



# Beyond journalism: Theorizing the transformation of journalism

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## Abstract

Journalism has enjoyed a rich and relatively stable history of professionalization. Scholars coming from a variety of disciplines have theorized this history, forming a consistent body of knowledge codified in national and international handbooks and canonical readers. However, recent work and analysis suggest that the supposed core of journalism and the assumed consistency of the inner workings of news organizations are problematic starting points for journalism studies. In this article, we challenge the consensual (self-)presentation of journalism – in terms of its occupational ideology, its professional culture, and its sedimentation in routines and organizational structures (cf. the newsroom) in the context of its reconfiguration as a *post-industrial*, *entrepreneurial*, and *atypical* way of working and of being at work. We outline a way beyond individualist or institutional approaches to do justice to the current complex transformation of the profession. We propose a framework to bring together these approaches in a dialectic attempt to move through and *beyond* journalism as it has traditionally been conceptualized and practiced, allowing for a broader definition and understanding of the myriad of practices that make up journalism.

## Keywords

Atypical work, entrepreneurship, journalism, journalism studies, newsroom-centricity, post-industrial journalism

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## Introducing journalism and journalism studies

Journalism, as a profession, has enjoyed a long and stable development in most countries around the world. Whether working under conditions of censorship, pressures of nation building, or with expectations of providing a society with social cement, journalism is widely recognized and seen as a set of values, principles, and practices enacted in different ways and settings with a ‘sense of wholeness and seamlessness’ (Hallin, 1992: 14) around the world. Similarly, the field of journalism studies – the scholarly pursuit of knowledge about journalism – developed alongside its object into an increasingly sophisticated and consensual body of knowledge, range of research methodologies, and theoretical developments.

This modernist dream of coherence and consensus is a fallacy. In the late or, with Zygmunt Bauman (Deuze, 2007a), *liquid* modern era, the field of journalism studies and education recognizes how journalism is more than a neat sum of its parts, instead accommodating a more dynamic and indeed unruly consideration of the profession. Journalism is transitioning from a more or less coherent industry to a highly varied and diverse range of practices. As Anderson et al. (2012) write in a review of the profession at the start of the 21st century, ‘the journalism industry is dead but ... journalism exists in many places’ (p. 76).

Scholars and educators tend to respond to this shift in two ways. One is to rally the troops, close ranks, and put significant effort in bringing coherence and stability (back) to the field. This gets established by producing impressive handbooks, canonical anthologies, readers, and companion volumes (and corresponding special issues of scholarly journals and conferences). Empirical approaches in this tradition center on comprehensive surveys and content analyses of journalists and journalism based on narrow definitions of the news industry offering conclusions about what journalism does and who journalists are (see Hanitzsch et al., 2011; Hellmueller and Mellado, 2015; Willnat et al., 2013).<sup>1</sup>

A second trend in the field is to dive, head first, into the chaos. This proves to be an often exciting and bewildering experience, leading to a wide variety of studies and conceptualizations of journalism in a post-industrial era, often featuring particularistic work on emerging genres, formats, and types of journalism. Theoretically, journalism research in this context enthusiastically explores the boundaries of the field (Carlson and Lewis, 2015) or shows through a surge in ethnographic fieldwork how even the traditional ‘inside’ of the profession – the newsroom – is not as coherent as it is generally made out to be (Domingo and Paterson, 2011).

In this intervention, we bring together these approaches in a dialectic attempt to move *beyond* journalism, allowing for a broader definition and understanding of the field. We critically interrogate first the normative expectations of what journalism should be and do according to dominant conceptualizations of the profession. Next, epistemologically we follow up on the newsroom-centricity of journalism studies (section ‘Toward a dynamic definition of journalism’) while recognizing that newsrooms continue to be important anchoring points for newswork (section ‘Understanding news as work’). However, the newsroom is not necessarily a solid or coherent entity in today’s post-industrial journalism (section ‘Considering the organization of post-industrial journalism’), nor is newswork outside of the newsroom necessarily free of the constraints and

structures traditionally provided by the institutional arrangement of journalism (section 'Enter entrepreneurialism'). Newsrooms and newswork are part of a profession that can best be seen as a self-organizing social system through which shifting coalitions of participants are linked, and that is interdependent on a variety of other systems (such as sales, marketing, design, programming and coding, publishing, and distribution services). It is also a field with a distinct materiality of praxis (Sartre, 1976: 79) – as what journalism is and what journalists do cannot be meaningfully separated from their material context (cf. technologies, work environments). We discuss how, in this context, we can understand the role of the media professional as an enterprising individual beyond the limited conceptualization of entrepreneurship as a strictly economic endeavor (section 'Beyond journalism'). In the concluding section, we push for an ontology of journalism beyond individuals and institutions.

