Journalism – neo-modern and deliberative
An alternative journalistic approach

Flemming Svith

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Abstract
In recent years in literature, journalism in Western countries is considered on a downfall due to digital technologies, the corporate structure of news media and the project of the profession of journalism itself. Despite attempts by scholars and the journalistic profession, the journalistic gab towards society and democracy still exists. Paraphrasing scholarly work, the idea of this paper is simple: I propose a new journalistic approach, called Analytical Journalism, which adds to representations of reality in news discourse by nuancing dominating frames on a specific issue. Hence, the story is the best obtainable deliberative input – both in terms of existing reality representations, the practice of journalism and the contingent nature of reality.

1. Introduction

The starting point of this paper is a concern grounded in the literature about the future of

journalism.[1] Some of these concerns can be for journalism itself or the occupational

possibilities for new generations of journalists. Other concerns are directed towards the

effects - intended or unintended - of journalism on society, democracy or individuals.

Journalism seems to have lost its raison d'etre from the 20th century, when journalism

established itself as a commodity, which was not only valuable to the individual citizen's

welfare, but also necessary for the healthy of society. By the daily portraying of social reality,

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[1] E.g. Anderson, Bell and Shirky, 2012; Hirst, 2011; Mancini, 2013; McChesney & Pickard, 2011; Peters & Broersma, 2013; Ryfe, 2012; Sturgis, 2012; Zelizer, 2009.

journalism was the glue that bound the pieces of society together. During the "*twentieth century, journalism succeeded in creating an information monopoly because it controlled the distribution channels for news, advertisements and other current information. This obviously has changed.*" (Broersma & Peters, 2013: 4). This paper recognizes, at least in Western societies a time period called the "*golden age of journalism*" (Mancini, 2013) has passed.

It is no longer obvious that journalism as a profession occupies a central societal position by addressing problems with uncontrollable rulers, ignorant citizens and the shaping of communities and society. But - if the assumption persists that journalism still plays a role in the functional differentiation of society, there is a call for responses. This paper takes on this request for normative guidelines for journalism by proposing a journalistic approach, called Analytical Journalism,[2] which is based on substantive research in various scholarly traditions as political science, sociology, pragmatic communication, rhetoric, journalism and media studies.

This analytical journalism approach addresses two interrelated concerns regarding journalism raised in literature, which of course on a general level not are dealing with nuances, variation or specific cases.[3] The first concern relates to the societal function of journalism, which mainly is related to democracy (Zelizer, 2004 & 2012), but also to culture and other aspects of society and the lives of individuals. Journalism in this perspective is understood as an expert system in the division of labor in modern society, whose functions in the latest decades are challenged by multiple factors. Much focus are on external factors, such as the internet, which undermines the monopoly of news media to the public, and where

[2] The notion of Analytical journalism is not mentioned as a key concept in journalism studies (Franklin et al., 2005) and at Wikipedia an initial entry was made in 2011 (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Analytic_journalism) by our first international class in Analytical Journalism (http://mundusjournalism.com/).

[3] This implies that there may well be a journalistic practice that resembles the proposed approach and even follows the same objective and strategies. However, to my knowledge no coherent approach has been proposed similar to the one made in this paper.

people in part are informed through their connections in social media; or as the professionalized elite communication blurring the line between propaganda and journalism, or as the strengthening in media of commercial (Witschge, 2013: 171) or partisan values.

The second concern relates to the attributes of the journalistic profession. While the paradigm of post modernism since the 1970s affected the understanding and practice of most social and human sciences, philosophy and art, now the high modernism of journalism is undermined (Bogaerts & Carpentier, 2013: 61), which both devaluate the importance of journalists as gatekeepers transmitting more or less available information (Mensing, 2011), and expose the epistemology of journalism as "*naive realism of journalism with its insistence on objective facts*" (Carey, 2006/1986: 314), the notion of objectivism as narrowing the insights of journalism (Cunningham, 2003) and news articles "*as self-enclosed narratives that reflect reality*" (Bogaerts & Carpentier, 2013: 66). Hence, both external and internal factors explain "the crisis" of journalism. In a Weberian sociological perspective of professions this can be described as a failure of the professional project of journalism.

If professions are collective social actors with a collective intention with coherence and consistency, although the "*goals and strategies pursued by a given group are not entirely clear or deliberate for all the members.*" (Sarfatti Larson in Schudson & Anderson, 2009: 90), then the proposed Analytical Journalism is to reorient the professional project of journalism, hence affecting the development of democracy, society and culture in the coming decades.

