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Understanding Journalistic Culture as Context and Result of Negotiation

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Research into journalistic cultures primarily focuses on examining how normative demands on journalistic work are evaluated in different countries or reflected in media output. This article advocates an agenda for research on journalistic culture that foregrounds intrapersonal communicative negotiation processes that journalists engage in as part of their duty to facilitate public communication. It proposes a research approach that attends to the significance of journalists' strategies for negotiating the inevitable conflicts, uncertainties, and ambiguities that come when trying to align ideals and practices. This proposed research approach allows for inclusiveness of work, not only from Western countries but also from non-Western and nondemocratic contexts. By focusing on journalistic negotiation across individual, community, organizational, social system, and global contexts, research may be more capable of discovering both tensions and challenges but also innovative strategies, interpretations, and improvisations that constitute different journalistic cultures.

Keywords: journalistic culture, global journalism, negotiation, journalistic roles, intrapersonal communication

The notion of journalistic culture has been extraordinarily useful in understanding journalism within and mostly across media systems. On a general level, journalistic culture has been defined as a "particular set of ideas and practices by which journalists legitimate their role in society and render their work meaningful" (Hanitzsch, 2007, p. 369). Journalistic culture can manifest as (1) sets of ideas (e.g., values, beliefs, professional identities), (2) practices (e.g., reporting methods), and (3) artifacts (e.g., news content; Hanitzsch, Hanusch, Ramaprasad, & de Beer, 2019, p. 34). In the theoretical contribution that follows, this article seeks to build on the concept of journalistic culture in two main ways.

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First, rather than think about ideas, practices, and artifacts as three separate sites of investigation, we want to theorize how these elements work together across different social contexts and manifest as a negotiated practice of journalistic culture. By journalistic negotiation, we mean the ways that journalists rationalize institutional norms in light of their work and the artifacts they produce or are embedded in, rationalize their work relative to norms and artifacts, and rationalize artifacts in terms of norms and practices. Indeed, journalists operate within a matrix of competing influences at the social, institutional, organizational, and individual levels and must make sense of a constant tension between ideals and practicalities.

Second, this article seeks to advance a research agenda that foregrounds negotiation in a cultural context as an activity of intellectual interest. Journalists seemingly find it difficult to put ideals into practice and produce the kinds of news they aspire to create (Siegelbaum & Thomas, 2016). They are often acutely aware of these shortfalls (Hellmueller, 2014), such that part of their ongoing work is to negotiate these conflicts (Raemy & Vos, 2021). Focusing on negotiation allows us to explore what Schein (2010) calls the mostly hidden aspects of culture, which is how journalists are interpreting basic assumptions about what journalism is and how they are negotiating specific contexts of practice. Indeed, this article argues that this journalistic negotiation should be its own unit of analysis since it is an integral—and telling—part of journalistic cultures. Furthermore, challenges and opportunities that come with centering journalistic negotiation as an object of study will be discussed.

Finally, the article seeks to provide an outlook for future research on journalistic cultures. "Culture" is a fluid social construct that refers to a complex set of phenomena (Jahoda, 2012) and is an ever-evolving system that both adapts to and influences the individuals within it (Berry, Poortinga, Breugelmans, Chasiotis, & Sam, 2011). In a globalized, digital world, understanding how journalists negotiate evolving challenges and expectations is increasingly important. A refocus on negotiation can be a helpful analytical approach to understand these transitions.

This contribution draws on the existing literature to illustrate the journalistic negotiations that face journalistic cultures in various media systems and in doing so seeks to demonstrate the theoretical value of our approach.

Journalistic Culture: The Context of Individual and Collective Thoughts and Practices

Journalism can fruitfully be linked to the concept of culture. "Culture" is a social construct referring to a vastly complex set of phenomena (Jahoda, 2012) and a constantly changing system, both adapting to, and impacting on the individuals within it (Berry et al., 2011). According to Hong (2009), cultures can be further understood as "networks of knowledge consisting of learned routines of thinking, feeling, and interacting with other people, [. . .] as a corpus of substantive assertions and ideas about aspects of the world [. . .] shared [. . .] among a collection of interconnected individuals" (p. 4). Culture is then externalized by social constructions and institutions, such as the news media, that form a common ground for communication among members. Hence, culture is both context and cause of what and how we think and act. For example, Oyserman and Sorensen (2009) argue that individuals are socialized by negotiating diverse, overlapping processes that influence their values, relationships, self-

concepts, well-being, and cognition in real time. Hence, journalism and culture have micro (individual), meso (corporative), and macro (collective) levels. For understanding one level, we must account for the interplay with the other levels.

Research on journalistic culture has predominantly focused on the macrolevel. This began with the comparative analysis of U.S. journalists in comparison with journalists in other countries, examining national differences and using the nation-state as the primary organizing principle (Hanusch & Vos, 2020; Reese, 2001). To date, the most common way to assess journalistic cultures empirically is to examine the normative or practiced roles of journalists in different countries. As valuable as research on role conceptions, role performances, and other macrolevel phenomena has been, it obviously does not capture the full spectrum of journalistic cultures. Wan and Chiu (2009) argued that exploring and defining culture should go beyond intersubjective consensus based on average or modal values, beliefs, personal attributes, and practices that might be (or not) endorsed or displayed by "average" members of the culture.

