THE INTERNET'S TRANSFORMATIVE POWER ON JOURNALISM CULTURE IN GREECE

Looking beyond universal professional values

Maria Touri, Sophia Theodosiadou, and Ioanna Kostarella

News and journalism practices are undergoing complex changes under the influence of technology. As the internet facilitates new ways of collecting and reporting information, conceptions of journalistic identity based on normative values such as objectivity, impartiality and gatekeeping are being contested. These ideals have become a central reference point in empirical evaluations of technological innovations in journalism cultures. However, as they are engrained in Western models of news production, they often mask the nuances that exist in the appropriation of the internet in different locales. In order to offer a better understanding of online technologies as they are adapted in different cultures, online journalism research can benefit from more conceptual clarity in defining journalism culture. We argue that such clarity can assist in capturing the complexity of online journalism as the outcome of profound changes taking place in different societies. We aim to contribute to current debates by borrowing an existing theoretical conceptualization of journalism culture to explore online journalism in Greece. Through interviews with professional journalists, we show the nuances of online journalism as this evolves through a dynamic interaction between technology and local contingencies in a climate of financial uncertainty.

KEYWORDS crisis; culture; Greece; Internet; journalism

Introduction

The last two decades have witnessed considerable energy devoted to the study of the internet's implications for journalism. Using a range of methodologies including content analysis, observation and interviews with journalists, numerous studies have explored new ways of collecting and reporting information facilitated by the internet, possible changes to journalists' professional identities, and challenges posed by user-authored content (Fenton 2010; Mitchelstein and Boczkowski 2010). Online journalism is commonly discussed in the context of journalism cultures, journalists' occupational ideologies and their professional identities, while traditional ideals such as objectivity, impartiality and gatekeeping are a central point of reference for the evaluation of the internet's transformative power. However, as these ideals tend to follow Western and liberal models of news making, they often mask nuanced variations that exist in different locales and which determine the appropriation of technologies. Although deterministic approaches have been abandoned and scholars have widely recognised that technological transformations result from organizational, economic, and social factors, we argue that there is scope for a more fine-grained evaluation of the internet's role in journalism cultures. Following calls for better understanding of the complexity of journalism, in line with our fluid cultures and societies (see Craft et al. 2014; Heinrich 2011), we argue that this can be achieved with a more nuanced conceptualisation of journalism culture, that pays closer attention to the variance that exists in journalists' professional roles, beyond universal values and practices; and allows for culturally bound

aspects of journalism to be considered more systematically. In this article, we take the debate forward by borrowing a specific theoretical conceptualization of journalism culture based on which we explore online journalism in Greece.

Greece is a country where normative values are challenged by the media's political parallelism, while the economic and political pressures of the current financial crisis have created an even more uncertain working environment for journalists. As more and more journalists are turning to online media looking for alternative spaces, Greece offers an exemplar case of the fluidity that characterises the evolution of online journalism, and the complex ways in which technologies interact with local contingencies. We conducted interviews with fifteen professional journalists working for independent web-based news outlets as well as popular and established news media organizations that have migrated online. Through an examination of their practices and perceptions about their roles in the networked environment, we explore how a partisan journalism culture interacts with new technologies, especially as the financial crisis forces journalists to consider the alternative practices and funding mechanisms that online media enable. With the help of a theoretical conceptualisation of journalism culture, we shed light on the significance of these tensions for the culture of Greece.

The Digital Transformation of Journalism and the Need for Conceptual Clarity: Theorising 'Culture'

The internet has created a new ecosystem, where news organizations are becoming more networked and open to cooperation with other information providers and members of the audience (Picard 2014). This new model represents a more diffuse instrument of control as it allows a plurality of actors to become involved in news production while it also increases the number of news sources available to the public (Mancini 2013). Embedded in this new journalism are notions of 'citizen journalism', which have tried to capture the changing role of the audience, from passive observer to active participator in the construction of news (Atton 2002). Scholars also continue to address and identify the different ways in which the transparency and openness of digital technologies transform journalism's traditional virtues. These efforts have led to new concepts of journalism, including networked journalism or the fifth estate, all of which encourage a new journalism culture that is more open, collaborative and interactive (Beckett and Mansell 2011; Newman, Dutton and Blank 2012; Siaperas et al. 2014).

However, as journalism practices shift towards more iterative and collaborative models of news reporting and verification, journalists' authority is also thought to be undermined, while their previously coherent professional identities are gradually eroded. The internet has facilitated the flow of information from various sources entering the newsroom in the form of unstructured data, which is then aggregated, processed and verified by journalists, turning them from powerful investigators to news workers (Chadwick and Collister 2014; Hermida 2012). This process is also thought to have triggered the so-called 'copy-and-paste' culture and a cacophony of voices offering widely varying levels of discourse, not all of it intelligent and civil (Picard 2011). For many scholars, a consequence of all this is the erosion of values such as objectivity, impartiality and the distinction between fact and opinion. As audiences are now able to check and verify the validity of one news report against another, journalists' role as gatekeepers is also rendered less important than before (Beckett 2010; Deuze and Paulussen 2002; Kawamoto 2003; Quinn and Quinn-Allan 2005).

Ideals such as objectivity, impartiality and gatekeeping are considered to be the normative anchors of journalism that distinguish professionals from non-professionals and

have provided a central point of reference in empirical evaluations of the internet's role. Although these ideals admittedly govern newsrooms across the globe, they also reflect Western and liberal models of news production, and may not fully capture more subtle variations that exist in different locales. Online journalism remains influenced by the external environment and national state institutions and cultures, a fact that has been acknowledged by cross-national comparative studies. Comparative analyses of news content have shown the hegemony of established news organizations being transferred to online news, while media system factors maintain the status quo (Benson et al. 2012; Curran et al. 2013; Quandt 2008). Others have looked at journalists' perceptions across different countries, confirming that journalistic practices and routines vary significantly across different regions, especially between Southern and Northern countries (Sarrica et al. 2010).