### **Defining journalism: Beyond the core–periphery dichotomy**

Students and scholars coming from a wide variety of disciplines have researched and theorized journalism, resulting in a more or less coherent conceptualization of what journalism is (Zelizer, 2004). The general approach to understanding, studying, teaching, and practicing journalism articulates the profession with a specific occupational ideology and culture. Journalists tend to benchmark their actions and attitudes self-referentially using ideal-typical standards, seeing themselves as providing a public service; being objective, fair, and (therefore) trustworthy; working autonomously, committed to an operational logic of actuality and speed (preeminent in concepts such as reporting on breaking news, getting the story first); and having a social responsibility and ethical sensibility (Deuze, 2005). This conceptualization is still strong within the field today and seems to endure even in the midst of profound changes and challenges to the profession.

Through the occupational ideology of journalism, we can define the field from the inside out, helping us to understand how the profession makes sense of itself. External definitions of journalism tend to be more functional and instrumental, where the profession is considered to provide a particular function for (democratic) society, 'informing citizens in a way that enables them to act as citizens' (Costera Meijer, 2001: 13). Seen from such a function-specific perspective, journalism gets identified distinct from other media professions (such as public relations) 'as a societal system providing society with fact-based, relevant and current information' (Görke and Scholl, 2007: 651). Beyond systems theory – with its reluctance to be normative about what journalism could or should be – democratic theories of the profession attribute it a seminal status, as Michael Schudson (2003), for example, defines 'journalism [a]s the business or practice of producing and disseminating information about contemporary affairs of general public interest and importance' (p. 11). Schudson (2008) sees journalism in terms of what it 'can do for democracy' (p. 11), where journalism informs, investigates, analyzes, mobilizes, provides multiple perspectives and a public forum, and publicizes representative democracy.

From this point of departure, the literature diverges, one strand embracing universalist notions of journalism, showing how it gives meaning to itself in its culture – where culture is seen as the way in which a particular group (i.e. journalists working at a specific project or within a particular context, such as a newsroom, a medium, a country or

region) works and how group members make sense of this. Thomas Hanitzsch (2007) defines this ‘universal’ culture of journalism as constituted by its institutional role in society, its epistemology, and its ethical ideology. Surveys of (and interviews with) journalists, almost always sampled from within legacy news organizations, fuel such claims by asking journalists a set of standardized questions about role perceptions and professional values. They suggest consensus and add coherence to a ‘global’ journalism that is as aspirational as it is universal among working journalists (Löffelholz and Weaver, 2008; Weaver and Willnat, 2012).

While popular, there is also much critical debate both among newswriters and journalism students and scholars about an assumed homogeneity of the profession. The discussion on the elements of journalism (Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2014) tends to assume a more or less stable core of news values and professional standards. This is a problematic assumption in the case of journalism, as the reference to a consensual core (of ‘elements’) excludes marginalized and minority voices, practices, and forms of journalism. Generally lacking formal boundaries and therefore relying on communication about itself to define and validate its privileged position in society, journalism recently has been reconceptualized in terms of its continuous *boundary work*, consisting of ‘efforts to establish and enlarge the limits of one domain’s institutional authority relative to outsiders, thus creating social boundaries that yield greater cultural and material resources for insiders’ (Lewis, 2012: 841). Research among journalists working for organizations, companies, or units both within mainstream news media and those on the sidelines shows how they engage repeatedly in boundary work, intensely debating what journalism is and who can be considered to be a (‘real’) journalist – and that such discussions have always been intrinsic to the profession and its associated praxis (Carlson and Lewis, 2015).

