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REFLECTIVE PRACTICES FOR FUTURE JOURNALISM: THE NEED, THE RESISTANCE AND THE WAY FORWARD

Timon Ramaker, Jan van der Stoep and Mark Deuze

In newsrooms journalists encounter numerous constraints accelerated by increasing technological and economic pressures. The complexity of the job and the need for (constant) innovation coupled with the rising call for transparency and accountability ask for journalists who "reflect-in-action". Newsroom ethnographies consistently suggest that journalists experience a gap between the wish for increased self-reflection and its actual practice. Additionally, both newsroom research and journalists' expressions in the trade press show significant resistance against reflection as being a largely academic exercise, or simply too time-consuming. We propose that considering reflection primarily from a learning perspective can overcome this resistance. Secondly, the article acknowledges that in order to enable professionals to fit reflection into their precarious practice, critical reflection should develop out of the practice itself. Reflection only makes sense if it starts from the sense of immediacy and autonomy within journalistic practice, recognises the constraints that journalists face and acknowledges the aversion among journalists against standardised protocols in their craft. Outlining the basic tenets of reflective practice, journalism's current precarity and the learning perspective, we propose further research in how informal reflective practices can enhance professional autonomy.

KEYWORDS ethics; journalism; reflection; reflective practice; accountability; informal learning; professional autonomy

Introduction

The professional practice of journalism is increasingly precarious and complex. Who are journalists in the blogosphere, and what are journalists to do on social media? Can professional journalism be distinguished from journalism made by amateurs, and should it be? How can quality journalism be safeguarded in a time of mass layoffs, corporate buyouts, managerial overhauls and casualisation of newswork? In this context, journalists (and schools of journalism) more often than not embrace entrepreneurialism, and a start-up culture emerges around the world (Deuze 2014; Naldi and Picard 2012; Sørensen 2008). In newsrooms journalists encounter numerous constraints accelerated by increasing technological (i.e. convergence) and economic (i.e. new business model) pressures. At the same time, public trust is waning, inspiring calls across the board for journalism and journalists to become more transparent and accountable (Groenhart and Bardoel 2012). The complexity of the job and the need for (constant) innovation coupled with the rising call for transparency ask for journalists who "know-in-action" and "reflect-in-action" (Schön 1983).

A critical lived reflective competence seems to be a problem for journalism. Ethnographic studies mention that journalists in newsrooms experience a gap between the

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wish for increased self-reflection and its actual practice (Buijs 2014; de Haan 2012). Additionally, both newsroom research and outcries of journalists in popular media show significant resistance against reflection as being "too academic", rational or just too time-consuming (Buijs 2014; de Haan 2012; Groenhart 2013). We propose that considering reflection from primarily a learning perspective can overcome this resistance and would enable professionals to fit reflection into their precarious practice. Second, we acknowledge that in order to be of value for journalism, reflective practices should fit the journalistic context and as such develop out of the practice itself.

This contribution is inspired by the concept of the "reflective practitioner" (Schön 1983), a fundamental concept embraced by journalism educators around the world (Deuze 2006; Sheridan Burns 2013). Here we explore the meaning of reflection in relation to pervasive theories about journalistic practices, ethics and journalism as a social system (Shoemaker and Reese 1996, 2014). We do not stop at recognising that reflection as deliberate conscious behaviour is under pressure in the reality of journalistic work, but seek to push the possibilities of developing reflective learning practices within the precarious professional environment of contemporary news production.

The Dutch Jayson Blair

A few days before Christmas 2014, *Trouw*, one of the smaller quality newspapers in the Netherlands, published the outcome of an internal investigation on one of its editors (Myjer and Smit 2014). *Trouw*, a newspaper that started in the resistance movement during the Second World War ("*trouw*" is the Dutch word for "loyal, faithful"), withdrew 126 articles by the dismissed staff reporter Perdiep Ramesar, because of the non-traceability of his sources about, for example, a so-called "Sharia-triangle" in the town of The Hague, seat of the Dutch national parliament and International Court of Justice. In the report of the investigating committee, questions were phrased about individual behaviour, both of Ramesar and of colleagues not asking critical questions; about the editorial culture, not encouraging feedback or counter speech; and about leadership, characterised by inadequate coaching and lack of oversight. *Trouw* was praised for its transparency by publishing the entire report on its website.[1] This case both feeds and is testament to the rising call for accountable and reflective journalism in society and the academic world (Peters and Broersma 2013). As a response to the Ramesar crisis, Hans Laroes, president of the Netherlands Press Council, concluded that "journalism is not open enough for criticism and in its internal debate—if there is room for any at all—insufficiently professional".[2]

