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To cite this article: Brigitte Hofstetter & Philomen Schoenhagen (2017) When Creative Potentials are Being Undermined By Commercial Imperatives, Digital Journalism, 5:1, 44-60, DOI: [10.1080/21670811.2016.1155966](https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2016.1155966)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2016.1155966>



Published online: 17 Mar 2016.



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# WHEN CREATIVE POTENTIALS ARE BEING UNDERMINED BY COMMERCIAL IMPERATIVES

## Change and resistance in six cases of newsroom reorganisation

**Brigitte Hofstetter** and **Philomen Schoenhagen**

*The aim of this paper is to explore and discuss how newsroom restructuring in favour of cross-media news production is changing news production practices and to what extent media-specific norms, values and practices impede the strategy for change. In doing so, we use the structuration theory of Anthony Giddens as theoretical framework. With his concept of the dynamic relationship between structures and agency, and the analytical division of structures into recursively organised rules and resources, we look at planned newsroom reorganisation in order to analyse aspects leading to its implementation as well as factors resistant to change. Overall, our findings show that conflicts between journalistic norms (accurately researching content) and values (reliably informing citizens on socially relevant topics), and the requirement to produce more content within an ever shorter time, influence the implementation of the intended cross-media news production. Moreover, interviewees suggest that in addition to allocative resources (notably financial and human resources), authoritative resources, such as competencies and expert knowledge, have been relevant for adaptation or maintenance of newsroom structures.*

**KEYWORDS** agency; commercialisation; cross-media production; journalism; newsroom convergence; norms; structuration theory; values

### Introduction

Media organisations have undergone major transitions during the past decade, mainly due to technological developments and socio-economic changes (Siles and Boczkowski 2012). Consequently, media outlets globally are striving to keep up with growing online competition, as well as changing usage patterns and distribution channels. At the same time, they are trying to exploit fully the newly available technological production opportunities which have developed in the wake of digitalisation. In order to remain competitive, many media organisations not only rely on investments in online news and other online-related activities. They have also restructured newsrooms in favour of cross-platform content production and distribution to improve the quality

of journalism, as well as to reduce production costs (García Avilés et al. 2009; Singer 2004; Zhang 2009). The strategies and processes of reorganisation undertaken by media organisations are varied and have different consequences. In addition, they increasingly allow user participation on their websites (Hermida and Thurman 2008), notably to improve website readership and customer loyalty (Vujnovic et al. 2010). In some cases, they also expect to obtain additional, free content from their audience (Schönhagen, Hofstetter, and Bosshart 2014).

Previous studies have shown that the organisational integration of formerly separate newsrooms leads to conflicts between media-specific values, norms and practices, complicating the intended cross-media news production (Erdal 2009; Silcock and Keith 2006). As Singer (2004, 18) notes, daily working routines, norms and values may be “a major stumbling block to convergence”. This raises questions about whether or not newsroom restructuring changes daily news production and, if so, how and to what extent. Moreover, it remains unclear how journalistic routines and their underlying norms and values may influence the implementation of convergence strategies. In order to capture this interplay between structure and agency, we conducted six qualitative case studies in newsrooms in the French- and German-speaking parts of Switzerland. This methodological approach is best suited to collecting rich and detailed information about how journalists experience newsroom restructuring and how they understand and explain related challenges. This applies all the more with regard to the scarce availability of findings concerning this issue (as will be shown below) and to the fact that we have adopted Anthony Giddens’ (2010) structuration theory as a theoretical framework—a theory that, at the start of this project, has not yet been employed in newsroom convergence research.<sup>1</sup>

Before briefly introducing the theory of structuration by the British sociologist Anthony Giddens (2010), the current state of research will be summarised and presented with reference to the aims and consequences of newsroom convergence.