Even journalism’s assumed significance for the functioning of democracies has come under serious scrutiny. Beate Josephi (2013) argues that such a corollary is ‘too limiting and distorting a lens through which journalism can be viewed in the 21st century’ (p. 445). The consolidation of journalism studies in the literature mainly serves the modern project of bringing an inherently unruly object under control (Steensen and Ahva, 2015: 3). It is crucial to recognize that the supposed core of journalism as well as the assumed consistency of the inner workings of news organizations is anything but consensual, nor is it necessarily the norm. At the same time, it would be a mistake to assume that the types of journalism emerging outside and alongside legacy news organizations are necessarily different or oppositional to the core values, ideals, and practices of the profession. We propose to widen journalistic conceptualizations beyond the false core–periphery dichotomy, understanding that the core is no more homogeneous than the so-called periphery, while neither necessarily represents the other’s antithesis.

We have to revisit the question of what journalism is for conceptual considerations – the normative construction of journalism through ideology and culture as reinforced in both scholarly work and professional publications – and practical propriety – given the increasingly fragmented, networked, and atypical nature of the labor market for newswork. When answering this question, theory needs to move beyond the limitations framing this discussion: An overreliance on journalism as an inherently stable institution, distinct from other social systems, and beyond its validation as uniquely necessary for democracy. These notions, however important, have over-extended their shelf life

(Zelizer, 2013). We argue for theorizing journalism from the ground up – focusing on where, how, by whom, and why ‘the lost labour of reporting’ (Compton and Benedetti, 2010: 487) is done.

## **Toward a dynamic definition of journalism**

Until recently, the participation of journalists in the discursive construction of journalism was governed by being employed in (or as a student, intern, or scholar: Observing) a newsroom. The newsroom was the dominant form of employment and organization of work in journalism throughout the 20th century. This arrangement served to stabilize the industry, going hand in hand with the shaping of consensual practices in journalism studies and education. The newsroom was the site to be a journalist, to be recognized as such, and scholars validated this process by pursuing empirical approaches dedicated to newsrooms and the newswork therein. Throughout the history of journalism studies, high-profile and much-cited newsroom studies have appeared, from David Manning-White’s (1950) work on the gatekeeping selections at a metropolitan newspaper via seminal work by Jeremy Tunstall (1971) and Gaye Tuchman (1978) to more recent newsroom studies by David Ryfe (2012) and Nikki Usher (2014), to name but a few.

Even though these studies have been important in shedding light onto newsrooms, they focus on ‘problematic sites of fieldwork as well’, as Anderson (2011: 152) notes. Anderson points out that the traditional newsrooms ‘cannot serve as our only model for fieldwork’ as ‘the very definition of journalism is being contested on a daily basis’ (Anderson, 2011). This is not simply an operational problem in the current climate of newswork destabilization. Our critique is more fundamental: Throughout its history, scholars of journalism and the news have supported the dominance of certain interpretations of (the role of) journalism by focusing on specific institutional arrangements within particular privileged settings. As Karin Wahl-Jorgensen (2009) puts it, the *newsroom-centricity* in journalism studies has meant that

scholars have tended to focus on journalists’ culture as it emerges within the limited areas of newsrooms and other centralized sites for news production, usually paying scant attention to places, spaces, practices and people at the margins of this spatially delimited news production universe. (p. 23)

Such newsroom-centricity has implications beyond the mere privileging of some actors and exclusion of others: It has also led to an emphasis on ‘routinized and controlled forms and aspects of newswork’ (Karin Wahl-Jorgensen, 2009: 25). The scholarly consensus on professional routines that make up newswork in newsrooms has been consolidated in journalism education where such routines become fixed elements in the coursework for print, broadcast, and online sequences. Cottle (2007) notes how such a focus on ‘organizational functionalism’ (p. 10) privileges routines and patterned ways of doing newswork over differentiation and divergence. What is more, even within newsroom-centered research, scholars have privileged print over other media, further limiting the range of understanding and definition of journalism. Moreover, the scholarly focus on elite, prestige, and glamorous institutions located in large cities of the capitalist

Western world serves to solidify such places as the only ones deemed worthy of a voice to articulate what is journalism and who counts as a journalist (Nerone, 2013).

