

Professional autonomy

Challenges and Opportunities in Poland, Russia and Sweden

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Abstract

Degree of autonomy is one of the key dimensions of professionalization in journalism. However, the strive for autonomy looks different in different media systems, where pressure on autonomy can come from both political and commercial powers, outside and within the media. Media development also changes the conditions for professional autonomy for journalists, in both a positive and a negative sense. In the comparative research project “Journalism in change”, the journalistic cultures in Russia, Poland and Sweden are studied. In a survey involving 1500 journalists from the three countries, journalists report on their perceived autonomy in their daily work and in relation to different actors inside and outside the media. The survey covers how the work has been changed by media developments, and how these changes have affected journalists’ perceived autonomy. The results show similarities in the strive for autonomy, but also clear differences in how autonomy is perceived by journalists in the three countries.

Keywords: journalists, professionalization, autonomy, professional institutions, comparative journalism studies,

Introduction

The professional identity among journalists has been challenged by the developments taking place in our modern network society. It is not only the gatekeeping function of journalists that is being questioned, but the journalistic work itself is also undergoing fundamental changes – transitioning from a monologue to more of a dialogue with the audience, with new tools and media formats that introduce new kinds of expressions. Increasing commercialization and fragmentation of the media landscape are changing the foundations on which journalism rests (Deuze 2008, Mitchelstein/Bozkowski 2009).

Professionalization has been a key concept in journalism studies during the past 40-50 years, but more as a process than as a question of whether or not journalism counts as a complete profession. During the 20th century, journalism developed into a kind of “semiprofession”, according to journalism research (Weaver et al. 2007). Journalism has strengthened some of the elements of a profession – there is a specialized body of knowledge and formal training for journalists, there are professional standards and

formal institutions of journalism in many countries, journalists struggle for independence and there is an ideology of journalism serving society (Shoemaker/Reese 1996).

In comparative studies of journalism, degree of professionalization is one of the most important variables. In their analyses of media systems in 18 European and North American countries, Hallin and Mancini include professionalization as one of their four variables. They focus on three dimensions of professionalization: the degree of autonomy and control over the work process, distinct professional norms and values, and the degree of public service orientation (Hallin/Mancini 2004: 34-37). Another variable that can be used in analysing media systems is, for example, the degree of political parallelism – how closely the media and the political system work together and to what extent the media are used for political purposes. This is an important variable in not only southern Europe, but also central and eastern Europe (Hallin/Mancini 2012).

Dimensions of Professional Autonomy

Professional autonomy for journalists is difficult to define. In journalism, autonomy was initially a question of *external autonomy* in relation to the powers that be in society. In countries with strong liberal traditions, newspapers could achieve an independent position early on, for example in the US and Sweden at the end of the 18th century. In other countries, where the historic tradition has been a strong state and more authoritarian rule, achieving this external autonomy has involved a much longer process. Important issues in the struggle for external autonomy have been censorship and direct control by state authorities. But even if external autonomy is achieved, it is not a given forever; pressure from external powers to control the media can increase during times of crisis. The means of this control may be laws and regulations, financial pressure and an expanding PR machinery (Schudson 2003).

Internal autonomy for journalism concerns the position of journalists in relation to the owners and other departments of the media company. Historically, the party press in Europe created strong links between media owners, parties and political power. The journalist was supposed to share the political beliefs of the newspaper (Hallin/Mancini 2004). Internal autonomy can also be a question of financial pressure from owners and other departments in the company. “Market-driven journalism” can entail a powerful constraint on internal autonomy for journalism when the “wall” between the newsroom and the marketing department is broken (McManus 2009). Internal autonomy for journalism developed with the commercialization of news and the break-up of the party press. Together with strong (at least in Western Europe) public service TV and radio, the ideal of an independent journalist developed during the process of professionalization in the second half of the 20th century (Weibull & Djerf-Pierre 2001).