### **State of Research: Goals and Consequences of Newsroom Convergence**

Newsroom convergence is aimed at coping with the challenges caused by technological developments, most notably the rise of the internet as a news outlet (Compton and Benedetti 2010; Graham and Smart 2010; King 2010), and the financial difficulties of news organisations (Kaye and Quinn 2010; Levy and Nielsen 2010; McChesney and Nichols 2010; Picard 2008). With the consolidation of different editorial offices into converged newsrooms and the restructuring in favour of multi-platform content production and distribution, media organisations tend to reduce costs, particularly by cutting jobs (Compton and Benedetti 2010; Goyette-Côté, Carbasse, and George 2012; Kradolfer, Custer, and Künzler 2010; Zhang 2012). It is assumed that newsroom convergence leads to synergies, improves efficiency and makes savings in journalistic news production (Brüggemann 2002; Erdal 2009; Meier 2007). Another objective is to enhance the quality of journalism in an economically difficult environment (Beck, Reineck, and Schubert 2010). Some scholars suggest that thanks to the increased collaboration and communication of and between journalists, a greater number of topics can be researched more thoroughly. This should lead to the production of more original and exclusive content and a broader coverage of socially relevant issues, since

different collaborating departments could handle complex topics. Moreover, the strengths of different distribution channels could be exploited more efficiently (Erdal 2009; Meier 2007). Additionally, restructuring towards cross-media work should lead to improved technological and content-related skills, e.g. in relation to multi- and cross-media narration (Meier 2010; Wallace 2013). This expands the professional opportunities of journalists in a transformed job environment (Singer 2004). Moreover, an optimisation of working conditions through flexible work organisation and flatter hierarchies is aimed for, with the goal of improving co-ordination in newsrooms and facilitating the situational adaptation of work processes (e.g. through the integration of a new mobile distribution channel) (Meier 2010).

These expectations have been challenged by studies from the United States, Europe and Canada demonstrating that the reorganisation of newsrooms in favour of cross-media news production, which often goes hand in hand with a substantial number of staff cuts, leads to an increase in workload and time pressure (Compton and Benedetti 2010; Meier 2007; Mitchelstein and Boczkowski 2009). Contrary to the objective of enhancing quality, it is argued that economic imperatives are leading to the replication of the same content on multiple platforms. Gherseti (2014, 383), for example, compared the reporting on “the 2010 grand election” in the online and print editions of five major Swedish newspapers without finding any significant differences in content, “despite considerable differences in formats”. She explains these findings by the “way newsrooms are organised ... as well as economic conditions controlling editorial work” (383). By analysing two Canadian newspaper companies, Goyette-Côté, Carbasse, and George (2012, 760) also show that both “make all their news and entertainment contents available for many different platforms at the same time, repurposing the same news again and again in order to feed all of the platforms”. Also in a study on integrated news broadcasting organisations in Norway, Erdal (2009, 228) observes that “more cut-and-paste journalism”, widely dependent on news agencies and press releases, takes place as a result of cross-media work. Thus, after all, economic imperatives seem to limit original reporting considerably (e.g. Fenton and Witschge 2011; Franklin 2010; Phillips 2012). Hence, these studies suggest not an increase, but a decrease in the variety of topics and opinions in regional, national and international reporting (Beck, Reineck, and Schubert 2010; Fenton and Witschge 2011). However, a diverse, respectively pluralistic coverage and conveyance of social communication is essential for the mass media. In order to fulfil their function in a democratic society (Christians et al. 2009), mass media should provide a platform for public communication in complex modern societies and facilitate continuous discourse (Fürst, Schönhagen, and Bosshart 2015).

Furthermore, the implementation of newsroom co-operation and convergence projects is usually anything but straightforward. Previous studies indicate that media-specific values, norms and practices can impede the intended cross-media news production strategy (Meier 2007; Schmitz Weiss and Domingo 2010). Siles and Boczkowski (2012, 1378) suggest that “the adherence to traditional journalistic values associated with print culture has limited newspapers’ capacity to innovate and adapt to a changing technological environment”. Moreover, Robinson (2011) as well as Loosen (2005) found some evidence that journalists are able to resist certain restructuring attempts. As a consequence, structural adjustments to cross-media news production are often

only partially implemented, despite technological opportunities and economic challenges (Bechmann 2011; García Avilés and Carvajal 2008; Loosen 2005).

However, such findings on the role of journalists' practices, norms and values in restructuring processes are still limited. Research to date has mainly focused on how resources are reallocated in converged newsrooms and to what extent the workflows as well as the working conditions have changed. Thus, the focus of our study is on journalists' role and influence in restructuring processes. To grasp the interplay between journalists' practices and related norms and values, on the one hand, and the (intended changes of) organisational structures, on the other, we introduced Anthony Giddens' ([1984] 2010) structuration theory as a theoretical framework.