As much of newsgathering, editing, and packaging take place elsewhere, outside of the newsroom, and with organizations virtualizing their workflow delegating work to stringers and correspondents on the road, Wahl-Jorgensen (2009) notes how the newsroom is disappearing. Anderson (2011) advocates ‘blowing up the newsroom’ when conducting contemporary newswork studies, proposing an approach that would consider news production as a network that transcends organizational boundaries. And yet, Anderson (2011) concludes, ‘The newsroom is not extinct. In many ways, it is more important than ever, for it remains, even now, a central locus in which a variety of fragmented actor-networks find themselves tied together to create an occupation’ (p. 160).

It is a challenge to consider journalism as a networked practice (Russell, 2015) involving a distributed variety of actors and actants (including co-creating audiences as well as robots producing news), including an emerging global startup scene of newswork (Küng, 2015) while recognizing the permanence of meaning-giving structures, such as the newsroom. The more or less formal (and professional) arrangement of journalism requires an awareness of the *inhabited* nature (Hallett and Ventresca, 2006) of the spaces where newswork takes place. The newsroom as an inhabited institution, on one hand, provides the raw materials and guidelines for the way people work, and on the other hand, the various people moving in and out of the newsroom through their interactions produce the institution, putting it into motion. The focus in this conceptualization of newswork is on ‘institutional complexity’ (Delbridge and Edwards, 2013: 927) and heterogeneous understandings of occupational membership (Bechky, 2011: 1157). The point is not to say that contemporary news institutions are inhabited, and those in the past were not. As Matt Carlson suggests, journalism has always already been ‘a varied cultural practice embedded within a complicated social landscape. Journalism is not a solid, stable thing to point to, but a constantly shifting denotation applied differently depending on context’ (Carlson, 2015: 2).

The roles of institutions in newswork are dynamic and changing, opening our eyes to movement rather than stability, to what journalism *becomes* rather than what journalism *is* (Deuze and Witschge, 2016).

## Understanding news as work

If we assume for a moment that in some ways the newsroom is still important and key to understanding what contemporary journalism is, what would we in fact see inside one located in a legacy media organization? For one, we would observe a lot of empty chairs. The number of layoffs in journalism – especially in print – has been nothing but astounding over the last decade. Reports of journalism unions and associations, such as the Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance in Australia, the Society of Professional Journalists in the United States, the National Association of Journalists in The Netherlands, and the National Union of Journalists in the United Kingdom in recent years, suggest their members see their colleagues being fired and not replaced, as journalists working in newsrooms consistently report having to do more with fewer colleagues and less resources. Long-term planning and ‘moving up the ladder’ have been replaced by job-hopping and

a portfolio work life as news professionals increasingly have contracts, not careers in journalism. As a consequence, stress and burnout are on the rise among newswriters, with many journalists considering to leave the profession altogether (O'Donnell et al., 2015; Reinardy, 2011). Precarity and a 'culture of job insecurity' (Ekdale et al., 2015) have come to define the lived experience for many inside the contemporary newsroom.

Of the people who are left in the newsroom proper, some still enjoy permanent employment (including benefits and protections). These, generally senior, staffers work side by side with a host of colleagues in part-time, contract, freelance, temporary, casual, and at times underpaid or unpaid roles: Practitioners who come in irregularly to file stories, produce segments, push stories online, or provide other editorial services (Cohen, 2015: 515). Not only are these contractual working arrangements of newsroom colleagues under-represented in discussions of the profession (about itself) and, subsequently, in surveys and ethnographies of news organizations, but also the myriad of additional functions in the newsroom ranging from technical support staff, copy editors, ombudsmen and reader representatives, designers, producers, and programmers are often left out of the conversation. In recent years, however, such functions have multiplied in the newsroom with the emergence of new roles and positions, and they are increasingly important in shaping the practice, output, and distribution of journalism (Bakker, 2014).

Permanent jobs are scarce, and generally unpaid internships and other forms of free or underpaid labor now determine access – as in other cultural industries (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011). All this is accompanied by rising cost of entry into journalism: A trade school diploma is a bare minimum – for jobs in the (national) quality news media, in practice a high-level university education is required. Student grants have been cut, their duration shortened, or they have been converted into loans. The majority of newcomers in the profession start as a self-employed journalist. Tariffs for freelancer journalists have declined over the past decade. To use The Netherlands as a particular example, not only has freelance remuneration declined (up to 50% for news photographers), but also almost half of Dutch freelance journalists today depend on the income of their partner, and 60 percent have monthly earnings well below the minimum wage (Vinken and IJdens, 2013). Given the stable market and state-subsidized media system of The Netherlands, we would venture that this situation is the same, if not more precarious for professionals in other developed nations.

