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## MORE NEWS FOR LESS

### How the professional values of 24/7 journalism reshaped Norway's TV2 newsroom

Maria Konow Lund

*Using an ethnographic case study of the Newschannel at TV2 Norway, this article reveals ways in which the assembly-line mentality required by 24/7 news production nevertheless encourages reporters to negotiate a certain autonomy over their work and the routines required to produce it. By reorganizing its staffs use of time, space, and resources, TV2 was able to generate roughly 78 hours of "live" news coverage a day during the article's research period from 2007 to 2009. This production process is framed in terms of Schlesinger's "reactive" mode, here qualified as "reactive-active", because it allows for the possibility of broadcasting live and gathering news at the same time. The article also revisits the concept of "professionalism" with regard to a traditional broadcaster's implementation of a 24/7 news channel within its existing newsroom. As a result of this process, more news-and more content concerning that news- is produced more efficiently while the tenets of traditional journalism remain operative .*

KEYWORDS 24/7 journalism; ethnography; news production; professionalism

#### Introduction and Review of the Literature

In this article, I will look at the ways in which the news broadcaster TV2 Norway organizes production, uses technology in new ways, and creates a viable sense of urgency in its traditional and 24/7 content through new efficiencies in its presentation, particularly regarding "breaking news". I will show that TV2's Newschannel succeeds by becoming a "synergy desk" dedicated to repackaging content generated by the pre-existing departments that surround it. In terms of this desk's impact upon industry professionalism, both the company and its journalists will be seen to benefit when certain traditional journalistic freedoms are retained even as costs are reduced. I will be particularly interested in the *implementation* of 24/7 production at the Newschannel (and its impact upon the professional values of the newsroom). Though there are relatively few existing ethnographic studies of 24/7 news channels, several do confront the profound consequences of 24/7 news for "sit-down journalism" (Baisnee and Marchetti, 2006, p. 99) and "core journalistic values" (Aviles et al., 2004, p. 98). I will therefore begin my narrative with a review of the literature that supplies the background and context for this study.

Whether within a 24/7 context or not, journalists have always faced deadlines and a shortage of time, as researchers have amply documented (see, for example, Epstein, 1974; Gans, 2004 [1979]; Hampton, 2004; O rnebring, 2009; Schlesinger, 1978; Tuchman, 1969, 1978). Journalists have also adapted to new technologies and demands, according to the resources available to them and their organizations (Cushion and Lewis, 2010; Rantanen, 2009).<sup>1</sup> Stephen Cushion and Justin Lewis (2010, p. 4) note that research about 24/7 news "has often been consigned to . . . introductory chapter-length endeavours in undergraduate textbooks" and seldom extends to the work practices of journalism or the work conditions of journalists.<sup>2</sup> Lucy Kung-Schankleman explored the organizational culture and management of two 24/7 news broadcasters (CNN and BBC) in order to ascertain how culture affects strategy

in these organizations (2000, p. 3), but she focused on management rather than working journalists (2000, p. 223). Olivier Baisnee and Dominique Marchetti, on the other hand, did examine everyday 24/7 news production practices at Euronews, drawing upon ethnography and interviews to explore "the characteristics of the concrete organization of the new division of journalistic work, such as its designs for processing and producing just-in-time news, and how it tailors its product for a transnational audience" (2006, p. 99). Their conclusions anticipate my own: "'Sit-down' journalism and 'breaking news' . . . reinforce each other and further narrow the scope of the journalistic compass" (p. 117). Production costs were found to dictate some of these negotiations, and they will play a part in my argument here as well, as global 24/7 news channels struggle to be "the first with the latest" while cultivating the best practices and professional values of their journalists in an economical way.<sup>3</sup> Jose Alberto Garcia Aviles et al. drew upon fieldwork and interviews to compare 24/7 news production in Spain and Britain, looking in particular at the "impact of new technology on journalists' attitudes and practice in distinctive national and organizational contexts" (2004, p. 87). Like several other researchers (see Cottle and Ashton, 1999), they found that reporters welcomed the introduction of new technology into their daily routines but expressed concerns about "the attrition of core journalistic values, as journalists become increasingly computer-bound 'mouse monkeys' required to trade accuracy for immediacy in the speeded-up world of digital and 24-hour news" (Aviles et al., 2004, p. 87). Timothy Majoriebanks (2000) wonders, however, what choice journalists have when faced with the technological (and professional) demands of news production. Little further research has taken place specifically on the *implementation* of new practices in the journalistic workplace, forcing David Ryfe to conclude recently: "Little is known about how the routines and practices of news production are changing (if at all), how journalists understand these changes, and what all of this means for the production of news or the self-conception of journalists" (2011, p.165).