Professional autonomy can also be studied on different levels – as an ideal, as perceived autonomy among professionals and as some kind of factual autonomy. In studies of journalism as a social field, some degree of autonomy is necessary to perceive journalism as a separate field (Benson & Neveu 2005). Historical studies of journalism have described how the *ideals of journalism* as a fourth estate in this field were created. But these ideals of detachment and autonomy for journalism differ across media systems depending on the history and political/social developments (Schudson & Anderson 2009). The degree of *perceived autonomy* has been studied in surveys during the past

40-50 years – both on a national level and in large comparative projects. The notion of perceived autonomy focuses on decisions in daily work, relations to other groups in media companies and questions concerning influence on media content (Weaver & Willnat 2012, Asp 2012). The *factual degree* of autonomy is more difficult to study, as it is hard to find reliable indicators of autonomy. Historical studies have looked at how external autonomy for the media has developed, and newsroom studies can give some important pictures of journalists’ autonomy in daily work (Tuchman 1983, Konow Lund 2013). But in the end, the degree of factual professional autonomy is something that varies over time and across different situations.

This gives a matrix of at least six different dimensions in studies of professional autonomy for journalism. The present article covers only some of them – it concentrates on perceived autonomy within the internal dimension of autonomy. We also know from earlier studies that the degree of political parallelism is or has been high in Russia and Poland; the ties between the media/journalism and politics are close and intimate (Vartanova 2012, Dobek-Ostrowska 2012). Therefore, the article also partly covers external autonomy as perceived by journalists in the three countries of focus.

Figure 1. *Six Dimensions of Autonomy*

	External autonomy	Internal autonomy
Ideals		
Perceived autonomy	(x)	x
Factual autonomy		

Note: The paper covers perceived internal autonomy and partly also external autonomy, as perceived by journalists.

The purpose of the article is to discuss how media developments have influenced professional autonomy in three different media systems. It is based on a survey of 1,500 journalists in Sweden, Poland and Russia – countries with different histories and political/social contexts. The key questions focus on similarities and differences between the media systems in some of the areas that are central to professional autonomy:

- Professional institutions and economic conditions for journalists.
- Perceived autonomy in daily work.
- Internal and external actors’ influence on media content
- Changes in daily work and multiskilling

A Survey of 1,500 Journalists

The survey is part of the research project *Journalism in Change*. In the project, researchers at three universities, Södertörn University in Stockholm, Moscow State University and University of Wroclaw in Poland, have cooperated to study how the professional journalistic culture in the three countries has been influenced by media developments (Nygren & Dobek-Ostrowska 2015). The project also includes in-depth interviews with 60 journalists as well as case studies on journalists and social media.

The survey was conducted during the spring and summer of 2012. The questionnaire was constructed jointly by the researchers to achieve the highest possible validity, so that each question would be interpreted in the same way in the three languages. The fieldwork was organized and carried out by teams in each of the three countries. There are no registers on journalists in the three countries, except in Sweden where previous research on journalists has been based on the members in the Union of Journalists (Asp 2012, Strömbäck et al. 2012). In the other two countries, the unions only include a small part of the journalist population, and it was not possible to use the unions to obtain a representative sample. To use the same methods in the three countries, the project instead employed quota sampling to select survey participants, the aim being to create a sample that was as representative as possible of journalists in each country (Lavrakas 2013).

Drawing on previous knowledge about the media structure and work places for journalists, a quota of journalists was determined for each media type; the goal was to collect 500 surveys in each country. Surveys were sent to a wide range of newsrooms in different parts of the country and to different types of media, in the form of both written surveys (mostly in Sweden and Poland) and e-mails with links to a web-based survey (mostly in Poland and Russia). The survey was not sent to specific, named journalists, but with the instruction to distribute the questionnaire to all journalists in the newsroom. The journalists returned the questionnaires themselves or filled in a web survey anonymously. When the quota for each media type was filled, the survey stopped.

The details for each country:

Poland – the number of journalist was estimated on the basis of Almanac of Media and phone calls to the editorial offices. This showed how many journalists were needed from each group. Surveys were sent out to the editorial offices both as printed surveys and as e-mails with links to the web survey. Surveys were sent out until the required number was reached. In total more than 1000 printed surveys were sent out and a few hundred e-mails with links to the web survey.