Hence, less is known about the individual level of culture, which, according to Geertz (1973), consists of mental phenomena (such as individual beliefs, values, and strategies) that cannot be readily analyzed by formal statistical methods.

We hear little about journalistic subcultures and even less about journalists' individual thoughts and practices or outliers in these studies. We know little about the context of journalistic practices and professional identities (e.g., how these roles are negotiated within organizational duties, why certain roles are accepted over others, and personal aspirations in daily work). Relating this to the definition of journalistic cultures, we know little about its second part: journalistic work as "practices by which journalists legitimate their role in society and render their work meaningful" (Hanitzsch, 2007, p. 369). What we do know is that a gap frequently exists between role ideals and practices (e.g., Tandoc, Hellmueller, & Vos, 2013), but that "gap" largely remains in a "black box" (Schwinges, 2024).

A first attempt of understanding the "black box" of journalistic culture is to understand how journalistic practice depends on the system in which journalists operate. Hanitzsch et al. (2019) identify that different journalistic cultures reflect different approaches to newsgathering based on the media system. We aim to propose that focusing on journalistic negotiation will reveal how these journalistic cultural approaches are negotiated and practiced, and what pressures and limitations they may put on journalists in a particular journalistic culture. This lens goes beyond an understanding of journalistic practice as "embodied, materially arrays of human activity [. . .] centrally organized around shared practical understanding" (Schatzki, 2001, p. 11), by providing insights into the relation between normative ideals and everyday practices and artifacts. A bottom-up approach focusing on negotiation acknowledges the increasingly diverse range of actors and ideas in journalism. Hence, research on journalistic cultures requires looking at how journalists talk and act (discourse as part of practice) as journalistic practices are not simply routines but include the activities and discourses surrounding those routines (Couldry, 2004). This fresh lens on negotiation as part of journalistic culture can potentially combine the self-understanding and actions of journalists and allow for researchers to observe change as it happens in journalistic practice.

Journalistic Negotiation: From Intrapersonal Communication to Public Communication

A focus on the relationship between the individual and the macrolevel of journalistic culture allows for going more in-depth on how different interests, priorities, goals, and practices are *negotiated*. Negotiation is a basic human practice when people "face fuzzy situations that are full of uncertainties and ambiguities and require sense making" (De Dreu, Beersma, Steinel, & van Kleef, 2007, p. 608). These situations are seemingly endemic to journalism. Indeed, journalism studies is replete with mentions of negotiation, such as when journalists have sought to resolve conflicts between the norm of autonomy and new crowdfunding models (Hunter, 2015), when "newsrooms are negotiating their routines and roles while developing new practices in investigative journalism" (Konow-Lund, 2019, p. 103), and when "journalists negotiate representations of their professional and personal identity on social media platforms" (Bossio & Sacco, 2017, p. 527). Yet, negotiation goes untheorized.

Negotiation puts communication and interaction to its core. Journalism is a social phenomenon that is led not only by cognitive decisions but by communication and interaction where journalists negotiate between social obligations, social settings (e.g., risks), individual cognitive aspects, individual affective aspects, and personal motivation (Raemy, 2021). Negotiation, in this respect, is different from similar concepts used in journalism studies. Gatekeeping studies and early newsroom ethnographies highlighted decision making as a key concept—however, decision-making processes are more related to individual, cognitive, objective-driven, rational choices (Tsay & Bazerman, 2009). In this literature, the focus was on decision making understood against a backdrop of "dynamic connections between the person and the (social) environment" (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009, p. 34) and predominantly on the construction of news, often against a backdrop where journalists sought to maximize their autonomy (Gans, 1980; Tuchman, 1978). Yet, journalists today find themselves in a different environment—not only defending news choices but also the very role that journalism plays in society. They do so with greater expectations of transparency and engagement with other institutional actors (Karlsson, 2022; Nelson, 2019). We focus on negotiation as it relates to the now near-constant journalistic work of legitimating journalism's role and making it meaningful.

When we disentangle the many general definitions of negotiation, we arrive at core elements that seem relevant for journalism: First is the goal of overcoming differences in interests, priorities, and goals (Cross, 1977). This is not merely a matter of striking a balance, although that is how it is often conceptualized in journalism research. Negotiation can also result in unequal compromises or in inaction (De Dreu et al., 2007). Second are strategies or goal-directed behaviors that are implemented and enacted to reach those goals or outcomes. Strategies can involve mirroring the negotiation partners and shifting their focus to specific aspects (Maddux, Mullen, & Galinsky, 2008). Third are the reciprocity and series of recurring actions and reactions that form the foundation of negotiation (Brett & Thompson, 2016). Finally, are the outcomes of negotiations, which can be decisions, positions, agreement, conflict resolution (Brett & Thompson, 2016; Cross, 1977), reinterpretations, reorientations, and improvisations (Raemy & Barabasch, 2022). The process of negotiation, as well as its outcome, depends on the situation and context and often involves conflicts or motivations to resolve a conflict.

De Dreu et al. (2007) argue that negotiators' motivation shapes how they process conflicts. Higher epistemic motivation is linked to thorough information searches, reduced reliance on heuristics, prompt corrections of assumptions, and diminished ego defensiveness following self-threat. Journalists likely exhibit high epistemic motivation for seeking and conveying truth. In contexts outlined in this essay, variations exist in how this epistemic mission is feasible. Particularly in constrained contexts or conflict situations, where stakes are high, journalists are anticipated to possess elevated epistemic motivation and particularly invest in purposeful negotiations. In less tense Western-democratic environments, normative failure (see Siegelbaum & Thomas, 2016) could be linked to lower epistemic motivation and a greater willingness to accept the status quo.