We need to consider how changes in the way in which newswork is organized do not only affect news as an institution but also impact individual careers. Peterson and Anand (2004) suggested that careers in this fragmenting and flexibilizing industry tend to follow two different paths. The first is a top-down career, largely established through life-long participation in vertically structured institutions, where seniority, experience, and a transparent system of salaries guide the professional toward higher positions in the office hierarchy, resulting in more or less permanent positions within the newsroom. In more competitive environments where the organization of work is tailored toward flexible production, 'careers tend to be chaotic and foster cultural innovation, and career-building market-sensing entrepreneurs enact careers from the "bottom up" by starting from the margins of existing professions and conventions' (p. 317). Today, a third trajectory can be added: The 'patchwork-career' (Michel, 2000) of the atypically employed individual

finding his or her permanence in impermanence, forever flexibilized on the outside *as well as* on the inside of news institutions.

Newsrooms are still creating positions, yet often these are temporary structures designed as more or less informal internships, often with little or no pay. Moreover, the new jobs that are available in journalism tend to be in the digital area and in numbers do not make up for layoffs elsewhere in organizations (Deuze and Fortunati, 2010). With the accelerating dynamic of reorganizations and reshuffling, buyouts and layoffs, new owners and managers, new work arrangements and budget cuts, journalism has become more precarious and less accessible to everyone. In fact, if we put it provocatively, it increasingly seems to be the playing field of only those who can afford to work for years or even for the majority of their careers below or around the minimum wage in the largest and therefore most expensive cities, as that is where the main news outfits (as well as most hyperlocal companies and news startups) are generally located.

Although exclusivity of industry access is not new, it tends to be overlooked. This critique of journalism studies' tendency to overlook the dimensions of labor and working conditions as these influence the news is not particular to journalism studies but can be made about most media studies. In fact, only in recent years has labor enjoyed a surge in scholarly attention across media, cultural, and creative industries (Banks et al., 2013; Deuze, 2007b; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011). Incorporating work into media studies allows us to address the diversity in roles, functions, and people's backgrounds that exists in media work generally and newswork in particular (Siegelbaum and Thomas, 2016), providing insight into how professional journalism has diversified into many different forms of reporting and newsgathering, production, and distribution.

### **Considering the organization of post-industrial journalism**

According to Anderson et al. (2012), journalism is evolving toward a 'post-industrial' model of news. They argue that in order for journalism to adapt to the new media environment (with its attendant social, economic, and cultural implications), the profession needs new tactics, a new self-conception, and new organizational structures. What their report alludes to is a trend benchmarked by developments across the creative industries more generally: A gradual shift from centralized and hierarchical modes of industrial production to what Castells (2010) coined as a 'network enterprise' form of production. The relationships of capital and labor in our at once global and local network society, argues Castells, are increasingly individualized. This type of post-industrial mode of production integrates the work process globally through digital telecommunications, transportation, and client–customer networks. Workers find themselves collaborating or coordinating their activities with professionals elsewhere, sometimes located in different parts of the world. Furthermore, newswork increasingly takes place with the formal or informal collaboration of the public, who participate on a co-creative continuum ranging from sharing real-time information all the way to authoring autonomous news stories, shaping an emerging type of *networked* journalism (Beckett, 2010).

Considering the role of journalism in an always online environment, Van Der Haak et al. (2012) see the emergence of a new professional figure: The 'networked journalist', whose work is 'driven by a networked practice dependent on sources, commentaries, and



feedback, some of which are constantly accessible online' (p. 2927). They consider this new role for journalists 'not a threat to the independence and quality of professional journalism, but a liberation from strict corporate control' (Van Der Haak et al., 2012: 2935). The networked character of newswork gets amplified by a particular feature of the corporate character of the global news industry: The often translocalized nature of the media production process, as media industries cross-finance, offshore, subcontract, and outsource various elements in the production process to save costs and redistribute risks. In journalism, outsourcing is called 'remote control journalism' as news organizations move specializations or entire divisions to another part of the world (Compton and Benedetti, 2010: 495; Mosco, 2009: 350–351), while 'journalism-by-remote-control' refers to the increased reliance of legacy news organizations on local contacts, handlers, stringers, and correspondents in (conflict) areas around the world (rather than sending contracted employees).<sup>2</sup>

