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New Forms of Media Work and Its Organizational and Institutional Conditions

Editors

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Editorial

Editorial: New Forms of Media Work and Its Organizational and Institutional Conditions

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Abstract
This thematic issue explores the widening scope of media work and the institutional and organizational conditions that support new forms of media work. The media industry has undergone significant economic, structural, and technological changes during the past few decades, including changing patterns of ownership and digitalization of media production, distribution, and consumption. Simultaneously, practices of media work are adopted also in other industries. The 10 articles in the issue not only focus on the new professional roles and responsibilities emerging in the news media industry but also study the practices of media work in organizations in other fields, such as the music industry and public sector.

Keywords
corporate media; journalism; media industry; media work; news media; organizational communication; organizations; strategic communication

Issue
This editorial is part of the issue, "New Forms of Media Work and Its Organizational and Institutional Conditions," edited by Salla-Maaria Laaksonen (University of Helsinki, Finland) and Mikko Villi (University of Jyväskylä, Finland).

1. Introduction

Media, as ubiquitous as it is in our modern world, requires care, labor, and maintenance. Media work, as defined by Deuze (2007), refers to planning and producing media content, products, services, and brands within media organizations. Media work is not limited to journalistic work but includes other activities undertaken by media professionals aimed at advancing the success of media products and services (Malmelin & Villi, 2017). Studies in the field of media and journalism have acknowledged how the emergence of new digital players and changes in consumers' media behavior have affected media work (Villi & Picard, 2019). The inclusion of social media in media work (Nielsen & Ganter, 2018) and other platform-centric practices are occurring in response to the new, digitalized media environment. The increasing competition is pushing media organizations to consider engaging in strategic communication and branding activities (e.g., Laaksonen et al., 2019; Malmelin & Moisander, 2014).

These factors, among many others, have influenced the ways of working and content of work in the media as well as the organizational dynamics in media organizations. Changes are often driven by technological transformation: Media workers are required to have digital competencies (Oberländer et al., 2020) to cope with new technologies; and new professional roles emerge to satisfy the requirements and labor needed to make media content suitable and successful on various new channels, from social media to mobile applications (Cohen, 2019; Karlsen & Ytre-Arne, 2021). Further, the ongoing economic, structural, and technological changes in the media industry during the past few decades, including changing patterns of ownership and digitalization of media production, distribution, and consumption (Villi et al., 2020) and the subsequent constant need to innovate (Küng, 2013), have impelled institutional responses in media organizations. Examples include the development of novel media outlets and processes, from specialized formats to cross-sector collaborations and intraorganizational development networks.

Furthermore, driven by the increasing power of media in society (e.g., Couldry & Hepp, 2017), forms of media work are emerging in other industries that aim to communicate with their audiences. These include, for example, organizations that strive to produce professional, media-like content as a component of their strategic communication, and communications agencies that produce communication and marketing content for their customers. It could also be argued that the increasing significance of public social media and demands for dialogue require all employees to possess media skills (Pekkala, 2020). These expanding contexts raise the question of what media work is like when it is done outside the media industry and what principles are driving it.

For the issue, we have invited theoretical and empirical articles investigating the changing nature of media work as well as its new institutional environments. The 10 selected articles cover three main themes: new forms of media work in media organizations, emerging forms of social media work, and atypical organizational contexts for media work. In the following sections, we will briefly introduce the articles by theme.

2. New Forms of Media Work in Media Organizations

The first four contributions to this thematic issue approach media work in the context of media organizations. First, Mathias-Felipe de-Lima-Santos (2022) explores the nuances of data journalists' professional roles and how they relate to structural aspects of news organizations. The study concentrates on ProPublica, a nonprofit news organization producing investigative journalism and renowned for its data journalism. According to the study, the blurring of traditional professional boundaries and hybrid profiles of media workers can be detected in data journalism: Journalists must expand their competencies to coding and design, whereas non-journalistic professionals must develop writing skills. Such blurring and hybridity are integral to the professional culture at ProPublica, which mirrors the organizational structure.

A similar negotiation and blurring of boundaries can be detected between the journalistic and managerial professional ethos of editors in business newsrooms, as Johanna Suhonen (2022) shows in her article. Business journalism is an appropriate context for studying the junction of two professional discourses of journalism and managerialism. Editors in business journalism tend to absorb managerial tendencies due to their close connections to financial and commercial communities. This subsequently leads to a new hybrid professional ethos that combines managerial practices with journalistic ideals.

Moving on to digital competencies in journalistic work, Salvador Reyes-de-Cózar et al. (2022) conduct a systematic review to examine what the literature suggests about the digital skills that new professionals should acquire in the field of journalism. Such knowledge is important to journalism schools and other academic institutions that educate future journalists. The findings reveal the lack of studies focusing on certain key aspects of digital competence, particularly those related to personal growth, emotional state, and the acquisition of a deep level of digital competence.

The thematic issue then shifts from newsrooms to Mediapolis, a Finnish media cluster that serves as a center and network for media companies and organizations. Mediapolis offers public (non-commercial) and private (commercial) media organizations cross-sector collaboration aimed at shared value creation and co-creative innovation. Sari Virta and Nando Malmelin (2022) explore the management of complexities, organizational tensions, and dualities in such cross-sector collaboration in a media cluster with shared strategic-level aspirations. The article discusses the dynamics of different organizational orientations and business logics, discrepancies between visionary planning and practical actions, and opposing organizational interests in a cluster structure.

3. Emerging Social Media Work

The increasing significance of social media has led to calls for a specific new type of media work. Linking media work in news media organizations and the social media context, Mark Badham and Markus Mykkänen (2022) employ a relational approach to media audiences to clarify how news media organizations are engaging their audiences on social media. They draw on public relations theory and conduct a content analysis of Twitter and Facebook posts by nine newspapers in Australia, the US, and the UK. Using this approach, they show that the studied newspapers predominantly use their social media accounts for news dissemination rather than audience engagement.

An opposite perspective to engagement is given in Jessica Edlom's (2022) article, which uses qualitative interviews to explore the adoption of social media in the music industry, where participatory cultural norms are becoming standard in strategic communication. Edlom conceptualizes her findings through the notion of engagement imperative—the constant requirement to produce audience engagement—which affects communication workers' competencies, roles, responsibilities, and identities. Strategic communication, thus, is increasingly also media work, characterized by the logic of engagement enforced by social media platforms and their participatory culture.

Brooke Erin Duffy and Megan Sawey (2022) further seek to theorize the emerging phenomenon of social media work in their article. Social media workers—such as social media managers, editors, and community managers—form a relatively new category of digital laborers. Using interview data, the authors argue that social media work is configured by a visibility paradox: While the main work of social media workers is producing visibility, their labor remains invisible behind branded accounts. By connecting this notion to broader discussions on the gendered valuation of work in the digital economy, the authors show that social media work has a marginal status and is frequently devalued in organizations and by members of the public.

4. Atypical Organizational Contexts for Media Work

The last three articles in this thematic issue further expand the boundaries of media work by focusing on media work conducted in organizational settings outside a typical media organization: public sector organizations, a science communication start-up, and a counter-media outlet.

Maria Grafström and Hanna Sofia Rehnberg (2022) explore what happens when journalistic practices and ideas about newsworthiness enter a public sector organization. Their empirical case is VGRfokus, a Swedish county council's digital news channel. The authors use content analysis and interviews to show how VGRfokus balances between bureaucratic and market values, as the channel aims to both inform citizens and brand the organization. To solve this tension, the idea of newsworthiness emerges as a governing principle for what is considered appropriate for the channel. Yet newsworthiness, in this context, is affected by the demand to create a coherent and positive organizational image, thus reflecting patterns similar to the tensions between discourses of journalism and managerialism identified by Suhonen (2022).

We have also witnessed the emergence of entirely novel types of media organizations that aim to find their place in the insecure, digitalizing field of media. In their article, Christopher Buschow et al. (2022) discuss one such example: the Science Media Center Germany (SMC), a non-profit news start-up. The article positions SMC as a repair organization that aims to support high-quality media work to compensate for the deficits in legacy media. The authors show how SMC undertakes field repair activities but also does field advancement by promoting innovation and renewal of journalism. The authors conclude that SMC acts as a prototype organization in science journalism by offering direct contributions to the field but also by demonstrating new ways of working and organizing.

In the final article, Olli Seuri and Kim Ramstedt (2022) turn the analytical gaze to another novel and atypical context of media work: counter-media. They explore how remix theory can be used to analyze the work of these emerging publishers. Using concepts that are crucial to remixing—appropriation and authorship—the authors provide a theoretical reading of two news cases in the Finnish counter-media *MV-lehti*. The authors' approach broadens and challenges the underpinning ideas of participatory and democratizing remix culture by arguing that the media work of remix, when appropriated by an anti-democratic media actor, is a means to challenge liberal-democratic ideals. The authors propose that counter-media publishing should be seen as a form of political activism or, in some cases, political media criticism.

5. Conclusions

Together, the articles in this thematic issue give a broad view of the widening scope and contexts of media work, ranging from traditional news media to social media brand communication and public sector organizations. The empirical findings draw a complex picture of overlapping roles, shifting practices, as well as tensions in practices and discourses as actors engage in planning, producing, and distributing media content. The emerging actor roles and professions raise questions about the skills and competencies required for media work but also call for completely new ways of organizing—as a unit, as an organization, or in inter-organizational collaboration.

We argue that the concept of media work proves its usefulness in exploring media-related practices across industries. Media work is used for a variety of purposes that are not necessarily journalistic or follow journalistic values. Due to the institutional pressures posed by the developing media field, media work is a practice that becomes increasingly mixed with forms of strategic communication. As several studies in this issue show, this also introduces ethical questions, which will hopefully encourage future research that continues exploring discourses and valuations related to the developing field of media work as well as its uses in society.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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Salla-Maaria Laaksonen (D.Soc.Sc.) is a senior researcher at the Centre for Consumer Society Research, University of Helsinki. Her research areas are technology, organizations, and new media, including social evaluation of organizations in the hybrid media system, the organization of online social movements, and the use of data and algorithms in organizations. She is also an expert in digital and computational research methods.

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Part I.

New Forms of Media Work in Newsrooms and Journalistic Organizations

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Article

ProPublica's Data Journalism: How Multidisciplinary Teams and Hybrid Profiles Create Impactful Data Stories

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Abstract
Despite growing interest in the emergence of technologies in journalistic practices, especially from the production perspective, there is still very little research on organizational structures and professional culture in relation to the deployment of these technologies. Drawing on six interviews and observation in staff meetings, this study aims to explore the nuances behind the professional roles of data journalists and how these relate to structural aspects of news organizations. The study focuses on the case of ProPublica, a news organization internationally renowned for its global excellence in data stories. This work considers boundary-making in the context of journalism and focuses on new professional roles in the news industry to produce a hybrid ethnography study based on qualitative data collected immediately before the Covid-19 pandemic hit the United States. The findings reveal the importance of hybrid profiles at ProPublica. While some journalists have had to expand their knowledge to learn more about new areas, such as coding and design, some non-journalistic professionals have had to develop writing skills, and this blurring of traditional boundaries forms an important aspect of ProPublica's professional culture. The structure of the organization, divided into two teams engaged in cross-sector activities, helps to promote data skills and collaboration with other journalists, which also serves to mitigate any individual lack of experience on certain topics. The article concludes by suggesting that the growing importance of these new professional roles has broader implications for the development of data skills in the newsroom, and also discusses the limitations that can arise from the increasing overlap between journalistic and non-journalistic roles.

Keywords
data journalism; hybrid profile; journalism; multidisciplinary teams; news nerds; ProPublica

Issue
This article is part of the issue "New Forms of Media Work and Its Organizational and Institutional Conditions" edited by Salla-Maaria Laaksonen (University of Helsinki) and Mikko Villi (University of Jyväskylä).

1. Introduction

There has been much discussion about how the increasing pervasiveness of technology has resulted in new dynamics in digital communication at a theoretical and conceptual level. In this respect, emerging technologies are increasingly shaping newsroom culture, as journalists find themselves taking on new roles (Carlson & Lewis, 2015) and having to adapt to novel values, norms, and practices (Tandoc, 2018). Thus, technology can intensify work pressures and expand the boundaries of work to include a broader range of activities that were not previously seen as an obligatory dimension of journalism, blurring normative boundary distinctions. Conversely, boundary maintenance work establishes discursive claims about who belongs to the field, creating divisions between the work of core and peripheral actors (Eldridge, 2017). As non-traditional journalistic formats are accounting for an ever-growing portion of work in the field, there is a need to better understand these new peripheral actors and the ways they may be transforming the organizational culture (Schapals et al., 2019).

In the current scenario where the journalism industry is changing by leaps and bounds, some organizations are more successful than others in bridging the strategy–implementation gap between their day-to-day operations and their long-term goals by attracting exceptional professionals with myriad skills (Tandoc, 2018). This is the case of ProPublica, a nonprofit digital-native media organization based in the United States, that defines its work on the use of investigative data journalism as a way to expose "abuses of power and betrayals of the public trust by government, business, and other institutions" (ProPublica, 2021a, para. 1). The organization received initial funding of 30 million dollars from the Sandler Foundation in 2008, which was used to produce real-world investigative stories principally aimed at enthusiasts of watchdog reporting.

Prior research described organizations like ProPublica as social news enterprises, which are public service media organizations with "a strong commitment to social goals and the need to justify their work in terms of impact" (Sparviero, 2020, p. 796). Consequently, social news enterprises are extending the original idea of public journalism to offer content investigative and explanatory journalism rather than attempting to compete with existing news organizations, aiming to increase levels of trust and, consequently, engagement with the public. Thus, these news outlets exemplify the dynamic development of social and economic initiatives through their news products (Usher, 2017). To achieve this, ProPublica produces quality investigative journalism by bringing together a team of journalists and programmers who go beyond traditional forms of journalism to create interactive stories built around data and multimedia. These stories helped to attract the additional capital the organization needed to continue operating. ProPublica's reputation is seen through its numerous recognitions and awards, such as six Pulitzer Prizes and a myriad of online journalism awards (ProPublica, 2021b).

Data journalism is therefore aligned with the company's goals, as it provides the ability to uncover stories that were not previously being discussed or reported, a highly significant contribution to today's media landscape (Coddington, 2015). These goals, among other factors, have influenced ways of working and organizational dynamics in media outlets, putting data journalists, in some cases, at the center of the news production process (Appelgren & Lindén, 2020). Where it previously attracted niche and segmented audiences, data journalism is now an industry trend seeking wider legitimation in a sector "where fluidity is a defining element in journalistic processes, practices, positions, and products" (Hermida & Young, 2019, p. 33). Although ProPublica's model cannot be easily replicable by competitors due to the lack of funds, it is an important case to examine because of its characteristics that stimulate the production of data stories.

Despite growing interest in the emergence of technologies in journalistic practices, especially from the production perspective, there is still very little research on organizational structures and professional culture in data journalism practice. To fill this gap, this study focuses on the case of ProPublica, internationally renowned for its global excellence in data stories.

Drawing on theories of boundary-making concerning journalism and focusing on new professional roles emerging in the industry, this article highlights the importance of hybrid profiles and multidisciplinary teams at ProPublica, enriching and expanding the literature of the role of these practitioners in the production of high-impact journalism. The study takes a two-stage approach. First, it considers the importance of multidisciplinary teams as an aspect of ProPublica's professional culture. These professionals have emerging roles that extend beyond traditional journalistic practices, and their backgrounds include a wide range of knowledge fields. Second, it discusses the organization's dynamics and technology-driven culture, which supports team members while also fostering internal and external collaboration. The article proposes the following research questions:

> RQ1: How do ProPublica's data team characteristics and competencies help to spur its investigative data journalism work, while these new actors inscribe themselves in the field?
>
> RQ2: How does ProPublica's organizational dynamic with internal and external collaborations support the production of data stories?

2. Theoretical Grounding

2.1. Boundaries of Journalism Between the Work of Core and Peripheral Actors

The concept of "boundary-work" was developed by the sociologist Thomas Gieryn to discuss the difficulties involved in defining what should and should not be considered "science," and how understandings of what a field is can confer authority on certain social actors and limit the ways actors inscribe themselves in particular spaces. In other words, boundaries are established in a certain field to prevent or contest the emergence of new players attempting to enter from outside the sector and transform it (Gieryn, 1983).

In striving to meet the news industry's changing needs triggered by social and technological change, the defined boundaries of journalism have become increasingly blurred (Eldridge, 2017), bringing to "the fore questions of what journalism is and what it should be" (Carlson, 2018, p. 1). Boundaries are established to exclude actors, practices, norms, and values that are not considered legitimate in the realm of journalism. However, this understanding treats journalism as a stable object, whereas a series of recent studies has shown that journalism is expanding to encapsulate other activities, such as blogging, social media content, fact-checking, etc. (Carlson & Lewis, 2015).

In part, attempts by journalists to set boundaries are linked to survival, as "social boundaries…yield greater cultural and material resources for insiders" (Lewis, 2012,

p. 841). In trying to exclude others, journalists use the need for objectivity, ethics, and impartiality in their work to contest the admittance of other actors. New professionals are described as "too emotional, too opinionated, too activist, or as relying too much on hearsay" (Schapals et al., 2019, p. 20) to adapt to institutional norms and conventions. Conversely, these new actors show that journalism is not a solid discipline, and is in a constant state of flux, especially in the digital era.

Nevertheless, by establishing these boundaries, journalists are legitimating their profession and structuring their social world to maintain control. Studies have shown that newsrooms are divided into three types of specialized actors: journalists, technologists, and businesspeople. Traditionally, these professionals work within their "silos," creating social distance between the groups (Kosterich, 2021). This epistemic authority aims to bring power and prestige, and also provides some material benefits (Carlson & Lewis, 2015). For example, journalists may have easier access to high-profile figures or confidential sources using their press pass, and have legal protection if they publish leaked information (Eldridge, 2017).

In the digital media sector, new actors are less constrained by the field's normative pressures, allowing them to experiment with unconventional ideas and solutions. In doing so, these new entrants are trying to distinguish themselves by preserving their dominant vision and influencing journalists' work (Tandoc, 2018). This is the case for pioneer journalists, a group of actors dedicated to incorporating new organizational forms, relying on experimentation as a way to redefine the field and its structural foundations (Hepp & Loosen, 2021). A recent study on intra-organizational collaboration points out that IT departments have become a key factor impacting news outlets' innovative capabilities (Westlund et al., 2021).

Building on these insights, much attention has been paid to the emergence of these new professionals and the new type of empowerment they enjoy in journalism. Eldridge (2017) describes these professionals who openly claim to belong to the journalistic field as "interlopers," while Ferrucci and Vos (2017) call them "peripheral actors." Common sense suggests that these professionals are challenging news organizations by extending the boundaries of what journalism is today. In this sense, Belair-Gagnon and Holton (2018) saw a need to expand the concept of "interlopers" due to nuances regarding their roles in the news cycle, and this resulted in three different levels being defined: explicit interlopers, implicit interlopers, and intralopers. The first category includes non-traditional journalism actors who work on the periphery of the profession, contributing to the creation of products and services. Implicit interlopers are less clearly aligned toward journalism, but do not reject journalistic objectivity or impartiality. Intralopers are distinct in that their activities are not journalism-oriented, but they work inside news organizations, using their expertise to improve news production processes (Belair-Gagnon & Holton, 2018).

In light of these differences, I argue that data journalists can be perceived as peripheral actors, as they resemble implicit interlopers. In comparison to other areas, data journalism has been granted a certain level of acceptance in the news industry through adopting some of its established values, norms, and routines. Simultaneously, these practitioners try to distinguish themselves from other peripheral actors by promoting their values, such as an open data culture and collaborative mindset (Lewis & Usher, 2014; Stalph, 2020). Thus, these professionals are engaged in forms of hybrid journalism, drawing on their structurally diverse backgrounds to merge media skills with other areas of expertise. To better understand this phenomenon, it seems sensible to analyze organizations where data teams are well established and aligned with the goals of the newsrooms, such as the case of ProPublica.

On the other hand, the entanglements between data journalism and other forms of data work create new dependencies and synergies that introduce new actors working in novel forms of collaboration with non-journalistic institutions (Baack, 2018). For example, the role of civic tech organizations in developing data journalism across Africa shows that the boundaries of journalism are being transformed as evolutionary pressures are imposed on the system. Journalists are engaging in constant interaction with non-news workers, changing the patterns of interaction between these actors, their environments and habits, and prompting the question of how these transformations reflect on surrounding institutions and their business practices (Splendore & Brambilla, 2021). Thus, it is important to understand how these hybrid profiles are creating a new cultural logic in newsrooms.

2.2. Hybrid Profiles: The Advent of New Professionals and Their Role in Data Journalism

Technological developments have brought transformation to the media industry, which has slowly taken a more active role in these innovative processes. This has meant adopting new organizational structures and changes to capacity and resources. At the same time, there is a need to deal with advanced computational capabilities, which previously most journalists did not have the skills to approach. In this context, innovation has taken a pivotal role in reconfiguring newsrooms. This has resulted in new ways of producing and telling stories in influential formats that cross media boundaries. Thus, not only have the boundaries of journalism been expanded, but new professionals have also become part of newsrooms, challenging the traditional logic of journalism (Parasie & Dagiral, 2013). These new actors incorporate knowledge from other areas, mainly business and technology, including product management, data, analytics, and programming (Kosterich, 2021). Described by

Kosterich (2020, p. 52) as "news nerds," they represent "new forms of professional journalists working in jobs at the intersection of traditional journalist positions and technologically-intensive positions." These actors, who in most cases have hybrid backgrounds or more specialized skills, are typically more willing than traditional journalists to adapt to change. As a result, they are responsible for introducing new practices, norms, and roles into the industry, and thus play a paramount role in the media industry's shift toward innovative organizational structures (Malmelin & Villi, 2017).

These hybrid roles are gradually becoming more valued for their contributions to journalistic work (Westlund et al., 2021). In data journalism, these actors have been described in the scholarly literature as journalist-programmers, programmer-journalists, journo-devs, and journo-coders (Hannaford, 2015; Parasie & Dagiral, 2013). With hybrid profiles, demand for these practitioners has grown in newsrooms across the world in an environment where technology shapes journalism and vice versa (Splendore & Brambilla, 2021). Studies suggest that bringing programmers into the newsroom challenges some journalistic principles, reshaping how news is produced and, by extension, distributed (Hermida & Young, 2019). These new professionals act as a "driving force to produce more effective and efficient news by harnessing the power of technological advancements" (Kosterich, 2020, p. 52). Although coders and technologists possess knowledge and skills enabling them to navigate through technical complexity and exercise decision-making power in newsrooms, these are not the only news nerds to have emerged in the data journalism industry. Previous studies have shown that roles vary greatly from culture to culture and newsroom to newsroom (Young et al., 2018), and it has been reported that some of these practitioners do not consider themselves to be journalistic actors, even though their tasks overlap with various forms of journalism (Baack, 2018).

In Europe, scholars have revealed a different attitude to connections between technology and journalism. In the United Kingdom, much less has been written about hybrid profiles, but more about multidisciplinary teams. In a study by Hannaford (2015), two major legacy news organizations were studied, the BBC and the Financial Times. In both organizations, teams composed of programmers, journalists, and designers worked closely together to produce interactive stories. Indeed, multidisciplinary teams that share a common organizational goal tend to foster innovative thinking and promote innovation in newsrooms (Westlund et al., 2021). Conversely, another study has suggested that the multidisciplinary teams vs. hybrid profiles dichotomy has more to do with the size of the news outlet than with cultural aspects. Smaller news organizations are more likely to have one hybrid practitioner due to the "lack of advanced computational skills and a technological infrastructure" (Borges-Rey, 2016, p. 837), while large, elite news organizations can afford multidisciplinary teams that involve a division of labor (Fink & Anderson, 2015). This approach has been widely adopted in other newsrooms around the world, for example in Australia (de-Lima-Santos et al., 2021).

Newsrooms are struggling to adapt to and embrace these changes in the journalism profession and the resulting new norms and practices. The collaborative mind, for instance, is a break from the traditional mentality of journalism, from highly competitive single newsroom environments where journalists looking for a scoop are reluctant to collaborate, to a "new model" of multiple news outlets and organizations sharing information to expose wrongdoing on a global scale (Carson & Farhall, 2018). Thus, the capacity for innovation is increasingly being developed collectively, and leading news organizations are placing a higher value on cooperative efforts as a key mode of governance (de-Lima-Santos & Mesquita, 2021), impacted by internal and external forces (Westlund et al., 2021). This collaborative mindset can be applied to distinct business units, functions (intra-organizational), and organizations at national (inter-organizational) and international (transnational) levels (Heft et al., 2019). However, the challenge is to maintain and reinforce these collaborative principles over the longer term.

In the highly competitive environment created by the media industry, news nerds can provide a competitive advantage to publishers in the process of digitalization and help them adapt to a datafied world. This process of change is iterative and usually aligned to the external environment. In this sense, newsrooms are strongly influenced by award-winning news organizations, which define the cultural capital, i.e., constitute modes of production and levels of development for subsequent projects (Hermida & Young, 2019). To adapt more quickly to these advances, newsrooms are required to modify their internal structures and processes (Kosterich, 2020). However, the historical organizational structures of elite newsrooms create a normative conflict that either consigns data teams to the margins or fully incorporates them into newsroom culture (Stalph, 2020). Thus, this article addresses the importance of multidisciplinary teams in association with hybrid profiles in the industry, a focus so far lacking in the scientific literature.

3. Methodology

Through a qualitative approach, this study investigates the importance of data journalism in ProPublica's organizational dynamic. The work embraces a hybrid ethnographic approach by combining observations and in-depth interviews based on qualitative data collected during fieldwork at ProPublica. This approach has been widely used by other researchers, demonstrating that it is an effective way to explore the distinct norms and routines adopted by news organizations (Hermida & Young, 2019).

The first stage of the project involved newsroom observation. This fieldwork aims to capture the participants' point of view, and all details observed while conducting the study are noted, including details of newsroom norms and the routines adopted on the data desk. This is important because it enables the research to elicit a comprehensive picture by seeing through the eyes of the key actors involved in a process. Additionally, the research involved observing an editorial agenda meeting and team meeting to understand the rules and processes involving other units in the newsroom (Bryman, 2012).

The method proposed by Emerson et al. (2011) was used to analyze the data gathered during the observations, following a three-step process: (a) close observations are conducted and systematic notes are taken of what is observed; (b) two-step qualitative analytical coding of the fieldnotes is carried out—open coding, in which the researcher reads the fieldnotes line-by-line and notes all the themes that emerge, followed by focused coding for fine-grained analysis, reducing the number of topics from the previous stage; and (c) the findings are described in the form of narrative "tales," combining the themes that emerged in stage b to create "a thematic narrative that is fieldnote-centered" (Emerson et al., 2011, p. 202).

Observation data is then triangulated with in-depth, semi-structured interviews to obtain additional information about settings and patterns not captured during the observations. On average, the interviews lasted 45 minutes. These semi-structured interviews covered topics that emerged from the observations, including biography, involvement with the data journalism community, conceptions concerning data journalism, information about routines, organizational relationships, external collaboration, and projects carried out. This part of the study was designed to ensure gender balance among the respondents (see Table 1), with the hope of gaining access to a diverse mix of ideas, priorities, and methods, and avoiding the homophily trap, that is, focusing on similar people who share similar perspectives and provide similar information. By considering gender diversity, this study aimed to obtain an assessment from practitioners as complete and precise as possible, presenting their different views of the underlying situation and approaches to dealing with it. However, it is worth mentioning that gender diversity was not a level of analysis in this study, and, importantly, that only team members who were in the newsroom at the time of the visits were interviewed.

The observation and interviews were conducted over two days in the second week of March 2020 and were constrained by the Covid-19 crisis, as it happened immediately before the pandemic hit the United States. However, these steps provided sufficient data with which to answer the research questions proposed by this study.

4. Findings

4.1. Data Journalism at the Center: Two Data Teams Working Together

It was the beginning of spring 2020, a year marked by a tragedy that changed the entire world. On arriving in New York, I went to the ProPublica office, located on the 13th Floor of a building on Manhattan's Avenue of the Americas, popularly known as Sixth Avenue. This is an affluent neighborhood filled with the offices of bankers and high-growth companies, proof that the funding ProPublica has received has had a significant impact on its business model. In part, this is thanks to generous donors since its foundation in 2008 (Sparviero, 2020). "Especially in the beginning when we're just starting to gain credibility, and winning a Pulitzer early on at ProPublica certainly helped us to establish" (R5). Investigative journalism, therefore, became a form of strategic value, helping to attract interest in funding the outlet.

In 2019, ProPublica raised about 4.7 million dollars in online donations, while gifts and major grants above 50 million consolidated more than 19.9 million dollars (ProPublica, 2020). These funds allowed the organization to build a highly qualified team, despite its small newsroom, in discordance with findings of Fink and Anderson (2015) who reported "some fairly profound differences between the way that data journalism was practiced at larger, more resource-rich news organizations" (p. 470). Although ProPublica is equipped with significant resources, when compared with its peers, the news outlet is still small.

The organization began producing data journalism soon after its foundation, and this is an important long-term investment for the company. Data journalism at ProPublica is "split into two separate teams [the data team and the news app team] but, in many ways, there's a lot of overlap" (R4). Both are led by ProPublica's deputy

Table 1. Interviewees.

Code	Position	Gender
R1	News Applications Developer	Female
R2	News Applications Developer	Male
R3	News Applications Developer	Female
R4	Data Reporter	Male
R5	Editor	Female
R6	Editor	Male

managing editor. There are many similarities in their tasks and, "in theory, a lot of the people in either can do both tasks" (R5). In terms of their specific roles, the news app team is dedicated to more technically complex tasks and those that require interactive and in-house, scalable solutions (Usher, 2017), while data reporters are responsible for requesting, collecting, and analyzing data, and collaborating with reporters on data stories. "It's mostly going to be a reporting aid and not something that the public will ever see….So, we often work side-by-side with a news app developer," explained R5, referring to how the teams are organized in the newsroom.

The units are composed of more than a dozen professionals. This is an indicator of their importance in the newsroom, which is also demonstrated by how the units have grown over time:

> Our [data] team now consists of me and seven data reporters, which is huge because when I was hired [in October 2013] I was the only data reporter. In fact, even when I took over the team, we had two data reporters. So, since June–July of 2017, we have nearly tripled in size. (R5)

In total, the data team consists of four reporters responsible for general data reporting for ProPublica's national operation, one dedicated to covering the tech industry and algorithms (referred to as computational journalist), one data reporter who works at ProPublica's Illinois office, and one dedicated to the local reporting network project. Similarly, the news app team is made up of "six people. We have three people who are in the office right now and we have three people who are remote. It will soon be two and four" (R6). By having part of the unit working remotely, the news app team is used to dividing up responsibilities and relies on Slack, an online collaborative software tool. This corresponds with the findings of a study by Moran (2020), who describes the growing popularity of online collaborative softwares in virtual newsrooms, which are increasingly coexisting with physical newsrooms, creating new forms of sociability, collectivity, and control within newsmaking. Thus, the news app team's tasks are distributed between coverage of the Federal Government, based in the Washington DC office, a broad swath of the Midwest, based in the Illinois office, and several other projects, such as Electionland, Visual Evidence, and the Local Reporting Network. Both teams, along with the other newsroom members, use Slack to exchange information and ideas, hold meetings, and resolve any issues that occur.

Data stories produced by these teams are not merely daily news stories, but aim to produce a greater impact on society, echoing Sparviero's (2020) definition of social news enterprises. In general, these data stories require a lot of time, effort, and dedication from the practitioners who create them. "I think it's a luxury in the news industry. We'll spend the time that we need to dig into a story. And many news organizations don't have the staff or the budget to do that" (R5). This does not mean that all the projects are complex, although I observed a high level of complexity in some analysis and visualization, requiring a certain knowledge of statistics and coding for team members to implement their solutions, for instance, the Polluter's Paradise series. On the other hand, Dollars for Docs is an example of a project that did not demand complex analysis and became one of ProPublica's best-known projects. Dollars for Docs simply combined several data sets and made them available on one portal. One result of this project was that this data has now been released by the government, "but before they did not, it was on 20 different pharmaceutical websites" (R5). This project means that the public can access the data to check whether any doctor or teaching hospital has received money from pharmaceutical or medical device companies. These are specific characteristics of ProPublica, which differ from those previously reported in the data journalism scholarship, as organizations suffer from limited resources including "time, tools, manpower, and the financial means and expertise" to produce data stories (Fink & Anderson, 2015, p. 470).

4.2. Hybrid Schemes to Support the Production of Data Stories

Another important aspect of the organization is that news apps and data teams work as knowledge and collaboration hubs for the newsroom. The relationship between these teams and other journalists in the newsrooms expands beyond their work tasks, as they have lunches and coffee breaks together, which reinforces their relationships. As a result, many journalists working internally at ProPublica value data very highly. These journalists typically pitch ideas to their teams that use datasets or pitch the datasets themselves. Conversely, practitioners on the data or news app teams may find an interesting dataset or story and contact a journalist who can help them to get access to the sources.

In particular, the structure of the organization, composed of two data teams acting across sectors, helps to promote data skills and collaboration with other journalists. This internal collaboration is important to the success of data stories, as these professionals can leverage their combined potential to the fullest, serving to overcome any individual lack of knowledge on particular topics. However, some interviewees bemoaned the fact that data journalists are sometimes seen as a service desk. "I am always cognizant, we don't want to become a service desk. We have to be treated as co-collaborators and not just the data folks who do an analysis and give you your results, neither make any calls nor do any part of reporting. Fortunately, that has happened very rarely at ProPublica" (R5).

In part, this concern relates to the makeup of the teams behind the projects. They come from a variety of backgrounds, including computer science, design, and law, among others. For example, R2 went to design school, where he also studied computer science. However, he always believed that "design is a field that is good when you combine it with another field….[In my previous job,] I was getting interested in the combination of computer science, design, and journalism" (R2). Consequently, he began doing some side projects in journalism, which brought him into contact with a community of journalists, educators, entrepreneurs, and advocates passionate about journalism at the Newsgeist conference, allowing him to get his first job in the news industry (Lewis & Usher, 2014).

Similarly, R3 studied computer science, but she "always had a natural interest in journalism." Thus, data journalism seemed to her an opportunity to "combine my interests, computer science, and journalism. [To gain experience in journalism,] I worked for the student paper in college….Then, I realized that data visualization was my way in. So, I decided to learn DataViz (data visualization) in my spare time" (R3). Shortly afterward, she was offered a Google News Lab Fellowship at ProPublica, which was her first step toward data journalism. However, the fellowship only lasted two months, meaning that she had to look for new job opportunities. After a placement at the MIT, she got a job at New York Public Radio. As a local reporter, R3 did shoe-leather reporting, going out onto the streets looking for people to interview:

> I just took it upon myself to pad the pavement and go to community board meetings. I did things that traditional reporters do when they're learning how to report, because I wanted to learn how to be a good reporter. I needed to understand what this is like because I also felt I wasn't gonna get another opportunity to do that and I was probably right. As a data journalist, you're typically not going to community board meetings and interviewing angry tenants. So, I learned by doing and also by reading and listening to the people around me….I think it can be challenging for data journalists to sometimes just understand what traditional reporting means and looks like because you don't get much practice in it. Unless that's where you started and then you transitioned into data journalism, but a lot of people I know have only ever done data journalism. So, I think that you'll have a nebulous idea of what it's like to be a traditional reporter but having an on-the-ground experience that I had, it was really helpful. (R3)

4.3. The Increased Specialization of Knowledge to Delimit Boundaries

Although these professionals have some experience that allows them to write stories, the majority bemoaned the specialization that typically ends up limiting their writing to "annotation in infographics" (R1). "Most of the writing that I do happens inside the graphic, like an explainer text" (R3). This echoes the findings of Stalph (2020), who found that data journalists are either consigned to the margins or fully incorporated into newsroom culture. Similarly, this is a way to establish journalism boundaries to prevent or contest the emergence of new players in the field of journalism (Carlson & Lewis, 2015).

The journalists, meanwhile, had had to learn coding skills, showing that the definition of journalism is expanding to encapsulate other activities (Belair-Gagnon & Holton, 2018). "I didn't have anywhere close to what a typical data journalist would have. I knew and I was very good at Excel. But I didn't know any of the programming languages….I had to learn R and Python so that I can do more complex, ambitious work." (R4). R6, meanwhile, "started building side projects like maps that updated crime numbers," while he was studying journalism. He took "whatever digital classes existed, which were not that many at that time" (R6). This allowed him to get an internship at the *Los Angeles Times* on their data desk, where he further developed these skills. Similarly, R5 also "took a bunch of data journalism classes. Moreover, I worked at the data library for NICAR. So, when I graduated in early 2012, I was hired full time for a nonprofit investigative reporting center, much like ProPublica." The fact that she was immediately hired in a role like this shows the importance of this training to develop her data skills.

However, there is a consensus that you cannot take "every person working for a tech firm in Silicon Valley and put them in a newsroom and expect that they're going to automatically be a great data journalist" (R5). Data journalists need to demonstrate that they have the necessary skills. This shows that there is a certain level of acceptance in the news industry through adopting some of its established journalistic standards (Belair-Gagnon & Holton, 2018; Carlson & Lewis, 2015). For example, the computational journalist was hired after publishing a post on Medium in which he reported his findings on the Federal Communications Commission's comments on net neutrality using machine learning algorithms. Having a law and computer science degree, he demonstrated that he also could do journalism by producing this analysis (R5). By combining these distinct skills and expanding the boundaries of journalism (Carlson & Lewis, 2015), while turning news nerds into journalists (Kosterich, 2020) and putting both together in multidisciplinary teams (Hannaford, 2015), ProPublica makes use of multiple internal resources in its quest to produce high-impact journalism, in line with the ideas of Borges-Rey (2016) who found that "the best stories they have produced were those where data journalists collaborated with specialised correspondents" (p. 838).

4.4. Making an Impact Locally

In striving to make the greatest possible impact nationally and internationally, ProPublica also relies on external collaborations and partnerships. "We are not as ubiquitous as the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, or the *Washington Post.* What I think is interesting is that a lot of our stories end up running in the *Times* or the *Post*....[Our website] is not a destination website, especially because we publish once a day," explained R5. In this context, the news outlet found in collaboration, mainly at the national level, a key vehicle to reach a wider public and exercise an important influence over government decisions and policies. This is in line with previous research showing that data journalists tie together to reach the common goal of providing a quality product efficiently (de-Lima-Santos & Mesquita, 2021; de-Lima-Santos & Salaverría, 2021; Heft et al., 2019).

By 2019, ProPublica had 228 publishing partners (ProPublica, 2020). According to the interviewees, the news outlet always has an eye on maximizing the impact of its stories, and collaborative alliances are an important strategy for reaching this goal. Collaboration has become a way for the organization to achieve its long-term financial goals, by showing donors the importance of ProPublica's journalism (Sparviero, 2020), particularly investigative data journalism. The news app team even includes a member whose role is entirely dedicated to establishing partnerships and collaborations.

Among these projects, the Local Reporting Network is one of the most important cooperative programs. "At this point, it's about a little over 20 newsrooms all across the US that we work with. They pitch us for a yearlong project and ProPublica pays their salary and they get access to our research team, news app data, and engagement" (R6). In this way, ProPublica promotes data journalism beyond its newsroom and shares its know-how and experience with local newsrooms. One data journalist from each team is responsible for working with these newsrooms, and this is "the same job we all do, but working with those local reporters instead of ProPublica's reporters" (R3).

Importantly, not every project in the local reporting network has a data component. In those that do, there is a higher level of involvement. For example, "in the case of Hawaii, that's as far deep as we'll go. Fully co-reporters with our [local] reporter, and we'll be doing much of the work. Then, whenever it comes time to write the story, we'll be helping to write the story and all the other stuff" (R4). Otherwise, the collaboration is limited to "a consultation on something, if those local journalists want to request data from an agency or they got this data back and they are trying to figure out what to do with it'' (R4).

In one example, ProPublica partnered with The Texas Tribune, where they "co-hired 10 people who will live in Texas to report on Texas-based issues" (R6). This entailed a five-year commitment of 5.75 million dollars (ProPublica, 2020). One ProPublica project involved building a map of toxic areas in the US, and there were several severely affected areas in Texas. This team helped "to build a graphical walkthrough of the Texas areas" (R6). In this process, the news app team rarely "[does] graphics with other news organizations. In fact, it's usually hard to share graphics across news organizations" (R4). Thus, the collaborations focus on the sources and knowledge on the ground that these local journalists have, which, "in some cases, we just won't be able to do without them" (R6). The idea behind this is to build local impact through these partnerships, more than developing these skills together. "We get the ability to distribute journalism with a local organization. So, if we're gonna be writing about a place and we want local impact then it's best to publish with the local news organization" (R6). This echoes the findings of Heft et al. (2019), who demonstrated that transnational collaboration among organizations from different European countries was important in creating impact across Europe.

5. Conclusions

This research aimed to explore the role of multidisciplinary teams and hybrid profiles at ProPublica and how these professionals and their modes of work contribute to significant data projects. In its quest to produce high-impact investigative data journalism, ProPublica has adopted a two-team approach (RQ1). While the data team is responsible for requesting, collecting, and analyzing data, the news app team is more focused on creating visuals and apps, elevating the "computational prowess and product development" (Usher, 2017, p. 1128). The latter is also in charge of more complex data analysis. While some journalists have had to expand their knowledge and learn more about other areas, such as coding and design, some non-journalistic professionals have also had to develop writing skills. These hybrid roles are an important aspect of ProPublica's professional culture. Although the organization's work involves specialized components that may require a high level of specific expertise, the professionals working in these units have hybrid backgrounds that make it difficult to categorize them as either journalists or technologists (Splendore & Brambilla, 2021).

Additionally, ProPublica's data teams comprise multidisciplinary teams so that different skill sets complement each other. These findings demonstrate that ProPublica became a data journalism powerhouse by combining not only multidisciplinary teams, but also practitioners with hybrid backgrounds. In data journalism scholarship, it is common to treat these two approaches separately, which expands the dichotomy of journalist-programmers (Hannaford, 2015; Parasie & Dagiral, 2013) versus multidisciplinary teams (de-Lima-Santos et al., 2021; Fink & Anderson, 2015). This study suggests that this model of collaboration between journalists and non-journalists has broad implications for the development of data skills in the newsroom, such as the case of ProPublica. This extends the literature by showing that the combination of hybrid profiles in multidisciplinary teams is a strong strategic fit to create and develop data teams in newsrooms, complementing each other's skillsets and ensuring coherence in the overall approach to the matter.

On the other hand, there is a certain level of skepticism about the capabilities of these journalists in terms of writing and reporting data stories, even though some have already worked in other newsrooms. This skepticism aligns with the established journalistic boundaries that work to stratify different groups of people in newsrooms (Carlson & Lewis, 2015). Similarly, specialization is a process of establishing boundaries, as professionals are concentrating on and becoming experts in a particular subject or skill. However, this tends to happen to a much lesser extent at ProPublica, where the focus on data journalism since the organization's foundation has fostered a culture of collaboration with data teams. Furthermore, the data editors are constantly reinforcing the idea that data teams are not a "service desk." This is important because data has inherent biases and may discriminate against certain groups of people, meaning that the involvement of data journalists is vital from the early stages of investigation to ensure a deep level of understanding (Tong & Zuo, 2019). Acknowledging the rise of these hybrid profiles is an important step in reengineering "journalism's longstanding professional boundaries" (Kosterich, 2021, p. 24).

In another vein, partnerships and collaboration are central to news organizations' ability to innovate (RQ2), as stories are increasingly being developed collectively, meaning that collaborative networks are becoming a key mode of governance (de-Lima-Santos & Mesquita, 2021; de-Lima-Santos & Salaverría, 2021; Westlund et al., 2021). Through collaboration, ProPublica gains access to sources and information that they would not otherwise have (Heft et al., 2019). Additionally, this process has a significant impact on local communities, as local newsrooms working with ProPublica have decisively influenced the political agenda on several topics. Thus, these actors transcend existing professional boundaries, leading to new interdependencies and collaborations (de-Lima-Santos & Mesquita, 2021). Their interdependent, long-lasting relationships also impact ProPublica's trajectory. Hence, awards are a result of these joint efforts.

