Operationalising news diversity: A comparison of Norway and Flanders

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Abstract

Several scholars and institutions have made attempts at defining and conceptualising news diversity, underlying its increasing relevance within and beyond academia. However, very few have operationalised it for a given media market, let alone in more than one simultaneously. In this paper, we critically assess existing theories and studies and present main shortcomings on the conceptual, methodological and empirical levels. We proceed by applying and testing two different frameworks and methods for assessing news diversity, co-developed by the authors separately from one another, to two different yet in many regards similar European media markets: those of Norway and Flanders (Belgium). In doing so, we seek to properly operationalise news diversity and expand the body of internationally comparative news-related research in times of fundamental change in the news industry, its production practices and markets. We highlight obstacles and best practices for future research.

Keywords
Diversity, News, Journalism, Comparative

Disarray (in Flanders and Norway)

Diversity's missing yardstick

In the introduction to their book *New Journalisms*, Fowler-Watt & Jukes (2019) refer to a current (global) media landscape 'distorted by disengagement, distrust and disaffection' (p. 1). This poignantly encapsulates some of the key issues currently causing a constant state of flux (Hendrickx & Picone, 2020) and disarray within media markets and companies. The rapid digitisation and platformisation of news content and production have left many legacy news organisations and media scholars bewildered as they seek to run with newly emerging issues such as the phenomena of fake news (e.g. Tandoc et al., 2018) and echo chambers (Dubois & Blank, 2018). Other issues include the increasing (political) attacks geared towards and even curtailments of press freedom at public broadcasters (for an excellent European overview, see the edited book by Połońska & Beckett (2019). Overall, trust levels in institutions, media organisations and journalists have diminished in recent years, although these appear to have increased 'thanks to' the COVID-19 pandemic, following findings of the latest Digital News Report (Newman et al., 2021). Another important factor

is the steady decline of the traditional business model for news, in which audience engagement has rendered itself as a key concept (Steensen et al., 2020) and media companies' aim to add new value-added products and services. These act as multi-sided platforms (Jääskeläinen & Yanatma, 2019) as journalists grapple with the changes to their roles and functions as gatekeepers in society (Hendrickx & Picone, 2020; Lamot & Paulussen, 2019).

The overarching question of what the situation outlined above has done, and is doing, to media diversity, has long been neglected in academia. While media diversity has become a major concern both within and beyond the borders of academic research in recent years (Loecherbach et al., 2020), few studies have considered what these global trends mean for diversity within and across media markets. Policy makers, regulators, (media) scholars, media companies and journalists have expressed worries about the string of recent changes which increasingly tend to alter the perception, production and profitability of journalisms around the world for the worse (Nielsen, 2016; Waisbord, 2019). The many 'crises' (Curran 2019) facing contemporary journalism are difficult to operationalise comparatively, leaving us with poor evidence of the effect of such global trends on media diversity. We aim to fill this gap in scholarship by assessing news diversity in two media markets, using secondary data and two distinct frameworks.

Operationalising news diversity is difficult not least because the scientific questions on what media diversity is and how it should be studied have long remained unanswered. Diversity has been popularised as a buzzword term, used without distinct definitions and frameworks (Raeijmaekers & Maeseele, 2015). While the amount of research on diversity is on the increase (Hendrickx et al., 2020), the question remains what the 'yardstick' that diversity mobilises actually entails. Recent contributions to the theoretical angle of the moniker have proven useful (e.g. Joris et al., 2020; Masini et al., 2018), yet progress tends to stay cemented in an intricate web of similar yet distinct terms used interchangeably and a persistent lack of a commonly agreed and adopted framework.