### **The Theory of Structuration: A Brief Overview**

The aim of structuration theory proposed by sociologist Anthony Giddens is to study the different forms of social organisation and to understand the "conditions which govern the continuity and dissolution of structures or types of structures", as Giddens (1976, 127) already mentioned in his earlier work. His approach rests on an understanding of social practices, which form a regular and recurring pattern through time and space. Giddens sees these patterns as structural properties of social systems that are continuously produced and reproduced by creative and knowledgeable human agents. With this, Giddens (2010, 25) highlights the dynamic relationship between structure and agency, which he captures in his conception of the "duality of structure". Accordingly, agents cannot be understood as separate from structure. Structure does not exist as an independent entity external to human activity and does not completely determine these actions (377). Nor is the origin of human activity solely based on free initiative of the independently constituted subject. This dual role of structure constitutes "the very core of the structuration theory" (Stones 2005, 5) and implicates the notion of structural properties of social systems as both "the medium and outcome of the practices they recursively organize" (Giddens 2010, 25). Hence, structures only arise from actions and are getting their relevance merely in practical application in its social fabric, because structures "do not exist outside of action but are chronically implicated in its production and reproduction" (374).

Giddens (2010, 25) analytically divides structures into "recursively organized sets of rules and resources". Rules described as "generalizable procedures applied in the enactment/reproduction of social practices" broadly consist of normative elements for governing behaviour (21). These normative elements include rights and obligations, as well as institutionalised practices such as norms and conventions. Equally, codes of signification (based e.g. on common values and myths), through which meaning is produced, are further aspects of rules that are limiting and enabling human activity in the same manner. Regarding formulated rules, such as organisational guidelines and instructions, Giddens notes that these are "codified interpretations of rules" (21).

But with structures Giddens (2010) does not only refer to rules implicated in human activity and social interaction, but also to resources. Resources emerge in structural properties as forms of power and domination and thus are central to the human agent's ability to act, i.e. "to 'make a difference' to a pre-existing state of affairs or course of events" (14). Resources include both allocative resources, that are "forms of

transformative capacity generating command over objects, goods or material phenomena”, and authoritative resources, “types of transformative capacity generating command over persons or actors” (33). Accordingly, allocative resources refer to the control over economic goods such as money, staff and production facilities, whereas authoritative resources refer to the control over people made possible not only by an employee’s position within a company but also by its credibility or trustworthiness, competencies, expert knowledge, relationships, etc. Just like rules, resources are becoming significant as structural properties in social systems only if they are produced and reproduced in social practice.

As mentioned earlier, human actors are “recognizable competent agents” drawing upon their knowledge of the meanings, norms and the distribution of power within a terrain of action (Giddens 2010, 171). In doing so, they not only reproduce but may also transform the structural properties of a social system, as they can be “constantly actualized, displayed, and modified by [their] members ... in the course of their interaction” (Giddens 1976, 113), because rules such as norms and conventions are open to interpretation and can be negotiated, and relations of power based on authoritative or allocative resources can be resisted or transformed by social interaction. In this sense, “various forms of constraint are thus also, in varying ways, forms of enablement. They serve to open up certain possibilities of action at the same time as they restrict or deny others” (2010, 173). However, Giddens argues that at “the very origin of the capabilities of agents to bring about intended outcomes of action” is power (173). Furthermore, he notes that there are always circumstances unacknowledged by actors, albeit at different degrees, leading to unintended consequences (9–14).

Despite the probability that structures may be adapted and adjusted in the course of action, Giddens (2010) emphasises the importance of routinised practices. Social systems constitute themselves only through the reproduction of their rules and resources (60). Actions that are repeated in the same way on a daily basis are giving the relatively stable character to social systems over a period of time and thus are the “material grounding of ... the recursive nature of social life” (xxiii).

In the case of a reorganisation, which is the focus of the present study, the aim is to change rules and resources within an organisation. Or more precisely, reorganisation is the attempt to change established structures of signification, legitimation and domination; because adaptations of working processes accompanied with reformulations of rules and reallocation of resources might be translated into the intended human actions and social interactions and thereby be produced and reproduced as desired adaptation of structures. But the intended restructuring can also be undermined or ignored and thus reproduced incompletely or not at all. Therefore, Giddens’ theory of structuration allows looking at planned restructuring of individual organisations and understanding organisational inertia and change (Ortmann, Sydow, and Windeler 1997). It is thus a useful foundation for a discussion on how cross-media strategies and the resulting adjustment in working organisation enable and restrict journalistic practices and to what extent journalists implement these strategies through their action.

