culture, general changes in journalism in different media systems, as well as differences between the three countries. It is also possible to relate the results to national differences in history and culture, to analyze the relation between globalization and national differences.

Literature – earlier studies

Studies on journalism are very well developed in Anglo-Saxon world, and in some West European (Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Switzerland). Over the last years studies in this respect have also been very popular in Scandinavian countries, one can speak about “a golden decade” in Nordic communication research with the leading position of Sweden (Fernández-Quijada, 2014). Central and Eastern Europe is lagging behind.

Research in Western countries

Most research on how journalism changes in the era of new media development is conducted in the U.S. and Western Europe (Mitchelstein and Bozkowski, 2009; Quandt and Singer, 2009). The results are seldom related to differences in media systems and in journalistic cultures; it is often taken for granted that these results are valid in all kind of media systems. There is a lack of empirical results in comparative research about changes in journalistic cultures. Most research on journalists is being conducted on a national level, as for example the “The American Journalist. News People Around the World” (Weaver et al., 2007) and “The Swedish Journalists” (Asp, 2007). State-of-the-art includes many important chapters published in “The Routledge Companion to News and Journalism” (2010), where one can find an interesting consideration of professional identities (Donsbach, 2010) and journalism development (Waisbord, 2010). In this book, we note some arguments for a stronger homogeneity and convergence among journalists both nationally and internationally - due to commercialization and the increasing of editorial control (Donsbach, 2010).

During the last two years several books were published. The key concept of journalism, dilemmas and ambiguities of professional identity, logic of journalism, hybrid professional culture, post-professional journalism, were conceptualized by Waisbord in 2013. One cannot forget about McQuail and his latest monograph “Journalism and Society” (2013), where technological changes in journalism are widely analyzed. It is necessary to mention “The Hybrid Media system” by Chadwick (2013), in which the author dedicates one chapter to changes in journalism due to technological conditions, and shows the boundaries between “professional journalism” and “amateur” blogging.

One of the few exceptions of comparative journalism study is “The Global Journalist in the 21st Century” (Weaver and Willnat, 2012) covering changes in journalism in 21 countries around the world. Research led by Weaver and Willnat includes the examples of Poland and Russia analyzed by Stępińska et al. (2012) and Pasti et al. (2012) accordingly. Another significant project - “World of journalisms” is led by Hanitzsch et al. (2010) and presents

results from 18 countries (Russia included). Finally, “Media Accountability and Transparency in Europe (MediaAcT)” the European Union’s project in 2010-2013 was conducted. “MediaAcT” help us to understand accountability cultures in 14 different countries; it includes the example of Poland (Fengler et al., 2014).

Research in Central and Eastern Europe

Without a doubt journalism studies in Central and Eastern Europe have not developed to a similar extent. Their results often covers the example of one country; due to the fact that studies are often published only in national languages the access to them is very difficult for scholars from other part of the world.

Similarly to this, there are also some regional comparative studies concerning Central Europe but they are rather narrow and the result are not widespread. The majority of studies is dedicated to political communication and media systems but they lack a research on journalistic culture. During the last decades only some scholars from Russia (Hanitzsch et al., 2010; Weaver and Willnat, 2012), Poland (Weaver and Willnat, 2012; Fengler et al., 2014), Bulgaria (Hanitzsch et al., 2010), Romania (Hanitzsch et al., 2010; Fengler et al., 2014), Hungary and Slovenia (Weaver and Willnat, 2012), Estonia (Fengler et al., 2014) participated in international comparative projects.

During the last years some new important publications have been enriched the studies dedicated to this region of Europe. One of them is “Comparing media systems beyond the Western world” edited by of Hallin and Mancini, where we find the chapters on Poland (Dobek-Ostrowska, 2012), Lithuania (Balčytienė) and Russia (Vartanova, 2012).

“Media and Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe” (MDCEE), was an interdisciplinary project funded by the European Research Council (2009-2013). Many interesting reports and articles are a fruit of this research (Štětka, 2013; Bajomi-Lázár, ; Örnebring, 2013), but also the monograph of Bajomi-Lázár “Party Colonisation of the Media in Central and Eastern Europe” (2014). He analyzes five former communist countries (Hungary, Bulgaria, Poland, Romania, and Slovenia) and tries to explain variations in media freedom and the politicization of the news media in and across countries.

A collective book “Media Transformations in the Post-Communist World: Eastern Europe’s Tortured Path to Change” (2013) edited by Gross and Jakubowicz, is other publication important for “Journalism in change” project, above all for a case of Poland. The authors present not only positive effects of transformation after the collapse of communism, but also the problems and uncertainty of this process.

