

# The Shift from High to Liquid Ideals

## *Making Sense of Journalism and Its Change through a Multidimensional Model*

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### Abstract

By reading qualitative studies, surveys, organisational histories, and textbooks, one can claim that the ethos of journalists has undergone fundamental changes in recent decades. The “high modern” journalistic ethos of the 1970s and 1980s was committed to the core values of the journalistic profession: objectivity, public service, consensus maintenance, gate-keeping, and recording of the recent past. After the millennium, these central ideals have become more ambivalent and “liquid”: subjectivity, consumer service, the watchdog role, agenda-setting, and forecasting the future seem to be more tempting alternatives than before. This article develops an analytic framework that elaborates the simple narrative from “high modern” to “liquid modern” journalism. Five key elements, namely, (1) knowledge, (2) audience, (3) power, (4) time, and (5) ethics, are discussed and problematized to suggest a more nuanced view of the changing professional ethos of journalism.

**Keywords:** journalistic profession, core elements of journalism, professional ethos, high/liquid modern ideals, multidimensional model, analysis of change

### Introduction

One of the most common ways of crafting normative, evaluative discourses is to construct a narrative of change. This has also been true in journalism research recently (e.g. McChesney & Nichols 2010, McChesney & Pickard 2011). However, because journalism is a multifaceted institution with many interfaces to its social, political, and economic contexts, many alternative narratives are possible. Consequently, change can be communicated in many ways. Partly because journalism research is linked to the defence of particular ideals of journalism, there has been a tendency for journalism researchers to interpret change in a very normative manner, articulating it as a threat rather than an opportunity. Interpretations also tend to exaggerate rather than dismiss the magnitude of change.

This article attempts to suggest how we could elaborate the narratives we tell about the recent developments in journalism. I will present a “model” that identifies five aspects, or “nodal points”, of the professional, journalistic ethos, hoping that such a multidimensional, more systematic model will help us see the change in journalism in a more nuanced manner. My aim is to show that a key narrative often referred to in recent journalism research – a story about journalism’s shift from a “high modern” ethos to a

more late-modern, liquid era – should be viewed in a more complex way. The empirical reference for developing this model is Finnish journalism, but I hope that this conceptual model, which identifies and elaborates some of the key aspects of the profession, can be useful in other contexts as well.

An important starting point for my analysis are the works of Hallin (1992, 2006) on the rise and fall of high modern journalism in the United States. According to Hallin, high modern journalism was strongly committed to objectivity. From the end of World War II until the 1980s, it seemed possible that journalism, as the fourth estate, could be truly independent of other institutions. Journalists did not regard themselves primarily as employees of profit-seeking corporations but rather as professionals providing a public service. This sense of independence was based on the ideology of mature modernity that combined the independence and relative mutual respect of social institutions. Journalists saw themselves as distinct and separate from other experts, but they also respected the skills and functions of other institutions and professions. The image of society was based on scientific planning, technical progress, and trust in rational solutions to social and other problems (see, e.g. Alasuutari 1996, Scott 1998). The high modern period of journalism seemed solid and sustainable, but with the collapse of political consensus and economic stability, problems surfaced within the journalistic profession. Deuze (2006, 2007) applied Bauman's (2001) ideas about liquid modern society to media work and journalism. In this narrative – from a high to liquid modernity – it is said that experts are no longer considered unquestionable authorities. Furthermore, the general cultural trust in progress and planning begins to erode. Hallin, Deuze, and several other journalism researchers have provided their version of the main storyline. In it, journalists have had to update their professional ideals and practices in order to adapt to the changing conditions of their work. These narratives are often fruitful in capturing the sense and direction of where journalism is going. However, they operate at a very general level, and perhaps, they also simplify our understanding of the nature of this change and the complex and contradictory nature of the core issues that are at stake.

In my own research, I have examined changes in Finnish journalism through various empirical perspectives: looking at changes in the institutionalization of the profession, analysing changes in news coverage (texts), and interpreting the ways in which journalists reflect on their professional practices during critical moments of public pressure. Drawing from this work and from the work of other journalism researchers, I identify five key elements or issues at the core of the changing professional ethos of journalism. By professional ethos, I refer to the shared discursive resources which journalists think about and identify the core ideals of the profession and negotiate its permanence and change.