Although not every organization can hope to successfully emulate ProPublica, the American digital news outlet serves as a model for many others, based on the principles of transparency and accountability leading to trust (Howard & Constantaras, 2019). The organization's hybrid business model, as defined by Sparviero (2020), is also becoming a model for others, which can inspire other newsrooms to establish data practices, policies, and capabilities to collect and use on news reporting.

Concerning the limitations of the research, this study is restricted to the observations and views of practitioners who were in the New York newsroom on the days I visited. Unfortunately, this was constrained by the Covid-19 crisis, as it was planned to last longer, allowing me to demonstrate causality and how these practitioners approach unexpected events. Similarly, the newsroom was not working at full capacity. Future research could explore similar topics from the perspectives of practitioners working in other ProPublica offices, or remotely. Additionally, it would be interesting to consider the perspectives of partner organizations to understand how these partnerships are helping to develop data skills at the local level. It would also be interesting to investigate how other members of the newsroom perceive data journalists and the limitations that arise from collaboration between the two spheres.

In conclusion, I was able, despite the limitations discussed, to highlight some relevant aspects of data journalism practices at ProPublica. This study contributes to the scholarly literature by expanding the concept of journalistic boundaries in the context of data journalism epistemologies, shedding light on the experiences and realities of a specific group that had not previously been discussed at this level.

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Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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Article

Negotiating Journalistic Professional Ethos in Nordic Business Journalism

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Abstract
News work conducted more like business creates clashes between the journalistic and managerial professional ethos of editors. While journalists' professional ethos includes values of self-regulation, autonomy, and public service, managerialism promotes business ideals, measurable outcomes, and organizational efficiency—values that business journalism is claimed to support. This article aims to show how editors negotiate their work-related ethos at the junction of two professional discourses. The article is based on 20 semi-structured interviews of editors in four Nordic business newsrooms. The results reveal a new hybrid professional ethos that combines managerial practices with journalistic ideals. Furthermore, editors in business journalism tend to absorb managerial tendencies more easily due to close connection to financial and commercial communities. Strong journalistic principles prevail, but managerial ideals are considered a notable part of the new editorial work ethos.

Keywords
business journalism; editor; ethos; financial journalism; managerialism; newsroom management; professionalism

Issue
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1. Introduction

The digitalization of news media has put newsrooms face to face with changing work practices. As newsrooms implement new technologies and meet a digital audience's preferences, normative journalistic ideas are also reformulated. Editors managing the news work are leading the change in newsrooms and tackling the demands of more efficient, quantified news production. Here, I examine how editors, in the rarely researched domain of business journalism, describe their work practices and ethics in the changing climate where business ideals are more prominent.

In journalism research, observing the construction of professional identity has focused on the profession's value system and shared understanding of being a good journalist (e.g., Deuze, 2007; Kunelius & Ruusunoksa, 2008; Wiik, 2010). This construction is not static or defined and it closely connects with the profession's work practices, though certain ideas are considered elements of "real journalism"; journalists perceive themselves as impartial and autonomous professionals in the service of the public good (Deuze, 2007, pp. 162–164). Moreover, journalists' attitudes and values are affected by national media systems (Hallin & Mancini, 2003), and different specialized areas, like business journalism, tend to have their own nuances (e.g., Butterick, 2015; Orange & Turner, 2013; Reunanen & Koljonen, 2018; Slaatta & Kjær, 2007).

The ethos of journalists, i.e., practice-related work ethic, consists of the normative evaluations of good work that relate with the need and capability to do work well (Sennett, 2008, pp. 241–254). Ethos as a concept gathers work practices that are done for "good" but also decodes how changing practices subtly alter professional ideals (Carpentier, 2005; Deuze, 2007, pp. 162–163; Kantola, 2013, p. 611). Modifications in practices are reflected in journalistic professional identity and the virtues appreciated within the profession. Professional ethos lets us speak both about what journalists want to be and how they must be because of external influences (Hanitzsch & Vos, 2017; Jaakkola et al., 2015; Kantola, 2013, 2016; Reunanen & Koljonen, 2018).

Journalism as a profession makes its claim on occupational authority by distancing itself from business considerations (Schudson & Anderson, 2009); particularly in newspapers, there has been a Chinese wall between businesspeople and journalists to prevent content being corrupted by commercial interests (Aris & Bughin, 2009, p. 346). Because journalism is characteristically defined by everyday work processes and routines, not official qualifications, keeping the wall up has been an important and delicate issue (Kantola, 2016, p. 430), but as news outlets meet a harsher economic environment, managerial thoughts and ideas spread from the business to the editorial side. In this situation, the role of editorial leadership is crucial. Maneuvering in the relentlessly changing news media sphere increases demand for business competence within organizations (Achtenhagen & Raviola, 2007; Gade, 2008).

In this article, I study how managerial work practices are combined with journalistic ones in the work of editors of Nordic business news. This is done to observe how managerial and journalistic professional ideals are negotiated to create a new professional ethos—a conception of who they want to be but also need to be in their work.

Looking at the tension between journalism and managerialism in business journalism is particularly interesting since the field, with its close relations to the commercial and financial life, has been observed to promote neoliberal ideals and uncritically popularizing "enterprise culture," "managerialism" and "cult of the chief executive" (Butterick, 2015; Mazza & Alvarez, 2000; Slaatta & Kjær, 2007). Furthermore, the question of whether business journalists are more part of the business society than of journalism has been presented (Doyle, 2006; Engwall & Kipping, 2002). These questions have gained new meaning in recent decades, when businesses and market forces, natural subjects for business journalists, have obtained ever more power in society (Butterick, 2015, p. 180).

Though the editors' changing professional values and ideals have been studied before, separately or in comparison with reporters, (e.g., Kunelius & Ruusunoksa, 2008; Waldenström et al., 2019) I chose to concentrate on the news managers' perspective. The editors' perspective on the development of journalism is significant, as their role in newsrooms and power over journalistic content expands (e.g., Deuze, 2005, 2007; Kantola, 2013, 2016). This matter should be examined continuously, as the fast pace of change affects news work daily, and its practices are in constant negotiation with the surrounding environment.

The study, conducted from March to June 2018, draws from a round of 20 semi-constructed interviews with editors in four leading Nordic business newsrooms that provide a comprehensive but somewhat homogenous subject matter within the Nordic media system. The interviews show how editors negotiate new work practices in their ideals of a job well done.

2. Literature Review: Journalism Meets Managerialism

Predominantly, ethos is used to describe distinctive virtues, styles of behavior, or informed practices, aimed at achieving the good, or at least some vision of the good. It is an action-oriented concept, opposite to values that might remain unlived or inactive (Aristotle, 1991, p. 37; MacIntyre, 1984, pp. 188–191). Professional ethos describes practice-related work ethics of journalism and is similar to other concepts, like professional identity (see Carpentier, 2005; Deuze, 2005; Hanitzsch et al., 2016) in how it enables observing and separating normative ideals from descriptive practice, seeing journalists as how they want and must do their work (see also Hanitzsch & Vos, 2017; Jaakkola et al., 2015; Kantola, 2013, 2016; Reunanen & Koljonen, 2018).

According to Deuze (2007, pp. 162–164), the ideal qualities in journalism are public service, objectivity, autonomy, immediacy, and finally ethics. Such qualities usually characterize journalism in Western societies, though they are not static, but exist in relation to time, surrounding societies, and media systems. Journalism conducted according to these norms, or "professionally," is usually seen as the best kind for democracy, but these qualifications of professional journalism have gathered critical voices too: They are said to make journalism "blunt," constrain its real potential for public service, and be a construction of commercial media and journalists to gain social prestige (Waisbord, 2013).

Earlier research has shown the changing nature of journalists' ideals and value-related work practices (e.g., Kantola, 2013; Reunanen & Koljonen, 2018) and that there is growing misalignment between ideals and practice: what journalists say and how they practice their work (Wiik, 2015). Journalism cannot be seen as one cohesive profession anymore as younger journalists' experiences differ evidently from the ones of earlier generations; older journalists struggle to hold onto professional values, while for the younger, "liquid" generation, the changes are easier to accept (Kantola, 2013; Nikunen, 2014; Wiik, 2015). There is no clear sense of professional community anymore, which is likely to polarize the profession ideologically; for instance, professional autonomy seems to be reserved for a few high-profile journalists, not regular reporters (Wiik, 2015.). In addition, specialized journalists, like cultural or business journalists, differ from the general.

In the financially tightened market situation, journalists, once seen as free riders of the news business (Aris & Bughin, 2009, p. 351), have been obliged to defend media organizations' success. In many cases, the walls between news and commercial departments have lowered; consequently, journalists must closely consider audience demands and preferences (Picard, 2006, pp. 6–7) and increasingly take over roles such as news producer (Kantola, 2013, p. 610). The professional ideals of journalistic autonomy and public service might be threatened by shrinking economics (Schudson, 2009, p. 370) and journalism being conducted more consciously (Hujanen, 2008; Kunelius & Ruusunoksa, 2008). In this change, newsroom managers are at the forefront. They need to carry out the transformation needed to cope with a new market situation. The journalists' collective, accustomed to work by gut feeling (Schultz, 2007) and independently in the public interest, is now being faced by ever more influential top-down managerial practices: business ideals and performance indicators, a logic of linear control, and a demand for efficiency (Waldenström et al., 2019).

"Managerialism" perceives management as its own profession: According to managerial discourse, there are more similarities than differences between organizations, so all "businesses"—manufacturing, health care, academics, and journalism—can be managed with the same principles. Skills and experience related to an organization's primary business are believed to be secondary. (Klikauer, 2015, p. 1104). According to Entemann (1993), managerialism, with its aim for profitability and efficiency, has become the prevalent ideology of society.

Managerialism has its origins in the growth of neoliberalism, regarded by the economistic view of the world as a marketplace, where free-market principles are fundamental (Maringe, 2010). In the 1980s, belief in free markets' advantages gained ground, and the role of regulation decreased. This was the golden age of business journalism as well. Practical manifestations of managerialism are adoption of a rational business-like approach (e.g., strategic planning and objective setting) and establishing a management culture, strengthening management functions like performance management, adapting human resource management methods to ensure employee commitment, shifting from inputs and processes to outputs and outcomes, and adding more measurements and quantification of outputs as performance indicators (Diefenbach, 2009; Pollitt, 2003; Shepherd, 2018, p. 1662). Similarly, Shepherd (2018) has described five notions of managerialism: in "ideal" managerialism, management is perceived as a good and important thing, a discrete function, value-neutral and rational, and generic and universally applicable; further, managers should have the right to manage.

Managerialism, like professionalism, is a normative system regarding what counts as valuable knowledge, who has access to it, and who is authorized to act on it (Clarke et al., 2000). Managers are professionals of efficiency. Managers are also seen as the main sponsors and beneficiaries of managerialism since it improves their social status organizational position. Therefore, managers may cite the code of good management practice to defend their own autonomy similar to how journalists refer to journalistic integrity (Pollitt, 2003).

Managerialism is challenging journalism just as it challenged academic work (Abramov, 2012; Shepherd, 2018). It may appear to solve the current challenges of journalism and legitimize it with the argument of financial sustainability: In order to produce good-quality journalism, journalists need to accept economic factors, audience orientation, and collaboration with businesspeople (Andersson & Wiik, 2013; Cornia et al., 2020; Waldenström et al., 2019, p. 5). Furthermore, journalists see their managers' right to lead as a necessity for their company to survive; contrary to earlier times, when newsrooms were supervised by collegial control, the responsibility is now given increasingly to editors, who focus more on measurable outcomes than input and process of news production (Waldenström et al., 2019). Not all accept these changes. Andersson and Wiik (2013) suspect there is a risk of journalistic values becoming superficial—constantly being applauded but with no influence on editorial decisions.

To put it bluntly, managerialism does not care what kind of journalism is produced, it concentrates on efficient production and preferred outcomes, which might challenge the ideals of journalism. Journalists have seen public service and commercial goals as opposite objectives and perceived these as a zero-sum game. This could be a maneuver to protect the autonomy of the profession and to gain trust and credibility, a great social asset to journalists. In this mindset, the newsroom produces all the news organization's value, and commercial departments only exploit it, borrowing the credibility and readers' trust (Coddington, 2015). However, research indicates that journalistic and managerial logic may coexist (Saldaña et al., 2016). Raviola (2017) describes how editors appeal to both traditional journalistic values and financial principles and, depending on the situation, make choices accordingly. Additionally, Cornia et al. (2020) show that there is a new norm of integration between editorial and commercial functions that combines journalistic ideals with values such as collaboration, adaptation, and business thinking. Managerial ideals and work practices streamline particularly editorial work, and as Andersson and Wiik (2013) notice, make editors experience their role as more professionalized than earlier—not in the journalism field, but with economic and managerial skills.

3. Business Journalism as a Profession

Over the last 50–60 years, business and economic media coverage have increased considerably, following the growing importance of economic factors in daily life. However, research on business journalism remains limited. Earlier research concentrated on historical development, and more recently it has broadened its outlook to the field's relationship with stakeholders, and geographical perspective has shifted to more regional and to markets outside Anglo-Saxon countries (Slaatta & Kjær, 2007, pp. 13–26).

Business journalists are a specialist group with some practices of their own, although the line towards general journalism is not static (e.g., Ainamo et al., 2006). Doyle (2006) even claims that business journalists commonly see themselves as professionals of the business community while the role of journalists is somewhat subordinate to it. Indeed, business journalism has always connected closely with stakeholders of commercial and financial life in surrounding society, and business journalists tend to position themselves to assist investors, managers, and other parties that need market-relevant information (Davis, 2007, pp. 64–65). Furthermore, business journalism has been claimed to play a part in spreading and commercializing certain ideals of management, and Engwall and Kipping (2002) even see business media as part of a symbiotic system, the "global management knowledge industry." Observers fear that business journalism uncritically popularizes "enterprise culture" and "managerialism" (Mazza & Alvarez, 2000), and, for instance, Tienari et al. (2007) show how by discursive framing, business journalists highlight certain neoliberal translations of social reality while marginalizing others.

Particularly after the 2008 financial crisis, business journalists have been accused of forgetting their ideals and role as a watchdog of society's financial and commercial power. In general, business journalism accepts and helps sustain a neoliberal view of business and the hegemony of free-market capitalism (Butterick, 2015, pp. 127, 174) which might be contradicting when reporting on the economy broadly, not just on companies. In addition to being too close to their sources, business journalists are claimed to be economically illiterate to report objectively on market movements and too focused on short-term trends leading to a reinforcement of the market consensus (Schiffrin, 2015; Thompson, 2013).

In her study on American business journalists, Strauß (2019) notes that business journalists tend to see themselves as active watchdogs, but a misalignment exists between perception and actual behavior. Journalists claim that they report to the public, but when asked in more detail, they are writing for wealthy, male, well-educated business people or citizens with a strong interest in investments. Strauß (2019) notes, similarly to Usher (2012), that business journalists prefer speaking to an elite audience. Furthermore, they have been accused of promoting the "cult of the chief executive," which has created an almost mythic status for managers in corporate culture and enabled extremely high salaries—another manifestation of neoliberal business philosophy (Butterick, 2015, pp. 127–129).

Strauß (2019) calls for a new modern watchdog role of business journalism: fair, objective, and reliable educator and informant for the general public. She sees this as a challenging task due to decreasing resources in the newsrooms: There are fewer editors and less collegial mentoring and educating younger reporters which might lead to lower quality in reporting and a deterioration in ethics and journalistic values. However, business journalism has also taken in a stronger audience orientation. While in traditional business journalism large companies are being discussed more than small ones, the trend has turned towards more personality-driven storytelling: Interesting people and businesses are more attractive to readers, and well-known companies, like those in retail business, gather more traffic. Critics argue that the concentration on interesting individuals diverts attention from more important and substantial issues. (Butterick, 2015, p. 122.)

3.1. Business Journalism in the Nordic Countries

The Nordic countries can be seen as a relatively homogenous region economically, politically, and culturally, which correlates to their mass media (Byrkjeflot, 2001; Hallin & Mancini, 2003; Slaatta & Kjær, 2007). These countries are highly developed capitalistic economies with parliamentary democracy, welfare-state regimes, and uniform national cultures. Simultaneously, however, the Nordic countries seem a challenging market to business journalism; as their awareness of social welfare and national economic policies is highly developed, there are strong traditions of economic regulation, and, in general, commercial mass media has been relatively weak (Slaatta & Kjær, 2007).

According to Hallin and Mancini (2003) professionalism is affected by different national media systems. The Nordic and Central European media model—the democratic corporatist model—is characterized by the strong and early development of journalistic professionalism (Hallin & Mancini, 2003, p. 143), implying that journalists in this system have adopted relatively similar traditions and attitudes. Syvertsen et al. (2014) gather these into a Media Welfare State model, a set of organizational values and beliefs that align similarly with the more general economic and social terms of the welfare state. Although many developments, like increasing commercialization, have taken place in the Nordic media landscape, compared internationally, Nordic journalists in general are still characterized by a welfare state mentality (Ahva et al., 2017).

The development of modern business journalism in Nordic countries has coincided with many changes in the market since the 1960s. The postwar consensus of the welfare states began falling apart, and neoliberal and microeconomic ideas started rising. The financial and industrial elites saw that certain business interests needed to be communicated to shape public opinion, and business journalism served as the means. Business news increased greatly, many new media outlets were founded, and a new kind of neoliberalist criticism towards the welfare state and interventionist policies grew in the Nordic countries (Slaatta & Kjær, 2007, pp. 13–26). Hence, the development of Nordic business journalism is not totally parallel to the region's journalism in general but creates an interesting combination of ideologies.

At first, business journalism met skepticism among journalists and was seen as little more than free advertising. It was also difficult to find journalists that were competent enough to report on business matters and some business news outlets started to train business and economics graduates to journalists while others chose to train on-the-job journalists to report knowledgeably on business and economics. Due to their background, the latter group had a stronger understanding of journalistic norms, but both affected the development of the profession (Grafström, 2006; Kjær, 2009, p. 77).

While business journalism in Western countries is generally produced to the business elite, the Nordic business journalists saw themselves early on rather as reporting on behalf of a broader public. During the years from the 1960s to 1980s, when the field was developing fast, this idea transferred into journalism with tabloid-like features: empathizing drama in business with large pictures and headlines. From the 1980s, business journalists started practicing more investigating ideals of journalism and concentrated on newsworthy companies and events. This development led to the acknowledgment of business journalism as a professionalized field inside journalism also in Nordic countries (Kjær, 2009, pp. 78–79).

4. Research Data and Method

The empirical case study concentrates on editors of four Nordic business newsrooms: *Kauppalehti* in Finland, *Börsen* in Denmark, *Dagens Industri* in Sweden, and *Dagens Näringsliv* in Norway. These media outlets provide a homogeneous field of study: they have similar market positions in their countries; substantial editorial departments; and large, targeted audiences in both print and digital. Although they are leading business news providers in their markets, they have faced turbulent years, as have all legacy news organizations.

Dagens Industri is clearly the newest of the publications, founded in 1976, when business news was increasing rapidly in Nordic societies. The three other publications have century-long histories with close connections to the business life of their markets. For instance, *Kauppalehti* was originally the "tribune for businessmen" and *Dagens Näringsliv* the newspaper for the seafaring industry, later adding all business to its scope. They all declare to be (economic) liberal or liberal-conservative. *Kauppalehti* is the only one owned by a publicly listed company, Alma Media Oyj.

To answer the research question, I conducted a series of face-to-face semi-structured interviews (total of 20) with news editors and managing editors in these four newsrooms. Also, three editors-in-chief were included. Interviews took from 40 to 75 minutes, from April through June 2018. Every interview was recorded, transcribed, and further analyzed in accordance with the thematic analysis.

In the interviews, I asked the editors to describe their careers: how and why they joined the profession, what they thought was good journalism initially, and how those ideas have prevailed or changed. The aim was to observe signs of shifts in the ethical framework. Second, I invited the editors to describe how journalism is produced every day in their newsroom, what is the driving force in their work, what makes them feel a job is well done, and what they do if they do not reach what they are after. With these questions, I was able to picture how the editors perceive their everyday work.

The goal was to identify what the editors saw as modern-day "virtues," cultured practices of everyday work, to pursue a job well done, but it is worth noting that this is how the editors find their work and the actual practice might differ from this, like earlier research has shown (e.g., Wiik, 2015). Journalism as a profession finds its ethics in work practices, which is why changes of profession have often been examined by studying the transformation of everyday journalistic work.

In the thematic data analysis, I first collected all notions where editors' descriptions of their work mirrored traditional journalistic values and then those reflecting more managerial values. This provided a combined representation of what editors saw as the ideal demeanor for an editor. After this, I grouped the descriptions into categories: "managerial ideals," "journalistic ideals," "me as a manager," and "me as a journalist." Through these categories, I could find different aspects of the editors' ethos. Finally, I divided the whole material into four groups by country to assess differences between the newsrooms, though on the surface there were none.

5. Results

During the news industry's recent volatile years, newsroom management, the editors, have faced the biggest changes in their work: In addition to good journalism, editors must understand the business of news and manage news production accordingly. In business news, editors have a solid understanding of market economy ideas but also long journalistic careers, tight connections to their professional community and its values, and a strong mission of public service. As a result of the interviews, I gather here four sets of ideals that appear in the editors' work: they appreciate the position of a manager and see management as important; they find efficiency and results valuable; they value the public service role of journalism though the connotation is changing; and preserving autonomy and self-regulation of the profession qualifies the editors to supervise journalists. This set of ideals creates a new, negotiated professional ethos of a business news editor.

5.1. Qualifications of a Manager

In my interviews, I met seasoned newsroom managers, ages 35–55, 70% men. They usually had an academic education in journalism but also in politics, economics, or political history. Most became journalists due to their interest in societal or economic matters, but some had landed in journalism only by will and talent to write.

Most editors interviewed had long careers as business journalists, and many seemed to have suitable qualities to become managers. They described wanting to carry more responsibility for planning and developing the work, organizing, and supervising others—activities promoting improved performance, which managerialism emphasizes:

> I'm a pretty decent journalist but I'm probably more talented as a manager. So that was always, quite early, I like to boss people around. And I realized I can actually get more done by trying to train a whole newsroom. (Interviewee 4)

Although some of the editors drifted into management, most were conscious of what the managerial role demands and, early on in their careers, noticed that they possessed those qualities. Editors are comfortable with the overseeing and supervising role in the newsroom and see it as increasingly important in splintered online media. They talk about "the product" or "the brand" which they are producing as efficiently as possible:

> You…have to get all these individuals to work together. Perhaps that's one of the things that I like to do and what I'm good at….At the paper you have a lot of superegos but then it's the product that you are, that gets the results. It's not the egos, but you need egos, and you need all the other ones as well to get a good product. (Interviewee 5)

The editors' willingness to manage shows that, from this perspective, journalism has similarities to any other business, as managerialism indicates. The same demands of efficiency, target setting, and teambuilding exist in the newsroom. When editors manage newsrooms with undisputed performance indicators, they represent one of the key qualities of managerialism: it is rational—that is, value-neutral. Journalism, earlier produced only with "gut feeling," becomes a logical, rational, measurable performance.

Business news editors share the values of market economy, which seems to support absorbing business-like work manners: working next to and with the business community and reporting on its issues is an inspiring resource of more-efficient practices. In addition, the editors believe that business journalists in general accept performance indicators and want to know how the business of the organization is going. While this is only an assumption, and actual perception of the new, results-oriented practices might vary, the values by which a newsroom is managed evidently affect what is considered a job well done and how business journalists experience their profession.

5.2. The Ideal of Efficiency and Results

In addition to managing daily news production, editors are increasingly responsible for the outcomes of the newsroom, particularly for reaching audience objectives. Following readers' preferences through online analytics defines the day, and news work is conducted consciously to reach desired results. As one described her daily job: "What are main stories, how the headlines are edited, how the stories are served, how they are packaged, how do we get them as large audience as possible" (Interviewee 1).

Earlier, the editors oversaw the prioritized agenda of the day, which was printed in the newspaper. Now the focus is shifting towards news promotion. Though actual reporting follows traditional practices, stories go through new kinds of promotional processes like any other merchandise: they are edited, marketed, and optimized to achieve their full potential in every channel. Outcomes are explicit when they can be observed in metrics.

Although the reasoning is clear, working by and for the numbers is stressful for editors. Many find the work denser, with pressure for traffic and subscriptions higher than ever. The work happens faster, and there are many new aspects to consider when deciding what to publish. There is also constant concern about being boring if the news selection is done according to only "old" news criteria:

> Decisions need to be made more quickly. And you can't go only with that, ok, this [topic] has a great societal value and meaning, this has to be reported well. You have to think of the input–output relation. But I guess it has always been like that but now there are more aspects, things that impact the decisions, if there used to be three or four, now there are 10–12, and you have to prioritize. (Interviewee 9)

> This is very complex. The old regime was that there was a simple truth, and we tell it, we take care of it, but now we really don't know, and we can't always tell what is interesting to the readers. (Interviewee 19)

The immediate response to publishing decisions in online channels is welcomed, but many editors reminisce about print-only times when they got reader statistics only once or twice a year. In the present day, when the workday is run by numbers, editors seem to have lost some control over their work, and, furthermore, some of them feel constantly anxious about coping with the new demands. But the concern also reveals that these metrics are important to the editors and high-performance results are valuated:

> We have this constant anxiety if we have enough traffic, do we have sufficiently stories, are they good enough. This has changed so that it is constant, that worry, that something bad is going to happen, or that things do not go as they should….When in the morning we already see that now this goes wrong, and we try to react, but usually it goes that we do not get hold of it, so it is terrible and that way it is excruciating to follow those figures, so that it really makes a normal person grey. (Interviewee 6)

Comparing the four newsrooms, the editors who mainly oversaw production of the print edition felt less stress over the results—they still lived in the "stress-free print era." Correspondingly, editors supervising an entire newsroom or online news production expressed more stress over productivity and outcomes. In *Kauppalehti*, where editors expressed the most stress over results and were notably aware of the business aspirations of their company, figures seemed to have the biggest role, maybe because it is a publicly listed company.

5.3. The Ideal of Public Service and Objectivity

The editors feel strongly that they work for their readers, for the public. They have a strong sense of public service ideals or even an educational role of journalism: The editors want to report to the public "how and where wealth is created in society" or show "how objectively produced information changes markets" (Interviewees 6 and 19). Although business journalism is claimed to be for everyone, the described primary readers are typical for the business press: well-educated managers, entrepreneurs, or investors with high income. Similarly to other Western societies, business journalism in Nordic countries is journalism to the elite.

Public service once meant helping citizens operate consciously in society, but now audiences seem to have shifted to more active but privatized "consumerists" (Ahva, 2010; Hanitzsch, 2007). As noted earlier (Andersson, 2009; Andersson & Wiik, 2013), journalists talk about readers, but editors apply the term "customer" to describe their audience. Like general news, business journalism has moved in a more consumerist direction. Newsrooms provide their subscribing customers "premium" content that is useful to the reader, and public service is also described as "giving investment pointers." The public service ideal remains, but there is a shift towards customer-centricity; whereas citizens are provided information needed in democratic decision-making, consumers are offered tips and directions to manage everyday life—in business journalism, their commercial, professional, and financial life:

> Ten years ago, when I started as a…news editor we were very focused on big news, sometimes scandals, sometimes breaking news, and we are still that, but we are also very focused…to help our readers and subscribers to make good decisions at work or at home. (Interviewee 5)

The area of journalism that was the mouthpiece of the industrial and financial community, particularly in postwar Nordic societies, has now turned towards the single consumer, following the same trend as journalism and society overall. Nonetheless, this change relates to audience-centricity, which has been accelerated by developing traffic analytics and the need for growing numbers of readers (see Butterick, 2015). This is causing ethical discussions: whether to produce high-end financial journalism to the business elite or more everyday-focused service journalism to "blue-collar men and women in business," as one interviewee put it.

Some of the editors find the new "interesting" news criteria somewhat objectionable. Traditionally business journalism has concentrated on reporting about large companies with a critical outlook on performance indicators. Now stories are more personality-driven and about intriguing companies of all sizes. The old, objective, and critical stance in news selection gives to some extent room to "business entertainment" and this bothers some of the editors.

5.4. Autonomy and Self-Regulation of the Profession

Even if editors' power over news production has increased, the strong collegial support and control, shared values and ethics of the profession, and sense of journalistic community preserves as a foundation relied on to claim occupational authority. Autonomy is still attained by the strong value system of journalism and self-regulation among journalists.

Editors speak highly of the collegial community and its ability to steer news work back on track. For instance, high-end financial journalism and "popular" topics require continuous negotiation, and certain stories get published even though they are estimated not to bring that much traffic. Many editors also trust that their long career in business news gives them a gut feeling of what "the brand,"—the promise to the readers—is and what it entails. Many say they have learned from mistakes made when the online channel and audience metrics were new. At that time, journalism was under threat of becoming too commercially led, and even its reliability was questioned because of so-called click journalism.

Journalistic ethics are the solid ground on which the editors build their managerial role. Hints of managerial behavior are accepted in the newsroom when the editor is foremost a journalist. Journalistic work experience is a highly legitimizing factor to lead journalists (see Waldenström et al., 2019, p. 13); it balances the ethos of journalistic collegial control and the accountability of managerial ruling. As one editor described it: "The editor needs to be there, go along, be a part of the team—then it works. If the journalists do not rely on their management, they start acting out some way, and that can be quite brutal" (Interviewee 2).

The editors also need to ride on two horses when motivating reporters to be both good journalists with high ethics and productive news workers with measurable results. Earlier, a reporter wrote as one of many journalists without really seeing what their input was worth to the outlet; now everyone's performance is ranked daily. The feedback came from peers, family, or friends; now it comes from clear numbers. As managers, the editors see this as a challenge. They meet a value cap where once were journalistic ideals:

> You can't ignore that there's an element of competition, that it's, of course, for a reporter, on a good day he or she gets another high…if they're having a bad day, of course, it's much tougher. Sometimes we [editors] have been forced to…[say], this is what happens, but it doesn't mean that this is a better article, it's just selling more, and it doesn't mean that you're a lousy reporter because no one actually cares about this [your story]. (Interviewee 9)

Explaining what it is to be a good journalist today, and what is expected from a reporter, might be one of the most demanding tasks in editors' work. Considering that journalism is a profession without formal qualifications, preserving certain boundaries is crucial to protect the occupational authority journalists hold. When supervising news work, the editors must carefully consider when to elevate journalistic autonomy and when to press business goals.

6. Conclusions

In this article, I examined how Nordic business news editors combine managerial practices with their journalistic professional ethos. The interviews show how editors negotiate managerial and journalistic work practices and how managerial ideals are blended with virtues of journalism. Together, they create the professional ethos of editors.

The professional ethos of editors, what editors want to be but also need to be, is a combination of ideas from journalism and managerialism. The editors in business news media are notably well equipped to be managers—they have the qualifications and the trust in market economy, and they see management to be important. However, there is still a strong sense of journalistic ethos and professional community. The editors must be and want to be a visible and dependable part of the journalistic profession.

The editors create new hybrid professional ideals. In pure managerialism, policies of good management are enough to justify managers' autonomy (Pollitt, 2003), but as news managers, editors must also integrate journalistic ideals into it (Shepherd, 2018). While the editors have will and talent to manage people, to earn the right to manage and the social status of manager in the newsroom, editors must also be good journalists. Furthermore, editors believe that quantitative evaluations and journalistic ambitions can coexist; it is a demanding job to combine them, but these are professionals of news work management. Also, Saldaña et al. (2016), Raviola (2017), and Cornia et al. (2020) have made parallel observations. The most challenging role editors have as an interpreter between these two sets of ideals: how to encourage reporters to be the best journalists but also produce the best measurable outcomes.

As earlier research has shown (Anderson & Wiik, 2013; Cornia et al., 2020; Waldenström et al., 2019), editors legitimize change in the newsroom as a necessity to keep producing quality journalism. Alternatively, emphasizing performance indicators can be a shield against pressure from the business side: By communicating with figures, editors are neutral professionals who can be trusted to manage newsrooms in an impersonal way with the company's best interests in mind. Performance indicators are a good calling card for editors, justifying their autonomy and legitimizing their authority over the journalism they lead, which is why editors are notably committed to them. The figures are neutral and free of values: if they are good, I am a good editor.

The journalistic professional ethos is transforming, along with the profession's work practices in a changing mediascape, but changes differ by journalistic field. There are differences between general and specialized journalism and even inside one specialized journalism group (Jaakkola et al., 2015, p. 824). In business journalism, the distinctive feature is familiarity with managerial manifestations. Business journalists have promoted market economy ideals in society alongside close encounters with the surrounding business community (Butterick, 2015; Mazza & Alvarez, 2000; Slaatta & Kjær, 2007); therefore, it is logical that managerialism has more potential to infiltrate business journalism practices than those in other areas of journalism. The editors, too, seem to assume this.

In the case of business journalism, the ideal of public service has had a unique tone because the business press has concentrated on reporting to the financial and commercial elite in society. Now the increasing demand for commercial success requires editors to turn to more "general" financial reporting and service journalism to the masses. This new, more audience-oriented journalism can bring business journalism closer to the general public, which might benefit from more informative and educational reporting. This could be a modern-day watchdog role, as Strauß (2019) suggests, and an interesting development in the professionalization of business journalism. But is this a continuing development, and if so, where does it take business journalism in the media system?

Journalism as a profession makes its claim on occupational authority by distancing itself from business considerations (Schudson & Anderson, 2009), but editors are on the frontline of increasingly business-like demands in the newsroom. Business competence is expected from the editors (Achtenhagen & Raviola, 2007; Gade, 2008), but for business journalists, this is probably easier to accept than for others. Managerial work practices might help newsrooms operate more efficiently, and by reporting the outcomes business-style, the editors are able to show they are doing their part in the tightened economic situation.

Editors experience changes in news work differently from reporters, as their daily work concentrates on the whole news organization. It is no wonder that the professional ethos of an editor diverges from the reporter and reshapes into a hybrid ethos. The new hybrid ethos of editors was noted by Kunelius and Ruusunoksa (2008), and it can be observed as part of journalism's becoming a more "liquid" profession with an increasingly plastic, multiskilled, and highly manageable workforce (Deuze, 2005, 2007; Kantola, 2016, pp. 425–426). This development has become faster, with online news and heightened pressure for measurable results, and needs further research in the future.

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Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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Article

Digital Competencies for New Journalistic Work in Media Outlets: A Systematic Review

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Abstract
Media organizations operate in a rivalry-charged ecosystem nowadays, as a consequence of emerging patterns of news production, distribution, and consumption. Furthermore, the growing of public social media manifestations and the arrival of digital journalism require new professional roles, responsibilities, and skills inside the media industry. In this context, Faculties of Communication need to equip students with the digital competencies that are relevant to new media outlets and journalistic work. Based on this approach, the main objective of this study is to answer the following questions: What does the literature suggest about the digital skills that new professional profiles should acquire in the field of journalism? Which dimensions of digital competence are gaining visibility and which dimensions are being neglected? To answer the scientific objectives, a systematic review has been carried out following the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) statement. The application of the two models of digital competence, Bloom's taxonomy (1956), and digital competence in education (Redecker, 2017), serves as a framework in two ways: to determine the level of digital competence development, and to identify the dimensions on which greater emphasis is being placed. The results show a lack of studies linked to key aspects of digital competence, especially those related to personal growth, emotional state (Redecker, 2017), and the development of a deep level of acquisition of this competence (Bloom, 1956). This article proposes to reflect on whether we want to train professionals according to the model demanded by the media outlets nowadays, or whether we prefer to train communication professionals with a deep level of digital competence, since they are able to respond to the future and changing needs of the 21st century.

Keywords
digital competence; digital journalism; digital skills; journalism; new media outlet; professional profiles

Issue
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1. Introduction

In 2020, an artificial intelligent new language generator, GPT-3, wrote an essay, entitled "Are You Scared Yet, Human?," in *The Guardian*, to convince citizens that robots come in peace (GPT-3, 2020). This article expressed deep concern about the future of journalism and challenged the new competencies and skills of students at the faculties of communication. Thus, it has become increasingly obvious and plain that journalists and media organisations operate in a "hypercompetitive environment" (Chadwick, 2011, p. 3) and face different dilemmas currently. The emerging patterns of news production, distribution, and consumption (Carlson, 2017; Jensen et al., 2016; Salaverría & De-Lima-Santos, 2020), the growing public social media manifestations, and the arrival of digital journalism—described as a "highly elusive, changing, multifaceted concept" (Salaverría, 2019, p. 2)—among other phenomena, also emphasise the need to tackle this rivalry-ridden ecosystem. This can be achieved by training new professionals in skills, responsibilities, and roles in line with the requirements of the new labour market and the media industry.

For some authors (Berganza et al., 2017; Cruz-Álvarez & Suarez-Villegas, 2017; García-Orosa et al., 2020; Lugo-Ortiz, 2016; Sánchez-García, 2016), the future of journalism relies on keeping its essence instead of training students in new technologies. Accordingly, Lazo et al. (2020) stress that there are traditional competencies in journalism that graduates should always acquire, regardless of whether professionals operate in online or offline environments since the absence of these skills would lead to an "identity crisis of journalism, with deep and disastrous consequences for the profession, the society and democracy" (p. 55). In this sense, Lazo et al. (2020) propose that the most noteworthy classical competencies and skills of journalists are "professional identity competencies, solidarity competencies, narrative skills, reporting skills, ethical, deontological and juridical competencies, psychosocial skills, social commitment competencies, creativity, speculative competencies and autonomous learning skills" (p. 55).

Other scholars (Bruns, 2016; Diakopoulos, 2015; Goggin, 2020; Heravi et al., 2021; Lewis & Westlund, 2016; Steensen & Westlund, 2021) argue that in this new digital landscape, the journalism process itself has changed radically. Therefore, the emergence of new journalistic works has pushed professionals to quickly incorporate new digital skills and competencies in this changing media landscape. In this line, many new insights for new professionals range from data journalism (Appelgren & Lindén, 2020) to online participatory journalism (Abbott, 2017; Engelke, 2019), mobile journalism (Burum & Quinn, 2016), and fact-checking journalism. For example, according to Graves (2016), journalists will comprise fact-checking agents and many non-professionals who will combat disinformation to recover the prestige and credibility of journalism and the media industry, mainly after the spate of false narratives surrounding Covid-19 (Luengo & García-Marín, 2020), among other growing fields.

This new media ecosystem also entails other complex changes that jeopardise the future of the journalistic profession, since the internet and social media offer average people the ability to instantly transmit information globally (Chung, 2008; Currie, 2012; Rogers, 2016). As Shirky (2008) states, "if anyone can be a publisher, then anyone can be a journalist" (p. 71). Analysing citizen journalism and the open comments section on social media and internet forums clearly shows that participants communicate and interact with one another and the media channel, creating online discussions that may even gain more attention than the news articles posted by the hosting website itself (López-Vidales & González-Aldea, 2014). For this reason, social media editors also work to smooth out the rougher areas of social media journalism, so they can incorporate new technology responsibly and try to stem the flow of inaccurate information (Myers, 2011).

Contrary to this line of thought, Simon (mediagrrl9, 2009) is critical of certain aspects of citizen journalism, since the structure of professional news organisations provides that ability for reputable journalists to use the sum of their time and professional experience to gather information, cross-check facts, and publish the news (Paine, 2015). Individuals doing anything else are amateurs pursuing the task without compensation, training, or, for that matter, sufficient standing (mediagrrl9, 2009). Nonetheless, the internet and social media are assets for the spread of media activism (Pickard & Yang, 2017), specifically, in the context where the media are controlled and there is government censorship, a state that has stonewalled a great deal of newspaper reporting, but independent bloggers have still been able to uncover corruption and spur political action (Hassid, 2012; Paine, 2015).

Similarly, there is indeed a broad diversity of professional profiles in today's digital media newsrooms: writers or editors, data journalists, visual journalists (Cairo, 2015; Zavoina & Reichert, 2000), transmedia journalists (Renó & Flores, 2012), social media journalists and content curators (Renó & Renó, 2015), mobile journalists, and so on.

In this context, studying the competencies and skills for new journalistic work in media organisations has become an increasingly indispensable and urgent issue for professionals and scholars. In this research, we focus on digital skills and competencies for two fundamental reasons. First, examining general skills and competencies in journalism implies taking sides in an academic discussion that has been widely researched and debated, as demonstrated above. Second, the figure of the journalist had continuously evolved over the 20th century, although these transformations have occurred more acutely over the first two decades of the 21st century, mainly because the journalistic profession has continually changed to keep pace with technology. Therefore, to fully understand the new skills and competencies that these new professionals should acquire, it is essential to frame the research in the digital realm since it is currently the most common environment where journalists operate. This concrete framework also allows us to avoid outlining the future of journalism as vague and undefined.

However, in order to carry out a systematic review of the digital competencies that are necessary to develop the profession of journalist in the coming years, we first need to establish a theoretical framework that will serve as a model for understanding or framing digital competence. In this sense, the authors of this study have decided to use Bloom's taxonomy (1956) as a regulatory and measurement framework of digital competence, since Bloom's taxonomy (1956) is a reference model in the field of technologies and has a long trajectory in the scientific literature (Figure 1). Moreover, its specialization by categories and levels of acquisition is considered especially appealing to catalogue the findings of the systematic review in the following levels, which allows us

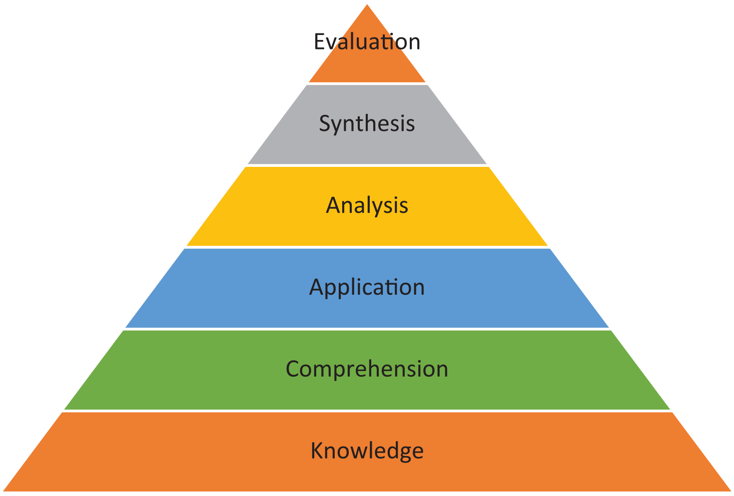

Figure 1. Bloom's taxonomy. Source: Adapted from Bloom (1956).

to map a possible training itinerary in the new journalism degrees.

The main objective of this study is to present a theoretical basis that can offer an overview of what is required in the journalism profession, as well as to provide some lines of action that could be incorporated in the curricular designs of the new degrees. Regarding this purpose, it is considered that the model of digital competence in education (DigCompEdu; Redecker, 2017) stands out as the necessary regulatory framework in which to check which aspects are being implemented in the training plans and which are necessary to include, review, or rethink (Figure 2).

Thus, we attempt to answer this question at the core of our research: What does the literature suggest about the digital skills that new professional profiles should acquire in the field of journalism? Which dimensions of digital competence are gaining visibility and which dimensions are being neglected? To shed light on these central questions, we have conducted a systematic review of the literature to understand the current state of this topic. In doing so, we have included research articles published over the last 10 years, from 2011 until our search was finished in June 2021.