Table 1. *Basis for Selection of Polish Respondents*

Type of media	Percentage of journalists	Number of surveys
National newspaper	10	50
Regional newspaper	16	80
Magazine	24	120
Radio – channel (public service)	11	55
Radio – channel (commercial)	8	40
TV- channel (public service)	8	40
TV- channel (commercial)	9	45
Online media	3	15
News agency	3	10
Freelancer	8	45
All	100	500

The sample is similar to that of other surveys, for example in Global Journalist (Stepinska et al. 2012). The share of male journalists is 58% in our survey, and 57% in Global Journalist. The median age is a bit older in Journalism in Change, 37 years compared with 34 years in Global Journalist. The share with an academic education in Journalism in Change is 38%, compared with 32% in Global Journalist.

Russia – in Russia there are about 150,000 journalist, according to an estimate from the mid-2000s. The main criterion for sampling was medium type. Official statistical information was used as a basis for sampling. In 2011 there were (registered and re-registered) more than 90,000 established media: 67,727 printed media, 21,234 audiovisual media and 1,564 news agencies. Online media formed the remainder of the sample. From a geographical point of view, the sample includes journalists from 6 federal districts (out of the total of 8 in Russia), excluding Siberian and North Caucasian federal districts. Respondents live in Central Russia, Southern, North-Western, Volga (Privolzhskiy), Ural and Far Eastern regions.

Table 2. *Basis for Selection of Russian Respondents*

Media type	Percentage of all journalists	Number of respondents
Print media	67	335
TV and radio	21	105
Online media	8	40
News agencies	2	10
Production companies	2	10
Total:	100	500

The sample is similar to that of Global Journalist (Pasti et al. 2012), which used a combination of quota sampling and members in the Union of Journalists: The share of male journalists is 38% in our survey, and 40% in Global Journalist. There is a clear difference when it comes to age; in Journalism in Change the average age is 32 years, compared with 41 years in Global Journalist. This difference is probably because one third of the population in Global Journalist consists of members in the Union of Journalists, where the average age is quite high (in our survey over 40).

Sweden – earlier research on journalists by researchers at the University of Gothenburg (Asp et al. 2007) was used to define the proportions of respondents working in different kinds of media. Newsrooms in all of the workplace categories in different parts of the country were chosen, and the survey was distributed in written form together with an attached postage-paid reply envelope. Surveys were also distributed to freelancers through cooperative groups of freelancers and also with the help of the Union of Journalists. In total, about 1 400 surveys were distributed until the required number of respondents in each category was achieved.

Table 3. *Basis for Selection of Swedish Respondents*

	Percentage of journalists*	Percentage of respondents
Local/regional newspapers	32	29
Big city newspapers	14	14
Free newspapers	3	6
Magazines	17	13
SR (public service radio)	12	9
SVT (public service TV)	10	7
Commercial TV and radio	4	5
Production companies	1	2
News agencies & online only	6	6
Other	2	10 **
Total:	100	100

* Journalists employed by media companies in 2005. In this is not included about 13% of all journalists working as freelancers 2005.

** Many of these are freelancers working mostly for magazines.

The sample is similar to that of Global Journalist (Strömbäck et al. 2012). The share of men in our survey is 47%, compared with 50% in Global Journalist. In our survey, 38% of the journalists are older than 50 year, in Global journalist the figure is 36%. The responses in Journalism in Change come from the whole country: 51% from journalists in Stockholm, 10% from the two other big cities Gothenburg and Malmo, and 39% from regional and local media. There are marginally more respondents from the three big cities than in earlier research – 61% compared with 56% in the latest survey sent to members in the Union (Asp 2012).

The total sample of the survey Journalism in Change is described in Table 4:

Table 4. *The Sample in the Survey Journalism in Change 2012 (%)*

	Poland	Russia	Sweden	Total
Male	58	38	47	48
Female	42	62	53	52
≤35 years	42	69	27	47
36-50 years	39	23	36	33
≥51 years	18	7	38	21
Printed paid newspapers	26	35	42	34
Magazines	25	29	13	22
Public service/state radio and TV	22	10	16	16
Commercial-free media*	25	21	12	19
Subcontractors**	3	6	17	8
Total number of surveys	500	500	500	

* Commercial TV and radio, free newspapers and online only.