This ethos serves as a collective pool of the alternative ways of making sense about professional dilemmas, drawing suggestions on how to solve them and arguing for the legitimacy of different solutions. In many ways, this concept overlaps with the notions of “journalistic culture” (e.g. Hanitzsch 2007, Melin 2008) or “professional ideology” (e.g. Deuze 2005). My approach to professionalism does not contradict these alternative conceptualizations but aims to emphasize professional ethos as a more multidimensional field of meanings and negotiations than a rigid “ideology” and as a somewhat more abstract one than a “culture” that links sense-making in particular practical contexts, such as in specific newsrooms. I will suggest a model for mapping this professional

ethos — as a resource for identifying what is changing in journalism – by focusing on five key elements that define the way journalists

- (1) define their understanding of what constitutes “*knowledge*”,
- (2) think of their relationship to the *audience*,
- (3) situate themselves to other institutions and to “*power*” in society,
- (4) construct the relationship between journalism and *time*, and
- (5) reflect on the *ethical* dilemmas of their work.

## The Five Elements at the Core of Journalism

Media or mass communication research has been an integral part of the professional system of journalism. Thus, scholars have produced vast amounts of literature both defending and criticizing the key values or elements of journalism. In this article, my focus, however, is on developing a model for mapping the recent changes. Thus, I take my point of departure from three rather recent contributions that try to re-think the professional ideology or culture of journalism. Carpentier (2005), Deuze (2005), and Hanitzsch (2007) have all, in partly different but partly overlapping ways, tried to identify the key ingredients of current professionalism. Carpentier examined media professionals’ identities by constructing a discursive field in which professional identity formed four dimensions based on hegemonic and counter-hegemonic articulations. Deuze presented the occupational ideology behind journalists’ identities and discussed how multiculturalism and multimediality are changing the ideal-typical values at the core of journalistic ideology. Hanitzsch deconstructed the concept of journalism culture in terms of its constituents and principal dimensions to provide a theoretical framework from which different cultures could be compared. While the above-mentioned researchers have approached the core of journalism with different concepts and motives, their final outcomes are very similar (see Table 1).

**Table 1.** *Three Models of the Core Issues in Journalism*

<b>Deuze: Ideal-typical values of the occupational ideology of journalism</b>	<b>Hanitzsch: Constituents and principal dimensions of journalism culture</b>	<b>Carpentier: Nodal points in the identity of the media professional</b>
<b>Knowledge:</b> Objectivity	<b>Knowledge:</b> Objectivity versus subjectivity <b>Knowledge:</b> Empiricism versus analysis	<b>Knowledge:</b> Objectivity versus subjectivity
<b>Audience:</b> Public service	<b>Audience:</b> Citizen orientation versus consumer orientation	<b>Audience:</b> Professional elite versus representative of public <b>Audience:</b> Control versus partnership
<b>Power:</b> Editorial autonomy	<b>Power:</b> Loyalty to hegemony versus counter-hegemony <b>Power:</b> Active intervention versus passive neutrality	<b>Power:</b> Independence versus dependency
<b>Time:</b> Immediacy	<b>Time:</b> <i>No core material to Hanitzsch</i>	<b>Time:</b> <i>No core material to Carpentier</i>
<b>Ethics:</b> Ethicality	<b>Ethics:</b> Relativity versus universality <b>Ethics:</b> Idealism-minded versus strategic-minded	<b>Ethics:</b> <i>No core material to Carpentier</i>

Deuze's outline serves as a starting point for my aim of tracing the change in journalistic ethos. His list of ideal values well fits the key issues that, for example, Finnish journalists emphasize in their professional ideals (e.g. Ahva 2010, Väliverronen et al. 2012). Hanitzsch's model helps to elaborate this somewhat basic list of core professional issues by showing that while in some locations – for instance, in the West – core values or elements of journalism can be seen as relatively solid and clear, in a culturally comparative perspective, they appear more as *dimensions*. Hence, a similar list of key elements for journalists can actually include several combinations of positions on the key dimensions, sometimes even oppositional ones. This is a crucial idea not only when we compare things across countries and locations but also when we analyse changes over time and how such changes are conceptualized. Carpentier's analysis takes yet one more step further. He looks at professionalism as a discursively constructed identity where some key issues are constantly at stake. This points to the idea that different dimensions related to the key elements of professionalism can be seen as “nodal points” that are constantly struggled over.