Communication and negotiation are connected, as van Ruler (2018) argues: "Communication is a process that is interactive by nature and participatory at all levels, [. . .] not necessarily two-way but omnidirectional diachronic, with an emphasis on the external and internal arenas of continuous meaning presentations, negotiations, and constructions" (p. 379). Negotiation is baked into journalistic practice. Journalists negotiate what is newsworthy, relevant, realistic to enact, timely, important, and so on but also what is possible and ethical to do. Hence, intrapersonal communication and individual negotiation might be a starting point or even the essence of journalism. We thus argue that negotiation begins in journalists' heads and that what starts as intrapersonal communication can lead to public communication. However, studies in journalism that foreground individual negotiations and intrapersonal communication have been scarce.

Raemy and Vos (2021) concluded that future studies should examine journalists, not only as actors who use scripts to perform institutional and social roles but as actors with the agency to bring a role to life with scripts that are adapted and rewritten to suit situations and to perform or improvise institutional and social roles that also have personal and organizational dimensions. In other words, journalists are almost constantly negotiating with themselves and others over possible understandings and courses of action. Such a lens on journalistic roles would be an attempt to better explore, explain, and compare journalistic culture across countries, because journalistic culture is the result of negotiation between macro, meso, and microcontexts (see, e.g., Reese, 2001), as well as personal, organizational, and institutional aspirations, missions, and duties (Raemy & Vos, 2021) and between explicit beliefs and implicit guiding cues (Ryfe, 2024). More local and comparative research is needed to understand how role negotiation recreates and expresses journalistic culture and how this concept can serve as a nexus between institutional roles and work practices in journalism. Raemy and Vos (2021) suggest listening carefully to what journalists say and how they narrate their negotiations between institutional roles, organizational roles, and personal identity. Universalist epistemologies (what Powers & Vera-Zambrano, 2018, have introduced as universalism) are simply not able to understand such negotiations.

This essay argues that focusing on journalists' negotiation processes is essential to determine which specific roles (i.e., a blend of roles, emerging from individual reflections and discourse), best suit journalists in a given context. Comparative studies should include role negotiation as a unit of analysis rather than emphasizing role conception or role performance alone. It should include questions about how normative roles are negotiated differently across contexts rather than focus on the actual importance of the norm. This means a shift toward focusing on the social meaning of roles where questions could include: "What are the most important elements of being a watchdog for you? In what situations have you experienced restrictions

in this role? What considerations do you weigh when deciding how to perform this role?" Finally, a research approach focusing on role negotiation could help rethink, enhance, and refine our understanding of journalistic culture by considering and connecting journalists' work practices and personal identities with institutional normativity.

Exploring Journalistic Negotiation in Different Cultural Contexts

Without considering journalistic negotiation, we are left with largely descriptive approaches where explanations are proposed or inferred but not fully investigated. Although national contexts are often offered, the actual context of how practice is negotiated remains at arm's length. For example, a study by Mellado and colleagues (2017) shows that, at the national level, countries such as Ireland follow the expectations of a liberal media system (Hallin & Mancini, 2012) because journalists there perform a dissemination type of reporting, whereas Greek and Spanish journalists perform a watchdog role at a higher level than, for example, in the United States. Meanwhile, the United States ranks higher in normative roles that were not previously identified in the literature, such as the trend toward more interventionism or interpretative news. Although these differences are important to consider in understanding journalistic cultures across the world, these studies are not designed to address the reasons behind such shifts in normative roles. Although journalists orient themselves on similar institutional norms (such as objectivity, detachment, and power distance), the negotiation and interpretation of these norms might differ across countries, organizations, and individuals (i.e., see Hanitzsch & Vos, 2017; Raemy & Vos, 2021) depending on organizational and individual contexts.

When focusing on how roles are interpreted and practiced in a specific cultural context, the comparative aspect then could include the element of journalistic negotiation as the unit of analysis, mainly because context-based roles would inherently assume the importance of role conception and performance. Negotiation in a journalistic work context means interpretation and improvisation at the perception level where journalists decide among alternative possibilities. Such an approach requires thoughtful methodological designs, such as linking qualitative interviews and qualitative content analysis, observations in newsrooms, or reconstruction interviews as recently applied by Schwinges (2024). Yet, looking at the results of research exploring role performance (see, e.g., Raemy, Beck, & Hellmueller, 2019; Tandoc et al., 2013), we hear little about journalists themselves and how they discuss their role performance and how they decode roles in media output.

Despite the lack of empirical studies focusing on negotiation within journalistic practice, we identify examples where aspects of journalistic negotiation hold potential. Although we could explore various intrapersonal, interpersonal, or organizational contexts in which negotiation happens, we focus here on exploring journalistic negotiation in four different journalistic contexts: restrictive nondemocratic contexts, conflict-violent contexts, Western-democratic context, and digital contexts.