**News agencies, production companies and freelancers.

Professional Institutions and Economy

Professional institutions are important structures for a profession (Freidson 2001). With strong professional institutions, common values and standards are upheld. They also give strength to journalists as they strive for autonomy. The survey gives a mixed picture of the situation in the three countries (Table 5).

Education: In Sweden, an increasing share of journalists has a professional education in journalism, almost 9 out of 10 among young journalists. In Poland and Russia, this share is lower among those who entered the profession during the transitions years in the 1990s; this group is now between the ages of 36-50. In all three countries, the young, under-35 generation has the largest share of journalists with a professional education. In comparison, Poland shows a generally much lower share of journalists with a professional education in all age groups.

Unions: In both Poland and Russia, the share of journalists who are members in a Union of Journalists decreases dramatically across generations. In the older generation of 50+, a clear majority are union members, but among those under 35 less than 20% are union members. Young journalists perceive unions as belonging to the old system. In Sweden, many young journalists, 86% according to the survey, are still members of the union, at least in the traditional media sector. Data from journalism education programmes show lower figures; five years after graduation only 62% of those working as journalists are members of a union. The Swedish Union of Journalists says it is difficult to organize new journalists outside the big media companies (Nygren 2012).

Table 5. *Education and Unions for Journalists (%)*

The share with professional journalism education (academic and/or vocational):

	≤35 years	36-50 years	≥51 years	Total
Poland	52	39	43	45
Russia	85	69	72	81
Sweden	89	81	73	81

The share who are members of a union for journalists:

	≤35 years	36-50 years	≥51 years	Total
Poland	18	25	56	29
Russia	15	33	69	23
Sweden	86	89	90	87
Responses	668	468	298	1 434

A professional is usually able to make a living from his/her work. The survey shows clear differences in this area; in Sweden, 9 of 10 journalists in the survey have no problem making a living from journalism. In Poland and Russia, 49% and 43% of the journalists, respectively, say they only “can survive” or have to earn income from other areas. These figures are even higher in the younger generation (Table 6).

This forces journalists in Poland and Russia to find other media-related work. Data from another question show that 20-30% of journalists in Poland and Russia agree with the statement “It’s no problem for a journalist to work with PR and information”. An equal share say “It’s OK to receive gifts from sources as long as they do not influence

one’s professional work”. In Sweden, only a few can accept gifts, and 13% say it is OK to work with PR. However, a large percentage of those leaving the profession in Sweden move into to PR and communication (Nygren 2011).

Table 6. *Is it possible to survive on your income from journalism? (%)*

	Poland	Russia	Sweden	Total
No, I have to get money from other jobs	20	21	3	15
Yes, I can survive	29	22	6	19
Yes, I can provide all necessary things	28	40	13	27
Yes, I can do well and provide extra things	23	17	78	39
Total	100	100	100	100
N=	490	500	495	1485

The generation analysis shows dramatic changes for the professional institutions in Poland and Russia. In the communist system, journalism was a privileged profession and all journalists belonged to professional organizations close to political power. Now nearly half of journalists have difficulty surviving on their income from journalism, and the unions hardly exist for the young generation. Education is still important, at least in Russia, but at the same time journalism education is also being transformed to include PR/communication in Poland and Russia (Stigbrand/Nygren 2013).

Changes are also underway in Sweden, but they are not as dramatic. The profession is still strong – but growing older. Of the respondents, 38% are older than 50, compared to 7% in Russia and 18% in Poland (Table 4). Among the young journalists in Sweden, the same signs are seen as in Poland and Russia, with many temporary jobs and weaker unions (Nygren 2012).

Perceived Autonomy in Daily Work

The differences are quite small when it comes to the degree of freedom in taking decisions in daily work. In Sweden and Russia, 42-45% of journalists say they almost always are able to get a subject covered. This percentage is somewhat higher among the Polish journalists, as are the figures for selecting stories and deciding on angles. When it comes to managing individual time at work, the figures in both Poland and Russia are higher than in Sweden (Table 7-8).

A comparison with similar questions posed to US journalists shows results at the same levels – among US journalists, 52% say they are almost always able to get a subject covered (Weaver et al. 2007). In the US, the figures have been decreasing since 1971, but we do not know whether this is the case in our survey countries, because there is no previous research on this topic.

