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Abstract

The article examines how the crisis in journalism was experienced in the Finnish newsrooms in the spring of 2010. Based on interviews conducted in six newsrooms, this article highlights changes in journalistic practices, and the ways in which these changes have affected professional identity and journalistic expertise, in particular, in terms of age. The change does not affect everyone in a similar way. Its implications are experienced differently according to the position and work history of individual journalists. The article points out two particular factors that had a specific impact on shaping the boundaries of the journalistic profession, and notions of journalistic identity, skills and values. These are the concurrent processes of the move towards convergent newsrooms and the implementation of pension packages to downsize the newsrooms. With the implementation of pension packages as a solution to downsize newsrooms, age became the defining factor for professional identity, capacities and skills in the Finnish newsrooms. This particular time of change was also characterized by the implementation of new technology in the newsrooms. Thus, the measures taken in newsrooms emphasized speed, technological skills and youth as characteristics that were needed to compete in the changing and increasingly convergent media markets.

It is argued that journalistic identity is tightly bound to its practice. Changes in practice are reflected in professional identity and the qualities that are valued within the profession. During this time of transition, the older journalists, particularly, struggled to hold on to their professional values and notions of expertise when, in practice, they had difficulties in bringing their expertise into use in the new technology-centered newsroom structure. Research highlights the multiplicity and complexity of change, where taken-for-granted positions are challenged and put into circulation. It provides insight into changes in the professional imagination and shared journalistic values.

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Crisis in journalism, recession, journalistic identity, convergence, early retirement, expertise, age

Introduction

The crisis in journalism has affected media companies around the world (Curran, 2010; Franklin, 2008; Picard, 2006; Reinardy, 2011). The advent of new technology, online publishing and convergence continue to pose challenges around how to create sustainable business models in the new media environment. The crisis has hit the newspapers most severely; however, other media companies are also struggling to find ways to reach new audiences and maintain their positions in the competitive and changing markets. While the crisis in journalism has mainly affected the USA, its impact resonates in other countries such as Finland, where the situation is more stable. During 2009, negotiations focussing on restructuring and lay-offs were conducted in almost every news company in Finland as a response to the deteriorating predictions on the future of the business.

As argued by Usui and Colignon (1996), industry has various ways of reacting in times of global recession. While lay-offs have been the general measure taken by the US industries, in Finland, the measures have focussed on restructuring and reforms. The Finnish case was also characterized by the fact that for the first time, early retirement arrangements became a significant tool with which to fight the recession.

This particular time of change was also characterized by increased convergence. Prior to negotiations on lay-offs and pension packages, media companies in Finland and elsewhere in Europe had already started to apply convergence as a strategy to maintain competitiveness (Avilés and Carvajal, 2008). In the context of journalism, convergence involves co-operation between “formerly distinct media newsrooms and other parts of the modern media company” (Deuze, 2004: 140). Thus, convergence has brought an increase in multi-channel publishing, 24-hour news cycles through online publishing, and an increase in various participatory elements in the news (Avilés and Carvajal, 2008).

There are several studies (Berte and Bens, 2008; Edmonds, 2009; Franklin, 2008, Picard, 2006, 2008) on the crisis in journalism that highlight it from the economic point of view; however, this article examines how these different measures, taken together, shaped the understanding of journalistic professional identity, skills and values in Finland, with specific connections to age. This article then follows research on the journalistic profession and draws on the notion that journalistic identity is tightly bound to its practice (Ryfe, 2009). Changes in practice, restructuring newsrooms and reorganization of the work with a new emphasis on particular kinds of skills and audiences are reflected in professional identity and the qualities that are valued within the profession (Fenton 2010). In addition, the research highlights the management of affect (Mazzarella, 2009), in the ways in which journalists handled the challenging and emotionally difficult transition in the newsrooms.

Professional identity and journalistic values

Journalism research has explored the construction of professional identity with a strong focus on the value system in the development of professionalism and the shared

understanding of what it means to be a good journalist. Previous research has, for example, explored the professional imagination of journalists as a shared understanding of journalistic values and ideals (Kunelius and Ruusunoksa, 2008; Wiik, 2009) or journalism as an occupational ideology (Deuze, 2006). Much of the research has applied Bourdieu's (1993, 2005) field theory to analyze and explain the ways in which journalists acquire and adapt to particular system of values. According to field theory, journalism can be understood as a semi-autonomous field of specialized action that is structured by social relations. The field has its own set of values that define what is worthy of pursuit and what kind of action accumulates capital and legitimate power within the field. Journalistic autonomy in this context refers to the notion of the independence to define ideal journalism from within the field itself and the factors that accumulate capital within the field. Traditionally, autonomy is seen as a form of protection against political and economic interests, so that these would not overtly determine news criteria and journalistic content (Schudson, 2005). Journalism research discusses, for example, the ways in which journalistic action, values and production exist in relation to the structures dominating the whole field (Benson and Neveu, 2005). Autonomy in the journalistic field can be structured between two poles: on the one end there is the absolute independence from economic and political interests, usually connected with public funding, and on the other end the compliance with commercial and political powers, usually connected with private ownership (cf. Hanitzsch, 2011). Consequently autonomy is considered high in a context where journalistic values, accumulated by particular forms of practices such as investigative reporting, dominate commercial forces. Commercial forces define the field through various economic measurements such as advertising revenues, circulation figures and audience ratings. In terms of individual journalists, the ability to stand out and to define the production of symbolic capital is crucial for his/her professional identity. The autonomy from commercial and political interests guarantees distinction within the field, which according to Bourdieu (2005) is crucial for professional existence. However, as argued by Phillips (2010) the growing significance of technological and economical imperatives increasingly influence and challenge journalistic autonomy and therefore also professional identity. In addition, the autonomy varies across and within countries with Finland traditionally belonging to the group of countries with fairly high levels of autonomy according to the experience of the journalists (Dalen, 2012).