From the empirical perspective, progress is even more limited. Over the last decades, several scholars have analysed small aspects of media diversity. Thereby they have, however, (unwillingly) neglected overarching media landscape/market characteristics and the contingencies which continue to shape it, hence mitigating the urgency and relevance of results for markets and societies (e.g. Doyle, 2002; Karppinen, 2013; McQuail, 1992; Napoli, 1999; Nelson, 2020; Vogler et al., 2020). As we will show, government-subsidised media regulators demonstrate high variations in the size and scope of their national and/or regional analyses, but they too indicate corresponding shortcomings and flaws which hamper them from being impactful for media diversity research across markets. While many regulators and research projects have developed their own 'yardsticks' for operationalising and measuring media diversity, few have been validated across markets, enabling a discussion of comparative diversity levels across media systems. Only a few longitudinal analyses into the effects of 'news black holes', areas without any (local) news reporting and coverage, exist. In one notable Australian study, Howells (2015) found that the 'gradual withdrawal of journalism' (p. 223) from a small town caused both quantity and quality of reporting to significantly reduce, with negative effects for election turnouts and the town's local public sphere.

Democratic corporatist landscapes

To contribute to the existing body of research, we carry out an experimental study on news diversity across media markets. We achieve this by combining two existing frameworks and applying them to two distinct Western media markets for which said frameworks were initially developed, namely the ones in Norway and Flanders (Belgium). Thereby, we contrib-

ute to and expand the body of available internationally comparative research using dual methods and markets. This fills the lingering gap in academia regarding the proper operationalisation of holistic news diversity models and theories, as opposed to merely smaller subsections as was previously frequently the case (see previous paragraph).

The Norwegian and Flemish societies are among those which considers comprehensive policy measures as necessary to sustain a national public sphere (Syvertsen et al., 2019, p. 15). Both markets have been defined as democratic corporatist (Hallin & Mancini, 2004). However, later research labelled Norway as the prototype of the Nordic type, marked by generous press subsidies and powerful public broadcasting, whereas this is less so in Flanders and Belgium, causing it to be labelled as closer to the Western (liberal) type (Brüggemann et al., 2014). The media markets in Norway and Flanders serve roughly the same number of inhabitants (5.4 and 6.6 million respectively) and are both dominated by a handful of dominant media companies controlling large portions of the legacy news market. We hold the view that these similarities, and the nationalities of the researchers of the study proving their respective expertise, warrant a comparison between Norway, a nation state, and Flanders, a Dutch-speaking region of a federal state which boasts its own government policies and media landscape entirely separate from its French-speaking Walloon counterpart.

Our central aim is twofold. First, we aim to test the appropriateness of country-specific analysis designs across national markets, the contribution of which is to ascertain the extent to which the global changes facing journalism can be traced and compared along different market contexts (Sjøvaag, 2019, p. 7). Second, applying established frameworks across markets contributes to the debate on operationalising news diversity analyses, enabling more cross-media market studies. Before expanding on our research design, we revisit the concept 'diversity' and then map existing diversity measuring methods as previously and/or currently used by research centres, government regulators and individual or groups of academics.

Diversity

Within media diversity research, there have been a few highly dominant key theories and taxonomies which were developed in the (late) twentieth century and enjoyed continued popularity in terms of both application and references. In their structured literature reviews on news diversity research, Hendrickx et al. (2020) and Joris et al. (2020) confirm the lasting rule of three main theories. While still suited to serve as blueprints for additional theories and models, it is important to remember that they were all developed in the 1990s, when media landscapes around the world were in many cases unrecognisable to what they look like today in terms of consolidated ownership levels. Not only were media corporations at the time much more dominant and affluent than today, they were also much more overtly marked by American powerhouses. This does not render them obsolete per se, but somewhat limits their relevance, as they are, by default, unable to take into account current media market characteristics.

- The notion of diversity at the level of structure, with ownership, format and geographical diversity as subcomponents, and at the level of performance, with as subcomponents opinion, information and culture, as outlined by McQuail (1992);
- The distinction between source and content diversity within one media product by Voakes et al., (1996), with source diversity referring to journalistic sources;

- Napoli's (1999) 'diversity chain' consisting of source, content and exposure diversity, source diversity here meaning how diverse content providers populate a media ecosystem.