There are also some significant differences between groups of journalists:

- In Sweden and Poland, young journalists have less freedom than their older colleagues do to select stories and decide on the angle.
- In Poland and Russia, journalists working for state radio and TV report significantly lower figures in their perceived autonomy than do colleagues in other areas. In Sweden, the figures are the same in the public and the private sectors.

- In all three countries there is a clear correlation between having the freedom to work on one’s own ideas and the degree of pride in calling oneself a journalist.

Table 7. *If you have a good idea for a subject that you think is important and should be followed up, how often are you able to get the subject covered?*

	Poland	Russia	Sweden	Total
Almost always	59	42	45	49
More often than not	30	35	40	35
Only occasionally	8	18	13	13
I don’t make such proposals	2	6	3	3
Total	100	100	100	100
Number of answers	490	487	473	1450

Table 8. *How much freedom do you have... (mean on a scale 1-4 where 4 is almost complete freedom)*

	Poland			Russia			Sweden		
	Mean	Std dev	N=	Mean	Std dev	N=	Mean	Std dev	N=
... in selecting the stories you work on?	3.23	0.59	487	2.80	0.89	495	3.05	0.79	481
... in deciding which aspects of a story should be emphasized?	3.17	0.65	488	2.97	0.83	490	3.08	0.74	481
... to manage your own time in your work?	3.09	0.69	491	2.87	0.88	496	2.69	0.92	486

Freedom at work is important to journalists, and there are no major differences between the three countries as regards this dimension of autonomy. There is also quite a low standard deviation, showing a common understanding among journalists. The responses to another question also give similar results – freedom at work is the second or third most important factor out of ten when choosing a workplace in all three countries. The only things more important than freedom at work are the atmosphere at the workplace and the chance to develop a speciality (Anikina 2015).

These results show that a degree of autonomy in daily decisions is a kind of common trait within journalism, at least in the three countries and media systems in the survey, both as an important value and as perceived daily reality.

Influence on Media Content

Journalists are not the only actors taking decisions on media content. The survey shows both similarities and differences when it comes to evaluating how different factors influence the selection of subjects (Table 9). The most important factors are the same in the three countries: audience interest, professional interest of the journalist and the editorial policy of the media company. There are also important differences:

- The political affiliation of the media company and strong political actors outside the media are regarded as being much more important by journalists in Russia, and to some extent in Poland, than in Sweden.
- The influence of advertisers is regarded as being much more important in Poland and Russia than in Sweden.

In Sweden, political influence is almost non-existent, according to the journalists. Advertisers and businesses outside the media company are regarded as having some influence, but not as much as in Russia and Poland.

Table 9. *Factors Influencing the Selection of Subjects in the Daily Work (mean on a scale 1-5 where 5 is very significant)*

	Poland			Russia			Sweden		
	Mean	Std dev	N=	Mean	Std dev	N=	Mean	Std dev	N=
Professional interest of journalist	4.03	1.04	484	3.89	0.98	492	3.96	0.89	467
The editorial policy of the media company	3.89	0.99	474	4.21	1.87	493	3.56	1.01	455
The political connection (affiliation) of the media company	2.78	1.31	415	3.26	1.25	467	1.58	0.95	455
Strong political actors outside the media company	2.44	1.27	382	2.79	1.23	447	1.82	1.00	445
Audience interest	4.29	0.88	481	4.02	0.96	494	4.05	0.80	477
Needs and interests of society	4.12	1.01	470	3.68	1.08	479	3.48	0.98	468
Those who advertise in the media	3.30	1.35	380	2.95	1.31	439	1.87	1.20	451
Business interest outside the media company	2.80	1.30	382	2.52	1.27	425	2.00	1.19	441

Note: The question in the survey was:

Different factors influence the selection of subjects in the daily work of your media organization. How could you evaluate the significance of the following factors in the work at your news organization?

Also, when journalists are evaluating how the influence on media content has changed during the past 5-10 years, the influence of audiences is becoming much stronger in all three countries (Table 10). This can be a sign of the effects of increasing interactivity in a network society, as well as a sign of increasing market competition and “market-driven journalism”. Other groups in the media company (for example, departments for marketing and advertising have also clearly increased their influence in all three countries.