Other accounts of professionalism explore journalism if not in terms of a field, then as a collective or cultural knowledge emerging within the profession (Schudson, 2001; Zelizer, 2004) or as an ideology. Deuze (2005), for example, discusses it as an occupational ideology where journalists' professionalization is examined as a process of distinctly ideological development. The emerging occupational ideology serves to create a consensus about the ideal journalist. Ideology in this case is not necessarily discussed in terms of a struggle but more as a ritualistic process where a collection of values and codes are shaped over time. Thus, professional ideology refers to the way journalists understand and validate their work. Journalism research identifies particular sets of values as central to that professional identity. For example, five core values of journalism are listed as public service, objectivity, autonomy, immediacy and ethics (Deuze, 2005; Hoyer and Lauk, 2003; Jyrkiäinen, 2008; Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2001). As research on professionalism has indicated, these values can be contradictory or disproportionate.

However, as argued by Wiik (2009: 354), “professional ideals are important blocks of identity construction, giving occupational members a sense of belonging and pride as well as directing their decisions and behaviour in daily work.” They are the tools through which journalists build their professional identity and the understanding of their work. However, when significant changes enter the field due to social, cultural, political, economic or technological reasons, these ideals are challenged and put into question (Deuze, 2005). Thus, economic downturns, technological developments and new interpretative and productive communities are redefining the values of the profession and marking the identity of journalists in specific ways.

This article draws from the previous research and its understanding of professionalism as a shared value system created within the field of journalism. It connects professional identity to the ways in which particular values are being negotiated in a particular historical context when traditional notions of journalism are challenged.

The changes in newsrooms due to downsizing and convergence are examined as a process with complex and multiple implications. To follow Stuart Hall (1985), the concept of articulation is used here to describe the ways in which notions of skills, values, expertise and experience travel within the changing newsroom: the ways in which existing elements are combined with new modes of production and connotations. Articulation is a way to understand how ideological perceptions come together in particular discourses, and to examine the ways in which these articulations define subjects (Hall, 1985: 94) and their professional identity. Different measures implemented in the newsrooms that shape the notions of journalistic skills, expertise and experience and the ways in which these connect to personal and professional characteristics, are then examined.

The change does not affect everyone in a similar way but its implications are experienced differently according to the position and work history of the individual journalists. Work history, age and position in the newsroom mark the adaptation to new situations but these factors are also used to evaluate the capability of the individual journalist to adapt to change. Various norms connected to age entail stereotypical images and assumptions of what kinds of roles in newsrooms are suited to journalists of different ages (cf. Lawrence, 1988). For example, in research by Chaudhuri and Ghosh (2012), the generation born during or after World War II, “the boomers,” are seen to believe in lifetime employment and company loyalty. They have grown up in an era of economic prosperity, opportunity and progress, with all the advantages associated with it (Leschinsky and Michael, 2004). They also have a longer work history and, thus, changes are evaluated against their long experience in the field. Younger generations, “the millennials,” born in the 1980s and early 1990s, have grown up in a rapidly changing world influenced by technology and are considered to be comfortable and savvy with new media technologies. They experience changes with a relatively short work history and, thus, are more likely to accept changes as part of the prevailing work culture (Chaudhuri and Ghosh, 2012). Although the research by Chaudhuri and Ghosh is set in the context of the USA, similar patterns of generational experience of work-life can be identified in the context of journalistic work-life in Finland (cf. Jyrkiäinen, 2008).

Such norms are not only shared by the management that implement changes in the newsrooms but also by the individual journalists in terms of deep-seated conceptions of their own position and capacities. Measures taken in newsrooms such as technological

convergence tend to throw traditional hierarchies and practices into disarray and challenge normative thinking; however, they may also strengthen certain stereotypical conceptions of age, technology and expertise, as will be demonstrated later in this article. Thus, the articulation between age, technology, expertise and the economic conditions of the recession become relevant for the study of how individual journalists struggle to hold on to their professional values in the changing newsrooms and how this struggle is connected with age.

The research design

The research in question was conducted in 2010 in six newsrooms. It includes 20 in-depth thematic interviews with journalists and an email survey on the effects of the recession in the newsrooms. In the first stage of the study, a preliminary survey was conducted by email to collect information on the general views on the issue in the newsrooms. The idea was that an average of three journalists from each newsroom would be selected from the survey data for further interviews. The preliminary survey was conducted to ensure that a variety of experiences would be represented in the study. However, the entry response of the surveys was in some cases very low and, therefore, four journalists were selected directly without a preliminary survey for the interview. In addition, two of the journalists refused to be interviewed due to their anxiety over the research topic. From each newsroom, one journalist of a certain career stage was chosen: the early stage (temporary contract, or only a few years' experience), mid-career stage (10–15 years) or end-career stage (10 years to pension). One journalist in a leading or managerial position was also chosen from each media group (in four cases, the editor also represented the mid-career stage). Six journalists represented managerial level and 14 represented rank-and-file level. Overall, the study includes journalists working in three newspapers, two national television newsrooms and one online publication. The ages of the journalists ranged from 27–57. Each journalist is identified with an age range of 25–35, 36–50 or 51–65. This was done to avoid recognition, which may be a risk in a small country such as Finland. The individual interviews were conducted mostly face to face in cafés or in the newsrooms. Three of the interviews were carried out over the phone. To follow the guidelines for research ethics, the interviewees were guaranteed anonymity, which appeared to be extremely important. Many of the interviewed journalists felt that they had difficulties in expressing their views openly in the newsroom and were afraid of being labelled as “difficult” or being accused of disclosing delicate information. However, the overall atmosphere of the interviews, which lasted from an hour to an hour-and-a-half, was relaxed and trustful. The analysis of the data focused on the changes in journalistic work (restructuring of the daily work, new tasks), changes in workforce (lay-offs, pensions and contracts), changes in the atmosphere of the newsroom (relationships with colleagues, editors and owners), conceptions of the journalistic profession and its future (professional identity, visions of personal future and the future of news). Interview data has been transcribed and coded with Atlas.ti computer software.