2. Methodology

Our study advances a systematic review of the literature to understand the digital competencies and skills for the new professional profiles in the journalism field. New journalistic work in the social media era requires new professional roles, responsibilities, and skills within the media industry. Drawing on the emerging patterns of news production, distribution,

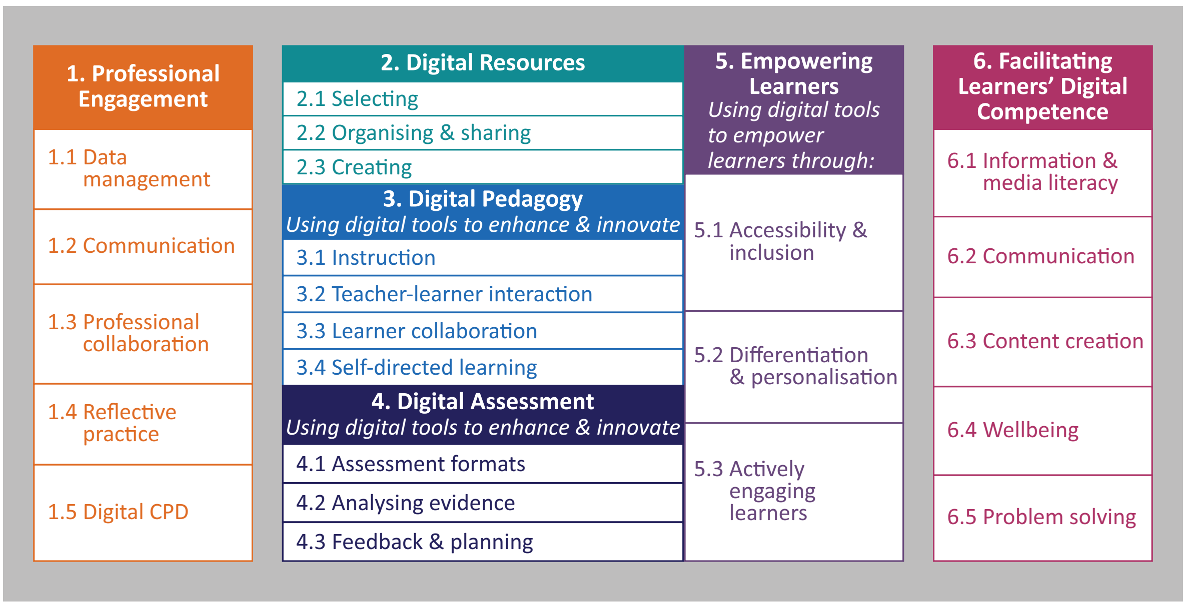

Figure 2. Overview of the digital competence in education framework. Source: Redecker (2017).

and consumption (Carlson, 2017; Jensen et al., 2016; Salaverría & De-Lima-Santos, 2020), as well as the growing public social media manifestations and the arrival of digital journalism as a "highly elusive, changing, multifaceted concept" (Salaverría, 2019, p. 2), we conducted this literature review to shed light on overall trends in digital competencies and to identify previous studies in this research area. Moreover, based on two framework models of digital competence, such as Bloom's taxonomy (1956) and Cruz's taxonomy (2020), and the DigCompEdu model, we will try to make an in-depth analysis of which aspects of digital competence are being bolstered in journalism degrees and which are being forgotten, leading to a lack of competence in information professionals. Along this line, we reviewed several types of literature, following the items recommended in the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) statement (Moher et al., 2009; Urrutia & Bonfill, 2013), to ensure the validity and the accuracy of the process. The remainder of this methodology section is organised as follows: in Section 2.1, we itemise the research question and outline the scope of this work. In Section 2.2, we highlight the features and values of systematic literature reviews and assess the appropriateness of applying this method to this study. Finally, in Section 2.3, we present and expound on our procedure in carrying out this systematic review.

2.1. Scoping

The formulation of research questions is one of the first steps in terms of defining the scope of a systematic review, guiding the decision making throughout the review process and ensuring more focused findings (Counsell, 1997; Petticrew & Roberts, 2006; Siddaway et al., 2019). Given this, we attempt to answer this core question: What does the literature suggest about the digital skills that new professional profiles should acquire in the field of journalism? Which dimensions of digital competence are gaining visibility and which dimensions are being neglected?

2.2. Systematic Literature Review

Whereas reviewing the literature "involves selectively discussing the literature on a particular topic to make the argument that a new study will make a new and/or important contribution to knowledge" (Siddaway et al., 2019, pp. 750–751). The literature review is a research method that addresses much broader questions, leading researchers to draw firm conclusions based on existing conceptualisations (Siddaway et al., 2019). For this reason, a systematic review is a useful qualitative and structured method of identifying previous studies in each research area (Siddaway et al., 2019). The literature review contributes to categorizing the studies to answer specific research questions (Grant & Booth, 2009; Williams, 2019), as well as revealing trends, connections across many studies and any gaps that need to be filled (Petticrew, 2001; Petticrew & Roberts, 2006). In doing so, this systematic review provides a database comprising all the literature relevant to digital competencies and skills for new journalistic work in media organisations.

2.3. Literature Search Process

Our approach consisted of two parts. Initially, we conducted a search process that started in January 2021, using the terms "digital journalism" and "digital skills" in the Web of Science (WoS) and Scopus. However, the obtained results were too broad and relatively uninteresting, giving the main objective of this study (to determine the overall trends and common patterns in publications that investigate the digital competencies and skills for the new professional profiles in the journalism field). Therefore, after this step, we undertook another search in which we used the Boolean operators AND and OR, adding the descriptors "media industry," "social media," "journalistic work," "journalistic routines," "professional competencies," "professional responsibilities," "professional skills," and "professional roles." Although the latter search improved the specificity of the results, the generated scientific publications were either too wide and extensive or too scarce and of little value for conducting a systematic review. These two initial searches positively contributed to developing a global overview of the studied subject and to reinforcing the suitability of conducting a systematic review of the literature.

In the second phase, we carried out a new search strategy to better achieve our purpose. In view of the obtained references, finally, in September 2021, it was decided to broaden the search by trying to conduct the widest possible literature review incorporating the findings found in the Scopus, WoS, and ScienceDirect electronic databases over the last 10 years, from 2011 until our search was finished in September 2021. Using these criteria, this final search strategy was formulated as follows:

> (Digital journalism skills) AND ((media industry) OR (social media) OR (journalistic work) OR (journalistic routines) OR (professional competencies) OR (professional responsibilities) OR (professional skills) OR (professional roles))

This process generated a total of 5,325 items (4,035 in Scopus, 1,132 in ScienceDirect, and 158 in WoS databases). Then, we applied the inclusion and exclusion criteria following the PICOS model for narrowing down the results, as Table 1 shows.

After the identification of the 5,325 generated items, we applied the inclusion and exclusion criteria (listed in Table 1), which allowed us to focus on the research question, narrow down the existing literature and delimit the systematic review (Siddaway et al., 2019). Taking into consideration these criteria, 3,531 references were

Table 1. PICOS model.

	Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
Participant	Any participants	None
Intervention	Any interventions	None
Comparator/Context*	Social science Research papers Published publications Papers that deal with journalism or digital journalism specifically	No publications published between 2011 and 2021 None in social science No research papers No published papers
Outcomes	Papers that deal with competencies and skills	Others
Study design	Any study designs	None

Note: The "Context" item is marked with an asterisk (*) because we have replaced the "Comparator" component, which is included in the classic PICOS models, with "Context" since it better fits the methodological needs of the studies in the field of social sciences. Source: Adapted from PICOS framework (Colás-Bravo et al, 2021).

excluded for the following reasons: 1,687 were not published between 2011–2021, 909 did not belong to the social science field, 766 were not research papers, and 169 had not been published yet. Consequently, this selection phase left 1,794 unique items. Subsequently, we screened the 1,643 remaining references, examining their titles and abstracts to identify the appropriate studies that tackled the subject of our study, leaving a total of 151 publications that fully satisfied the requirements detailed in Table 1.

Finally, after examining the full texts of the 151 items, we excluded 112 papers because they did not deal with journalism or digital journalism specifically or did not refer to competencies or skills or even failed to meet any of the above criteria that we had not identified in prior phases. Then, 39 items were included in the systematic review (see the full process in Figure 3). No manual results were added from additional databases because no relevant results were found for our study.

3. Results and Discussion

In this section, we present the results of our systematic review of the literature. Given the objective of the study, this section consists of three distinct parts. Firstly, the general results of the systematic review are presented according to the characteristics of the studies. Secondly, the studies found in the systematic review are catalogued based on Bloom's taxonomy (1956) and Cruz's taxonomy (2020). Both proposals will allow us to tackle what competencies and competency levels professionals are demanding in the last decade. Finally, the studies are arranged based on the DigCompEdu model of digital competence in education (Redecker, 2017). Hence, it is possible to establish which dimensions of digital competence are being emphasized and which are being left aside. The DigCompEdu framework is a model of digital competence that should guide the development of present and future curricula; therefore, the study of these aspects would allow us to assess whether the current curricula are addressing all the necessary aspects of digital competence.

Regarding the main characteristics of these publications (see Table 2 and Figure 4), most of the studies that deal with digital competencies and skills in the journalism field apply a qualitative methodology (n = 14; 36%), such as interviews, observations, and case studies. Additionally, nine publications (23%) are theoretical studies essentially. Eight publications (21%) employ a mixed methodology. Eight research studies (21%) are based on quantitative analysis, using questionnaires and descriptive and inferential methods. In general, these findings might reveal a strong upward trend in qualitative procedures, using interviews, observations, case studies or theoretical reflections.

It should be stressed that these publications also present different sorts of samples in their research. According to Pozo et al. (2012), the profiles of individuals who participate in studies are broad and heterogeneous; therefore, the criterion for their selection is a key point when carrying out an analysis. For this reason, based on the taxonomy proposed by Pozo et al. (2012), we have distributed the 39 publications comprising our sample according to the following profiles:

- Specialists; This group consists of specialists who do not belong directly to the education domain but are experts in the communication field due to their professional competency and experience.
- Involved: This group is made up of students.
- Facilitators: We include academics and university professors in this group.

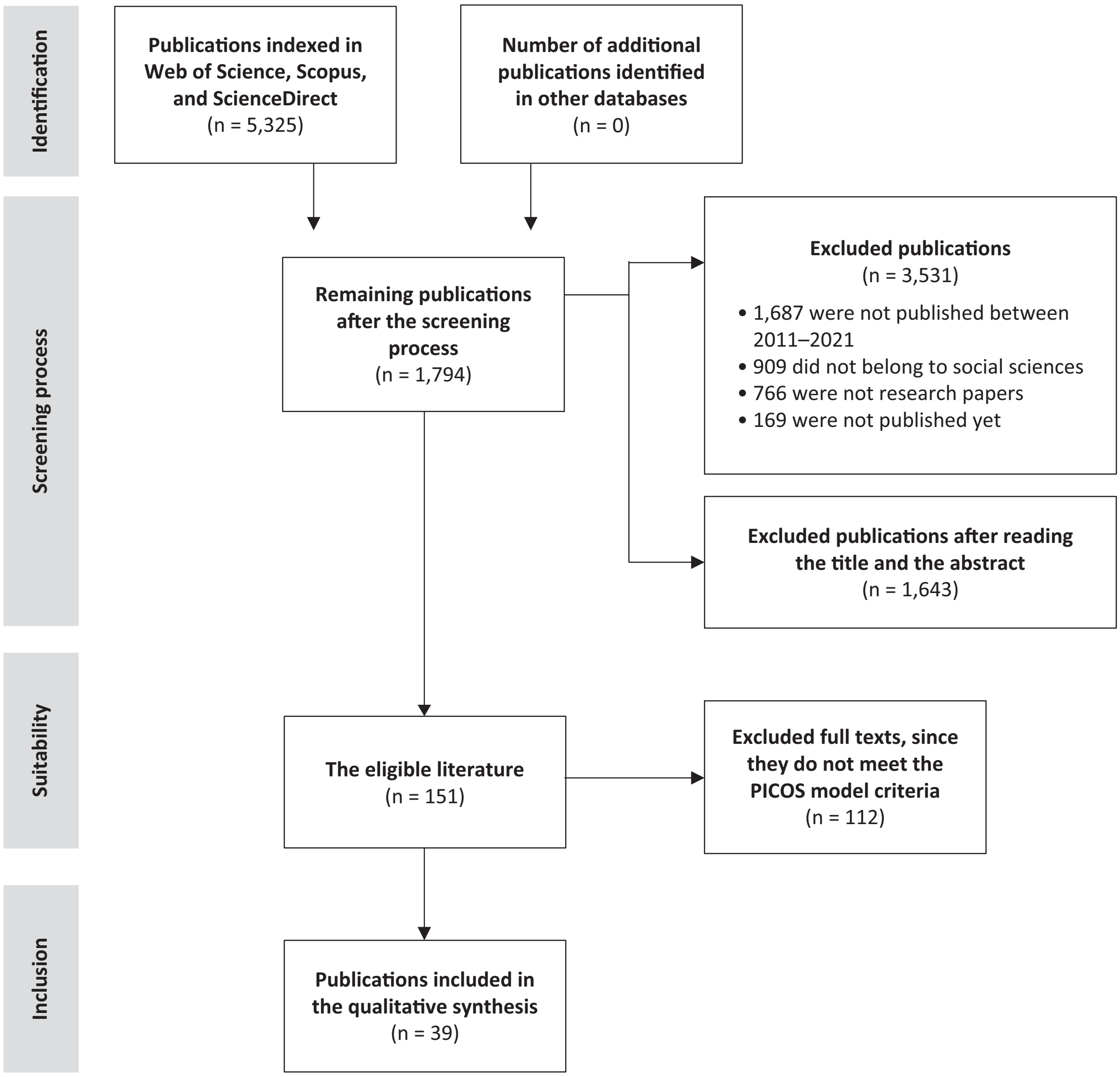

Figure 3. Planning, identification, and eligibility process workflow.

Bearing in mind that one research study could use two or more participant profiles, the "specialist" profile is the most prolific type in the sample (Table 2 and Figure 5). Fifteen publications have used journalists, founders of start-ups, media professionals, directors and supervisors of media outlets, news editors in press departments, managers of strategic communications companies, and executive producers of small audio-visual production companies. Likewise, six studies use the "involved" profile, since their samples consist of college students and

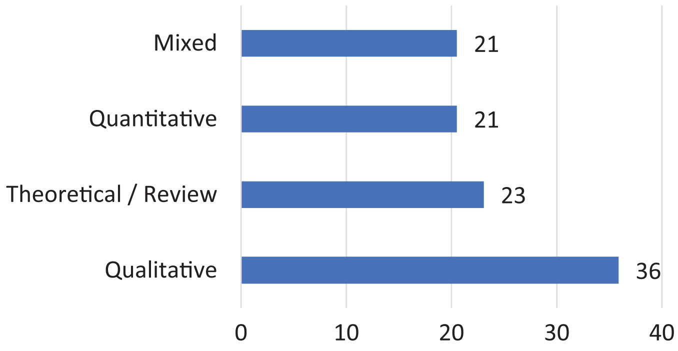

Figure 4. Percentage of studies by methodology.

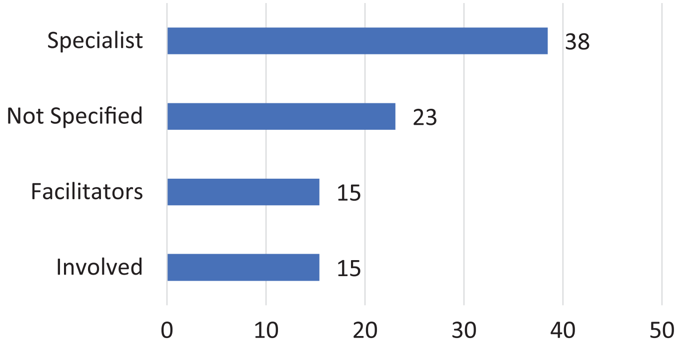

Figure 5. Percentage of studies by samples.

journalism and audio-visual communication students. Lastly, the "facilitator" profile is used in six research studies that have university professors and academics in their samples. Interestingly, there are nine publications in which the authors have not gathered any sampling, number of participants, or methods. Moreover, the samples of three studies comprise different sorts of narratives, such as the syllabi or study programmes of different universities, and previous publications when conducting a literature review.

Table 2 summarises the main characteristics of the publications included in the qualitative synthesis.

Table 2. Main characteristics of the publications included in the qualitative synthesis.

ID	Publication	Sample	Methodology
P1	Aceituno et al. (2014)	237 college students	Quantitative: descriptive and inferential
P2	Anderson and Bourke (2020)	Not applicable	Theoretical
P3	Appelgren and Lindén (2020)	Founders of two news start-ups in Stockholm	Qualitative methodology/case studies
P4	Calvo and Ufarte (2020)	Responsible for innovation of various national media, university teachers, journalists and journalism and audiovisual communication students	Mixed: qualitative/interview and quantitative/questionnaires
P5	Chen (2018)	475 scholarly journal articles in librarianship and journalism	Quantitative and qualitative comparative study
P6	Flores (2018)	Not specified	Mixed: case study and observation
P7	Gulyas (2017)	2,762 journalists	Quantitative/descriptive
P8	Jiang and Rafeeq (2019)	Six students, five professionals in communication, and four teachers from faculties of journalism	Qualitative/focus groups and in-depth interviews
P9	Josephi (2019)	Not applicable	Theoretical
P10	Karaduman (2015)	Not specified	Mixed: theoretical and in-depth interviews
P11	Kõuts-Klemm (2019)	10 journalists from different media outlets	Qualitative/in-depth interviews
P12	Labio-Bernal et al. (2020)	107 teachers	Quantitative/survey
P13	Lazo et al. (2020)	119 articles indexed in Web of Science (54) and Scopus (65) between 1998 and 2017	Literature review

Table 2. (Cont.) Main characteristics of the publications included in the qualitative synthesis.

ID	Publication	Sample	Methodology
P14	López-Vidales and González-Aldea (2014)	199 students	Qualitative/observation
P15	López et al. (2019)	Not applicable	Theoretical
P16	López-Martín and Córdoba-Cabús (2020)	20 public journalism universities	Qualitative/content analysis
P17	Lugo-Ortiz (2016)	Students, teachers, media professionals, and directors and supervisors of media outlets	Quantitative/descriptive and inferential media
P18	Macmillan (2014)	215 journalism students	Five-year qualitative study
P19	Manfredi et al. (2019)	Not applicable	Theoretical
P20	Oliveira and Angeluci (2019)	One market specialist, two national media professionals, and three researchers from Brazilian universities	Mixed: theoretical and qualitative/semi-structured interviews
P21	Pellegrini and Grassau (2018)	News editors in press departments, managers of strategic communications companies, and executive producers of small audiovisual production companies	Qualitative/in-depth interviews
P22	Recio and Santos (2014)	Not applicable	Theoretical study based on a teaching innovation project
P23	Reilly (2018)	The top 10 schools in the US, ranked according to the number of journalism and mass communication graduates	Qualitative: Content analysis of journalism courses at US undergraduate and graduate schools
P24	Robinson et al. (2021)	Not specified	Mixed: in-depth interviews and textual analyses
P25	Saavedra et al. (2020)	Total universe of official university bachelor's and master's degrees related to data journalism in Spain and offered in the 2019–2020 academic year	Quantitative/descriptive and inferential
P26	Saks et al. (2019)	4,387 tweets	Quantitative: a constructed-sample content analysis
P27	Schaich (2012)	Not specified	Qualitative/case study
P28	Sewchurran and Hofmeyr (2020)	Not applicable	Theoretical
P29	Stoker (2015)	Six students	Qualitative/semi-structured interview
P30	Tsymbal et al. (2020)	Journalism students	Mixed: quantitative/descriptive and inferential, and qualitative methods/interview and focus group
P31	Túñez et al. (2021)	12 experts from the main universities in Spain and heads of companies and of relevant associations in the sector	Qualitative methodology based on in-depth interviews
P32	Ufarte et al. (2018)	Seven university professors	Multidisciplinary method that combines qualitative and quantitative research techniques, such as structured interviews, content analysis, and questionnaire

Table 2. (Cont.) Main characteristics of the publications included in the qualitative synthesis.

ID	Publication	Sample	Methodology
P33	Ufarte, Anzera, and Murcia (2020)	Three projects: Maldito Bulo, Newtral Media Audiovisual, and Pagella Politica	Qualitative methodology/case study and in-depth semi-structured interviews (conducted with co-founding members of Maldito Bulo and Pagella Politica)
P34	Ufarte, Fieiras, and Túñez (2020)	768 subjects from 17 undergraduate study programmes and 116 subjects from eight master's degrees offered by universities in Spain	Mixed: literature review and case study
P35	Valencia-Forrester (2020)	Not applicable	Theoretical
P36	van Laar et al. (2020)	87 journalists	Quantitative/survey
P37	Viljakainen and Toivonen (2014)	10 publishers of consumer magazines	Qualitative/in-depth interviews
P38	Wagner and Boczkowski (2019)	71 participants in Chicago, Philadelphia, and Miami	Qualitative/in-depth interviews
P39	Walker (2019)	Not applicable	Theoretical

Once the results have been analysed by their main characteristics, drawing on Bloom's (1956) taxonomy that delineates a hierarchy of cognitive-learning levels and Cruz's (2020) typologies of competencies of digital journalists, we have designed a classification (see Table 3) to organise the main results of the selected 39 publications. As explained above, this categorization allows us to conduct an in-depth analysis of the competencies required by future journalism professionals and the level of development of these competencies, leading to concrete actions.

Bloom's (1956) cognitive competencies refer to the competency of learning to learn. These competencies are essential for training students in new skills and abilities adapted to their future jobs and professional challenges, due to the impact of digitalisation and technological innovation. Moreover, these cognitive competencies usually imply a hybridisation between the journalist's classic qualities and emerging technologies (Calvo & Ufarte, 2020), which flows into a hybridisation of profiles and transversality of knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Gulyas, 2017; Ufarte et al., 2018). In contrast, social competencies create a deeper discussion since these skills require journalists to interact with other users on different social platforms and gather information in order to understand how users behave and what the audiences' wishes are on the internet.

Having explored the competencies and their levels of development, the studies found in the systematic review will be categorized using the DigCompEdu framework model (Redecker, 2017; see Table 4). As already explained, this procedure will allow us to shed light on which dimensions of digital competence are being emphasized and which are being neglected. Assuming that all dimensions of digital competence are desirable and have approximately the same weight within the model, we understand that none of them should be neglected if we want to train professionals prepared for a digital world and in the continuous advancement of technologies.

As seen above, the results showed a clear imbalance in the dimensions of digital competence found in the literature. Specifically, it can be concluded that studies are putting the focus of attention on aspects based on the mastery and use of Digital Resources with 87% of studies that support this. Secondly, there was a pledge to generate the commitment of communication professionals with their job (Professional Engagement, 56%), including aspects such as Data Management or Professional Collaboration, and a mastery of the ability of Digital Assessment (60%), mainly related to the need to develop the ability to differentiate truthful and quality information within the digital information ecosystem. On the other side, we could see how fundamental aspects such as developing the journalists' ability to develop their digital skills (27%), empowering the professional, gaining confidence and security about their own abilities (27%), or encouraging the learning of an appropriate digital culture and professional health (20%), were those with the lowest percentage of occurrence.

These results collide worryingly with those found in Bloom's categorization (Figure 6), in which we found articles that mainly focused on the Knowledge (44%) and Comprehension (44%) dimensions, which are the lowest levels of Bloom's pyramid. The rest of the levels, such as Analysis (15%), Synthesis (18%) or Application (28%), have very low values, considering the number of articles analysed. As it happened with the evaluation dimension in the findings based on DigComEdu, we observe,

Table 3. Digital competencies for new journalistic work in media organisations.

Competencies	Definition	Task	Publications
Knowledge	Remember and memorise facts, principles, and concepts; evoking or recognising facts, events, or theories that have been learned	Memorise facts, principles, and conceptions	P1, P3, P4, P11, P13, P16, P14, P17, P18, P19, P33, P34, P32, P37, P2, P35, P38.
Comprehension	Organise events in such a way that makes sense; translating materials from one form to another, interpreting materials, or predicting future trends	Understand the information received	P7, P8, P13, P16, P17, P18, P19, P25, P28, P30, P31, P32, P36, P37, P35, P26, P38
Application	Apply the concepts or principles learned to solve new problems or handle new situations and to use learned materials in a new and concrete situation	Remember the information and apply it correctly	P1, P10, P13, P17, P25, P28, P31, P36, P2, P35, P38
Analysis	Ability to examine a concept and disaggregate it into its component elements, as well as to analyse the relations between and among parts	Ungroup the information into parts and determine how it is organised	P12, P17, P19, P25, P27, P28
Synthesis	Synthesise or propose new ways to value information; ability to resolve contradictions and put parts together to form a new whole	Propose new ways to understand the information	P17, P18, P19, P25, P27, P28, P36, P2, P35, P26
Evaluation	Ability to make critical judgements for a specific situation or a concrete purpose	Value the information from quantitative and qualitative perspectives	P12, P13, P17, P18, P19, P20, P21, P31, P32, P33, P36, P35, P26, P9, P5
Individual competencies	Ability to reflect on one's actions in digital environments; ability to direct and focus personal attention	Act correctly in a wide variety of situations	P1, P6, P8, P12, P13, P14, P17, P19, P22, P29, P30, P31, P33, P32, P37, P24, P2, P35, P26, P38, P39, P5
Social competencies	Ability to act in a socially responsible manner as a community member; ability to interact with social, technological, and educational networks; ability to work with others	Adopt a new way of interacting and socialising, not only between and among subjects, but between the audience and the content as well	P7, P13, P14, P15, P17, P20, P21, P29, P30, P31, P33, P32, P24, P2, P35, P26, P9, P23

Note: Publications may contribute to more than one competency. Source: Adapted from Bloom (1956) and Cruz (2020).

regarding Bloom's taxonomy, several articles that point to the need to develop this competence (38%). The rise of fake news is undoubtedly of concern to all agents involved in the communication field. Finally, the aspects related to Individual (50%) and Social (49%) competencies have high values, which are in line with the Professional Engagement dimension of the DigCompEdu model. Thus, there is a tendency in the media outlets that pushes journalists to acquire competencies related to teamwork, and to empathise with the audience and their job through self-directed learning, lifelong learning, etc.

Based on these results, we affirm that there is still a long way to go to establish training needs that holistically satisfy all the dimensions present in digital competence;

in particular, those that can promote higher levels of professional satisfaction such as empowerment, learning healthy work habits and other aspects that are not being incorporated or demanded by media outlets. Becoming aware of these aspects can be the first step to generate transformation and value in future curricula with a vision that is able to collect both the needs of the media outlets and the needs of the professional.

Table 4. Studies and dimensions of digital competence based on digital competence in education.

Dimensions	Definition	Studies	Total N = 30 (%)
1. Professional Engagement	Refers to digital skills and abilities to improve organizational communication between different agents; establish networks for professional collaboration, make use of reflective practice and serve for continuous professional training	P1, P3, P8, P9, P12, P14, P18, P20, P21, P22, P27, P29, P30, P33, P36, P35, P38	17 (56%)
2. Digital Resources	Refers to the capacity to select appropriate resources; create and/or modify existing digital resources to respond to objectives; as well as knowing how to manage, protect, share, and understand the use of open resources	P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P10, P11, P13, P16, P15, P17, P18, P19, P21, P22, P24, P25, P26, P28, P30, P31, P33, P34, P32, P38, P39	26 (87%)
3. Digital Pedagogy	Refers to the use of digital resources and tools for lifelong learning and for professional innovation; it consists of developing skills that guide professional, collaborative, and self-directed learning	P1, P2, P16, P20, P24, P26	6 (20%)
4. Digital Assessment	Use of digital tools to improve the evaluation process; is linked to evaluation strategies through ICT, understood in the context of using digital tools to evaluate information quality and veracity	P1, P3, P5, P6, P11, P12, P17, P18, P19, P20, P25, P26, P28, P33, P34, P32, P38, P39	18 (60%)
5. Empowering Learners	Related to ensuring that professionals have the ability to access and handle all kinds of digital resources to solve tasks in their workplace; is about exploiting the potential of ICT to reduce possible gaps; personalize differentiated learning itineraries and achieve the active participation of professionals, fostering an active commitment	P1, P14, P23, P24, P29, P32, P37, P38	8 (27%)
6. Facilitating Learners' Digital Competences	Linked to practices that promote the development of digital competences; is specified in posing challenges based on real problems that involve the use of technologies	P1, P3, P13, P23, P24, P26, P29, P36	8 (27%)

Note: Publications may contribute to more than one dimension.

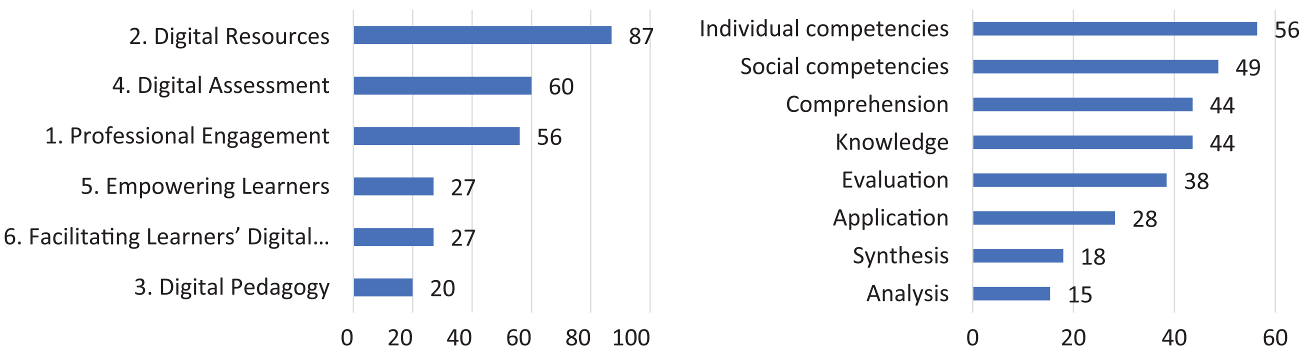

Figure 6. Comparison of the results based on the digital competence in education model and Bloom's taxonomy.

4. Conclusions

This study provides an important insight into the key aspects of digital competence and skills required by journalism professionals that are currently in demand. In addition, the systematic review of the literature that we have carried out in this work has determined which aspects or dimensions of digital competence are being privileged in the last 10 years. The application of the two models recognized by the scientific community of digital competence, such as Bloom's taxonomy (1956) and the DigCompEdu model (Redecker, 2017), has served as a theoretical framework in two ways: to determine the level of digital competence development (Bloom), and identify the dimensions on which greater emphasis is being placed. The value and originality of this work lie in the comparison of both models to extract a holistic view of the new digital competencies demanded by the media outlets, by measuring, at the same time, the areas in which digital competency is specified and its level of development.

Focusing on the characteristics of the works and following the taxonomy of authors such as Pozo et al. (2012), we conclude that the studies in the systematic review aim attention at collecting the opinion of communication professionals (managers, publishers, producers, etc.). Although this could be considered opportune and necessary, the great difference in the results obtained shows a clear tendency to favour the needs of the industry, which can lead to a neglect of the demands and proposals of both students and teachers, ultimately affecting future journalists. Some authors share this concern and demand the development of studies with a perspective focused on other actors in the sector (Tsymbal et al., 2020; van Laar et al., 2020).

These results are further supported by the comparative analysis of digital competence models. The analysis results have shown that there is a high proliferation of studies focused on competencies development related to improving organizational communication and marketing (e.g., Schaich, 2012), establishing networks for professional collaboration (e.g., Josephi, 2019), or making use of reflective practise (e.g., Aceituno et al., 2014; Jiang & Rafeeq, 2019; Macmillan, 2014). On the contrary, neglecting competencies development related to personalizing differentiated learning itineraries and achieving the active participation of professionals, fostering an active and creative commitment (e.g., Reilly, 2018; Robinson et al., 2021; Stoker, 2015). As well as posing challenges that involve the use of technologies to provide answers and promoting the development of digital skills (e.g., Appelgren & Lindén, 2020; Lazo et al., 2020; Saks et al., 2019) linked to aspects of individual and emotional nature: Empowering Learners and Facilitating Learners' Digital Competences dimensions (Green et al., 2017; Peters et al., 2018).

The results of this analysis also show that another of the key aspects found after the literature review has been to discover that from the point of view of the development of digital competence (according to Bloom, 1956), the studies focus on the most basic levels of digital competence: specifically, the Knowledge and Comprehenssion levels. These results converge, worryingly, with those of the analysis following the DigCompEdu framework (Redecker, 2017), in which studies focus on the Digital Resources dimension. This may highlight a tendency on the part of the media outlets towards the demand for worker profiles with very specific roles in the mastery and use of digital resources, but without paying special attention to cognitively higher aspects of digital competence (such as the level of Analysis, Synthesis, and Evaluation). These findings coincide with the concern of authors (Alexander & Giarraffa, 2021) who point out, as a general problem, the current trend of university curricula towards a more professionalizing than academic orientation, reducing the distance between the university world and professional training. If this were the case, it might inevitably lead to a proliferation of communication professionals who are very expert in certain tasks, but with a lack of global vision of the environment and with visible skills deficiencies. However, as some authors (Jagannathan et al., 2019; Rainie & Anderson, 2017) have highlighted, this may be a consequence of an increasingly sectorized world of work. It is important to note that current educational models of digital competence raise the alarm that it is as necessary to develop skills related to the use of resources as it is to develop other dimensions of digital competence (linked, as mentioned above, to personal development and personal empowerment, improved well-being, time management, etc.; Schleicher, et al., 2019).

In summary, this article contributes to the field of journalism research by providing a vision of digital competence linked to the current moment of work in the communication sector. Our results bring to light a lack of studies linked to some key aspects of digital competence, especially those related to personal growth, emotional state (Redecker, 2017), and the development of a deep level (Bloom, 1956) of digital competence acquisition. These results may serve to reflect on the need to look at the curricula of journalism and communication degrees and reflect about whether we want to train professionals following the model demanded by the media outlets, or whether we would like to train professionals with a deep level of digital competences. Nevertheless, despite that the DigEduComp framework is a global model, standardized throughout Europe and recognized in many Western countries, the national context could be a key factor that influences the interpretation of the results.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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Article

Managing Organisational Tensions in Cross-Sector Collaboration: The Case of Mediapolis

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Abstract
Cross-sector collaboration combining public (non-commercial) and private (commercial) organisational orientations is considered an advantageous and dynamic strategic approach to shared value creation and co-creative innovation in disruptive operational environments of media industries. However, cross-sector collaboration features inherent complexities and organisational tensions due to the fundamental differences between the actors' strategies and operational models. This article explores organisational tensions and dualities in media work in the cross-sector collaboration of media clusters. The qualitative case study examines the development of the management approach and practical operations of the Finnish media cluster Mediapolis, which aims to produce value, especially through collaborative content and concept innovation. The case study builds on extensive empirical material collected since the Mediapolis project started in 2011 until 2018. The analysis focuses on the management of complexities and organisational tensions in implementing collaborative strategies at Mediapolis, as well as managing the shared operations and work of the cluster. The results reveal tensions between the core dualities in developing Mediapolis as a collaborative arrangement between the participating organisations in practice, despite shared strategic-level aspirations. The findings elaborate on the dynamics of different organisational orientations and business logics, discrepancies between visionary planning and practical actions, and opposing organisational interests and strategies as sources for organisational tensions in collaborative contexts. The article contributes to both the theoretical and practical knowledge on organisational tensions and their management in cross-sector collaboration in media cluster development and provides implications for managing respective complexities in media work.

Keywords
creative industries; cross-sector collaboration; media cluster; media industry; media work; Mediapolis; organisational tensions

Issue
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1. Introduction

Changes in the operational environment of creative industries have destabilised the equilibriums of legacy (i.e., traditional) media organisations during the last two decades (Küng, 2017b; Westlund, 2012). These changes include shifting to digital production technology and distribution, moving from mass production to coproduction, transforming broadcast media to convergent cross-media, consolidation and internationalisation of the media industry, and the creation of media clusters and organisational collaborations (e.g., Komorowski, 2017; Küng, 2017a; Picard & Lowe, 2016; Villi & Picard, 2019). As a result, the barriers to entry the industry have shifted and business models disrupted, originating complications for media companies' performance and profitability (Ess, 2014; Küng, 2017a, 2017b). Collaborative arrangements (for example, in the form of partnerships, value networks, and media clusters) are necessary to cope with the new reality (Lowe & Stavitsky, 2016; Virta & Lowe, 2017).

The fundamental changes in the media industry call for a shift in managing media organisations and their collaboration. Cross-sector collaboration combining public (non-commercial) and private (commercial) organisational orientations is considered an advantageous and dynamic strategic approach to shared value creation and co-creative innovation in disruptive operational environments. However, cross-sector collaboration features inherent complexities due to the fundamental differences between the strategies and operational models of the actors.

This study focuses on complexities of collaboration in media work (Deuze, 2007). The purpose of the article is to explore organisational tensions and dualities (e.g., Lewis et al., 2014; Sutherland & Smith, 2011) of cross-sector collaboration in the work of media clusters, as well as their management. It utilises theorisations on collaborative dynamics and approaches, including hybrid organisations (e.g., Battilana & Lee, 2014; Battilana et al., 2015; Jay, 2013). Hybrid organisations blur traditionally separate forms and logics between public (or non-commercial) and private (or commercial) organisations (Battilana et al., 2012). Combining these different aspects implies the necessity of collaboration, which is also considered to provide important means for managing the variety of tensions inherent to hybrid organisations (Battilana et al., 2015; Ramus et al., 2017). Previous research has emphasised dual relationships in collaborations (Sydow et al., 2013), but cross-sector collaboration in hybrid organisations among multiple partners is a more complex interplay of different dimensions.

The qualitative case study focuses on the development of management and operations at the media cluster Mediapolis (https://mediapolis.fi/en) in Finland. Mediapolis aims to produce value especially through collaborative content production and concept innovation in the context of digital creative industries. The case study builds on extensive empirical material (interviews, documentation, informal discussions, and feedback sessions) collected since the Mediapolis project started in 2011 until 2018. The abductive analysis (see, e.g., Jay, 2013) focuses on management of complexities and organisational tensions in implementing collaborative strategies at Mediapolis, as well as managing the shared work of the cluster.

The results reveal and elaborate on managerial tensions in developing Mediapolis as a collaborative arrangement between the participating organisations in practice, despite shared strategic-level aspirations for value creation. The article contributes to both theoretical and practical knowledge on organisational tensions and their management in cross-sector collaboration in media cluster development and media work. More specifically, the article elaborates on the dynamics of different organisational orientations and business logics, discrepancies between ideal planning and practical actions as well as contending organisational interests, strategies and visions as sources for organisational tensions in collaborative contexts. The findings will be beneficial not only to media and creative industries, but also to other knowledge-intensive industries and organisations, where skilful management of creative organisations and their collaboration is crucial for competitive and collaborative advantage (Huxham & Vangen, 2005; Kanter, 1994; Lampel et al., 2000).

Following this introduction, the theoretical background of the article is described. Then, the case is introduced, and the methods are outlined, explaining the data collection and analysis approach. This is followed by the presentation of the findings of the empirical analysis. The article ends with a discussion of the results and conclusions, including implications for practice and suggestions for further research.

2. Theoretical Background

Turbulent operational environments challenge the performance and sustainability of organisations, leading to organisational tensions that require managerial attention (DeFillippi et al., 2007; Ghezzi, 2013; Ramus et al., 2017). The rapidly evolving technology and production environment of the media industry require developing knowledge, skills, and resources that are no longer viable to maintain in-house even for large and established media companies. New collaborative arrangements, for example, in the form of partnerships, value networks, or media clusters, are needed to cope with this new reality and achieve the necessary innovative development (Lowe & Stavitsky, 2016; Virta & Lowe, 2017). The changes sweeping the media industry call for modification, if not reformation, of organisational forms, performance, and management practices of media work (Küng, 2017a; Picard & Lowe, 2016). The ample shifts within the context of media organisations implicate the need for reconceptualization towards more fluid and boundary-crossing collaborative approaches (Hitters & Richards, 2002; Virta & Lowe, 2017), which is evident in the growth of the media cluster phenomenon internationally (Achtenhagen & Picard, 2014; Karlsson & Picard, 2011; Komorowski, 2017).

Definitions of collaboration vary, and the concept has been used interchangeably with concepts such as consortium, alliance, or partnership, where the role of formal or contractual relationships is often essential (Bryson et al., 2015). The concept of collaboration refers to working together (Kaltoft et al., 2006) in a cooperative interorganisational relationship (Phillips et al., 2000). Overall, definitions of cross-sector collaboration "stress a continuum of progressively more intense interorganizational relationships" (Bryson et al., 2015, p. 648). This article follows Bryson et al.'s (2006, p. 44) more focused definition of cross-sector collaboration as "the linking or sharing of information, resources, activities, and capabilities by organizations in two or more sectors to achieve jointly an outcome that could not be achieved by organizations in one sector separately."

Media work and production are characteristically collaborative (Eikhof, 2014; Townley et al., 2009). In creative industries generally, cross-sector collaboration is increasingly common, useful, and necessary in the current uncertain environments (cf. Bryson et al., 2015). It is also typically encouraged by policymakers and other public actors (Kettl, 2015), which has put cross-sector collaboration strongly on their agenda. Nevertheless, such collaboration features complexities and tensions due to its dynamic, multilevel systemic nature (Bryson et al., 2015; Huxham & Vangen, 2005). Thus, despite the expected usefulness of collaboration, partners often find collaborating troublesome and frustrating in practice (Bryson et al., 2015).

The capacity for innovation is crucial for media organisations facing current changes in their operational environments and business models. Media clusters can offer potential for creating collaborative advantage in content innovation and digital production. This is because hybrid organisations may demonstrate high-level innovativeness (Battilana et al., 2012; Mongelli et al., 2017), or at least they are argued to offer important capacity for innovation (Jay, 2013). However, hybrid organisations face instability and sustainability challenges due to characteristic tensions that arise from the need to combine fundamentally different organisational elements and logics (Battilana et al., 2015). These tensions may hamper the performance or even threaten the existence of hybrid organisations in practice (Jay, 2013; Mongelli et al., 2017).

Hybrid organisations feature dualities (cf. Sutherland & Smith, 2011), such as simultaneous commercial and non-commercial objectives (Ashforth & Reingen, 2014; Battilana et al., 2012). Creative organisations, including media, are also fundamentally characterised by dualities (Achtenhagen & Raviola, 2009; Küng, 2017b), such as continuous tensions between creative freedom and business orientation (e.g., Caves, 2000; DeFillippi et al., 2007; Deuze, 2011; Lampel et al., 2000). Furthermore, creative media organisations in the current context are required to simultaneously "innovate and optimize, which is expressed in the need for diversity and harmonization, for autonomy and centralisation" (Küng, 2017b, p. 207).

The case of Mediapolis, a media cluster and cooperative in Finland, combines publicly and privately funded organisations. Tensions reflect dynamic interrelationships and struggles between the seemingly opposing but interdependent elements of corresponding dualities (cf. Achtenhagen & Melin, 2003; Farjoun, 2010; Sutherland & Smith, 2011) that are inherent to hybrid organisation development. The analysis focuses on tensions in implementing collaboration in practice, because successful management of tensions increases the value-creation potential of cross-sector collaborations (Koschmann et al., 2012). The research questions are:

RQ1: What organisational tensions and dualities arise in media work in the cross-sector collaboration of media clusters?

RQ2: How to manage the collaborative tensions that emerge?

The findings contribute to extant research by elaborating on the central role of co-existing organisational tensions as a managerial challenge in dealing with the complexities of collaboration in the media industry. Despite shared goals and collaborative strategies, collaboration is complicated by various tensions due to partners' diverging strategies, organisational logics, interests, and goals. Accordingly, developing the work in media clusters is constrained by existing orientations, operational models, and interests of the participating organisations. In the following, the empirical context of the study is discussed.

3. Methods

3.1. Description of the Case

The empirical case context (Miles et al., 2014; Stake, 1995) of this article is a media cluster called Mediapolis in Finland. The case was chosen because it provides a unique opportunity to analyse the managerial issues and tensions in creating and developing cross-sector collaboration in media work (cf. Smith & Lewis, 2011). Mediapolis was launched as "a campus" in autumn 2014, when extensive renovations of the premises were finalised, and the first private companies moved in as tenants of Technopolis (real estate operator on site previously owned by the Finnish Broadcasting Company). Mediapolis has been described on its website as "a centre of storytelling and digital industries" and as "a growing and developing centre and network of media companies and organisations" (Mediapolis, 2021, para. 1). In the following, the Mediapolis case is described in terms of its aims, partners, initial development, and operations.