My argument is that journalists are engaged in struggles over the definition of their profession in at least five key “fields” that can be identified as the nodal points of their ethos. Although these five points are familiar to most newsrooms in Western democracies, here, I will mainly reflect on how we can make sense of the changing ethos of Finnish news and current affairs journalism from the 1970s to the 2010s. In each of the following sections, I will first argue how the nodal point is crucial for journalists and how we can open a multidimensional perspective to this point. After reconstructing each point, I will argue how this model helps us to make sense of the shift from “high” to “liquid” professional ethos.<sup>1</sup>

## **Knowledge Orientation: From News Disseminators to Content Producers**

Journalism has established its position among the other institutions of modern society by relying on its role as a disseminator of news and a seeker of truth. Although journalism's access to knowledge is dependent on the knowledge of other institutions, the solution to ensure the credibility of news has been the application of objective methods (Tuchman 1972). According to Lichtenberg (1996), objectivity is the cornerstone of journalistic ideology in Western democracies.

The first dimension concerning journalism and knowledge can be stretched between objectivity and subjectivity. The starting point of objective journalism is that it is possible to have a correlation between what is reported and what exists in reality (Merrill & Odell 1983). The journalist's function is to reflect reality and not to create, fabricate, or amend it. In order to achieve objectivity, one must be able to keep facts separate from values (Schudson 2001). The foundation of subjective journalism is constructivist thinking; there is no place for absolute truth or objective reality (Schudson 2003). The journalist's task is to select issues and events for the public eye and edit meaningful representations of them. The possibility of value-free news is denied. However, truth can be realised as a result of a combination of, or competition between, subjective descriptions (Manca 1989).

The second dimension can be formed by a continuum between empiricism and analysis. There are different methods for knowledge construction. The journalist who stresses

empiricism assumes that truth must be substantiated by facts (Merrill & Odell 1983). In these cases, journalism is orientated to reporting and emphasises observation, quantification, and proof. The journalist who emphasises analysis and explanation highlights specific knowledge, which is based on reasoning, ideas, values, and opinions (ibid.).

In journalism, there has been a general shift from emphasizing the “transmission” of knowledge to thinking of journalism more as a mode of “producing” knowledge (e.g. Luostarinen 2002, Djerf-Pierre & Weibull 2008). The criteria for the knowledge conveyed by high modern journalists contained not only truthfulness but also relevance, versatility, and social significance. The goal for journalists was to replicate reality as accurately as possible. Journalists considered it possible and desirable to keep the facts and values separate. Liquid modern journalists, in comparison, are expected to produce content that has both an intellectual and an emotional appeal and create surplus value for their customers by refining the knowledge obtained from sources. Journalists are nowadays aware of the fact that journalism mostly consists of interpretations of reality and that they are involved in the production of that reality. Moreover, “liquid” journalists do not consider that it would be possible to neatly separate facts from values.

An example of the changing and complex nature of what “knowledge” means in journalism can be taken up by clarifying the fate of “objectivity”. Objectivity was a controversial issue for Finnish journalists already in the high modern period. In the 1970s and 1980s, media scholar Hemánus developed a critical, Marxist idea of objectivity that aimed to expose the “true” realities of capitalist societies (Hemánus 1976, 1984, Hemánus & Tervonen 1980, 1986). In practice, however, most journalists assumed a more Western version of objectivity, of which Westersháhl’s (1983) conceptualization was well known. Lehto (2006), who studied the changes in the official mission statements of Finnish newspapers, found that objectivity (emphasizing the relationship between message contents and reality) had been replaced by trustworthiness (emphasizing the relationship between message content and its sender identity). Thus, “knowledge” never was a simple core value as such — and despite the fact that it has retained its centrality in the professional ethos, it has been partly redefined.