Ethnographic studies based upon direct observation and in-depth interviews are particularly useful for filling this gap, and Simon Cottle (2000, p. 19) even suggests that a "second wave" of news ethnographies is "needed to theoretically map and empirically explore the production of today's fast-changing and differentiated news ecology". Georgina Borne (2004) conducted considerable ethnographic fieldwork around traditional evening news production for her study of the BBC's adaptation to changes in technology, economic circumstances, efficiency, and organizational culture . Eric Klinenberg's ethnographic study even describes the evening news cycle as having "spun into an erratic and unending pattern" that he characterizes as a "news cyclone" (2005, p. 54). Klinenberg joins other researchers in observing that professional journalists deal with these new challenges by cultivating flexibility, particularly around "translating" their work across platforms, and he then pursues those technological synergies. Brent MacGregor devoted an early study (1997) to 24/7 news production according to its technological demands; Aviles et al. would coin the term "McLuhanism" for this general scholarly validation of "the medium is the message" (2004, p. 88). Cottle and Ashton's study (1999) also represents an early call to action regarding analyses of the relationship between the working journalist and the new means (and demands) of reporting news, particularly given what they saw as the persistence of traditional journalism "Despite the professional turmoil generated by the pressures and new working practices of multi-skilled, multi-media production, the news appears pretty much business as usual" (1999, p. 41).

My own ethnographic approach aims directly at the heart of the journalistic enterprise, particularly given the exploding trend toward producing "more news for less" in the 24/7

context of the new millennium. <sup>4</sup> I am particularly interested in how changing production practices impact upon journalistic autonomy, which Henrik Ornebring (2010a, p. 572) describes as, "the freedom to shape one's own work without being controlled by internal or external forces". What constitutes journalistic professionalism has changed as working conditions have changed, particularly with regard to originality versus standardization (Aldridge and Evetts, 2003; Deuze, 2007; Dickinson, 2007; Ursell, 2004). Gillian Ursell writes: "Centralized and increasingly pressurized news production arrangements push in the same direction, of routinization and standardization" (2004, p. 47). Yet this exact dynamic, and its impact upon journalists, has yet to be thoroughly investigated.

This article is based upon my field observation at TV2 Norway during a year (2007) that saw the establishment of a 24/7 news channel within their traditional broadcast newsroom; I followed up with more field observation and qualitative interviews over the subsequent three years. TV2 was the result of a 1992 political decision to launch a nationwide commercial television channel in Norway (Lund and Puijk, forthcoming). It was the only television broadcaster allowed to carry advertisements on the nationwide analogue terrestrial network (as a "hybrid channel"). <sup>5</sup> TV2 was also required to base itself on the west coast of Norway, in Bergen, though it had a news desk in Oslo as well.

The news was a vital part of TV2's overall attempt to challenge the television monopoly of its fellow Norwegian broadcaster, NRK; Ragnar Waldahl et al. observe, "When established, it was a condition that TV2 should produce alternative news to NRK's productions" (2006, p. 67). From its inception, then, TV2 was positioned to capitalize upon the newest trends in television news. TV2 news production has been further shaped by the larger shifts in television as a platform over the last decade, which include fragmentation, the development of niches, globalization and regionalization, and convergence among (and the arrival of more) platforms (Enli et al., 2006, p. 32). According to Aldridge and Evetts, the changes in the media industry (as elsewhere in the business world) have been profound in the wake of the digital revolution: "As in many industrial sectors the overarching motif has been intensification. In all news media, more news is being produced by the same number of people, whether it is for 24-hour rolling television bulletins or multi section newspapers" (2003, p. 559). This drive to do more with less complicates the practice (and "professionalism") of journalism, as Henrik Ornebring (2009) has found in his research and as we shall see here.

