

Chapter 1

Introduction

Negotiating Core Values Transnationally

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Every day worldwide, journalists gather and publish information. They make their news stories according to ideals and values as well as routines and methods of their profession. Also, students are educated and trained to become journalists in accordance with journalism's epistemology. Journalists and journalism students around the world interpret journalistic core values and implement them in journalistic work. They do so in the historical, social and geographical contexts of their society. Still, they have the same occupation, publishing news so that the public may 'seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers' (United Nations 1948, article 19).

Telling the truth and giving information to the public are core values in journalism. Immediacy is another. Traditionally, news media and press freedom enhance people's ability to make up their minds about what is going on and then to form their own opinions about essential issues. According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, people have the right to freedom of expression and freedom of opinion (ibid). Freedom of speech and press freedom are corner stones of the foundation of journalism. Even so, the meaning of press freedom and informing the public is 'far more elastic than textbook knowledge usually implies and therefore has to be renegotiated in the context in which they are implemented' (Votmer 2012:233).

In a globalized world, new technologies, media commercialization, convergence and conglomeration constantly make marks on journalism. Social media and media companies such as Google, Facebook and YouTube make it easier for anyone to be a content provider and publisher. Furthermore, they also make the world seem closer.

In times of significant changes, one answer is to go to the core of the profession. It may be a strategic move in order to (re)legitimize journalism, or it may as well be as simple as seeing core values in a different light. Values can – and should – be renegotiated, as they do not have 'a fixed meaning that could claim validity outside time and space' (ibid).

Today, social media challenge the way in which journalists gather and verify information, and the answer from Brandtzaeg et al. (2015) is that verification has become even *more* important.

In regards to interpreting journalistic values through space, the notion of autonomy stands out as an enduring core value (see for instance Splichal & Sparks 1994; Weaver 1998; Deuze 2005). However, is it possible to make and publish autonomous journalism throughout the world? Examining levels of democratic performance, perceived security, violence and inequality in 62 countries, Hughes et al. found that journalists in insecure democracies feel influences about their work most intensely (2017:652). It seems natural to assume that journalists living in unsettled societies are more careful to monitor politicians and other people with power.

Nevertheless, Muchtar et al. state that three out of four journalists in countries such as Egypt, Sudan, Sierra Leone and Turkey say it is very or extremely important to scrutinize political leaders (2017:568), thus emphasizing the value of being a watchdog. Indeed, they stress that journalists' roles in the political domain are particularly vulnerable to cross-cultural variation (ibid). That may be because 'the press always takes on the form and coloration of the social and political structures within which it operates. Especially, it reflects the system of social control whereby the relation of individuals and institutions are adjusted' (Siebert et al. [1956] 1969:1f).

In 1956, Fred S. Siebert, Theodore Peterson and Wilburn Schramm launched four theories of the media. They wrote about the Authoritarian system, the Libertarian theory, the Social responsibility system and the Soviet Communist theory of the press (Siebert et al. [1956] 1969).

Nearly half a century later, Daniel Hallin and Paolo Mancini examined North America and Western Europe, stating that these regions 'tend to dominate models globally' (2004:6). The Liberal or the Anglo-American Model of neutrality and objectivity, as well as the dominance of market mechanisms, is based on American and partly British journalism.

In northern Europe, the Democratic Corporatist Model prevails, and it also makes its mark on France. France, however, also displays characteristics of the Polarized Pluralist Model, which was Hallin and Mancini's third model. This type of journalism, which integrates media and party politics and incorporates a strong role for the state, is mainly found in Mediterranean Europe. As for the Democratic Corporatist Model, it is characterized by an active but legally limited state.

In 2012, Katrin Voltmer looked into how far media systems can travel. To use Hallin and Mancini's three media system models on the rest of the world, she claims, would be overstretching them and would disguise 'the broad variations of constellations that can be found empirically outside the Western world' (Voltmer 2012:244). Voltmer and other contributors to *Comparing Media Systems Beyond the Western World*, edited by Hallin and Mancini, argued that globalization is an important force on media systems and 'produces a variety of forms of hybridization, rather than homogenization' (Hallin & Mancini 2012:286). Thus, media norms from the Liberal

Model are reinterpreted in the local context, where their meanings are transformed (ibid:285).

The aim of this book is to compare journalism's core values transnationally. Our intention is not to suggest new models of media systems. Nevertheless, the theories of media systems mentioned are interesting to the countries we examine. Due to the heritage from colonial times, the British media system influences Bangladesh, whereas the French media system influences Tunisia. As for Norway, its media system is very similar to the one described as the Democratic Corporatist Model.

This book presents results and discussions on journalistic core values in Bangladesh, Norway and Tunisia. In Part II, the contributors problematize the perception and interpretation of core values, such as objectivity, press freedom and the role of being a watchdog. In Part III, empirical studies show how core values are renegotiated under different conditions in divergent countries. When we examine whether journalistic core values are transnational or not, we follow in a long line of researchers who have asked questions about differences and similarities in the journalism field, its culture and its participants.