The call for an accountable press and the connected crisis of trust (Brants 2013) is not the only reason for paying attention to reflective practices. Reflective practitioners are a necessity because the practice of journalism is increasingly complex. The flexibilisation and casualisation of journalism as reflected in the ongoing transformation of the labour market and the working arrangements for journalists make individual journalists increasingly responsible for their own professional development (de Jong 2012). The wider socio-cultural and technological changes in journalism make it necessary for journalists to permanently reflect on their changing position in "liquid" modernity (Bauman 2000), in terms of their career development, the evolution of their skill set and their professional norms and values. Bauman defines a liquid modern society as "a society in which the conditions under which its members act change faster than it takes the ways of acting to

consolidate into habits and routines" (2005, 1). In this precarious and constantly changing context, journalists are expected to be able to embrace a notion of enterprise in their sense of professional self, to collaborate and to innovate (Storey, Salaman, and Platman 2005). Journalists will, in addition to the traditional orientation on products, have to focus on the processes they work in[3]—as these tend to change faster than routines can set in—and encompass a contextual sensitivity. These developments call for reflective practitioners.

Reflection In and Outside Journalism Studies

The concepts of the "reflective practitioner" and "reflective practice" come from the philosopher Donald Schön (1931–2007), specifically his influential *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action* (Schön 1983). The work of Schön provides a foundational framework for this article. The concept of the "reflective practitioner" has been widely embraced by educators in journalism. In a recent introduction to journalism, Lynette Sheridan Burns uses the concept of the reflective practitioner as a starting point to guide "beginners through the thinking processes used by journalists to produce thoughtful, quality journalism" (2013, ix). In her work she focuses on deliberate "decision making in action" (2013, 34–47) in line with rational decision-making models in ethics (Painter-Morland 2011). More work has been done in the journalism education field on the concept of "reflective practice" (for example, Sheridan Burns 2004; Chapman and Papatheodorou 2004; Niblock 2007; Harcup 2011). Appropriating Schön's terminology, Glasser specifically suggests studying journalism can help students to transfer "knowing-in-action" into "reflection-in-action" (2006, 149). Overall, however, the work on reflection and reflective practice in journalism studies tends to be focused on formal education and to some extent the field of ethics, and not so much on the core journalistic practices of news gathering, selecting, editing and publishing itself.

Admittedly, reflection is a rather vague concept. In journalism studies it is not well defined and is often used as a synonym for evaluation, and as such tends to be mainly part of an ethical discourse. This contributes to resistance among practitioners, a tension described by de Haan (2012) as a paradox between professional autonomy and public responsibility. We think it is helpful to take a look at literature on adult learning and organisational studies to see reflection as more than evaluation and more than an instrument in an accountability system (Bertrand 2000, 2003). In this literature, reflection is primarily a learning activity. In this article we will explain how using this frame can help to discover anew the contribution of reflective practice to journalism—not as an alternative to the ethical discourse, but as a necessary supplement that helps to uncover a deeper sense of professional autonomy.

According to educational learning scholar Mittendorff (2014), in spite of the differences in the many definitions of reflection there is a common ground. Reflection starts with meaningful experience, which by being questioned leads to new insights and to new strategies for action. As such reflection is a way of seeking human competence broadly conceived. In this article we focus on professional reflection. In recent literature on professions, reflection is generally seen as playing a central role in what it means to be a professional as it concerns independent professional judgement (Geul 2010; Mey 2008; Noordegraaf 2007). Management consultant Harold Jarche articulates how in today's liquid modern context, reflection is increasingly important for the workplace as

there is a decrease in standardised work and an increase in customised creative work (Jarche 2014).

Besides a way to learn from experience, reflection can be seen as an instrument to integrate person, practice and theory (Korthagen and Vasalos 2010). Reflection thus plays an important role in the development of professional identity for media professionals in general, and newsworkers in particular (Ahva 2013; Deuze 2007; Nygren and Stigbrand 2013; Witschge and Nygren 2009).