Finally, we should mention about “Journalism that Matters. Views from Central and Eastern Europe” where we find one general study “How the internet changes journalism: some trends in the ‘West’ and ‘East’” of Bajomi-Lázár (2014), two chapters dedicated to Poland (Stępińska and Głowacki 2014; Milewski, Barczyszyn and Lauk, 2014) and one to Russia (Pasti, 2014). All of them are very useful and enriched our research.

A transnational research project:

“Journalism in change: Professional journalistic culture in Poland, Russia and Sweden”

The purpose of the project “Journalism in change” is to identify common parts of a transnational journalistic culture and common changes in journalism in general in different media systems - but also the differences among the three selected countries. It is also possible to relate the results to national differences in history and culture, to analyze the relation between globalization and national differences.

The research design can be described as a “most-different” selection of cases. The project includes three countries representing different media systems, of different historical and political backgrounds and different size – Sweden, Russia and Poland situated on the Baltic Sea. All of them had the relationships in the past. They were intense between Poland and Sweden in the times of 16th and 18th centuries, and between Sweden and Russia from the 12th to 19th century Poland and Russia have had a very deep relationship started from the medieval times until today. The communist period (1945-1989) was significant for Polish and Russian journalism and professional cultures. Despite a common geographical localization and history, the three states are different in many aspects, journalistic culture is being influenced by different external factors, such as democratic tradition (or lack of this experience), religion, education systems, economic development, and access to the new technologies of communication. In a fact, “Journalism in change” is the first comparative project covering journalistic culture in these three countries.

We were aware of these differences from the beginning there are differences, but we also wanted to look whether there are any similarities. With the study design it has become possible to analyze what changes in journalism in different types of society have in common, and what kind of differences come from characteristics of each society.

Who and why take part in the project

Journalism has experienced deep changes during the last decades. For this reason it seemed interesting to verify this general opinion in case only few countries using the empirical research. The points of departure for this book are based on two variables – technical and

economic; it was the goal to observe how these two types of changes are influencing different media systems. The research project “Journalism in change – professional journalistic cultures in Poland, Russia and Sweden” was conducted in the period of 2011-2014. The project have a multidisciplinary approach with researchers in journalism, media sociology and political science. Researchers from Södertörn University (Sweden), Moscow State University (Russia) and University of Wrocław (Poland) worked together in the project and in this final anthology. Two additional reports were published at the earlier stages of the project (Nygren et al., 2012; Anikina et al., 2013). Dissemination activities also includes number of articles published in scientific journals (Anikina, Dobek-Ostrowska and Nygren, 2013; Dobek- Ostrowska, Barczyszyn and, Michel, 2013; Dobek- Ostrowska, Barczyszyn, Michel and Baranowski, 2013); Johansson, 2013, 2014; Johansson and Nygren, 2014; Nygren, 2012c).

Hypotheses

We formulated the two groups of hypothesis (see more 2.2.1.) important from the comparative perspective. The first group is linked with similarities/differences among journalistic culture in three countries:

- H1: *There is an increasing similarity in journalistic cultures in different media systems, market influence and liberal ideals are more common pushing journalism in the direction of a commercialized Western model.*
- H2: *The similarities between journalistic cultures are mostly on the surface, nationally rooted traditions from history and culture still influence journalistic cultures deeply and preserve differences.*

The liberal ideals in journalism are getting stronger with market liberalism; a global media culture is emerging (Hallin and Mancini, 2004). This hypothesis can be defined as a homogenization of journalism in different media systems under the influence of technological and economic development, and the counterhypothesis can be the opposite that the similarities are mostly on the surface:

- H3: *Media development make the profession weaker as a collective, the borders of journalism are more diffuse and professional autonomy weaker. Journalism as media content and as a profession will be more difficult to perceive as we know it from the 20th century.*
- H4: *Media development can strengthen the position of the individual journalist, giving him/her new possibilities both in research and in publishing. This can give journalists a news kind of autonomy.*

Other research shows that social institutions like journalism is hesitant to abandon its conventions even in the “age of the net” when communication patterns in the society are changed (O’Sullivan and Heionen, 2008). A professional culture is sluggish, and moves only slowly in spite of changes in the surroundings – technical, economic and political. Journalists are often seen as conservative, and research shows that fast changes also promote a reaction of defense for old values (Witschge and Nygren, 2009). This can also be defined as hybridization, when hybrid systems emerge melting together elements from the global development and national history and traditions (Hallin and Mancini, 2012).