These studies have dispelled several myths about the universalising role of the internet in the field of journalism. At the same time, they are less successful in revealing the nuanced shifts in journalists' roles that are more deeply embedded within the social, political and economic environments in which the internet is appropriated. Often, this is down to the reliance on quantitative approaches and methodological instruments that borrow from the normative journalism roles and practices. As Atton and Mabweazara (2011) also attest, there is need to empirically discriminate between universal professional values and context-dependent practices in relation to the implementation of the internet in journalism.

A deeper understanding of online journalism entails that closer attention is paid to the variance that exists in journalists' professional roles, beyond universal values and practices. For this, a clearer and more nuanced conceptualisation of journalism culture is also required, one that allows for culturally bound aspects of journalism to be considered more systematically. Here, we need to be careful not to imply that such a conceptualisation denotes the existence of a universal culture. Instead, we argue in favour of a theory of journalism culture that can function as a tool for more methodical connection between local contingencies and the adaptation of digital technologies by journalists. We suggest that the definition of journalism culture proposed by Thomas Hanitzsch (2007), lends itself well to this purpose. Hanitzsch theorizes journalism culture with respect to three essential constituents: institutional roles, epistemologies, and ethical ideologies. He breaks down the institutional roles into three basic dimensions: interventionism, power distance and market orientation. Interventionism describes roles that range from a passive role driven by the principles of objectivity, neutrality, fairness, detachment, and impartiality, to the more interventionist and advocacy roles. In the latter case, journalists' active role can take two routes: either representing the interests of the socially disadvantaged or those of a political party.

Power distance refers to the different degrees of criticism that journalists are allowed or willing to exert on governments and elites. Journalist can take an adversarial role, challenging the powers that be. They can also adopt a more loyal stance towards those in power. Market orientation refers to journalists' approach to the audience as consumers or citizens. When market orientation is high, emphasis is placed on what audiences want to know and news content centres on everyday life issues and individual needs. At the other end of this continuum, journalists focus on creating an informed citizenry that can be free and self-governing. The epistemology constituent of journalism culture is concerned with whether or not the news can provide an objective and value-free account of the truth, whether truth is something that exists out there and ought to be mirrored; or truth essentially needs to be substantiated by facts. There are two dimensions embedded in this constituent, namely objectivism and empiricism. Objectivism concerns questions about the existence of an objective and ultimate truth. At one end of this continuum are those cultures that claim objective reality exists and should be mirrored. At the opposite end, which Hanitzsch refers to

as ‘extreme subjectivism’, journalists claim there is no absolute truth. Instead, they create their own realities. As for the empiricism dimension, it concerns the means with which journalists justify the truth claims they make. This could be achieved either empirically, through observation and measurement; or analytically through commentary and analysis. Finally, the ethical dimension refers to ethical ideologies and moral values. These include prototype values of a universal code of ethics in journalism that have evolved in a Western cultural context and may apply to different degrees in non-Western journalism cultures.

This theoretical framework provides a useful continuum of institutional roles that combines normative and actual functions of journalism, and accounts for the social, political and cultural environments where journalists work. We argue that based on where a journalism culture is situated in this continuum, the internet accelerates changes that carry different meanings and significance depending on the cultural context. It goes without saying that Hanitzsch’s definition is not a statement in favour of a universal journalism culture. Instead, it offers a valuable conceptual tool for a more systematic combination of technical and contextual factors in the evaluation of the internet’s role in journalism cultures

In this study, we focus on Greece, a democratic country characterised by political parallelism, state intervention and a weak journalism culture, where normative values of accuracy, impartiality and objectivity are challenged by the media’s political ties. We also position our study in the context of a key historical moment, the ongoing financial crisis, as Greek journalists are currently operating in a climate of political and economic uncertainty.

Greece as a Case Study: Contextualizing the Greek Crisis and the Media Sector

From the national elections that took place in October 2009 until the time of writing, has been a turbulent period in Greece. It is the European Union (EU) member state that has been hit the hardest by austerity measures imposed by three bailout agreements. In Greece, the state has taken a leading role in promoting the economic development of the country which was further facilitated by the slow development of the private industrial and services sector (Featherstone, 1994). A weak civil society also meant that the state has had to support society in building up politico-ideological orientations (Mouzelis 1980 in Papathanasopoulos 2013, 237). This resulted in the formation of a corrupt political system, characterized by patronage and clientelism, where state power has been used by political parties as a means to extend benefits and privileges in exchange for electoral support.

At the backdrop of this political reality, the Greek media have developed within a system of clientelism, shaped by the leading role of the state along with the late development of democracy. In this system, the provision of balanced news becomes secondary to the representation of political and business interests, with newspaper content, in particular, being tightly linked to specific political affiliations (Hallin and Mancini 2004; Papathanasopoulos 2013). The most serious implication, especially for a democratic country, is the media’s inability to perform their watchdog role. The deregulation that took place in the late 1980s has brought the Greek media closer to those of other Western European countries. This was achieved through a dynamic development that involved the introduction of new technologies, diversification of ownership and an increase in advertising expenditure in both print and broadcast media (Papatheodorou and Machin 2003). However, despite the turn towards fairer and more neutral journalistic approaches, the political affiliation of newspapers is always manifest, especially in periods of intense political contention. Moreover, news outlets continue being cautious about reporting news which would be embarrassing to state officials (Papathanasopoulos 2001, 2013; Papatheodorou and Machin 2003). In this context of political clientelism, developing a culture of journalistic professionalism becomes highly problematic (Hallin and Papathanassopoulos 2002). From a regulatory perspective, the Greek

Constitution provides for freedom of speech and freedom of the press, as well as broadcasting and the internet, while the Greek National Council for Radio and Television (NCRTV) is the regulatory administrative authority that creates mandatory rules and codes of ethics related to journalism. It also oversaw the licensing of the broadcasting operators until February 2016 (Law 1866/89). Since then, an amendment has been passed, introducing changes in the granting of licenses. There are also a series of licensing, ownership and content matters which are regulated by separate laws and rules of conduct.