Like media work elsewhere, post-industrial newswork still tends to take place not only in the offices and on the work floors of specific institutions – including newsrooms – but also at home, the atelier-style offices of editorial collectives and journalism start-ups, and in free Wi-Fi café environments as the landscape of urban media production (Hartmann, 2009). As much of this work is contingent, freelance, and temporary, people constantly move in and out of such environments, continuously reconstituting the production process. Furthermore, under conditions of a changing media culture that is more interactive and co-creative (Jenkins, 2006), media professionals as well as their audiences are increasingly (expected to be) working together, to converse and co-create. This process accelerates the flow of people, processes, and ideas through the networked enterprise that journalism becomes (Heinrich, 2011).

Considering the individualized precarious and networked context of newswork, it becomes imperative to critically interrogate the notion of 'organization' as the operational framework for analyzing what it is like to do journalism and be a journalist. The emphasis in studies of contemporary organizations has been shifting from explaining the behavior of the organization as a macro-structural entity to embracing organizations as open systems of interdependent activities, linking shifting coalitions of participants in intra- and interorganizational networks (Baker and Faulkner, 2005). In this light, Gernot Grabher (2002) suggests we shift our focus from the media firm as a generally unproblematic coherent and unitary economic actor to organizational practices that are built around projects, involving a *project ecology* of shifting alliances (or teams) of people from inside and outside the company.

Looking at temporary projects and collaborations enables us to focus on organizations as loosely integrated units of individuals working together – possibly including participants from different disciplines, with different working arrangements, and with different professional identities, along with collaborating publics. This allows for the equally necessary acknowledgment that still much of the work in the media gets done within the context of observable organizational structures and arrangements. Developments in online production and digital communication, production, and distribution technologies have facilitated the proliferation of many smaller companies and networks able to provide specialized and niche services to the generally more rigid and bureaucratically structured regional, national, and multinational media businesses (Deuze, 2007b:

87–88). In order to make the transition toward a more flexible type of production, media companies in recent years have tended to reorganize themselves into multiple smaller units or have shifted toward a more decentralized, team-based managerial and working style – attempting to flatten existing hierarchies in the company or to bypass journalism’s obduracy – a general resistance to change produced by ‘routines, practices, and values, developed over time’ (Borger et al., 2013: 50).

A specific example of a new managerial style in the organization of newswork is the introduction of agile development sequences in renowned news companies, such as the *Washington Post*, *NPR*, *Politiken*, and the *BBC* (Marshall, 2012). ‘Agile’ refers to a set of management principles commonly used in software development, and in the context of news production stipulates fast-paced projects with short design cycles, working in temporary teams based on the integration of people from different parts of the company – reporters, assignment editors, designers, developers, market research, and management. We have little empirical knowledge of these types of work in the field of journalism studies, but findings from organization studies (within creative industries generally) suggest that within many of these conglomerates, the sharing of knowledge or cross-fertilization of ideas and projects is in fact quite minimal and tends not so much to depend on structural intra-firm relationships (in business jargon, ‘synergies’), but rather on personal, informal, and affective personal networks (Grabher and Ibert, 2006). Such networks stretch both across and outside of institutional boundaries, consisting of professionals in different fields of work and working under different contractual (if contracted at all) arrangements.

A second key example of the diversified managerial strategy deployed inside news organizations correlates with the signaled emergence of a global startup culture in journalism, as venerable news companies create separate divisions or units to act and function as startups (Küng, 2015). These project units tend to have separate budgets, often consist of members from across (and outside of) the company, and are generally encouraged to adopt a unique, more or less independent work style. Their function is as much to inspire the news company as a whole to adopt more flexible ways of working as it is to develop new sources of revenue and audience attention.