There are, however, important differences in the changing influence as well, as perceived by the journalists. Differences are sometimes more difficult to explain:

- In Poland, journalists are experiencing strong commercialization. The influence of advertisers and owners is increasing sharply. This correlates strongly with the increasing influence of other parts of the media company and business outside the media company. The influence of journalists and politicians is almost the same, according to the journalists.
- In Sweden, the political influence is decreasing (from an already very low level). Other parts of the media company are increasing their influence, and this correlates strongly with increasing influence for owners and advertisers. The perceived influence of journalists is regarded as almost the same.
- In Russia, journalists are increasing their influence, according to a clear majority (57%) of journalists in the survey. This increasing influence correlates positively with the influence of other parts of the media company and the owners. The perceived political influence on media content is increasing a bit, but regarding this question there are also major differences among Russian journalists (Std dev 1.92 on a scale 1-5).

Table 10. *If you look back 5-10 years, how would you evaluate the changes in influence on media content in your news organization from the following actors?**
(mean on a scale 1-5 where 1 is decreased and 5 is increased)

	Poland			Russia			Sweden		
	Mean	Std dev	N=	Mean	Std dev	N=	Mean	Std dev	N=
Professional interest of journalist	4.03	1.04	484	3.89	0.98	492	3.96	0.89	467
Journalists	2.91	1.07	396	3.57	1.05	398	2.95	0.95	348
Other groups in the media company	3.43	0.87	336	3.17	0.97	391	3.36	0.83	318
Media owners	3.68	0.92	373	3.53	1.11	391	3.08	1.02	309
Politicians	3.14	0.98	364	3.27	1.92	393	2.62	0.78	309
Audiences	3.60	0.96	390	3.53	1.01	407	3.56	0.80	340
Advertisers	3.83	0.93	375	3.01	1.16	381	2.97	1.06	305
Private business	3.41	0.90	341	2.55	1.13	341	2.93	0.85	299

* Only those with 5-10 years of experience could answer the question. Therefore 100-150 answers are missing in each question.

Influence on media content is a question of power. Usually, when changing power is analysed, one group increases its power at the expense of other groups. This is also the case in the responses from Sweden and Poland – there is a negative correlation between increasing power for journalists and increasing power for owners, other parts of the media company and advertisers (Table 11). When journalists in these countries feel that the power of owners and markets is increasing, they perceive their own influence on media content as decreasing.

This is not the case in Russia. There is quite a strong correlation between perceived increased influence for journalists and for rest of the company, as well as for owners, audiences and private business. The only exception is political influence, which is considered to be increasing slightly, but is not correlated with the influence of journalists. One explanation for this may be that Russian journalists feel their influence grows stronger when the whole media company is strong – in relation to the political system.

Both in Russia and in Poland there is a clear correlation between the influence of the audience and journalists. This indicates that journalists in Russia and Poland in some way see the audience (and market?) influence as a kind of ally to their own influence – in relation to the old political influence. In the Swedish media system, journalists feel all other influence has a negative impact on their own influence.

Table 11. Correlation between changes in influence on content for journalists during the past 5-10 years and the influence of other groups

Influence of...	Influence of journalists on content in...		
	Poland	Russia	Sweden
Other groups in the media company	-0.144 ** N=334	0.393 ** N=381	-0.299 ** N=314
Media owners	-0.149 ** N=367	0.168 ** N=378	-0.477 * N=305
Politicians	–	–	-0.136 * N=306
Audiences	0.306 ** N=379	0.241 ** N=392	–
Advertisers	-0.203 ** N=368	0.106 * N=368	-0.223 ** N=297
Private business	-0.165 ** N=339	0.218 ** N=332	-0.246 ** N=297

** Pearson correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

* Pearson correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

More Production and Less Autonomy?

Media development changes journalistic work – new tools, new media formats, new production processes. These changes can also have an impact, both positive and negative, on professional autonomy in the daily work. One question in the survey asked the journalists to evaluate the changes in work in different parts of the journalistic process – what are they doing less or more of compared to 5-10 years ago (Table 12).