## **Notes on Methodology**

In his early call for a "second wave" of news ethnography, Simon Cottle notes, "Much more knowledge is required, for example, about processes of 'technological embedding' and the 'social (and professional) shaping' of news technologies in use by journalists as well the impact of these technological changes upon working practices, source involvement and news output" (2000, p. 33). This is a new scholarly goal in relation to earlier work: "'first wave' news ethnographies tend to theorize news as organizationally oriented, as a matter of bureaucratic routine and shared professional ideology, towards homogenization, standardization of form, and ideological conservatism" (2000, p. 31). Both the nature of public discourses and the textual complexities for journalists that are implicated by them have much larger parts, however, in the "representational play of power" (2000, p. 31).

In recent years, various researchers have met Cottle's demands for a renewed ethnographic approach (see Boczkowski, 2004; Domingo, 2006). Yet there are profound challenges to it: the fieldwork is *very* time consuming; the presence of a researcher often disturbs the routines of actors and informants; it is sometimes hard to capture information at

the most relevant time; there are often problems with accessing information about how actors are handling technology; and informants will sometimes regret their statements and withdraw them (Domingo, 2003, quoted in Paterson and Domingo, 2008, p. 5). When researching a working environment that is constantly in motion, it might also be tempting to *view* any given staff member's contribution as incidental, but, as Steen Steensen points out, these repeated or even contradictory statements, taken *over* time, form the building blocks of the best ethnographic narrative: "Only then could the complex nature of modern newsroom communication and work practice be 'decoded'" (2010, p. 707).

Another way to mitigate the potential distortion of the ethnographic "first impression" is to combine approaches that might include qualitative interviews, field observation, and document analysis. This article derives from six weeks of field observation and field interviews as well as 22 semi-structured qualitative interviews with staff members in different positions and professions. I mainly interviewed reporters but also met with editors, photographers, scriptwriters, "planners", and technical producers, among others. Due to the fact that the Newschannel is mostly desk based, my main informants were desk workers, but I also drew upon staff with other functions. I found a welcome coherence between the situations I observed in the field in 2007, 2008, and 2009 and the accounts I received from informants I selected to elaborate upon my data. My access to editorial meetings, internal seminars, and internal documents was *very good*,<sup>6</sup> and in fact produced almost too much information; I also had to overcome competing demands upon everyone's time as I sought answers to specific questions. Still, being there was crucial. It likewise helped that I already had a relationship with TV2, having worked there as a part-time journalist in the *very* early 1990s and later for a production company producing for TV2.

In the final stage of my research, I sent my journalist informants their quotations as well as my entire article for review. Very few had comments, indicating the accuracy and viability of going "behind the scenes" and using field observation as evidence for in-depth examinations (for other recent ethnographic efforts, see Erdal, 2008; Kjus, 2009; Krumsvik, 2009; Møller Heartly, 2011; Schultz, 2005).

### **Traditional TV2 News and the Implementation of a News Channel**

Early on, administrators at TV2 asked themselves how they could produce more news with less, even as a traditional commercial broadcaster, and took bold steps to standardize (and therefore industrialize) production (Trine Syvertsen, 1997, p. 228, notes that this is a common strategy among privately owned channels to boost returns). In the newsroom, these steps led inexorably to more live coverage, however, and then culminated in the aforementioned adoption of the 24/7 model already popularized by CNN and other breaking-news channels. Initially, audience prospects appeared dim for TV2's 24/7 Newschannel, which was available in 2007 only through online subscription or the digital terrestrial network (see Sjøvaag, 2009), but this soon changed. TV2 daily viewers increased from 120,000 people in 2007 to 275,000 in 2008; by 2009, the total approached 300,000 daily and the channel had become available to 70 percent of the population of Norway, thereby claiming an average of approximately 0.5 percent of the audience share within the overall television market (TV2 AS, 2008, p. 30).<sup>7</sup> Thanks to its progressive sense of content, the Newschannel also attracted particularly devoted viewers among politicians and people connected to the business sector—that is, those who benefited most from its constant updates (Medieundersøkelsen, 2009).<sup>8</sup>