The case organisation features core characteristic of a hybrid organisation in combining entities with differing organisational logics and identities (cf. Jay, 2013). The Finnish Public Service Broadcasting Company, Yleisradio (abbreviated Yle), and two educational institutions—Tampere University of Applied Sciences (TAMK) and Tampere Vocational College (Tredu)—represent the public, non-commercial side of the collaboration. TAMK and Tredu have their media-related schools on the Mediapolis campus. In addition, the Business Tampere (part of the Tampere Region Economic Development Agency) has been strongly involved in the Mediapolis development. The private organisations in this study comprised the original Mediapolis real estate operator Technopolis (2012–2019) and various commercial media production companies. These included, e.g., AitoMedia production company (producing mainly TV series), which employs approximately 25 media professionals as well as around 5 to 7 (depending on the time of observation) small 1-to 2-person media production companies (focusing on TV or multimedia production, including VR, or both). In addition to media-related organisations, private companies in the fields of management consulting or information technology, catering and health-related services are also located in Mediapolis premises. This case study focuses on the media-related participants of Mediapolis and Technopolis as the real estate operator.

Collaborative initiatives between public and private partners are typically emphasised and stipulated in public funding (cf. Stone et al., 2013). Also, in the case of Mediapolis, the initial development in 2011–2014 was supported by public resources and funds. These include support coordinated by the Tampere City and the Pirkanmaa Region, especially in the initiation stage, in both the Creative Tampere initiative, which aimed to enhance creative industries in the region in general and especially in two rounds of the European Union (EU) project funding. Public funding resulted in the formation of a collaborative company, i.e., Mediapolis Cooperative, in January 2016. It is a legal entity (cf. Chaddad, 2012; Ménard, 2007) comprising the main Mediapolis partners (Yle, TAMK, Technopolis, and AitoMedia at the time).

The Mediapolis Cooperative was founded for managing the Mediapolis shared operations. The aim was set to solve the initial collaborative management problems that were characteristic to early stages of the cluster development. The Mediapolis Cooperative was also expected to sustain itself as a business after an inception period by creating revenue from organising Mediapolis events and happenings. Initial ideas for income generation included selling production piloting services utilising the Yle and Tredu studio facilities on the premises or developing and leading projects financed by public sources such as the EU. However, the management and business models of Mediapolis remained unclear and unspecified. As a result, the partners have been critically analysing the role and identity of the Mediapolis Cooperative and its future.

3.2. Data Collection

The data collection for this study comprised four rounds of semi-structured interviews: March–April 2013, November 2015, March 2016, and February 2017. The semi-structured interviews formed the empirical data for the case analysis. The interviews cover the Mediapolis development over time and include the central actors involved in the process. The key informants interviewed were the Mediapolis Cooperative Board members and other key actors in the immediate surroundings of Mediapolis development, such as Tampere city representatives, external consultants, or entrepreneurs on site. The interviewees represented managerial positions (administrative and program production) of both public and private organisations, individual program producers and production company entrepreneurs, as well as product and program developers on site. Also, internal and external consultants involved in the cluster development and respective product development processes were interviewed. The purposive sample of interview participants (Patton, 2015) included 15 individuals from 12 organisations, and they participated in 23 interviews. Each respondent was interviewed 1–3 times over the research period.

The first round of interviews took place during initial Mediapolis planning, approximately 1.5 years before the launch of the Mediapolis campus in autumn 2014. The most recent interview round was carried out one year after the formation and official establishment of the Mediapolis Cooperative as a legal entity. The length of individual interviews varied between 20 minutes and 1 hour and 51 minutes, and the interviews summed to 24 hours of recorded material. All interviews were conducted by the first author in Finnish. The interviews were digitally recorded, and transcribed. The respondents were promised strict anonymity with regard to their identities and connections to specific organisations.

In addition to the interviews, Mediapolis partners provided the author with extensive access to different forms of empirical material on the case concerning the whole period of Mediapolis development. The research project included selected Mediapolis documentation (e.g., strategy documents and final reports of EU-funded development projects). Furthermore, informal discussions with the chair of the Mediapolis Cooperative Board were conducted regularly (10 times between November 2014 and October 2017, duration of 1–3 hours). These discussions constituted an important gateway to the necessary background information and functioned as "member checking" for trustworthiness of the research results (Creswell, 2014).

3.3. Analysis Approach

The analysis approach was inspired by the iterative and abductive process, which Jay (2013) used to analyse paradoxes in hybrid organisations. As is typical for qualitative research, the analysis process started by making initial interpretations of the empirical material (Miles et al., 2014). The first author made notes after each interview to capture the nuances and details, thereby forming a preliminary understanding of the empirical data. The interview transcripts were uploaded to Atlas.ti analysis software (version 8), which was utilised in the coding of the material.

The analysis process was divided into three phases. First, the empirical material was initially explored and reviewed. The transcripts were read in detail several times to create an overall understanding of the data.

In the second phase, versus coding (Saldaña, 2009) was utilized as observable tensions and conflicts in relation to Mediapolis collaboration emerged as central features in the data. Versus coding identifies phenomena, processes, or organisations in binary terms and in conflict with each other. This made versus coding appropriate for the study of dualities in this article. Accordingly, phrases and excerpts capturing actual and conceptual conflicts were identified and coded (e.g., "public vs. private," "individual vs. collaboration," "agility vs. rigidity"). As suggested by Saldaña (2009), the more detailed coding utilised a grounded approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967/2009), resulting in 98 individual codes (e.g., "bottleneck," "collaborative advantage," or "conflicting aims").

In the third phase, the analysis process became an iterative process of reflection back and forth between extant literature and empirical material, enabling more composite and abstract themes to be identified as key dualities and tensions of collaboration in Mediapolis development. These included differing organisational orientations, incongruences between strategy and action, and conflicting interests and contradictions concerning collaboration. In addition, following Jay (2013), the timing of events in the Mediapolis development process was mapped against the composite themes to construct an understanding of the Mediapolis development process.

In the analysis, the respondents were randomly numbered (one number between 1 and 15 per respondent). This numbering is used when the respondent quotes are provided for illustrative purposes. The illustrative quotes from the empirical material have been translated from Finnish. The findings based on the empirical analysis are discussed next.

4. Findings

The empirical case in this article features a media cluster aiming at content innovation between publicly and privately funded organisations. The analysis focuses on organisational tensions and managerial challenges of making Mediapolis work as a collaborative arrangement in practice. The tensions emerge as dynamic interrelationships between constituent elements of dualities. For clarity, the core dualities and respective tensions identified in the analysis are discussed separately despite their overlapping features. Tensions regarding each duality are summarized first, and excerpts from the empirical material used as illustrations.

4.1. Duality 1: Organisational Inertia vs. Operational Agility

The first duality emerges from differing organisational logics and dynamics, which Mediapolis aims at combining. Tensions between public and private orientations reflect the fundamentally different aims, cultures, and operational practices of the collaborating organisations. The private companies' aspirations suggest a focus on profit and growth, whereas public organisations seem to value stability and long-term development, which builds on established practices. Accordingly, the public organisations' organisational inertia, bureaucratic decision-making, and strong dependence on public policies and regulation collide with the flexibility, willingness to take risks, and dynamic operational realities of the private companies. In Mediapolis, the overreliance on the public organisations' role as anchors of the cluster development seemed to further amplify the tensions in this regard.

As Mediapolis development moved towards operationalisation of the collaboration, tensions especially between public service and private commercial orientations increased. A respondent illustrated the fundamental differences between the operational aims and realities between public and private organisations, which hampered Mediapolis development:

> It has been surprisingly slow….I guess it is partly because we have these public actors here; the biggest organisations are public companies, so the ability and willingness to take risks is rather small. Or it is different. There are very few big or even medium-sized [private] companies here that are financially sound and aiming for growth. (Respondent 11)

Yle's central roles as the initiator of Mediapolis, as the buyer organisation for creative production companies' content offerings, and later the possessor of the Mediapolis Cooperative chair position were crucial for Mediapolis' initial development. The collaborating participants acknowledged this, for example, in the following comment:

> It [Mediapolis development] started with Yle's willingness to open up and create partnerships. That's where it started, yes. (Respondent 1)

At the same time, Yle's central role was also a source of tension and development challenges, and Yle's organisational inertia deriving from its public service logic and identity was one of the main obstacles in Mediapolis' practical operations:

> How could we remove the Yle stopper….[Yle] Board should hear all this; they should hear that we are well on the way, but the obstacle is this, hey, really, they [Yle] have been doing this same thing since 2012. The progress has been truly slow; it's horrible to say….In these first stages, Yle must be the driver here….Yle [needs to come] out of its bunker. (Respondent 1)

The tensions concerning public-private orientation were especially evident in the different decision-making processes and time frames between the public and private organisations at Mediapolis. A respondent stated:

> One thing that has been told to the Yle management is that we need to be able to make decisions more promptly. (Respondent 15)

Yle was also considered an unpredictable collaboration member, whose actions could abruptly and fundamentally change the dynamics of Mediapolis. This was amplified by the fact that Yle as the Public Service Broadcaster is regulated by specific legislation and by the Finnish Parliament through an Administrative Council. The situation was further complicated by the surprising nomination of an external parliamentary committee to evaluate Yle's mandate and tasks at the time of Mediapolis development. Yle and the other Mediapolis partners had to wait for the results of the committee's work before making further plans or decisions. These unexpected effects of public policy decisions concerned not only Yle but also the other public partners of Mediapolis, especially TAMK, a central reason being the unpredictable changes and cuts in state financing for its operations. A respondent described the situation as follows:

> The two biggest things that have had an effect are the challenges created by the [parliamentary] working group and the collapsed financing of the applied science universities. (Respondent 11)

Tensions in relation to the varying orientations between the educational institutions (TAMK and Tredu) and the private media companies in Mediapolis were due to colliding approaches towards everyday realities of media production and teaching it. The industry requirements emphasized future-orientation, agility and speed in action, whereas education built on long-term, established plans and curricula. As respondents stated:

> Because there is the problem, we know that the teachers who get stuck in teaching there, they are [mentally] rather far away [from the everyday production realities]….There are several problems. It concerns equipment and also how the teaching happens. When we always came back to this and had meetings, I ended up somehow saying that this is waste of time, this will not lead anywhere, they have isolated themselves in there. (Respondent 13)

> It has been a bit painful at times because the commercial companies want their fair share and ask, what is the benefit for them, so that it is not only acting as tutors for the interns. (Respondent 14)

4.2. Duality 2: Visionary Planning vs. Practical Implementation

Tensions residing in the duality between ideal planning and practical actions hinges on the imbalance between agreement on the strategic level and concrete action on the practical level. A shared vision is a significant foundation for cross-sector collaboration, but it does not compensate for lack of progress in concrete terms. Planning collaborative governance "in theory," i.e., separate from and ahead of actual experimentation and practices in media work, seemed to hinder Mediapolis progress and add to the frustration of not achieving the targets established. Additionally, strong reliance on public funding and the respective requirements of planning before action seemed to intensify the disparity between long-term visionary planning for explorative development and short-term exploitative action for tangible end results.

In the beginning of Mediapolis development, the partners shared a vision and agreement on the general aims of the collaboration, as illustrated by quotes from the early days:

> The big picture in Mediapolis is that it is a great shared dream. (Respondent 11)

> In real terms, we have had a vision and goal all the time. Mediapolis is a centre for storytelling and digital industries. (Respondent 6)

The shared vision was crucial for securing the commitment of the participating organisations and for acquiring public funding for the early development of Mediapolis. However, operationalising the strategic-level intent required shared operational processes and practices, which were lacking. This led to confusion and hindered Mediapolis development in concrete terms, as illustrated by these quotes:

> On the level of strategic talks, we all think and share the vision that this is how it should work. But the truly hard basic work where the issues really become clear is still not done. (Respondent 13)

> The shared space has been a bit too big and unclear, and this has hindered the advance of the small concrete things. And then many have wondered what is done here and why nothing happens….Somehow the 'shared' has not become concrete enough concerning who wants what. It is usually the small things that lead to a collapse, not the big ones. It is quite possible to agree on the big issues, but somehow the smoothness of everyday actions is what determines the outcome. (Respondent 5)

Tensions between strategic-level visionary planning and corresponding applied action frustrated the private companies in particular, who were expecting practical beneficial results sooner. One of them described the situation as follows:

> In a way, the lead time for vision implementation has been way too long, and then it is easy to forget about the vision. What I came here to establish was

> an international-level media hub, and this ambition tends to be forgotten all the time. (Respondent 10)

In the operationalising process of Mediapolis collaboration, significant effort was made to create plans, functional models, and management principles for Mediapolis operations and practices in advance, i.e., before actual concrete action. This was strengthened by public funding allocated for the planning projects. The project work involved several external consultants who concentrated on mapping out the Mediapolis operational model of collaboration, management systems, and the Cooperative's potential business opportunities. Despite the shared approach and objectives, the overemphasis on planning governance before practical actions became one of the central causes of frustration in relation to the lack of progress and the pursuit of outcomes for shared value. The respondents described the results of the consultant-based governance planning projects as follows:

> We stated in the concluding event of the project that all the partners were a bit disappointed. It took two or three years, and what was left, lousy web pages. (Respondent 13)

> Well, in fact I realised [something] when the productization of the piloting process and the whole operational model [of Mediapolis] had been commissioned two times externally.…[but] it has not led to anything. (Respondent 15)

An illustrative example of tensions between planning and actions was evident in the development of the piloting process as a Mediapolis Cooperative potential product. The shared strategic aim for Mediapolis was to become a platform for new content development, piloting, and innovation, thus serving the vitality of the Finnish audiovisual industry. One of the original core aims of Mediapolis development was to open Yle's resources for wider use, because Yle had unique resources in its newly modernised digital studios and other production facilities which were not in full use by the company itself. Mediapolis participants were looking forward to practical collaboration in this regard. They considered this as key for Mediapolis success, but they expressed some doubt at the same time:

> The most crucial point is that Yle will open up not only in ceremonial and festive talks but also in concrete, real terms. (Respondent 11)

> Sometimes I have sensed some irritation from the smaller participants because many of them thought when moving to the premises that the studios will immediately open to everyone. But that was the goal; the process of the public organisation was not as smooth as we thought it would be. (Respondent 2)

Collaboration was difficult to implement in practice. One of the core challenges was the creation of viable pricing principles and practice for studio use in piloting processes. Yle had invested heavily in production technology, which created severe pressure in setting prices too high for partners to have a viable chance to use the resource. Additionally, private production companies hoped to be able to use the studios flexibly with short advance notice. This was compromised by the requirement of Yle personnel to operate the equipment, which added to the costs as well as prolonged the planning periods beyond the hopes and expectations of the private partners, who tried to react swiftly to reach potential production deals. In the end, the only way forward was to simulate the actual process among the partners and thus identify the operational bottlenecks to be solved. A respondent explained as follows:

> It [finding a solution to the piloting process and pricing] is possible when our cultures are grounded by time and through a sufficient number of cases.…For a long time, everyone calculated their own prices in their own ways. The diagnosis was that these prices don't work or sell… there has been work to clarify and a lot of sitting, and all kinds of things are on paper, but this stage does not take us anywhere, and we have to do this workshop type of thing where we have a representative from a production company involved to go through it all in practice. (Respondent 13)

4.3. Duality 3: Self-Interest of Individual Organisations vs. Collective Interest in Altruistic Collaboration

Tensions between the duality elements of self-interest of individual organisations and the collective interest in collaboration illuminates the complexity of combining the collective strategy of the media cluster and the strategies and operational aims of the individual partner organisations. A structure or governance instrument to support cross-sector collaboration may be essential, but its creation seems to require a mandate, ability, and willingness to make decisions collaboratively. Mediapolis partners indicated varying and altering understandings of what collaboration in media work actually implies and requires, which potentially exacerbated the tensions between individual and collective organisational interests.

Tensions between self-interests of individual organisations and the collective interest for collaboration were severe and persistent issues that complicated Mediapolis development. The overall aim of the creation of shared value was described as unclear or non-existent as a result of the collaborative relationships in the Cooperative becoming formalised:

> We had several options when we founded the Cooperative. We could have continued as a project but ended up with the Cooperative. We have now

> operated for a year, and I don't think the added value can really be reclaimed in one year. No, I cannot say what added value it has produced. (Respondent 11)

The Mediapolis Cooperative was only partly able to moderate the tensions between interests, despite the intended central role in achieving this. The Mediapolis Cooperative was established with the aim of acting as a structure for the creation of collaborative advantage. However, the hybrid organisation lacked decision-making power of its own to succeed in this because it was completely dependent on the individual organisations' decisions and processes. This severely hampered improvement regarding the collaborative interest, as illustrated below:

> Or that we could in real terms here together make decisions on some issues, like, OK, now we start this kind of a piloting process and there and these partners are involved. We always have to get confirmation and backing from everyone's own organisation. And even then, they need to process it internally. (Respondent 15)

The partnering organisations of Mediapolis were in principle committed to cross-sector collaboration, but the manifestations in individual organisations varied. A special feature of the tensions between varying interests concerned the use of working time for Mediapolis issues. This was especially evident in the large organisations involved in the Mediapolis Cooperative, despite the fact that they had ample resources and central roles in the collaboration. The respective organisations were in principle highly committed to Mediapolis development on the strategic level, for example, as official members of the Cooperative, but they were strongly bound to their own corporate aims, strategies, and principles in practice. The current operations required by the participants' organisations seemed to overrule the coexploration that Mediapolis was supposed to achieve for the collective interests. As a concrete example, the Mediapolis development process required much effort and focus from the nominated persons, and when this happened, the respective individuals were reminded by their organisations that too much work time devoted to the Mediapolis project was not advisable. The following quote illustrates this situation:

> Well, yes, we do without asking, but it's also a bit like saying that no, I don't use much time there for this, you know, everyone has their hobbies….You can also have work as a hobby [when it is not approved as real work by your boss]. (Respondent 1)

Collaboration for the collective interest as such was considered an asset in receiving public funding or as a tool to fulfil the social responsibilities of the large public organisations in Mediapolis. However, the small private production companies set their priorities clearly to focus on their individual business and benefit despite the shared ideal of collaboration. Due to limited resources, the small private companies chose to focus on self-interested exploitation and everyday business. Respondents explained:

> I won't do for a second anything that does not seem to lead to concrete business transactions [for our company]. I don't use time for anything else. (Respondent 10)

> It is very difficult to get partners that would really share the business risk. Now there is no time to think about that kind of issue. (Respondent 4)

All in all, the individual strategic interests of each organisation involved in the Mediapolis Cooperative in particular, and in Mediapolis collaboration in general, remained different, which obstructed shared value creation. Despite the shared aim of creating a "media hub" for innovative production, organisations preferred their own agendas: Yle was initially focused on relinquishing real estate ownership as well as implementing its openness and partnership strategy, Technopolis was looking for opportunities to widen its real estate business portfolio in the Tampere area, and Tampere city was concerned with securing a continuous Yle presence and strengthening the role of creative industries and businesses in Tampere.

5. Conclusions

In earlier research, collaboration is considered valuable and necessary support for knowledge-intensive organisations for the required flexible and dynamic responses to the rapidly changing operational environments (e.g., Biancani et al., 2014; Ramus et al., 2017). Building on empirical case analysis (cf. Eisenhardt, 1989), this article enriches scholarly discussion on the complexities of collaboration in developing media clusters and in hybrid organisations in two main ways. First, this work contributes to extant theory (Battilana et al., 2015; Jay, 2013; Ramus et al., 2017) by elaborating on the prominent role of organisational tensions as a managerial challenge requiring recognition and action in developing hybrid organisations. Second, the article provides much-needed empirical support for the theoretical underpinnings of creating hybrid organisations by illustrating the inherent tensions that emerge as interrelations between dual organisational elements or forces.

In cross-sector collaborations, the resources provided by the participants can be considered complementary in supporting the aims of the collaboration. However, the media cluster case analysed in this article suggests that the picture is more complex. Despite shared overall goals and strategies towards collaborative opportunities, collaboration is challenged by various tensions due to partners' diverging strategies, organisational logics and interests, and collaboration goals, thereby making development constrained by the existing orientations, operational models, and interests of the participating organisations. Addressing these tensions requires specific managerial attention and boundary-crossing practices both internal to and across collaborating organisations.

The case analysis exposed dualities and respective organisational tensions in relation to (a) differing organisational orientations and business logics, (b) incongruence between strategic intent and practical outcomes, and (c) conflicting interests between organisations. In the findings, the respective dualities were labelled as (1) organisational inertia vs. operational agility, (2) visionary planning vs. practical implementation, and (3) self-interest of individual organisations vs. collective interest in altruistic collaboration. Tensions relating to each duality were explained. Although the results of the analysis illustrate the dualities and corresponding tensions as distinct, they are interrelated in practice. For example, the differing organisational orientations are reflected in strategic intents, which connect to differing expectations of speed and clarity in reaching practical outcomes and placing individual organisations' immediate gain over collective benefits. As a result, tensions coexist and require managerial attention as an interrelated and dynamic package.

Trade-offs between public (or non-commercial) and private (or commercial) organisations are crucial in cross-sector hybrid organisations (Battilana & Lee, 2014), as well as in formalising inter-organisational cooperation more generally (Vlaar et al., 2007). The logic of public sector organisations in focusing on long-term viability and development collides with the short-term business imperatives and profit orientations of private partners. This article concludes that identifying and successfully managing the coexisting tensions of collaboration is key in finding the necessary trade-offs for establishing cross-sector collaboration in the media industry, particularly in media clusters.

In the Mediapolis Cooperative specifically and in collaboration more broadly, the participants have to rely on the willingness of other partners to share knowledge and other necessary resources for the collaboration to succeed (cf. Phillips et al., 2000). The shared engagement is difficult to achieve because the individual strategic focus of the collaboration participants may easily overrule the shared vision and development despite the agreements or even legal contracts. In this regard and in accordance with earlier studies (e.g., Hitters & Richards, 2002), the individual agenda of the participating organisations in the Mediapolis Cooperative was their main concern, not the Mediapolis development. The idea of Mediapolis as a fully integrated hybrid organisation (see Battilana et al., 2012) was not transformed from executive-level presentations and visionary collaboration plans to everyday media work in real terms. The shift of focus from individual organisations' interest to the collaborative interest necessitates understanding that these shifts require reconceptualization of current organisational principles and practices of the participating organisations in order to avoid centripetal effects of self-interest in relation to collaboration.

Collaborative practices are necessary for creating collaborative advantage. Changes are required not only on the collaboration level but also within each partner itself (cf. Bryson et al., 2015; Kanter, 1994). The Mediapolis case analysis surfaced considerable internal tensions in the core anchor organisations of the cluster, and these led to respective tensions in the overall cooperation. This finding suggests that successful collaboration requires a shift from management approaches emphasising vertical angles including structure and order in the "home" organisation to more horizontal and lateral perspectives, emphasising the importance of collaborative processes and mutually beneficial relationships. Collaboration does not feature an equilibrium; instead, it is in constant flux and requires balancing the strategic objectives of individual organisations with producing shared value for collaborative advantage.

Despite the overall strategic-level agreement on collaboration, it is crucial to identify the potentially different goals that the participants aim to achieve. This understanding is necessary to anticipate the implementation-stage managerial problems and practical challenges of establishing the collaboration, especially for defining when the collaboration can be considered successful and by which criteria. Unlike the suggestion from earlier research by Ramus et al. (2017), the case study in this article does not support the assumption that clearly defined formal processes would necessarily pave the way for smooth collaboration; rather, it emphasises the key importance of flexible and dynamic managerial approaches. Thus, the article has practical implications for managers in creative industries aiming to create collaborative organisational arrangements for shared value creation and content innovation in media work.

This study has limitations worth noting. It presents a single case study, which suggests limited generalisability of the results. Additionally, potential researcher bias is evident because the interviews were conducted by the sole researcher. However, multiple sources of empirical data, long-term access to the case, researcher triangulation in the analysis, and member checking with respondents support the credibility of the results (Creswell, 2014).

Finally, future research should focus on dimensions across different analytical levels of collaboration and hybrid organisations in the media industry. Deeper understanding would benefit from considerations, e.g., on the micro (individual), meso (interaction between actors), and macro (external factors) levels. The complexity of the phenomenon calls also for dynamic and systemic approaches and comparative qualitative case studies, e.g., between media and other types of creative clusters.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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Article

A Relational Approach to How Media Engage With Their Audiences in Social Media

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Abstract
People are increasingly turning to social media for their news and for sharing and discussing news with others. Simultaneously, media organizations are becoming platform-dependent and posting short forms of their news on their social media sites in the hope that audiences will not only consume this news but also comment on and share it. This article joins other media and journalism studies exploring this phenomenon through a relational approach to media audiences to better understand how media organizations, particularly newspapers, are cultivating relationships with audiences via social media. Drawing on public relations theory about organization–public relationships, the article examines how news organizations nurture relationships with audiences via social media, such as through engagement and dialogic communication strategies. This article empirically examines organization–public relationships strategies (disclosure, access, information dissemination, and engagement) of nine newspapers with the largest reach in Australia, the US, and the UK. A content analysis is conducted of these newspapers' posts (total 1807) published in March 2021 on their Twitter and Facebook sites to identify and examine these strategies. Findings show that their social media accounts are predominantly used for news dissemination rather than audience engagement. The implications are that although media professionals are frequently distributing news content among their audiences via their social media sites, they are not adequately engaging with them.

Keywords
audiences; engagement; media organizations; news dissemination; organization–public relationship strategies; relational approach; social media

Issue
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1. Introduction

Audiences increasingly turn to social media as their main source of news (Newman et al., 2021, p. 10), and subsequently consume, share, and discuss news through social media. News organizations recognise this emerging practice and build business models and distribution strategies to tap into this trend. Accordingly, we position this study within media work research (Deuze, 2007; Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011) that examines how news media organizations plan, produce, disseminate, and promote their news content through social media (Malmelin & Villi, 2017; Villi et al., 2016; Villi & Noguera-Vivo, 2017). While much of media work research has examined the audience role in the creation and production of news through social media and other digital environments (Malmelin & Villi, 2016, 2017), we limit our study to news distribution (Napoli, 2009; Oeldorf-Hirsch & Sundar, 2012; Villi et al., 2016). We view distribution not as the media organization's dissemination (publication) of news, but rather as a collaborative effort between outlets and their audiences spreading and promoting news.

Thus, we focus on how media organizations become involved in marketing efforts (Malmelin & Villi, 2017) through social media to expand the reach and impact of their content. Accordingly, we treat audiences not only as consumers who passively receive media content but also as participants engaging with the content of media organizations, such as through sharing, commenting, and applying sentiment judgments to media content in social media. In doing so, they unintentionally take part in media work through the distribution and promotion of content.

However, technology platforms have added deep levels of complexity to the media work of news distribution conducted in social media (Lewis & Molyneux, 2018). Taking these platform-dependency challenges into account, this study contributes to an emerging media–audience relational approach (Hepp, 2020; Hepp & Loosen, 2019; Lewis et al., 2014; Picard, 2011; Villi & Picard, 2019) which offers insight into, and argues for the importance of, news outlets' mutually beneficial relations with their audiences. However, in the literature on this approach, communication strategies to develop these mutually beneficial relations have not yet received scholarly attention. Accordingly, this study draws on relationship theory in public relations research to examine four relationship–cultivation strategies of media organizations in social media, namely disclosure, access, information dissemination, and engagement. This study examined 904 Facebook posts and 903 tweets published in March 2021 by nine of the more popular newspapers in Australia, the US, and the UK to identify and examine their use of these relationship–cultivation strategies in social media. Findings show that these newspapers predominantly made use of information dissemination strategies to cultivate relationships with audiences. This is not surprising, given that media outlets are in the business of disseminating news. However, engagement strategies were not well used, suggesting that although news outlets would like to engage more with audiences, they are not doing so.

This article is structured as follows. It begins with a discussion of platform companies' influence in media–audience relationships, followed by a brief review of current journalism research about a relational approach to media audiences. It then integrates public relations theory into this discussion to show how media organizations can nurture audience relationships through relationship cultivation strategies implemented in social media. Finally, it describes the empirical data and discusses the findings within the context of a relational approach to media work.

2. Audience Relations via Social Media Platforms

The way platform companies like Google and Facebook both support and muzzle media work is an issue of growing interest to media organizations (e.g., Meese & Hurcombe, 2020). As third parties mediating, facilitating, and sometimes dictating the economic relationship between media outlets and their audiences, platform companies pose both problems and opportunities for the news media. For example, they help news outlets spread their news to wider audiences and as a result this offers the potential for financial rewards for media companies, such as more advertising revenues and more digital subscriptions. However, the challenge is that closer ties between the two makes news organizations more dependent on these platforms for audience traffic (Bell, 2018; Bell & Owen, 2017) and this restricts the media's autonomy (Gans, 1979) and its editorial independence (e.g., as the primary gatekeeper of news in society).

These platforms often change their algorithms and features, which can reduce the number of users viewing and reading news content. While new outlets' websites and apps enable them to maintain gatekeeping control over the reach and spread of their news, their social media accounts—through software features and algorithms—force some restrictions over who sees and consumes their news, which means these platform companies exercise a great deal of control over news outlets' relationships with their audiences. As observed by Hermida (2020, p. 477) "platforms, then, serve as algorithmic gatekeepers of the public's attention." These proprietary algorithms give platform companies power over the promotion and deletion or suppression of different types of news stories.

Media organizations and their audiences have contributed to the coupling of platforms with news consumption and distribution processes (Newman et al., 2021; Nielsen & Schrøder, 2014) and this has thus embedded platforms in media–audience relations. In 2019, 55% of US adults often or sometimes obtained news from social media (predominantly Facebook; Shearer & Grieco, 2019). Kalsnes and Larsson (2018) find that Twitter is used more to follow and share breaking news, whereas on Facebook the news often is softer and stories-based. Twitter is also defined as more news-oriented whereas Facebook is considered more as a social network and is used more for marketing purposes (Ju et al., 2014; Kalsnes & Larsson, 2018).

Media–audience relations are very dependent on news engagement on social media platforms. In this article we focus on engagement as audience participation in user-distributed content rather than user-generated content (for previous work on user-distributed content see Villi & Noguera-Vivo, 2017). Dutceac Segesten et al. (2020) define engagement on Facebook as constituting three distinct, yet interrelated, behaviours that influence news consumption and distribution on that platform: visual attention, news selection, and distribution. Once a user has observed a news post on Facebook (attention), that user can then select it by clicking the post to read the full story. The final engagement step involves the user sharing the post with their network of peers, which contributes to the distribution of the news on social media. Of course, a user's decision over what news to share is based on multiple factors, such as fear of criticism from members of social networks (Dutceac Segesten et al., 2020, p. 5).

Gaining audience attention is important. News media seek to gather more audience for their news and traffic to their online news sites through social media (Ju et al., 2014). Social media platforms like Facebook enable news outlets to use tactics such as “engineering headlines to include emotional directives for readers (to click or like and share) and creating digestible and relatable content that could be easily shared among users” (Caplan & boyd, 2018, p. 5).

As stated above, platforms have limited media outlets’ control over not only gaining attention, but also news distribution. Although news outlets traditionally controlled the dissemination of their news through their channels (e.g., printed newspapers and TV and radio broadcasts), technology has forced them to add other means of dissemination (i.e., distribution) such as via their websites, apps, and social media accounts. For clarity, we refer to dissemination as the news outlet’s initial publication or broadcast of news and distribution as the post-dissemination process involving the news outlet and its audience promoting the news (such as through posting news headlines and subsequent sharing, liking, and commenting in social media), whether intentionally or not. See Figure 1 for an illustration of the positioning of dissemination, distribution, and engagement within the overall process of news production, dissemination and distribution processes adapted from Dutceac Segesten et al. (2020).

3. A Relational Approach to Media Work With Audiences via Social Media

Acknowledging these third-party complexities in the economic relationship between news organizations and their audiences, this study builds on an emerging relational orientation to media work in social media. Picard (2011) and Villi and Picard (2019) draw attention to innovative newspaper business models that focus on building and nurturing value-creating relationships with readers and other newspaper stakeholders. They advise media companies to adopt an audience-first strategy (Lehtisaari et al., 2018) to develop higher-level relationships with audiences based on “mutual respect and the pursuit of joint benefit” (Villi & Picard, 2019, p. 126).

Another emerging strand of journalism research that offers insight into a media–audience relational approach is reciprocal journalism (Lewis et al., 2014) or mutually beneficial exchanges between journalists and audiences. Lewis et al. (2014) describe reciprocal journalism as “a way of imagining how journalists might develop more mutually beneficial relationships with audiences” (p. 229; see also Coddington et al., 2018). They hypothesize that reciprocal forms of journalism could be of three overlapping types: direct exchanges between journalists and audiences (e.g., one-to-one social media conversation); indirect exchanges that are more generalized, one-to-many and intended for community benefit; and sustained exchanges that have an enduring dimension, build relationships over time and lay the groundwork for future interactions (Lewis et al., p. 561). Research has shown that if journalists deliberately seek to develop mutually beneficial relationships with audiences, the public will reciprocate more positively, such as with favourable comments (Borger et al., 2016; Harte et al., 2017; Reader, 2018).

More recently, studies by Hepp (2020) and Hepp and Loosen (2019) refer to a figurational approach in which relations between journalists and audiences are “characterized by more or less congruent mutual expectations about what journalism should deliver and what audiences might expect, and the more or less mutually visible practices that emerge as a result” (Hepp & Loosen, 2019, p. 57). However, in reality, the paradox is that although news organizations have offered a growing number of participatory spaces and features, journalists are often reluctant to engage with audiences (Hepp & Loosen, 2019, p. 57). Holton et al. (2016) suggest that media organizations and journalists are in general reluctant to pursue relational ties with audiences, largely due to the media’s in-built deference to professional autonomy (Gans, 1979). They state that “there is an enduring tension between maintaining professional control of the news information environment, as a key aspect of journalists’ occupational role, and developing more dialogical relationships with users via digital media” (Holton et al., 2016, p. 851).

4. Media Organizations’ Relationship-Cultivation Strategies via Social Media

What is missing in this emerging media–audience relational perspective are communication strategies to implement these mutually beneficial relationships in social media. Thus, to expand understanding of media work undertaken through media–audience relationships

Figure 1. News production, dissemination, and engagement process on Facebook, adapted from Dutceac Segesten et al. (2020).

operationalized via social media, this study draws on the theory about organization–public relationships (OPR; Ki & Hon, 2009) from public relations literature, the second most frequently used theory in public relations scholarship (Sallot et al., 2003). OPRs have been defined as the "(state which exists between an organization and its key publics in which the actions of either entity impact the economic, social, political, and/or cultural well-being of the other entity" (Bruning & Ledingham, 1999, p. 160). OPR research has examined relationship antecedents, relationship outcomes, and relationship–cultivation or relationship maintenance strategies (Grunig & Huang, 2000; Hon & Grunig, 1999). OPR research has shown that relationships contribute to loyalty and satisfaction with an organization's products and services (Ledingham & Bruning, 1998; Ledingham et al., 1999).

In this study, we examine media outlets' relationship–cultivation strategies, which are an organization's communication efforts aimed at nurturing mutually-beneficial relationships with audiences (Grunig & Huang, 2000). These strategies include positivity, disclosure, social networks, access, assurance, information dissemination, and engagement. Positivity is defined as "anything the organization or public does to make the relationship more enjoyable for the parties involved" (Hon & Grunig, 1999, p. 14). Assurances relate to "attempts by parties in the relationship to assure the other parties that they and their concerns are legitimate" (Hon & Grunig, 1999, p. 15). Social networks involve "organizations' and publics' sharing in solving joint or separate problems" (Hon & Grunig, 1999, p. 14). Shin et al. (2015) define four strategies in their study of OPRs in Facebook: disclosure, access, information dissemination, and engagement. Disclosure is measured through evidence of an organization's disclosure of information about itself, such as its management structure, financial situation, and mistakes. Terms such as openness and transparency describe this dimension. Access refers to an organization's availability to the public and this can be measured through evidence of the range of contact information made available to the public. Information dissemination refers to the extent to which an organization provides information useful to its public, such as information about its products and services. Engagement refers to the extent to which an organization actively engages in conversations with its audiences and welcomes their feedback. The definition of engagement on Facebook by Dutceac Segesten et al. (2020) provided above offers further insight into this strategy.

The advent of social media shifted the emphasis in OPR scholarship from an overwhelmingly mass-mediated approach to a much more conversational, relationship-building approach (Kelleher, 2009). It also transitioned the conceptualization of OPR communication from "monologue (one-to-many) to dialogue (many-to-many)" (Hansen et al., 2011, p. 12). Indeed, OPR research is aided by the concept of dialogic communication (Wilcox & Cameron, 2009). Organizations apply dialogic communication by listening to their audiences, having a positive regard for them, and being willing to change in response to audience wishes (De Bussy, 2010). Digital media, including social media, enable organizations to not only disseminate information to audiences but also interact with them through feedback or dialogic loops (Kent & Taylor, 1998; Lillqvist & Louhiala-Salminen, 2014).

Social media sites have been found to be much more suitable for dialogic communication and relationship-building (Shin et al., 2015). Dialogic communication features in Facebook include ease of interface, usefulness of information, and links to the organization's home page (Bortree & Seltzer, 2009; Shin et al., 2015, p. 189). However, studies have suggested that organizations are not adequately using these features for dialogic communication and relationship-building (Bortree & Seltzer, 2009; Shin et al., 2015). Organizations also are not taking advantage of Twitter for dialogic communication and relationship-building (Lovejoy et al., 2012; Rybalko & Seltzer, 2010). Instead, organizations predominantly are using both Facebook and Twitter for information dissemination (Shin et al., 2015).

We identify OPR strategies of disclosure and information dissemination as dimensions of uni-directional communication (Shin et al., 2015) because they represent an organization choosing to provide its public with information about itself. We consider the OPR strategy of access as a dimension between uni-directional and dialogic communication; on the one hand, the public can gain access to the organization's contact information and thus communicate one-on-one with the organization, yet, on the other hand, the organization does not necessarily proactively engage in stimulating and maintaining conversations with the public when providing this information. The OPR strategy of engagement is considered a two-directional dialogic communication (Shin et al., 2015, p. 191) because it represents the organization's purposeful stimulation and maintenance of conversations.

5. Method and Data

In this study we address the research question: How do newspapers nurture relationships with audiences through their social media sites? To examine this question, we conducted a content analysis of Facebook and Twitter posts of nine newspapers located in Australia, the US, and the UK to identify OPR strategies. We selected these countries because of their similarities as large Western democratic societies with an Anglosphere background. These selected newspapers were among the five largest within their countries by circulation, located in three of the largest Anglosphere countries, and included: *The New York Times* (US), *New York Post* (US), *USA Today* (US), *The Wall Street Journal* (US), *The Daily Telegraph* (Australia), *The Sydney Morning Herald* (Australia), *The Courier-Mail* (Australia), *Herald*

Sun (Australia) and *Metro* (UK). The selected US newspapers reach 426,000 to 1.6 million readers. Their combined reach is 3.5 million readers (Statista, 2019). The circulation of the UK-based newspaper *Metro* was 1.4 million in 2020 (Mayhew, 2020). Detailed information on the circulation of Australian newspapers is currently difficult to obtain. The total number of selected Australian newspaper audiences' readership in 2019 has been calculated to be approximately 3.6 million (Burnie, 2020).

Facebook and Twitter are two of the most used social media platforms for news consumption (Shearer & Gottfried, 2017). Twitter profiles of these newspapers provided information about the number of followers, the date when the newspaper joined Twitter, and a link to the news site. The Facebook profiles were more descriptive, offering information such as the nature of the business, customer service details, and a link to the news site. Newspapers with the largest Facebook following were *The New York Times* (17.9 million), *USA Today* (9 million), *The Wall Street Journal* (6.7 million), *New York Post* (4.7 million), and *Metro* (3 million). Newspapers with the largest Twitter following were *The New York Times* (49.8 million), *The Wall Street Journal* (18.8 million), *USA Today* (4.3 million), *New York Post* (2.1 million), and *The Sydney Morning Herald* (836,000).

For the analysis we had two units: the Facebook page (N = 9) and the Twitter account of the newspapers (N = 9). For each Facebook page and Twitter account the most recent post or tweet were read and coded until approximately 100 posts and 100 tweets were coded (overall 200 items per newspaper). Overall, the data consisted of screenshots of 904 Facebook posts and 903 Twitter tweets (overall 1807 screenshots). The screenshots were collected between 13th and 26th March 2021. A sampling interval of every third post and tweet was determined and applied.

The codebook and coding were based on the measurement items used by Shin et al. (2015) to identify four organizational relationship cultivation and dialogic communication strategies: disclosure, access, information dissemination, and engagement. These four strategies (i.e., OPR strategies) were identified in our study as categories, and the measurement items identifying these categories were critically reviewed and their suitability as such for this study was evaluated during coding. This was important to do because, in comparison to most types of organizations, media organizations' core business, whether public media or privately owned enterprises, is specialized to disseminate social, economic, and political information to their audiences and is built around constant (hourly and daily) news flows. News organizations are distinct from normal types of organizations in that they are information intermediaries (Deephouse & Heugens, 2009) positioned at the centre of society-wide information-exchange processes and networks. As such, these infomediaries are formal organizations that provide mediated information to audiences (Hirsch, 1977; Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). News outlets' core product, therefore, is the news, and these organizations develop strategies to publish (i.e., disseminate) and then promote their product on social media. Figure 1 illustrates the positioning of the last two OPR strategies of information dissemination and engagement within the news business' news production, dissemination, and engagement process.

As a result of this critical reflection of our codes, during the coding process no items related to the access category were found within newspaper posts themselves. In other words, although contact information was made available to the public on the news outlets' social media pages, we did not find contact information published in their posts. When examining how users can contact news outlets directly using the message feature in Facebook and Twitter, we found that, except for *New York Post*, the Facebook accounts of all selected newspapers allowed users to send a direct message to the newspaper. However, only three (*New York Post, USA Today*, and *The Sydney Morning Herald*) out of nine newspapers' Twitter profiles enabled users to send a direct message to the newspaper. The newspapers in our sample are thus more openly accessible on Facebook than on Twitter. Nevertheless, overall it seems that newspapers do not want to be easily accessible. This access strategy is tied to the discussion about media transparency (see Craft & Heim, 2008). Interestingly, Facebook offers page account holders a "page transparency" feature and some newspapers in our sample have taken advantage of this (e.g., *The Sydney Morning Herald*). This feature shows users what individual people and organizations are managing the page and whether the page is running advertisements.

Eventually an updated model, which included three categories for the analysis (disclosure, information dissemination, and engagement), was employed for our measurement purposes. In this model information dissemination and disclosure were considered as one-way communication and engagement was considered as two-way dialogical communication. Disclosure and information dissemination categories were related to newspapers' efforts to provide new and interesting information to the general public. The engagement category was related to newspaper efforts to stimulate reactions and conversations on social media.

To measure all categories, we adapted items for each category from the model by Shin et al. (2015). For Facebook posts and Twitter tweets, only one and the most prominent item was selected. The list of items was edited and updated during the coding process as coding screenshots revealed new consistent patterns. After the coding, unused items were discarded from the data set. Also, some new items were formed based on their frequent appearances in the data set. The final list of measurement items according to the three categories is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Summary of items used to identify OPR strategies used by newspapers in Facebook and Twitter.

Categories (OPR strategies)	Items in Facebook posts	Items in Twitter tweets
Disclosure	News disclosing journalist(s)' names/photos	News with tagged journalist(s)
Information dissemination	News headlines ads for or of the company opinion live update photo story video podcast/audio other (food recipe, meme)	News headlines news about the industry ads for or of the company opinion live update photo story video podcast/audio other (food recipe, meme, travel, real estate)
Engagement	polling/voting open ended question or sentence survey game registration/signup	polling/voting open ended question or sentence survey game registration/signup encourage readers to retweet or reply retweeted or shared content

6. Findings

Given the high frequency of tweets and Facebook posts published, audiences of these newspapers in our sample were given a lot of opportunities to engage with newspapers on Twitter and Facebook. Newspapers with the highest average number of tweets/day were *The Daily Telegraph* (105), *Metro* (89), *The Wall Street Journal* (68), and *USA Today* (55). Newspapers with the highest average number of Facebook posts/day were *The Daily Telegraph* (126), *Metro* (81), *The Sydney Morning Herald* (46), and *The Wall Street Journal* (46). However, our analysis shows that these newspapers rarely asked or encouraged audiences to participate in a discussion about news. Newspapers' requests for audiences to post photos, personal experiences, or comment on the news were only evident in a few posts and tweets. For instance, *The Courier-Mail* posted a poll on Facebook just four times during the research period; the newspaper also encouraged readers to like a post with a thumbs-up emoji and dislike a post with a sad or angry emoji.