Positioning Greek journalism culture in Hanitzsch's model, in terms of the interventionism dimension, the Greek news media take a more active role in their reporting. However, rather than acting on behalf of the socially disadvantaged, they become the mouthpiece of specific elite groups, either political parties or media owners. Even if Greek journalists give the impression that they represent the citizens, their role is heavily influenced by the constraints of news organizations (Papathanasopoulos 2001). In terms of power distance and the journalists' position toward loci of power in Greek society, Greek journalists may believe that the media should perform a watchdog function, but in practice they are forced to represent the political position of their news organization. Even if commercialization is believed to have removed some political intervention, in reality Greek journalists are still aligned to political parties. As for the dimension related to the news media's market orientation, although Greek journalism now operates in a market framework, the influence and control of political interests remains. In pursuit of high ratings, TV news may be focusing more heavily on everyday life issues and devoting more attention to the private citizen than before. This model has also been mirrored by newspapers to a certain extent. Nevertheless, both TV and print journalism remain partisan and influenced by political interests, producing information that is addressed to political insiders rather than the public (Hallin and Mancini 2004, 133). As Papathanasopoulos (2001) explains, this development can only be understood in the context of Greek political history, the interplay between media owners and political power centres, and the absence of an independent journalistic body of ethics.¹ In fact, the lack of a code of ethical principles also explains why positioning Greek journalism in the ethical constituent of journalism culture is less straightforward. The same applies to the epistemological dimension, since the concepts of objectivity, neutrality and factuality are not entirely clear in the Greek case. Greek journalists associate objectivity with freedom of expression rather than factuality, which would position the Greek culture more towards the subjectivism pole. The polemical writing and commentary-oriented style of Greek journalism would also place the Greek culture in the negative end of the empiricism continuum.

The ongoing financial crisis has now created additional pressures for journalists in their effort to perform these roles. Even if news media organizations have never been a profitable business in Greece, relying instead on advertising through state-owned enterprises and banks, with the crisis these revenue streams were cut leading to drastic staff reductions. More than 20 per cent of Journalists' Union of Athens Daily Newspapers (JUADN) members are now estimated to be unemployed, while salaries have been reduced by 60 percent. For many journalists that were hit by these developments, the internet has offered a much needed escape route (Iosifidis and Boucas 2015). It has provided a platform for self-organized groups and networks of journalists and other media personnel to begin exploring new models of journalism, with some prominent initiatives emerging, such as the 'Editors' Newspaper' (EfSyn), the magazine 'Unfollow', and the online 'Press Project'. These are examples of collaborative models of journalism that offer an alternative voice to that of mainstream news organizations. It is at the backdrop of this socio-political turmoil that online journalism is slowly taking shape.

Until now, scholarly attention on online journalism in Greece has revealed mixed results in terms of journalists' reception and engagement with the internet. In a content analysis of four of the most popular Greek online newspapers, Doudaki and Spyridou (2015) discovered that although traditional models of news organisation and production still govern the Greek online media, selective ideas of journalism 2.0 are also employed. Greek online media appear to stand in-between the traditional and the new world of media, taking one step forward and two steps back in tradition. In the same spirit, Greek journalists show resistance to the changes introduced by technology, but without totally rejecting those (Spyridou et al. 2013). We take this research forward first by delving deeper into the perceptions of journalists about the appropriation of the Internet in Greek journalism and how it is entwined in the broader context of the Greek journalism culture. We also focus closely on how the appropriation of the Internet happens in the context of the financial crisis, which is currently shaping the socio-political environment where Greek journalists operate. We address the following questions:

Q1: How do Greek journalists perceive their institutional roles in the networked environment?

Q2: What do their narratives tell us about the internet's role in the evolution of the Greek journalism culture?

Interviewing Journalists in Greece

This is a qualitative case study of journalism culture in Greece, using targeted non-random sampling. It involves fifteen semi-structured interviews with professional journalists who, at the time of the interviews, had either moved from a traditional to an online news outlet, or were working for both platforms. The sample selection was based on the study of popular news sites and was also made through the snow – ball technique. With the exception of one, who is also the youngest participant, all our interviewees have worked in traditional, prestigious news organizations in the past, including newspapers, TV channels and radio stations, and have between 10 and 30 years' professional experience. From those, five worked only in web-based outlets at the time of the interviews, while the rest worked in both traditional and online platforms. Four participants are representatives of the older generation of journalists, and all four of them were working in the online versions of traditional news organizations when they were interviewed. The others all worked for independent outlets that were not associated with any established organization. These comprised news sites and sites that focused on commentary and analysis. Moreover, two of the respondents worked for local news sites, in the periphery. The interviews were conducted in person or via skype during the period from October 2013 to February 2014 and lasted approximately one hour. All interviews were sound recorded and fully transcribed by the authors.ⁱⁱ

The interview design aimed to capture a combination of the participants' subjective viewpoints regarding the current state of online journalism in Greece and objective information about material conditions and the practices they employed in their respective areas of work. The interview questions were organised in thematic categories that covered the following topics: funding mechanisms, newsroom practices, relationship with audiences, freedom of expression, the impact of the financial crisis and the differences between traditional and web-based platforms. The interview data were analysed through a deductive and an inductive process with NVIVO. The deductive process involved the use of the broader interview topics as codes, under which the data was organised. After the first coding, the data

were coded inductively, though iterated detailed readings of the interview material, and additional key themes were derived that captured core messages, based on which further interpretations were made. In order to ensure that the identified themes were representative of the data, the previous interaction of data, codes and themes was scrutinised several times before the analysis moved to the interpretation process and explanations were drawn. Interpretive rigor was achieved with information and quotations from the raw data, which ensures that interpretations remain linked to the words of the participants. To establish the credibility of the findings, we employed stakeholder checks. Such checks can enhance credibility by allowing participants to comment on or assess the research findings (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane 2006). The stakeholder checks included subsequent informal conversations that allowed participants to offer clarifications and verify interpretations that were made through the data gathered in the interviews. The findings are discussed through the following four themes: the role of the financial crisis in the decline of traditional media and rise of web-based news outlets; the changes brought to journalists' institutional roles; the role of the audience and the emergence of online collaborative models of journalism.