Yet TV2 administrators did not want to commit *additional* resources to rolling news

coverage, hoping instead to accommodate its demands using the processes they already had in place. Among other things, they introduced a 30-minute news broadcast during "Breakfast TV" in the morning and sought new ways of generating more content from the existing evening news as well. It was a daunting prospect to go from producing 90 minutes of news programs and (at most) six hours of "live" content a day to producing 24/7 news and being "live" all the time (interview, News Director Ovre Helland, 9 April 2008). Administrators rose to this challenge by repurposing their existing newsdesk rather than expanding their stable of journalists. Six months along in the implementation of the Newschannel, there was already a working "synergy desk" in the Bergen newsroom (internal documents, 2006); in another six months, Oslo had one as well, and TV2 was on its way to producing "more news for less than ever" (see Syvertsen, 1997, p. 228). These synergy desks emphasized breaking news and live reports but also incorporated more formal anchor-driven programs in the evening; as a successor to CNN, then, TV2 perfected multitasking to succeed in its mission: "To produce a quantity [of news] in a cheaper way than what Norwegian broadcasting traditionally had done" (internal documents, 2006).<sup>9</sup>

### **The Structural Organization of "More for Less"**

Thus the 24/7 Newschannel basically consisted of a repurposed news desk in the middle of the pre-existing newsroom. This "hot desk", where news production itself took place, was staffed with one editor, two desk reporters, one reporter responsible for graphics, two producers, and two anchors. In Oslo, the hot desk was also shared with the economy news staff (one desk reporter/daytime anchor and one anchor/daytime editor), which distributed several programs through the Newschannel as well. A nearby "cold desk" served as a "research place" for two planners (who contacted potential guests, did background research, and suggested story topics and questions) and as a refuge for anchors to read updates and mail. From the beginning, the Newschannel was given a bare minimum of resources with which to find "new news" and told instead to gather what was needed content-wise from already-existing departments in the newsroom. These departments thus were tasked with feeding the Newschannel (whose priorities emphasized currency) as well as the traditional news programs (whose priorities emphasized depth).

### *Model*

The model schematizes the ways in which the Newschannel works within the traditional TV2 news production process, drawing from stories meant for the evening news as well as any breaking news. (The evening news at 6:30 and 9:00 pm runs on both the Newschannel and the main channel.)

The model (Figure 1) illustrates two distinct production processes: the "updating" process of the Newschannel and the "summarizing" process of the evening news. When I began my field observation in 2007, I saw immediately that the whole news day was defined by these two ongoing (and sometimes dueling) discussions, one concerning the daily agenda, where editorial staff reported about ongoing stories or events, and the other concerning more in-depth journalistic efforts. While the evening news is organized in a more traditional way, with reporters concentrating on telling one story at a time, and telling it well, 24/7 (or rolling) news is more "reactive", in the sense that "newsmen wait for things to happen, and then register their occurrence" (Schlesinger, 1978, p. 47). This results, of course, in less distinction among news items, which tend to be presented exclusively in terms of their newness or currency, not

their impact or consequences.

I found, however, that the TV2 Newschannel follows a process better characterized as "reactive-active", in that its new modes of organization, new applications of technology, and new emphasis upon speed not only respond to things quickly after they have happened but also respond to them *while* they happen. During field observation, I noted the staff's early uncertainty about filling a 24/7 broadcast. Later, however, everyone was surprised by *how much* content could be generated through the new synergistic production practices. For example, the Newschannel's daily-shift "live team" not only covered planned events but also produced content based upon ongoing situations, gathering facts while the story was unfolding rather than waiting for the advantages of hindsight. In this way the Newschannel represented both an outlet for content gathered by reporters working for the evening news and also an operating newsgathering system for other TV2 platforms, including its website.

This sense of immediacy in content resonates with the immediacy of the process that generates it, which we might call "live newsgathering". During the daytime, for example, the Newschannel team produces a lot of "live-on-tape" content by bringing

experts, politicians, and other relevant people to the studio or interviewing them "live on location", then uses excerpts of these interviews to bulk up the coverage and, in a sense, make news out of the coverage itself. TV2 was then able to market the "exclusivity" of its breaking news coverage (Volkmer, 1999, p. 138). The news editor at TV2 noted that the TV2 evening news content was seldom picked up by other media outlets when he first started there, but the Newschannel changed all of that:

The Newschannel has existed for nearly a year, and now it is nearly impossible to keep track of everywhere we are quoted. It has been an amazing growth in the number of quotes. Our experience is that other newsrooms are continuously observing the Newschannel and use it as a huge source for information. (Interview, News Editor Jan Ove Ars<Ether, 8 November 2007)

Thus TV2's "reactive-active" mode allows for the most effective news production, gathering and processing information in distinctive ways while promoting the channel as a whole.