6.1. Newspapers' Organization–Public Relationships Strategies in Facebook

We found that newspapers used the information dissemination strategy in Facebook far more than engagement and disclosure. On average, 96% of Facebook posts published by newspapers in our sample used this strategy. Table 2 shows the breakdown of how the newspapers deployed these strategies via their Facebook account.

In their posts, they mainly concentrated on publishing and promoting the news rather than content-seeking interaction. Other journalistic content like opinions, live updates, and videos were published, although much less frequently. For example, *Metro* posted a live video of UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson addressing the nation and another video of a disappointed brewery owner who had to pour away beer due to Covid-19 legislation. The total number of posts in the information dissemination category indicates that newspapers used Facebook just to share news (one-way communication). Few newspapers used a disclosure strategy on Facebook. Three newspapers promoted news and opinions with the name or picture of the related journalist, which shows them disclosing to the public some information about their journalists and the nature of the organization. For instance, *The Wall Street Journal* and *The Daily Telegraph* displayed the names of journalists who authored news pieces.

On average, only 3% of Facebook posts of these newspapers used engagement strategies. Newspapers varied in their use of the engagement strategy on Facebook. The most frequent item indicating this strategy on Facebook was an open-ended question in the news headline or as a lead sentence of the post. For instance, *The Wall Street Journal* used headlines such as "The US Has Followed Europe in Previous Covid-19 Surges. Will It Happen Again?" and "A Surge of Children Crossing the Border. What Happens to Them?" Other ways to engage on Facebook were used only marginally, such as polling or surveying, posting about games, and providing possibilities to register or sign up.

6.2. Newspapers' Organization–Public Relationships Strategies in Twitter

As shown in Table 3, the analysis of newspapers' tweets shows more variance between OPR strategies on Twitter

Table 2. The percentage of nine newspapers' Facebook posts according to categories and sub-categories (measurement items) of OPR strategies.

Category (OPR strategy)/ sub-category (measurement items)	The New York Times	New York Post	USA Today	The Wall Street Journal	The Daily Telegraph	Metro	The Sydney Herald	The Herald Courier-Mail	Morning Sun
Information dissemination (avg = 95,8 %)	98%	99%	98,3%	91%	90%	100%	99%	95%	91%
News headlines	88%	96%	84%	87%	78%	89%	84%	84%	62%
Ads for or of the company				1%	1%	1%			3%
Opinion	3%			2%			1%		2%
Live update/coverage	1%		4,8%	1%	4%		9%		3%
Photo story						2%	2%		
Video	3%	3%	9,5%		6%	7%	3%	7%	2%
Podcast/audio	1%								
Other content (food recipe, meme, real estate, travel, graphic)	2%				1%	1%		4%	19%
Disclosure (avg = 1,1 %)	0%	0%	0%	5%	3%	0%	0%	0%	2%
News disclosing journalist(s)' names/photos				5%	3%				2%
Engagement (avg = 3,1 %)	2%	1%	1,7%	4%	7%	0%	1%	4%	7%
Polling/voting			0,8%					4%	
Open ended question or sentence	2%	1%	0,9%	4%	7%		1%		3%
Survey								1%	1%
Game									2%
Registration/signup									1%
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Total number of posts (N = 904)	100	100	105	100	100	101	100	100	98

than was found in newspapers' Facebook posts. An average of 80% of newspapers' tweets showed evidence of their use of information dissemination, compared to an average of 96% on Facebook. An average of 8% of tweets showed newspapers using disclosure, compared to an average of 1% on Facebook. An average of 12% of tweets showed newspapers using engagement, compared to an average of 3% on Facebook.

The vast majority of these tweets indicated newspapers' use of an information dissemination strategy and therefore as one-way communication with audiences. Newspapers published slightly fewer opinions, live updates, and videos on Twitter than Facebook. Like Facebook, promoting other specialized content (e.g., food recipes, memes, travel tips and real estate presentations) existed on Twitter at a marginal level.

The results show that only one newspaper (*The Sydney Morning Herald*) employed tagging as an ongoing disclosure strategy. *The Sydney Morning Herald* used the 'at' sign (@) to link to the profile of related journalists or to display the name of the journalist who wrote the article. By tagging news items with journalist(s) who authored them, the newspaper provided information about its news team to the general public. Tagging of journalists within tweets was also used by three other newspapers, but only marginally and not systematically.

Newspapers used an engagement strategy more on Twitter than on Facebook. As a platform, Twitter enables newspapers to be more engaging by retweeting and tagging, which in most cases were the most used items contributing to this strategy. Seven out of nine newspapers used retweeting or sharing others' tweets as part of their engagement strategy. For example, *USA Today* retweeted tweets of their sports and political news team, local police department, and news editorial's podcast team. However, only three newspapers did this

Table 3. The percentage of nine newspapers' Twitter tweets according to categories and sub-categories (measurement items) of OPR strategies.

Category (OPR strategy)/ sub-category (measurement items)	The New York Times	New York Post	USA Today	The Wall Street Journal	The Daily Telegraph	Metro	The Sydney Herald	The Herald Courier-Mail	Morning Sun
Information dissemination (avg = 80 %)	82%	99%	78,5%	94%	81%	73%	36%	85%	91%
News headlines	72%	92%	65%	90%	74%	70%	26%	81%	78%
News about the industry									1%
Ads for or of the company		1%	1%	2%	3%		2%	1%	3%
Opinion							1%		1%
Live update/coverage	4%				2%		7%		
Photo story	1%								1%
Video		3%	12,5%	2%	2%	1%		2%	
Podcast/audio	2%	3%							
Other content (food recipe, meme, travel, real estate)	3%					2%		1%	7%
Disclosure (avg = 8%)	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	64%	4%	2%
News/articles with tagged journalist(s)	2%						64%	4%	2%
Engagement (avg = 12%)	16%	1%	21,5%	6%	19%	27%	0%	11%	7%
Polling/voting								1%	
Open-ended question or sentence				2%	16%				2%
Survey									1%
Game					1%				2%
Registration/signup									1%
Encourage readers to retweet or reply	1%	1%	1%					4%	
Retweeted or shared content	15%		20,5%	4%	2%	27%		6%	1%
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Total number of tweets (N = 903)	100	100	105	99	100	100	99	100	100

systematically during the data collection period. They used retweeting to promote content their journalists had tweeted earlier or the newspapers' other Twitter profiles (e.g., the newspapers' political team or entertainment team) had tweeted. All other engagement strategy items, excluding open-ended questions or sentences by *The Daily Telegraph*, were seldom employed and only marginally used among newspapers. Using open-ended questions in tweets that either dealt with conflicting issues or entertainment, *The Daily Telegraph* sought to spark discussion in comments and increase the number of clicks. For example, the newspaper used sentences like "Do you agree?", "What do you think?", and "Is this fair?" at the end of its news tweets. *The Daily Telegraph* also embedded dedicated pictures in its tweets alongside news-related questions such as "Has Meghan and Harry's interview changed your opinion of the royal family?''

Multiple factors could explain the different engagement levels on newspapers' Facebook and Twitter sites. As noted earlier, Twitter is a more news-oriented platform while Facebook is considered more as a social network (Ju et al., 2014; Kalsnes & Larsson, 2018). Also, Twitter enables retweeting and tagging of posts, which were often used by newspapers. Another reason may be that Twitter users and Facebook users are interested in very different content and levels of engagement. In sum, it would seem that newspapers do not have a well-thought-out strategy for engagement on different platforms.

7. Conclusions

This study examined how some of the most popular newspapers in Australia, the US, and the UK use relationship cultivation and dialogic communication strategies in their Facebook and Twitter accounts. It contributes to media work research with a relational approach to audiences (Coddington et al., 2018; Hepp, 2020; Hepp & Loosen, 2019; Lewis et al., 2014; Picard, 2011; Villi & Picard, 2019). Although this research advocates that media organizations should adopt a relational approach to view audiences as relational partners in the mutually beneficial process of news formation, distribution and promotion, this literature has not examined strategies to develop and maintain audience relationships in social media. Thus, our study adopted OPR theory to analyse the strategies used by newspapers to build such relationships via their social media accounts.

Overall, our study's findings show that newspapers do not use very engaging methods in Facebook or Twitter to activate and maintain relationships with their audiences. Instead, newspapers mainly employ an information dissemination strategy on both social media sites, while engagement and disclosure strategies played only a supporting role in their cultivation of organizational relationships with their audiences. The access strategy was almost non-existent, indicating that newspapers do not want to be as accessible as they could be. Most of their Facebook and Twitter posts did not contain any engaging features. Only a few newspapers asked the public to post pictures or encouraged followers to participate in the discussion.

This indicates that although Facebook and Twitter are conducive to media–audience interaction and thus encourage closer relational ties, these newspapers preferred one-way communication with their audiences in these social media sites. It, therefore, seems that newspapers are stuck in the old news dissemination (i.e., publication of news) mindset, even though social media presents opportunities for more two-way communication between newspapers and audiences. This suggests newspaper management and journalists are satisfied with a social media communication model in which they constantly distribute news headlines (with links back to the full stories on their news sites) via their social media sites and rely on their audiences to pass on this news to their social networks, thus contributing to audience consumption and news marketing targets.

This study contributes to online participatory journalism research (see Engelke et al., 2019, for a review of this literature) by providing empirical evidence showing how newspapers are seeking (or not seeking) audience participation in their news distribution practices via social media. We suggest that newspapers' lack of engagement with audiences in social media limits the ability of audience members to enhance a story's prominence and thus draw attention to it (Almgren & Olsson, 2016; Larsson, 2018). It seems ironic that although audience engagement has become a key performance indicator of journalistic production (Cherubini & Nielsen, 2016), the newspapers in our study did not employ many engagement strategies. We acknowledge that although our measurement of engagement is likely to be different to the way other studies measure engagement, this deserves closer attention in future participatory journalism research into media engagement with audiences.

Given that media organizations, as information intermediaries, are quite different to most other types of organizations, it may at first seem surprising that our main finding, that newspapers predominantly used an information dissemination strategy, correlates closely with the findings of other OPR studies (e.g., Bortree & Seltzer, 2009; Lovejoy et al., 2012; Rybalko & Seltzer, 2010; Shin et al., 2015). OPR studies predominantly have examined relationship–cultivation strategies of typical business-to-consumer corporations and non-profit organizations. Shin et al. (2015) examined strategies used by corporations producing different types of products (durable, non-durable and services). However, this is the first known study into how media organizations use OPR strategies in social media.

Our finding that newspapers predominantly used an information dissemination strategy seems fitting at first glance. Indeed, newspapers specialize in the constant dissemination of social, economic, and political information to their audiences. Although a dissemination-first mindset traditionally and predominantly takes place in their proprietary news sites, it seems this practice carries over into social media sites as well. This shows that newspapers do not take seriously the post-dissemination practices linked to engagement (see Dutceac Segesten et al., 2020), particularly distribution, which advances mutually beneficial relations with audience members. We argue that if news outlets want to build closer relations with audience members, they must engage more with audiences in social media.

This study did not adequately investigate media workers' roles and responsibilities in engaging in relational and dialogic communication with audiences in social media. We concur with Malmelin and Villi (2016) that the journalist role of communication facilitator in online communities, in which journalists and other editorial workers seek to inspire discussions about news content, is vital for media organizations aiming to boost market share. Audiences' news-sharing practices, led by these media workers as communication facilitators, contributes to extending the reach of news content and audiences engaging in this content.

There are a number of limitations within our study. First, we disclose that we only looked at engagement strategies of newspapers themselves, not how audiences actually engaged in news content (e.g., we did not consider the quantity of user responses to newspapers' posts). We also did not compare the strategies of newspapers across countries. Another clear limitation is that we did not examine social media posts of other types of media organizations, such as television and radio news programs and news magazines. Also, we only examined posts (1807 in total) within a two-week period in March 2021, and thus we did not conduct a longitudinal study, which may have revealed more engagement strategies during highly public events (such as celebrity scandals). Finally, we did not look at the social media profiles and posts of journalists (Holton & Molyneux, 2018) or of newspapers' subsidiary social media profiles (e.g., political and entertainment news teams). Studies suggest substantial proportions of journalists now hold social media accounts, with Twitter sign-up rates of around 70–80% in Western countries (Pole & Gulyas, 2015). Future research may explore these personal journalistic profiles to see if they lead to closer relational ties between journalists and audiences (e.g., Engelke et al., 2019) and between media outlets and audiences. It would also be interesting to explore if relationship cultivation strategies of engagement are dominant in journalists' posts on their social media sites.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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Part II.

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Article

The Engagement Imperative: Experiences of Communication Practitioners' Brand Work in the Music Industry

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Abstract
Due to societal trends, such as digitalisation, platformisation, and active and co-creative audiences, new organisational practices have surfaced. This study examines how communication practitioners experience their changing work in a new communication environment in which participatory cultural norms are becoming standard in strategic communication. I argue that the requirements to produce audience engagement affect the communication work and the communication workers. This study uses the popular music industry as a case, and is based on interviews with communication practitioners as well as on the qualitative text analysis of reports and newsletters from the music marketing firm Music Ally to the music industry. The study shows that communication practitioners within the industry experience a duty to create audience engagement—an engagement imperative. Although the practitioners are highly skilled in digital communication and social media, they often see the development of digital promotional culture as a challenge and express a lack of a deeper understanding of engagement. This study highlights implications for their professional roles, competences, and identities as well as ethical implications regarding the exploitation of audiences in communication work.

Keywords
audience engagement; communication management; communication practitioner; engagement imperative; ethics; media work; music industry; participatory culture; strategic communication

Issue
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1. Introduction

In the digitalisation context, organisations have re-negotiated their communicative relationships with consumers, leading to changed patterns of communication work that consider a new organisational emphasis on audience and consumer engagement. What I call an *engagement imperative* now dominates communicative working practices. The engagement imperative implies that organisations' communication of all sorts is built on the precepts of creating engagement and dialogue among their audiences and stakeholders. Although audience and consumer engagement are well researched (see, for example, Barger et al., 2016; Broersma, 2019; Steensen et al., 2020), the same cannot be said about how engagement affects communication work and workers. Accordingly, this study examines media work in a promotional and participatory culture (cf. Deuze, 2007; Jenkins, 2006) through a qualitative analysis of music industry communication practitioners" experiences.

The popular music industry, like many others, depends on the affordances provided by platforms and social media (Choi & Burnes, 2013; Van Dijck, 2009). As audiences (also named as consumers, users, stakeholders, and fans), are expected to engage with and "co-create" value with artist brands, new sophisticated and integrated marketing methods are adopted (Gamble et al., 2019; Scolari, 2009; Zeiser, 2015), and new communication practices to follow, foster, steer, track, and commodify consumer engagement via big data surface (Andrejevic, 2014; Choi & Burnes, 2013; Negus, 2018). Strategy is at the centre here, and organisations are increasingly taking a unified approach to all sorts of deliberate and strategic communication practices (public relations [PR], marketing, and management) to adapt to changes and to build relationships with audiences (Argenti et al., 2005; Hallahan et al., 2007). Communication practitioners are part of a system and within it simultaneously play different roles—as power agents, directing debates and cultures, but also as workers acting according to norms and demands, such as new knowledge and ethical considerations. Nevertheless, there seems to be a lack of understanding of promotional practices and worker experiences (Brodmerkel & Carah, 2016; Valentini, 2015)—and how to manage the fluidity of changing contexts within this field (Asunta, 2016; Edwards, 2018). Elmer (2011) urges us to delve more deeply into the "messiness of the profession" of PR, and Brodmerkel and Carah (2016) discuss the need to pay more attention to how algorithmic use influences the roles and the work of communication. Kiesenbauer and Zerfass (2015) argue that it has become necessary to focus more on the personal and sociocultural aspects of communication. The use of social theories in strategic communication can help us understand its sociopolitical consequences (see, for example, Ihlen & Verhoeven, 2015), which this article helps highlight. To analyse what communication professions entail, the framework of Anteby et al. (2016) is used in this study, highlighting various parts and perspectives of the work. To also put focus on the consequences of the fast-paced and digitised field could bring insights that help create a more sustainable media industry for the workers.

Workers' experiences with participatory work is an important new approach to both the fields of media work and strategic communications. Accordingly, linking and problematising work with experiences of audience engagement will add perspectives to the communication practitioner's work conditions. I argue that the requirements of the communicators to produce audience engagement possibly affect both the work and the worker. Therefore, I explore these issues through the following research questions:

> RQ1: How do the requirements to produce "engagement" affect communication work and workers in terms of the roles, responsibilities, competences, ethics, and identity of being a communication professional within the music industry?
>
> RQ2: What are the imagined audience modes, and what are the expectations of audience engagement, from the communication professional's perspective?

This article proceeds as follows: In Section 1, I review the literature that I draw on in the analysis of media work, professional competences and identities, and strategic communication. This is followed by a presentation of the methodology used and the study conducted—interviews with communication practitioners and content analysis of music industry material. This is followed by a description of the findings and discussion of the results and key contributions of the study concerning previous research. Based on this study I will argue that the engagement imperative within music industry communication affects communication practitioners' work. The study specifically addresses the worker's experiences of the pressure to use music fans and their engagement as a marketing tool, based on the prerequisites of the contemporary online participatory culture.

2. Theoretical Framework

In line with calls for a deeper understanding of communication work in a participatory culture (see, for example, Brodmerkel & Carah, 2016; Edwards, 2018), this section discusses theories on work, competences, skills, and identities, as well as facets of co-creation in strategic communication. This article relates to what can be seen as two suggested engagement turns—first, an engagement turn in work and, second, an engagement turn in strategic communication.

The framework of Anteby et al. (2016) uses three lenses—the "becoming," "doing," and "relating"—to discuss the parts and perspectives of professions. The *becoming* lens refers to processes of socialisation within an occupational community into shared cultural values, norms and world views. This lens also refers to becoming controlled and unequal-stressing organisational dynamics. The *doing* lens focuses on what kind of work and activities occupational members do "that have consequences for individual, occupational and organisational outcomes (such as shifts in jurisdiction, status, power and resource allocation)" (Anteby et al., 2016, p. 200). It has implications for the sense of identity, meaningful work and dignity of the worker. The *relating* lens refers to how the collaborative relationships that workers build with others (other occupational and non-occupational groups) also define them. This lens explains the generative nature of occupational and often collaborative and coproducing relationships. Using this framework can contribute to the understanding of communication work from multiple perspectives: individual, social, and contextual.

2.1. The Engagement Turn in Work: Competences, Skills, Identities, and Ethics of Communication Professionals

"Work" is going through transformation overall due to technological, political-economic, and organisational aspects within digital capitalism. Many workers—in this case, communication professionals—operate in a complex environment, with constantly changing contexts, relationships, demands, and pressures of consumers, clients, and colleagues (Deuze, 2009). There is also a liquefication of boundaries and practices in communication work. Professional fields like PR, marketing, branding, and social media management are often intertwined due to common grounds, challenges, and aims (Hallahan et al., 2007).

The concept of media work is used for cultural production taking place in a media logic (Deuze, 2007; Snow & Altheide, 1979). It is "forms and processes that organise the work done within a particular medium…with cultural competence and frames of perception of audiences/users, which in turn reinforces how production within the medium takes place" (Dahlgren, 1996, p. 63). The media worker is executing a constant interaction and negotiation between creativity, connectivity, content, and commerce—they are a "culture creator" (Deuze, 2009). Within the music industry, this tension is prominent. Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011) define the "cultural worker" within, for example, the music industry as creative labour centred on activities of symbol making and interpretive knowledge such as journalism, PR, and advertising. These creative workers (writers, editors, designers, producers, managers, musicians—and communicators) all produce "creative outputs" and mediated communication. As creative workers, according to Hesmondhalgh and Baker, tend to care greatly about their products, the individual striving and satisfaction to do "good work" (2011, p. 182) with quality that is socio-culturally significant, is also central to understanding their driving forces and sense of responsibility.

Regarding work as a whole, there is a shift in focus towards the individual worker's responsibility and accountability. There are also accelerated demands on the individual worker to balance the work environment and an expanding range of expected characteristics (Malmelin & Villi, 2017; Sennett, 1998), which becomes part of the professional identity of the worker (Deuze, 2008; Miscenko & Day, 2016). The professional identity forms out of the image of the ideal worker, emphasising values and desired characteristics such as being efficient, productive, autonomous, creative, flexible, responsible, self-optimising, and entrepreneurial (Baym, 2018; McRobbie, 2018). Fuller et al. (2018) suggest that excellent professional communication is signified by being strategic, empathetic, expressive, decisive, and able to see interrelationships. These traits become something to strive for and desirable feelings, values, and behaviours (both from a personal and collective view) that form one's identity (Alvesson et al., 2008) negotiated through a dynamic "internal-external dialectic" (Jenkins, 2014, p. 18) and affected by contextual factors, for example, technology. When researching journalists, Deuze (2008) finds that participatory and convergence culture impact both the structure (like standards and set routines, hierarchies, protection by law, ethical guidelines, etc.) and the worker's subjectivity (socio-demographic background, motivation, role models, identity, etc.). These changes also force professionals to develop new skills and competencies (Mykkänen & Vos, 2017) that are increasingly diverse and complex (Cornelissen, 2008). Communicational skills and competences are at the centre: relationship building, project leading, planning, etc., as are technological competences, such as managing social media and data analytics. Jeffrey and Brunton (2010) argued that the most important skill of PR professionals is adaptability, indicating flexibility and a willingness to learn. Leadership and the ability to think strategically are also seen as central (Grunig, 1992; Grunig & Grunig, 2006; Verhoeven et al., 2011). Altogether, characteristics, skills, and competences are part of what forms the professional practitioner's practice. It is both learnt in professional education and socialised within work contexts.

Expectations and public interpretations of the communication practitioner change and vary. On the one hand, they can be negatively associated with persuasion and manipulation (Hackley, 2007), doing "dirty work" (Ashforth et al., 2017), following orders and, therefore, subordinating any ethical judgments of their own (Botan & Trowbridge, 2015). On the other hand, PR professionals can be seen as "ethical guardians" (L'Etang, 2011)—advocating for public opinion and building prerequisites for dialogue. Regarding these opposing views and the challenges of the work at large, ethical aspects of the profession are increasingly discussed (see, for example, Drumwright & Murphy, 2009). Social media has brought new ethical challenges, potential legitimacy gaps are more apparent, and unethical behaviour is more easily discovered and propagated online. L'Etang (2011) summarised actual key ethical issues, such as manipulation and inauthenticity, through the practices and assumptions of promotional culture. However, ethics online is only modestly discussed in communication research (see, for example, Sebastião et al., 2017; Toledano & Avidar, 2016). Communication practitioners need to assess and adjust their social media practices and provide "ethical, responsible advice to their organisations," according to Valentini (2015, p. 175). These different results imply that ethical aspects of communication work in social media are complicated and require further investigation along with other social and contextual aspects of communication work.

2.2. The Engagement Turn in Strategic Communication

Strategic communication focuses on how an organisation presents and promotes itself to its audiences through intentional activities (Hallahan et al., 2007; Holtzhausen & Zerfass, 2013). All organisational communication, according to Deetz (1992), has both goals and normative ideals of both participation and effectiveness. Building on the arguments of Deetz (1992), Torp (2015) claimed that it is important to keep this dual focus on communication. When the real goal of participation is effectiveness instead of participation (which is used as a tactic for reaching effectiveness), participation becomes instrumentalised. When strategic communication is seen and practised as a participatory process that can also emerge from below, individuals have the potential to be central actors in participation, instead of effectiveness.

In this latter view, strategic communication is a recurrent process in which an organisation and its audiences negotiate meaning through dynamic and co-creational exchanges (see, for example, Botan, 2018). This view is also central in a participatory culture enabling and fostering engagement and in so-called "transmedia marketing" and "storytelling," where narratives expand and are co-created across media forms (Jenkins, 2006).

The view of and expectations of audiences have changed over the years, from being seen as passive and susceptible to influence to being seen as free and active agents choosing what media to consume and when, making their own meanings from content and creating their own (Jensen & Rosengren, 1990; Livingstone, 2003). It has been profoundly discussed that audiences in their activities are being exploited as free labour by organisations (Terranova, 2000; Van Dijck, 2009) and are seen as commodities, where brands use their audiences' creative capital and the data audience engagement generates as valuable recourses for their own needs (Arvidsson, 2006; Nieborg & Poell, 2018; Smythe, 1981/2006). Participatory cultures have also been discussed (see, for example, Carpentier, 2011) as both power producers and relatively powerless, and the producers, as having power over "official" media texts as well as the audience itself. What is called "fan culture" is what the media industry calls "user-generated content." Users make the content, and the industry makes the profit (Jenkins, 2009). Nonetheless, the focus on an active audience is still valid in contemporary audience discourses. There are imagined user modes: to use Bengtsson's (2012) terminology, users (audiences) should be active and engaged regarding digital media are. Thus, organisations that account for the engaging potential of social media "have clear advantage in building and upholding long-term relationships" (Falkheimer & Heide, 2015, p. 342) and reach the ideal of so-called "symmetric communication" (Grunig & Grunig, 2006). Engagement has become imperative to strategic communication.

As a consequence, communication practitioners are also increasingly seen as "social" communicators who initiate interaction and meaning creation between the organisation and the audiences (Falkheimer et al., 2017; Phillips & Freeman, 2010). They can be seen as cultural intermediaries (Bourdieu, 1984)—"taste makers" working in the intersection of economy and culture, adding value and constructing legitimacy to today's marketplace, and in so doing leveraging their own personal experiences into occupational resources. The strategic communication professional balances the individual responsibility and competing demands of commerce and creativity with the actual communication work, where both strategy and audience relationships are central and constantly negotiated.

The music industry, more specifically, early on understood and adapted to digital platforms and social media prerequisites and their affordances (Choi & Burnes, 2013; Van Dijck, 2009; Wikström, 2009). New, sophisticated methods and strategies to increase engagement using audiences and fandom as a marketing device have been increasingly developed (Gamble & Gilmore, 2013; Gamble et al., 2019). Music fans generally have engaged relationships with popular culture and mediated artefacts (see Holt, 2004): Fans enjoy, participate with, and are often deeply involved in music artists, their music, and other fans (Baym, 2018; Carah, 2010; Duffett, 2013). Baym (2018, p. 1) claims that musicians are "under pressure to build connections with listeners" and to "be constantly accessible, especially on social media, offering unique and intimate moments to their fans." Therefore, strategies of both engagement and control are required for music brands, according to Baym (2018). In a music campaign, a range of media formats is used to provide a controlled and coherent (marketing) narrative with the aim to engage fans through co-creation (Edlom & Karlsson, 2021; Jenkins, 2006). Communication and marketing are also highly adapted to and organised around data-driven processes where content is "continuously reworked and repackaged, informed by datafied user feedback" to be optimised for platform distribution and monetisation (Nieborg & Poell, 2018, p. 4275). The work, itself, is therefore adapted both to the user-driven/engagement focus and the data that engagement produces, which is looped back into strategic considerations.

3. Methods

3.1. Research Design and Data

To attain a wider understanding of communication work and roles within the music industry, a qualitative focus is employed. A combined methodology was used: qualitative interviews and qualitative content analyses of music industry data.

The study was partly based on semi-structured interviews with music company representatives working with management, branding, and communication, as well as PR consultants in the field, on different professional levels. Interviews allow the researcher to get closer to their experiences and perceptions (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009)—to understand processes, social relationships, and deeper meanings. In total, 18 interviews were conducted between 2016 and 2021, with both men and women of various ages and stages of their professions in Sweden, the UK, and the US. Interviews lasted between 30 and 65 minutes and were audio-recorded and transcribed. Contracts were signed and the respondents' anonymity was ensured throughout the process of collecting, analysing and presenting data. The respondents were chosen from a combination of variation selection (they represent a width of the phenomenon) and type selection (they represent the typical within the specific phenomenon) to find patterns in the phenomenon of communication work in the music industry. This selection was partly made by convenience sampling and snowball sampling.

To understand the communication system of the music industry and the business view of the audience, I try to grasp discursive practices within the industry as emerging in the interviews and industry texts. Discourses are representations of the world, constituted of semiotic systems that provide a specific understanding of a reality to social actors and contribute to establishing and maintaining power structures (Foucault, 1969). As part of the analysis, I also use textual data from the environment of study and public documentation made by the music marketing firm Music Ally. This PR firm has specialised in communicating to music audiences and has become influential in the music industry by distributing "daily news and weekly insight briefings that are relied upon by thousands of music and tech execs around the world; covering markets, technologies, trends, and viewpoints that are shaping the modern industry" (Music Ally, 2020). Newsletters and reports from this firm (which can be seen as representative of the music industry and its current debates), targeted at other music companies and actors, were subjected to a qualitative analysis that considered written discourse. The material was collected between October 1, 2018, and July 30, 2019, and consisted of a daily digital newsletter (*The Music Ally Bulletin*) and a monthly report (*Sandbox*—the digital music marketing magazine), sent via email to subscribers worldwide. This textual industry data were contrasted and compared with the interview data and related to theoretical discussions regarding communication work and audience engagement.

3.2. Data Analysis

The data analysis was performed under the methodology of Gioia et al. (2013), an inductive and systematic approach to concept development that enables scientific theorising about people's experiences. Inspired by grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) and its constant comparative method, the approach provides a way to identify rich theoretical descriptions of the context within which the phenomena occur, guided by respondents' thoughts, intentions, and actions. The research process was characterised by an iteration between the data collection and analysis. All data were examined with a qualitative content analysis that identified similarities and differences among relevant topics and categories, which were then described and interpreted. As recommended by Gioia et al. (2013), I started the data analysis by coding the data set, identifying empirical codes and constructing empirical phrases closely related to the respondents' descriptions. I then constructed second-order themes by combining empirical explorations with theoretical reflections on communication work/practices, skills, roles, and identity, followed by aggregate dimensions and key themes. I worked through the interviews and the industry material in a similar way, and I ultimately compared and contrasted the two data sets, looking for overlaps, similarities, and differences, to understand the communication worker and today's conditions. These themes and aggregate dimensions are explored and described in the following results section and elaborated on in the discussion section concerning the chosen theoretical framework and concepts.

4. Results

This section discusses communication work within the music industry about audience engagement, with a focus on communication practitioners' experiences with their work.

4.1. Becoming: Learning to Be a Communication Practitioner

The data shows that the competences, skills, and characteristics demanded of the communication practitioners are constantly changing, which puts demands on them to keep up with what is expected and which values to adhere to (as suggested by Anteby et al., 2016). A communicator in the music industry is well educated and also supposed to be adaptive, social, creative, flexible, strategic, analytic, and relationship building, which reflects the traits of an excellent professional communication (Fuller et al., 2018) and a creative worker (Deuze, 2009). They are supposed to constantly build audience engagement—to be a social communicator (Phillips & Freeman, 2010), strive for "symmetrical communication" (Grunig & Grunig, 2006) and, meanwhile, strategically analyse the data that engagement brings.

The communication work is overall professionalised. Although, in smaller companies, it is more common for one person to have many tasks, whereas in bigger companies, the workforce is more specialised. In-house bureaus are also often built to create promotional content (photoshoots, ads, social media posts, album covers, etc.) at a fast pace and to "be more cost-efficient" and "creatively flexible." Quite a few of the respondents were young or had rather short experiences in the occupation (2–10 years). Hence, many are digital natives to whom digital media are natural. Although they have no first-hand experiences with the digital turn, they still reflect on this. Bella (head of social media marketing, 31) claims:

> When I started working with this in 2015…there were no social media specialists [at the company]….Today you need a certain type of excellence to keep up. You need to be much more tech-savvy [than before]. Everything happens so fast, so you need people who can be focused all the time on this and that keep educating themselves.

The pace, the technological level and the demands on competences are seen as challenging: "A huge trial," as a young brand manager from a major music company puts it or "one big learning curve" (Music Ally, 2019a). Among the respondents, there was an expressed fatigue regarding constantly new technical solutions, although there was an acceptance that new platforms would arrive and that there was never enough time to catch up. Marketers "should be excited about the potential of new technologies" (Music Ally, 2018a). Respondents are optimistic about fast technological development, but is also concerned about the demands of being constantly up to date and online "24/7."

The accelerating demands of a relational, fast, competitive, technology-driven, and liquefied work environment to be an "ideal worker" put high pressure on individual communication practitioners. The findings indicate that although music industry communication practitioners are supposed to be experts in digital communication and consumer targeting, they express a lack of deeper understanding of the new work requirements. Many respondents pointed to the fact that the work changes place a larger demand on everyone involved: "You can never let your guard down" (Tomas, manager/communicator, 49). In the structure they are in, the development and demands also affect the professional's self-image, the professional identity, and the work identity of the communication worker (Miscenko & Day, 2016). As the demands to create engagement and all the competences needed to do this are seen as a duty or an imperative, the demands need to be translated into meaningful actions, values and ideas that constitute the professional identity as a media worker.

4.2. Doing: Working With Strategic Communication and Marketing in the Music Industry

Popular music brands are built and communicated as a joint effort; by the artist, agent, the music company (its management, communicators, marketers, and creatives), and often PR, advertising, and media consultants. The actual work comprises value formulation and long-term strategic artist branding and narrative formulation, as well as day-to-day practices of communication and advertising, both in digital (web, social media, streaming services, etc.) and traditional media (print, TV, radio advertising, sponsorship agreements, etc.). A communication worker's day can include creating content and buying ads for Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok, analysing generated social media data, and following and interacting with fan communities. The data show that communication work is clearly focused on building relationships and creating audience engagement (Botan, 2018; Gamble & Gilmore, 2013). Most of the respondents emphasised the need for dynamic strategies in the social media environment: to be able to react to audience actions, to listen to and "follow" the audience, and to adjust the communication strategy if needed, in a fluid way.

The data suggest that, with increasing demands on social media and platform content creation to engage the audience, actual professional roles are expanding and most often include both traditional communication and marketing. Those who used to be PR or marketing professionals can now work as, for example, a creative and marketing director, president of strategy, Internet community manager, senior content creator, or head of social media marketing. Both broad competences and excellence are required. Being a strategist, communicator, content creator, and coach/educator for the artists in their platform usage, all simultaneously, is the norm. Bella (head of digital marketing, 31) was working both with the "organic" parts of social media (the communication and content creation) and the advertising part, such as media buys and the connected analytics. John (VP of strategy, 49) was responsible for consumer insight, data analytics, and brand partnerships. There were considerably larger responsibilities than before, which also goes in line with Anteby et al. (2016).

The communication professional is seen as a (silent) key player between the music company, the audience, and the platforms. Nevertheless, the constant striving to "build engagement" is seen as challenging: to create interesting content and appear interesting to audiences. Adam (CEO at management, 55) claims that "this is the goal of our social media platform…is to fit into their narrative." To do this, there is a need to know "what the fans are thinking, doing, and talking about," according to Ali (head of insight, 44). This requires spending time with them on the platforms. Anna (head of creative, 32) noted:

> We need to live in the same world as the target group. We need to inject our presence there. It is an unwritten part of our work description to increase the number of followers and to keep the fans active.

There are not only expressed challenges but also positive aspects of the work: Several of the respondents expressed pride in being able to create successful communication and be part of creative teams, in doing "good work" (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011), close to fans. Sandra (head of brand partnership, 29) explains: "Check out that content! It was outstanding." It is also often seen as exciting to work with communication in the music industry, with a close connection to both music and the music fans. The view is that these kinds of jobs are desirable and that there are many applicants in line, "hungry" for the jobs.

4.3. Relating to Audiences: Expected Audience Modes

The data suggest that it is important to involve audiences in the communication and brand building of music artists. To have a dialogue with audiences and to follow them in their "natural arena": "These people are so excited. We just follow them and amplify what they were doing" (Erica, communicator at management, 28). It is "fans first" and the most engaged are always in focus. Music audiences are generally seen as being really interested and invested in music, and "it is much easier to build relationships with someone that is interested" (Johan, CEO PR firm, 38). The "expected user modes" (Bengtsson, 2012) is audiences having agency and impact, and wanting to contribute and take part. The audience is generally seen as getting better and better in creating content and in being selective in their approach. You have to "give the fans credit," expressed Phil, a PR specialist (42). Many respondents point to the fact that they are aware of being part of the communication around an artist—they know when they are being exploited and not getting something in return, and then will leave. Ali (head of insight, 44) claims: "Fans have a very eager nose for fakery…for bullshit."

At the same time, audiences are seen as tools and key resources for strategic communication. To involve them in the communication around a music brand is seen as necessary—a fact, not a choice. The communication work centres on "approaching" and "pleasing" the audience to increase and "cultivate fan engagement," "tie in with fanbase," to get a "following," to "amplify," "trigger," "target," and to steer and "drive subscribers" and "traffic" (Music Ally, 2018b, 2019a, 2019c). The aim is "making social marketing smarter and more streamlined" to serve music brands (Music Ally, 2018c). This must be done in a considerate way, according to many of the respondents: "You need to be extra smart, to pursue them in a way that makes it possible to not pay them and make them do it out of their own interests," Anna (head of creative, 32) claims. Nevertheless, this view implies an uneven, asymmetrical, power relationship between the organisation and the audience, not a symmetric one. Focus is the industrial benefit of audience engagement, not the engagement, itself.

The question about whether the audience is actually working for the brand (as suggested by, for example, Van Dijck, 2009) is debated within the music industry as well as by the respondents in this study. Sometimes audiences are actually paid (for example, work in "street teams"), but most of the work is done for free, out of "interest," because they "want to help":

> We have a girl in Russia who, whenever we do campaigns there, will translate and post for us. And she does it for free because she is interested. But of course, we give her rewards and treats like first-hand information and content, because…it's win-win. (Bella, head of social media marketing, 31)

Some respondents were ambiguous, or not concerned at all, regarding the fact that audience engagement translates into free marketing: "My focus is to help the artist to achieve their vision with the brand….Much more than that, I don't think about it" (Christopher, senior content creator, 27). Others are clearly concerned: "They [the audiences] are doing work that means that we can spend less….We're actually using them" (John, VP of strategy, 49). "Of course, the fans are working for the brand….Or, rather, they're ambassadors," suggests Stefan (management, 48). The general view among the respondents is that audiences need to be told when using their engagement and input into marketing campaigns and tell them about the prerequisites, although this is often overlooked. Altogether, this suggests that, in theory, the self-image of being a communication practitioner tends towards wanting to be a responsible cultural intermediary (as according to Bourdieu, 1984) and aware of the pitfalls of the work regarding using audiences. In practice, this is sometimes harder to achieve: The tempo, complexities, and insecurities of everyday work performances entangled in digital platform structures, big data flows, and networked relationships make it hard to focus on social and ethical factors. The human side of the audience gets out of focus.

Ethical aspects and concerns were discussed by some of the respondents—what is ok to do, regarding the audience. Some respondents expressed concerns about, using and/or exploiting the audiences' engagement: pushing and steering them into activity within a campaign, collecting the data they generate, and using the co-created fan content without their awareness. During the process, they also collect fans' personal data and personalise digital advertising, often without them knowing it. Many of the respondents expressed confusion regarding ethics along with an acceptance of the conditions. Anna (head of creative, 32) stated: "It is a matter of getting into the conversation and camouflaging ourselves in it. It sounds terrible, as if we are an enemy, but it is how marketing works." Nevertheless, some asked for more discussions about ethics in their organisations and in the industry. Clear ethical guidelines are sought for (although often non-existent): "Fan engagement opens up a strange ethical space: What is ok or not ok to ask people to do. It's a new territory, but there aren't a set of ethical or moral guidelines, which is quite scary," John (VP of strategy, 49) elaborates.

One example where ethics have come further is the privacy aspect: Here, new laws on General Data Protection Regulation have forced the industry to adapt and learn (see, for example, Music Ally, 2019b). One platform representative explained: "We are helping marketers take more control over how they can retarget audiences." Coming up with and understanding new regulations and new practices that work within them is possible, although complicated. Yet, some respondents were so concerned with the business practices and had even changed companies when finding the fan exploitation too harsh. Bella (head of social media marketing, 31) says: "We are working with living material, with humans….Therefore, I eventually changed to a smaller music company, to get to work closer to music and people, and being less commercially steered." Others think that the music industry is better than other industries. The commercial popular music industry seems to partly represent cultural values and a humanistic approach to all the respondents, although the ethical limits for how to approach the audiences vary. Even this part of the work, using the relating lens by Anteby et al. (2016), shows that the collaborative relationships built with audiences define the professionals. In summary, the professionals seem to have difficulties navigating the opposing views of and interaction with the audience: The commercial and cultural sides are colliding, which is in line with Deuze's (2009) view on being a media worker and culture creator, to be in constant negotiation between creativity, connectivity, content, commerce, and the use of audience engagement.

5. Conclusion and Discussion

This article discusses communication practitioners' experiences working within contemporary participatory culture—the popular music industry—with its mediatised modes of communication production, dependent on audience engagement. By addressing calls for understanding the sociocultural aspects of strategic communication work, the article answers questions about how experienced roles and responsibilities affect the work, the worker, and the profession itself. How to become and be a communication practitioner (i.e., the becoming and doing of the framework by Anteby et al., 2016) is affected by socialisation in the occupational community—to learn what is expected and which norms and values to adhere to. It is also affected by what is required to work with communication—new skills, competences, practices, work methods, and tools being used. When trying to measure up with both internal and external demands on being cooperative, flexible, creative, strategic, effective and decisive (as suggested by, for example, Fuller et al., 2018; McRobbie, 2018), professional identity is affected.

The study shows that all parts of communication work are affected by participatory culture, the anticipation of active audiences, and ultimately by an engagement imperative. The normative ideals of commercial and strategically steered artist brands, via audience engagement, have become imperative. All sorts of organisational communication are built on the precepts of creating engagement among their audiences, to involve them in dialogue and co-creation around the brand in the brand's interest. Building engaging brands is a duty, and relying on audience engagement in the communication work is seen as the only way to do it, according to the respondents in this study. Nonetheless, there are tensions: Even if capitalist organisations demand collaboration and creativity from the worker, there seems to be less place or time for being empathetic (i.e., focus on the human behind the number), subjective, or critical (Gill & Pratt, 2008).

In this study, there is an expressed struggle between different requirements and discourses, which also reflects the current discourse of the music industry regarding their audiences. On the one hand, there is an active audience and endless interactions on social media. On the other hand, the audience is steered by commercial interests and platforms. For organisations, reaching an audience is hard work that must be done. According to Music Ally (2018c), it is the "smart ones" who are "working around the rules" that succeed in leading the audience. Here, the "blessing" is understanding the systems, to be able to bypass them and strategically reach the audiences better, and understanding their actions via data gathers, not really getting to know them better or respect them more. This reflects an asymmetrical view of the audiences, not at all the ideal symmetric one, suggesting that the power structures are still rather intact within communication. Communication practitioners and their organisations still manoeuvre the co-creative relationship with the audience. The goal of engagement is effectiveness rather than participation, according to the results of this study. As such, the imagined audience modes and expectations of the audience engagement inform how the requirements to produce engagement affect the communication work and worker and the norms and considerations they face. One example is ethics, that even though it is discussed by the respondents and within the industry data, is not in focus. Creating engagement has clear ethical implications for both media workers and the audience, and some of the respondents express that they want to reflect ethical and empathetic behaviours (Alvesson et al., 2008). They want to convey themselves as ethical guardians (L'Etang, 2011) or advocates. Although, when Valentini (2015) suggests that communication workers advocate for ethics within the organisation, this is seldom the case according to this study, and there is a lack of ethical competences.