## Research Questions and Methodology

Building on the concepts of the theory of structuration in order to study the reorganisation of newsrooms in favour of cross-media news production, the following research questions are addressed in the present paper:

- RQ1: How is newsroom restructuring reproduced in journalists' action and thus changing daily news production practices?
- RQ2: To what extent do journalists' practices, norms and values influence the implementation of convergence strategies?

In order to answer these questions we applied a qualitative research design with case studies to get detailed information about the intended structural changes, the reallocation of resources, the reformulation of rules, the successes and problems with the implementation, but also to learn how newsroom staff experienced the reorganisation. As daily newspapers are particularly affected by changes in the media landscape (Franklin 2010), they served as the starting point of our investigation. The sample for the study is based on preliminary qualitative document analyses of the organisational structures of French- and German-speaking newsrooms in Switzerland, in order to include different stages of newsroom convergence. For this purpose, the studies by García Avilés et al. (2009; García-Avilés, Kaltenbrunner, and Meier 2014) served as a background since they distinguish three ideal types of newsroom convergence: (1) "Coordination" with "discrete/isolated platforms in the newsroom" (García-Avilés, Kaltenbrunner, and Meier 2014, 579) where co-operation occurs in specific cases but "is neither implemented systematically in news gathering nor in news production or news distribution" (García Avilés et al. 2009, 300); (2) the "cross-media" model with a "platform-oriented division of the newsroom, but with a central desk or multimedia coordinator in charge of initiating and coordinating stories with cross-media character" where collaboration "is encouraged, but not obligatory" (García-Avilés, Kaltenbrunner, and Meier 2014, 579); and (3) "full integration" of all platforms, in most cases also in terms of spatial reorganisation ("open space") (580).

The newsrooms selected for our study had to produce a minimum of one daily newspaper and combine at least two platforms (print and online). Accordingly, two newsrooms in French-speaking and four newsrooms in German-speaking Switzerland were selected. The two French-speaking newsrooms are *20 minutes/20min.ch*, the leading national free daily paper, and *L'Express/L'Impartial/arcinfo.ch*, the result of a merger of two regional newspapers. The German-speaking cases include the newsroom of the tabloids *Blick/Sonntagsblick/Blick am Abend/blick.ch*, as well as the newsrooms of two of the leading regional dailies *Tagesanzeiger/tagesanzeiger.ch* and *Aargauer Zeitung/aargauerzeitung.ch* (the latter having integrated the regional television channel Tele M1 in its newsroom). Moreover, a bilingual (French and German) newsroom is included in the sample which reorganised its newsroom to integrate four media outlets: two regional newspapers (*Journal du Jura/Bieler Tagblatt*), their online counterparts (*journaldujura.ch/bielertagblatt.ch*), as well as a regional television channel (*Telebielinge*) and radio station (*Canal3*).

Within these six newsrooms, we conducted 30 semi-structured interviews (Lindlof and Taylor 2002) between February and June 2013, in each case with the editor-in-chief, two journalists and the CEO of the parent media company. Additionally, we inter-

rogated six dropouts—journalists who had left the newsroom in the course of or after restructuration towards cross-platform production. The interviews with dropouts allowed us to obtain additional points of view and, in some cases, more critical insights on the respective newsroom restructuration. The interviews were based on an interview guide to keep the conversation focused on the topics to be explored while giving the informant room to define the content and direction of the discussion. For the computer-assisted (MAXQDA) qualitative analysis of the interviews, we deductively and inductively developed coding categories that have been applied.

### Main Results of the Case Study

We present our findings by starting with our first research question concerning changes in daily news production practices and provide a short overview of central adjustments in the working organisation. In the following section we address the second question of journalists' influence on cross-media strategies.