The interview data, which surveys the opinions of reporters and editors, offers both factual information about the changes implemented in the newsrooms and self-reflexive

interpretations of these changes (cf. Ahva, 2010: 144). While the focus of many studies has been mainly on the newspaper business, this article also highlights how the crisis in journalism was experienced throughout the field and shows how similar measurements were applied from newspapers to television newsrooms, illustrating the shared experience of the crisis in the context of Finland. One should also recognize that changes in organizations are generally difficult and that the interview data reflects the time of transition, in particular.

It must be acknowledged that there are certain restrictions to the generalizability of the data due to the small number of interviews. However, the qualitative interview data offers insight to the experience of change on an individual level as experienced by each journalist. Moreover, the interviews depict changes in the newsrooms from different perspectives. As such, it gives an in-depth view of the complexity of the changes in newsrooms and their implications for professional identity and journalistic expertise in this particular context. In addition, micro-level interview data is complemented with macro-level information on the economic and corporate changes in the Finnish media companies connected with employment and restructuring during the period of the research.¹ The analysis points out the similarities across these different contexts to carve out the tendencies in the field.

Recession in Finland

The Finnish media market is characterized by strong companies operating within specific markets and modest, yet intensifying, competition. SanomaWsoy leads the market with the national newspaper, *Helsingin Sanomat* (HS). With its superior position and circulation of 430,000, HS faces only modest competition from regional daily newspapers (*Aamulehti*, *Turun Sanomat*, *Kaleva* etc.). Thus, the media markets in Finland are led by the commercial company SanomaWsoy (newspapers, magazines, book publishing and broadcasting), and include other significant players such as YLE (public service broadcasting), Bonnier's MTV3 (broadcasting) and Alma Media (focusing on regional newspaper publishing and electronic market-places) (cf. Ahva, 2010; Karppinen et al., 2011). Finnish media companies have enjoyed a reasonably secure market position, as they have been protected by specific regional languages, high levels of news consumption, subscription-based markets and efficient home-delivery systems. However, the latest recession predicted turbulence in the financial situation even in the best-established media companies. This was mainly caused by the decrease in advertising and circulation (the income of Finnish newspapers originates equally from the sale of subscriptions and advertisements) (see Table 1 and Table 2).

In real terms, the recession hit the Finnish media at the beginning of 2009, when media companies around the country went through negotiations focused on restructuring and lay-offs. As a result, many newsrooms faced a decline in their workforce. The workforce was reduced in regional newspapers as well as in national television newsrooms. The downsizing of newsrooms was realized by means of redundancies and voluntary pension packages. According to the Finnish Journalists' Association, altogether, 189 of its members were given notice in 2009 and nearly 100 took the offered pension package. In the end, most Finnish media companies made a profit in 2009 and improved their profit margins in 2010 (see Table 3).

Table 1. Media advertising in Finland 2008–2009.

Media	2008/Millions	2009/Millions	Change 08/09	2010/Millions	Change 09/10
Newspapers	605	474	–21.6 %	486	+2.4%
Television	268	237	–11.6%	266	+12%
Radio	51	50	–1.7%	52	+4.7 %
Film	3.1	2.4	–20.6%	2.9	+9 %
Internet: Display and classified online advertising	78	77	–1.8%	100	+28.5 %
Internet: Directory and keyword advertising	71*	102	Not comparable	106	+4 %

*The figure from 2008 does not include the same sources in directory advertising as the ones in 2009 and 2010 and therefore is not comparable.

Table 2. Circulation of major broadsheets and tabloids.

Circulation	2001	2005	2007	2009	2010
<i>Helsingin Sanomat</i> (broadsheet)	446,380	430,785	419,791	397,838	383,361
<i>Iltä-Sanomat</i> (tabloid)	218,829	195,673	176,531	152,948	150,351
<i>Aamulehti</i> (broadsheet)	135,478	136,743	139,165	135,293	131,539
<i>Iltalehti</i> (tabloid)	134,777	130,290	131,150	112,778	107,052
<i>Turun Sanomat</i> (broadsheet)	115,142	111,547	112,419	109,504	107,199

Table 3. Profits of the major media companies.

Media company	2008/Millions	2009/Millions	2010/Millions
Sanoma	+120	+107	+297
Yleisradio	+0.7	–2.9	–27.1
Alma Media	+52	+40.4	+43
TS-yhtymä	+23	–10	0
MTV Media	+4.6	+2.8	+2.1
Keskisuomalainen	+21.6	+15.5	+20.3
Kaleva	+10.3	+5.9	+7.0

Sources: Financial statements 2008–2010.