This paper consists of four more sections. It proceeds with an argument, sketching out the functional limitedness of traditional journalism, i.e. objectivistic news journalism and investigative journalism, regarding society and democracy, pointing to a need for journalism with deliberative functions. Then follows an argument, outlining the simplicity of the epistemology of traditional journalism, it suggest a journalistic practice in representation of

reality, which is guided by analytical concepts embedded in current theory. Subsequently, the objective and the strategy of analytical journalism are defined. This paper concludes with a discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of analytical journalism.

2. The deliberative gap

This section argues that mainstream journalism favors some aspects of society and democracy and discriminate others, hence not fostering an informed public. My argument concerns democracy, but applies as well areas of society beyond the political relationship between government and people, because the interventions of journalism in the political field have much in common with interventions in the economical, social or cultural fields.

Journalism and democracy are regarded as two sides of the same coin by scholars of politics, communication and media (e.g. Adam & Clark, 2006; Ekström, 2002; Zelizer, 2004) and by the practitioners of journalism as well (e.g. Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001). At least in the Western societies, the relationship between journalism and democracy has been conceptualized as mutual conditioning factors, so democracy is regarded as the formal principles for freedom of expression, press freedom and the independence of journalism. Also, journalism is regarded to address the problems with uncontrollable rulers and ignorant citizens as a fourth estate of power and informer of current issues. This is more or less common knowledge. The simplicity of this relation between democracy and journalism has recently been questioned (Anderson, 2007; Strömbach, 2005; Zelizer, 2012). However, there is still a gap in literature regarding the journalism/democracy nexus. By elaborating the norms of journalism in the light of the deliberate aspects of democracy, I suggest a role for journalists as deliberate agents compared to metaphors as news hunter, watchdog, rescue dog, moderator, etc.

Most radically, Zelizer suggests a "*retirement*" of the concept of democracy as a way to understand journalism (Zelizer, 2012: 1). She claims that misunderstandings of "*both the key terms in the journalism/democracy nexus – journalism and democracy – has undermined the capacity of journalism scholars to speak reliably about the world of journalism practice.*" (ibid.: 11). Her argument is that journalism is measured by a set of external parameters derived from democracy, which does not capture the diversity of journalism. However, besides maybe avant-garde poetry or mathematics, journalism as most other fields is more the mean to an end than the end in itself. It follows, journalism serves something external to the field of journalism, and to inform individuals to citizens seem as one unavoidable parameter in Western societies. Hence, the problem of the journalism/democracy nexus is not the relation in itself, but as pointed out by Strömbäck (2005) the simplicity in the literature on this issue.

Strömbäck (2005) argues that normative standards of journalism must be deduced from a more complex understanding of democracy and hence journalism. Firstly, he identifies four normative models of democracy: procedural democracy, competitive democracy, participatory democracy and deliberative democracy; secondly he specifies four sets of norms for journalism adjusted to these democratic models.

On one side, these four set of norms for journalism contain a considerably overlap and on the other side, some norms are in opposition to each other, c.f. the focus in journalism at the strategy of politicians, which is in accordance with the competition model and the focus on politicians actors but in opposition to the deliberate model and the need for political substance (Strömbäck, 2005: 342).

I agree with Strömbäck in the need to nuance the relation between journalism and democracy (and society in general), but to improve our understanding of the journalism/democracy nexus, I will present a different model of the deliberative democracy

and deduce more analytically distinct categories of journalistic norms than Strömbäck (2005). Also, I will compare these norms to scholarly research on journalism showing an uneven focus from journalism on different aspects of liberal democracy.

Regarding the deliberative democracy, Strömbäck lists the following journalistic norms: "*Act for inclusive discussions; mobilize citizens' interest, engagement and participation in public discussions; link discussants to each other; foster public discussions characterized by rationality, impartiality, intellectual honesty and equality*" (ibid.: 341). This paragraph shows how Strömbäck like others scholars (e.g. Romano, 2010a) blurs the analytical lines between especially the participatory and deliberative forms of democracy, because only the last paragraph connects to the deliberative aspect, while the other paragraphs connect to the participatory aspect of democracy.

This blurring dates back to the Lippmann-Dewey dispute in the 1920s over the role of citizens in the public debate (see Allan, 2010). Being on the Dewey-site, Strömbäck builds on the assumption of the existence of agents, who can secure deliberation. Journalist then, must provide an arena for these agents with strong arguments and identify those who can advance the discussion, and not give most attention to those with most resources or the harshest criticism (Strömbäck, 2005: 340-341). This places journalists in a transmitter role, occupied by journalists in traditional journalism. In contrast, I will highlight a producer role for journalists in analytical journalism approach.