#### *Changes in Daily News Production Practices*

The working organisation of the newsrooms in the study were altered with the initially discussed goals in mind—namely the improvement of work efficiency in order to reduce costs and cutting staff, as well as the improvement of journalistic quality. In some cases, spatial structures were also adapted. In this respect, the examined newsrooms showed some variation. This was to be expected based on the selection of cases (chosen with the aim of observing a broad spectrum of restructuring). The different reorganisations will not be discussed here in detail, but we will focus on aspects that are relevant to the exploration of our research questions

The editorial teams of all of the investigated German-speaking media organisations work in big open-plan newsrooms. Two of them were newly built for the purpose of the convergence project. The decision makers, respectively the production management, form the pivotal point of the newsroom. The online specialists, who will be discussed in more depth later, are often situated closest to the decision makers, on a news desk. *Blick*, *Tagesanzeiger* and *Aargauer Zeitung* use big video screens to display click rates and user reactions in their open-plan offices—a first indication that these inputs may have gained importance in production practices. The newsroom of the French-speaking newspaper *L'Express/L'Impartial* is also located in an open-plan office. However, it is comparatively small and has no video screen, just like the smaller bilingual newsroom of the regional media organisation. Interestingly enough, the French-speaking newsroom of the leading national free daily paper *20 minutes* is the only case having its editorial offices on two different floors even though the management strives for “full integration” (García-Avilés, Kaltenbrunner, and Meier 2014, 580) .

At the time of this research, there also existed distinct differences with regard to the responsibilities of the chief editorial offices. Based on the new cross-media strategy, new obligations and duties were formulated. At *20 minutes* and *Tagesanzeiger*, both belonging to the media company Tamedia AG, the editorial board is in charge of both print and online content after the merging of those two platforms. The same is true for

*Aargauer Zeitung* and *Bieler Tagblatt/Journal du Jura*. At the *Blick* group as well as at *L'Express/L'Impartial*, the editors-in-chief are still responsible for their individual media platforms. The two regional media companies which have, alongside print, television (*Aargauer Zeitung*) or radio and television stations (*Bieler Tagblatt/Journal de Jura*), are aiming for a consolidation of print and online journalism and a more co-ordinated collaboration between the different newsrooms. In both cases, these newsrooms do remain autonomous, however, in the sense of "co-ordination of isolated platforms" (García Avilés et al. 2009, 300), as "the requirements ... tend to differ" (interview B16, paragraph 121). The management and the editor-in-chief thus desire a higher level of collaboration in the areas of topic selection and an increase in the shared use of textual and audio-visual content.

All six newsrooms in this study have in common that the reorganisation of the working processes is based on publication pace and not on the different channels of distribution. For this purpose, the position of online specialists has been established. These online specialists work on so-called news desks. They are in charge of creating short, fast-paced news items, based on agency content and internet research, without any considerable journalistic contribution. At the *Blick* group these short news items are not only distributed through their own, free digital platforms and published in the free daily newspaper *Blick am Abend*, but are also being used as "compulsory content" (interview B19, paragraph 19) for the paid published edition of *Blick*. Likewise, *20 minutes* is using some of the online content in its printed edition, though in a slightly abridged version. While online specialists are encouraged to prepare incoming breaking news items as quickly as possible for free content on the digital platforms, the responsibility for paid content behind pay walls or in printed editions remains with the respective news departments. Where possible, journalists in these departments should get one or more days to do research and properly edit materials for paid content. If these articles are being published on digital platforms, the online specialists are required to add pictures, videos and links.

This distribution of work based on differing paces is aimed at relieving parts of the newsroom from the constant pressure to update digital platforms and is supposed to free up resources for editorial contributions. Two newsrooms (*Tagesanzeiger* and *Aargauer Zeitung*) additionally introduced an approach where some journalists from different departments regularly produce content that is mainly meant for the online edition of the newspapers and is published within the same working day. This model is intended to prepare all journalists for work on digital platforms and to improve the quality of online content at the same time. This goal is not only stipulated by publishing and editorial management but is also seen as a necessity by all journalists.