The Greek Financial Crisis as a Critical Historical Juncture: New Challenges and Opportunities

One of the most prominent observations that emerged from the interviews was the belief that the financial crisis exposed and exacerbated a pre-existing journalism crisis, at the heart of which is the political instrumentalization of the media, the excess supply of media outlets and a perceived lack of education that characterises journalists in Greece. At the same time, this crisis is also perceived to be a blessing in disguise that can pave the way for positive changes in Greek journalism culture. It is against this backdrop that journalists appropriate technologies and their roles evolve.

Several respondents agreed that the financial crisis worked as a political tool for self-censorship, leading to job cuts that were based on political motives, and to the emergence of a plethora of web-based news platforms. News sites are seen as easy and cheap alternatives, which however, have created additional pressures and competition amongst journalists. As one of our interviewees explained:

It is now so easy to start a news site that almost everyone can do it, and this increases competition. A lot of these start-ups begin working with a very small team of journalists, which means they have limited capacity to conduct autonomous reporting, that's why they end up relying on news agencies and other media sources (Journalist A, January 24, 2014).

Although these start-ups offer an alternative platform for those left without work, they also created unfavourable conditions, as the words of a journalist reflect:

In a small market such as Greece, not only have these sites increased competition, but they also set a precedent, creating unfavourable conditions for journalists looking for decent pay. There are instances where the internet has facilitated the exploitation of journalists who are willing to work with no insurance and/or receiving unaccounted payments (Journalist B, February 2, 2014).

Inevitably, the competition for a share of the small revenue that is currently available through the advertising industry has also increased. Our respondents explained how the absence of

legal recognition of online journalists by Journalists' Union of Athens Daily Newspapers (JUADN) makes it even harder for them to attract funding. The lack of resources means that online news media are mostly reproducing content from traditional news organizations, as one of the journalists argued: "Good journalism requires a lot of resources but these are only available to established organisations that will also promote the sponsors' interests" (Journalist C, November 6, 2013).

Several of our respondents also expressed concerns about their own future, as they fear that only those sites that secured financial assistance through political parties would be able to survive. A journalist that runs his own news site said: "My site has a fairly good visiting rate but the money it makes from advertising is minimal. I don't accept advertisements from banks or state aid. Consequently I can't say that I can survive at the moment" (Journalist D, November 25, 2013). Other journalists also agreed, fearing that "it's a matter of time before those news sites that are now considered as independent become attached to political ideologies and business interests" (Journalist A, January 24, 2014).

However, there is another side to the impact of this crisis, as Greek journalists have started turning to alternative funding sources to support their online platforms, including smaller and non-politically driven advertisers, and crowd funding options. Many also commented on how the low cost of start-ups is already encouraging the creation of new and alternative journalism platforms, through which it is possible to offer cheap but better quality journalism. Such platforms may take time to become established as credible news sources, but are easier to maintain. One of the respondents gave the example of the site he was working for – a 24-hour news site that went through an uncertain initial phase, but managed to survive thanks to the hard work and commitment of its employees. Others also believe that the crisis will inevitably force some of the established organisations to bankruptcy and closure. When this happens, opportunities will open up for new platforms to take their place. One respondent referred to "...interesting times as the old world is handing the torch to a new world, and this is causing a lot of tension between the different generations of journalists. There are enormous changes taking place" (Journalist C, November 6, 2013). In essence, the internet becomes embedded in a spiral of economic and political changes that are currently taking place in Greek society. It is within these tensions that the roles of online journalists are gradually taking shape.

Journalists' Institutional Roles in Transition

The discussion of professional practices and identities revealed mixed perceptions regarding journalists' roles in the online environment. Our respondents painted a picture that is very similar to other countries, where resistance to change is coupled with recognition of the opportunities that the internet affords. A question that arises in this case is: how are these changes and opportunities situated in Greek journalistic culture?

Those journalists with long experience in traditional news organizations, some of which have now moved to the online version of the same organization, are the most resistant and critical towards online news platforms. For them, the 'soul' of journalism is in the traditional media. Their resistance is also fuelled by a new-media literacy deficit. As several of our respondents explained, many Greek journalists still lag behind in new media skills; and especially the older generations are unable to exploit the benefits of the networked environment. As one of the younger respondents commented: "You may not believe it, but there are still people who do not even know how to send an email" (Journalist E, November 27, 2013). It is this generation of journalists that also see professional practices being eroded by the internet, while they lament the loss of investigative journalism, as they knew it. For

them, work conditions in online media are perceived to have worsened significantly, with no real work schedule or the structure that one could find in a traditional newspaper. One journalist who works for the online platform of an established organization explained:

In the past, verifying a story was straightforward, as all you had to do was make a phone call, speak e.g. to a Minister and get the information you needed. Now, there are all sorts of sites and blogs spreading rumours and I need to find a way to cross-check if they are true or not. This has changed our work completely...Also, now we have the problems of unlawful copy-paste...stealing information from a print newspaper is time consuming, as you need to make a photocopy of the story and re-write it; but with the internet, these obstacles have been removed. (Journalist F, January 9, 2014).

The above quote raises important questions about the impact that online news gathering practices may have on the ways in which journalists relied on their official sources. Due to the abundance of information sources available through the internet, journalists feel the pressure to cross-check and verify facts more than before. This trend signals a shift within the epistemological constituent of Greek culture, and towards more factually-based news reporting. Although this may not replace commentary-oriented writing, it forces journalists to approach the process of news gathering differently.