Negotiating Journalistic Norms and Restrictions in Nondemocratic Contexts

It comes as little surprise that studies of more restricted media systems, in which journalists perceive low autonomy, found a larger gap between journalists' ideal roles and journalistic performance

in roles related to holding powers accountable (Hanitzsch & Örnebring, 2020; Karaliova, 2020). However, in more censored and restricted contexts, journalists' motivation to orient to iconic Western-democratic journalistic roles seems to come from a place of wanting to simply provide good journalism for society. For example, a study by Ranji (2020) shows that journalists in a restricted media system such as Iran hold on to iconic (Western) journalistic roles and institutional norms. Iranian journalists see themselves as journalists with an important institutional mission and a distinct professional identity, even though they are operating under pressure and are forced to align their practiced role performance with restrictive Iranian media law. Hence, Iranian journalists are creating and maintaining journalism that (although not free) is an important institution for Iranian society, even though the media output does not merely reflect journalists' ideals.

Hence, the perspective on journalistic negotiation provides additional value to studies of journalistic cultures in restricted contexts. Instead of finding signs where journalism fails, based on a Western-democratic understanding of what journalism is and ought to be, "celebrating" an understanding of journalism as an institution that is detached from other social institutions and especially the government (Hanitzsch & Örnebring, 2020, p. 118), the focus could better be set on how journalism is created and maintained despite the restrictions and how journalists negotiate between their missions and restrictions. For example, to be a watchdog or an investigative journalist seems to be a motivation that led many journalists into their profession. This might also be, in large parts, true for Chinese journalism. From a universalist approach, Zhou and Zhou (2016) show that it seems most important for Chinese journalists to report things as they are, to provide analysis of current affairs; to support national development; to provide advice, orientation, and direction for daily life; and to be detached observers. Most journalists in China see the importance of providing the kind of news that attracts the largest audience, letting people express their views, influencing public opinion, and supporting government policy.

However, by exploring journalistic negotiation, the focus of interest shifts toward how journalists interpret and negotiate these normative orientations amid restricted journalistic practice. For example, Meadows, Yan, Huang, and Ding (2021) explored how former hard news journalists in China, who were reassigned to new positions within the company to lifestyle sections, negotiated journalistic roles with their work practice that was different from their initial journalistic goals. These Chinese journalists were confronted with profit-oriented practices, such as marketing, public relations, or advertising tasks, which caused conflicts with their ideal perception of appropriate journalistic roles. The study revealed that, similar to the findings of Zhou and Zhou (2016), most journalists valued ideals such as public service and advocacy, fighting for social justice, and helping the helpless. But these Chinese journalists struggled to enact these goals while assigned to the lifestyle beat. Through a journalistic negotiation lens, the interest lies in the strategies of these journalists on how to cope with these discrepancies. Meadows and colleagues (2021) found that journalists focused on the possible aspects and opportunities that their jobs bring them; hence, they tried to assimilate and identify with the practiced role and to find a negotiated place between their ideals and practices. Most journalists tried to assimilate instead of quitting their jobs. Such a lens on Chinese journalistic culture considers the context of the Confucian culture, which is concerned with obedience to authorities and stability of personal lives. Hence, the findings of the study of Meadows and colleagues (2021) shed another light on the findings of Zhou and Zhou (2016). Although most Chinese journalists might see rather universalist and global norms as important, we might assume that many of them find themselves in

situations as described by Meadows and colleagues (2021), and thus it might be more important to explore how journalists in specific contexts might negotiate between their ideals and practices.

The case studies in restricted journalistic contexts revealed what De Dreu and colleagues (2007) explained as negotiators' motivation shaping their information processing. In restricted (and in conflict situations, as seen in the next section) where the stakes are high, journalists' epistemic motivation plays a crucial role. In these challenging contexts, journalists are expected to demonstrate heightened epistemic motivation, leading to more diligent and purposeful information gathering and negotiation processes. With a focus on journalistic negotiation, this means focusing on the strategies and possibilities journalists negotiate and enact instead of focusing on restrictions in these contexts. Journalistic culture in restricted contexts involves balancing personal beliefs, risks, internal conflicts, and professional shifts while seeking acceptable outcomes. Hence, journalistic culture in such contexts seems to involve diplomacy and activism, which eventually shapes journalistic practice. For example, Karaliova (2020) notes that journalists in autocratic regimes often push press freedom limits with civic bravery by critically reporting on government policies. Such restrictions cultivate a disciplined journalism culture, emphasizing thorough fact-checking to avoid government penalties.

Negotiating Journalistic Missions, Impacts, and Risks in Conflict-Violent Contexts

Especially in conflict zones, journalistic cultures might be affected by how journalists are negotiating journalistic missions, impacts, and risks. For example, Shah, Ginossar, and Ittefaq (2023) argue that Western professional values and norms originate from mostly safer, resource-rich contexts. Although journalists in conflict zones embrace and strive to reach these journalistic ideals, they face many values that are in tension with each other, and hence are forced to negotiate a balance of those values in their own ways. They discursively negotiate journalistic ideals and practices in the context of conditions of conflict zones. For example, González de Bustamante and Relly (2021) explored how Mexican journalists negotiate their mission in the face of organized crime groups, increasingly managing the narratives produced by the news media, attempting to control journalists through overt and violent strategies. Although corrupt authorities lost public trust because of their opacity, Mexican journalists have continued to investigate events and issues using innovative strategies to inform their audience. The authors describe how Mexican journalists created resistance "as conscious acts among journalists and members of journalism communities to individually and collectively oppose adverse and threatening conditions with the intent to improve safety, professional autonomy, and journalism as a whole" and resilience, as manifested in journalists' "ability to continue to function professionally and to create, adapt and resist in the face of trauma and violence" (González de Bustamante & Relly, 2021, p. 7). Journalists in Mexico are searching for ways to circumvent, adapt, and resist the power structures that are in place, and they are compelled to negotiate between their journalistic mission, approval from crime bosses to publish stories, and confronting dangerous environments. The authors thus conclude that, when focusing on journalistic negotiation, resistance and resilience seem to be important aspects of journalistic culture in Mexico.