In some cases, labour division based on different paces of publication considerably alters the work processes. Publishing managers, editors-in-chief and dropouts see a significantly increased co-ordination effort, particularly for the management. This is caused by the attempt of reaching synergy effects and avoiding redundancies in work processes across different media outlets. Similar findings are provided by the previously mentioned study of García Avilés and Carvajal (2008). In order to minimise co-ordination needs, electronic planning tools are used in some cases. Otherwise, the co-ordination of the news production and distribution for the different channels takes place in meetings and through informal communication. But in general, the interviewees stated that bringing together editorial staff of different media outlets in the same

office space helped to overcome previously separated communication flows and improved co-operation. Journalists more often and spontaneously share and exchange information, suggestions and tips, no matter which platforms they are working for. This mainly creates synergies in the area of information gathering, an effect already mentioned by other scholars (Erdal 2009; Meier 2007). In this respect, the goal of greater collaboration has been put into action, but almost exclusively between print and online journalists. However, journalists of the tabloid *Blick* consider the enhanced co-operation to be a great benefit, as many of the converged editorial teams had rather strained relationships before (interview B27, paragraph 65). Smaller regional newspapers also highlight the advantages of a closer collaboration as it enables more wide-ranging research thanks to the network of sources of other journalists. These networks of sources prove to be an essential resource for journalists to reliably inform citizens and to make public discourse possible, as we will further argue below.

However, the attempt to tell a story across multiple media platforms using their advantages rarely ever seems to occur, and if so, mainly for major national events. When it comes to the production of content, things have not changed much yet. According to the respondents, newsroom convergence means first and foremost the fulfilment of new tasks which are incorporated into existing working routines, such as writing summaries, taking pictures and recording video for publication on the digital platforms. Although journalists in four of the analysed newsrooms are equipped with flip cams and smartphones, the quality of the audio-visual content they delivered was often not sufficient for publication. Consequently, the initial idea of a multimedia journalist gathering material for the different media outlets has been given up or was reformulated. This shows that the (newly) formulated obligations are not necessarily implemented, if, as in this case, the corresponding outcome does not meet the institutionalised (quality) norms.

The implementation of cross-media news production is further hindered by the reduction of allocative resources, notably in the case of staff cutbacks. In this regard, one journalist summarises: “the extra work often has to be performed by fewer staff, but this reaches its limits, even if the newsroom has more resources over all” (interview B18, paragraph 105). An employee of a French-speaking newspaper also admits that in converged newsrooms more staff are available but more work has to be done as well (interview B06, paragraph 194). Hence, a common view amongst the interviewed journalists was that they are faced with some unrealistic expectations. As one experienced journalist put it: “the idea of a jack of all trades who has a competent grasp of many skills has been floating around the office” (interview B12, paragraph 26). Moreover, there is a constant struggle over human resources: “Those responsible for the different channels all demand content to the head of the editorial departments” (interview B19, paragraph 23).

A further issue mentioned is that the online channels, with their prioritisation of speed and immediacy, set the pace for the entire news production process. Moreover, one of the interviewed dropouts commented that the number of clicks has become more important than the relevance of the covered topics—the video screens might also play their role here. Thus, click rates and “high-speed journalism” (interview B28, paragraph 199) undermine institutionalised understandings of what constitutes quality journalism. But on the other hand, half of the interviewed journalists thought that convergence had led to improvements, particularly in online news, although talking

about this issue, interviewees mentioned higher error rates and less quality control than in print journalism. Here the conflicting objectives—content-related synergies and quality improvements, on the one hand, and measures to cut expenses, on the other hand—become apparent. According to one dropout, this is the “fundamental dilemma” of the current situation, as loss in quality leads to even more financial losses, which in turn causes further staff cuts, etc. In short: “a vicious cycle” develops (interview B29, paragraph 100).

Another major topic that came up in the interviews was the differing information-gathering practices. “Having a network of sources is not relevant at the news desk” (interview B26, paragraph 103), reported a respondent employed at a daily newspaper. An online journalist working for a medium-sized regional newspaper made similar statements: “I don’t need to get in touch with people in order to get my story. I just copy the press release or maybe research a couple of things and end up with an article” (interview B21, paragraph 479). Journalists working mainly for online channels rely on the availability of a plurality of online sources, as well as contributions from users like audio-visual material and helpful hints. This increased importance of internet research has also been observed in journalism research of various countries (Lecheler and Kruijemeier 2016; Machill and Beiler 2009). This approach to research becomes routine, due to the demands for speed and immediacy, and may have serious repercussions for the quality of journalism in general. Beat reporters, who used to work for the print outlet, reported that their network of sources which is essential for their research is getting smaller, as they no longer have time to maintain it (interview B02, paragraph 169). Thus, there is a serious risk that the dependence on press releases and online research will increase, as discussed in literature. Regarding this matter, an interviewee accurately described that journalists have to produce increasingly more online content, while online content is turning into the primary source of information (interview B02, paragraph 179). An additional reason for the adaptation of practices to the norms of online journalism is that it is particularly tempting for newcomers to impress their bosses with quick stories for (free) online channels, as a dropout pointed out. Thus, speed is becoming a central benchmark for the entire newsroom leading to conflicts with journalists’ aims such as accurately researching content and building a network of sources—goals that are not only highly valued among journalists but also entrenched in newsroom culture.