Newsroom reforms: Convergence, general reporting and multi-tasking

While the number of pension packages and layoffs appears low compared to the international scenario, the situation was exceptional in the Finnish context.² These measures

came as a shock to journalists who were used to having secure jobs, particularly in the regional newspapers. Some journalists involved in this research felt that a “recession discourse” served as an excuse for media companies to rationalize gains in efficiency and profit. Thus, the attitude towards changes, introduced in times of insecurity, was not positive, based on this premise. Generally, the rank-and-file journalists criticized measures, while editors defended actions, illustrating how professional positions shape the ways in which work-life situations are reflected. However, the situation was new for many editors, and three of the interviewees expressed their anxiety and discomfort over having to side with the managerial decisions that were difficult for them to take on a personal level. In these situations, however, they publicly supported the decisions made by the leadership, managing their discomfort and keeping their emotions private (3, 11, 12).³

Market changes caused by the recession were addressed by various organizational reforms. These reforms were mostly focussing on cost-efficiency (cf. Freedman, 2010). Newsrooms followed the trends that had been developing during the 2000s throughout Europe. These included convergence, with an increase in multitasking and a decrease in specialization (Örnebring, 2009). Establishing convergent, combined or multimedia newsrooms, as argued by Vobic (2011), resonates with global trends in news production, and reflects the economic convergence of the media industry where corporate mergers and acquisitions aim at making use of technological convergence by combining a wide range of media production streams under the same roof.

The restructuring strategies included new forms of cooperation inside one media company or corporation. These included for example a fusion of domestic news desk and the city news desk with a new editorial level leadership in a national newspaper. In a regional newspaper all news desks were combined to form one news line and in a broadcasting company television and radio news desks were combined to form one larger news department in which the journalists started to provide news to three different outlets: radio, television and online. Cooperation within one corporation included content sharing between two or more newsrooms, usually between separately operating television news and a newspaper. Cooperation extended even to include potential competitors. This form of cooperation is not an entirely new area of operation, since the regional newspapers in Finland have shared content with particular joined pools for over 20 years. During the time of this research, two new pools were established to combine journalistic work in the foreign news desks and in the Helsinki news desks, which cover the main political news from the capital. The foreign news pool is operating as a virtual news desk, combining the foreign news desks between four regional newspapers, while the Helsinki desk was established between three regional newspapers and situated in one office in Helsinki.⁴

Decrease in specialization

From the perspective of this article, the more relevant measure affecting professional identity, however, concerned the changes in the newsrooms from specialized positions towards general reporting. Three newsrooms, in two newspapers and one in a television company, went through similar processes of establishing team-based systems and general reporting without specific areas of expertise. While pools were based on sharing

content with other media, the move towards general reporting aimed at enhancing knowledge-sharing between journalists. The removal of specialized positions, such as posts which follow environmental issues, reflects structural mechanisms connected to convergence culture, and the notion of collective intelligence, where various skills and competences are brought together to produce new information with specific openness, combinations and modes of sharing (Jenkins, 2004, 2006). By breaking down organizational barriers or by creating interdepartmental teams, newsrooms sought to increase knowledge exchange. In such systems, journalists are required to be able to move from one subject area to another, to adapt and to hold a broad base of skills. From the perspective of the employer, the “general journalist” offers flexibility, and, in some cases, decreases costs, as the extra pay for specialized positions is negated. However, from the perspective of specialized journalists, the change was considered as a degrading regime. In this new situation, they no longer had the time for, or the possibility of, following their area of specialization as intensively as before and they had to adapt to the increasingly intense daily rhythm of ‘the new’ news production.

We used to have typical news desks: financial news, culture, sport and so on. Now these boundaries have been erased and we don't have a financial news desk anymore. We have, what was it, a news line or news process. For example, I [previously in charge of environmental news] can be ordered to make news on any topic, also financial news [...] So the job description of individual journalists was expanded to make it more flexible. (Male, reporter, mid-career, 36–50)

The rank-and-file journalists were also concerned about the change, since they saw specialization as an option for the future and something they hoped to achieve in later years of their career. This seemed to be increasingly difficult in the convergent newsrooms with continuous reforms.

If I could get some kind of break, that would help. I have had that of course in a way, because I have followed the court cases and crime, so I have had my own field. But now, when that's gone and one has to work all around weekends in all sorts of openings of an envelope and not being able to engross, to do real reportage ... There's really minimal chance for that now. (Male, reporter, end career, 51–65)

Most of the interviewed journalists had a strong sense of self-development inscribed in their professional identity. This follows the notion of differentiation identified as crucial for professional identity by Bourdieu (2005). The journalists expressed hopes to be able to develop their knowledge in specific areas of the news later on in their careers. To be an experienced, valued expert in a particular area of news production was at the heart of this vision. However, this vision of dignified final years in the profession was distorted with the abolishment of specialized positions and with the move towards general reporting. To develop one's skills seemed to be harder as the work rhythm was becoming more intense. Moreover, journalists were concerned that the changes undermined journalistic quality, as journalists were not able to enhance their expertise in specific areas.

I think there is a real danger that the expertise is removed to the outside of newsrooms. It means that when the journalists no longer have expertise in any area, they are dependent on the experts

and may even be led by them, because in the rush you can't really say if there is another angle to the issue. You just have to do it. (Female, reporter, mid-career, 36–50)

Not having specialized journalists with a more focussed view on particular financial, political or social issues was considered problematic by the rank-and-file journalists as well. This engendered indifference: if journalists' expertise is not required, why try to achieve it.