## **Audience Orientation: From Obedient Citizens to Active Consumers**

Journalism in modern societies is founded on the idea of serving the people with multiple ways. Carey (1969) remarked how in a society where the division of labour is differentiated, the communication professional has been central in interpreting one community’s attitudes and concerns into concepts that are meaningful to the other.

The extremes of the first dimension of the journalistic audience orientation are “service for citizens” and “service for consumers”. At one pole, journalism addresses the audience as citizens; the need to inform them is central to the functioning of democratic societies (Hanitzsch 2007). Current topics in politics and economics are valued as the most important news stories. At the other pole, journalism regards the audience as consumers, individuals, and target groups. The task of journalism is to provide individuals with help, guidance, and information in their management of daily life (Eide & Knight 1999). The task of journalists is to understand the needs of their customers and then modify their services in order to appeal to the audience. Journalism is committed to the promotion of consumerism, and therefore, journalists are more sympathetic to “utility news” and entertainment stories.

The second dimension relates to journalists' perceptions of the audience's public engagement. Journalism that sees audience as passive receivers has its roots in modern society's precepts on the division of labour. At one extreme, the rights and obligations connected with the practice of journalism remain in the hands of the professionals (Carpentier 2005). Journalists are certain of their mission and whether they have succeeded in it. For this reason, the audience feedback is perceived as a nuisance without any benefits (Shoemaker & Reese 1996). Meanwhile, journalism that construes its audience as active participants is keen to connect to the layperson in journalistic processes. Journalists have become "gate openers" who have handed over some of their rights and obligations to the audience (Carpentier 2005).

In broad terms, the way journalists conceptualize their audience seems to have shifted from rather obedient "citizenship" to more active but privatized "consumerists" (e.g. Hanitzsch 2007, Ahva 2010). The mission of the journalists of the high modern era was to inform and educate citizens to act rationally in society. Newsrooms had a more detached relationship with the audience, who were treated as receivers of information. Journalists of the liquid modern era consider it their task to provide consumers with useful and entertaining information that is worth paying for. Thus, newsrooms have sought to cultivate a closer relationship with the audience. For instance, journalists and newsrooms are increasingly willing to open the "gate" so that amateurs can participate in content production.

Capturing this change, Heikkilä (2001) suggested that journalism used to think about itself through an implicit metaphor of a "comprehensive school". Like a teacher, a high modern journalist knew best what the audience needed to know. This has given way to an often explicit metaphor of a "mall". Like a storekeeper, a liquid modern journalist tries to arouse customer interest in the products put on display. Again, the ethos of journalism clearly retains its core link to the image of the audience, but the key relationship that defines the audience moves from the state (citizenship) to the market (consumers). Public service turns more into serving the individual members of the public.

## **Power Orientation:**

### **From Confiding Reporters to Sceptical Watchdogs**

Journalism plays a significant role in the functioning and credibility of democratic societies. According to Habermas (2006), journalism acts as an intermediary between the citizens and the power holders by informing citizens about decisions made, conveying information between the elites, reflecting public opinion, and monitoring decision-making systems. Nonetheless, journalism has become a dramatizing, moralistic, and moralizing force in the communication between systemic power and powerless individuals (Kunelius 2009).

In the first dimension of journalism's power orientation, the extremes are "consensus-seeking trust" and "confrontation based on doubt". In consensus-seeking trust, journalism regards the power holders as cooperative partners whose activities and motives are to be doubted only in exceptional situations (Hanitzsch 2007). In an asymmetrical power balance, journalists feel they need the information from powerful sources more than power holders need the media, and this arrangement makes journalism conformist and respectful. When journalism is based on confrontation and scepticism, power hold-



ers are seen as competitors who should be continually scrutinized (ibid.). Journalists believe that the establishment is more dependent on publicity than journalism is on the information offered by the power holders. This permits journalism to take chances and openly oppose authorities. The exercise of power was earlier depicted as taking care of common matters and serving the public interest, but nowadays it is interpreted as a game motivated by self-interest with decisions made for the benefit of some and to the detriment of others (Patterson & Seib 2005).