If communication professionals constantly are pushed to develop, change, go-between views and morals, and even bend rules, are they getting prone to problematise the conditions they work within? A further ethical discussion about audience engagement and clearer ethical guidelines regarding what communication practitioners can and cannot do is important to keep evolving in both the academic and the professional strategic communication field. Further research should continually supply alternative discourses regarding the relationships between the industry and their audiences—to broaden and problematise the views on both the workers and the audiences as human beings in a complex society. There is a possibility for a more sustainable music industry truly interested in those they are relating to. For this, there is a need for contextualisation and an understanding of social, economic, and cultural aspects, as well as getting closer to the study objects. The engagement imperative should also be discussed in other industries. Music fans as audiences are generally highly engaged with music, musicians, and ultimately music brands—presumably more engaged and entangled with the brands than customers with many other kinds of brands in other industries (although there are some exceptions of deep and fanlike consumer engagement, for example in sports (Guschwan, 2012) and luxury goods (see, for example, Cova et al., 2015). Nevertheless, although relationships with audiences might look different and be on different engagement levels, organisations in different industries are facing the same challenges and there might be similar implications regarding engagement in a contemporary digital arena.

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Conflict of Interests

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Article

In/Visibility in Social Media Work: The Hidden Labor Behind the Brands

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Abstract
Despite the staggering uptick in social media employment over the last decade, this nascent category of cultural labor remains comparatively under-theorized. In this article, we contend that social media work is configured by a visibility paradox: While workers are tasked with elevating the presence—or *visibility*—of their employers' brands across Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and more, their identities, and much of their labor, remain *hidden* behind branded social media accounts. To illuminate how this ostensible paradox impacts laborers' conditions and experiences of work, we present data from in-depth interviews with more than 40 social media professionals. Their accounts make clear that social media work is not just materially concealed, but rendered socially invisible through its lack of crediting, marginal status, and incessant demands for un/under-compensated emotional labor. This patterned devaluation of social media employment can, we show, be situated along two gender-coded axes that have long structured the value of labor in the media and cultural industries: a) technical–communication and b) creation–circulation. After detailing these in/visibility mechanisms, we conclude by addressing the implications of our findings for the politics and subjectivities of work in the digital media economy.

Keywords
cultural production; digital media; gender; invisibility; labor; social media; technology; work

Issue
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1. Introduction

Though "going viral" on social media is—at best—a lofty ambition, the internet is rife with pseudo-experimental "hacks" and "tricks" assuring individuals and businesses that they can garner likes, comments, shares, and other markers of reputational currency. Yet, as a report in the online trade publication *Digiday* headlined, "things don't go viral by themselves" (Chen, 2016, para. 3). Rather, social media success owes much to the concerted efforts of a relatively new sub-category of digital laborers: social media managers. In chronicling these so-called "cabals" of social media professionals, the *Digiday* report helped draw attention to the invisible laborers powering the accounts of major media and marketing brands. Indeed, storied news organizations, buzzy clothing retailers, renowned educational institutions, and major media publishers all enlist trained professionals to manage their companies' social media presence. Though their job titles range—common position designators include social media managers, editors, audience development coordinators, and community managers—what we collectively refer to as "social media workers" are positioned at the interface of creativity and technology in the digital media economy. In addition to creating and circulating branded content across Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and more, social media workers are responsible for fielding comments and messages from consumer-audiences; boosting their companies' likes, follower counts, and conversion rates; and monitoring and evaluating analytic data. In short, their work hinges on the logic of visibility.

But, crucially, social media workers' earnest pursuit of visibility on behalf of their employers—whereby they represent "the frontline of brands" (Webb, 2020)—belies the fact that their own identities are hidden behind these branded social media accounts. To be sure, both popular articles and academic writings (e.g., Duffy & Schwartz, 2018; McCosker, 2017) have noted the patterned concealment of the editors and managers who run branded social media accounts. In 2015, for instance, journalist Alana Hope Levinson (2015) suggested that the women-dominated makeup of social media—along with employers' tendency to diminish the significance of these roles—heralded a new "pink ghetto" of media organizations. In a nod toward the wider cultural devaluation of women's work, "invisibility" and lack of crediting were persistent themes in Levinson's exposition. Other accounts of the professional field have also invoked hidden worker subjectivities: Social media workers have thus been described as the people "behind the brand account" (Troughton, 2021), the "unseen face behind a brand" (Uifalean, 2019), and those "behind the screen" (Spencer, 2017). Such invisibility marks a critical departure from other conceptualizations of social media in the domains of work and labor. In contrast to those individuals who deploy social media *for* work—namely the carefully curated "identity work" that structures the production of a visible self-brand—those for whom social media *is* work are largely concealed to various publics (for a discussion of the intersections of social media and work, see Bagger, 2021).

Accordingly, we contend that social media work is configured by a visibility paradox: While workers are tasked with elevating the reputation and presence—or visibility—of their respective organizations across Facebook, Twitter, TikTok, YouTube, and Instagram, their efforts to do so are invisible, concealed as they are in the background of branded accounts. Although social media is by no means the only site of such a paradox (see, for example, Anteby & Chan's 2018 work on surveillance, and Mateescu & Ticona's 2020 account of "visibility regimes"), we argue that this employment field is analytically rich given both its recency and its divergence from many other categories of digital labor defined exclusively through their hidden status (e.g., Crain et al., 2016; Hatton, 2017; Jarrett, 2016; van Doorn, 2017). Gray and Suri (2019), for instance, describe how the piecemeal labor force propelling Big Tech relies upon a global army of "ghost workers": people who complete myriad project-based assignments, often without recognition via bylines or full-time salaries (see also, Irani, 2015). Studies of online content moderators, too, contend that the invisibility of social media's digital "cleaners" is baked into platforms' design; the labor of content moderation is thus "largely imperceptible to the users of the platforms who pay for and rely upon this labor" (Roberts, 2019, p. 3; see also, Gillespie, 2018, p. 114). Offering a broader perspective on the invisibility of various modes of virtual work, Cherry (2016) details how new technologies are "transforming the foundations of where, when, and how work is performed… in the process obscur[ing] the worker from the view of the Web site users or ultimate consumer" (pp. 12–13). But while task-work and content moderation are about the production of invisibility, the aim of social media management is precisely the opposite. Examining workers' understandings of and experiences with this visibility–invisibility tension can, we argue, tell us much about the valuation of work in the digital media economy.

In this article, we present data from in-depth interviews with more than 40 social media professionals to illuminate how this seeming visibility paradox shapes laborers' conditions and experiences of work. Accounts from our interviews indicate that social media work is not only intentionally hidden by the workers themselves (Weidhaas, 2017); rather, the labor is rendered socially and economically invisible—that is, devalued—through a lack of crediting, marginal status, and the felt obligation to provide various forms of un/under-compensated emotional labor. As we show, moreover, our participants tended to frame such valuations—both their own and the perceptions of value expressed by employers and the public—along two axes that have long structured the organization and status of labor in the media and cultural industries: a) technical–communication and b) creation–circulation. These axes have historically invoked a gendered division of labor that prioritizes masculine-coded technical skills and creation at the expense of feminized communication and publicity/promotional roles (see, for example, Lipartito, 1994; Mayer, 2014). Accordingly, discursive placement on the latter poles of these parallel axes—be it from employers, colleagues, or members of the public—functioned much like the socio-cultural "mechanisms of invisibility" detailed by Hatton (2017), wherein "labor is [economically] devalued by virtue of hegemonic cultural ideologies" (p. 337). After examining how workers interpreted—and at times, challenged—these in/visibility mechanisms, we conclude by addressing the implications of these findings for the wider politics and valuation of digital media work.

2. Background and Context

2.1. Invisible Labor in the Media and Cultural Industries

In the three-plus decades since sociologist Arlene Kaplan Daniels (1987) theorized that contemporary social institutions devalue women's social and reproductive labor by making their work symbolically "disappear," the concept of invisibility has gained considerable traction in scholarship on work, labor, and employment (e.g., Crain et al., 2016; Hatton, 2017; Star & Strauss, 1999; van Doorn, 2017). Indeed, the designation "invisible" has been applied to an astonishingly diverse array of activities—both waged and unwaged—spanning healthcare, childcare, and other forms of care work (Armstrong et al., 2008; Ticona & Mateescu, 2018); service-based sectors which emphasize feminized, emotional performances and the provision of "soft skills" (e.g., Hochschild, 1983/2012; Poster, 2016); aesthetic work and hidden bodily labor (Hatton, 2017; Mears, 2014); and various kinds of computer-mediated work, including the hazily defined category of "digital labor" (e.g., Irani, 2015; Jarrett, 2016; Sannon & Cosley, 2019). The wide-ranging uptake of "invisible labor" across disciplines and career sectors is, according to Hatton (2017), "due, at least in part, to [the concept's] success in drawing attention to those types of labor that have been overlooked in popular and scholarly accounts of work and employment'' (p. 337).

There is a tendency in many of the aforementioned works to equate the relative in/visibility of a worker or task with the latter's economic valuation; invisible work is, in other words, largely un/under-compensated. Of course, visibility also functions as a proxy for other systems of value exchange, including social status/esteem (Abidin, 2016; Duffy, 2017); contribution to consumer capitalism (Budd, 2016), and/or recognition within a regulatory/institutional system (Crain et al., 2016; Ticona & Mateescu, 2018). To the latter, Crain et al. (2016, p. 6) define invisible labor as the activities:

> Workers perform in response to requirements (either implicit or explicit) from employers and that are crucial for workers to generate income, to obtain or retain their jobs, and to further their careers, yet are often overlooked, ignored, and/or devalued by employers, consumers, workers, and ultimately the legal system itself.

While Crain et al.'s (2016) placement of "workers" alongside external factions like employers and the legal system may seem contradictory, it testifies to an important distinction between *invisible* labor and *hidden* work: whereas the former comprises activities that are discredited by external social actors (under a normative assumption that the worker desires visibility), the latter refers to those acts internally concealed by the workers themselves (Weidhaas, 2017). Weidhaas's (2017) distinction is especially relevant for the present study given that social media workers are, by definition, required to "hide" their personae behind the accounts of major media and marketing brands.

Perhaps not surprisingly, many accounts of invisible work and labor note how visibility ideals and valuations are deeply imbricated with social identity politics. Duffy's (2007) conception of "dirty work," for instance, illustrates how categories of work associated with marginalized groups—including the cleaning and care work disproportionally shouldered by women and people of color—are rendered invisible through their stigmatized placement in the capitalist economy (see also, Mateescu & Ticona, 2020). Meanwhile, one of the key "mechanisms of invisibility" that Hatton (2017) develops—namely socio-cultural—calls attention to the patterned devaluation of work embedded within "hegemonic ideologies of gender, race, class, age and ability" (p. 338). In explicating the role of identity in these various occupational denigrations, these scholars denaturalize crass assumptions between the complexity of the work and its economic and/or social status. As Webster (2014) usefully reminds to this end, the devaluation of tasks associated with marginalized groups occurs "no matter how much individual jobs may involve competence, skill, and technological knowledge" (p. 143; see also, Mayer, 2014).

Webster's (2014) exposition of "technological knowledge" in the context of "women's work" provides a useful backdrop for understanding how work in the media and cultural industries has been oriented around a gendered division of labor. Histories of telecommunications, computing, film, and journalism reveal how the technical and creational aspects of various professions and roles have been coded as masculine, whereas communications and promotional skills are ascribed to feminized subjectivities (Hill, 2016; Light, 1999; Lipartito, 1994; Mayer, 2014). Lipartito (1994) thus notes how the turn-of-the-last-century telecommunications industry represents "an extreme example of how technology and innovation could contribute to the construction of new female occupations while at the same time confirming old ideas about female work" (p. 1087). The cultural image of the "telephone girl" that circulated during that time helped to mitigate concerns about the technology itself through appeals to feminized notions of trust and community (Mayer, 2014). Tying these gendered prescriptions to notions of invisibility, Mayer (2014) notes that while these positions superficially promised young women class mobility, the work remained "invisible"—even to the laborers themselves (p. 51).

The journalism industry has also been structured by a gender-coded division of labor: one that has rendered particular tasks and content categories—those most often associated with women and journalists of color—socially invisible (Nilsson, 2010). We can also see this dynamic in the history of newspaper bylines, which provide credit and therefore convey recognition (or visibility) to the author. Histories of British journalism note how women reporters have been systematically written out of such chronicles. As Gray (2012) contends of the "unsigned articles" written by 19th-century women journalists, such anonymity meant that women failed to receive "credit" for their research and writing; instead, "the male editor, [who was] named, gained the cultural capital" (p. 8). Unfortunately, these structures of invisibility persist in the contemporary field of journalism, where forms of occupational segregation endure (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2015) along with gender- and race-based disparities in bylines ("Male journalists dominate," 2019). Structures of credit seem all the more critical in today's digital media economy, especially, as Arvidsson et al. (2016, p. 252) put it, "the invisible labor of self-branding has become a condition for professional visibility" (see also Gershon, 2017; Hearn, 2010; Jacobson, 2020).

2.2. Brands' Pursuit of Social Media Visibility

While commercial brands have long sought markers of consumer "awareness," "mindshare," and "recollection," both the measurement and indices of these values have shifted markedly over the last several decades. In the context of 20th-century brand goals, marketers sought to increase product sales, improve audience ratings, and cultivate loyal niche audiences (Turow, 1997). However, the rise of the internet—with its oversaturated market for content—ushered in a new transactional marketplace for brands: the attention economy. Writing in the late 1990s, Goldhaber (1997) proposed that heightened attentiveness functioned as a new source of currency; attention thus represents "a form of wealth that puts you in a preferred position to get anything this new economy offers" (para. 44).

In more recent years, against the backdrop of ubiquitous social media platforms, brands are roused to pursue quantifiable markers of attention and visibility. Accordingly, companies that once created and circulated their "brand voice" through newspapers, magazines, radio stations, and other traditional media outlets are now compelled to ratchet up Facebook shares, Instagram likes, and robust communities of Twitter followers. Social media metrics are, in other words, key indices of brand visibility and hence value. As Baym (2013) writes, "metrics are often made visible in the interfaces themselves, where they can serve as proxies for both audience size and engagement, as they stem from active audience choices to click, to follow, to like, to retweet, and so on" (para. 28). Here, it seems useful to call attention to a striking paradox related to the datafication logic that engenders these metrics: social media's mechanisms of datafication are largely "invisible," in part through proprietary mechanisms that are "often inaccessible to public or private scrutiny" (van Dijck & Poell, 2013, p. 10). Further, the algorithmic systems that undergird social media metrics are largely "inscrutable" to outsiders; such mystique means they carry the persistent "threat of invisibility" (Bucher, 2012).

Though beset by the challenges of "inaccessible" platform infrastructures and "black-boxed" algorithmic systems, visibility remains paramount for brands. As such, most companies employ social media workers of various levels and employment categories (including full-time, part-time, and contract-temporary) to build and manage the former's digital "presence." As McCosker (2017) explains, companies utilize social media "as a matter of influence, analytics and insights, brand and community development or crisis management" (p. 132). Both influence and brand and community development are of particular importance here, as they underscore the demand for visibility. In contrast to those for whom social media is *for, about*, or *instead of* work, social media *is* itself work for these professionals (Bagger, 2021, p. 2034; see also, Jacobson, 2020). However, whereas creators and other social media-enabled workers (e.g., Duffy, 2017; Meisner & Ledbetter, 2020; Scolere, 2019) post content that is hitched to their identities, social media workers are expected to remain inconspicuous as they boost the visibility of their brands', rather than their own self-profiles.

While existing studies of social media work (Bagger, 2021; Duffy & Schwartz, 2018; Jacobson, 2020; McCosker, 2017) provide insight into the emergent category of social media work, the still-nascent status of this profession makes it under-theorized compared to legacy forms of cultural labor. We suggest that examining this employment field through the lens of in/visibility can tell us much about how this work is valued—internally as well as externally. In this article, we examine what it means for social media workers to simultaneously promote branded content and have their personal identity markers—and much of their labor—hidden. Among the questions we address are: How do social media workers understand their profession's conflicting brand visibility and personal anonymity mandates? How might their hidden efforts to direct positive attention toward brands impact their sense of worker value, as well as the value ascribed by external sources (i.e., employers, members of the public)? Do particular "mechanisms of in/visibility" (Hatton, 2017) emerge? Finally, how can theories of visibility and valuation help us understand career categories rendered ever more central to digital capitalism?

3. Methods

To address these and other questions about the conditions and experiences of social media work, we draw upon an analysis of 42 in-depth interviews, which were conducted over a span of three years (2017–2019). We recruited interviewees who self-identified as social media professionals on LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, and/or Instagram; to account for the plethora of job titles held by social media professionals, we employed "social media manager," "social media editor," "audience development coordinator," and related terms as search queries. Given the value of the media and cultural industries as settings for analyzing evolutions in work and labor (Neff, 2012), we focused our attention on workers employed by companies across the news, marketing, fashion, publishing, and retailing sectors. A small subset of interviewees was, however, located outside the cultural industries; this included participants from the culinary arts and higher education.

Interviewees' ages and experience levels ranged considerably; some were college student interns and/or recent graduates, while others had held social media jobs since the early days of Facebook and Myspace. Their employment categorizations varied, too: While most of our interviewees were salaried employees housed within a particular company, several were contract workers who managed social media for various companies at once. Our interviewees were located predominantly in the United States (except for two located in Canada and Europe). Women were over-represented in our sample (n = 36)—a trend that reaffirms existing accounts of the feminized nature of social media work (Duffy & Schwartz, 2018; Levinson, 2015). To protect interviewees' privacy, we assigned each interviewee a pseudonym and removed references to specific employers and identifiable brand strategies.

Interviews, which followed a semi-structured protocol, were conducted one-on-one with one of the authors or a trained research assistant. Most of the interviews took place over the phone or via Skype. We asked about interviewees' educational and employment histories; current positions and organizational structures; personal and professional experiences with social media; interactions with platform metrics and audience members; daily schedules; and perceptions of the skills needed to secure social media jobs. With the interviewees' permission, we recorded the interviews; audio files were subsequently sent to a professional service for anonymous transcription. The authors took a grounded, inductive approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), wherein coding and analysis occurred simultaneously, and codes were used to develop larger categories that guided our framework. As we discuss in the findings section, two prominent tensions emerged from our interview data: those between technical and communication skills and the creation and circulation of cultural products. We deemed these tensions salient given how they map onto axes discernible in our review of the literature on the media and cultural industries. The discursive placement of social media work and/or workers on these axes is, we contend, useful for understanding mechanisms of visibility, or, alternatively, invisibility (Hatton, 2017).

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1. Visible Brands, Hidden Workers

Although our interviewees offered a consistent refrain about their jobs, namely that every day is different, many of the responsibilities they explicated—from repackaging news content for Twitter to creating YouTube clips and engaging with audiences on Instagram—were oriented around the axiom of "visibility." Riley, for instance, discussed her reliance on social "analytics to see what stories performed [well]," while Keith noted the importance of quantifiable benchmarks of success: "We also look at link clicks, how many people are reading this, how many comments does the piece have on it right now, how many people shared this post or this story yesterday." To some, like Noemí, the reliance on metrics was a positive element of the job: "It really does provide a lot of insight into what your audience likes, what they don't like, how they might respond to something in the future." Other workers, meanwhile, expressed frustration with senior managers' preoccupation with what Jenna called "vanity metrics," or superficially inflated numbers that provided little insight into consumers' "real" brand engagement. Perhaps not surprisingly, workers decried platform changes—most especially unannounced algorithm tweaks—that thwarted their efforts to ensure that content and communication were seen. As Nicole explained of Facebook, "It changes so frequently that it can become somewhat frustrating as a social manager because you might get used to certain content performing well for you and then algorithms change.''

Despite—or perhaps because of—social media workers' pursuit of visibility on behalf of their employers' brands, interviewees noted the felt demand to downplay their own visibility. Several of our interviewees thus explained how they concealed their own distinctive communicative styles behind the "voice" of the brand. Riley, for instance, described her job as "being the voice *behind* the community" (italics added for emphasis), while Olivia described her work as "anonymous in that people don't always know that it's coming from me." Tess, similarly, noted how the ability to conceal her own persona behind the personality of the brand or organization was a key marker of professional potential. "Because I work for a brand, my name isn't attached to anything." Much like those forms of labor that are "hidden" as a result of organizational demands (Weidhaas, 2017), a "good" social media worker is one who can successfully cloak their individual identity behind the veil of a corporate entity.

4.2. Economic and Social Invisibility

Crucially, social media work was not only intentionally concealed by employees; it was also, according to interviewees, rendered invisible by both employers and the wider public. Several social media workers indicated their devalued status through expositions of their relatively low compensation, especially compared to careers in Big Tech. Laura noted how social media workers earn "definitely less" than their peers in expressly technical roles, in part because "companies don't totally value their employees." Work, moreover, stretched into all hours of the day—typically without overtime compensation. As Donna explained of the always-on culture, "[I] loved what I was doing… though [I] was not getting paid for all the extra duties I was putting on myself." Melissa, similarly, recounted "get[ting] all of my content scheduled, emails, social….Then I'd say, 'Okay, now I have three free hours, and then I have to do it all again.' There was just no way to really get in front of it. It was brutal."

In other cases, workers noted how their careers were socially devalued, as the public perceived their jobs as frivolous or unchallenging. As Blaire explained, "[People joke]…'Oh, you write tweets for a living.' But people don't realize how much goes into a single tweet." Similarly, Veronica noted, "I think a lot of people think of social media as just an intern sitting on Twitter all day, which is entirely not what I do." Jenna, meanwhile, identified a chasm between the external perception and reality of social media work: "The amount of strategy and planning [required]—I don't think that a lot of people fully realize that." She added, "There's always people that are like, 'Oh, just let an intern take care of the social because they know it better than anyone.' " Such repeated invocations of the imagined "intern"—a trope used to signal an oft-exploited worker subjectivity—attest to the lack of status ascribed to those employed in social media as well as to gender and age-based assumptions that reaffirm its invisible status (e.g., Shade & Jacobson, 2014).

Other interviewees noted how the valuation of this career was bound up with identity-based assumptions about what constitutes a "valuable" worker subjectivity within contemporary organizations. Alice found that many people assumed it was "an easy job…[something meant for] a dumb, 20-year-old girl." In dispelling this assumption, she countered, "It's really hard, and you get no credit and no visibility." Alice also noted how this social devaluation belied the economic import of social media within a digitally driven economy:

> If we were only getting like 10 percent of traffic from social media, it wouldn't be that important of a job. When you're getting the majority of it from social media, and posts can live or die based on if it's posted to Facebook and how it's posted to Facebook, that becomes a super valuable skill.

Riley's exposition was remarkably similar: "You have to do the work and strategize so that you… can make your company profitable." As such, she noted, "The work I'm doing isn't for nothing. The work I'm doing isn't just throwing silly captions at the wall and just hoping they stick."

Despite external perceptions of social media work, our interviewees highlighted the time, energy, and emotional labor demands. More pointedly, they detailed how the emotional toll of dealing with online antagonism was largely overlooked by outsiders. "A part of the job people don't think about," Lacie explained, is the incessant exposure to toxicity: "You are on the other end of a public face. And a lot of the time that means routing people to customer service or dealing with trolls or dealing with the fallout when something that you've posted was just a mistake." Donna, similarly, concluded that those aspiring to work in social media should "[recognize] that there are crazy people on the internet." She added, "If that really bothers you, it's gonna be tough to be a social media manager. If you don't have thick skin, it's gonna be tough. You can't take it personally." However, as Riley acknowledged:

> You're dealing with trolls all the time on the internet, and you can ignore them all you want but they're still going to impact you. You're going to read a negative comment about something you wrote, and it's going to upset you, but you just have to roll with it.

Notions of "roll[ing] with it" and maintaining a "thick skin" invoke the unpaid, oft-invisible management of emotions that is central to Hochschild's (1983/2012) formulation of emotional labor.

More broadly, and given what interviewees considered a patterned devaluation of their jobs, it seems useful to consider how these positions were rendered more or less visible—and by whom. Such mechanisms of in/visibility emerged along two parallel axes—technical–communication and creation–circulation; as noted above, we deemed these salient given their historical role in the organization of work within the media and cultural industries. As we show, while workers tended to emphasize the former, more valuable dimensions (i.e., technical and creational), they confronted tensions from employers and members of the public who largely associated social media work with the latter (i.e., communication- and circulation-focused).

4.3. In/Visibility Mechanisms: Technical–Communication Axis

Social media's placement at the interface of communications and technology has—much like the antecedent industries of telephony (Lipartito, 1994) and computing (Light, 1999)—engendered a highly variable discursive positioning of the work. When discussing their jobs, interviewees emphasized the technical nature of their positions through invocations of data, analytics, and objective calculations. Tess, for instance, described how a social media career allowed her to discover a "right-brained, analytical capacity that I didn't know that I had." Her exposition contrasted sharply with that of Diya, who supplied a metaphor offered by one of her managers about "what social editors do": They are "art-directing every piece of content that goes out there." As Diya's comment suggests, outsiders foregrounded the communications dimension by noting the importance of human expression.

Melissa, meanwhile, drew on her range of experiences working both in and on social media to reflect on the fraught valuation of various careers linked to social media. "The nature of being Big Tech [is that] their bread and butter—their kings of that world—are the engineers." She added, "It's reflected even in the office structure. The engineers have the best seating and the best everything. The marketing and operations teams where I was… weren't regarded in the same way." Here, Melissa indicated what Hatton (2017) has described as the socio-spatial mechanism of invisible labor, which is "devalued because it is physically segregated from a culturally defined worksite" (p. 337). To this end, Jenna explained how the novelty of the profession meant that it could be "housed in different places within different organizations: in some places, it's in marketing, in some places, it's PR. [In other places], it's part of digital."

Other interviewees spoke to this technical–communication configuration in addressing the lack of perceived status in the imaginations of both employers and the public. Following the above-mentioned discovery of her "right-brained" capacity, Tess told us that she regretted not tapping into this skill set earlier, especially given the broader valuation of technical skills in the contemporary economy. "It's people with STEM backgrounds who end up in these very lucrative fields." She added, "Had I known that as a younger person… that you can use numbers to tell a story just like you can use words, I think that is something that would have opened up professional opportunities like this to me sooner." Much like Alice's comment about the perception that social media is something that any "20-year-old girl can do," Tess, too, noted how the worth of different social media jobs was bound up with a gender-coded division of labor. She thus contrasted the "pink ghetto jobs" of media—where "writers and editors were very replaceable, and [as] such, the salary is very low"—with social media and the "more traditionally male-coded skills attached to it." This suggests that the occupational clusters emerging in social media thus seem to replicate longstanding, and unabashedly gender-coded hierarchies in media and cultural work.

4.4. In/Visibility Mechanisms: Creation–Circulation Axis

In chronicling their careers, social media workers invoked a second, seemingly parallel axis, between the production and promotion of media and cultural products. Indeed, social media management oscillates between the poles of creation (writing, recording, editing, or otherwise producing original content) and circulation (distributing and promoting packaged content to digital audiences). These conflicting demands point to a key tension among social media workers: Whereas some felt their employers considered them central—and, thus, valuable—to content development, others detailed how companies seemed to perceive social media work as more akin to public relations. As Alice put it, "It's like someone else does the creative work and then you're selling it." Other interviewees noted how their responsibilities were oriented more clearly toward promotion, rather than production. Whereas Blaire highlighted some collaboration among the social media workers and creative teams at her company, she reaffirmed her role as content circulator: "Now when I do stuff… my day is kind of set for me because, I hate to say it, like it is kind of more robotic almost because you're just pushing out what is being posted on a website usually." Blaire's comment captured a sense of distance from the production processes, as the work of "pushing out" content came after this content had already been assembled. Alice, meanwhile, expressed feelings of removal from the outside; she had hoped to write original articles, but she found that her managers "weren't really that into me writing at the place where I worked because they wanted me to focus on social media."

Such role ambiguity ostensibly led to confusion and, depending on the company, structures of devaluation. For instance, Gracie pointed out that social media work can be misconstrued as non-laborious: "I think social media can be kind of underrated….It can seem easy because you're not the one doing the actual reporting. But you're responsible for communicating the information. You have to have it factually accurate." Gracie's account is, perhaps, a testament to the still-nascent nature of social media as a business priority. Such novelty sustained the misconception that social media work is not as challenging or agentive as "actual reporting." Ellen offered a similar comment and situated her discussion of this work within longstanding gender roles (Daniels, 1987) and more recent observations about occupational segregation in the cultural industries (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2015; Levinson, 2015):

> I think also within journalism, social media jobs are the lowest rung on the ladder. We know a lot about what happens when things are gendered as women's work….It seems to me this confluence of maybe it was already gendered, and that's why it's the lowest paid job, or maybe it's a low paid job, and women get stuck there. I don't know. It's a chicken or egg kind of thing. It's the sort of thing, too, that at least within media, if you want to not be writing tweets for your publication, you really have to claw your way out of that position. It's like being branded as a perma-assistant. I think it's quite difficult for people, for women in particular, to take those jobs and transition to a different type of journalistic work, even if they took it with the expectation that it would just be a starting place.

Ellen's use of "stuck" and "perma-assistant," as well as her reference to social media management as "women's work," reaffirms both the limited career trajectories attached to this type of work and its often gender-coded devaluation.

Attuned to these (problematic) perceptions, some interviewees challenged the devalued status of publicity/promotional work. Veronica, for instance, likened her position at a large media publication to "the best seat in the house" because she and her fellow social media workers interacted with "everyone on the floor, from reporters [to] copy editors, designers, [and] video teams." Others articulated how their circulation work—even if not understood as such by their employers—combined creative and promotional processes in manners that lent themselves quite well to other careers. Tess said that she and other social media workers are privy to the interests of digital audiences and are, thus, uniquely positioned to drive production decisions:

> I find myself advocating for stories that would otherwise be ignored, because editors think it's like, too mass, or not on-brand, or, you know, "This isn't us." And I say, "Well, it may not be you, but it is millions of people on Facebook, and they deserve to read about stuff that interests them."

While Tess acknowledged that social media workers are not always "influencing the pieces of journalism that you read," it is important to highlight this influence as a possibility. The productive bent of social media management also materialized in what a few of our interviewees referred to as recirculation, wherein they repackaged and redistributed company assets. Noemí noted that her work entailed searching for social media trends and recirculating content to spark new conversations:

> So, that's one of my daily things that I do, is I look to see what's trending on social, in terms of news. What are other outlets talking about? And then from there, if there's something that I feel like we can recirculate with our content, or also share from one of the other… sites, I'll go ahead and do that. So, that's also something that I look at, like what's the longevity of this clip? Is this something that I feel like could potentially be talked about in different ways?

Likewise, Gracie visualized recirculation as a "hamster wheel of creativity"—one that, in her opinion, demands creative and strategic fortitude. As she explained, "You can't really just like rest and stop for a day. You always have to be thinking." While recirculation offers a productive framework for articulating the value of social media work, these tasks, crucially, fail to provide bylines and other visible markers of credit that translate into individual reputational currency (Hearn, 2010).

5. Conclusion: The Value and Visibility of Digitally Enabled Cultural Work

In addressing the inequality and precarity structuring the platform labor economy, van Doorn (2017) identified a quandary: "How does one value something one cannot and often does not want to see?" Recent studies of digital labor have captured the extent of this plight, with accounts of the metaphorical "ghosts in the machine" of gig work (Gray & Suri, 2019), the "behind-the-screen" work of content moderators (Roberts, 2019), and the "hidden and often-stigmatized" labor of online community managers (Nakamura, 2015). Yet the sprawling category of work in social media is somewhat distinctive in that the central aim of this unseen labor is to render an employer hyper-visible. For brands, visibility is tantamount to attention and, presumably, the accrual of value. In this way, social media work is discursively located within a visibility paradox, similar to those observed in studies of surveillance cultures (Anteby & Chan, 2018), aesthetic labor (Crain et al., 2016; Mears, 2014), and platform-based care work (Mateescu & Ticona, 2020). What makes this paradox even more pronounced is that it defies the promotional logic of media and cultural workers in the neoliberal digital economy. Individual employability—packaged as a strategic, consistent self-brand—hinges on identifiable authorship and crediting—that is, visibility (Arvidsson et al., 2016; Duffy, 2017; Gershon, 2017; Jacobson, 2020). But social media work mandates that workers intentionally "hide" their identities and their labor, concealing both as they toil to uphold the "voice of the brand."

While social media work is by definition "hidden" (Weidhaas, 2017), our analysis reveals how it is also rendered invisible—that is, devalued—through the assumptions and practices of both employers and the wider public. The under-compensated nature of this profession is a key index of its economic devaluation. While the media and creative industries have long relied upon the unpaid labor of interns, apprentices, or amateur/hopefuls, interviewees felt that their work failed to draw the financial compensation—or economic visibility—of other positions at the interface of technical and creative skills. At the same time, the 24/7 nature of social media meant that employees were expected to be ever-available to circulate social media content—often without additional remuneration. Our interviewees also noted how their work was socially devalued by employers and, more pointedly, members of the public, who dismissed the work as trivial or thoughtless—both qualities associated with the cultural denigration of feminized work (Duffy & Schwartz, 2018). In addition, interviewees felt that the emotional laboring requirements were overlooked by outsiders. It is in this vein that cultural critic Ella Dawson (2020) recently compared social media managers to bodyguards: "They take all the hits for your brand, from the abuse of drive-by trolls to meaningful backlash when your company makes a bad decision." Such laboring requirements seem to have intensified in the wake of the global Covid-19 pandemic; journalist Marta Martinez (2020) described how those at the frontlines of corporate Twitter handles and Facebook accounts face grueling demands amid a "relentless news cycle." Moreover, with online hate circulating largely unchecked on these platforms, social media workers are frequent targets of internet users' misdirected ire and antagonism. Despite the "importance of their work," Martinez (2020) noted, it is often "invisible and undermined."

To illuminate the discursive processes of such undermining, we have presented a framework of two axes—technical–communication and creation–circulation—which function as "mechanisms" (Hatton, 2017) through which work/workers are valued or devalued. These axes are by no means unique to social media; rather, work in the media and cultural industries has long been structured by occupational clusters—many of which are implicated in social valuations of work and workers (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2015). Our research on social media reveals that—much like the earlier fields of telephony (Lipartito, 1994), computing (Light, 1999), film and TV (Mayer, 2014), and journalism (Nilsson, 2010)—the value of this work is often shaped by gender-coded assessments and inequities. But while industrial histories furnish insight into the deep-rooted tensions between technology and communication, and between creation and circulation, these associations are by no means natural or inevitable. As such, we encourage additional studies of social media work to ensure that, although these workers may remain hidden, the labor accrues the value, status, and renumeration of more visible categories of digital labor.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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Part III.

Atypical Organizational Contexts for Media Work

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Article

Newsworthiness as a Governing Principle in Public Sector Communication

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Abstract
This article examines what qualifies as news when public agencies in Sweden claim to engage in media work. We unwrap and explore what happens when ideas about "newsworthiness" enter the practice of public sector communication. What becomes news, and how? What kinds of content are favored, how are stories told, and what voices are heard? The ideas of newsworthiness in a public sector context are here conceptualized as a logic of appropriateness that governs civil servants' media work. We base our analysis on a three-year case study of a Swedish county council's digital news channel, VGRfokus. The analysis focuses on how ideas of newsworthiness are constructed and mirrored in and through the content of VGRfokus, as well as how they are reflected and acted upon by communications professionals working at the news channel. We suggest that ideas of newsworthiness may function as a governing principle and tone down or even hide conflicts and tensions between key values of bureaucracy and market, otherwise often manifested in public sector communication.

Keywords
bureaucratic values; civic information; digital news channel; logic of appropriateness; market values; newsworthiness; public sector communication; media work; strategic communication; VGRfokus

Issue
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1. Introduction

"No one owns the concept of news" ("Kommun startar egen 'nyhetsförmedling,' " 2019). The comment was made in 2019 by a Swedish municipality to explain and justify the initiative to start a news service. Five years earlier, the communications director of another Swedish municipality had stated that their goal was to be "the leading news source" in the community ("Kalix bygger nyhetsredaktion," 2014). And yet another municipal communications manager explained in the magazine *Dagens Samhälle* (Sundling, 2015) that "the media have no monopoly on telling the story of what is happening in [the city of] Gävle." These quotes, collected from different newspaper articles, are prompted by tensions created by the ongoing trend to reorganize parts of public sector communication in the form of news production (cf. Grafström & Rehnberg, 2019; Rehnberg & Grafström, 2021). This reorganization, we argue, can be understood as civil servants, often with a background in journalism, engaging in "media work" and producing "media-like content" (cf. Deuze, 2009).

In this article, our aim is to develop insights into how the use of journalistic methods and formats influence public sector communication. We are particularly interested in unwrapping and exploring what happens when ideas about newsworthiness enter the practice of public communication. What becomes news, and how? What kinds of content are favored, how are stories told, and what voices are heard? In this analysis, we conceptualize ideas of newsworthiness as a "logic of appropriateness" that governs actors' behavior (March & Olsen, 2011). Consequently, we are not interested in newsworthiness in terms of journalistic ideals. Instead, we strive to understand what communications professionals perceive as news in the context of public sector communication.

The perspective allows us to reflect upon how ideas of newsworthiness in a public sector context relate to both traditional bureaucratic values, stressing factuality, openness, and equal treatment, and to more recent market values emphasizing results, efficiency, and competition.

While previous studies have shown how public agencies engage in proactive media management through the pitching of news stories to selected journalists in order to create positive media images and counteract critical media coverage (Figenschou et al., 2021; Figenschou & Thorbjörnsrud, 2015), our study places the focus on a different type of proactive communication work: the establishment of a news channel. Our ambition is to contribute with an understanding of how ideas of newsworthiness are reflected and acted upon by communications professionals in a public sector context permeated by values of bureaucracy and market. Our study thereby corresponds with recent calls to develop more knowledge both on what shapes norms and practices in public sector communication (cf. Jacobs & Wonneberger, 2019) and on how diverse and incompatible values are manifested and given meaning in such processes (Fredriksson & Pallas, 2016).

We base our analysis on a three-year case study of the digital communication channel VGRfokus, which was launched as a news channel in November 2017 by a county council on the west coast of Sweden, Region Västra Götaland (VGR). The articulated goal is to provide journalists, employees, and citizens in the region with up-to-date information, and it is explicitly stated that this goal is to be achieved through the use of journalistic working methods and formats.

2. Institutional Environment, Values, and Logic of Appropriateness

To situate our study object in an institutional environment, we present two values characterizing the public sector—bureaucratic values and market values—and focus specifically on how these values condition public sector communication. In order to capture how journalistic methods and formats influence public sector communication and its output, we conceptualize ideas of newsworthiness as a logic of appropriateness.

2.1. Bureaucratic Versus Market Values in Public Sector Communication

The institutional environment of the public sector is characterized by complex and pluralistic conditions that make the communication work different from, for example, that of corporations and civil society. An institutional perspective also challenges and stands in contrast to "self-interested and rationally calculating actors, instrumentalism, and consequentialism" (March & Olsen, 2011, p. 3). Human behavior instead needs to be understood as embedded in and governed by values, norms, and rules. The public sector is expected to uphold bureaucratic values, such as factuality, transparency, equal treatment, impartiality, neutrality, loyalty, correctness, and accountability (e.g., Christensen et al., 2007). In recent decades, the influence of the corporate world has brought in a different set of values rooted in market ideology (e.g., Hood, 1991). This has spurred, motivated, and intensified the adoption and use of models and ideas from the private sector, emphasizing, for example, results-based management, efficiency, performance measures, and competition.

Bureaucratic and market values will therefore make different types of practices appear as appropriate and legitimate in all parts of the public sector, and the communication work is no exception. Briefly, this means that values with roots in bureaucratic and public administration prescribe that civil servants inform citizens in formats that are easily accessible, and secure that public documents are made available when asked for (Figenschou et al., 2021; cf. Fredriksson & Pallas, 2016).

Values stemming from the corporate sector, in contrast, direct civil servants to engage in strategic communication (Figenschou et al., 2021), with a focus on branding (Wæraas, 2008), reputation management (Byrkjeflot, 2015), media management (Figenschou & Thorbjörnsrud, 2018), and crisis communication (Heide & Simonsson, 2015). The strengthened presence of market values has also motivated new forms of assignments and increasingly central positions for publicly employed communicators (Kolltveit & Figenschou, 2020).

Previous studies show that ideas of branding and reputation inscribed in strategic communication create tensions and paradoxes for civil servants in general and not least for public sector communicators, since these ideas are often in direct conflict with key values of bureaucracy. In an analysis of communication policy and strategy documents in Swedish public agencies, Fredriksson and Edwards (2019) identify tensions centered around the ideas of transparency and consistency. Similarly, in their studies of Swedish hospitals, Blomgren et al. (2015) show how reputation management and strategic communication activities, traditionally characterized by an emphasis on coherency, are not easily combined with the inconsistencies and contradictions of public organizations.

2.2. Newsworthiness as a Logic of Appropriateness in the Public Sector

In order to analyze how journalistic methods and formats influence media work in a public sector context, we conceptualize ideas of newsworthiness as a logic of appropriateness. When civil servants, or other actor groups, act "appropriately," they "proceed according to the institutionalized practices of a collectivity, based on mutual, and often tacit understandings of what is true, reasonable, natural, right, and good" (March & Olsen, 2011, p. 2). We argue that when journalistic methods and formats are adopted by civil servants, ideas of newsworthiness are manifested and developed, and these ideas have the potential to influence what is understood as appropriate content and formats of public sector communication. In this way, ideas of newsworthiness bear the potential to strengthen or challenge existing norms and routines of public sector communication practices.

News does not mirror reality, and news-making processes are structured according to certain criteria for what is considered newsworthy (Harcup & O'Neill, 2017). These are rooted in journalistic values, such as public service, neutrality, credibility, and ethics (Deuze, 2005). These values overlap and go well together with traditional bureaucratic values. Yet there are also values more exclusive to journalism, mainly independence and immediacy (Deuze, 2005), the value of standing with the individual against the powerful (Aare, 2021), and the high regard for scrutiny. It might even be reasonable to say that scrutiny forms the basis for the other journalistic core values, the soil from which they draw nourishment, especially in a Nordic context (Ahva et al., 2017). In line with the values of scrutiny, journalism is accorded considerable democratic significance (e.g., Figenschou & Thorbjörnsrud, 2015; Wiik, 2008).

News is, in the words of Schudson (2003, p. 33), "a representation of the world, and all representations are selective." Events are not out there ready for journalists—or others, such as communications professionals—to pick up and forward as news. News-making processes are shaped by multiple factors that include everything from journalists' normative ideas on the news value of potential stories to practical, economic, and format considerations (Strömbäck et al., 2012). There is no shortage of lists of criteria for newsworthiness (in the form of event properties) in journalism studies, including aspects such as closeness to the audience in time and space, references to elite persons, something negative, conflict-related, extraordinary, or entertaining (Harcup & O'Neill, 2017; Strömbäck, 2019). Newsworthiness may also be created through the use of different storytelling techniques, such as simplification, polarization, dramatization, and stereotypization (e.g., Rehnberg, 2014; Strömbäck, 2019). The result is that news stories tend to be relatively short and episodic, focus on a single event, and favor unambiguity (Figenschou & Thorbjörnsrud, 2015); they also need human faces, both as illustrations and in order to attract attention (Figenschou & Thorbjörnsrud, 2018; Thorbjørnsrud & Ytreberg, 2020).

3. Method and Material

In order to develop an understanding of how ideas of newsworthiness may influence the content of media work in the public sector, we chose a case study design and combined multiple data sources: the content of VGRfokus, interviews, meeting observations, and official documents. The combination of data sources allows for different pictures and views to emerge, which should be seen as supplementary (Czarniawska, 1998). This, in turn, allowed us to not only investigate the meaning and influence of newsworthiness in a public sector context but to also elaborate a problematized understanding of rationales behind the use of journalistic methods and formats in this specific context and to conduct a deeper and more profoundly contextualized discussion of outcomes in terms of news content.

3.1. VGRfokus as our Case

We actively searched for a case in which civil servants themselves presented their communication work as news production and claimed to use journalistic methods. Over the last few years, in the Swedish context, we have witnessed an increased number of such cases in which organizations (both private and public) reorganize part of their communication work in order to resemble news desks, and actively appropriate methods and rhetoric from journalism (e.g., Ekengren, 2018).

