

**Abstract:****Investigating techno-economic influences on the journalistic field: Atypical journalistic work in Europe.**

Journalistic work has long been viewed as something that is done by people in stable full-time employment who earn an income that sustains their living. However, the standard career in journalism is a thing of the past for many (Deuze & Witschge, 2018). As business models of news organizations have become unsustainable, newsrooms across the sector and countries decreased their employed journalistic staff in the past 20 years (Salamon, 2019). Moreover, new technologies have contributed to the increase of freelancers and journalistic workers without full-time employment. Internet and Communication Technology (ICTs) facilitate remote work, and more affordable recording and editing technology allow individuals to produce high-quality audio and audio-visual content independently of spatiotemporal setting (Deuze, 2007). Thus, while freelancers and atypically employed journalists always occupied the journalistic field of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, they increased in number in the past twenty years, and not all are freelancing by choice (Antunovic et al., 2019; Salamon, 2019). This has led to a plethora of contributors and decreasing remuneration rates (Meyen & Springer, 2009; Rosenkranz, 2019). More and more freelancers cannot live off their journalistic work alone, and many supplement their income by pursuing other work, mostly other communication work, public relations or copy editing (Meyen & Springer, 2009). Journalism is rendered a “passion project” (Deuze & Witschge, 2020, p. 83), reminiscent of other cultural work like music, literature, and art (Scott, 2012; Umney & Kretsos, 2015).

These developments have four larger implications for journalism and the journalistic field. First, non-employed journalists, in general, are perceived as a de-professionalization of journalism as they might not be aware of long-held norms and routines (Deuze & Fortunati, 2011). Second, research suggests that precariously employed journalists are not able to fulfil the profession’s key functions to society like investigative and watchdog journalism as they lack the resources for long-term reporting and legal protection (Gollmitzer, 2014; Meyen & Riesmeyer, 2012). Third, only those with enough financial resources to sustain longer periods without journalistic work can continue working as journalists – and consequently, this might lead to a

wave of young journalists who can afford to pursue their dream job through years of uncertainty and underpaid work (Deuze & Witschge, 2017). This poses complications for the diversity of the journalistic field, namely the representation of society as a whole, including minorities and journalists with working-class and low-income backgrounds. And finally, fourth, freelancers working in journalism and other communication work threaten the taken-for-granted separation between commercial and societal interests, even more so when they work in both areas on the same topic (Fröhlich et al., 2013).

Most existing research on atypically employed journalists consists of single-case studies, hardly generating comparative knowledge, even though it would be necessary to generalize, contextualize, and reflect on results without overestimating the specific cultural context they derive from (Esser & Hanitzsch, 2012). Moreover, scholarship primarily focused on the paradoxical tension between freedom, passion and precarity in freelance journalism. Less attention has been given to the material contexts which allow journalists to pursue such underpaid work and to what extent atypical work might affect their understanding of professional ideology. This dissertation addresses these research gaps by employing a field theoretical approach (Bourdieu, 1977, 1996) to deduct how power relations within the broader social space shape the journalistic field and consequently impact which resources are perceived as necessary and valuable within the field and which beliefs and perceptions are taken-for-granted. As research in the European context points to journalistic crises shaped by economic and technological influences, this study specifically addresses these and how they affect journalists in atypical employment. As such, the framework allows to examine the resources that atypical journalists have amassed to participate in the journalistic field and how specific economic and technological constraints shape their journalistic culture, answering the following three main research questions:

**RQ 1:** How do technological transformations affect the work of atypical journalists and their freelance journalistic cultures?

**RQ 2:** How do economic transformations impact the work of atypical journalists and their freelance journalistic cultures?

**RQ 3:** How do these transformations play out across different media systems?

To answer these questions, the dissertation project employed a cross-national survey in five European countries – Austria, Denmark, France, the Netherlands, and the UK – and descriptive

and inferential statistics as well as multiple correspondence analysis. Countries for this study were selected based on theoretical considerations (Hallin & Mancini, 2004). To ensure cross-national equivalence, the master questionnaire was put together in English, professionally translated and back-translated by native-speaking communication scholars (Hanitzsch et al., 2019). Data was collected from January to April 2020 and the final sample of 430 journalists resembles populations from previous survey results in sociodemographic parameters (ibid.).

While comparative research often focuses on unearthing differences, the key findings of the dissertation point to a pattern of similarity across countries. Generally, journalists in all media systems under investigation can chiefly be described as precarious due to a lack of economic capital, material resources, and embeddedness in a professional community. Moreover, atypical journalists' perceptions differ from those of all journalists surveyed in the past in similar ways. For instance, they perceive personal relationships and conventions of the profession as more influential and commercial influences less significant for their work than their employed colleagues, which illustrates that working outside the newsroom shapes journalistic practice differently (Hanitzsch et al., 2019). Likewise, atypical journalists are generally less interested in accommodating the audience and more interested in advocating for social change compared to all journalists (ibid.).

Moreover, specific technological and economic constraints only slightly affect their perception of what journalism is about and what journalists should do. Accordingly, atypical journalists generally voice strong adherence to principles of journalism like the norms of objectivity and transparency as well as following ethical principles during the editing process. However, they are less strict when maintaining a separation between journalistic and public relations work, suggesting that atypical journalists as entrepreneurs negotiate similar boundaries between commercial and journalistic content just like news organizations (Coddington, 2015).