Many of the younger journalists also emphasized the additional pressures imposed by the competitive networked environment. Among the most drastic changes brought by the internet were an increase in the pace and workload, emphasis on speed and volume and an obvious decrease in editorial oversight. This was reflected in the words of a journalist who said: "An online newspaper doesn't take the 30 pieces a day that a print newspaper has. It takes endless numbers of pieces and each editor wants to have as much editorial material as possible" (Journalist G, December 19, 2013). Journalists working for new start-ups described their main job as curation, rather than original reporting. One of the respondents described the process as a "normal desk job with an eight-hour shift". Another suggested that the most creative aspect of the online newsroom is the enhancement of news stories with multimedia content, including video and audio material, as well as the conduct of more extensive online research that will provide background information and better contextualization to a story. Once again, these developments carry significant meaning for the Greek culture. Curation combines automatic aggregation through search engines and social media with human labour that includes the verification and rewriting of the selected content (Bakker 2012; Beckett 2008). The process involves the selection of material through press releases, news agencies, established international media brands and social media. Acting as curators also means that journalists incorporate the use of social media into their research practices, monitoring it closely and verifying the information collected through posts and tweets. The turn towards this process of news gathering and writing meets the need for more empirical justification of truth claims. In essence, this process shows a shift in the empiricism continuum, from the negative end towards the more positive end.

At the same time, several journalists commented on the capacity of the internet as a research tool and the added value of speed, as well as the possibility it creates for a story to reach wider audiences. One of them suggested that "the internet takes your work to another level. The minute you are told about a robbery, you can get to the place, take pictures, write your piece and upload it immediately. This is the beauty of the internet" (Journalist A, January 24, 2014). Another one emphasised the value of the web for research purposes, explaining that "...a large chunk of our research comes through online sources that show

things from a different perspective. Those who do not admit it, are simply turning a blind eye” (Journalist H, November 17, 2013).

Some of these opportunities are easily understood as a result of the challenges that the financial crisis has created. Here, the internet turns into a valuable tool for conducting research that makes up for the lack of resources many news outlets suffer from. Yet, what seems more striking is how this generation of journalists sees networked journalism as the answer to the hegemony of traditional media, enabling them to disrupt the formal political process by reporting on scandals and protests or supporting victims of police violence. New media were “praised” for creating a more transparent media institution, by reporting on issues involving corruption, and which mainstream media would normally conceal; as well as by creating space for more voices to be heard. The words of a journalist working for a news site as well as a radio station were revealing:

The internet has openly exposed what was considered as established. Ten or fifteen years ago, anything a newspaper would write was unquestionable; but now there are voices that question it, degrade it sometimes, definitely demystify it, this is a new thing... The old news media have been demystified; they have undressed themselves (Journalist I, December 11, 2014).

Another respondent even referred to a new objectivity emerging from online news “...a macro-level objectivity through the publication of a wider range of ‘subjective’ views on any issue. From a macro-level, this offers a more comprehensive picture of reality” (Journalist J, November 11, 2013). Greek journalists see the internet as a platform where a plethora of voices can be heard, leading to greater transparency, which reflects their need to embrace an ethical ideology. As another journalist/blogger that works exclusively for an independent site also said:

The internet is causing massive changes in the distribution of power among journalists. In the past, you had to be well-connected in the circles of power; this would give journalists an advantage and allow them to promote their work. Now, networked journalism is removing some of these barriers (Journalist C, November 6, 2013).

In the words of another respondent, there is now “a new type of political and media autonomy” (Journalist K, November 15, 2013). Positioning these findings in the context of the institutional roles described in Hanitzsch’s framework suggests that this generation perceives Greek journalism to be changing not just with respect to the epistemology dimension, but also to the dimensions of interventionism and power distance. In a culture where traditional news outlets were heavily dependent on opinion and commentary pieces that mainly supported specific party-political ideologies and interests, the freedom, space and volumes of information that the internet affords, presents Greek journalists with opportunities to break away from the ideological divisions reproduced by traditional media and become more socially committed and independent. This generation of journalists could therefore epitomize a significant moment in the evolution of Greek journalism culture, as they appropriate the internet in line with their aspirations for a more autonomous and transparent journalism. As one of the respondents remarked, “there is a new generation of journalists that have learnt the job in a networked environment” (Journalist L, November 10, 2013). The ways in which journalists appear to relate to their online audiences is a key constituent of this process.

The Renewal of Media- Audience Relations

Several scholars have predicted that the audience segmentation caused by technological innovation will lead to further polarised media systems. Yet, in the context of an already polarised culture, technology may create a more complex scenario. Greek journalists' narrations draw attention to the transformation that the speed and constant updating of news stories is bringing to media-audience relationships, as the Greek audiences can now conduct their own news research cross-checking national and international sources for accuracy. Our respondents commented on the different audiences that online news attracts, compared to print and TV journalism. These audiences "are younger, more educated and more demanding – they want to get the story faster, and they can also do their own research" (Journalist G, December 19, 2013). Another respondent explained that "these are different types of audiences, and they have needs that are not met by the current traditional media. This is why we need to create a new media system" (Journalist K, November 10, 2013). Not only did our respondents recognise the need for reporters to engage more with the public, but they also admitted the commercial motives behind the use of interactivity features, such as the comments' sections. Journalists' increasing need for audience "approval" was a recurring theme, with several of them admitting how they considered social media features, such as "like" and "share", as a legitimate tool for audiences to evaluate a journalist's work. In the words of one respondent, these features allow them to know "if the audience likes and approves of our news stories and this has an impact on what we write and the tone of our writing. The audience attention we get through Twitter and Facebook is increasingly becoming more significant for us" (Journalist O, November 8, 2013). A similar point was raised by another journalist, who said:

On the radio, you don't know how many people like or dislike what you say. But, when you write a piece and you see that there is a 'like' or 'share' on Twitter, for instance, you can measure the reception of your work, and in this way it is totally different...the relation with the reader, this interactivity is pressing you, it controls you and it forces you to do a better job (Journalist J, November 11, 2013).