Equally essential to producing more news for less is the reutilization of internal material, particularly since it is already well suited to the broadcaster in question: it was produced there in the first place, and it may well be exclusive, which has become more important in the hypercompetitive world of television news (see Schultz, 2005). The "media manager"-a huge hard disk where reporters download their digital raw material after returning from newsgathering on location - aids this reutilization.<sup>10</sup> Without this fount of raw material, which is accessible to most of the TV2 reporters in Oslo as well as Bergen, the Newschannel simply would not have enough stories. Other news content sources include an internal archive with moving news images; material from other, related departments, such as politics, domestic events, foreign affairs, and so on; and the content that is available from press agencies and exchange agreements with foreign media companies.

With the help of these multiple sources of content, the Newschannel lives up to its reputation as a "mini-version of CNN", as TV2 internal documents eagerly anticipated.<sup>11</sup> Perpetual coverage likewise allows for the possibility of news taking place during (or as part of) a given story; sometimes, world leaders will even communicate in real time via 24/7 news features (see MacGregor, 1997). While CNN works with breaking-news rotations, as KONG-Schankleman (2000) describes, TV2 combines this with the products generated by the existing evening newscasts as well. The repurposing of existing but variably topical content depends

upon good internal communication, particularly between reporters and the editors who produce their stories. Several daytime and evening editors told me that they depended upon evening-news reporters passing by the Newschannel desk and alerting them to ongoing topical stories. While it was not a requirement as such, reporters were generally willing to share their stories, when they remembered.<sup>12</sup> Internally, then, the process of newsgathering elides with the process of news production through this "reactive-active" mode.

### **"Long-lived News"**

One TV2 daytime editor I interviewed (23 April 2009) reported that he would watch the videotaped evening news from 9:00 pm before he left his house for work at 4:00 am, as well as scan two newspapers and listen to the news on the radio. The first news program takes place at 6:30 am, so the editor might begin with whatever was left over from the day before and use a brief strategy meeting with the desk reporter and the anchor on duty to answer two questions: What stories would be best to open with? What stories had the greatest potential to "live the longest" (an expression used by several informants)?

Perpetual coverage also sometimes means simply waiting around for incidents - preferably big incidents - to happen. In 2009, I noted the following in my field notes:

A daytime editor expresses his frustration at waiting. Today is what he calls a slim news day. "Oh, why can't a plane fall down?" he complains. He quickly became aware of being observed by me and explained that this was just a manner of desk-talk, typical of news desk humor everywhere. However, it was also an example of the frustration that is felt when very little actually happens but the news program still has to be produced, hours need to be filled, one way or another. (Field observation, April 2009)

Twenty-four-hour rolling news coverage seems to involve the random alternation of three production modes: (1) light news periods; (2) "average" news periods, which combine light news with some action-oriented news; and (3) breaking news periods. The sorts of incidents that characterize the latter mode might generate content for hours or even days on the Newschannel while likewise seeding coverage online at TV2.no and on more traditional programs such as the evening news. At these times the Newschannel, to an extent, stops repurposing other content and starts supplying content of its own to others in the TV2 organization. If something happens overnight, for example, Newschannel editors would capitalize on it throughout the following day, from as many angles as possible: "So you try to renew all the time. You try to find a guest, new angles, new information" (interview, desk reporter, 7 May 2009). This process of finding new angles, reshuffling content, and reordering presentation is nothing new; Philip Schlesinger described the same thing at the BBC in 1978 (1978, pp. 59- 61). One difference from the BBC back in the days of traditional news programs, however, is that the Newschannel turns on a dime as new things happen. One Newschannel daytime editor used a particularly compelling metaphor- they wait for the "monster" to turn up, and then they try to control it (interview, editor, 23 April 2009).