Another example is the context of Cyprus journalism. Şahin's (2022) study on Cyprus journalism reveals that journalists in conflict-affected Cyprus balance professional and ethnic identities, influenced by the ongoing conflict. The study complements the universalist, norm-oriented approach of previous studies like Milioni

(2017), offering insights into how Cypriot journalists negotiate their roles in a conflicted environment. It underscores that journalists' identities are not fixed but fluid, and journalists struggle to find a suitable arrangement between their professional and national/ethnic identities and responsibilities. The study highlights the value of a focus on journalistic negotiation. Şahin (2022) could *explain* how Cypriot journalists negotiate roles that have been assigned as important for Cypriot journalism by the Worlds of Journalism Study (e.g., Milioni, 2017). Cypriot journalists are committed to monitoring and scrutinizing peace negotiations and keeping the public informed, yet they are careful not to stir up tensions between conflicting groups by checking who benefits from their scrutiny. Their role as watchdogs is undermined by political spin and limited media scrutiny. Despite these challenges, they stress the importance of accurate reporting. A significant part of their job involves facilitating understanding and communication within communities. They see promoting conflict resolution as aligned with their impartial journalistic principles, serving the best interests of their communities. This dynamic forces Cypriot journalists to continuously adjust their professional and ethnic identities, striving to balance journalistic integrity with community needs.

These examples of conflict-violent journalistic contexts show that focusing on negotiation reveals hidden thoughts, ideas, and challenges in journalistic practice. It shows how specific tendencies and features of a journalistic culture, which would have remained undiscovered within universalist comparisons, can be illuminated. And it can provide some important and needed insights into how journalism can be supported and maintained following various strategies, interpretations, and improvisations of local journalists.

Negotiating Ideals and Practices in Western-Democratic Context

Since most journalistic norms are based on Western-democratic ideals, we might presume a comparable friendly regulatory and social environment for journalism in Western-democratic contexts—an environment with comparatively few structural barriers for turning ideals into practice. Yet, remaining barriers are notable, as demonstrated in studies focusing on the United States, Poland, and Switzerland. These countries differ in many aspects on a social system level: different political systems (apart from all being democracies), histories, economies, and sizes. These differences likely affect journalism, and one would likely argue that these countries have different journalistic cultures. On closer examination of how journalism works, we can identify relevant similarities between these countries, particularly in the negotiation between ideal norms and practice. Indeed, each of these countries faces challenges in journalism that appear to be normative failures.

In the U.S. context, the study of Vos and Craft (2017) revealed that roles that express political service elicit the strongest responses among journalists. U.S. journalists see classic monitorial roles as most important while poorly rating roles that suggest an active pursuit of the partisan. However, another study showed that normative journalistic ideals are not always reflected in U.S. news content (Tandoc et al., 2013). A study trying to *explain* this gap comes from Siegelbaum and Thomas (2016). They describe how iconic normative roles served as anchors to guide journalists through unprecedented industry upheavals, legitimating new tasks and routines despite drastic changes to their workplace and field. However, these U.S. journalists focused on external changes in journalism, largely overlooking internal aspects of their practice. Siegelbaum and Thomas (2016) described this phenomenon as "normative failure," an aggregate of pressures that journalists believe gradually dissociate them from their normative orientations. The authors

conclude that journalism's normative roles help to define, and to some extent, serve as coping mechanisms for professional challenges and uncertainties.

Another example is Poland, where Mellado and colleagues (2017) identified a significant presence of the interventionist role in the news stories of the Polish press. Compared with other countries, the Polish press ranks high in the watchdog and loyal-facilitator roles (although higher in the watchdog role than in the loyal-facilitator role) and shows high performance in the civic role and the infotainment role, and comparatively low performance in the service role. However, Krzyżanowski (2014) describes how Polish journalists often overestimate their actual knowledge and practice in light of idealized visions of what they believe their profession should entail. Polish journalistic culture is influenced by strict media laws and populist politics, which emphasizes the importance of understanding and contextualizing journalistic culture by focusing on journalistic negotiation. The author noted similarities in how journalists viewed their roles, suggesting they struggle to differentiate between real and perceived practices. Consequently, Polish journalists often overemphasize journalistic values, further distancing themselves from actual practice. Krzyżanowski (2014) concludes that these values neither guide journalists' actions nor amplify their societal impact, particularly on challenging topics such as migration and multiculturalism under the populist government at the time of the study.