Quotes like this reveal a lack of reflection, which raises questions about journalists' realisation of the impact that audiences' needs may have on the quality of journalism. At the same time, the meaning that such trends carry in the context of the Greek journalism culture needs to be addressed. Here, Hanitzsch's market orientation dimension helps us understand this trend as a shift towards a consumer-driven journalism. Although this could compromise journalists' social responsibility, what also matters is how social responsibility is perceived by different cultures. In the case of Greece, a consumer-driven journalism could mean a shift away from a partisan journalism.

Some of our interviewees said they also considered readers' suggestions for corrections and updates in a story. The audience also begins to adapt to the new rules and regulations of online journalism. As one of our interviewees noted in relation to the moderation of audience comments in her news site, "we have to abide by certain rules and remove offensive comments; or videos that we are not allowed to show [due to copyright issues]...and we can see how audiences have started to understand these rules and gradually adapt their behaviour too" (Journalist B, February 2, 2014).

Unsurprisingly, contrary to the younger reporters, those with longer experience in the traditional media maintained a much more defensive stance towards the citizens' comments, which one of the respondents described as "rubbish", while another one said: "I have a lot of colleagues who hate technology; and they hate seeing the comments of the audience

appearing below their stories” (Journalist M, October 28, 2013). According to a younger respondent: “The older generations are still too proud and egoistic to let go of their perceived control of public debates” (Journalist N, February 4, 2014).

The different ways in which the two generations approach the public’s involvement in the news production process is another indication of what looks like a gradual evolution of Greek journalism culture that is triggered by a combination of financial needs as well as the requirements that online journalism creates. Those journalists who are more open to change begin to re-focus their attention to the needs of an audience that is becoming more fragmented and more difficult to capture the attention of. As they recognise the need for news to become more audience- driven, they also begin to re-position themselves in the market orientation dimension of journalism culture, putting more emphasis on what the audiences want to know. In the context of the Greek journalism culture, this shows a shift from the type of news reporting that was addressed to political insiders. This trend also manifests the interplay between financial and technological developments, as journalists’ more commercial approach to the audience signals an attempt to adapt to the needs created by the crisis.

The Future of Greek Journalism - Towards Collaborative Models

Many of those we interviewed envisage a new journalism culture that will stand firm and fight against all factors that repress journalists. It is these individuals that believe technology creates an exceptional opportunity to defy the financial crisis and work towards developing a new, bottom-up model. The speedy and relatively easy production and dissemination of news appears to have encouraged the development of some collaborative projects among journalists sharing similar philosophies and wanting to create a truly alternative and free journalism platform. However, more than technology, it is their desire to fight against established patterns of news media ownership that drives these projects. A useful example mentioned in the interviews was a project representing a collective of journalists who aspire to be able to set the media agenda and use their platform to communicate their message, organize political activities and form specific communities of interest. As one of the journalists involved in that project also noted,

...new media are making a revolution, and I think that our collective makes something even bigger, it has a further meaning ... and this is the reason I am a part of this team. It is not just a business model; we are extremely interested in making this a platform to communicate with the other media. And we began to take the initiative to make a Sunday edition ...and try to join our forces and to make something further (Journalist I, December 11, 2013).

It needs to be mentioned though that with the exception of few examples, the revolution in Greek journalism remains a romantic idea and a wish for future initiatives such as the creation of a joint platform where journalists from different outlets could join their forces and produce good quality investigative reporting with smaller financial cost and minimum funding and advertising revenue. This is one way in which our respondents also conceptualised the notion of “alternative media” - a platform that privileges the marginal and the powerless –such as the unemployed journalists – and offers a perspective from “below”. Such projects display journalists’ desire to move to an interventionist approach where journalism culture acts more on behalf of the socially disadvantaged, and less as mouthpiece of a political party. This may eventually lead to a more adversarial journalism culture capable of serving as “fourth estate”.

These visions were accompanied by a good deal of skepticism about the future of Greek journalism. For the time being, these collaborative projects reflect Greek journalists' need to free themselves from the political ties that characterise the Greek journalism culture. Yet, in a small media market so fraught with political corruption and vested interests, it is deemed imperative for individual journalists to re-invent themselves in a more holistic way. This was reflected in the words of one of the most experienced journalists we interviewed: "The Greek market is too small to support us all; that's why we need to educate ourselves, study politics, economics and learn foreign languages, so that we can expose ourselves more and get opportunities abroad. This is the only way to survive" (Journalist L, November 15, 2013).

Conclusion

This study sought to perform a more systematic evaluation of the role of the internet in journalism cultures on a theoretical and empirical level. We borrowed the concept of journalism culture theorised by Thomas Hanitzsch, as a conceptual instrument to draw closer connections between Greek journalists' practices and perceptions about the internet's role in their work and the broader journalism culture in Greece. The multidimensional structure of the model provides a useful continuum of institutional roles and their dimensional components. This allowed us to position Greek journalism's context-dependent practices on this continuum, based on which journalists' appropriation of the internet was evaluated. Our findings were discussed with respect to the dimensions of interventionism, power distance, market orientation and epistemology, since our interviews did not provide enough evidence to address ethical ideologies. These dimensions enabled us to make sense of journalists' practices and perceptions in relation to current trends in online Greek journalism, and the Greek culture more broadly.

Greek journalists' responses reinforced well-established observations regarding the lack of a strong journalism culture in Greece, which has been further weakened by the ongoing financial crisis. In this environment, the role of the internet and the emergence of online news platforms are treated in a rather ambivalent manner: as a source of competition and further financial insecurity, but also as an escape route and an opportunity to free themselves from the political and economic control of media owners and their political allies. All this is beginning to force journalists to search for alternative funding mechanisms and collaborative solutions. In essence, the crisis acts as an accelerator that pushes journalists towards the migration to online news platforms, with many of them embracing it as the solution to the ills of the Greek journalism culture.