### *Renewing the News*

While waiting for that monster, however, the Newschannel must carry on with something. In this "news factory" context (Bantz et al., 1980), journalists and other news workers must act independently, cleverly, and efficiently to manufacture novelty of either subject or approach where there is none (see Evetts, 2003, p. 408). The system depends upon this journalistic initiative. The light -news mode is in fact reminiscent of the production of an

online newspaper, several informants told me: "On the news channel we often operate as if we were Web journalists, really. Like there's a new version coming, and then another version" (interview, editor, 13 May 2009). During light news periods, staff members will discuss ways to update the facts, renew angles, and nuance existing stories, sometimes in light of competitors' coverage. Suggestions typically vary depending upon particular areas of interest; an anchor with a special knowledge of the economy might suggest news about a recent financial crisis, while another might *favor* more material from foreign correspondents. There is considerable latitude in what gets done, if only because editors must continuously compose the next half hour's coverage. Anchors surf the Internet when they are not "*live*" and often suggest stories as well. These diverse sources of content create challenges for the researcher: in an early production study of traditional TV2 newsroom work practices, Gunnar Sand and Knut Helland note the difficulties of fully capturing the process of production when so many individuals can make such "a huge difference, and . . . influence prioritizing and processes, according to knowledge, values, sympathies, and dislikes" (1998, p. 83).

The way desk reporters at the Newschannel operate demonstrates the need for flexibility. Desk reporters are, for example, particularly important during light news periods, when they are given considerable latitude to work out these new angles . While traditional newsgathering implies that those reporters venture from the newsroom to the

outside world in search of content, TV2 Newschannel desk reporters do their light-news work *within* the newsroom. One Newschannel editor described their contributions to their own channel as well as the traditional daytime and evening news programs:

More often what happens is that the desk reporters sift through the feeds and then they say, "We *have* these three stories. Should we go with them?" ... Rarely do you have an editor with the capacity to go through *every* feed and then assign tasks to people [the way desk reporters do]. (Interview, editor, 13 May 2009)

The interaction among anchors, desk reporters, producers, and news editors demanded by the 24/7 Newschannel often results in better coverage of stories throughout TV2. I also noticed during my field observation that anchors could act as reporters as well; for example, at one point they gave a press-agency story (from the feed) new life through the information they collected by surfing the Internet in the studio or calling outside experts or guests during breaks or before their shift s.

### **Technology: Making Production Happen**

As we have seen, the TV2 Newschannel operates entirely within the existing newsroom, repurposing the content being generated around it at TV2 and monitoring outside sources for *even* more. While traditional news reporting at TV2 involves discussing ideas at an editorial meeting, doing research (and contacting sources), going out in the world to record the story, returning with the raw material, and editing the story, the Newschannel tends to edit more than it actually produces. In this context, technology becomes absolutely vital to its operations. Knut Helland attributes some of this change from "storytelling" to "reporting" (2001, pp. 243- 248) to the simplification of news- gathering enabled by technology (such as the satellite) . Henrik Ornebring privileges technology in his approach to the study of journalism as well: "It is argued that analyzing journalism as labor presents a way to address both the integration of technology in the everyday working practices of journalists, and the history of the inter-relations between journalism and technology" (2010b, pp. 57- 58; Ornebring points also to McNair, 1998 , p. 125 ; Negroponte, 1995 ; Pavlik, 2000, p. 229; and Welch, 2000, pp. 6- 7). Simon Cottle and Mark

Ashton caution against elevating technology beyond its economic, social, political, and cultural contexts, however (1999, p. 23; see also Bozckowski, 2004; Deuze, 2007). Ornebring agrees: "Technology is not a force in itself. It is adapted and implemented according to already existing value systems, and these value systems have cultural, social and economic roots" (2010, p. 68).

In the context of the Newschannel, technology is intended not to inhibit editorial solutions but to allow for more of them, by making access to content *simpler*. One obvious example is the aforementioned media hub for raw material; others include the editing programs used by desk reporters as well as various instant messaging platforms, such as Microsoft Messenger: Gaye Tuchman notes in her own study that reporters and editors "use instant messaging to communicate with one another--only sometimes they call out across the room [as well]" (2010, p. 2; see also Boczkowski, 2004). Staff members have even created their own software applications, especially designed to accommodate the need of the Newschannel to "do more with less". Along with "industrialization", then, comes innovation, which, according to Lucy Kung (2008, p. 149), tends to emerge from the challenges surrounding engineering and technology management. Felix Janszen (2000), p. 8) defines innovation as the "commercialization of something new"--we might say, then, that the Newschannel pursues the commercialization of something *news*. The TV2 software Mosart was created by TV2 technology staff in the fall of 2006 to make it possible to produce a studio-based news program with only one or two people. The program demonstrates the "reactive-active" value of simplifying a previously complicated process using technology (see also Epstein, 1974; Gans, 2004 [1979]; Tuchman, 1978) :