If the editors don't react, and then when one doesn't have time to follow and absorb, then of course each of us goes from where the fence is the lowest, because it is simply easier. [...] I cannot give my own view or critical insight on a news story because I don't have time to find out the information needed. There is no time to make calls. So in this situation when there is pressure and rush, we should have experienced people, who can. They can because they have the expertise and knowledge of their field. (Female, reporter, mid-career, 36–50)

Instead of an accumulation of expertise, journalists voiced concern over a more dispersed expertise. They connected this not only to the abolishment of specialized positions, but also to the lack of time available to be used to follow particular areas of interest or to find news in rank-and-file positions. Consequently, they would have fewer tools to critically evaluate the information they got from various sources. These concerns were voiced particularly by the more experienced journalists, who compared the changes with past practices (2, 10, 15, 6). However, the frustration of not being able to focus on news-gathering was also shared by the young.

Day shifts are so fragmented that many have finished with their own news-gathering because there is no time for that, so people come to work with the attitude that I will do whatever they give me. And I think that is a really dangerous direction from the point of view of journalism, because then the ideas come more or less from the news desk, which is run by the editors, and their work is also very hectic. They don't have time to deepen and absorb into anything. They don't even have time to meet people, they don't really have any sources, they are not networked in that way. They run the desk and create ideas there. I think it is a bit of a wrong place for trying to create news. They are not created there, they are created—I support this kind of old-fashioned journalism where journalists are the experts and that's how the news is derived. (Female, reporter, early career, 25–35)

The journalists spoke of expertise as a necessary element for any professional journalist. Expertise seems to enhance the core values of public service and improve possibilities for objective reporting. Interviews highlight that gaining expertise is connected with and derived from daily news work. It is the daily work, the phone calls, interviews, discussions with sources, investigations of documents, policies and initiatives where the expertise is seen to be gathered, and these aspects are seen to form the core of journalistic work, whereas the most valued skill is viewed as the capacity to critically evaluate and contextualize the information that has been gathered. Therefore, changes in daily routines, such as abolishing specialized positions, were seen to endanger, rather than to enhance these core aspects of journalistic work. In this way the changes seemed to decrease the autonomy of the journalistic field as the journalists were not able to be in

control of the production of symbolic capital. Instead they were more dependent on their sources and the expertise brought from outside the newsrooms.

Increased multi-skilling

The increased multi-skilling due to the integration of online news as part of the daily routine was another of the changes that affected the sense of expertise and professional identity. Previously, news desks had separate online reporters. Due to the need to serve multiple platforms, journalists increasingly made online versions on top of print, TV or radio versions of the one news story. This illustrates convergence culture at work: it is evident in increased multi-channel publishing as well as in the dissolution of boundaries of specialization. Among the journalists interviewed, online news was considered to be extra work that had to be done on top of everything else:

I still think that my main task is radio and television stories, and I need to take care that I produce those on time. But the problem is that now that we are 'multi-media' we shouldn't think that we have one main task. My main task is radio, television and online [laughter]. Mostly I finish the radio and television story first and then whatever time is left I use for the online version and I'll write it on the basis of the radio story. (Reporter, female, early career, 25–35)

Multi-skilling is referred to ironically as a practice that is implemented through the reform but still remains superficial on the practical level. The interviewed journalists were particularly concerned about the down-skilling that was taking place because of the different publishing platforms they had to use. Thus, while the journalists were learning to produce different kinds of news for different platforms, they felt that their journalistic skills, sourcing and critical assessment of those sources were impaired. Journalists either did not have enough time to be engrossed in challenging news reportage, or they were no longer allowed to specialize in any particular area in the new organizational structure. Similar tendencies were recognized in the research by García Aviles et al. (2004) and Nygren (2008), pointing out that multi-skilling leaves less time for double-checking of sources or contextualizing the news.

Combined news desks

Restructuring led to the creation of new organizations, where old hierarchies were abolished; however, new ones emerged as newsrooms were combined (for example, radio and television news desks, city and national news desks).

We have combined news departments and the number of people has increased, but it is smart, because now there are more journalists than before, when we, in a way, competed against each other. (Male, editor, mid-career, 36–50)

As the quotation above shows, the editor discussed new combinations in terms of efficiency and rational planning; however, reporters were more skeptical over the value of

combining two news desks. From their perspective, new combined newsrooms required more meetings and planning and resulted in an increase in the editorial management of news production.

It was supposed to be because of cuts, but we talk about this a lot. I mean, how many savings can there be when such a huge organisation is put together. Because you know, a small organisation is often nimble, but in a big one, there are so many people to inform. So much of our time is spent on explaining to different people what I have done, whom I've called and what they've said. (Reporter, female, mid-career, 36–50)

Thus, rationalization has been experienced by the rank-and-file journalists as creating unnecessary work and inefficiency. News work was described to be more led by the editors and planned more in advance than before. More frequently than before, individual journalists were told how to work on a story, from which perspective to write it, and whom they must interview. Thus the autonomy of the rank-and-file journalists was decreasing inside the newsroom with the effect that many became disinterested in creating their own news. The disinterest and sense of powerlessness in news creation weakened the professional pride and differentiation that is held as elementary to professional existence.