The second dimension tackles journalists' *own* role as power brokers. At one end of the dimension, journalists are passive observers, and at the other end, active interventionists. Journalists who have adopted the observer identity see themselves as independent information conveyors whose job description does not include meddling with events and issues but only reporting on them in a neutral and balanced manner (Westerståhl 1983, Hanitzsch 2007). In contrast, active interventionists cannot and will not take the back seat in the flow of events. Instead, they participate and engage in issues and promote a specific mission and particular values (Donsbach & Patterson 2004, Hanitzsch 2007).

The relationship with the establishment and social power (e.g. journalistic autonomy) has been a particularly sensitive issue in the professional ethos of journalists, and arguments about changes in this relationship form a key part of the change narratives of the profession (e.g. Pernaa & Railo 2006, Allern et al. 2012). The institutional division of labour in the high modern society was generally rather rigid: the role of the journalist was to report experts' and representatives' views to audience in an unbiased way. Furthermore, there were confidential and close relations between journalists and elite sources, and therefore, journalists treasured stability, impartiality, and harmony. It could be argued that not until the arrival of the liquid ethos could journalists perceive themselves as the watchdogs of power. Journalists still recognize that they have to convey information received from other institutions but, in addition, their aim is to expose hidden information, produce information independently, and interpret and even criticise the information offered to them. To sum up, journalists have begun to position themselves as a correction factor between power holders and citizens.

This general change can be illustrated, for instance, in the way Finnish journalists view their relationship to power holders. In her study on Finnish political journalists, Kantola (2012) identified three generational groups among political journalists – the “solid” moderns, the liquefying moderns, and the liquid moderns – each of which has a different emphasis in their professional ethos. The solid moderns view public life as something that needs to be guided and nurtured from above whereas the liquid moderns maintain an anti-institutional and revolutionary ethos. The liquefying moderns stand at the crossroads of solid and liquid ideals; they want to preserve the high status of journalism and they are detached from politics and citizens. According to Kantola, it is possible that with time, today's liquids will be incorporated into the system and they become tomorrow's solids.

## **Time Orientation:**

### **From Reactive Gatekeepers to Initiative Agenda-Setters**

Journalism is integrally related to time; it is involved in the day-to-day writing of history and giving meaning to the present. Timeliness has been considered as one of the

values by which news is chosen. The closer to the present an event or issue is, the more newsworthy it is. However, Ekecrantz (2001) reminded us that the past and the future also feature prominently in the news. This is true even in the era of online journalism (Barnhurst 2009).

The first dimension of journalism's orientation to time focuses on how connections are created between the past, present, and future (Ekecrantz & Olsson 1994). Journalists may orientate to the past by reporting events and speeches that have already happened, or they may orientate to the future by making predictions, wishes, promises, or demands (Välvirronen 2013). In journalism, it is also possible to focus on the present by not referencing the past or future. Different time orientations intermingle in journalists' mind set.

The second dimension is concerned with time management. The role of journalism as a time manager can range from a passive gatekeeper to an active agenda-setter. When journalists are gatekeepers, they adapt to the time set by other social actors. Sources take the initiative in providing information (Shoemaker et al. 2009). When journalists are agenda-setters, they determine the schedule for other actors in society. Journalists are not so dependent on the initiative of sources because they are able to produce scoops and other exclusive stories and to release them at their own pace (Schultz 2007).

In respect to time orientation, journalism has turned from the past more toward the future, combining this general orientation to a more active role in setting the public agenda (Ekecrantz 2001; Kunelius 2009). Journalists of the high modern era orientated to the past by asking what had happened and what had been said. The endeavour in the profession was to avoid speculation and to maintain trustworthiness even at the cost of speed. Journalists of the liquid modern era, in contrast, orientate to the present and future by asking what is happening now and what will happen next. Journalists are in fierce competition to be the best foreteller and to be the first to break the news, even at the expense of credibility.

The link between time orientation and agenda-setting is illustrated, for instance, in a book written by a long time editor-in-chief, Pietilä (2007). In his analysis, drawing from his own experience, he likens earlier periods into "keeping a daily log of public life". Journalists mostly followed the rhythm of public institutions and their agenda. In a mediated, liquid modern society, the situation is reversed; institutions and individuals have to adapt to an arrangement in which journalists determine the timetable for the rest of us. Combine this change to the increasing intensity of time and "real time" news competition, and you begin to see how journalists have at the same time taken *more* control of time but destabilized their potential to create a sustained, substantial news agenda.