Furthermore, building on a Habermasian ideal of a domination free communication in public discourse, Strömbäck's norms for a deliberative oriented journalism seem fruitless, as Anderson's remarks to Strömbäck's norms indicate: "[t]*he final model, deliberative democracy, moves a little too far into the theoretical world and away from the reality of everyday life to be considered as a practical alternative here. It assumes a degree of rationality, impartiality and*

deliberative discussions among all sections of the public and their representatives that is unlikely to be realized in an imperfect world." (Anderson, 2007: 47).

In this paper, I will highlight a practical starting point rather than an idealistic one, by recognizing that power and resources to influence the public discourse are unequally distributed in current societies. Then the question is, how can journalism contribute to a more symmetric nature of public discussion, which favors a diversity of arguments to come forward in the public debate? The answer is substantive diversity in public discourse, i.e. diversity in representations of reality, which are a precondition for the public to play its intended role; i.e. ensuring relevant arguments actually to be are part of the public discussion. This internal diversity in the public content is needed for a dynamic public reasoning, which can contribute to the 'rationalization' of political problems (Loftager 2004: 47-48).

Following this, more distinctive norms for journalism can be deduced. The competitive oriented journalism shall represent and control the representatives, their views and actions providing citizens with options to give mandate or to sanction; the participatory oriented journalism shall engage citizen in the public debate and decisions processes; finally the deliberative oriented journalism shall differentiate or nuance the representations of reality in public discourse as a precondition for relevant arguments.

Comparing these norms to how journalism is represented in literature it is obvious that journalism focuses most on competitive aspects of democracy, since *objectivistic news journalism* (Lawrence, 2010) report on the record of officeholders and the platforms of the political candidates and parties in accordance with the mandate model, while *investigative journalism* (de Burgh, 2000; van Eijk, 2005) acts as a watchdog or a burglar alarm sets the agenda in accordance with the sanction model (c.f. Strömbäck, 2005: 341). Less attention does the participatory aspect of democracy receive from journalism, although *public*

journalism (Bro, 2008; Romano, 2010) favors the agenda of citizens and mobilize the citizens' interest, engagement and participation in public life, and *citizen journalism* with user generated content (c.f. Strömbäck, 2005: 341). Finally, least attention does journalism give to the deliberative aspect of democracy. No specific tradition is to distinguish, although *interpretation journalism* (Schudson, 2005/2001) could be in this vein without necessarily having a deliberative intention or function.

In summary, there is a deficit of journalism oriented towards deliberation, and if a well functioning liberal democracy and society needs journalism to focus on competitive, participatory and deliberative aspects of societal processes and democracy, then this is an argument for more deliberative oriented journalism as analytical journalism.

3. The epistemological gap

In this section the focus will be on epistemology in traditional journalism and it's representation of reality. Based on literature, I argue that traditional journalism limits the repertoire of relevant questions to explore reality and to create knowledge; hence traditional journalism is insufficient to strengthening an informed public understanding. I order to respond to these concerns in the scholarly discourse on journalism; I suggest maintaining the enlightenment as an effort to improve understanding of society (disapproving relativism) and at the same time recognizing the contingency of reality and the absence of an absolute and factual truth.

Although it is nearly three decades since Carey (2006/1986) made his statement about the naive realism of journalism and its search for objective facts, objectivity in a high modernity fashion is still a dominating part of contemporary journalistic roles in many countries (Weaver & Willnat, 2012: 544). Balancing conflicting statements from sources

without regard to truth (Cunningham, 2003), *"news organizations routinize objectivity by getting their stories and sound bites from the most powerful and available sources first, "balancing" the views of the leaders of one political party against those of the other"* (Lawrence, 2010: 283). When news organizations choose how to package their stories in understandable ways, they juggle remaining faithful to the frames used by their sources with simultaneously accounting for news values (e.g., "balanced" coverage), and sometimes injecting their own unique perspectives. (Druckman, 2010: xiii).

The weakness of this approach has been highlighted in scholarly research, as "*powerful players devote massive resources to advancing their interests precisely by imposing such patterns on mediated communications*" (Entman, 2007: 164), and that powerful elite agents represent reality - as they wish reality shall look like, without regard to logic or contradictory facts - in a way that is believed (Ettema, 2009; Jones, 2009; Schudson, 2009).