The convergence strategies thus bring in expectations of multitasking and the sharing of skills and knowledge by journalists and reporters, yet more structural leading by editors. This change of culture, recognized also in other research (Phillips, 2010; Nygren, 2012), has been particularly difficult for the more experienced journalist, who now had to take orders from clearly younger and less experienced editors.

While the reforms made in the Finnish newsrooms seemed to work against the aspirations of individual journalists, there were reasons behind such measures. The newsrooms were preparing to adjust for an increasingly convergent media environment, which emphasizes shared practices and the abolishment of boundaries. Movement in this direction entailed attractive notions of innovation, synergy, flexibility and novelty, and the promise of a structure that would create something new, as different areas of practice were merged. It also leans towards the promise of new technological tools for sourcing and information gathering that are seen to facilitate daily routines (Aitamurto and Lewis, 2012).

Rank-and-file journalists, however, connected these changes to the impairment of their professional skills, cutting off the possibilities of gaining expertise and conducting individual news-gathering. This, in turn, seemed to endanger some of the core values of journalism: objectivity and the capability for public service.

Moreover, the proposed changes affected the way in which journalists thought about their profession and their position in the future. The new model of the ideal journalist seemed to be moving away from a craftsman-like professional culture that featured fixed posts and expertise in a particular field. Instead, their visions were transforming to hectic general reporting with technologically-centred multitasking, and many seemed to be lost as to how to make use of their more traditional understanding of journalistic skills in this new situation. With the new measures, journalistic expertise becomes articulated with sharing, flexibility and a lack of boundaries. However, this articulation collides with the

notion of expertise as individual specialization, which was dominant among the journalists interviewed, and was tied to their perception and experience of daily news practices.

Pension packages: Out with the old

Increased multitasking and a decrease in specialization were accompanied by yet another, more drastic, measure that articulated the journalistic expertise in terms of age. During the recession of 2009, pension packages played a central role in the Finnish labour-market settlements. Volunteer pension packages were seen as the key solution for downsizing newsrooms; thus, many newsrooms lost a generation of journalists at the same time. With the implementation of pension packages, age became the defining factor of professional identity, capacities and skills. Generational thinking in the newsrooms was dividing journalists into categories of the “hungry” and the “weary.”

I wouldn't want to be a burden that everyone refers to with: “Oh, I wish they would just leave.” It used to be grand when someone took the pension; there was a party and everything. This time they had a joint party for all of them; it was like a mass funeral, the anonymous pensioners just left. (Female, journalist, mid-career, 36–50)

Pension packages not only affected the older journalists concerned, but even younger journalists started to consider their future in the profession. Journalists in their 30s and 40s saw that they might soon be considered useless, perhaps even in their 40s. They were seriously contemplating how they could compete with younger, faster and more affordable journalists, since experience and expertise in special fields of journalism were no longer seen as useful traits.

I have been thinking about this a lot. What are the experiences and skills that will carry me in the final years of my career? I mean, how can I compete with the young? They can do everything that is needed and they are cheaper. (Male, journalist, mid-career, 25–35)

For myself it was a shock, since I have entered the job market fairly late, and I have thought that I will work through the later years of life and I have felt really motivated [...] I was really shocked for a long time at the fact that none of the agreements mean anything really, so that if they want to get rid of me in ten years, they will do as they please [...] it felt like a very probable scenario that within ten years we will be in these negotiations again and that they will come to me and suggest, “Could you leave?” I was terrified of that vision. (Female, reporter, mid-career, 36–50)

For some journalists, who were offered pension packages and decided to leave, the situation was so offensive that they did not want to share their contacts, as the editor below explains:

Some of the older journalists were so angry that they just remained silent. They were so offended that they wouldn't say anything [if they were asked to help or share their contacts and networks]. (Female, editor, early career, 25–35)

In these cases, the newsroom lost not only part of its workforce, but a significant amount of background information and contact networks. The silence illustrates the affective moment of undesired change. The feeling of not being appreciated, translated into a sense of bitterness towards both the employer and the entire work community when people who would have liked to have stayed were asked to leave. The ones that remained described feelings of sadness and emptiness as they saw their colleagues quietly leave (4, 6, 12).

The tendency to downsize the workforce according to age alongside implementing convergent newsrooms, articulated the connection between technological skills and age in a particular way. There was no apparent evidence that older journalists were offered pension packages due to their lack of technological skills. Rather there was an implicit sense of change in journalistic business that required new kinds of skills connected with technology and online media. In previous research, difficulties in adapting to new technology in newsrooms have been connected with old age (cf. Vobic, 2011). In this research only two of the interviewed rank-and-file journalists made direct references to older journalists that could not keep up with the required pace of the reformed newsrooms. Research on ageing in work-life has also shown that precision and speed of precision decrease with age (Ilmarinen, 2001). Therefore, older journalists may not be as fast with the new technology and it may take time for them to learn the new technology required. However, some functions improve with age, such as ability to reason, deliberate and comprehend the whole picture, functions that are highly relevant in journalistic work. The introduction of new technologies, it seems, has, however, strengthened the discourse of speed as a primary criterion of journalistic work (Örnebring, 2010, see also NOVA, 2011). To be able to produce news stories rapidly is considered as vital in the competition with other media and one of the core values of journalism (Juntunen, 2010; Jyrkiäinen, 2008). However, speed *per se* can be connected to various dimensions of journalistic work: it becomes crucial then whether speed is seen as valuable only when it is connected with adapting to new technology, or is it also of value in understanding the contexts, background information and social dimensions of a story. From the viewpoint of the journalists interviewed (6, 9, 15, 2, 7, 17), technological skills seemed to displace more traditional expertise related to social and political information management, causing tension between the values of speed, on the one hand, and accuracy and fairness, on the other, as discussed previously. The introduction of a technology-driven convergent newsroom structure and the concurrent implementation of the pension package articulated journalistic expertise potently through speed and technology. However, it is important to notice that most of the interviewed journalists, regardless of age and position, saw convergence as inevitable, and even as an exciting part of the future of journalism, and they were not against new technology and online publishing as such. Rather, the change seemed rapid and confusing, and created a situation where traditional skills and expertise seemed to be difficult to combine with the new demands.