Research questions

The hypothesis presented below provoke a long list of research questions, which are presented by the authors in each chapter. The research questions are linked with an area of analysis, but overall three fundamental questions were addressed:

RQ1: What are the differences and similarities among the journalists in Poland, Russia and Sweden when it comes to the basic dimensions (age, sex, education and professional training, membership in professional associations), working conditions, professional autonomy on the individual, organizational and societal level, ideals, standards and values of research’s participants, their relationship with politics and politicians, their attitudes towards commercialization, the new technologies used in the journalistic practice ?

RQ2: What are the most important factors explaining differences observed between media systems?

RQ3: How are the factors mentioned in RQ1 influenced by media development in three countries?

Methods

The researchers from the three countries participated in research workshops and in accomplishing a research. Three methods were used:

Survey/ quantitative data analysis: A total 1500 respondents – a sample of 500 journalists from each country Poland, Russia and Sweden, participated in survey (see more 2.2.3.).

Interview/ qualitative data analysis: 60 in-depth interviews were conducted with a broad selection of 20 journalists in each country (see more 2.2.4).

The survey and the interviews have covered several areas:

- Who are the journalists – age, gender and social position, income and education?

- The daily work – employment and conditions, perceived autonomy and influence.
- Professional identity and relation to politics, commercialism and media owners.
- Attitudes towards technology, interactivity and change in work. Social media use and multiskilling.
- Professional roles in society, quality and press freedom.

Quantitative and qualitative comparative analysis: Surveys and interviews which were conducted in three countries let us to use the received results for analyzing data sets by listing and counting all the combinations of variables observed in the data set. We compared the unique combination of values of its independent and dependent variables. We compared the data as numbers, per cents, standard deviation, means, factor analysis, and Pearson correlation.

The project has not studied journalism performance and media content. It has focused on the journalists, on how they think about their role in society and in the media companies, about their daily work and their reflections on change. For example, the journalists have given their opinions on quality in journalism, if it is decreasing or not. There are no empirical data to support these opinions, no content analyses. The results are only the opinions of the journalists.

But in a comparative perspective, this still can bring new knowledge. It is possible to compare different generations, journalists in different kind of media and in different media systems. What the journalists say have relevance, as long as we believe there is a connection between what you think and how do you act.

Monograph “Journalism in change”

This book is designed as a series of comparative chapters in different areas. Each author is responsible for the chapter, but the results have been discussed in the group and were carefully evaluated.

In the first chapter, Gunnar Nygren gives a theoretical background to comparative journalism studies. The study covers theories on professions, autonomy as well as research on how current media developments influence journalism.

In the second chapter, background information on media systems in three selected countries is given by Gunnar Nygren, Bogusława Dobek-Ostrowska and Elena Johansson. Manuscript also contains a description of methods in the survey and the interviews and how the results have been analyzed.

In the third chapter Michał Głowacki makes attempts to answer the question “Who is a journalist today?” he puts the emphasis on selected dimensions of comparative studies of

journalism: demographic traits and facts on education, conditions of employment and the role professional associations.

In the fourth chapter Jöran Hök analyzes the daily work practices, working conditions, multiskilling and other dimensions of daily work.

In chapter 5 Gunnar Nygren focuses in the perceived autonomy among journalists and the degree of freedom within given frames in the three countries, political and commercial pressure on journalists in daily work.

In the sixth chapter Maria Anikina analyzes ideals and values, professional ethics and attitudes towards society. Also verification and other key values are analyzed in relation to media developments.

In the seventh chapter Bogusława Dobek-Ostrowska analyzes the relation between journalism and politics, both the political preferences of journalists and how politics interfere in news processes.

In the eight chapter Bogusława Dobek-Ostrowska analyzes the relation between journalism and commercialization. This includes foreign ownership and also external economic pressure.

In the ninth chapter Elena Johansson analyzes how journalists relate to social media, how they use social media and in what purposes.

In the final chapter Gunnar Nygren and Bogusława Dobek-Ostrowska summarize the analysis, and relate the results to other comparative research in journalism. They discuss the questions of homogenization of journalism globally, or if the development is more likely to describe as hybridization with new forms of media systems emerging.

Project was led by professor Gunnar Nygren and financed by the Foundation for Baltic and East European Studies, linked with the academic infrastructure at Södertörns University in Sweden. The team of six scholars, supported by doctoral students and students from each country, worked hard in order to achieve the outcomes and fascinated intellectually job. The project helps us to know the journalists and journalism and to understand better how the countries developed journalistic cultures. The important question is how journalistic culture evolves today in a condition of intensive technological changes and what the perspectives are for the future.