Our selection of the digital communication channel VGRfokus, which primarily includes online news articles (sometimes with the additional content of a few videos and Facebook posts), is motivated by the rather far-reaching journalistic ambitions characterizing the news channel and the work behind it. The channel, which is operated by the Swedish county council VGR, received quite a lot of media attention when it was launched in November 2017. It aims to be VGR's main channel for news related to the county council's core tasks, which are mainly health care, but also public transport and culture as well as trade and industry. With about 53,000 employees, VGR is one of the largest employers in Sweden. VGRfokus aims to be a trustworthy channel with news value, targeting VGR employees, legacy media, citizens, and other interest groups (Lagersten, 2017). The VGRfokus staff belong to the press team at VGR's department of communications and public affairs, and VGR's communications director is also the publisher. The two civil servants (referred to as editors) responsible for the day-to-day practical work with VGRfokus both have a professional background in journalism.

The layout of the VGRfokus website strongly resembles legacy media. For example, the content is categorized into themes, as is common on traditional media websites. When VGRfokus was launched, the communications director wrote an editorial, hereinafter referred to as "the launching text," which motivated, and marketed the VGRfokus initiative using a journalistic vocabulary (Lagersten, 2017). We show in an analysis of VGRfokus presented elsewhere (Rehnberg & Grafström, 2021) that many key professional values of journalism (cf. Deuze, 2005) are explicitly ascribed to VGRfokus in the launching text. At the same time, it clearly states that VGRfokus is not journalism and will not engage in scrutiny, since "a public sector agency cannot scrutinize itself; that is a task for journalists" (Lagersten, 2017).

3.2. Developing the VGRfokus Case With a Focus on Ideas About Newsworthiness

In all four data types used—content, interviews, meeting observations, and official documents—we searched for criteria that reflected what was turned into news and how. In this way, each data source added to our understanding of how "newsworthiness" was interpreted by civil servants working with VGRfokus, as well as how these ideas were translated into actual article content.

To structure our empirical work, we were helped by three basic empirical questions which can be seen to cover criteria for newsworthy content:

1. *What* is the overall focus of the content?
2. *How* is the content presented?
3. *Who* figure in the content?

3.2.1. Content of VGRfokus

We collected and read all the articles (consisting of verbal texts and photos) published on the VGRfokus site during two different time periods that together total 12 months: November 2017–May 2018 and September 2019–March 2020. Our analysis indicates no major differences between the two periods, and therefore we cluster them into one set of articles. The total number of articles is 187.

To identify and develop an understanding of what issues and events are turned into news in VGRfokus, and how the news is presented, we constructed coding categories related to our three empirical questions. The question of *what* was captured through the coding variables "main theme" of the article and representations of VGR (mentions of VGR or subdivisions of VGR; how VGR is described in value terms such as "first in Sweden" and "innovative"). For each article, we also made notations about what seemed to have motivated the selection and publication of the news, based on explicit markers in the text (for example, "first in Sweden"). *How* was captured through identifying whether the tone of the articles is negative, neutral, positive, or both negative and positive; and *who* was captured through identifying main or subordinate actors appearing in the articles and in which role (e.g., manager, other employees, citizen) these actors appeared. We define "main actor" as the individual who is ascribed most space and focus in the article in terms of number, length, and placements of quotations, number and placements of mentions, and number and sizes of photos. In articles where two or more individuals are ascribed roughly equal space and focus, we counted them both as subordinate actors. We also coded the use of photos in more detail, which allowed us to further analyze how individuals were presented in the articles.

The coding was conducted by us, the two authors. Initially, we each separately coded a minor sample of 10 articles, and thereafter we carefully compared and discussed this coding to secure that we had a shared understanding of the coding scheme. Second, we continued coding all articles individually. After all the articles had been coded in two different files, we compared the coding of each article in order to resolve any disagreements. At the end of the process, one single database with the final coding was created.

3.2.2. Interviews

Interviews with civil servants engaged in VGRfokus were essential for us to understand how particular motives and considerations influence the media work processes and how the civil servants themselves talk about and ascribe meaning to ideas about newsworthiness in their work. The interviews also gave us insights into the staff members' understanding of successful news production and informed us about what they found challenging in their work. For example, we were able to speak with our interviewees about specific articles and to ask them about the working processes behind them. The interviews were semi-structured, as we used an interview guide with a set number of questions, but these questions were somewhat modified depending on the interviewed person and also over time as we learned more about the work at VGRfokus and could ask more specific questions.

We selected the interviewees strategically to include all key individuals involved in the news channel (initiators, managers, and editors and writers doing the actual media work). We included editorial staff, a selection of other communications professionals (from different departments at VGR, all involved in VGRfokus), and communications department managers. In total, we conducted 18 interviews with 12 civil servants (four individuals have been interviewed two or three times). The interviews were conducted during four rounds from November 2017 to June 2020. All interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim.

3.2.3. Meeting Observations

To develop insights into everyday discussions about what constitutes appropriate issues and events to turn into news in VGRfokus, we made observations of planning meetings, called editorial meetings. These meetings, where the two editors of VGRfokus invite communicators from other departments of VGR to participate in order to share ideas about what to publish in the news channel, are generally held on a monthly basis. Observations were undertaken both during a physical visit to VGR in September 2019 and digitally over Skype in May and June 2020. Two of the meetings were recorded, and two transcribed. We also took detailed notes during all the meetings.

3.2.4. Official Documents

We have read various official documents in order to learn about VGR and the overall organization and work of the communication department. In our analysis of newsworthiness, we have specifically included two documents directly related to VGRfokus: one visionary text and one strategic document, namely the launching text (Lagersten, 2017) and the official documents with guidelines for VGRfokus (VGR, 2017), created by civil servants at the VGR communication department.

All quotes in the article, from VGRfokus as well as from our interviews, observations, and documents, have been translated by us from Swedish to English.

3.3. Analysis Process

Our analysis was undertaken in four steps. First, with the guidance of our three empirical questions about what, how, and whom, we carefully went through all the material. The VGRfokus articles were coded, and the rest of the material was read in order to identify prominent examples related to newsworthiness. In this careful review of the material, we identified a number of characteristics prominent in the VGRfokus news-making processes. Second, based on the reading of the total material and the identified characteristics, we were able to develop answers to the three questions: the focus of the VGRfokus content (what); whether the news is presented in neutral, negative, positive, or both negative and positive tones (how); and to what degree humans are included in the articles and who (in terms of roles) is given most space and focus in the articles (who). As a third step, we developed our case study narrative in which we compared and reflected upon the motives and considerations expressed by civil servants, formal statements concerning VGRfokus, and the actual content of the news channel. We also compared the ideas of newsworthiness in the media work at VGRfokus with how these same aspects tend to be treated in and by legacy media, highlighting both similarities and differences. Fourth, we searched for explicit manifestations of the two sets of values—bureaucracy oriented and market oriented—in our case study narrative, which in turn allowed us to highlight and discuss how ideas of newsworthiness are used in relation to already established public sector communication.

4. Newsworthiness as a Governing Principle in the Production of VGRfokus

In this section, we present and discuss the results of our case study, based on the prominent aspects related to what, how, and who identified in our material.

4.1. What Becomes News in VGRfokus?

In the launching text, the communications director motivated VGRfokus mainly by emphasizing a need to inform people about what is going on in the region since the citizens have a right to know how their taxes are spent. He also argued that as legacy media are diminishing, journalists are not able to give a full understanding of the work of VGR (Lagersten, 2017). From this perspective, VGRfokus can be interpreted as a way to inform citizens, which is an elementary part of the mission of all public authorities. The guidelines for VGRfokus state that the content of the news channel should reflect the role that VGR plays in relation to current societal issues, and that it should be possible to publish content that "critically examines" in order to counteract one-sided coverage in legacy media (VGR, 2017b,pp. 2–3). This is further developed in terms of giving "a balanced picture by explaining causes and correlations and by making room for diverging perspectives when different opinions exist" (VGR, 2017, p. 3).

The content in VGRfokus is characterized by the following traits: It is simple and straightforward, highlighting one event or issue at a time; and it is about topics that are perceived to be of interest to many readers, that are inherently positive or easy to present in a positive manner, and that are extraordinary and spectacular. In the following, we exemplify these characteristics further.

Health care is the main area of coverage in VGRfokus, which is not surprising since health care is VGR's main responsibility and a subject that concerns and engages many readers. When legacy media cover VGR, they also focus on health care issues, according to our interviewees. The VGRfokus articles on health care often report on a successful initiative, a new service, or a specific solution to a problem. Obviously, new technology could easily qualify as news here, according to the traditional journalistic criteria of newsworthiness: it is something extraordinary and spectacular that can often be illustrated through one specific device or service, and that can (frequently) be described in terms of positive effects for patients. A related way to stress the extraordinary is to highlight occasions when VGR is "a national first," and to explicitly use terms such as "unique" and "innovative." Prominent examples include articles about new technology and different types of innovations. For example, one article is about new "super advanced" technology used at the region's university hospital, another is about how AI technology helps dentists to identify caries, and other articles are about new apps or e-services that will be useful for VGR inhabitants. A series of articles titled "The Digital Patient" describes the positive development of the digitalization of health services.

While health care is VGR's core task, the organization spans multiple areas, and, according to the communications director, VGR can be understood as a "news factory" in itself, since there are plenty of issues and events to select from and to tell the inhabitants about (Interview A, December 20, 2017). This statement is confirmed by our observations of "editorial meetings": although the participants provided many tips and came up with several ideas for possible stories, only a few were selected for publication. One interviewee, a communicator who is not a member of the editorial staff, states that it is not always easy to know what the editors of VGRfokus consider to be newsworthy; while she and her colleagues might think that a particular event or trend is a suitable topic for turning into news content, the editors may not agree (Interview J, June 24, 2020). Sometimes, the same interviewee explains, the ideas she brings to the editorial meetings can be turned into appropriate news content, but this often requires preparation to present them in a specific way, and to provide them with a clear news angle.

4.2. Tone: Seeing the Good in the Bad

The ambition to use a journalistic format in VGRfokus results in articles produced with storytelling techniques and characterized by some kind of (media) dramaturgy. This is not only a question of *what* to tell but also a question of *how* to tell it. The launching text stated that VGRfokus would not only convey good news about the region and VGR's activities but also report on difficulties and problems. Additionally, it was stressed that although civil servants in VGR could not scrutinize their own organization, they "will not be afraid to address topics that may cause conflict" (Lagersten, 2017).

The content in VGRfokus is, however, characterized by a clear tendency towards prioritizing issues and events that are positive. These include topics that do not need to be "processed" to fit into a positive news frame (for example technological innovations that can save lives) but can be reported frankly, since most people can be expected to perceive them as inherently positive. This is obviously in contrast to the legacy media tendency to favor negative issues, such as conflicts, problems, and criticism of the organizations covered. One interviewee at VGRfokus argues that since legacy media often report on problems that concern VGR, there is no need for VGRfokus to tell readers the same stories in exactly the same way (interview B, November 28, 2017). However, according to the same interviewee, VGRfokus might report on the same issue but from another perspective to give the readers a piece of information that they would not otherwise have.

The drama and the tonality in VGRfokus thus tend to highlight positive incidents (e.g., interviewing someone as part of a success story rather than someone who has run into trouble), heroes rather than villains or victims, and innovations rather than failures or problems. This means that almost all the VGRfokus articles are either neutral or positive. However, this does not mean that they all report on issues and events that most people would view as joyful or positive in some way, but rather that negative topics (such as the annual tick season and tick-borne encephalitis) or problematic issues (such as long care waiting lists) are also often framed and presented in a positive way (e.g., focusing on what VGR does to help, on a solution, or on a project initiated to create positive change).

In our interviews with representatives of VGRfokus, the ambition to construct stories not only about good things but also about more problematic issues is described as important but difficult. Finding and developing a story about a problem is time-consuming. One of the interviewees, a communicator with a professional background in journalism, claims that it is easier to report on problems when writing newspaper articles than when working as a communicator producing content for an organization, not least since it is easier to simplify or ignore nuances when reporting from the outside:

> There are many reporters who don't want things to be too complex because it's hard to write a good headline. But if you work for an organization, you know that it is always more complex than you might want it to be. That's often the case, there are lots of gray areas, and "on the one hand, but on the other hand." And such articles are quite difficult to write. (interview F, April 3, 2018)

One way to construct a positive framing is to give priority to the positive content in articles that contain issues involving both good and bad aspects. For example, the good aspects are often given a prominent position and also more space than the negative aspects. Another way is to use positive news angles even when writing about problematic issues. An illustrative example is an article about supply staff in health care. Although the article begins by declaring that "the costs for supply staff are rising in VGR," the headline exudes hope and inspires confidence: "Work to Cut Health Care Supply Staff Intensifies." Another frequently used (and related) strategy is to not write about organizational problems without also presenting a solution. One interviewee, a VGRfokus editor, states that:

> I wouldn't write anything that might harm VGR. [But] I can justify voicing criticism of VGR because it means that there are things we can improve. I have no problem reporting what isn't going well if we also highlight what we are doing to make it work better. But I wouldn't do anything that harms the organization. (Interview H, September 6, 2019)

Clearly, specific strategies are used to write about problems for which VGR could be held responsible. Writing about problems that are not caused by VGR, such as infectious diseases or the annual tick invasion, appears to be easier. Problems sometimes also even appear to be used as opportunities to show that VGR takes responsibility and provides security, protection, and help for its citizens. One prominent example is a number of articles about an outbreak of measles. An infectious disease—in this case a rather severe one that spreads easily—is, of course, in itself something very negative. At the same time, VGR cannot be blamed for the outbreak, and the severe consequences of such a disease can provide opportunities to show that VGR takes responsibility and is an organization to be trusted. For example, one of the articles published in VGRfokus during the measles outbreak reports an efficient information service, which is said to have made citizens feel secure and safe during the outbreak. Another article reports that employees worked day and night when the infection spread among patients in a hospital and were thereby able to stop the chain of infection. The positive tone in several of the articles published in connection with the measles outbreak is also visible in explicit assurances that there is no need for the public to worry as VGR takes the outbreak seriously and has it under control since the infection tracing (done by VGR) has been successful.

4.3. The Human Face: Managers Dominate the Content

Personification is a key storytelling technique in journalism, often discussed in terms of human interest. The underlying logic is simple: Stories with a human touch tend to attract attention. Our analysis of the content in VGRfokus shows that it is characterized by a high degree of personification; humans are quoted in as many as 94 percent of the articles. Further, in the absolute majority of the analyzed articles (90 percent)—a single actor is the most prominent in terms of number and placements of quotations (e.g., if quoted already in the preamble of the article) as well as photos. As main actors and speakers, these prominent actors are able to partially frame the content of the articles. At the same time, the main actors can also “be used by the writers” to frame the content. Because of this, and also for other reasons (not least questions of representation), it is crucial who is given space in the articles.

In the launching text, the communications director wrote that VGRfokus would “give a voice to all parties involved and provide a context that editorial offices today are not able to do to a sufficient degree” (Lagersten, 2017). This statement corresponds to the above-mentioned ambition to give “a balanced picture by...making room for diverging perspectives when different opinions exist” (VGR, 2017, p. 3). One way to realize such an endeavor is to let different voices be heard.

During our observations, it became obvious that the staff behind VGRfokus were making efforts to give voice to people other than those high up in the VGR hierarchy. For example, during one editorial meeting that took place during the Coronavirus pandemic, the idea arose of producing and publishing an article about employees who had either changed their workplace and work tasks within VGR or left their previous jobs outside VGR in order to help Coronavirus patients and at the same time relieve the heavily burdened health care staff in the intensive care units in the region (editorial meeting, May 5, 2020). The idea was received positively by all the participants, who engaged in a lively discussion to identify appropriate interview persons in different parts of the organization.

Nonetheless, the part of our analysis that focuses on the main actors’ institutional roles shows that the actual content of VGRfokus is dominated by managers—and to an even higher degree, it is dominated by organizational members (i.e., persons employed by VGR). The main actor is most frequently a VGR civil servant (77 percent). This category consists of a mix of managers, employees responsible for a specific project or subject area, experts (mainly specialist physicians), and other employees. External actors, i.e., actors not employed by VGR, are placed in the spotlight significantly less often, altogether in 19 percent of the analyzed articles. The main actors in this category represent patients, citizens, and others (e.g., researchers and entrepreneurs). It might not be surprising that the voices heard in and through VGRfokus come mainly from within the organization. However inevitable, it still delimits the perspectives presented through the channel; after all, the vast majority of parties involved in VGR’s activities are inhabitants of the region.

The main actors representing VGR are most likely to be a manager, such as operations manager, head of a unit, or human resource manager. Altogether, managers make up half of the main actors representing VGR. In other words, it is mainly the managers—the people in charge, with positions at the top of the organizational hierarchy—who personify the vast organization that is VGR. Often the managers comment on an event, something that has changed in the organization, or a new product or service. Ordinary employees—without a specific position such as project leader and without responsibility for a specific initiative or event—only make up 17 percent of the main actors representing VGR.

Like VGRfokus, legacy media tend to stress the importance of letting different voices be heard—and the outcome is similar: People in high positions, such as managers, tend to be overrepresented. A critical difference between legacy media and VGRfokus, however, is that the managers given a voice in VGRfokus represent the organization that operates the communication channel. Further, individuals interviewed in VGRfokus rarely seem to be faced with critical questions, contrary to what is often the case in legacy media (e.g., Djerf-Pierre et al., 2013). Most often, the voices in the articles (are allowed to) articulate something positive that has happened or is expected to happen, including announcements of new initiatives or events. The human face of VGR tends to be a happy, optimistic face.

According to previous research, the focus on human beings tends to lead towards individualization of issues in focus at the expense of more structural and complex phenomena that are not as easy to transform into a short piece of text that arouses interest (Figenschou & Thorbjörnsrud, 2018; Rehnberg, 2014), something also noted in VGRfokus. For example, in an article reporting on the long waiting times for prostate cancer test results, the only patient who appears in the text belongs to the small and deviant group of people lucky enough to have received the result in time. Simultaneously, the picture is more complex since managers make up the largest group of main actors in the VGRfokus material. In many of the articles where managers appear, they fulfill the rhetorical function of representing the organization rather than themselves as individuals. In light of this, it could be claimed that personification in the VGRfokus material often does not mean individualization.

5. Discussion: Newsworthiness as a Governing Principle in Line With Bureaucratic and Market Values

In this section, we elaborate further on the ideas of newsworthiness, suggesting that these ideas make up a certain logic of appropriateness in public sector media work, justifying and legitimizing both bureaucratic values (prescribing civic information) and market values (prescribing branding). We argue that ideas of newsworthiness may tone down or even hide conflicts and tensions between the two values of bureaucracy and market, as otherwise often manifested in public sector communication work. This means that previously identified conflicts—such as conflicts between transparency and inconsistency (Fredriksson & Edwards, 2019) as well as between coherency and value contradictions (Blomgren et al., 2015)—may seem to be resolved, or may at least appear less disturbing when the communication work builds on, and is justified with the help of, ideas about newsworthiness. These ideas may therefore be rather powerful means in shaping what is considered appropriate (March & Olsen, 2991) to turn into public news stories, whose voices are being heard and in what ways. Below we elaborate on this argument.

First, the pursuit of turning content into news items reflects ambitions to attract attention and also to reach out through legacy media, as journalists are one of VGRfokus' target groups. These ambitions can easily be interpreted in terms of both civic information and branding activities. VGRfokus is motivated and justified mainly as a way to better reach out to the inhabitants with information about the county council. Topical articles that actively aim to attract readership can be argued as one way to fulfill bureaucratic ambitions to make civic information accessible. At the same time, needless to say, good news about VGR constructs a favorable image of the organization. When VGR is mentioned in articles about, say, sustainable fashion, or portrayed as a provider of advanced health care or as a forerunner in the use of new technology, VGR is constructed as an active, responsible, modern actor—very much in line with ideals of market values and strategic communication. This is in line with previous studies (e.g., Figenschou & Thorbjörnsrud, 2015) showing that the news format reinforces stories about single events and issues—one at a time—rather than developing broader and more complex stories about challenges and developments in the region. While the ambition to inform inhabitants in the region may be achieved when ideas of newsworthiness govern the communication work, certain aspects will be highlighted in favor of others when information is communicated as news.

What is more, the mere existence of VGRfokus is also image-creating: The fact that VGR has launched and runs a "news channel" characterized by journalistic traits signals values such as being modern and being a forerunner, and it aligns with new trends and innovations. Engaging in media work is therefore *in itself* something to tell an audience about (representatives of VGRfokus have been invited to speak at conferences on public sector communication), and it adds to the overall image of a modern county council. In other words, engaging in media work might be not only a means to select, produce, and distribute information in an attractive way but also a goal in itself.

Our second elaboration concerns how ideas of newsworthiness justify favoring positive content over negative and, in line with this, positive framings. The aim with VGRfokus, as stated in official documents and in our interviews, is to publish news that not only calls attention to positive issues but also highlights those that are problematic and conflict-oriented. This is very much in line with fulfilling the task of being open and transparent (here understood as bureaucratic values). At the same time, one of the documents also expresses the ambition to "place VGR on the national map" as well as to use VGRfokus to provide the organization with a "voice in the public debate" (VGR, 2017, p. 2). VGRfokus is thus also expected to be a channel for branding communication. And while the aim to inform citizens can arguably be achieved through all kinds of information, whether positive or negative content, branding activities are not easily done through negative and problem-oriented stories. Further, the ambition to inform citizens about what is going on in a region does not stipulate any specific tone, whether positive or negative; rather, information can easily be conveyed in a neutral, even dry, format. However, the basic idea of strategic communication and branding is to shape the information in formats that increase the opportunities to reach out and influence people's opinions and evaluations of phenomena. One possible interpretation would therefore be that traditional bureaucratic values of informing citizens would allow for different kinds of stories in terms of tone, while branding activities would favor content that is either perceived as positive (as exemplified in the previous section) or can be framed positively, that is to say, presented in a way that emphasizes positive aspects (although negative aspects might also exist) and discussed in a positive tone.

Third, bureaucratic values do not necessarily imply that human voices are used in attempts to inform citizens. It could even be argued that the dry format without a human touch is preferable since a focus on individuals might jeopardize the pursuit of factuality, impartiality, and equal treatment. On the other hand, in order to be open and transparent and to protect democratic ideals in the public sector, a human focus may offer opportunities for employees in different parts of the organization to have a voice and to be heard—provided that others than managers are also allowed to speak. Further, personified content might be more easily comprehended than depersonalized information. The situation concerning market values is less complex: Content that is easily spread and awakens interest is prioritized in branding. The human face is a critical tool in developing such stories. In this way, while ideas on newsworthiness and market values tend to go hand in hand and support one another in the creation of personified content, the situation is more ambiguous concerning bureaucratic values.

6. Conclusions

Our analysis shows that journalistic methods and formats fulfill multiple functions in VGR's communication. Our analysis has opened the box and shed light on how content is produced internally by a public agency. Ideas on newsworthiness, which we here understand as a form of logic of appropriateness, become governing principles for what is considered to be appropriate topics to tell about and how. The civil servants' interpretations of newsworthiness tend to motivate and favor stories that are short, likely to arouse interest, and concern something that is current. Further, the news format is used in a way that tends to favor positive aspects over negative and to give most space to managers.

As we have illustrated, ideas of newsworthiness make certain types of news content appear more appropriate than others. The image of VGR that is constructed is very much that of a safe, modern, and solution-focused organization with responsible employees and active, engaged, and influential managers. This is an image that goes hand in hand with a coherent and agentic organization, i.e., underlying norms of strategic communication and the business firm (here understood as market values). However, as stressed both by interviewees and in official documents, the articles in VGRfokus are not to cover only positive aspects. In order to be trustworthy and fulfill ambitions of openness and transparency (bureaucratic values), problems and conflict areas are also to be included. Our analysis shows that when problems are included, they are combined with something positive—the problem needs to be positively packaged in some way with a solution in sight or ongoing improvement work. More neutral, informative, dry content does not qualify as news per se. That kind of information, if it cannot be presented as newsworthy but must be published, is dispatched to VGR's traditional website—a site that can be understood to be rooted in traditional bureaucratic values stressing the obligation to make information available to citizens.

The news format is something that civil servants at VGR describe and justify as a tool that can be used mainly in order to fulfill the democratic mission to spread civic information to citizens, but also in branding. Media work—and the establishment of newsworthiness as a logic of appropriateness—may be seen as a self-evident and value-free additional technique to employ to package information and to create visibility and credibility. However, while journalistic methods and formats are generally described by our interviewees as simply a means for reaching out—not least in order to fulfill a democratic mission in terms of informing citizens about what is going on—they are formative. They govern the actual communication activities, as they justify and legitimize what information is appropriate to turn into news, how it is presented, and by whom it is promoted. From such a perspective, ideas of newsworthiness and media work might be a rather powerful means to present an organization in certain ways, for example as innovative, modern, and responsible, and to create an image of a coherent and agentic organization. Simultaneously, the same ideas of newsworthiness justify and legitimize opting out from other topics, for example problems without solutions or any initiated action plan and issues that are difficult to turn into attractive stories with a human face.

Finally, it is worth remembering that a case study design—focusing only on one particular news channel in our analysis—obviously has its limitations. Although we take as a point of departure for our analysis that news production and the engagement in media work can be understood as a trend in the public sector, our single example of VGRfokus does not give us sufficient insights to develop what such a trend may entail and how it may influence public sector communication more broadly. Therefore, we see our study as a starting point in a series of investigations to come. As is evident, media work is not to be seen nowadays as a practice to be performed only by media organizations, but as a type of work in which we can expect different kinds of organizations to engage to varying degrees. Accordingly, we argue that the democratic mission of public agencies makes them particularly important to examine further in order to fully understand the role and impact that media work may have.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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Article

Media Work as Field Advancement: The Case of Science Media Center Germany

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Abstract
In the wake of the news industry's digitization, novel organizations that differ considerably from traditional media firms in terms of their functional roles and organizational practices of media work are emerging. One new type is the field repair organization, which is characterized by supporting high-quality media work to compensate for the deficits (such as those which come from cost savings and layoffs) which have become apparent in legacy media today. From a practice-theoretical research perspective and based on semi-structured interviews, virtual field observations, and document analysis, we have conducted a single case study on Science Media Center Germany (SMC), a unique non-profit news start-up launched in 2016 in Cologne, Germany. Our findings show that, in addition to field repair activities, SMC aims to facilitate progress and innovation in the field, which we refer to as field advancement. This helps to uncover emerging needs and anticipates problems before they intensify or even occur, proactively providing products and tools for future journalism. This article contributes to our understanding of novel media organizations with distinct functions in the news industry, allowing for advancements in theory on media work and the organization of journalism in times of digital upheaval.

Keywords
digital journalism; field repair organization; journalism; media work; news media start-up; Science Media Center Germany

Issue
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1. Introduction

Along with its technological, economic, and societal shifts, journalism's production structures and practices are also undergoing profound transformation (Alexander, 2015; Buschow, 2020a; Reese, 2020). Financial upheavals in the industry have led to cost cutting, downsizing and layoffs, the discontinuation of entire publications, and a significant increase in atypical, precarious forms of media work (Deuze & Witschge, 2020; O'Donnell & Zion, 2019).

One response to this transformed environment comes in the form of digital-native news media start-ups which attempt to mitigate the deficits and challenges of the contemporary news market (e.g., Buschow, 2020b; Deuze & Witschge, 2020; Konieczna, 2018). While most of these start-ups are created to deliver identical or similar journalism to that produced by traditional media firms (Buschow & Suhr, 2022), today's field of journalism also includes entirely new types of organizations, characterized by conducting alternative activities and structurally different forms of media work, thus fulfilling a novel functional role in the industry. Since an industry's organizational diversity is a central prerequisite for successfully dealing with changing environmental conditions (Hannan & Freeman, 1989), journalism studies need a broad overview of the changing organizational field and a deep understanding of recently-emerging media organizations. However, current journalism research lags behind in exploring such non-traditional organizations, as most existing literature continues to focus on the digital transformation within legacy companies and newsrooms (Deuze & Witschge, 2020).

In this article, we address the prevailing research gap in journalism studies by shedding light on a novel type of media organization, established to support and stimulate professional journalism and thus ensure high-quality journalistic work in a digitalized media environment. We immerse into the unusual case of Science Media Center Germany (SMC), a non-profit, primarily foundation-funded start-up based in Cologne, Germany, and launched in 2016. With around 20 full-time employees and more temporary staff, SMC does not produce its own media content but provides specific "raw material" (SMC, 2021) such as expert statements, assessments and background information on science-related issues and publications, as well as tools and further measures supporting the work of (science) journalism. In doing so, SMC compensates for the deficits that are evident in many legacy media companies today ("field repair"; Konieczna, 2018) while aiming to facilitate progress and innovation in the field (which we term "field advancement"). Furthermore, to deliver its products and services, SMC has developed an innovative organizational design—a constellation of journalistic insiders and outsiders—that differs from traditional ways of working in the news industry. Despite its novelty in Germany (and possibly also worldwide), SMC has been successful so far and grown substantially since its incorporation, especially given the recent Covid-19 pandemic, in which it has become an essential resource for many of its 1,200 accredited journalists (Broer, 2020). This article asks the following research question:

> RQ: What characterizes SMC as a new type of organization in (science) journalism?

Based on a practice-theoretical research approach, we have conducted an empirical case study on the role of SMC in today's digitalized journalism landscape, as well as on its internal structures and practices, examining the kind of media work that is achieved in this organization. Our study is based on a triangulation of virtual ethnographic fieldwork, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. With an in-depth analysis of the single case of SMC, the article contributes to our understanding of novel media organizations with distinct functions in the news industry, allowing theory building for journalism and media work in times of digitalization.

2. Theoretical Background

Digitalization fuels the emergence of novel organizations in the news industry. These organizations are a response to current upheavals since they pave the way for journalism's organizational adjustments to a changing market environment (Buschow, 2020b; Deuze & Witschge, 2020). Consider, for example, news start-ups, many of which have been established to counteract economic cost-cutting and downsizing tendencies in legacy companies (Konieczna, 2018). On the other hand, new organizations, as collective social agents, are themselves drivers of change that lead to transformation and renewal in journalism through their myriad activities.

New organizations are situated in the changing journalistic field, i.e., the set of organizational actors that constitute the production of news (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Holton & Belair-Gagnon, 2018). Current research typically applies Bourdieu's field theory (Bourdieu, 1998), focusing primarily on the entry of digital-peripheral actors ("strangers") to the journalistic field, on the boundary work of legacy media companies, and on the resulting power struggles over legitimation (e.g., Eldridge, 2018; Tandoc & Jenkins, 2017). By following an organizational-sociological perspective on the journalistic field (e.g., Hannan & Freeman, 1989; Scott, 2013), as we do here, journalism studies can instead identify novel types of organizations that differ considerably from traditional media firms in terms of their functional roles in the industry and organizational practices of media work.

Because they are rare and exceptional cases by definition, a research gap concerning these novel types of media organizations persists. However, for the progress of knowledge and theory building in journalism studies, in-depth investigations are of great importance for better understanding their contributions to the field and how they drive change, as well as how media work is accomplished in these organizational settings. Against this background, our article focuses on the relatively new, non-profit media organization SMC.

2.1. SMC's Functional Role in the Journalism Field

SMC arguably constitutes a novel type of media organization: neither a legacy media player (such as a publisher or broadcaster) nor a traditional news agency or wire service, but performing a functional role somewhere in between and beyond. As part of a larger global movement of science media centers in, amongst other countries, Great Britain, Australia, and New Zealand, it has essentially pioneered a model of supporting infrastructure and services, often referred to as an intermediary organization between the fields of science and journalism (Broer, 2020; Rödder, 2015). From previous studies we have a solid understanding of how SMC moderates the relationship between the fields of science and journalism, acting as a "knowledge broker" (Broer, 2020) and an "organized contact system" that institutionalizes relationships, potentially leveraging trust between the two sectors (Rödder, 2020). However, there is a lack of insight into what SMC does specifically for journalism and how it might differ from other organizations in the field.

This is particularly surprising given that, unlike the British SMC, which was founded to act as a "press office for science" (Hettwer et al., 2012), the German SMC is rooted in journalism, with the German Science

Journalists' Association (Wissenschafts-Pressekonferenz e.V., WPK) as one of its founding partners (Hettwer et al., 2013). Instead of solely promoting scientific studies through public relations, its focus on evidence-based information regularly brings about critical engagement with science, e.g., through "agenda-blocking," a practice that is employed when a publication's scientific quality is questionable and should not receive widespread attention (Broer & Pröschel, 2021). Originating from the field of journalism and still organized under journalistic leadership, SMC's primary goal is to provide supporting services and nurturing conditions for (science) journalism, which is struggling to keep up with the ever-increasing flood of scientific knowledge which collides with journalism's economic constraints (Broer & Pröschel, 2021; Hettwer et al., 2013).

In journalism studies, such a supporting function in the industry has been described as field repair (i.e., attempts to fix journalism from within), primarily by stimulating traditional legacy structures and quality content production, "directly, by providing the kinds of public affairs coverage seen to be lacking, and indirectly, through institution-building meant to promote such coverage in the news industry as a whole" (Graves & Konieczna, 2015, p. 1968; Konieczna, 2018). Classic examples of novel field repair organizations are non-profit, foundation-funded news ventures such as ProPublica, which are explicitly created to substitute activities that were previously performed by legacy media but have been cut to save costs. Field repair organizations are remarkable in that they repackage certain journalistic activities that were traditionally combined in a typical media organization into new organizational units.

Today, SMC seeks to improve rather than challenge journalism. However, as a non-traditional journalism actor, it cannot simply be classified as operating either inside or outside of the journalistic field based on the current state of research (Eldridge, 2018; Holton & Belair-Gagnon, 2018). For instance, while the work of SMC's newsroom is committed to journalism's values (Broer, 2020; Broer & Pröschel, 2021), some of its media workers have backgrounds in fields other than journalism. The latter could be described as "interlopers" (Eldridge, 2018) or "strangers" (Holton & Belair-Gagnon, 2018), those "who have not belonged to traditional journalism practice but have imported their qualities and work into it" (Holton & Belair-Gagnon, 2018, p. 70). The in-depth examination of new journalistic organizations such as SMC might help to better understand their novel position in and contributions to the news industry, and how this is related to a more general change in the field. Thus, we propose the first sub-research question of our article:

> SRQ1: What is the functional role of SMC in (science) journalism?

2.2. SMC's Practices of Media Work

To perform a new role in the industry and make novel contributions to journalism, organizations must adopt new and alternative forms of media work, i.e., "activities undertaken by media professionals in order to advance the success of media products and services" (Malmelin & Villi, 2017, p. 1).

Practices that characterize field repair organizations in general include sharing news content, resources, knowledge, and methods with legacy industry actors under the banner of journalistic reform (Graves & Konieczna, 2015, p. 1970). Specifically, the practice of news sharing stands out when a field repair organization passes ready-made investigations and journalistic content pieces to established media for publication, free of charge (Hermida & Young, 2019). Another typical practice is fact-checking (i.e., attempts to increase general journalistic quality within the field). However, because of the relatively close collaboration with existing industry structures inherent in such practices, field repair organizations are generally seen to be limited in improving and innovating journalism (Konieczna, 2018).

To investigate the kind of media work through which SMC accomplishes its role in German (science) journalism, we have applied a practice-theoretical research perspective (e.g., Buschow, 2020a; Ryfe, 2018; Witschge & Harbers, 2018). Such a viewpoint understands organizations as fundamentally constituted by social practices (i.e., concrete, situated patterns of action) which are regularly and repeatedly enacted by organizational members, thereby shaping the organization (Nicolini, 2012; Schatzki, 2005). Analyzing social practices allows for the open and exploratory discovery of new forms of media work that might not have been recognized when viewed through the lens of more traditional journalism theories (Witschge & Harbers, 2018). As we know little about the practices that constitute the German SMC, we propose as our second SRQ:

> SRQ2: Which essential practices of media work enable SMC to fulfill this role?

3. Method

3.1. Selection of the Case

We deliberately selected the German SMC, assuming it to be, in its entirety, a unique type of media organization (Broer, 2020; Rödder, 2020). The objective of our exploratory study was not only to provide a rich description of SMC, but also to make sense of its functional role in the changing field of journalism (SRQ1) and through which kind of media work this role can be achieved (SRQ2). We followed a qualitative single case study research design to gain the deepest possible insight into this novel, largely unexplored organization (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 2018). Single case studies are particularly suitable for an in-depth understanding of the complex and dynamic nature of a research phenomenon, thus enriching theory development (Ridder, 2020). While a multiple case study design has the advantage of replication being able to increase the robustness of the theory developed, its requirement that a variety of instances be examined and compared makes such a research strategy impractical in a unique organizational setting like the German SMC.

3.2. Data Collection

Our article aims to provide a deep understanding of SMC through the triangulation of multiple research perspectives, collecting and analyzing a wide variety of data over a period of about three months (November 2020 to January 2021). To gain the most comprehensive insights, and guided by methods of news production studies (Cottle, 2007; Jordaan, 2020), we combined (virtual) field observations with document analysis and a series of semi-structured interviews. Table 1 gives an overview of our data sources.

Starting the research process with document analysis (Bowen, 2009), we drew on several public and internal documents which allowed us to develop an initial understanding of SMC's specific self-perception and the way it organizes its work. Throughout the research process, these documents were repeatedly revisited for contextual information. We also gained access to SMC's internal Slack, its online collaborative software (Bunce et al., 2018), which proved particularly useful for observing ongoing interactions and accessing past communication to chronologically track organizational developments.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and resulting contact restrictions in Germany, at the time of data collection, large parts of SMC's work took place in digital spaces. In response, we conducted virtual ethnographic fieldwork through qualitative observations (Cottle, 2007; Jordaan, 2020; Usher, 2016). Instead of being on-site, all three researchers participated in a variety of different video conferences over three weeks. We focused primarily on observing routines at daily editorial conferences and weekly team meetings, but also joined strategy meetings with top management and department heads. Furthermore, we shadowed an editor for approximately two hours during the preparation of the daily editorial conference (Usher, 2016). In such a virtual ethnography, spontaneous meetings and hallway conversations cannot be observed, nor is there the opportunity for ad hoc questions. Observing the virtual environment proved helpful nonetheless because the fieldwork period could be extended flexibly, and observer influence was less prevalent (Nørskov & Rask, 2011). During the process, each researcher took field notes individually and then generated observation protocols, which we reviewed and discussed daily within the team to avoid interpretative biases. The key findings from the virtual ethnography became a foundation for preparing our semi-structured interview guides.

In addition to our observation, we conducted 15 semi-structured interviews. This resulted in a total of approximately 20 hours of audio material. Seven interviews were conducted with key informants in management roles, and we applied a semi-structured interview guide including questions about SMC's self-perception, strategy and product portfolio, and future plans. These

Table 1. Data sources.

Method	Data	Processing
External and internal documents	Public data (e.g., website, content products, newsletter, Twitter)	Close reading, integration in case study database
	Six internal documents (e.g., organization chart, editorial handbook, presentation decks)	
	Three evaluation-related documents from SMC (e.g., screenshots, survey results)	
	Minutes of team meetings	
(Virtual) ethnographic fieldwork	Field notes from over 20 meetings observed over several weeks	Anonymization, consolidation of key learnings, integration in case study database
	15 observational protocols	
	Excerpts from Slack channels	
Semi-structured interviews	Seven interviews with management staff	Transcription of audio recordings into text, anonymization, integration in case study database
	Three interviews with members of the editorial department	
	Three interviews with members of the lab department	
	Two interviews with shareholders	
	∑ 15 interviews	

findings were complemented by six interviews with subordinate employees, which were conducted after the observation to reflect on and deepen initial findings, thus compensating for the limitations of the virtual fieldwork. These interviews focused on the operational level and workflows within the department, as well as the goals of the departments and SMC in general. Finally, two interviews were conducted with shareholders. References to quotes from these interviews in the following are marked with (I#), where # stands for the respective interview number.

3.3. Data Analysis

During data generation, we continuously added all the material obtained (see Table 1) to a case study database that we built using ATLAS.ti, a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis tool. Over the process of data collection, in several (in-person and virtual) workshops we regularly discussed interesting aspects, emerging narratives, and findings within our research team, with the aim of building consensus and unifying the researchers' knowledge.

All three data types (documents, field notes, and interview transcripts) were included in qualitative analysis, following recommendations on good practice in analyzing, indexing, and coding qualitative data (Eisenhardt et al., 2016; Miles et al., 2014; Saldaña, 2016). The first cycle coding, i.e., the initial assignment of (mostly descriptive) codes and sub-codes to similar data points to arrive at clusters of analyzable material (Saldaña, 2016), was carried out by the article's second author, partially reviewed by and discussed with the article's first author. For guidance, our research questions provided an initial coding tree (a "start list" of codes; cf. Miles et al., 2014), that was inductively expanded, differentiated, and revised throughout the iterative data analysis process. During the second cycle coding, i.e., the grouping of initial codes to develop categories and concepts of higher levels (Miles et al., 2014), data analysis workshops within the research team were conducted, e.g., for reviewing categories, discussing rival hypotheses, and arriving at common interpretations (Ridder, 2020; Yin, 2018).

Regarding SMC's role in (science) journalism (SRQ1), the first coding cycle identified its contributions to journalism. Initial codes comprised typical journalistic tasks, such as "assessing" and "processing" information/data and "identifying expertise," but also more specific contributions, like "meta-knowledge" or "networking." In the second coding cycle, these codes were refined, subsumed, and grouped by the research team, eventually resulting in the final data structure (see Table 2).

In terms of practices of media work (SRQ2), our objective was not to identify general differences to established media organizations but rather to discover—among the various patterns of action that shape everyday work at SMC—the organizational practices that, in essence, help SMC fulfill its functional role in the field of journalism. Initial codes comprised "work organization," "issue selection," "product/tool development," "cooperation," and "contact." In a further workshop, the research team identified the main practices essential to SMC's accomplishment of its functional role (see Section 4.2). For both research questions, theory building from the case was cross-checked in ongoing discussions within the research team to establish the most reasonable interpretation of our data (Ridder, 2020).

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Functional Role of SMC

Our research perspective on SMC enhances its prevailing characterization as an intermediary organization in science communication (Broer, 2020; Rödder, 2020). Its contributions to journalism go beyond the role of a knowledge broker or an organized contact system in-between actors from the fields of science and journalism, and also clearly exceed the typical activities of legacy media organizations. Correspondingly, SMC is described in our interviews as a "service provider for the common good" (I04) and as "journalism's good spirit" (I13). Table 2 sums up the wide spectrum of SMC's contributions to (science) journalism that characterize its functional role in the news industry.

As Table 2 highlights, its functional role ranges from an individual level (support for accredited journalists) to the field level (public support for science journalism, coordinating collaborative investigations). In particular, SMC's direct supporting services for news work resonate with the concept of field repair (Graves & Konieczna, 2015; Konieczna, 2018), so SMC can be understood as a field repair organization by meeting the signifying practice of news sharing. This is evident from exemplary content products such as Rapid Reaction and Fact Sheets, which are forms of news sharing, even though they are not end products that publishers can distribute as is, but "raw materials" (I13). These take the form of only slightly edited expert statements and background knowledge, and aim to help science journalists finding a starting point for further investigation and news production.

However, as we can see from the portfolio of SMC's activities (Table 2), this novel organization not only aims at field repair but also what we term "field advancement." Whereas field repair describes more traditional journalistic services performed by new actors (e.g., news non-profits) for traditional structures (as is the case with content products such as Rapid Reaction and Fact Sheets), with field advancement we refer to new actors performing new services for journalism, thereby facilitating progress and innovation in the field, advancing what journalism can be, how journalists can work, and what journalism can accomplish (Zelizer, 2017).

SMC discovers emerging needs and anticipates problems before they intensify or even occur, proactively providing products and tools for future journalism. This

Table 2. Contributions of SMC to (science) journalism.