Schön distinguishes "reflection-in-action" from "reflection-on-action". The first is a fast-paced, on-the-job, sense-seeking process. Geul (2010) calls this kind of reflection "immediate reflection" and describes this as an inquiry and interpretation process that takes place in an internal dialogue (2010, 27). "Reflection-on-action" means looking back at an experience after finishing the work in order to learn. Geul calls this "evaluative reflection". Reflection-on-action is not the same as evaluation, however. Evaluation can be a reflective practice but is not necessarily so. With Kinkhorst (2010) we distinguish reflection from evaluation by referring to the work of Argyris and Schön (1974), who make a distinction between single-loop and double-loop learning. In single-loop learning one evaluates the outcomes and consequences of behaviour in the light of professional norms on the basis of which one can decide to change behaviour. In double-loop learning one reflects on underlying judgements, values and frames, and as such this "critical reflection" (van Woerkom 2003) can help to recognise routine behaviour and open up the way for innovation. Geul (2010) also mentions a third kind of reflection: "meta-reflection", as reflecting on how one reflects. According to Geul, this form of reflection has been investigated the least but is of major importance for professional development. Distinguishing this last kind of reflection is helpful because it focuses attention on the fact that not all reflection is necessarily helpful or productive (Luken 2011; van Woerkom 2010).

The Anti-reflective Profession

Researching reflective practices in journalism is challenging because journalism, according to Shoemaker and Reese, "has not had a tradition of critical self-reflection, one of the hallmarks of a profession" (2014, 107). They even suggest journalism to be "The Anti-Reflective Profession" (2014, 217) and as such confirm the observation made by Hans Laroes in his response to the crisis at *Trouw*. "The problem of ethics in journalism", Glasser and Ettema (2008, 512) correspondingly argue, "is not the inability of journalists to know right from wrong but their inability to talk articulately and reflectively about it". They also mention a resistance among journalists to external criticism (2008, 527). Zelizer indeed has noted "the rather basic fact that journalists do not invite or appreciate criticism" (1993a, 81). A general resistance to systematic reflection among journalists was confirmed in our country, the Netherlands, in recent newsroom ethnographies by de Haan (2012), Groenhart (2013) and Buijs (2014).

Further research is necessary to understand why journalists often are sceptical about pleas for more reflection. One explanation could be that reflection, often understood as a rationalist activity (van Woerkom 2010), implies the necessity to stop the flow of work (Dreyfus and Dreyfus 2005), which does not suit the ideological character of newswork as characterised by speed and immediacy (Deuze 2005). Beyond the workflow, as one influential Dutch reporter replied on Dutch national radio to a presentation of the research on public

accountability by Groenhart (2013), "Journalism is a profession of pragmatists, not of philosophers and ethicists".[4] Journalists often refer to their "journalistic gut feeling" (Schultz 2007, 190), having to do more with intuition than conscious deliberation. There seems to be just no time nor space for reflection in real-time and real-life journalism. We want to take this critique seriously. Indeed, reflection should make sense and have a real contribution to journalistic practice. Another aspect could be that reflection, seen as a professional accountability instrument (Bertrand 2000, 2003), seems to contradict professional autonomy (de Haan 2012), another building block of the occupational ideology of journalism. Journalists rightly cherish their autonomy and protect the open status of the profession. What educators, scholars and critics (and to some extent publics) demand of journalism, then, seems at times to be in direct opposition to the way the profession gives meaning to itself. This does raise the question about the meaning of the concept of professional autonomy.

Perhaps we need to be more precise. In most newsroom studies, scholars do not generally witness a wholesale denial of the need for evaluation and reflection, but signal a gap between a prevalent ambition to be self-critical and reflective and a professional practice of not really being reflective because of the constraints of daily work routines and the culture of the journalistic profession:

> There appears […] to be a discrepancy between the stated aspiration for increased self-reflection and evaluation, and its actual practice. These professional accountability instruments are recognized and valued, but rarely used as such, which restrains them from being incorporated in the organization. (de Haan 2012, 153)

According to organisational scholars and psychologists Tannenbaum et al. (2010), reflection and self-awareness of developmental needs play a key element in workplace development. So, in the acknowledgement of the gap between reflection as professional aspiration and everyday reality, and by underlining the problematic character of this discrepancy, we have a good starting point in our search for (the possibility of) reflective practices.