## **Ethics Orientation:**

### **From Dutiful Self-Regulators to Circumspect Individuals**

In democratic societies, freedom of speech is considered a fundamental precondition for journalism. On the other hand, McQuail (2005) points out that journalists are expected to use their freedom responsibly and to serve the public interest by their actions. The tension between freedom of speech and social responsibility is an issue that journalists must reconcile themselves.

The extremes of the first dimension of journalism's orientation to ethics are deontology and consequentialism. Telling the truth has been considered the most fundamental



duty of journalism. The journalist who applies deontological ethics collects and publishes facts relevant to the truth without regard for the consequences of publication (Merrill 1997). In diametric opposition, consequentialism is based on the evaluation of the consequences of action: the right action brings about positive effects and the wrong action, negative effects. The aim is to maximise social good, benefits, and happiness and conversely to minimise damages and unhappiness (ibid.). In journalism, consequentialism is also applied in such a way that truth can be sidestepped if revealing it can be expected to produce negative effects.

The second dimension is based on how moral rules are understood. The standpoint that stresses the relativity of rules privileges the individual's own judgment; overarching rules are not considered desirable or even possible (Keeble 2009). The ethics of relativistic journalism also highlight the uniqueness of situations, owing to which the professional ethical rules can only be general and will always require case-specific applications (Merrill & Odell 1983). The perspective that supports the universality of rules holds that the best result is achieved by committing to common moral rules (Keeble 2009). The universalistic ethics of journalism consider that professional ethical rules apply regardless of the situation (Hanitzsch 2007).

While it is noteworthy that changes in all the key elements mentioned above are far from simple and one-directional, the case of ethics is a particularly complex one (e.g. Ekström and Nohrstedt 1996, Merrill 1997). One can well argue that the ethical starting point of high modern journalism was the duty to report the truth. This moral emphasis was due to a professional ethos dominated by the values of objectivity, gate-keeping, and the detached role of an observer. The ethics of liquid modern journalism, in turn, is flexible and almost mercurial. Even though journalists still formally maintain their duty to tell the truth, today, much greater consideration is given to the *consequences* of publishing the truth. The bond between journalism and truth is also more publicly relativistic because of an ethos that stresses subjectivity, agenda-setting, and interventionism.

In all key elements, we see that the journalistic ethos is deeply anchored in the dominant social discourses (concerning the nature of knowledge, people, politics, etc.). For example, in the high modern era, Finnish journalists demonstrated their loyalty to power holders and ensured a public life that nurtured social consensus. Serving the power elite and practices of self-censorship were evident when issues of “national security” or “national interests” were at stake, particularly when covering Finnish-Soviet relations. In her analysis of this field, Lounasmeri (2013), for instance, points out that this emphasized consequentialism in Finnish journalism. Mäntylä (2008), in turn, has noted that, at the same time, Finnish journalists were building and solidifying their professional code and self-regulation system, which was typical in a society where problems were presented and solved in a modernist manner by increased planning and regulation. On the one hand, then, “public interest” clearly carries less weight in the current, more liquid context of journalism and in the fragmented imagination of the social order. On the other hand, it would be a mistake to claim that ethics of consequences as such would be a new phenomenon. It has, perhaps, merely been selectively individualized.

### **Toward a More Multidimensional Narrative of Journalistic Change**

A narrative that explains social or institutional change becomes strong not only because it captures something essential about change but also because it serves the “interests” of

several stakeholders. The story of the *emergence* of high modern, professional journalism can be seen as an example of this: it helped journalists occupationally by offering them a distinct social standing and a rising social status; provided the backbone for commercial and public service journalism that wished to reach a large, socially heterogeneous population; and offered an effective distribution channel for an increasing amount of bureaucratic or administrative expert information.