Decades before Hallin and Mancini's models of different media systems, the Liberal or Anglo-American model of journalism spread across the world through the early establishment of American journalism education (de Burgh 2005:4) as well as by the fact that English grew to be the common language for most of the academic world. Also, the Marshall Plan helped to spread the Anglo-American model, as did the American aid programme to developing countries from the 1960s onwards (Curran & Park 2000:5).

Most of the comparative studies of journalism, whether they have a focus on values, cultures, journalists or media models, relate to this model. In 1998, Weaver concluded, after a study involving 21 countries and territories, that there were many differences among journalists, and 'cultural norms and political values do appear to have some influence on journalists' views of their roles and ethics' (Weaver 1998:478). By 2012, Weaver and Willnat (2012:545) found that 'a culture of global journalism has not yet emerged' and 'journalistic norms and values vary widely across nationals' (549). Splichal and Sparks' results, gleaned from studying journalism students in 22 countries, showed striking similarities and indicated that differences were not related to countries (1994:179ff).

However, the concept of being critical was less important for students in developing countries (ibid:149ff), and objectivity and accuracy were also negatively correlated in some countries while positively in others (ibid:149). Years later, Hanitzsch et al. found that 'traditional western ideals of detachment and being a watchdog of the government flourish among the standards accepted by journalists around the world' (2011:280). That, however, does not mean these values are fully enacted in practice, Muchtar et al. claim (2017:564). Nor does it mean, as this anthology will show, that they are looked upon in the same way in different parts of the world – or, for that matter, under the influence of the same religious faith. For instance, Bangladesh is one of three out of

12 Muslim countries where journalists seem to be motivated to monitor business and politics, which are qualities of the watchdog role (ibid:569f).

Blumler states that, although Western factors are abound in the Worlds of Journalism Study, the examination of contextual differences means that ‘an overly “Western-centered focus”’ was avoided (Blumler 2017:683). For, even though the Anglo-American model of journalism ‘seems to stand out as the only universal model’ (Mancini 2005:78), academic as well as global winds blew in another direction, making it obvious that the model ‘cannot be grafted on to any other systems’ (Schudson 2005:104).

Thus, Curran and Park (2000) aimed to broaden the understanding of media theory and the experiences ‘outside the Anglo-American orbit’ (2000:11). In addition, they write that global theory underplays the importance of nations, which they believe are influential in shaping media systems (ibid:12ff).

Also De Burgh emphasizes that how journalists act depends on culture. Furthermore, globalization ‘has meant a sharing of techniques, and formats and professional attitudes but also, paradoxically, globalisation has brought about an intensified awareness of the power of culture such that we cannot afford to ignore it’ (2005:17).

For example, examining journalistic culture in Muslim-majority countries, Muchtar et al. saw that journalists support national development and advocate for social change, ‘particularly [...] journalists in Bangladesh and Indonesia, Oman and Qatar, as well as Sierra Leone and Sudan’ (2017:564). However, as a study from Ramaprasad and Rahman (2006) shows, it is not necessarily contradictory to believe in critical reporting and, at the same time, to endorse national-building values.

Normative and empirical

As Hallin and Mancini state, comparative studies are valuable but risky (2004:5). One of the many reasons for this is that using surveys and interviews to examine journalism’s values and norms generates results on how journalists *think*, not on what they *do*. So, there could be a gap between expressed values and work in practice and a need to follow up with research on journalistic content. Furthermore, journalism, as well as studies of it, tends to be normative.

For journalism, normativity is its legitimization (McQuail in Josephi 2005:576). Maybe due to the hegemony of the Anglo-American model, it is often argued that detached, critical journalism may lead to better democratic practices. Others have stated that a socially responsible press may lead to social harmony or that advocacy journalism can bring about change.

Schudson (2003:198), for example, states ‘the press by itself is not democracy and does not create democracy’ – unless the state tolerates criticism of its power and permits some degree of self-government for the press (ibid:197). Merrill points to the ‘cacophony of muttering worldwide about press freedom’ (2009:10), ironically refer-

ring to claims of this freedom, even when the obstacles are numerous. Press freedom is a normative value journalists want to claim exists, but the concept has multiple meanings, depending on where it is uttered (ibid).

We admit that this anthology has its fair share of normativity. Actually, for the six journalism teachers in *Shared Horizons*, normative and critical theory is an integral part of the teaching practices. As teachers, we also work alongside empirical approaches, covering journalistic methodology, skills and training. The students want to learn the best ways to work as journalists, and with our main aim being to teach them to be good reporters, normative values and norms are necessarily included. Furthermore, in journalism education, it is important that students reflect on what journalism is and even what it *should* be (Hallin & Mancini 2004:13).