The Reflective Practitioner as a Researcher

Having seen the importance of reflection, while recognising the sensitivities among journalists toward pleas for more reflective practices, what could sensible reflective practices in journalism look like? Let us start by looking at what Schön has in mind with his concept. In his book *The Reflective Practitioner*, Schön proposes reflection-in-action as an alternative to what he called technical professionalism. Reflective practitioners do not merely apply professional knowledge and skills as they are having "a reflective conversation with the situation" (1983, 76). Schön describes reflective practice as a professional capacity to reflect as "thinking on your feet" (1983, 54), so as to engage in a process of continuous learning.[5] He pictures the reflective practitioner as a researcher:

> The practitioner allows himself to experience surprise, puzzlement, or confusion in a situation which he finds uncertain or unique. He reflects on the phenomenon before him, and on the prior understandings which have been implicit in his behavior. He carries out an experiment which serves to generate both a new understanding of the phenomenon and a change in the situation. (Schön 1983, 68)

We argue that this learning perspective can be helpful to overcome the resistance in journalism to reflection. Reflection is not an externally imposed practice by ethicists,

politicians or academics, but a trait of professionals guarding the quality of their newswork. As described by de Haan (2012), reflection as public responsibility often is seen as being in tension with professional autonomy, but here we see that reflection is connected to journalistic core practices of asking relevant questions out of an attitude of curiosity and a critical search for truth. Reflection in a professional context can thus be considered to be an ongoing investigation of one's on-the-job experiences in order to learn and improve the quality of one's work. Seen as such, reflection helps to develop individual professional autonomy as it guards against stepping all too easily in line with newsroom routines and the culture of journalism more generally. Good reflective practice leads to new knowledge of professional practice, and as such is necessary for accountable and innovative professional behaviour, both individually as it can be in teams and organisations (Damen 2007; van Woerkom 2003).

The Importance of Contextualised Reflection

Contemporary literature on reflective practice says that reflection needs to be contextualised (Boud 2010). According to Boud, the place to start when looking for reflection practices is in the practice itself. Learning from recent reflection literature and partly agreeing with sceptics from the journalistic community, we acknowledge that reflective practice, if effective, should fit the characteristics of journalistic work. Imposing on journalists reflective practices developed in other contexts, such as intervision methods common in health and pedagogical contexts, is of little use. Suggesting that accountable decision-making needs to be rational—as is often suggested in handbooks on media ethics—is probably too idealistic for everyday journalistic practice.[6] Good reflective practices will have to be developed starting from the hectic practice itself.

Loosely referring to three core concepts from Schön's work—knowing-in-action, reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action—we will develop corresponding road signs guiding contextualised journalistic reflective practice, which we define as reflective practice working for journalists and contributing to the practice of journalism. In doing so we will relate reflection literature to cognitive psychology and pervasive theories in journalism studies. We think this will help to discuss the importance of reflective practice among journalists, because it takes sensitivities among journalists about reflection seriously. Furthermore, this framework will lead to proposals for further research.

Schön distinguishes knowing-in-action from reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. Knowing-in-action is the tacit knowledge (Polanyi 1967) the practitioner embodies. The practitioner more unconsciously than deliberately acts out professional knowledge and skills. Reflection-in-action happens when the practitioner in the work process recognises the uniqueness of this situation and tries to make sense of it. Reflection-on-action is the act of deliberately looking back on professional experience in order to learn from it. Table 1 presents an overview that we will develop further.