In terms of news gathering and reporting practices, our findings conform to earlier studies pertaining to the pressures and competition encouraged by established and emerging online news outlets, the commercial incentives that drive the deployment of new technologies as well as the challenges in capturing and pleasing online audiences. In the context of Greek culture, these practices and pressures signal shifts towards more factually-based news reporting, while several journalists also endorse the market orientation differently, becoming more attentive to the interests of the general public than before. Such trends would need to be explored further, as they carry significant meaning for a culture that is traditionally shaped by the media's political instrumentalization. Our findings also revealed intergenerational conflicts with respect to journalists' capacity and willingness to embrace changes in news gathering and reporting, as well as the audience's involvement. Such conflicts reinforce the younger generation's need to embrace online journalism as the way forward and towards the establishment of a stronger and more autonomous journalism culture.

Online journalism in Greece is clearly taking shape through a dynamic interaction of the current economic and political developments and the opportunities that the internet creates for new ventures. It goes without saying that more extensive research is needed to explore this dynamic interaction further. This should include closer observation of online newsrooms in Greece and in-depth analysis of the different economic and political forces that shape online news production in the different outlets. Moreover, as with any case study, the findings presented in this article are not generalizable, but they contribute towards knowledge accumulation. By focusing on a country that has received little attention so far, we shed light on patterns of variance that exist in professional dynamics in different locales, which can inform future comparative analyses of online journalism practices and cultures. At the same time, by substantiating our empirical analysis with a specific theoretical definition of journalism culture, we offered an illustration of a systematic evaluation of the internet's role in a national journalism culture. Additional work and more methodical evaluations of the internet's role in the context of different locales are always needed to enrich our understanding of online technologies as part of a complex evolution in journalism.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank the anonymous reviewers for their constructive comments that contributed to improving the final version of the paper. They would also like to thank Athina Karatzogianni, Ian Somerville and Steen Steensen for their valuable feedback during the preparation of the paper.

The research and writing of the article was supported by a period of academic study leave of the first author, granted by the University of Leicester in spring/summer 2014.

REFERENCES

- Atton, Chris. 2002. *Alternative Media*. London: Sage
- Atton, Chris, and Hayes Mabweazara. 2011. "New Media and Journalism Practice in Africa: An Agenda for Research." *Journalism* 12(6): 667–673.
- Bakker, Piet. 2012. "Aggregation, Content Farms and Huffinization: The Rise of Low-pay and No-pay Journalism." *Journalism Practice* 6(5/6): 627-637.
- Beckett, Charlie, and Robin Mansell. 2008. "Crossing Boundaries: New Media and Networked Journalism." *Communication, Culture and Critique* 1(1): 92-104.
- Benson, Rodney, Mark Blach-Ørsten, Mathew Powers, Ida Willig, and Sandra Vera Zambrano. 2012. "Media Systems Online and Off: Comparing the Form of News in the United States, Denmark, and France." *Journal of Communication* 62(1): 21-38.
- Chadwick, Andrew, and Simon Collister. 2014. "Boundary-Drawing Power and the Renewal of Professional News Organizations: The Case of the Guardian and the Edward Snowden National Security Agency Leak." *International Journal of Communication* 8: 2420--2441.
- Craft, Stephanie, Kevin G. Barnhurst, Bonnie Brennen, Theodore L. Glasser, Thomas Hanitzsch and Jane B. Singer. 2014. "Trajectories." *Journalism Studies* 15(6): 689-710. DOI:10.1080/1461670X.2014.952971.
- Curran, James, Sharon Coen, Toril Aalberg, Kaori Hayashi, Paul. K. Jones, Sergio Splendore, Stylianos Papathanassopoulos, David Rowe, and Rodney Tiffen. 2013. "Internet Revolution Revisited: A Comparative Study of Online News." *Media, Culture and Society* 35(7): 880–897. DOI: 10.1177/0163443713499393.

- Deuze, Mark and Steve Paulussen. 2002. "Research Note: Online Journalism in the Low Countries – Basic, Occupational and Professional Characteristics of Online Journalists in Flanders and the Netherlands/" *European Journal of Communication* 17(2): 237–45.
- Doudaki, Vaia, and Lia-Paschalia Spyridou. 2015. "News Content Online: Patterns and Norms under Convergence Dynamics." *Journalism* 16(2):1-21. DOI: 10.1177/1464884913517657.
- Featherstone, Kevin. 1994. "Jean Monnet and the 'Democratic Deficit' in the European Union." *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 32(2): 149-170.
- Fenton, Natalie. 2010. "Drowning or Waving? New Media, Journalism and Democracy." In *New Media, Old news: Journalism and Democracy in the Digital Age*, edited by Natalie Fenton, 3-16. London: Sage Publications.
- Fereday, Jennifer, and Eimear Muir-Cochrane. 2006. "Demonstrating Rigor Using Thematic Analysis: A Hybrid Approach of Inductive and Deductive Coding and Theme Development." *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 5 (1): 80-92.
- Hallin Daniel, D. and Paolo Mancini. 2004. *Comparing Media Systems: Three Models of Media and Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hanitzsch, Thomas. 2007. "Deconstructing Journalism Culture: Toward a Universal Theory." *Communication Theory* 17(4): 367–385. DOI:10.1111/j.1468-2885.2007.00303.x.
- Heinrich, Ansgard. 2011. *Network Journalism: Journalistic Practice in Interactive Spheres*. New York: Routledge.
- Hermida, Alfred. 2012. "Tweets and Truth: Journalism as a Discipline of Collaborative Verification." *Journalism Practice* 6 (5-6): 659-668. DOI:10.1080/17512786.2012.667269
- Iosifidis, Petros and Dimitris Boucas. 2015. *Media Policy and Independent Journalism in Greece*. Open Society Foundations.
- Kawamoto, Kevin. 2003. "Digital Journalism: Emerging Media and the Changing Horizons of Journalism." In *Digital Journalism: Emerging Media and the Changing Horizons of Journalism*, edited by Kevin Kawamoto, 1-30. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Mancini, Paolo. 2013. "Media Fragmentation, Party System, and Democracy." *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 18(1): 43–60. DOI: 10.1177/1940161212458200.
- Mitchelstein, Eugenia, and Pablo J. Boczkowski. 2009. "Between Tradition and Change: A Review of Recent Research on Online News Production." *Journalism* 10(5): 562–586. DOI: 10.1177/1464884909106533.
- Newman, Nic, William H. Dutton, and Grant Blank. 2012. "Social Media in the Changing Ecology of News: The Fourth and Fifth Estates in Britain." *International Journal of Internet Science* 7(1), 6-22.
- Papathanassopoulos, Stylianos. 2013. "Greece: Press Subsidies in Turmoil." In *State Aid for Newspapers: Theories, Cases, Actions*, edited by Paul C. Murschetz, 237-252. New York, Dordrecht, London: Springer.
- Papathanassopoulos, Stylianos. 2001. "Media Commercialization and Journalism in Greece." *European Journal of Communication* 16(4):505-521.
- Papatheodorou, Fotini, and David Machin. 2003. "The Umbilical Cord That Was Never Cut The Post-Dictatorial Intimacy between the Political Elite and the Mass Media in Greece and Spain." *European Journal of Communication* 18(1): 31-54. DOI: 10.1177/0267323103018001225.
- Picard, Robert, G. 2014. *Media Firms: Structures, Operations, and Performance*. London: Routledge.