The narrative from “high” modernity to a “liquid” one is a strong one, too. I have illustrated that the storyline from “high” to “liquid” offers a powerful framework in which to situate journalism and make sense of its changes. In this story, the core ideals of the high modern period were objectivity, public service, consensus production, gate-keeping, and recording of the (recent) past. These have been cast into question, and this is, in many ways, a fundamental and undeniable change in the landscape of journalism.

At the same time, I have tried to synthesize and elaborate some of the conceptual resources we have for developing a more nuanced framework of thinking about the change. While the strong storyline holds in many places, the analysis here also points to important complexities. First, we can identify complexities *inside* the fields formulated around key elements. For instance, the shift in thinking about knowledge – from something to be transmitted by journalism to something that is partly produced by journalists – can be seen both as a move from “high” to “liquid” (less trust to experts) and as a move toward higher modernity (increasing the professional self-reliance and autonomy of journalists).

Second, the *overall coherence* of the journalistic ethos seems to be more ambivalent in the liquid modern period that is still shaping up. It is not obvious yet how the values related to increasing subjectivity, more tailored consumer service, a more aggressive watchdog role, momentary active agenda-setting, and forecasting the future can be forged into a shared ethos for the profession. The future, in this respect, can also be a more fragmented one where one dominant professional ethos can no longer define proper, professional “journalism” – even at the level of ideals and values.

Thus, my claim at this point is that linear change is not the sole interpretation. The high modern ethos still has some hold on journalists’ actions even though the height of its reign in Finland was during the 1970s and 1980s. Correspondingly, the ideals of the liquid modern journalism have not formed overnight; the liquid modern ethos may have been predominant after the millennium, but liquid ideals had already emerged decades ago. What we are witnessing is a series of complex negotiations located in different kinds of key points of the professional ethos.

Strong narratives produce strong identities, which enhance the power of those who are identified in a powerful role in the stories. During the high modern period, the role of a journalist was seen through the lens of professionalism, which helped journalists to gain and defend a certain level of autonomy and the power to decide over some key aspect of the work. I have, in this article, proposed an analytic model that would help to locate, more specifically, the struggles and debates that are going on as journalistic professionalism is defined in a new way. This model of the core elements (or issues) of journalism’s professional ethos is useful in several ways. It serves as a theoretical framework against which different kinds of evidence (surveys, interviews, textual analysis) are set and in which their sometimes contradictory findings can also be related to each other. On the other hand, the model could help us to formulate our questions

better and in a more elaborated manner, perhaps focusing more on the contradictions and tensions between developments on different dimensions. In any case, this model serves as a reminder of the complexity of the ethos and the tensions it tries to negotiate into a relatively coherent professional identity and culture.

This model can also help to recognize that as journalists become adapted to increasingly reflexive and interactive practices, they can open up new opportunities for building their expertise and carving out spaces and moments of action through which they can better serve the purpose of their existence as a distinct institution. Journalism research that wishes to be a part of developing such a reflexive professional ethos should aim at telling more complex narratives about the ongoing shifts inside journalism.

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## Note

1. This conceptual discussion and analysis emerged from a long research project empirically focusing on changes in Finnish journalism. My characterizations and claims about journalism are anchored in an analysis of various kinds of materials, ranging from several surveys (main findings in English, see Heinonen 1998, Jyrkiäinen & Heinonen 2012) to dozens of qualitative research reports based on journalists' interviews (for an exhaustive literature list on these, see Koljonen 2013). I have also read through and analysed all Finnish textbooks used in professional education of journalists in this period. In addition, my conclusions are based on surveying (for the past 25 years) the public professional discussion of journalists themselves in different arenas, such as trade union papers, books (e.g. organizational histories, pamphlets) and self-reflections in scientific journals. I have also worked extensively on several project focusing on the way Finnish journalists cover crisis situations (Raittila et al. 2010, Koljonen et al. 2011, Väliaverronen et al. 2012, Koljonen 2013), where journalists themselves often discuss the changes of their profession and professionalism. Despite this wide ranging "field work", in this article I make no claims that my view of the changing professional ethos would be empirically more accurate than some earlier ones, many of which have been based on changes in political journalism (e.g. Aula 1991, Djerf-Pierre & Weibull 2008, Kantola 2011, 2012, Kunelius & Väliaverronen 2012).

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