1. *Contextualised Reflective Practice in Journalism Starts with Acknowledging the Dominantly Tacit and Embodied Character of Journalistic Knowledge and Routines*

A plea for reflection does not mean a plea for some kind of semi-scientific journalism characterised by rational decision-making based on explicit and public knowledge. Journalistic practice is messy in its everyday, real-time, fast-paced contexts. As mentioned, Deuze

TABLE 1
Contextualised Reflective Practice

Contextualised reflective practice needs to …	Related to Schön's (1983) work	Other related concepts	Challenge
1. Acknowledge the tacit dimension of journalistic knowledge	Knowing-in-action	Theories-in-use (Argyris and Schön 1974)	Embracing the "messiness" of journalistic work instead of rationalizing journalistic decision-making, yet …
		Tacit knowledge (Polanyi 1967)	
		Embodied knowledge (Merleau-Ponty 2013)	
2. Connect to core intuitions of journalistic ideology	Reflection-in-action	Dual process theories in cognitive psychology (Evans 2008)	… making a commitment to lifelong learning, by …
3. Highlight the conversational structure of journalistic practice	Reflection-on-action	Journalists as an interpretative community (Zelizer 1993a, 1993b, 2010)	… recognising and strengthening informal learning in journalism

(2005) considers immediacy as a building block for the journalistic ideology. In the context of daily newswork, journalists have to make fast decisions. Schultz (2007), referring to the work of Bourdieu, writes about journalists as being proud of their journalistic gut feeling. Also, in ethnographical studies, decision-making in journalism is portrayed as having more to do with intuition and feeling than deliberate thinking and moral conversation.

It is not helpful, however, to frame this as a dilemma between rationality or feeling, reflection or intuition. Schön (1983) himself considers intuition important in professional work. In organisational studies, this is confirmed by Dreyfus and Dreyfus (2005). Schön notices that in both everyday life and workaday life we show ourselves to be knowledgeable in a way that we cannot describe in words. Not all of our thinking and deciding is rational, verbal and conscious. Referring to Michael Polanyi he writes: "Our knowing is tacit, implicit in our patterns of action and in our feel for the stuff with which we are dealing" (Schön 1983, 49). This is what Schön calls knowledge-in-action. "In his day–to-day practice", Schön writes about the professional, "he makes innumerable judgments of quality for which he cannot state adequate criteria, and he displays skills for which he cannot state the rules and procedures" (1983, 49–50). A professional is not applying rational knowledge but is embodying[7] knowledge and in "artistic, intuitive processes often unconsciously working out of this tacit knowledge" (1983, 49). Acknowledging this intuition as a sign of professional behaviour is an important starting point in our search for reflective journalism.[8] The defensive responses by journalists rightly call the importance of tacit knowledge into mind. Effective workday reflection is therefore not necessarily a cerebral rationalistic act; it involves the whole person and not just the mind (Korthagen 2005; Luken 2011).

One form of tacit knowledge is routinised behaviour. Journalism studies highlight the importance of news routines (Becker and Vlad 2009). Contextualising reflective practice in journalism can benefit from the rich discourse on routines and other constraints in journalism studies. Shoemaker and Reese (1996, 2014) propose routines to be one of the levels constraining journalistic work in their famous hierarchy of influences model. The observation that routines play an important role is remarkable. Schultz (2007) has observed the paradox that in the self-understanding of journalists the daily practice is experienced as hardly routinised. Every day seems different. For the ethnographer observing newswork, as she writes, this is not the case. Newswork is highly routinised. As Tuchman (1973) phrases it: everyday newswork is about "routinizing the unexpected". This paradox is explained by the insight that routines often are not consciously seen, but form and become embodied, tacit knowledge. They are, in words of Schön, "implicit in our patterns of action and in our feel for the stuff with which we are dealing" (1983, 49). The work of journalists, being characterised by "notions of speed, fast decision-making, hastiness, and working in accelerated real-time" (Deuze 2005, 449), needs embodied and often even automatic or unconscious behaviour. But there are situations in which routines need to be criticised. "Routines are a journalist's best friend, but can be its worst enemies" could be a saying that expresses the ambivalence of professional routines and highlights the importance of critical reflection.[9]

Dual process theories in cognitive psychology (Evans 2008) help us to understand the necessary interplay between construction and deconstruction of routines. Unconscious or automatic behaviour has recently been interpreted in dual process theories as a type of thinking as opposed to conscious or even reflective thinking. Kahneman (2011) has popularised the unconscious type as "fast thinking" as opposed to "slow thinking". Both types or systems have their advantages and disadvantages, in an ideal setting complementing each other. Reflection can be thus seen as slow thinking. The reflective practitioner deliberately takes slow thinking processes and outcomes as an object of investigation. This energy-intensive process provides reflective space in order to critically assess routines and possibly adjust routines or replace old routines by new ones. The dual process theory thus helps to overcome a dualism between intuition and reflection.