Contributions	Exemplary products, tools, and initiatives
Supporting services for news work	
Identification and communication of scientific expertise	Expert Explorer: a software tool to help journalists identify experts in the biomedical area
Evaluation of scientific topics and new publications	Rapid Reaction: a content product that circulates expert statements on the latest science-related issues and events among accredited journalists
Background knowledge/contextualization	Fact Sheets: a content product that provides an overview and background information on complex science issues
Identification and anticipation of public (science) issues	Science Response: an assessment and evaluation of emerging science-related issues, used to identify public issues early on
Provision of complex data and large data sets	Corona Timelines: a software tool for processing and presenting Corona-related data, e.g., for region-specific use by local media outlets
Overview of new publications	Corona Publication List: a content product providing an overview of Corona-related publications
Time advantage	Embargo Accreditation: an extended accreditation for journalists who receive embargoed mailings and information
Qualification, education, and training of journalists and media outlets	
Consulting of media organizations and individual journalists	Sharing statistical expertise and enhancing data literacy with journalists, such as in Corona-related discussions
Meta-knowledge for determining expertise	Interviews in leading media publications (e.g., with SMC's managing director)
Organization of coordinated investigations and reporting	
Promotion of congruent reporting/topic development	Operation Explorer: a collaborative (data) investigation developed and led by SMC in partnership with local media outlets and journalists to simultaneously publish on a certain topic (in this case, operations in German hospitals)
Public support of science journalism	
Raising awareness for evidence-based science communication	Together for Fact News: a communication campaign advocating high-quality science communication and strong science journalism
Networking the science journalism community	SciCar: a conference that SMC co-organizes and supports with resources

becomes evident in its contributions to organizing coordinated investigations (such as Operation Explorer), to journalists' education, and to the development of new tools for information extraction and the adoption of machine learning procedures for journalism. Some examples of such tools are PRIOR, a piece of software for identifying potentially relevant scientific studies (only used in-house so far), and the Corona Publication List, currently being converted into a database to operate as a "structured journalism" or "atomized news" product (Caswell, 2019; Jones & Jones, 2019). Interviews with management also indicate that SMC plans to strengthen field advancement in the future (I02; I14; I15), e.g., by experimenting with new forms of structured journalism, a potential "paradigm shift" (I02) in journalism which SMC hopes to play a central role in.

Unlike other field repair organizations, which are generally seen as limited in improving and innovating journalism due to their close collaboration with traditional actors (Konieczna, 2018), SMC can bridge this barrier by combining field repair with field advancement under one organizational structure. When we look at its field advancement arm, SMC tends to resemble parts of an (academic) media lab, i.e., an organizational structure specifically built for journalism innovation (Mills & Wagemans, 2021).

4.2. Organizational Practices of Field Advancement

Our research stresses that supporting journalism through field advancement becomes possible for SMC through a unique set of organizational practices, which we refer to as internal exchange (4.2.1), field monitoring (4.2.2), external collaboration (4.2.3), and tool/product development (4.2.4). While these practices are not inherently new, they are unique in terms of their combination and in being accomplished specifically to advance the field.

4.2.1. Internal Exchange

SMC is characterized by specific practices of internal exchange. These constitute its organizational design and the new forms of media work it pioneers. The organization is divided into three departments: (a) the newsroom, an editorial department of about eight media professionals that is responsible for researching, processing, and providing content such as expert statements and background information in the form of "raw material"; (b) the lab, with a staff of nine, primarily engaged in software development; and the recently launched (c) innovation department, which is still in the process of being set up.

Due to this unique organizational structure, media workers with both traditional and non-traditional backgrounds (e.g., science, software development, project management, statistics) gather at SMC. Some of the staff (especially those from the lab) could be characterized as strangers (Holton & Belair-Gagnon, 2018), interlopers (Eldridge, 2018), or hacker journalists (Usher, 2016), whereas most newsroom employees have a background in journalism. Its workforce of insiders and outsiders is yet another indication that SMC operates both from within and beyond the field of journalism.

While the newsroom allows the organization to collaborate closely with the traditional journalistic field, the lab is not simply a support unit that delivers services for the journalistic nucleus. On the contrary, it independently develops new tools and technologies for journalism (see Section 4.2.4), both in cooperation with the newsroom and external (mostly academic) project partners. Staff from the lab approach journalistic problems in different ways, including an experimental, development-centered approach or by "tinkering" (cf. Lewis & Usher, 2013). An editor explains:

> I think that the way we deal with [SMC's] mission differs between newsroom and lab. Because the newsroom looks at the content, of course, and the lab looks at how it can support this, through software that is developed or through research projects. (I07)

To make use of these divergent approaches and working cultures, there is a set of practices for internal exchange and cooperation. Practices of internal cooperation between these units range from simple technical support to joint product development processes, with the latter occurring in both ad hoc and planned ways. An example of collaborative product development is the Corona Daily Report, an editorial product created together with a statistician who is an employee of the lab (I02; I07). Day-to-day collaboration relies on an informal exchange, resulting in the lab providing ad hoc technical support that enables the newsroom to solve its problems in a leaner, faster, and more flexible way (I10).

While the newsroom operates under greater structural and time constraints due to its daily editorial routines (for a detailed account, see Broer, 2020), the lab enjoys a high degree of freedom. As the deputy editor in chief puts it: "We somehow have more of an outside mission. That is, to get the material out there, to supply the journalists. There is more pressure to deliver something for us than for the lab" (I06). The lab's relative freedom allows for basic research practices which, at best, prove useful later in the development of new (software) products. The head of the SMC lab describes a situation in which he dealt with language models for machine learning, at first only as a "side project" which he "found interesting" (I02), but which he was later able to use as input for a collaborative project.

As we can see from the SMC lab, media professionals' work in novel organizations does not necessarily have to involve content creation, but can still be essential to journalism's success. Because they are only loosely coupled with legacy media, both the lab and the innovation department have the potential to overcome barriers to innovative capacity faced by field repair organizations that interact closely with the traditional field (Konieczna, 2018).

4.2.2. Field Monitoring

SMC closely monitors science (e.g., publications and pre-prints of scientific journals) and news coverage to identify public issues, partly with the help of specially designed software tools and unique work procedures (Broer, 2020). While the monitoring of sources and events certainly qualifies as classic journalistic practice (e.g., Gans, 1980; Tuchman, 1973), SMC also carefully monitors the struggles and needs of the journalistic field as a prerequisite for its functional role. One interviewee, a shareholder, explains the unique and essential practice of field monitoring (which enables SMC to define and continuously refine its goals and position) as follows:

> Ideally, SMC would make journalism better. In the current world, it mainly serves to make sure it doesn't get worse. Preventing it from getting worse or helping it to get better depends on how journalism evolves, independently of SMC. This means that SMC has to be sensitive enough to see what is happening in the journalistic system. (I13)

Sensitivity and flexibility are also required for the current offerings and products. A lab member stresses the need to constantly ask: "Is what we offer still what is needed in the field?" (I09). Currently, field monitoring as a new form of media work is not institutionalized in such a way that it is assigned to a specific unit, although the newly established innovation department is expected to take over this practice.

While field monitoring is immanent in aligning new products to journalism's needs, it also means constantly questioning whether field repair and advancement are still enough, or if legacy media need to be substituted. SMC considers a scenario in which the prevailing journalism fails irreparably, and where SMC itself could become a provider of media products for end users. However, this would again only be a reaction to the field's developments, as a staff member stresses: "At the moment, it is absolutely not our task. But it would logically be our task, if one day it becomes necessary, I would say" (I05). Certainly, this would then create a new competitive relationship with legacy media, challenging the existing structures of the field and leading to potential power struggles (Bourdieu, 1998).

4.2.3. External Collaboration

The practice of field monitoring is only feasible because SMC is involved in a wide variety of networks and communities. These range from more traditional science journalism actors, such as the German Science Journalists' Association (WPK), actors of science communication (universities, institutes) to think tanks (e.g., Siggener Kreis, a science communication network) and industry conferences (e.g., SciCar; see Table 2). Through the practice of networking, SMC can closely monitor journalism's situation and positions itself as a "player in the field of science journalism" (I06), publicly advocating for science journalism. Moreover, through collaborative projects, SMC gains insights and provides input into the broader organizational environment. Referring to a current research project in cooperation with some actors from science communication, an editor explains:

> We are involved, among others, to provide insights and to establish contacts to important data providers and simply to have some contacts to all the journals and science journalists and science communicators… to have a view of the big picture. (I07)

Since all the outputs of the organization are intended as a service to the field, both inputs and work procedures must also be closely linked to it. To do so, SMC generally bases its media work on practices of collaboration with external actors and a culture of participation. For example, openness and participation are evident in the collaborative investigations organized by SMC. Here, journalists are invited to work collectively on large and complex datasets, such as those based on the software tool Operation Explorer (see Table 2), to break material down to local news stories. In workshops, SMC staff guide journalists through the tool and instruct them in how to work with data, thereby educating journalists. The lab also collaborates with external project partners, mainly from academia (journalism and media studies, computer science) in long-term research projects that are broad in scope and aim to develop software tools and working methods for future (science) journalism (I09). These collaborations are considered especially important for technology transfer, as the managing director explains (I15). The resulting software will be released under open-source licenses to encourage wider use in the field (I02).

Through its practices of external collaboration, SMC also contributes to thinking media work anew and, following the approaches of many other news non-profits, advancing a general mindset of collaboration and sharing resources within the highly competitive field of journalism (Graves & Konieczna, 2015). The head of lab refers to "knowledge commons" that he aims to establish more widely as a way of thinking in journalism: "[I am working] that this kind of thinking is promoted, because I think that it makes science journalism in general somehow sustainable, keeps it powerful, keeps it effective" (I02).

4.2.4. Tool and Product Development

In the development of tools and products for the journalistic field, practices of field monitoring, external collaboration, and internal exchange are constitutive. New tools and products can be based on the observation of current shortcomings in the field: "The basic idea arises from a problem," as the head of the editorial department states (I06). Often, these problems can be observed in SMC's newsroom itself. Examples of internal challenges being addressed with software developed in-house include PRIOR, a tool to automatically scan and categorize incoming announcements for new publications, and Expert Explorer (see Table 2), a database for finding experts in the biomedical area.

These examples demonstrate the ongoing technologization of SMC's (science) journalistic work practices, which are standardized and automated (where possible) to compensate for challenges such as information overload. Expert Explorer shows how tools initially created for internal editorial use only are eventually made available to the entire field after thorough testing. This is rarely the case today, but in the interview with the lab's department head (I02), it was confirmed that this is a key future strategy for opening up new ways of working in journalism.

New tools and products developed by SMC can also be based on the anticipation of emerging needs in journalism, as described in Section 4.2.2, under practices of field monitoring, as well as on observations of the latest technological trends, as the lab's department head highlights: "The most important thing, I think, is to put yourself on the front lines of technological development and see what can be transferred to science journalism" (I02). As indicated in Section 4.2.3, external collaborations are key in testing and transferring new technological trends to journalism. In these joined projects, the acquisition of research funds together with science institutions is often an essential practice for carrying out research in which new software can then be developed.

5. Conclusions and Outlook

Through a multi-method qualitative investigation into the single case study of SMC, this article has presented an in-depth account of a novel, unusual type of media organization, focusing on its functional role as a supporting infrastructure in the news industry (SRQ1) and on the essential organizational practices that characterize its forms of media work (SRQ2). The aim of our study was not only to broaden the spectrum of media organizations in today's digital environment by including an additional type, but also to empirically contribute to theory development in journalism studies and research on media work.

Our article has introduced the theoretical concept of field advancement to explore SMC's unique contributions to (science) journalism. In the case of SMC, we identified four essential practices that facilitate field advancement: internal collaboration, field monitoring, external cooperation, and tool/product development. These ensure that SMC works closely with the field while operating relatively independently of industry constraints. The concept of field advancement helps to capture and understand the activities of new organizations that seek to not only repair traditional journalism by compensating for emerging deficits and stimulating quality media production ("field repair"), but also to innovate in and renew journalism, thus securing pathways to a better future for the profession. Therefore, SMC does not solely resemble field repair organizations such as ProPublica, but also incorporates certain organizational features of specific media labs, structures built to create, catalyze, and diffuse journalism innovation (Mills & Wagemans, 2021).

SMC furthermore exemplifies how the upheaval in the news industry affects media work. Novel types of media organizations are deliberately created to substitute some of the activities of legacy media outlets that they no longer conduct (due to cost-cutting measures, for example) and to explore entirely new tasks which were not feasible in pre-digital times. As a consequence, organizational innovations such as SMC also reconfigure their media professionals' ways of working and the content of their work. In the case of SMC, media work does not primarily involve the creation of content products for end users, but rather a variety of practices that go beyond the process of media production. Against this background, our study enhances the prevailing understanding of media work in the literature (e.g., Malmelin & Villi, 2017). Follow-up research requires a broad and exploratory approach (Witschge & Harbers, 2018) for taking into account the novel ways of working pioneered by emerging organizations.

Today, we are moving into an era of novel organizations in the news industry (Buschow & Suhr, 2022). While these organizations are born out of changes, they are themselves social entities through which change in the field is accelerated. Our findings highlight how SMC can be seen as an organizational prototype in (science) journalism, both in terms of its contributions to the field and its ways of working. Nonetheless, the case of SMC is, in some respects, an important instance of more general transformation in the field of journalism. For example, the trend toward a shifting division of labor in journalism can be witnessed by SMC being situated in the broader context of the emergence of new organizations characterized by repackaging some activities of journalistic production (which were traditionally combined in legacy media companies) into novel organizational units.

Whether or not SMC's specific organizational design marks the rise of a new "organizational population" (Hannan & Freeman, 1989) of actors combining field repair and field advancement under one umbrella needs to be closely monitored through follow-up research. Such a generalization is not possible from a single case study, but requires a longitudinal study of more general developments in the field.

Although SMC currently aims to improve traditional journalism rather than threaten it, follow-up research could adopt Bourdieu's (1998) field perspective in examining how SMC is seen by traditional science journalist actors, how its work impacts them, the extent to which SMC might (begin to) compete with existing players as the journalistic situation worsens (see Section 4.2.2), and how this might lead to struggles over legitimation and power (Eldridge, 2018).

Methodologically, our research was limited by the contact restrictions due to the pandemic, resulting in research that was mostly conducted online. While this can generally be considered a constraint, it also opens up new opportunities for research in digitalized working contexts which have been an exception or limited to studies specifically focusing on online work (e.g., Bunce et al., 2018). Here, we can see the need for methodological advancement.

Future research on novel media organizations should locate them in the field, vis-à-vis SMC, while looking for (practices of) field advancement to expand the concept for other cases. For such a replication in other contexts, our study provides a fruitful starting point.

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Article

Remixing News: Appropriation and Authorship in Finnish Counter-Media

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Abstract
This article outlines a first attempt at analysing counter-media publishing through the lens of remix theory. We concentrate on two key concepts—appropriation and authorship—which have a permanent standing in the remix research literature. To support our theoretical analysis, we investigate the coverage of two cases in the Finnish right-wing counter-media online publication *MV-lehti*. Our findings enable new readings on the nature of both counter-media work and remix culture. In fact, counter-media publishing leans more in the direction of remix culture—which is based on the act of using pre-existing materials to produce something new—than towards traditional journalistic convention, with its rules and ethical guidelines. *MV-lehti*'s practice of combining and layering different material is discernibly political, often resembling media activism. Our study provides the argument that counter to the utopian democratising assumptions of remix culture, the proliferation of remix practices has also given antidemocratic actors the means to challenge collectively and institutionally supported ideas of knowledge and justice. Counter-media publishing is perhaps democratising in that it offers the means to participate, but these antagonistic actors also remix news to undermine liberal-democratic ideals and social justice. Evidently, remix practices can be co-opted for a reactionary agenda.

Keywords
alternative media; appropriation; authorship; counter-media; democracy; journalism; media activism; media work; remix

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1. Introduction

In the early 2000s, "fake news" referred first and foremost to news satires like *The Daily Show*. It was a time when culture jammers and guerrilla marketers aimed to disrupt or subvert so-called mainstream media culture. Fast forward a decade or so, and a view that fake news could be an effective tool for promoting media literacy (see Baym, 2005) seems quaint at best. The media space is littered with everything from disinformation disguised as news to populist or right-wing authoritarian figures' frequent efforts to discredit legacy media by calling them fake news. Especially in the online environment, it is harder and harder to distinguish credible news sources from other forms of content, as not only satirists but also malign political actors have been savvy enough to use journalism's form and appearance to push their agenda. Throughout the Western media sphere, there has been a surge of pseudo- and sometimes semi-journalistic actors often cited as counter-media or alternative media.

In this theory-oriented study, we explore how remix as a theoretical tool can be used to analyse the work of these emerging publishers. The concept of remix has been used to describe a variety of, most often, artistic practices that appropriate and recombine existing media content to create new works. A common feature in its application has been questioning the authority of discrete authored works, often in conjunction with a call to democratise cultural production from dominant (economic) institutions in favour of the amateur (Gunkel, 2016; Navas et al., 2015b). Remix is, as such, not only a theory of appropriation but also a concept that describes a larger ideological position brought about with digital media technology. This ideological position has been theorised inherently as subversive and democratising, and the practice of remix and its practitioners as progressive (Navas et al., 2015a). Still, the proliferation of remix as a cultural condition has also generated practices that undermine democracy, understood in accordance with Miller (1978) to be empirically connected to principles of social justice.

This article serves as a first attempt at analysing counter-media publishing through the lens of remix theory. Rather than challenging existing research and theorisation, we aim to expand the "repertoire to interpret" (Wrona & Gunnesch, 2016, p. 727) by focusing on two concepts crucial to remixing: appropriation and authorship. The main research question we seek to answer is as follows: What can remix theory reveal about counter-media as a relatively new form of digital publishing? In what follows, we will first outline the context of the article: remix as a theory and an ideology as well as counter-media as an antagonistic challenger to legacy media. Then, we proceed to our analysis, which is grounded in prior research and literature and complemented by two small empirical samples of counter-media stories from Finnish *MV-lehti* to support our theorisations. This part is divided into two sections, in which we point out how the underlying characteristics of the media work in counter-media become more comprehensible in relation to remix than to journalism. Rather than complying with journalistic ethics and practices, *MV-lehti* seeks to "own," or "pwn," legacy media by appropriating the media material and form to push its political agenda. The political messages are often constructed by combining and layering material from different sources. Finally, we conclude the article by discussing the larger implications of our analysis, such as co-opting of remix practices for a reactionary agenda, for both studies on remix and counter-media and offer our thoughts on how our findings can be applied for future research.

2. Theoretical Context

2.1. Remix as a Theory and an Ideology

Remix is popularly understood as referring to the practice of altering, reusing, or recombining preexisting media content to create new, often artistic, works. Although the term originally comes from the field of popular music—or more accurately, the practice developed by DJs in the 1970s to edit individual analogue tracks on a master recording to make new versions of songs that were more suitable for DJ use (Borschke, 2011)—remix is today used in a broad range of practices and associated particularly with the digital realm. As Gunkel (2016, p. 22) notes, remix has become something of a quasi-synonym for terms like collage, pastiche, or mashup and an umbrella term for cultural borrowing at large.

But over and above describing individual practices of appropriation, remixing within digital media technologies has come to signify a larger cultural condition with radical political implications. As advocated most notably by copyright lawyer and activist Lessig (2008), "remix culture" is understood to be fundamentally democratising in that it questions notions of original authorship and the legitimacy of copyright legislation, promoting an open and free use of cultural products for all. In this view, remix is a materialisation of what has been theorised as "participatory cultures" (Delwiche & Jacobs Henderson, 2013), signalling ostensibly lower barriers for artistic expression brought about by digital technology and civic engagement with functions previously monopolised by hierarchical institutions like newspapers and television stations.

Similar to claims that participation is inherently democratic and that it can exclusively be attributed to digital technology (see, for example, Carpentier, 2013; Kelty, 2016), theorisations of remix culture have not gone without their share of criticism. As Borschke (2011) notes, Lessig's conceptualisation of remix fails to acknowledge a long history of media innovation that has influenced cultural borrowing and is problematic in suggesting that digital remix cultures restore some lost values of communality and free speech in contemporary society. While this criticism is certainly valid, the proliferation of remix practices has been argued to have impacted people's perceptions of creative work and the concept of authorship (Navas et al., 2018, p. 2). We argue that this is also witnessed in the emergence and popularity of antidemocratic counter-media practices that are the subject of this study, although this dimension of remix practices is almost absent in remix research.

Debates about remix practices, as Gunkel (2016, pp. 17–19) suggests, have largely been organised around two seemingly opposing positions about creative work and copyright legislation. One side consists of remix fans and those who celebrate corresponding ways of creating media content as innovative and original, while the opposing side consists of critics, large entertainment institutions and artists who argue that remixers are lazy copycats essentially engaged in illegal activity (Gunkel, 2016, pp. 17–19). While the values they attribute to remix practices are radically different, the two positions also have a lot in common. According to Gunkel (2016, p. 20), both sides believe that they are defending universal principles, such as originality and creativity. But more than that, we maintain that both sides believe that remixing is a subversive practice that can destabilise power hierarchies.

Apart from a few notable exceptions (e.g., Brøvig-Hanssen & Sinnreich, 2020; Stanovsky, 2017), remix theory has not been utilised in analyses of anti-democratic media appropriation. Stanovsky (2017) revisits Walter

Benjamin's concerns about the aestheticisation of fascism by looking at digital meme culture as remixed racism. Brøvig-Hanssen and Sinnreich (2020) note—in their study of video remixes of speeches made by former US President Donald Trump—that authoritarian and reactionary figures often see themselves as subversive in their quest to tear down the establishment, or, in Trump's case, the mythical "deep state." Both studies focus on audiovisual media works created by individual artists. Our effort here extends remix theory to written right-wing publishing within the realm of organised counter-media actors.

In our application of remix as a theoretical tool for conceptualising counter-media work, we are interested in both the actual practices associated with remix theory and the larger ideological implications of adapting these strategies. The field of remix studies is characterised by heterogeneity, and there are no particular objects, methods, or theories that can be used to conclusively define remix principles (see Gunkel, 2016). However, by singling out two key concepts—appropriation and authorship—from earlier remix research as the primary tools for our analysis, we aspire for a detailed examination of counter-media as opposed to a general evaluation of the compatibility between our theoretical and empirical material. The concept of appropriation is applied as an overall tool to analyse how the new works comment, critique, recontextualise, or explicitly disregard the content and aesthetics of the source material (Navas et al., 2015b). In analysing authorship, our approach is on a more ideological level, as we scrutinise the implications of naming or neglecting to name authors. Here we are not only drawing explicitly on remix theorisations but also adapting ideas that have been proposed by Barthes (1977) and Foucault (1984). Both scholars' works have been used to describe the concept of authorship in remix practices (see, for example, da Silva, 2015; Navas, 2012; Vallier, 2018), and their ideas are, as such, already integrated into theories of remixing.

2.2. Counter-Media as an Antagonistic Challenger to Legacy Media

Before embarking on the actual analysis, we need to approach the conceptualisation of counter-media and its relationship to legacy media in a hybrid media system (Chadwick, 2017). These non-mainstream websites have sometimes been clumsily categorised as fake news, which has prompted scholars to generate more appropriate formulations. In recent years, these websites have been further defined as counter-media (see Hopp et al., 2020; Toivanen et al., 2021; Ylä-Anttila et al., 2019), alternative media (see Holt, 2018; Nygaard, 2020; Schulze, 2020;) and hyperpartisan media (see Heft et al., 2020; Rae, 2021). These definitions work as distinctions, not only to fake news or legacy media, but also to more traditional partisan media (Levendusky, 2013) and populist media (Norocel et al., 2020). While the idea of creating an alternative media space or acting counter to so-called mainstream media culture is not novel (e.g., Atton, 2002; Atton & Couldry, 2003; Harcup, 2005; Kenix, 2011), the new websites rising to scholarly attention in the latter part of the 2010s have largely coalesced around the right (see Figenschou & Ihlebæk, 2019; Haller et al., 2019; Holt, 2020).

Counter-media websites or alternative media actors differ across the spectrum of media culture (e.g., Heft et al., 2020; Ihlebæk & Nygaard, 2021), but they do share some common characteristics. First, they are often defined by active positioning against legacy media and professional journalists. This can be summed as counter-hegemonic alternativeness found at producer, content, organisational, and system levels (Holt et al., 2019). For example, most right-wing alternative media in the Nordic countries do not adhere to ethical codes of professional journalism, as they see themselves as standing in opposition to the media or serving as media critics (Ihlebæk & Nygaard, 2021). Likewise, alternative actors in the UK, both on the left and right, are openly hostile to legacy media, based on a perceived bias and a lack of impartiality in professional journalism (Cushion et al., 2021).

Second, it is common for antagonism and counter positions to both legacy media and mainstream politics to be expressed not only through criticism but also through scepticism, conspiracism, derogatory language, and even hate (see Figenschou & Ihlebæk, 2019; Mayerhöffer, 2021; Seuri & Toivanen, 2021). Although there is no one transcending political orientation, different antagonistic speech acts carry clear political connotations. The politics in counter-media are apparent in varying anti-systemness (Holt, 2018), emphasis on topics like crime, immigration, and Islam (Heft et al., 2020; Nygaard, 2020) as well as published content and policy positions they express. Furthermore, scholars have noted a recent rise of a more transnationally networked political right across Europe and the United States, which has already materialised through interconnectedness in the digital right-wing media ecosystem (Heft et al., 2021).

Third, counter-media are dependent on legacy media, not only as opponents or targets of criticism but also as sources of material. There have been various scholarly definitions of this use of media material, as it has been labelled as remediation (Toivanen et al., 2021), recontextualisation and reframing (Ekman, 2019, p. 552; Haanshuus & Ihlebæk, 2021), or produsage of reinformation (Pyrhönen & Bauvois, 2020). Antagonistic actors use legacy media material on their websites, social media, and open media platforms. Right-wing or far-right actors have been connected to the rise of new types of online uncivil discourse (Krzyżanowski & Ledin, 2017), as they have used different platforms, for example, to recontextualise news items to portray both overt and covert anti-Semitic discourse and Nazi propaganda (see Haanshuus & Ihlebæk, 2021). Von Nordheim and Kleinen-von Königslöw (2021) have paid attention to the parasitic practices of these antagonistic actors infiltrating the journalistic system without adhering to its norms or logic. They are willing to exploit journalistic resources, as seen for example in the way Danish far-right actors used an open commentary space offered by legacy media to disseminate fear-mongering discourse and xenophobic conspiracy theories disguised as professional news and referred to as articles on social media (Farkas & Neumayer, 2020).

We argue that the widely acknowledged antagonistic stance to legacy media and counter-media readiness to exploit or reuse legacy media material can be understood to be in accordance with subversiveness, which is often associated with remix practices. There are also certain similarities to recurring debates on remix practices, where one side might emphasise the so-called corrective nature of counter-media publishing, but the other might link it to criminal activities, such as hate speech and copyright infringements.

In this study, the Finnish outlet, *MV-lehti* (MV referring to the equivalent of the expression "WTF" in English), is an exemplar of counter-media publishing, as it is, so far, the most prominent counter-media actor in Finland (Heikkilä & Väliverronen, 2019) known for its right-wing, populist, anti-immigration, and anti-elitist agenda (Tuomola, 2021; Ylä-Anttila et al., 2019). Most researchers have used the concept of counter-media to describe *MV-lehti*, so we follow this tradition without undermining the importance of other conceptualisations, such as alternative media. What is noteworthy in this context is that *MV-lehti* has been found to combine facts with fiction and rumours, oftentimes intentionally blurring the lines or spreading lies and other times cherry-picking, colouring, and framing information to promote its political agenda (see Tuomola, 2021; Ylä-Anttila, 2017; Ylä-Anttila et al., 2019). While there is a certain fluidity to the boundaries between legacy media and its alternatives in the Nordics (Ihlebæk & Nygaard, 2021), in Finland, professional journalism and *MV-lehti* both have actively fortified these boundaries and thus stand out from each other (Seuri & Toivanen, 2021).

3. Analysis

To support our theoretical analysis, we have studied two criminal news cases, which *MV-lehti* has framed as stories about immigration: a gang rape in Helsinki in March 2015 and a terrorist attack in Turku in 2017. The samples have been assembled from *MV-lehti*'s archives by including all stories related to these incidents within seven days (10 March 2015–16 March 2015 and 18 August 2017–24 August 2017). The size of the two samples is 76 articles, with 12 in the first set and 64 in the second set. Twenty-five of these articles were designated as having explicit evidence of remix and 29 articles as having some remix-like qualities. Both categories were included in the analysis. There was some variation between the two samples, as *MV-lehti* had a more proven standing in the fringe media ecosystem in 2017 than in 2015. This can be seen in the number of published articles but also in more news-like stories, which, for instance, circulate information from police press releases and report on radical right-wing demonstrations (see also Toivanen et al., 2021).

To structure our reading of the counter-media articles, we have used Cover's (2013) idea of a remix analysis. Like him, we have deconstructed the articles in our study by applying a metaphor of layering (drawn from Photoshopping and digital manipulation terminology). We have studied these layers—texts, illustrations, embedded content, aspects of layout, as well as intertextual meanings—to understand what *MV-lehti* or its writers do with the different content used as material in their publishing. Thus, we have paid attention to both the reordering of existing material and presentations of new meanings to texts or narratives performed by layering. We conducted the research as a dialogical process, where we analysed the research material both individually and together. We began by compiling a shared spreadsheet, where we listed all remix-like-qualities found in the articles with comments relating to them. This was done by identifying and highlighting how different material in the articles worked both in relation to each other and as individual layers. Then, we analysed the different layers and their functions from the perspectives of appropriation and authorship. It is worth noting that in the cases that had the most explicit remix-like qualities, the layers were also purposefully separated with typographical emphasis or with added captions. In some cases, the repurposed material could be traced back to an original source, which helped us make sense of the remix process from the perspective of the original context. The idea of this kind of research is to understand how new intertextualities are developed through the juxtaposition of different sources, or material, to give them all new significations and to activate old or new meanings (Cover, 2013). In our analysis, we have mainly concentrated on the conceptual level, as we have tried to understand appropriation and authorship in counter-media publishing.

As we have concentrated on news stories related to crime framed as issues of immigration, we understand the data is slightly tilted in the direction found to be the editorial core of *MV-lehti*. It is worth noting how, for example, Mayerhöffer (2021) found Danish right-wing alternative media to appear only moderately antagonistic and anti-hegemonic at the level of article content, as she looked at a month of published stories on several media. Still, our interest lies in the practice of remix, so we have analysed both form and content, as *MV-lehti* has used material from the legacy media as well as other sources to produce their stories on their website. If and when remix practices or the appropriation of legacy media material are found in counter-media publishing, traces of this practice should be found irrespective of the topic.

3.1. Appropriation to Change the Narrative

The rise of alternative and counter-media websites is "an expression of the vulnerability of journalism in a globalized and digitized world" (Holt, 2020, p. 4). These sites have challenged the professionalism and the business model of news journalism, as they have cherry-picked some external features of news sites and ignored others. They benefit from the same affordances of digital publishing, platforms, and social media as well as many journalistic endeavours. For example, Nordic websites, such as *Den Korte Avis*, *Document*, *Fria Tider*, and *MV-lehti*, have a layout with highlighted content, banners, suggestions, and stories categorised with sticky headers, such as "local," "economy," and "politics." Also, their articles often resemble traditional news, at least in a superficial sense, with a headline and a lead paragraph followed by text, photos, and other content. Still, these sites are creative in applying or appropriating these features. *MV-lehti* mixes information and media content from different sources in a way that may be accepted within parts of the blogosphere but that is still seen as plagiarism or unethical within the traditional media context. In effect, *MV-lehti* was sued by two major Finnish media corporations (Sanoma and Otavamedia) for possible copyright infringements in 2015 (Marttinen, 2015).

It can be maintained that appropriation in its different forms is a central characteristic of counter-media. Their success is based on the fact that they do not act exclusively outside the norms but, rather, partially harness them whenever it suits their needs (von Nordheim & Kleinen-von Königslöw, 2021, p. 89). For example, *MV-lehti* treats different media material in somewhat different ways. Whereas the legacy media material—and in some instances, assortments of Twitter and Facebook posts—are chopped and sampled, texts from the right-wing media ecosystem are circulated with added visual features and/or an endnote as a new layer, enhancing the power of the message often already included in the original text. In both instances, these original publications are appropriated in the sense of "taking something over and making it one's own" (Adema et al., 2018, p. 16). Even when *MV-lehti* circulates blog posts, social media posts, or readers' letters, the editors add material and edit the body of original work, resulting in a new version. For instance, the texts from a fringe academic blogger have been published word for word with additional imagery. The original posts have one or no photos, whereas the versions in *MV-lehti* are illustrated with photos of politicians and journalists with degrading captions. While the texts themselves are already political, a new layer, which combines text and images, is added to enhance the inflammatory nature of the publication. This layering, which discredits known politicians, academics, and journalists, can be seen as a subversive practice undermining democratic institutions (see "Hankamäki: Me emme," 2017; "Hankamäki: Valhemedian," 2017).

All in all, counter-media articles often play with text, visuals, audio, and video to alter the dynamics of the original work. They use digital means to borrow, sample, and add and subtract to build new layers of meaning. This may occur in embedded captions, photos or quotations, collages of mixed media material, and text and photo manipulations altering the meaning or creating a shock effect (see "Sipilä shokissa," 2017; "Suvakit aloittivat hyökkäyksen," 2017; "Turun Sanomat aloitti," 2017). These appropriative means are related to the rhetorical tactics of witnessing, pwning, incongruity, and noisification that Brøvig-Hanssen and Sinnreich (2020) have identified in user-generated remix videos critiquing or commenting on the policies of Donald Trump. *MV-lehti*, for example, is quick to point out alleged or real legacy media mistakes (witnessing), represent known politicians in unflattering and often manufactured or conflicted contexts (pwning and incongruity), and amplify certain details at the expense of the bigger picture (noisification).

The underlying aspiration in articles that appropriate legacy media news is to change the narrative or at least address the readership with an alternative to the alleged mainstream narrative. As Adema et al. (2018, p. 19) write, appropriation (in remix practices) often involves a struggle over meanings. In the case of counter-media, it is this new group of actors laying claim to traditional media resources as a means of expressing their identities, affiliations, and politics. Ylä-Anttila et al. (2019) have noted how *MV-lehti* engages in the political struggle both implicitly and explicitly by emphasising features that serve their anti-immigration agenda. In our data, this is most evident in the depictions of immigrants and Muslims, which range from discrediting terms ("Turun terrori-isku," 2017) to Disney-like illustrations of Middle Eastern villains ("Turun jihadistin vangitulla," 2017). This correlates with the idea of breaking taboos to push the borders of acceptability (see Nagle, 2017) and as Stanovsky (2017) has noted regarding the reactionary use of internet memes, "makes hate lovable" in that it obscures and sanitises hateful agendas.

All 25 articles found to have explicit evidence of remix incorporate different kinds of added elements or mixtures of elements, which aim to remix the original in the spirit of the equation 1 + 1 = 3. This means they freely combine material from different sources to create additional meanings, which the original sources do not independently communicate; or, as Cover (2013) writes, the core is radically altered by what occurs at different layers. This alteration does take place in the other 29 articles with remix-like qualities too, but it is often more rudimentary or direct. In some cases, it is reminiscent of the original, analogue form of DJ-remixing, where—rather than sampling and combining material from several sources—a designated sound in a single song is emphasised to "make a song danceable" (Borschke, 2011, p. 21). Or in this case, to make the work resonate better with the assumed audience.

Based on these findings, we argue that the underlying characteristics of media work in counter-media websites like *MV-lehti* become more comprehensible in relation to remix culture than to journalism. Or at least, counter-media publishing leans in practice more in the direction of remixing—which is based on the act of using preexisting materials to produce something new—than towards traditional journalistic conventions with their rules and ethical guidelines.

3.2. Contesting the Essentiality of Authorship

The notion of authorship is at the heart of remix practices. As several authors have pointed out (e.g., Lessig, 2008; Navas, 2012; Vallier, 2018), remix challenges traditional romantic notions of original works as products that stem solely from the artist's creative mind. Counter-media actors, such as *MV-lehti*, also question notions of authorship. *MV-lehti* uses material produced by others to serve its agenda, and it rarely discloses who the persons responsible for the published articles are. Although media work has not—in a similar way to music production—been the subject of debates around authorship, the same principles apply to journalism.

We admit that journalism is not "nearly as consistent nor homogeneous as it is made out to be" (Deuze & Witschge, 2020, p. 16), but we do believe it is important, due to our research interest, to define original reporting in journalism. Fundamentally, it means operating according to the norms and practices of professional journalism (Schudson, 2020, pp. 5–7, 23). Therefore, the question does not revert to appearance or merely form but to a larger understanding of practices and ethics, which carry ideals such as accuracy, truthfulness, transparency, and accountability as well as holding power accountable (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2014, p. 9). While a journalistic story is a compilation of different materials—for example, interviews, documents, press releases, and books—the code of ethics on authorship and ownership is fairly strict in media work. In fact, both a journalist's sources and journalistic material are protected by law in many countries, although the legislative standing has become more precarious in the digital age (Posetti, 2017, p. 11). Even when traditional media cite other media as sources, they are obliged to refer to the original work like they should with a book or any other product deemed to have intellectual property rights. By denotation, the media gives credit to the first publisher of new information or the original author of a certain work.

MV-lehti is clearly indifferent to this journalistic tradition. Contrary to modern journalism, there is an absence of an assigned author. With very few exceptions, the articles in *MV-lehti* do not name a writer responsible for the content. This can be seen not only as a way of avoiding accountability, which we will return to shortly, but also as an attempt to appear objective. As journalism has become more author-oriented, with bylines gradually making their way into newspapers in the latter part of the 20th century (Reich, 2010) and the recent use of a photo accompanying the name, authorless and "faceless" counter-media have moved in the opposite direction. Thus, these websites seem to nod to the pre-modern news tradition, in which the news was suggested to depict a transcendent truth, a feature that was criticised by British author Forster (1925) when he wrote that newspapers took advantage of the "universal air" of anonymity.

In its practice of not naming authors, *MV-lehti* also attempts to avoid liability and position itself outside any petty debates on writers' politics. As Barthes (1977, p. 147) has argued in his polemic text "The Death of the Author"—which is often cited with reference to authorship in remix theory (see, for example, Navas, 2012)—assigning a text an author "imposes a limit on that text." Barthes indicates that a text is rarely interpreted outside of the relationship to its author. Meanings ascribed to a work are essentially interlocked with the identity of its author. While bylines represent an indirect admission that news is "an imperfect human attempt to document it" (Reich, 2010, p. 721), the mostly authorless *MV-lehti* tries to rise above such mundanity. The stories often illustrate the legacy media as biased or serving an agenda, while it aspires to represent a more neutral position and champion the voice of "the people." This, of course, is a constructed position, which Tuomola (2021) has deconstructed to carry implications of ethnonationalism and antidemocratic values instead of any universal truth.

MV-lehti's opposition to authorship has not been total, and the website has not been able to avoid all accountability. For example, most articles in 2017 included anonymous email addresses instead of a byline with a writer's name. The ones in our data from 2015 do not have any personified information. Also, when blog posts or social media posts from the right-wing media ecosystem are circulated, the original author is referenced as a source, while the whole text is copied, and the byline consists of an email belonging to *MV-lehti*. Furthermore, the website became identified throughout the years with its founder, Ilja Janitskin (Nieminen, 2018), who at some stage began to sign at least some of the articles he had written. Willingly, or not, he became the public face of *MV-lehti*. According to Foucault (1984, p. 108), texts, books, and discourses historically began to have authors, so that they could be subject to punishment. This is noteworthy, as Janitskin was convicted in 2018 on 16 charges, including aggravated defamation, aggravated incitement against an ethnic group and copyright infringement (Yle, 2018).

4. Conclusions

While attaching concepts like détournement, culture jamming, remix, and reappropriation to news satire (e.g., Baym, 2005; McKain, 2005; Russell, 2011; Warner, 2007), media scholars have so far struggled to pin down more disruptive ways of challenging legacy media. Various studies on alternative and counter-media have verified a symbiosis between these websites and legacy media, as a significant part of published material links, circulates or refers to original journalism (see, for example, Holt, 2020; Nygaard, 2020; Toivanen et al., 2021). The relationship may be intrinsically asymmetrical, as "parasitic" antagonistic actors work as intermediaries at media system boundaries, drawing strength, strategies, and tools from legacy media and platforms (see Gunkel, 2001, p. 6; von Nordheim & Kleinen-von Königslöw, 2021). It highlights how—in Chadwick's (2017) terms—different types of media not only coexist but form a system that evolves through mutual (inter)actions among older and newer media logics.

Our theoretical and empirical findings show how remix theory enables new readings on the nature of counter-media work. We assert that the act of owning in counter-media has two meanings in relation to legacy media. First, it is a form of appropriation, which means taking news or excerpts of news and using them as material for a remix. Second, it can also be interpreted as "owning" (or defeating) the legacy media, as understood in video game culture. A remix is an act of defiance of mainstream politics and so-called mainstream media culture. While *MV-lehti* challenges the ideas of news publishing, it does so with an attitude of not giving too much weight to rules or norms found in traditional media work. In fact, it tries to game the system by appropriating the legacy media material and form and exploiting the affordances of the platforms and social media to push its political agenda.

Furthermore, as previous research (see Ihlebæk & Nygaard, 2021) has suggested, counter-media actors have managed to exert increasing influence on the public agenda through active social media strategies and controversial reporting. We believe counter-media also benefit from their appropriative practices understood here as rule-breaking or controversial and creative use of legacy media material. More emphasis should be put on the practices, which deviate from professional media work. In particular, populist actors on the right are strategic in their news coverage based on actual news. While counter-media like *MV-lehti* use traceable sources to create a sense of legitimacy, the layers—as in texts, illustrations, embedded content, aspects of layout, as well as intertextual meanings—added to original material can, in many cases, be considered examples of a borderline discourse of uncivility (see Haanshuus & Ihlebæk, 2021; Krzyżanowski & Ledin, 2017).

Thus, we propose that counter-media publishing should be seen as a form of political activism or, in some cases, media criticism akin to left-wing culture jamming. Like their predecessors or counterparts on the left, right-wing populist counter-media actors contest the centrality of authorship and stand against the increased focus on the personified author in mainstream media culture. Also, *MV-lehti* uses common remix practices, such as copy-paste, photo manipulation, and shock effects as layers, which alter or skew original meanings. But instead of playing with the aesthetics of polished advertising like *Adbusters*, *MV-lehti* seems to reflect more DIY-like techniques found on bulletin boards and blogs, which have served as a seedbed for the right-wing radicalisation of young men. In addition, while there is some common ground with the left in speaking the language of the unprivileged, the target of criticism is different. The culture jammers of the early 2000s attacked the mass media and consumerism (Lasn, 1999), whereas *MV-lehti* and its equivalents believe they are fighting a multicultural mainstream hegemony.

This brings us to the appropriation of remix practices for undemocratic, populist, or authoritarian means. Remix practices have been championed for questioning notions of individual authorship and romantic ideals of a solitary artist genius. In challenging these assumptions, however, one romantic ideal appears to have been substituted for another: that participatory cultures are unequivocally subversive and democratising. Evidenced by the parallels our analysis draws between remix theory and right-wing counter-media work, we argue that the proliferation or remix practices has also given antidemocratic actors the tools to dispute collectively and institutionally supported ideas of knowledge and justice. Remix culture, as it has been theorised by Lessig (2008), is perhaps democratising in that it offers more people the means to participate in civil society, but all the forms that this participation takes certainly do not advance democratic ideals or social justice.

This study offers a diverse agenda for further research. First, it would be worthwhile to study different counter-media actors at work to get a more concise picture of their methods and means in relation to remix practices. Second, we encourage other researchers to lay out plans to scrutinise similarities and differences between left-wing media activism and right-wing counter-media publishing more closely. Third, based on the evidence here, the impact of the libertarian values advocated loudly in remix theory on the proliferation of right-wing counter-media could be worth investigating in more detail. Questioning hegemonic institutions in the discourse around culture and arts has been seen as a subversive practice that amplifies marginalised voices. Still, more attention could be given to the way this campaigning for free culture may enforce incentives to doubt institutionalised information for the purpose of advancing an antidemocratic agenda.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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