In Switzerland, previous country reports about the journalistic culture (e.g., Dingerkus, Keel, & Wyss, 2016) showed that Swiss journalists generally demonstrate a strong commitment to professional standards of ethics and stated that journalistic ethics strongly influence their work. However, another study indicated that most journalistic content in the Swiss press seems not to reflect journalists' ideal roles (Raemy et al., 2019). In the context of Swiss journalism, the study by Raemy and Vos (2021) might be an example of what a focus on journalistic negotiation can provide for studying journalistic cultures. The authors discussed how journalists in the study often identified with iconic roles, such as investigative or civic-oriented roles, but yet rarely enacted those roles, despite their high freedom of reporting. The study shows that journalists do not interpret their role performances solely in terms of the number of stories in which the role might be explicitly performed. Journalists explained that roles, especially related to a contribution to political life and civic society, are seldomly or only partially enacted or are at least different from what scholars often expect as role performance. For example, some journalists noted that monitoring and scrutinizing is always being done; it is just that such activity does not result in long investigative pieces every day.

These examples of studies about journalistic cultures in Western-democratic contexts exemplify that journalistic roles might not be fixed scripts leading to fixed behavior in journalistic practice (Raemy & Vos, 2021). Instead, journalistic roles might be orientation points that serve as motivations for journalists to do their work as well as possible—an aspect that is also discussed in other journalistic contexts as the studies in the previous chapters show. Hence, even if there is a global understanding and "celebration" of iconic journalistic roles, these roles seem to be individually negotiated and their performance is more nuanced than expected in previous literature. Considering De Dreu and colleagues' (2007) definition of negotiation, the case studies reveal that in less tense Western-democratic environments, normative failure could be linked to lower epistemic motivation and a greater willingness to accept the status quo. This might be a first insight on Western-democratic journalistic contexts from the perspective on journalistic negotiation.

Negotiating Traditional Journalistic Norms and New Expectations in Digital Contexts

Media and the public sphere are undergoing a profound digital change, with online platforms, streaming services, and messenger apps now playing a central role in audience communication (Newman, Fletcher, Robertson, Eddy, & Nielsen, 2022). This has an impact on journalism's social affordances and culture. Duffy and Ang (2019) define digital journalism "as the way in which journalism embodies the philosophies, norms, practices, values and attitudes of digitisation as they relate to society" (p. 382). Digital journalism often customizes headlines and content to align with social media algorithms, resulting in the proliferation of concise, click-oriented, viral pieces (Costera Meijer & Groot Kormelink, 2015; Welbers & Opgenhaffen, 2019). News producers adjust their content according to platform-specific feedback, such as audience analytics (Blanchett Neheli, 2018), to suit the particular platform's audience, affordances, and culture. Different platforms have their own "code of interpretation, style and grammar" (Tsuriel, Dvir Gvirsman, Ziv, Afriat-Aviv, & Ivan, 2021, p. 1984) that is applied to the content and messages that exist on each platform. There is also a more global-oriented aspect in digital journalistic culture: News can be distributed beyond national boundaries, allowing for a related flow of information and opinions across borders and cultures (Brennen & Kreiss, 2016).

Hence, even though journalists' collective orientation to normative journalistic standards might remain stable, in a lens of journalistic negotiation, we are interested in how journalists try to find ways of doing "good journalistic work" in the face of new possibilities and expectations in digital journalistic contexts. For example, Tandoc, Cheng, and Maitra (2021) argue that journalists have always balanced their journalistic norms and beliefs about the audience with the audience's needs. But in a digital environment, journalists consider Web analytics as normal as it is embedded in their routines. Molyneux, Lewis, and Holton (2019) explain how impression practices, branding oneself and promoting one's employer online, became a new normal for journalists in the context of social media. Schaetz, Laugwitz, and Lischka (2023) describe how journalism has adopted a form of Silicon Valley's technosolutionism (the prioritization of tech-driven solutions), more specifically, a notion of datasolutionism (the prioritization of data-driven solutions), and connected it to fourth estate ideals of audience access. Hence, journalistic cultures might be shaped by both normative beliefs and orientations to new technology and digital culture. This means that next to journalists' perceptions of journalistic norms and journalistic performance and news traffic, journalists' negotiation between norms, expectations, and practices may move to the center of journalistic cultures.

The Interaction of Contexts of Negotiation

Digitalization is a global phenomenon. However, its impact seems to vary between contexts. For example, journalists in Western-democratic countries tend to see many changes as a step backward from the nostalgic "golden age of journalism" and are looking for ways to interpret and integrate traditional journalistic ideals in today's digitally driven journalism. But in more restricted contexts, new technological possibilities might affect journalistic practice and culture in different ways, where technological innovations seem to be enabling new ways of source acquisition, proximity to audiences, and networking among journalists. For example, Ranji (2021) shows that Iranian journalists' use of online platforms created arenas of mobilization and leverage in Iran, allowing people to see and think about an issue and act on it. Iranian journalists use their networks of connections to plan to "shape news waves" collectively with other journalists

and eventually create leverage and influence the public. Another example is a study by Seo (2020), who analyzed foreign reporting of Iran and North Korea by exile and diaspora journalists using primarily digital and distance techniques in place of firsthand observation. The study shows that such an approach allows covering countries that may have been previously inaccessible and fending off misinformation prevalent "on the ground." The study explored emergent norms and rules of sourcing that journalists have developed under restrictive conditions in North Korea and Iran. The study revealed extensive global collaboration that takes advantage of distance and time differences to produce more credible news about Iran and North Korea because the "new" foreign correspondents use traditional sourcing methods to complement online ones. Without having to worry about getting their access revoked, journalists can focus on issues that they consider important.