The answers show a common pattern in all three countries – an increasing focus on production (writing/producing, photography, editing/layout and the total amount of production). Journalists in all three countries are increasingly multi-skilled; they are able to take part in the complete process and put more focus on production.

Parts of the process not directly connected to production get less or equal time in the daily work, for example evaluation and discussion. Also, work outside the newsroom takes less time, at least in Sweden, where the level of daily production has risen the most. Journalists in Sweden simply do not have time to leave the newsroom. In Russia and Poland, journalists seem to do more of everything.

Table 12. *Changes in the Journalistic Work the Last 5-10 Years (mean on a scale 1-5 where 5 is much more)*

	Poland			Russia			Sweden		
	Mean	Std dev	N=	Mean	Std dev	N=	Mean	Std dev	N=
Research and verification	3.76	1.29	441	3.42	1.14	395	3.02	1.01	380
Work outside the newsroom	3.17	1.21	389	3.48	1.19	384	2.67	0.99	354
Writing/producing	3.53	1.22	423	3.50	1.11	409	3.50	0.88	366
Editing/layout	3.99	1.06	402	3.93	1.09	399	3.45	0.96	337
Contact with the audience	3.59	1.12	415	3.69	1.03	404	3.21	1.00	362
Cooperation in the newsroom	3.34	1.08	391	3.03	1.16	392	3.25	0.85	365
The amount of production	3.34	1.15	358	3.33	1.11	388	3.96	0.92	374
Evaluation and discussion	3.06	1.09	398	3.39	1.09	391	2.75	1.05	369
Photography	3.70	1.22	369	3.67	1.06	350	3.36	1.09	326

Note: The question in the survey was:

During the past 5-10 years the daily journalistic work has changed in many ways. How do you evaluate these changes in different areas, based on your own experience?*

* Only those with 5-10 years of experience could answer the question. Therefore 100-200 answers are missing in each question.

How are these changes related to the perceived autonomy in the daily work? There are very few correlations between increased production and perceived autonomy; only Sweden has a (rather) weak negative correlation between the amount of production and the ability to get a subject covered ($r=-0.13$, all following correlations are significant; $p<0.01$). In other areas there is a more positive correlation between perceived autonomy and work (in Sweden and Poland):

- More time for research and verification is positively correlated with more freedom for choosing stories and the angle for stories ($r=0.13-0.15$).
- More time for evaluation and discussion is positively correlated with being able to get subjects covered ($r=0.16-0.20$)
- More time for cooperation and for work outside the newsroom is positively correlated with being able to select stories to work on (in Poland only) ($r=0.19-0.22$).

These results indicate that the perceived autonomy in daily work is related mostly to whether there is time for basic parts of the process, like research and evaluation/discussion. Regarding general changes in the journalistic process, these skills seem to take a smaller share of the time than they did 5-10 years ago.

Power and Creativity with Multiskilling?

Convergence changes the production processes and requires multi-skilled workers. Journalists are supposed to handle all steps in the process, from reporting and taking photos to writing and editing. In TV production, these are often called “video journalists”. Reporters are also often expected to work on different platforms at the same time (Singer/Quandt 2009).

The attitudes towards multiskilling are mixed. In the survey, attitudes are generally more positive in Poland and Russia than in Sweden (Table 13):

- Multiskilling is more often expected in Poland than in Russia and Sweden. There are also great differences among Swedish journalists regarding their experience of multiskilling.
- Polish and Russian journalists clearly agree that multiskilling means more space for creativity and gives more power to the individual journalist. In Sweden, journalists are have neutral attitudes towards these statements, but they express some agreement regarding their fear of decreasing quality.
- Journalists in all three countries agree that more journalists will be multi-skilled in the future.