Hierarchies reversed

In this situation, then, the young journalists were assumed to be better equipped to adapt to the changing media environment, to master new technology and the demands of a

changing profession. Moreover, young journalists were seen to be able to connect with the young audiences—an audience segment that all of the six newsrooms were desperate to reach—illustrating how visions of the potential audiences importantly shape the decisions that are being made in the newsrooms (Andersson, 2011). In this case, the notion of “young audiences” seemed particularly powerful: all the interviewed editors and journalists expressed concern over the young audiences that were drifting away from traditional news media. While the older journalists were not explicitly addressed as incapable of reaching these important audiences, they were not appointed to new positions that were seen crucial in reaching young audiences. In three restructured newsrooms in this study, there was a clear drive to rejuvenate the news production through younger editors.⁵ This created friction in some cases, as the hierarchies were reversed, and more experienced journalists had to take orders from younger colleagues. In some cases older editors were replaced by younger colleagues.

They are all young, or almost all of them. At least that's how we who are a bit older see it. [...] of course there is an authority deficit [...] when you talk to your boss and he/she does not know what you are talking about because he/she doesn't have the same experience or common knowledge. (Female, reporter, 36–50)

In some cases, the more experienced journalists felt that their professional skills were not appreciated or recognized.

Elsewhere there is this practice, that one has to work as a reporter for a while before getting his or her own by-line. For example, one has to assist the more experienced journalists. Here, experience is not recognised. We make the young ones editors and all the older journalists are assigned positions as reporters and they have to run around in the city and, well, of course, it is almost offensive. (Female, journalist, mid-career, 36–50)

Through reversed hierarchies, expertise was disconnected from years of experience and, consequently, many questioned the skills acquired in the profession. Some saw the pension packages and the reforms as a clear sign of age discrimination. This view was also supported by the union (interview 20 October 2010). One of the interviewed journalists, in the age group of 45–57, was demoted from an editorial position, despite success and praise from the management in previous years for his work. He was replaced by a younger journalist and had to continue under the leadership of this younger colleague. He was told that the solution was organizational, where several pieces had to fit together, and in this puzzle, they could not keep him in his old position. He himself assessed that the reasons were financial in the end, and were connected to the ways in which the whole reform in the newsroom was conducted as “an age racist solution.”

Well, we went through a large organisation reform, which was really a bluff, the purpose apparently was to lower the wages of older journalists and this way cut the expenses, because it was this kind of age racist solution—[...] They are searching for cheaper employees to do the editorial work, cheaper staff. It doesn't matter if their experience and skills are not enough, they will, when the string is tight enough, they will do their job under pressure. (Male, editor/reporter, end career, 51–65)

The journalist in question did not hold a grudge against the younger journalist who is now his superior; however, he accused the management of the company and, in particular, the executive board, of greed that would not serve to benefit news publishing (as experience and expertise were disregarded). This case illustrates the ways in which unpleasant decisions were often interpreted as exterior to the newsrooms. This is also part of the affect management that is needed to be able to continue the journalistic work in the same newsroom even after painful change. The journalist in question concluded that he still has a few years before retirement and that he actually enjoys writing and reporting: that the journalistic work, to “be on top of the news,” is, in itself, rewarding.

The situation was not necessarily better for the young, even if some were offered editorial positions. The majority of the young journalists struggled to maintain their temporary positions while the whole profession was going through a substantial change (Porttinen, 2010; cf. Reinardy, 2011). For the young, it was particularly challenging to define the boundaries of their profession and see how it would carry them towards the future. The journalists interviewed identified the emergence of amateur participatory news production as an alternative to journalism and contemplated how that would affect their professional identity.

I mean, what makes the difference between me and a blogger? Maybe in the end it is the phone calls that we make, that we verify the facts, but maybe that's the only difference. (Male, reporter, early career, 25–35)

While the professional identity of the older journalists was challenged by reforms and pension packages, the younger ones struggled to achieve professional identity altogether in the new situation. Concerns over amateur productions and their impact on journalism were voiced particularly by younger journalists in their 30s, who also identified with the generation of active bloggers and social media users. It is noteworthy that these concerns were not expressed by older journalists, who saw social media to be distant and different from professional news production. Consequently, despite the fact that restructuring with pension packages particularly hit journalists over 55 years old, young journalists also had to struggle hard to maintain their positions in the newsroom. Perception was polarized: while a few members of the younger generation were enjoying fast-track careers, most of them were facing temporary contracts and constant uncertainty. The changing conditions of the labour markets mark generational experience: permanent posts are decreasing in number and temporary contracts increasing (Porttinen, 2010). In the eyes of younger journalists, the older generation had had its share of well-paid secure jobs, while the future seemed uncertain for most of the younger journalists.