As organisational scholar Becker (2004) has noted, the discourse on routines is riddled with ambiguities. In journalism studies the concept is rather broad. Further research is necessary to see whether the importance of routines in journalistic practice and the interest in routines in journalism studies is related to the problematic character of a distinct journalistic body of knowledge and skills (Godkin 2008; Örnebring 2012), and to distinguish organisational routines from professional ethics. Having said this, from a learning perspective the concept of routines helps us to understand the prevalence of tacit, implicit knowledge and the need for deliberate reflective practice. Reflective practice could paradoxically be the non-procedural method journalists are looking for: journalists do not apply abstract standards and procedures but are reflective practitioners (Schön 1983), who possess the competence of independent judgement—the last considered by many authors to be characteristic of professional behaviour (Mey 2008, 97).[10] Thus seen, reflection is closely linked to professional autonomy, one of the key building blocks of a journalist's sense of self (Deuze 2005). This leads to the next road sign toward journalistic reflective practice.

2. *Contextualised Reflective Practice in Journalism is Connected to Journalistic Core Intuitions, because it Directs Existing Critical Competencies toward Journalistic Practice Itself*

In journalism studies, journalistic gut feeling is rightly analysed as tacit knowledge (Schultz 2007). That does not imply a static, almost gnostic have-it-or-have-it-not property of "true" journalists but something that can be developed and formed by more or less conscious deliberation. Schön elaborates his description of the reflective practitioner by describing the practitioner to not just know-in-action but also reflect-in-action. This reflection on knowing-in-action usually goes together with reflection on the matter at hand:

> There is some puzzling, or troubling, or interesting phenomenon with which the individual is trying to deal. As he tries to make sense of it, he also reflects on the understandings which have been implicit in his action, understandings which he surfaces, criticizes, restructures, and embodies in further action. (Schön 1983, 50)

He describes this in his book with the metaphor of having a reflective conversation with the situation. "Practitioners have built up a repertoire of examples, images and understandings" (Schön 1983, 138). "The familiar situation functions as a precedent, or a metaphor, or … an exemplar for the unfamiliar one" (1983, 138). This process can be unconscious, but the inquirer may reflect on the similarities and differences he has perceived or enacted (1983, 139).[11]

Reflective practice in journalism can be contextualised by its connection to curiosity and critical discernment as journalistic core intuitions. A reflective practitioner is questioning his or her knowing-in-action and professional behaviour in order to make sense of the situation. The reflective practitioner is not just reflecting on himself or herself (emotions, attitude, behaviour), but also on used routines and constraints from the wider context. This reflective learning is utterly important within the increasingly changing context of newswork.

In the mentioned recent research of Dutch scholars de Haan (2012), Goenhart (2013) and Buijs (2014), journalists regularly mention workload and other constraints as explanations or excuses for non-professional behaviour. We suspect journalists can be more active in this respect. They are no—and would not like to see themselves as—puppets on the string of constraints. Constraints are not unique for journalism—all professions have to cope with constraints. One could say that being able to deal with constraints in an agential way is part of what makes one a more competent and autonomous professional.[12]

Recent developments in practice theory (Nicolini 2012) help us to see the non-deterministic character of constraints. Constraints are not just restricting but also have the dimension of being constitutive of a practice. Without constraints the world of practice would not exist. Furthermore, constraints are not independent of human acts. Paraphrasing Giddens (1979): structure shapes and is being shaped by practices.

Although meant as a hermeneutical and analytical tool for researchers first (Shoemaker and Reese 2014, 240 and 242), the hierarchy of influences model (Reese 2001) can be of practical use in conceptualising the experienced constraints of journalistic work.[13] The model, distinguishing factors of influence on the way media are made on the individual level, routine level, organisational level, social institutions level and social systems level,[14] can serve as a reflection tool individually or socially in editorial or inter-collegial discussions and as such enhance individual and organisational agency, contributing to a learning culture.

In the *Trouw* crisis (Myjer and Smit 2014), several explanations have been proposed by scholars and practitioners alike, varying from individual to structural explanations. The

hierarchy of influences model prevents reducing explanations to just one level. With Robertson, as quoted by Shoemaker and Reese (2014, 245), in spite of its name we do not interpret the model as a hierarchical top-down model. Robertson takes the model to be a more pluralistic approach to numerous influences.