- Picard, Robert, G. 2011. *Mapping Digital Media: Digitization and Media Business Models*. Reference Series No. 5. London: Open Society Foundations Media Programme.
- Quinn, Stephen, and Deirdre Quinn-Allan. 2005. "The World-wide Spread of Journalism Convergence." In *Proceedings of the 2005 Journalism Education Association Conference*, edited by Stephen Stockwell, and Ben Isakhan. Griffith: Griffith University, School of Arts.
- Sarrica, Mauro, Leopoldina Fortunati, John O'Sullivan, Aukse Balcytiene, Phil Macgregor, Vallo Nuust, Nayia Roussou, Koldobika Meso, Xosé Pereira, and Federico de Luca. 2010. "The Early Stages of the Integration of the Internet in EU Newsrooms." *European Journal of Communication* 25(4): 413–422. DOI: 10.1177/0267323110380996.
- Siapera, Eugenia, Lambrini Papadopoulou, and Fragiskos Archontakis. 2014. "Post-Crisis Journalism." *Journalism Studies* 16(3): 449-465. DOI: 10.1080/1461670X.2014.916479.
- Spyridou, Lia-Paschalia, Maria Matsiola, Andreas Veglis, George Kalliris, and Charalambos Dimoulas. 2013. "Journalism in A State of Flux: Journalists as Agents of Technology Innovation and Emerging News Practices." *International Communication Gazette* 75(1): 76-98. DOI: 10.1177/1748048512461763.

Maria Touri, Department of Media and Communication, University of Leicester, UK. E-mail: mt141@le.ac.uk

Sophia Theodosiadou, Department of Journalism and Media, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece. E-mail: stheodosiadou@gmail.com

Ioanna Kostarella, Department of Digital Media and Communication, Technological Education Institute of West Macedonia. E-mail: ioanna_kostarella@hotmail.com

APPENDIX

Journalist A, Skype interview, 24/1/2014, journalist in independent news site; has worked in mainstream print and broadcast media; 15 years' professional experience.

Journalist B, Skype interview, 2/2/2014, journalist in independent news site; has worked only in online media; 5 years' professional experience.

Journalist C, Skype interview, 6/11/2013, blogger; has worked in mainstream print media; 12 years' professional experience.

Journalist D, Skype interview, 25/11/2013, journalist in independent online and print media; has worked in mainstream print and broadcast media; 17 years' professional experience.

Journalist E, face to face interview, 27/11/2013, journalist in broadcast and online regional media; has worked in print and broadcast regional media; 15 years' of professional experience.

Journalist F, face to face interview, 9/1/2014, journalist in online version of a mainstream newspaper; has worked in mainstream print and broadcast media; 25 years' professional experience.

Journalist G, Skype interview, 19/12/2013, journalist in independent collaborative news site; has worked in mainstream print media; 22 years' professional experience.

Journalist H, Skype interview 17/11/2013, journalist in mainstream newspaper and independent news site; has worked in mainstream print and broadcast media; 15 years' professional experience.

Journalist I, Skype interview, 11/12/2013, journalist in independent collaborative news site; has worked in mainstream print media; 8 years' professional experience.

Journalist J, Skype interview, 11/11/2013, journalist in independent opinion/analysis site and radio station; has worked in mainstream, print and broadcast media; 24 years' professional experience.

Journalist K, Skype interview, 15/11/2013, blogger and editor-in-chief of online version of a mainstream newspaper; has worked in mainstream print and broadcast media; 30 years' professional experience.

Journalist L, Skype interview, 10/11/2013, blogger and journalist in independent collaborative news site; has worked in mainstream print media; 30 years' professional experience.

Journalist M, face to face interview, 28/10/2013, blogger and columnist in mainstream print newspaper and independent news sites; 30 years' of professional experience.

Journalist N, Skype interview, 4/2/2014, journalist in online version of mainstream newspaper; has worked in mainstream print media; 10 years' professional experience.

Journalist O, Skype interview 8/11/2013, blogger and journalist in independent news sites and radio; has worked in mainstream print and broadcast media; 20 years' of professional experience.

NOTES

ⁱ The Greek National Council for Radio and Television (NCRTV) operates in a very ambivalent manner, endorsing conservative values, and often ignoring rule violation (Iosifidis and Boukas, 2015).

ⁱⁱ All participants have been anonymised, to protect their identity.