Hence, these examples show that journalism seems in large part to be affected by searching for possibilities and innovative ways to inform and engage the public. Out of a perspective on journalistic negotiation, journalistic cultures in restricted areas seem to be more active, innovative, and diverse than previous studies might assume. New technologies can open new ways of reporting and of creating alternative public communication in and about contexts where public communication is restricted. Hence, in such cases, exploring journalistic culture might not be limited to journalism within the countries' borders but also to external journalistic sources.

Conclusion: Journalistic Cultures as the Contexts and Result of Negotiation

This essay argues for the importance of negotiation to journalistic culture and proposes a new agenda to (re)focus on it. The literature provides glimpses of journalists using a range of negotiation strategies, seeking to circumvent, adapt, and resist power structures or restrictions. In contrast to the gatekeeping studies starting in the 1970s, it proposes to set the processes of negotiating at the forefront rather than focus on newsroom decisions. We believe this approach helps understanding invisible power structures in the forms of communicative and social processes, enabling researchers to better understand forms of power struggles, including self-censorship, when it comes to decision-making procedures. Our literature review provides insights into how journalists are negotiating between journalistic mission, approval from crime bosses to publish stories, and confronting a dangerous environment. In many contexts, journalists are experiencing normative failures and gaps between journalistic ideals and practices—gaps that remain in a "black box," absent being the object of study. Journalists are constantly negotiating. They are negotiating individual, organizational, and institutional expectations, journalistic missions, impacts and risks, technological imperatives, new expectations, and traditional journalistic norms. These negotiations matter as they are shaping and constituting journalistic cultures. However, in universalist studies exploring how Western-journalistic ideals are perceived and enacted in journalistic practice around the world, we hear little about these negotiations.

Our exploration of what journalistic culture is and how its research might be enhanced led us back to basic assumptions of journalism, notably that journalism is a belief system with various interpretations and enactments, albeit in different contexts. The previous definitions of journalistic culture are helpful but also incomplete in their inattention to the relationship between journalistic culture and practice. Often, journalistic culture is understood as shaping public communication in a specific cultural context. However,

this article argues for additions and amendments to previous definitions of journalistic culture, which are summarized in the following two figures.

Figure 1 visualizes the importance of individual journalists' tensions, negotiations, and decisions that are often invisible in methodological designs. Furthermore, it shows how research should also consider aspects of intrapersonal communication that leads to public communication and that eventually shapes journalistic culture.

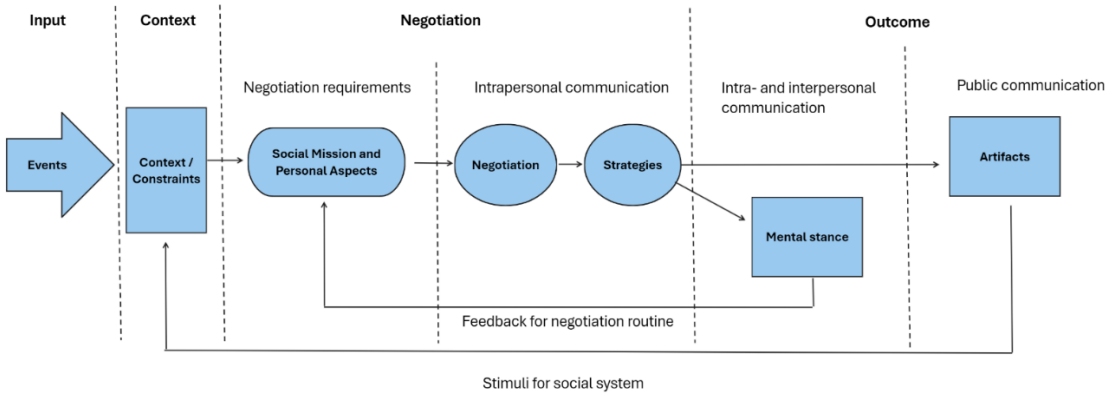

Figure 1. Journalistic cultures as sets of journalistic negotiation.

Figure 1 presents a process of negotiation that can be applied to different journalistic contexts and social system settings. The idea is that certain events occur that might be relevant in a specific journalistic context. This has been extensively discussed in gatekeeping and news values theories, as well as in the hierarchy of influences model. According to journalistic constraints and societal needs, journalists might treat these events in a certain way (see, e.g., Hanitzsch et al., 2019). The treatment of events begins with intrapersonal communication, which involves negotiation. First are negotiation requirements, which are journalists' social mission (such as ideals, norms, and goals that are explored; e.g., in the World of Journalism Project) and personal aspects (such as inner beliefs, skills, motivation; see, e.g., Raemy, 2021). These requirements affect how journalists negotiate expectations, goals, and constraints—hence, their epistemic motivation (see De Dreu et al., 2007). Negotiation leads to strategies such as compromises, action, inaction, mimicking effects, and priming (Maddux et al., 2008). Negotiation outcomes then are decisions, positions, agreement, conflict resolution, reinterpretations, reorientations, and improvisations (Brett & Thompson, 2016; Cross, 1977; Raemy & Barabasch, 2022). Those outcomes might eventually be applied in practice and affect journalists' mental stance, such as their individual beliefs, values, and strategies (Geertz, 1973).