The point of departure is that TV is actually very simple. Why do we make it so complicated when it's so easy? We put together some elements, either live pictures from some source, or studio, or pre-produced, small stories, news stories and so on . . . And then we can choose different ways to go from one to the other, but that's the basic principle . And as long as one holds on to that, you have a starting point for automatizing it. (Interview, producer, 29 April 2009)

Along those lines, TV2 also acquired a portable transmitter called "Deng" that the Newschannel could use to go "live" from locations in larger cities, such as Oslo, Stavanger, or Trondheim, where there is equipment to forward the signal to TV2 (or to any other broadcaster that uses the device):

There are receivers around Oslo, making it possible for us to broadcast with very simple equipment from downtown. We don't have to drag along an entire satellite car from Oslo . . . And of course technology always moves forward, so at some point in the future I'm sure we'll be able to use the mobile net to broadcast directly,<sup>13</sup> and that would be a huge breakthrough from our perspective. (Interview, producer, 29 April 2009)

TV2's commitment of technological resources to the Newschannel indicates its desire to follow in the footsteps of CNN as well, along the lines drawn by Kung: "The concept of CNN was designed to exploit a number of simultaneous technological advances --cable television, communications satellites, suitcase-size satellite uplinks and handy cams- in order to reinvent the way news is produced and delivered" (2008, p. 160). TV2 also framed its technological innovation, of course, in terms of resource conservation and even the generation of profits.

### **Time Management: Realizing the "Reactive-active" Mode**

Mark Hampton (2004, p. 89) noted an industry interest in speed already in the eighteenth century, and Schlesinger reiterates this in 1978 : "News is 'hot' when it is most immediate. It is 'cold', and old, when it can no longer be used during the news day in

question" (1978, p. 87). He goes on to observe, in a chapter titled "A Stop-watch Culture", that immediacy has even become "a form of fetishism in which to be obsessional about time is to be professional in a way which newsmen have made peculiarly their own" (1978, p. 105). For the Newschannel, speed and efficiency generate exclusivity (as well as quantity), as I observed once in 2007:

The minister of finance was a guest in the studio of the Newschannel. The program being transmitted was the Newschannel's economy program. Suddenly the desk editor for the economy program gasps. A press release about a major stockbroker firm appeared on the news feed on her computer. She quickly ran over to the printer and picked up the paper with the information before she ran towards the studio, where the minister of finance was being interviewed. The rest of that day, this coverage was the main story. The minister's live statements became headline news also on the evening news at 18:30 and 21:00. (Field observation, 28 November 2007)

Thanks to the Newschannel's "synergy desk", both the story and the minister's (serendipitous) live reaction to it were swiftly repurposed as 24/7 rolling content and as a headline story on the evening broadcast. This content arose outside the normal production structures associated with the evening news, thanks to an editor who was positioned to react quickly and authoritatively to whatever came across her path. This type

of breaking news story, the "monster", generates exactly that atmosphere of drama that broadcasters have always coveted (Tuchman, 1978, p. 48) but seldom *generated*. One desk reporter coined the term "production journalism" for the flexibility associated with working for a 24/7 broadcast: "I produce nearly 50 stories a day. It is all about getting it out there ... Working for the Newschannel, I know it is all about getting something on air. As fast as possible" (interview, desk reporter, 26 November 2007).<sup>14</sup> At the Newschannel, what Olivier Baisnee and Dominique Marchetti (2006, p. 117) describe as the more passive content of "sit-down" journalism is complemented by the continuous search for both exclusivity and that which "appear[s] to be exclusive".<sup>15</sup> Journalistic autonomy proves to be crucial to this ongoing negotiation.

During the different phases of my research, I observed some of the consequences of this autonomy, particularly in the tensions that arose among those responsible for generating perpetual coverage (interview, technicians, 27 April 2009). Part of the journalists' autonomy involved an obligation to oversee (and, when necessary, discipline) themselves.<sup>16</sup> The ongoing requirement to produce more content with less resource via an intensive and continuous production mode demands a significant editorial adjustment, particularly around the lack of time to reflect or even communicate with others. Aldridge and Evetts (2003, p. 555) point to an "ideology that enables not only self-control but self-exploitation". This was a risk most journalists I encountered were willing to take, but sometimes, it became too much. At an editor's meeting on 21 April 2009, for example, an editor related the fact that he had eased the burden on his "exhausted staff" by re-running a "live" news bulletin at the very end of the shift. Although this incident represented a clear exception to the customary practice at the Newschannel (and it was promptly dealt with by management), the daytime editor had intended his action to represent a graphic argument for more resources, and his point was received.