While the modernism notion of objectivity in news journalism appears as an "*attitude, a capacity to and willingness to subordinate the views of the journalist to the voices of their sources*" (Schudson & Anderson, 2009: 99), in investigative journalism this appears as a search for a factual truth, as illustrated by a guide to investigative journalism: "*Conventional news reporting aims to create an objective image of the world as it is. Investigative reporting uses objectively true material – that is, facts that any reasonable observer would agree are true – toward the subjective goal of reforming the world.*" (Hunter & Hanson: 2011: 8) This positioning points to another key attribute of investigative journalism, which are "*unabashedly moralistic*" (Ettama & Glasser, 2006/1985: 138), or as illustrated by the guide: "*The reporter seeks to be fair and scrupulous toward the facts of the story, and on that basis may designate its victims, heroes and wrongdoers.*" (Hunter & Hanson: 2011: 9).

In spite of these intentional differences between news journalism and investigative journalism, they share the epistemological approach that reality is "*out there*" (Ettema & Glasser, 2006/1985: 137), which leads to search for "the core", " what is it really about" or "the truth" in a liquid or contingent reality. Hence, traditional journalism lacks understanding or insight (Cunningham, 2003); and "*there are not many who continue to believe that it has maintained its rationale and its power to hold authority to account.*" (Dawes, 2013: 8).

Or in the words of Broersma, "*it might be much harder, if not impossible, to unite the public under the regime of 'objective' truth'. Journalism has to adapt to this new reality, and to rethink its fundamentals. Paradigm change might be not just adviseable but even necessary for journalism to retain its social function.*" (Broersma, 2013: 44).

In summery, there is a need for another epistemology in journalism based on a more complex understanding of reality, e.g. the concept of power: from being in the position of someone (the ruler or the villain) to symbolic power (c.f. Thompson, 2000: 98); or the concept of truth: from a factually, obvious truth to a double truth on both an objective and subjective level (c.f. Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1996/1992: 236). The point is that the practice of journalists should be informed by concepts imbedded in contemporary human and social theory.

4. The approach of Analytical Journalism

This section outlines the objective and the strategy divided into four parts for analytical journalism. As argued above, traditional journalism is characterized by a double weakness, one regarding the cognitive relation towards reality and one regarding the societal function of journalism, which are interconnected and interdependent. Hence, to propose an alternative journalistic approach must include coherent norms for both epistemology and societal function.

The objective of analytical journalism is to improve the basis for deliberation in society by increasing diversity in the public discourse regarding the representation of complex social issues. This assumption is based on a widespread perception in literature that the news discourse reflects the societal powers, due to powerful agents pursuing their own interest, which together with established institutions and structural factors creates a bias towards power (Entman, 2007). Many scholars of political news framing have criticized mainstream media for lacking thoughtful independence from the political actors who try to shape the news (Lawrence, 2010: 266). Hence with a focus on the subsequent public reasoning, analytical journalism seeks to foster deliberation by opposing the dominant representations in news discourse. While traditional news journalism is mainly reactive event-oriented towards the conditions preceding the presentation, analytical journalism is also oriented towards what succeeds its intervention, i.e. the impact of the journalistic products. As "*action Journalism*" (Bro, 2004: 84-85) analytical journalism serves the news discourse by analytically adding nuances to issue representations, subsequently stimulating thinking processes, argumentation and reasoning. With a paraphrase of the Watergate journalist Carl Bernstein (Bernstein, 1992: 22), analytical journalism is "the best obtainable deliberative input". Therefore, the news value is primary measured as the modification of a specific news discourse.

The strategy in analytical journalism contains four parts. First, analytical journalists construct oppositional or alternative frames to the dominant frames in news discourse in representing reality in their stories. "*Analysts have come to understand varying portrayals of issues and events as examples of framing.*" (Druckman, 2010: xiii). Frame is an analytical concept, which differs from the media production concept of angle by being imbedded in social science theory. Following Entmans operational and often quoted definition, framing is

"the process of culling a few elements of perceived reality and assembling a narrative that highlights connections among them to promote a particular interpretation. Fully developed frames typically perform four functions: problem definition, causal analysis, moral judgment, and remedy promotion." (Entman 2007: 164; see also Entman 1993: 52; Entman 2004; Entman, 2010, Entman, Matthes, & Pellicano, 2009).