Table 13. *Opinions on Multiskilling for Journalists (mean on a scale 1-5 where 5 is fully agree)*

	Poland			Russia			Sweden		
	Mean	Std dev	N=	Mean	Std dev	N=	Mean	Std dev	N=
I feel like a multi-skilled reporter	3.93	1.18	455	3.19	1.31	490	2.80	1.53	469
Journalists in my media organization are expected to be multiskilled	4.20	0.97	473	3.34	1.29	494	3.35	1.28	463
Multiskilling means more space for creativity	3.83	1.17	482	3.63	1.34	491	2.96	1.27	463
Multiskilling will decrease the quality of journalism	2.84	1.29	471	3.00	1.30	473	3.12	1.33	464
Multiskilling gives more power to the individual journalist	3.66	1.20	474	3.56	1.21	478	2.86	1.24	456
In the future more journalists will be multiskilled	4.42	0.82	450	3.52	1.30	478	4.35	0,80	475

Note: The question in the survey was:

“Multiskilling” or “multi-reporter” are some words often used to describe future journalists. It can mean both a journalist working in different channels and a journalist working with different parts of the process (photo-writing-editing). What is your opinion on the following statements?

There are some differences between different kinds of journalists. Young journalists feel more like multi-skilled reporters, and especially in Russia age means a great deal in terms of attitudes. The large young population of journalists in Russia has very positive attitudes towards space for creativity and more power to the individual journalist. There is also a strong and positive correlation in Poland and Russia between pride in being a journalist and having a positive attitude towards multi-skilling.

But what does this mean for autonomy in the daily work? Many journalists in Poland and Russia perceive multiskilling to give them more power in the daily work. There is also a positive correlation between the degree of being able to get one’s own ideas covered and positive attitudes towards being a multi-skilled reporter, and between space for creativity and power to the individual journalist. These positive correlations are mostly limited to journalists in Poland and Russia; in Sweden there is only a positive correlation with space for creativity.

There are some possible explanations for the difference between Sweden and Poland/Russia. One major explanation could be that Swedish journalists feel that they are under enormous pressure to produce, and the introduction of new technology can be perceived mainly as a means to intensify work (Quinn 2005). Another explanation could be the relatively high average age of journalists in Sweden.

Discussion

The survey covers journalists in three very different media systems: a stable democratic-corporative system in Sweden, a system with a history of strong state control in Russia and a system in Poland with a tradition of political parallelism in broadcast media and strong commercialization. This means that conditions for professional autonomy also differ and the starting point for comparisons is difference – not similarity.

Convergence, fragmentation and commercialization are global trends in all media systems. Technological development looks the same in newsrooms in Stockholm, Warsaw and Moscow. But the different starting points means that the consequences for professional autonomy can be both similar and different – what strengthens professional autonomy in Russia may have the opposite effect in Sweden.

The survey shows that the level of perceived autonomy in daily work is quite equal in all three countries, and the most important factors in selecting subjects are the same. Commercial pressure is strong in all three countries, but in different ways – in Poland, increasing influence from advertisers and in Sweden strong pressure for production in daily work. The old differences, however, are still clearly visible in the evaluation of political influence, limiting professional autonomy in Russia and also partly in Poland in radio and TV. Russian journalists are under a strong political pressure that limits *external* autonomy for the media, but at the same time they feel an increasing *internal* autonomy in, for example, multiskilling and audience influence.

Stable institutions have been regarded as important to professional autonomy (Freidson 2001). If this is still the case, there are reasons for concern in Poland and Russia, where institutions are vanishing and economic security for journalists is low. On the other hand, young journalists feel that multi-skilling and stronger media companies strengthen their potential autonomy both in daily decisions and in relation to political power. Also, the development of social media, like blogs and communities, has created new spaces for more independent discussion and reporting, at least during the past few years in Russia (Johansson 2015).

In Sweden, professional institutions are still stable, and journalists are financially secure, but they feel an increasing pressure in relation to daily production. New demands like multi-skilling are not received as positively. Journalists feel their influence is diminishing in favour of the commercial parts of the business and the owners. The core part of the profession is also growing older, with nearly 40% above the age of 50. Among young journalists, the trends are more similar to journalism in Poland and Russia – more flexible and temporary jobs, less stable institutions and more unclear borders of journalism (Nygren 2012).

The new generation of journalists are sometimes called “portfolio workers”, flexible media professionals going in and out of journalism (Deuze 2007). They can be strong in their individual capacity, but also weak in their lack of collective institutions. This new generation is growing in all three countries, struggling to gain their professional autonomy under the new conditions that define journalistic work.

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