However, the interviewed journalists see the potential of convergence within the opportunity to improve quality through more in-depth research because less time must be spent on “routine news” (interview B12, paragraph 28) and thus allows for more background reporting and exclusive stories. Moreover, the experiences of three journalists working for media companies of varying sizes point towards a broader range of topics being covered on several platforms, thanks to increased collaboration and communication. “Fewer topics are being missed” (interview B12, paragraph 262), as there are alternative platforms for publication. Whether the potentials of cross-platform production actually end up being realised largely depends on the available human resources, according to several statements. However, as mentioned before, these resources have been reduced in many cases.

*Journalists' Influence on the Implementation of Convergence Strategies*

Overall, our findings show that conflicts between journalistic norms (accurately delivering research content) and values (reliably inform citizens on socially relevant topics), and the requirement to produce more content within an ever-shorter time, influence the implementation of the intended cross-media news production. Moreover, the statements and comments of interviewees indicate that in addition to allocative resources (notably financial and human resources), authoritative resources, such as competencies and expert knowledge, appear to be relevant for adaptation or maintenance of newsroom structures.

Regarding competencies, respondents stressed the limits of cross-media production of news due to the different requirements and working processes of the various media outlets. One respondent argues that it is even difficult to take advantage of print and online for the distribution of news in a meaningful way. Indeed, in two cases the initial plan to converge the television and/or radio stations with print outlets has been reformulated, because neither the editors-in-chief nor journalists and reporters acted accordingly. One interviewee commented that the cross-media approach to news work is nothing but "purely theoretical" (interview B11, paragraph 44). Hence, most of the journalists in the investigated newsrooms primarily keep producing content for the media they are familiar with and that correspond to their competencies and experiences. Thus, they are ignoring, or only partially adapting to the intended reorganisation by reproducing the institutionalised practices. Further remarks also point to the persistence of routinised practices. It was mentioned that certain tasks are still done twice, for example two journalists, one working as online specialist for the news desk, the other working in an editorial department, made telephone interviews with one and the same person. The same happened in the case of press conferences, where several journalists of the same media organisation took part. Therefore, the attempt to reduce redundancies in work processes to reduce costs was realised only to a certain extent. Yet, our results also suggest that cross-media news production is particularly well realised in editorial departments for local news. This could be due to the lack of news agency content for local news which made the division of labour between online specialists and local journalists not feasible. Thus, in this case, missing resources for the fast production and distribution of online news resulted in the implementation of the intended cross-media news production. However, this could negatively impact on regional journalism: if local journalists have to deliver short news for the free online and a more developed article for the paid on- and offline outlets on the same day, topics of social relevance that require in-depth research will not appear on the agenda of local news very often.

One editor-in-chief is convinced, however, that sporadic cross-platform production is not a general issue, but just a temporary aspect of the reorganisation process. "We are half way there. For major topics [e.g. important national events], collaboration is fairly well structured" (interview B19, paragraph 17). Whether these are really just "teething problems" (interview B19, paragraph 17), and journalistic practices will adapt to cross-media news production structures over time, cannot be conclusively answered. The Dutch newspaper *de Volkskrant*, for example, revoked newsroom convergence after just five years. Print and online platforms have been reorganised into separate newsrooms "with specific journalistic standards and values". Based on their experience, the

publishers are convinced “that newspapers and websites are distinct media types with different rhythms, news cultures and business logic” (Tameling and Broersma 2013, 31). Thus, channel-related rules (e.g. norms and values) as well as resources (e.g. competencies) end up limiting restructuring towards cross-media production, just as our results are suggesting.