The negotiation outcome feeds back in two ways: first is the feedback to the negotiation process affecting the learning of the negotiation routine. Journalists' mental stance is reflected in the context of their social mission and personal aspects, triggering interpersonal communication (interaction with other journalists/people) and intrapersonal communication (negotiation). Second, negotiation might result in journalistic artifacts that we experience as public communication. This journalistic contribution to public

communication is then (hoped to act as) a stimulus for changing, maintaining, and supporting the social system in which journalists are acting.

What do the aspects highlighted in Figure 1 mean for the definition of journalistic culture? Overall, it shows that aspects of journalistic culture should be understood in relation to each other. Figure 2 visualizes this relationship. Rather than think about ideas, practices, and artifacts as three separate sites of investigation, these elements must be seen as working together across different social contexts and manifest as a journalistic negotiation.

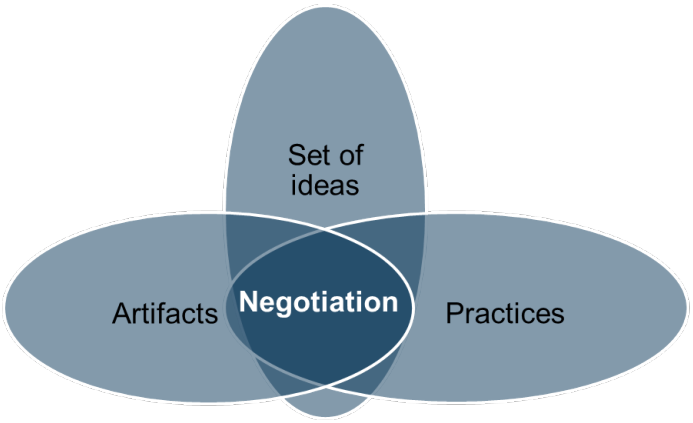

Figure 2. Negotiation explains expression of journalistic culture.

The two figures suggest future research to explore the ways that journalists rationalize institutional norms in light of their work and the artifacts they produce, how journalists rationalize their work relative to norms and artifacts, and how they rationalize artifacts in terms of norms and practices. In doing so, we come closer to understanding culture as a social construct referring to a vastly complex set of phenomena and a constantly changing system, both adapting to and impacting on the individuals within it (Berry et al., 2011). And we would arrive at an understanding of how journalists negotiate changing and stable challenges and expectations in different contexts. By exploring journalistic negotiation, we can gain greater access to the hitherto hidden (black box) dimensions of culture, which are the basic assumptions, norms, and values that are negotiated in specific contexts (Schein, 2010). We also potentially gain a more realistic understanding of what journalists are truly up against in seeking to do their work in complex contexts. Negotiation and intrapersonal communication are crucial in journalism, serving as foundations for public communication. This interactive process affects ongoing meaning creation, contingent on context, and frequently addresses conflicts, tensions, uncertainties, and ambiguities (De Dreu et al., 2007; van Ruler, 2018).

With this lens on culture and negotiation, this article highlighted studies that explored journalistic negotiation in different contexts and found interesting insights that shifted our understanding of what journalism is in those contexts. When we look at non–Western-democratic contexts, it comes as little surprise that governmental restrictions are shaping journalistic cultures in these contexts. But we should look closer at how journalists negotiate between restrictions and their journalistic goals. Western-journalistic

values and norms originate from mostly safer, resource-rich contexts, but journalists in high-risk and conflict zones also embrace and strive to reach these journalistic ideals. Yet, they find many values that are in tension with each other. Hence, in such contexts, journalistic culture is shaped by how journalists are negotiating journalistic missions, impacts, and risks. Journalists' goal is seemingly often to check the risk of publishing a story and to check who benefits from investigations and scrutiny and how information impacts the tension between the conflicting parties. The studies that strive to shed more light into journalistic negotiation in Western-democratic contexts underscore the importance of exploring how journalists are negotiating individual, organizational, and institutional expectations. Researchers should better explore how these tensions are negotiated in different contexts of journalistic practice. More research is needed: for example, to explore how negotiation is affected by rank, experience, reputation, and other factors that influence the power to negotiate.

Finally, we shed light on digitalization as a global phenomenon affecting journalism. Journalistic culture in a digital era has seemingly been a matter of negotiating traditional journalistic norms and new expectations in digital contexts. Apart from digitalization being a worldwide phenomenon, the literature nevertheless points to journalists—through processes of negotiation—seeking to adapt either their ideals or practices, or both, to the contingencies and complications of place and context.

The goal of this essay was to rethink and enhance research on journalistic cultures. A focus on journalistic negotiation allows for linking different contexts and allows for exploring understudied contexts and aspects of journalistic culture. This article puts forward a research approach that challenges universalist epistemologies by foregrounding journalistic negotiation as an essential feature of journalistic cultures. The simple fact remains that journalists, regardless of the context in which they find themselves, find it difficult to produce the kinds of news they normatively aspire to create. They are often acutely aware of these shortfalls, such that part of their ongoing work is to negotiate these conflicts in ways that render their choices as meaningful. Hence, the argument here is that this journalistic negotiation should be its own unit of analysis since it is integral to understanding journalistic cultures.

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