Besides making them aware of multiple influences, the model could help practitioners to see tensions between several levels. Conflicts can, for instance, arise between the individual and the organisational level (an introvert journalist feels pressured by an aggressive organisational culture focused on scoops and breaking news) or between the routine and the organisational level (as in the case of *Trouw*, where the indifferent organisational culture conflicted with professional norms on the use of anonymous sources). This awareness and shared language opens up space for agency: reflection literature suggests that by acknowledging tensions, agency is enlarged to act in different ways. It opens up mental space to search for creative solutions.[15] Indeed, work pressure can never be an excuse for unprofessional work, as external *Trouw* investigator and journalism professor Jeroen Smit said in response to questions on his research.[16] Reflective journalists are not a plaything of constraints but enact professional autonomy.

3. *Contextualised Reflective Practice in Journalism Highlights the Existing, but Not Always Acknowledged, Conversational Structure in Journalistic Practice and Looks for Ways in which this Structure can be Catalytic for Reflective Practice*

Lastly, reflection as internal and external conversation (Meijers 2014)[17] suits the discursive nature of journalists as an interpretative community (Zelizer 1993a, 1993b, 2010).[18] Contextualising reflective practice means highlighting this conversational structure of journalism through encouraging informal and social learning. Above we focused on individual reflection, but in the last 20 years the insight has grown that good reflection has a strong social component (Boud 2010; Damen 2007). In the work of learning expert Etienne Wenger (1999), the importance of social learning has had an important ambassador. His work on the "community of practice" is referred to by Godkin (2008) as relevant for journalism, and it bears in mind the notion of "journalists as an interpretative community" that Zelizer has introduced in journalism studies (Zelizer 1993a, 1993b, 2010). She suggested this concept in 1993 as an alternative frame for the dominant "journalists as professionals" frame that overlooks various dimensions of journalistic practice, like the informal networking among reporters and practices of narrative and storytelling among reporters. She primarily tries to understand journalism as meaning-making:

> Journalists […] create community through discourse that proliferates in informal talks, professional meetings and trade reviews, memoirs, interview on talk shows, and media retrospectives. Through discourse, journalists create shared interpretations that make their professional lives meaningful. (Zelizer 1993a, 84)

A similar discursive approach is mentioned by Ahva (2013), who proposes a discursive journalism as a way of understanding professionalism. She refers to Aldridge and Evetts, who note that a discursive understanding of professionalism is a mechanism that helps the members of a profession to relate to and understand the changes that are taking place within the profession (Ahva 2013, 792).

We think that reflection as an internal and external dialogue suits the conversational structure of journalism as an interpretative community. In future research it would be good

to study how especially informal and incidental workplace learning can serve as a means to enlarge the reflective level of both individuals and organisations. In learning literature, informal learning is recognised as being more effective than formal learning (Eraut 2000; Tannenbaum et al. 2010). According to Tannenbaum et al., reflection is one of the central components of informal learning leading to workplace development (2010, 308 and 311–312). Having seen the messiness and constrained character of journalistic work, the discursive nature of journalism seems to point a way forward toward lean and mean reflective practices.

In future research it would be also good to relate reflective practice and other learning concepts to the ethical concepts of responsibility and accountability. In media ethics the concept of reflection is especially linked to professional accountability, as defined by Brants (2013), based on McQuail (2003), as voluntary actions by media professionals to act according to their journalistic principles and the self-regulatory structures that uphold them. According to Brants, professional accountability "is answering to your peers for actions, to those who are part of the profession or their organization" (2013, 22). Reflection is seen as one of the instruments to gain an accountable press (Bertrand 2000, 2003). Here we suggest a different way to view both accountability and reflection. Referring to the work of Zelizer (1993a, 1993b, 2010), we suggest understanding professional accountability as the "dynamic interaction between the parties involved" (de Haan and Bardoel 2012, 18) or even a discursive or even dialogical structure that establishes the legitimation of the journalistic professional in society (Painter-Morland 2007). In this approach, accountability is strongly connected to the professional virtue of responsibility. The reason for being accountable is not primarily an external one, such as answering critical questions of scholars or politicians, but an internal one connected to professional pride and journalistic core intuitions. A professional is someone who questions oneself primarily out of a sense of curiosity. It is exactly this professional trait that is related to reflective abilities.