## Enter entrepreneurialism

This picture of increasingly networked and precarious working conditions for journalists and media workers corresponds with trends in the labor market as a whole, showing a continuous growth of independent businesses and freelance entrepreneurship.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, news organizations have seen major budget cuts, reorganizations, and considerable downsizing. Responding to technological disruption (Witschge, 2012b) and changing audience behaviors (Witschge, 2012a), production practices change. Managers and employers have come to stress the importance of ‘enterprise’ as an individual rather than organizational or firm-based attribute (Du Gay, 1996), in effect forcing entrepreneurialism on employees and freelancers alike (Oakley, 2014). The notion of the enterprising or entrepreneurial individual extends beyond the creative industries, but the emergence of the enterprising professional in journalism is a relatively recent phenomenon, coinciding with a gradual breakdown of the wall between the commercial and

editorial sides of the news organization, following ‘a process of further commodification of a commercialized media workplace where market pressures are increasingly dominating content decisions’ (Von Rimscha, 2015).

Faced with difficult and disruptive challenges on many fronts, the news business demands its workers to increasingly shoulder the responsibility of the company (or companies, in the case of those with patchwork careers, carrying a portfolio of multiple clients; see Platman, 2004). Trends such as the integration of the business and editorial sides of the news organization; the ongoing convergence of print, broadcasting, and online news divisions into digital-first and mobile-first journalism enterprises; and the introduction of projectized work styles (such as agile development) show that such hybridized working practices are not particular to freelance journalists (Compton and Benedetti, 2010).

Shifting the notion of enterprise – with its connotations of efficiency, productivity, empowerment, and autonomy – from the company to the individual, it is suggested to be part of the professional identity of each and every worker, contingently employed or not. This shift reconstitutes ‘workers as more adaptable, flexible, and willing to move between activities and assignments and to take responsibility for their own actions and their successes and failures’ (Storey et al., 2005: 1036). In this enterprising economy, entrepreneurial journalists increasingly start their own companies – somewhat similar to their colleagues elsewhere in the creative sector starting boutique advertising agencies or independent record labels, forming editorial or reportorial collectives as well as business startups. The emergence of a startup culture is indeed global: Since the early years of the 21st century, new independent (and generally small-scale and online-only) journalism companies have formed around the world (Bruno and Kleis Nielsen, 2012; Coates Nee, 2014; Küng, 2015; Simons, 2013).<sup>4</sup>

This shift in focus to entrepreneurialism has not only taken place within the industry. Researchers and educators have matched this attention with scholarly work and curricular innovation, which further urges journalists to take on entrepreneurialism as a core element in their identity (for a critical take, see Anderson, 2014). Courses and degrees in entrepreneurial journalism have been developed in countries as varied as the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, France, Colombia, Mexico, and The Netherlands (Mensing and Ryfe, 2013; Van Der Kamp et al., 2014; Vázquez Schaich and Klein, 2013). Emphasizing individual traits, skills, attitude, and mindset, this curriculum further envisages the future of journalism in the form of journalists who (alone or in collaboration) are able to monetize content in innovative ways, connect to publics in interactive new formats, grasp opportunities, and respond to (and shape) its environment (Briggs, 2012).

There are a number of issues with this conceptualization of entrepreneurialism. First, even though we can find some optimism among the independently employed, several studies (Ertel et al., 2005; Gregg, 2011; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011) consistently show adverse psychosocial effects, rising levels of stress, and overall poor subjective health among freelance media workers. The real or perceived freedom of working as an ‘independent’ comes at a cost to many. In presenting the entrepreneur as a ‘savior’ (Sørensen, 2008), there is too little attention for those costs.

A second, conceptual issue regarding entrepreneurship in journalism is the fact that it is generally presented as an individual-level attribute, which tends to reinforce a ‘you are

on your own' credo of individualized patchwork career trajectories. Entrepreneurship is thus presented as micro-level agency to make something happen, while the structural, unequal, and often arbitrary conditions underlying production processes do not get addressed (Görling and Rehn, 2008). As Landström and Johannisson (2001) explicate, 'entrepreneurship [is] a phenomenon that lies beyond individual attributes and abilities. Entrepreneurship encompasses ... the organising of resources and collaborators in new patterns according to perceived opportunities' (p. 228). It is imperative to understand entrepreneurial journalism in terms of both formal and informal networks, teams, and associations that tend to transcend the boundaries of news organizations large and small.