Similarly, ICT-mediated work does not affect journalists' understanding of the taken-for-granted truths about journalistic work (doxa). However, in some cases, their socialization in newsrooms equips them with a better sense of doxa. For instance, atypical journalists who have worked in journalism for long are better prepared to handle difficult ethical situations during the editing process. This speaks to other findings indicating that newcomers in atypical employment with little socialization within newsrooms have difficulty knowing the hidden rules in specific newsrooms and suggests that seniority and having built a network of customers makes journalists

less vulnerable to demands from commissioning newsrooms (Elmore & Massey, 2012; Gollmitzer, 2014). Moreover, having worked in a newsroom in the past equips journalists with the dominant doxa of Western journalism that journalists should not engage as supporters and collaborators of the government. This finding is relevant, especially in light of the blurring boundaries of the journalistic field, where other atypical contributors like bloggers and party news media enter (Maares & Hanusch, 2020).

Concerning economic influences, journalists' doxa is not affected when they work in other communication fields, not even when they depend on that other income. This suggests that atypical journalists generally share the tacit understanding of the journalistic field. Only journalists working in PR and communication challenge the professional norm of maintaining a "wall" between PR and journalism. On the other hand, working in PR and other communication work enables journalists to achieve independence from the precarious nature of atypical journalistic work.

Lastly, regression analyses indicate that most significant differences in journalists' role perception or evaluation of journalistic norms occur on the country-level, indicating that the historical genesis of the national field shapes atypical journalistic culture more profoundly than employment status. Concluding, this is the first comparative study that investigates both atypical journalists' working conditions and their perception of professional norms and journalism's role in society. As such, it bridges research on atypical journalists, which in recent years has primarily focused on their precarious working conditions and their reactions to it by embracing an entrepreneurial mind- and skill-set with comparative research investigating how country-level influences shape journalistic culture.

## References

- Antunovic, D., Grzeslo, J., & Hoag, A. (2019). "Ice Cream is Worse, and Joblessness is Not an Option": Gendered experiences of freelancing. *Journalism Practice*, 13(1), 52–67. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2017.1410069>
- Bourdieu, P. (1977). *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1996). *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*. Stanford University Press.
- Coddington, M. (2015). The wall becomes a curtain: Revisiting journalism's news-business boundary. In M. Carlson & S. C. Lewis (Eds.), *Boundaries of Journalism: Professionalism, Practices and Participation* (pp. 67–82). Routledge.
- Deuze, M. (2007). *Media Work*. Polity.
- Deuze, M., & Fortunati, L. (2011). Atypical newwork, atypical media management. In M. Deuze (Ed.), *Managing media work* (pp. 111–120). Sage Thousand Oaks, CA.
- Deuze, M., & Witschge, T. (2017). What journalism becomes. In C. Peters & M. Broersma (Eds.), *Rethinking Journalism Again. Societal Role and Public Relevance in a Digital Age*. Routledge.
- Deuze, M., & Witschge, T. (2018). Beyond journalism: Theorizing the transformation of journalism. *Journalism*, 19(2), 165–181. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884916688550>
- Deuze, M., & Witschge, T. (2020). *Beyond journalism*. Polity.
- Elmore, C., & Massey, B. (2012). Need for instruction in entrepreneurial journalism: Perspective of full-time freelancers. *Journal of Media Practice*, 13(2), 109–124. [https://doi.org/10.1386/jmpr.13.2.109\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1386/jmpr.13.2.109_1)
- Esser, F., & Hanitzsch, T. (2012). On the Why and How of Comparative Inquiry in Communication Studies. In F. Esser & T. Hanitzsch (Eds.), *The Handbook of Comparative Communication Research* (pp. 3–22). Routledge.
- Fröhlich, R., Koch, T., & Obermaier, M. (2013). What's the harm in moonlighting? A qualitative survey on the role conflicts of freelance journalists with secondary employment in the field of PR. *Media, Culture & Society*, 35(7), 809–829. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443713495076>
- Gollmitzer, M. (2014). Precariously employed watchdogs? Perceptions of working conditions among freelancers and interns. *Journalism Practice*, 8(6), 826–841. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2014.882061>
- Hallin, D. C., & Mancini, P. (2004). *Comparing Media Systems. Three models of media and politics*. Cambridge University Press.
- Hanitzsch, T., Hanusch, F., Ramaprasad, J., & Beer, A. De. (2019). *Worlds of Journalism: Journalistic Cultures around the globe*. Columbia University Press.
- Maeres, P., & Hanusch, F. (2020). Exploring the boundaries of journalism: Instagram micro-bloggers in the twilight zone of lifestyle journalism. *Journalism*, 21(2), 262–278. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884918801400>
- Meyen, M., & Riesmeyer, C. (2012). Service Providers, Sentinels, and Traders. *Journalism Studies*, 13(3), 386–401. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2011.602909>
- Meyen, M., & Springer, N. (2009). *Freie Journalisten in Deutschland. Ein Report. [Freelancing journalists in Germany. A report]*. UVK.
- Rosenkranz, T. (2019). From Contract to Speculation: New Relations of Work and Production in Freelance Travel Journalism. *Work, Employment and Society*, 33(4), 613–630. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0950017018793344>
- Salamon, E. (2019). Freelance Journalists and Stringers. In *The International Encyclopedia of Journalism Studies* (pp. 1–9). Wiley. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118841570.iejs0228>
- Scott, M. (2012). Cultural entrepreneurs, cultural entrepreneurship: Music producers mobilising and converting Bourdieu's alternative capitals. *Poetics*, 40(3), 237–255. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.poetic.2012.03.002>
- Umney, C., & Kretsos, L. (2015). "That's the Experience": Passion, Work Precarity, and Life Transitions Among London Jazz Musicians. *Work and Occupations*, 42(3), 313–334. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0730888415573634>