## Concluding Remarks

If journalists fail consciously to balance what they demand of themselves and what the organization (and its management) demands of them, they will run the risk of "self-exploitation"; as we have seen, one productive coping strategy involves the cultivation of

professional flexibility *even* at the expense of depth or accuracy .<sup>17</sup> Through the development of competencies such as self-organization, multitasking, strategizing alternatives, and so on, journalists are able to *overcome* the lack of time and resources that can accompany 24/7 news production. Such *compensational production* is frequently invisible in the workflow but nevertheless results in a win- win situation for the empowered journalist and the management who claims credit for the results. In the end, the scarcer the resources, and the greater the standardization, the more important an *atmosphere* of journalistic autonomy becomes, particularly with regard to the journalist's sense of validation and self-motivation. Only further research will show how the work of repurposing news content will affect the quality of such journalism *over time* .

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## NOTES

1. Stephen Cushion and Justin Lewis's longitudinal content analyses conclude, among other things, that the breaking news mode is "becoming increasingly predictable and routine" (2009, p. 304).
2. Cushion and Lewis note that research on the Al Jazeera network has *even* focused on the impact of rolling news on military conflicts (see also Figenschou, 2010).
3. Ingrid Volkmer (1999, p. 138) notes the link between the fetishization of breaking news and consumers' demand for continuous coverage.
4. Editors and reporters frequently phrased their ultimate goal as "more for less" during my field observation.
5. According to Enli et al. (2006, p. 37), "hybrid channels" are either "privately or publicly owned, but ... have in common that they are financed by advertisement and committed to certain obligations concerning their distribution".
6. Internal TV2 seminars: news seminar, one day, Bergen, 4 May 2009 and 5 May 2009; seminar for daytime and evening-time editors at the news channel, first organized meeting, one day, Oslo, 21 April 2009; news seminar for all TV2 news staff, one day, Bergen, 14 January 2010. Internal TV2 documents: description of project, 29 May 2006; document for TV2 board, undated (oral statement that it is from 2006); presentation of the Newschannel, undated (oral statement that it is from 2006); memo on technology at the Newschannel, 14 August 2006.
7. This source includes TV2's annual accounts of programs, an internal analysis of the production process.
8. The study (University of Bergen) looks at how media develops from the perspective of the audience as well as the media organization.
9. While multitasking has long characterized the labor of the journalist, it is important to

distinguish between multitasking as an option for the individual, and multitasking as part of an industrialized process of production that extends throughout the newsroom.

10. The internal pooling of news content has long characterized TV production- Schlesinger (1978) describes the same thing at the BBC's internal news agency, the General News Service (GNS)-but with the advent of new technology, one person is now often the source of all of the "synergy".
11. Internal document, undated description of project, 2006. Several internal planning documents, as well as interviewees, also point to both CNN as well as the United Kingdom's Sky News as models for the TV2 Newschannel's division of newsgathering and news processing, and its emphasis on immediacy, among other things.
12. When I collected my data in both 2007 and 2009, Newschannel editors expressed concerns about missing stories because they were not told about them.
13. TV2 is able to do this now (2011), although the technique is still low quality.
14. This journalist clarified these comments for me a few years later: "It is not so much stories as small video clips. The anchors in the studio comment and the video clip is broadcast while the anchor speaks. But as the reporter says: we write text as well as edit. What I mean by 50 stories is that there are 50 points in the program. It may seem like a lot, but during busy days this is the reality. On regular days you could say this would be about 20-30 visual video clips, where we write the text and edit the pictures" (feedback, desk reporter, May 2010).
15. At an internal meeting for Newschannel editors (21 April 2009), one editor observed that it "is important that the viewers get the impression that something has happened".
16. Warren Breed (1955, p. 335) conducted a famous study of the ways in which newsroom colleagues influence each other as they work.
17. See also Currah (2009) for a discussion of the tension between accuracy and immediacy in Great Britain.

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