In our study, it appears that allocative resources are essential for the realisation of the intended reorganisation. Similarly, authoritative resources, such as work experience and expert knowledge, turn out to be important for journalists to partly resist change in order to counter negative impacts of newsroom restructuring. But, as our findings show, the changed conditions in converged newsrooms leave less time for the development of such resources, and thus, journalists’ ability to act differently decreases. One editor-in-chief notes that “you get under pressure if you allow too often more time to a journalist to work on a story and his colleagues end up carrying the burden” (interview B10, paragraph 113). He further underlines: “We try to give some employees space, so they can focus on one topic. But the daily struggle to fill the pages remains” (interview B10, paragraph 56). This not only causes the decline of journalistic competencies but also limits journalists’ ability to resist certain reorganisation attempts.

Cross-platform production, however, also leads to the acquisition of new journalistic competencies such as multimedia skills (shooting photos and videos, tweeting, blogging, etc.). The majority of the respondents agree that such competencies will be an advantage in the job market. One interviewee puts it like this: Colleagues who are able to “juggle several balls at once” (interview B11, paragraph 99) and are fast and familiar with new types of media, have more opportunities. One editor-in-chief fears that journalists who do not possess any of those competencies “will not stay with us for long” (interview B15, paragraph 128). Moreover, respondents emphasise that producing content for more than one media outlet has made work more interesting. At the same time, fear prevails that this could create journalistic generalists who are able to do several things but none of them well. In smaller newsrooms, in particular, it will become increasingly difficult to specialise in a particular area of interest. Thus, while journalists acquire new and valuable competencies, essential skills needed to produce exclusive stories and background reporting might disappear over time. This dilemma may intensify if the pressure to produce more and faster with fewer resources keeps growing.

## Summary and Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to explore and discuss how newsroom restructuring in favour of cross-media news production is changing news production practices and to what extent media-specific norms, values and practices impede the transition strategy. In doing so, we briefly introduced Giddens’ structuration theory as a theoretical framework. With his concept of the dynamic relationship between structures and agency, and the analytical division of structures into recursively organised rules and resources, we looked at planned newsroom reorganisation in order to analyse aspects leading to its implementation as well as to its resistance.

In order to improve work efficiency and reduce costs, as well as to enhance journalistic quality, the working organisation of the examined newsrooms has been

adapted. As our findings show, spatial integration of editorial staff helped to improve co-operation and to create synergies in the area of information gathering, enabling the publication of a broader range of topics across the various media channels. But the aim of close collaboration has primarily been realised between print and online due to widely differing journalistic standards and values. Moreover, the attempt to provide news across different media channels in a meaningful way, using their particular advantages, has been limited, because new tasks have been incorporated into existing working routines and newsroom staff have been reduced at the same time. Hence, most of the journalists in the study sample newsrooms are still producing content for the media they are familiar with and thus are ignoring or only partially adapting to the intended cross-media news production. This may result in the publishing of more or less the same content, as articles are mainly replicated and shortened for the different channels.

With the aim of freeing up human resources for strengthening investigation and critical analysis of socially relevant topics, news work has been reorganised according to different paces of publication. Our analysis shows, however, that the continuous updating of news on the online channels sets the pace for the entire news production process, even for beat reporters. Thus, online-related norms and standards such as the prioritisation of speed and immediacy, as well as click rates, are becoming a central benchmark for the entire newsroom. This ends up by limiting time for journalistic research even though it was intended to strengthen it. As a consequence, not only are journalistic competencies in decline but also journalists' ability to resist certain reorganisation attempts which may be rational and useful as means to maintain their understanding of quality journalism.

Moreover, our findings show that if more weight is given to commercial imperatives, the creative potential of cross-media production is strongly limited leading to a loss in quality. This may lead to further financial losses, which in turn causes further staff cuts, and so on. Hence, more research and discussion should be invested in how this vicious circle may be broken.

## DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

## FUNDING

This work was supported by the Swiss National Science Foundation [grant number 136302].

## NOTE

1. In other areas of empirical newsroom research, some authors have already successfully applied restructuring theory: noteworthy in this context are the contributions to the understanding of journalistic practices in online newsrooms by Quandt (2005), of newsroom quality management by Wyss (2002) and of

co-ordination of activities in journalistic organisations by Altmeppe (1999). Furthermore, since the start of this project, a paper about journalistic autonomy in newsrooms (Sjøvaag 2013) and a study about journalistic routines in an American radio station (Usher 2013) applying Giddens' theory of structuration have been published. Keel and Wyss (2012) also highlight corresponding interactions in their study about editorial use of the internet (with reference to Wyss 2002).

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