Representing reality in their stories, journalists (either intentionally or unintentionally) promote or inhibit different positions or interests in society. The frames that journalists produce are discursive weapons, intervening in the symbolic power of news discourse. If the news discourse is dominated by few representations of specific issues as a result of unequal societal distribution of resources and power, hence narrowing public arguments and decisions, then analytical journalism reduces the bias of news discourse by nuancing or adding to the existing representations of this issue. Accordingly, the role of an analytical journalist is a *deliberative agent.*

Secondly, as any kind of expert system analytical journalism seeks legitimacy. While traditional journalism draws on the concept of modernist objectivity (Deuze, 2005; Tuchmann, 1972), the legitimacy of analytical journalism comes from the positioning as alternative or opposite frames to news discourse or "*the antipodal legitimacy*" (Poerksen, 2011/2006: 43). Journalism which reacts antipodally, i.e. representations directed against certainties or observable one-sidedness, obtains legitimacy from favoring deliberation. However, the legitimacy of analytical journalist derives only partly from the positioning of alternative frames in analytical journalism; another part comes the empirical grounding.

Third, analytical journalism seeks to inform deliberation by empirical grounded frames and explanations. This notion of empirical evidence does not conform to a uniform or "one true" representation of reality, because almost any nontrivial reality will be controversial and

susceptible to two or more framings (Entman, 2007: 166). This empirically grounding in analytical journalism distinguishes it from the analytical-advisory commentary (McNair, 1999: 65-66), which in a similar vein prefers to identify and dissect the previously unexplored angle on a current issue on the political agenda and to run against the pack. However, these commentaries are often baseless speculation and the closest journalism comes to theatre (ibid.: 63).

Fourth, analytical journalism is based on inferences conducted by the journalist in analyses - either inductive, deductive or abductive (Jensen, 2010: 132, 137). The dissemination in traditional journalism of other agent's information and knowledge is in analytical journalism replaced by production and dissemination of knowledge. These inferences are fact-informed explanations and arguments in representation of reality. Explanation is an analytical concept, informed by philosophy (Woodward, 2003), pragmatic-rhetorical theory (Faye, 2007) and social science theory (Gerring, 2005). Explanations of human action in contextual conditions are based on inference between the supposed explanans and the explanandum. Analytical journalism then follows a strategy similar to social science, where *"propositions are idea writing rather than subject writing. Propositions are assertions about topics – interpretational framings of factual observations."* (Lofland et al., 2006: 176-177). Such (relatively) independent analytical inferences in explanations made by the journalist provide the empirical basis for the construction of alternative frames in news discourse, because *"there is a terrifying multitude of possible answers to any "why" question [… The answers] are at best, explanatory claims, assertions* (Miles & Huberman, 1994: 143).

This proposed objective and strategy of analytical journalism - to represent reality in stories by constructing discourse-critical frames with explanations based on the journalist own analytical inferences – requests another journalistic identity than an identity based on

modernism objectivism, as "[a]*ctively constructing a complete counterframe - or several - in the absence of powerful leaders pushing those frames would likely strike many American journalists as unprofessional, even as "crusading" journalism that the profession strongly discourages.*" (Lawrence, 2010: 281).

By proposing analytical journalism, I redefine the professional project of journalism as an intentional intervention to qualify the public discourse in order to obtain the societal status and legitimacy necessary to perform its societal function in the coming decades.

5. Discussion

In a very short form, I will point out some weaknesses and strengths to analytical journalism. The attributes of the profession of journalism may weaken the possibility and quality of analytical journalism. To produce knowledge in the service of societal deliberation is neither favored by journalists "*gathering information less on the basis of expertise than of attitude, a capacity to and willingness to subordinate the views of the journalist to the voices of their sources*" (Schudson & Anderson, 2009: 99), nor by a profession lacking esoteric knowledge compared to other professions (Borden, 2007: 115). However, if production of knowledge depends on the methods applied, journalists can as well as other professionals produce knowledge during experimental practice (Schön, 1983; Svith, 2011) showing for instance an empirical basis for the claim that a phenomena is explained or caused by another phenomena (Miles & Huberman, 1994: 143).

The strength of the approach is to encourage journalism to greater independence (c.f. Lawrence, 2010: 266); to include the symbolic power of media in news discourse as well as other cultural, structural and institutional factors important for understanding current issues; and the more modest aim of creating diversity in news discourse instead of a domination free

communication in public discourse. Compared to investigative journalism, the aim of analytical journalism is at the same time more modest, to reform the public basis for decisions instead of seeking to change the positions of wrongdoers, and more ambitious, to question the representation in news discourse of more complex issues than often is exposed in investigative journalism. Thus, analytic journalism can supplement other journalistic approaches by favoring the deliberate approach to democracy and society as an answer to the "critical juncture" for journalism – both in education and practice.

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