Conclusion

The concepts of the "reflective practitioner" and "reflective practice" (Schön 1983) can be useful in contemporary journalism to cope with the dynamic between the need for accountability and innovation and the reality of a constraining context of journalistic work. Reflective journalists will not be surprised by pressures on professional autonomy and are willing to learn better ways to cope with these constraints. Organisational literature and literature on adult learning suggest that effective reflection starts from practice itself. Reflective practice only makes sense if it starts with journalistic ideology, including the sense of immediacy and autonomy (Deuze 2005), and accepts the reality of the constraining context and the connected aversion among many journalists against formal methodology and standardisation of often prized intuitive aspects in journalistic decision-making. Considering reflection from primarily a learning perspective can be an answer to the defensive reaction toward pleas for more reflection. This approach helps to contextualise reflection, or better said: to work on reflective practices starting from the reality of journalistic work. Therefore, having seen journalistic culture as being messy, constrained and conversational, we propose further research on how stimulating informal and incidental learning can serve as a means to enlarge the reflective level of both individuals and organisations (Eraut 2000).

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NOTES

1. *Trouw* is criticised, however, by among others journalism professor Piet Bakker (2014) for deleting the articles out of its archive instead of adding a disclaimer.
2. Translation from the original: "de journalistiek staat te weinig open voor kritiek en is in zijn interne discussies—als daar al ruimte voor is—onvoldoende professioneel." Accessed December 29, 2014. http://www.rvdj.nl/weblog/de-affaire-ramesar-en-de-journalistiek
3. Donsbach (2012) writes about process competence as one of the five competencies of journalism.
4. Nederlandse Publieke Omroep, Lunch! Radio 1, 1 July 2013.
5. In Schön's definition, reflective practice is seen as (a) a professional competence. This needs to be distinguished from (b) reflective practices as social practices in a profession and (c) reflective practices as exercises or assignments in educational context.
6. For a critical review of rational decision-making models in business ethics, see Painter-Morland (2011), who, discussing Derrida, mentions the importance of imagination and undecidability in ethics.
7. On embodied knowledge, see especially the work of the French phenomenologist Merleau-Ponty (2013, English translation).
8. Van Zoonen (1998) also mentions the legitimacy of intuition.
9. For an interesting parallel in aviation, see the post "Force of Habit". Accessed May 17, 2015. http://www.flightsafetyaustralia.com/2015/02/force-of-habit/
10. Ahva (2013) comes to a similar conclusion in her article on public journalism. Ahva thinks public journalism can be best understood from the viewpoint of professional reflexivity. Professional reflexivity refers to journalists' capacity for self-awareness; their ability to recognise influences and changes in their environment, alter the course of their actions and renegotiate their professional self-images as a result.
11. This can be a starting point for casuistry, a method for ethical decision-making (Boeyink and Borden 2010).
12. Compare newsroom research by Ryfe (2009a, 2009b) and Usher (2013) on structure and agency.
13. For research on perceived influences, see Hanitzsch et al. (2010).
14. Here we use the concepts from the revised 2014 edition of their book. In earlier editions the authors mention the individual level, routine level, organisational level, extra-media level and ideology level.
15. In recent research by Stefano et al. (2014), reflection is shown to improve performance. They focus on the role of enlarged self-efficacy as an explanation of their findings.
16. "Onderzoekscommissie: 'We kregen vanaf het begin carte-blanche'" *Trouw*, December 20, 2014.
17. For reflection as an internal and external dialogue, see Meijers (2014) inspired by the dialogical self-theory of psychologist Hermans (Hermans and Hermans-Konopka 2010). Geul (2010, 26–37) focuses on the internal dialogue. He considers himself to be part of the psychological tradition in professionalism studies, starting with Schön (Geul 2010, 17).
18. Zelizer writes interchangeably about "journalists as interpretive communities" and "journalists as an interpretative community". In 2010 she wrote about "journalists as members

of interpretive communities" and as such rightly indicating a pluriformity of cultures and quality standards (Buijs 2014, 23–39) within journalism.

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