Negotiating journalism: An outline of the book

Acknowledging that cultural, political and social structures shape the development of the media (Hallin & Mancini 2004:297), Chapter 2 describes the legacies, histories and media landscapes of Bangladesh, Norway and Tunisia. As we believe structures, laws and societal characteristics within national boundaries are important also in a globalized world, this chapter aims to give some necessary background about the three countries. Together, Chapters 1 and 2 form Part I: the study's points of departure.

Then follows Part II, with four chapters that offer comparative perspectives on journalism's core values. The methodology of these chapters is described primarily in the two appendices that close the book.

Chapter 3 examines the notion of objectivity, presenting theoretical approaches to the concept as well as results for how journalism students and journalists in the three countries understand it. The debate on objectivity is an ongoing discussion. In fact, discussions about whether or not it is possible to be objective came up in every meeting in the *Shared Horizons*' network. In this chapter, Elsebeth Frey shows that the way we understand objectivity in journalism is related to how we understand facts and notions about what is true.

Chapter 4 looks into how future and current journalists think journalists relate to political power. This opens up for a discussion on neutrality versus a critical position, whereupon the contrasting positions of the respondents in the different countries become apparent. The Norwegian students find a neutral position untenable, while for students in Tunisia and Bangladesh, neutrality means not being biased towards anyone, powerful or powerless. Also, Hamida El Bour examines perceptions of the watchdog role in this chapter.

In Chapter 5, Solveig Steien considers the relationship between press freedom and corruption. A minority of the students' opinion is that there is *no* press freedom in their country, although Tunisian and Bangladeshi students cite many limitations. The students were asked if they as journalists would be in danger when working on

a story about corruption, or if their sources could be in danger, and Steien finds that the majority of students from the two developing countries reflect on consequences of this kind. Surprisingly, many of the Norwegian students express fear for their sources' and their own safety, which does not seem to correspond with the relatively calm situation in Norwegian society.

Chapter 6 offers insight into thoughts and beliefs of Colombian journalists, and the notions of Colombian journalists are also compared to those of their peers in Bangladesh, Norway and Tunisia. Journalistic core values give meaning to the work of the journalists, according to Margrethe Håland Solheim, but some core values are appreciated more in Colombia and Norway than in Bangladesh and Tunisia – and vice versa.

With Part III, the anthology changes path and scrutinizes themes and case studies from the three countries. Addressing the state of freedom of expression and press freedom, as seen through a focus on religion, Chapter 7 is first in line. Methodologically, Amina Khatun, Janina Islam Abir, Mofizur Rhaman and Md. Golam Rahman use content analysis and semi-structured interviews to unveil the complex relations between religion, press freedom and freedom of speech during a hyped and critical time in Bangladesh.

The next case concerns the post-revolution challenges in Tunisia, as Souha Yacoub analyses in Chapter 8. Yacoub examines political, economic and legal limitations of press freedom in the only Arab country that has succeeded in building a democracy after the so-called Arab Spring. Still, as this chapter shows, freedom of the press is at stake, despite establishment of a more liberal media landscape and other advances that have been made.

Religion is an issue in Chapters 9 and 10 as well as in Chapter 7. In Chapter 9, Eva Beate Strømsted questions whether religious confrontations and diversities in a multicultural society such as Norway have an impact on the work of cartoonists. The majority of the interviewed cartoonists maintain that their contemporary caricatures are stylistically similar to the ones made before the Muhammad Cartoons Controversy and the terror against Charlie Hebdo. However, the nuanced worldview has forced them to strive for more precision, since the caricature has become more controversial. One of the interview subjects laments that the caricature is 'dying – not just in Norway, but also internationally'.

In Chapter 10, Most. Ummay Habiba, Priyanka Kundu, Md. Golam Rahman and Mofizur Rhaman examine the state of freedom of expression in Bangladesh in view of the five bloggers who were killed between February 2013 and August 2015. A variety of methods are employed to look more closely at the role played by religious fundamentalists in the country's social-political and cultural dynamics, as well as at how the murders were covered in the local media.

Chapter 11 lays bare an attempt to take control of the Tunisian public media. Taoufik Yacoub puts on historical and political science glasses to look at the battle for press freedom in Tunisia. Yacoub describes the tensions leading up to the general

strike by journalists on 17 October 2012. This strike, it is argued, led to the long-awaited implementation of two media laws as well as to the creation of HAICA, an audio-visual regulatory body.

The last five chapters provide examples of the state of journalism during transitional periods, when the role of journalism is vital, although debated. Also, when it comes to the comparative chapters, journalism, as a system of norms and values, is discussed. Jointly, the chapters offer insights into why journalism and its core values are crucial in communicating important, contemporary events as well as representing a means of debating pivotal themes in societies, nationally as well as globally.

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