## Beyond journalism

In this precarious setting – where newsrooms become networks of loosely affiliated competitor-colleagues, news organizations retool toward an enterprising mode of production, access to the profession is increasingly exclusive, and individual journalists are held responsible for market success (and failure)– to be a professional, working journalist means having to go and perform *beyond* journalism.<sup>5</sup> Working in this environment demands journalists today to be committed well beyond what any profession could ask for – without most of the securities, comforts, and benefits enjoyed by being a member of a profession. Journalists are expected to reskill, deskill, and upskill their practices and working routines, generally without any direct say in the way the organizations they engage with operate. In doing so, they vulnerably move inside and outside of newsrooms and news organizations large and small, trying to both make a difference and to make ends meet in an exceedingly competitive market. In this context, understanding journalism means to appreciate journalists' personal drive beyond the institutional protections and privileges of the profession. In today's post-industrial journalism, the affective and at times passionate engagement with newswork is expected in a profoundly precarious context and as such asks for rearticulation. However, there is a remarkable lack of attention for the affective and social dimensions of newswork in journalism studies and education (Beckett and Deuze, 2016).

Under conditions of technology and the market, the practice of journalism is (and always has been) often something quite different than its biased self-presentation and the way dominant conceptualizations of the field get articulated in journalism education and research. Conceptually as well as practically, journalism – seen as the process and product of the work of journalists – requires an ontology of *becoming* rather than of *being* (Chia, 1995). Following Robert Chia (1995), we propose a perspective on journalism as a profession, a set of institutional practices, a system of education, as well as a theoretical concept which privileges 'reality as a processual, heterogeneous and emergent configuration of relations' (p. 594).

As a growing number of scholars in various fields argue, in order to understand what a media profession such as journalism is becoming and what working as a journalist is like, we need to broaden the focus of journalism studies. Widening our view is not just a mere expansion of our sample: We need to reconsider our understanding of the role of both organizations (beyond the stable news institutions) and individuals (beyond the entrepreneur as savior of journalism), as well as the notion of the audience (beyond the

more or less avid consumer of news). Journalism takes place in increasingly networked settings, in formal as well as informal contexts, involving a wide range of actors and actants in various instances of both paid and free labor (Fast et al., 2016), covering news in real-time across multiplying platforms, often in competition or collaboration with publics (Witschge, 2012b). Such an ‘ambient’ (Hermida, 2010) and ‘liquid’ (Deuze, 2008) conception of journalism requires a toolkit that looks at the field as a moving object and as a dynamic set of practices and expectations – a profession in a permanent process of becoming.

‘Beyond journalism’ is an approach to journalism that considers it as a dynamic object of study. It points at the permanent instability inside the news industry as well as the structural and structured nature of people committing acts of journalism outside of it. Beyond journalism does not only exclude a ‘hard’ definition of the profession as a relatively contained entity with distinct boundaries but also a ‘soft’ definition of a range of practices by a multitude of actors that in various ways contribute to its social relevance. Beyond journalism is, as we have hoped to have shown in this article, not a new conceptualization of the field – it is also not simply advocating scholars and students alike to denounce existing definitions of what we understand newswork to be. Rather, it has argued that going beyond boundaries is what is productive in this time of flux. In recognizing this theoretical point, we would in fact ground our work more solidly in the lived experience of journalists and doing journalism.

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## Notes

1. See, for example, Worlds of Journalism (<http://www.worldsofjournalism.org>), Journalistic Performance Around The World (<http://www.journalisticperformance.org>).
2. Source: [http://www.slate.com/articles/news\\_and\\_politics/press\\_box/2004/10/journalism\\_by\\_remote\\_control.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/press_box/2004/10/journalism_by_remote_control.html)
3. See, for example, the annual Global Entrepreneurship Monitor reports from 2006 onward: <http://www.gemconsortium.org/report>
4. Examples can be found at the online database of journalism startups of AngelList (<https://angel.co/journalism>) and Multiple Journalism (<http://multiplejournalism.org>).
5. We want to acknowledge Jo Bardoel’s coining of the term ‘beyond journalism’ in 1996, where he proposed an additional instrumental function of journalism (directing the social flow of debate) above and beyond its traditional orientating function (collecting and providing information of general interest, see also Deuze, 2005).

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