Conclusion

As Ryfe (2009) has argued, newsrooms, like other organizations, are, in general, resilient and resistant to change. This becomes evident in this research material from the ways in which journalists criticized the reforms in the newsrooms. However, this does not mean that resistance to change is groundless or only superficial. While it is important to put the interview data in perspective, it is also important to identify the different factors that

carve out these reactions. Underlying the resilient stances, there is also a sense of powerlessness and even fear when faced with a transition that is shared by the journalists, and that shapes the ways in which they see their profession and its future.

The research shows that the autonomy of journalism is challenged more powerfully than before in Finland. The economic and technological imperatives have entered the newsrooms to define the field with a new force by creating structures that leave less space for professional development. This has implications for the perception of professional identity by individual journalists and the values shared in the newsrooms. The audience ratings, circulation and advertising revenues are followed more closely and, in particular, the reach of young audiences is shaping the activities inside the newsrooms.

As Bourdieu (2005) suggests, the differentiation and sense of professional pride connected with journalistic autonomy is a crucial counterweight against commercial and political powers. Therefore to enhance journalistic autonomy in the newsrooms in the moment of change is particularly significant. Unfortunately it also seems to be particularly difficult to realize.

Practices of journalism have always been shaped by technology and this particular moment of change can be seen as a continuance of that development. However, in the current reality the economical and technological imperatives shaping the newsrooms are not translating into self-development, success and ambition in the minds of the journalists. Rather technological development is seen to increase job insecurity and lead to loss of control over journalistic content)

Moreover the financial success of the Finnish news companies under research questions the necessity of all of the lay-offs and pension packages and the economic reasoning behind the changes. Despite the pessimistic scenarios the newsrooms in question continued to make a profit in 2010. The position of both national and regional news companies seemed to remain firm even though journalism continued to face difficult challenges.

Making older journalists redundant was most of all an economic solution, however, it happened at a time when the whole journalistic business was going through technological change and entering a new era of online journalism. Therefore the pension packages became a part of a transition from old journalism to a new multi-platform journalism. Through this articulation the ageing journalists were connected with the sense of old, both in terms of journalistic practices and technology although in practice they might have been as technologically savvy as their younger colleagues.

The research suggests that in this change scenario, to enhance autonomy, there is a clear need for the evaluation of journalistic values, skills and the practices, in order not to lose valuable resources and skills of the ageing journalists or deepen the inequalities within newsrooms. As pointed out in work-life research "the gravest threat to a favorable change in work life from the point of view of ageing is posed by the global economy and its harsh rules" (Ilmarinen, 2006: 82). The work-life research suggests that the most important measures to secure balance between the global economy and resourceful work-life include making use of the competencies of ageing workers and creating a market value out of the work experience of seniors. In addition the possibilities to promote and develop professional skills right until the end of a career is held vital for the performance of the professionals (Ilmarinen, 2006: 82–86). This resonates with the views

shared by the Finnish journalists and connects with enhancing journalistic autonomy by strengthening skills and professional pride. The skills and competences gathered throughout years in the profession should be regarded as a valuable resource for the whole newsroom, not only for the individual journalists. As in this process of change, much of the resources disappeared with the retiring journalists as a result of unsuccessful management of change. Losing professional pride is therefore not just a matter for an individual journalist but it may affect the field more profoundly. Thus to be able to make use of multiple resources and to maintain the view of different kinds of skills within a newsroom is a genuine challenge that needs to be taken seriously, particularly as the news industry is going through significant changes led by technological development.

It must be acknowledged that this research is confined to the context of Finland. However, research carried out elsewhere shows (Örnebring, 2009) that similar changes have been implemented in the newsrooms throughout Europe. Therefore, this study may give some indications on the ways in which journalistic professional identities are shaped in a larger international context, particularly in terms of journalistic autonomy. Clearly, more empirical research is needed on the particular implications of these complex processes in order to evaluate the constancy and scale of the changes. Moreover, there is a need for more longitudinal and cross-national comparative research on the ways in which these changes mark the professional identity and the core values of journalism in the long run.

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Notes

1. The three PR personnel interviewed represented the paper and medical industries and the public sector. Their interviews highlighted how the change in journalism is reflected in the PR sector. PR interview data is not included in the material discussed in this article.
2. For example, 5000 journalists lost their jobs in the USA in 2008 (Edmonds, 2009).
3. Each interview was numbered and these numbers are used in the text to indicate the interviews concerned.
4. The newspapers in the foreign news pool are: *Kaleva*, *Turun Sanomat*, *Keskisuomalainen* and *Etelä-Suomen Sanomat*. The content created by these is shared with *Savon Sanomat*, *Karjalainen*, *Ilkka* and *Pohjalainen*. The Helsinki pool is created between *Kaleva*, *Savon Sanomat*, *Keskisuomalainen*, *Karjalainen*, *Ilkka*, *Pohjalainen* and *Turun Sanomat*. The foreign news pool received positive feedback right from the beginning. By combining resources from several regional newspapers the joint pool offered opportunities to create own content with on-site reporting from international news events. This was an option that the regional newspapers rarely had. The joint Helsinki news desk however faced difficulties. National politics has different implications to different regions, and with a shared news desk these regional differences and distinct newsworthiness were difficult to realize, partly because each journalist was committed to their specific region and had little knowledge on the news values for other regions. In this case then the idea of shared resources did not meet the expectations. In 2013 two regional newspapers announced withdrawal from these pools. The Helsinki pool was expected to be closed down in 2013.
5. Three newspapers.

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