Both from a conceptual and methodological perspective, academic progress on new insights into media and news diversity has been rather limited over the last twenty years, with a noted failure to link the conceptual and empirical work in existing research (Loecherbach et al., 2020). Defining either term has in many cases been limited to applying one of the three models outlined above. Moreover, the assessing or measuring has been done in a host of different ways, without any sign of a comprehensive framework transferable to other media markets or shared normative consensuses on what either term *is* and *how* it can best be tackled. Empirically speaking, media and news diversity research has been centred around measuring media competition and concentration of ownership (Rasul & Proffitt, 2013), workforce diversity inside newsrooms and their impacts on the pluriformity of opinions and views presented in reporting (Cohen, 2019), news content homogeneity studies (Hendrickx, 2019; Sjøvaag, 2014; Vogler et al., 2020) and news consumption studies (Nelson, 2020), possibly also with a second focus on brand diversity (Van Damme et al., 2019).

While staying abreast of changing patterns of news production and consumption by, for instance, looking at mobile news consumption and automated content diversity studies, the multitude of areas around which they have been centred only confirm the persistent lack of holistic, all-encompassing approaches which take into account contingencies and characteristics of markets and their effects on the various layers or levels of media or news diversity. Another lingering question, then, is what the difference between media and news diversity is. Put succinctly, we focus solely on *news* diversity from the understanding that the very broad denomination *media* encompasses more than just news in the current multi-sided, multi-platform market heavily influenced by social media. While this could be considered as a mere semantical difference, we will refer solely to *news* diversity for the remainder of the article.

Measuring news diversity

While many EU Member States have specific regulations to maintain 'diversity', again often without specifying the exact meaning and purpose, very few have systems in place which systematically monitor the 'degree' or 'level' of news diversity within its national and/or regional or local media market(s) that can inform the status of news diversity within a fixed timeframe. Moreover, few of these methods are easily transferable to other media markets, making comparisons difficult. We found a few government bodies which provide annual reports on (news) diversity within media markets, but they have their own shortcomings, related in particular to the data accessible for each particular market.

Academic studies

In two academic examples, zooming in on the American and British media markets respectively, Hindman (2006) and Champion (2015) offered novel approaches by studying and comparing diversity across platforms (online vs. offline) and sectors, but both only denote content diversity without appropriately considering other aspects. The same can be said for the statistical diversity measures presented by Van Cuilenburg (2000, p. 71), whose measurements by the coefficient of variability or by entropy are explicitly and solely applicable to

media content. The same applies for his influential distinction between open and reflective diversity (ibid, p. 72). Duncan & Reid (2013) and Smith & Tambini (2012) outlined the uncertainty on how to 'achieve' the objective of diversity for South Africa and the United Kingdom, but solely from a media policy perspective. Other scholars, such as Vizcarrondo (2013) in his longitudinal study of the American media market, approach news diversity from the perspective of the media market and companies that operate in it through traditional Herfindahl-Hirschman Index (HHI) and C4/8 analyses. Iosifidis (2010) also looked exclusively at the media ownership side of news diversity, but nonetheless made a valuable contribution by focusing on the non-economic types of concentration measures, concluding that 'combining different types of measurement is more likely to provide a valid method' (p. 19).

Reports and government studies

Few studies have previously endeavoured to comparatively analyse existing measurement systems. The prime example, again relating back to the level of the European Union, could be the Media Pluralism Monitor (MPM), a report compiled and published by the Centre for Media Pluralism and Media Freedom, a research centre co-financed by the EU. In its third report, published in 2020 and covering 2018–2019, market plurality, political independence, social inclusiveness and digital dimensions were mapped in all, at the time, 28 EU Member States, as well as in candidate countries Albania and Turkey. Results are expressed in risk percentages for various indicators and sub-indicators, grouped as Low (0–33%), Medium (34–66%) and High (67–100%). For the indicator News media concentration, all but four countries score a 'High' risk, with an overall similar 'High' 80% risk (Brogi et al., 2020).

Furthermore, Lefever et al. (2013) and Napoli (2015) have sought to compare between the European and American contexts of monitoring media diversity, centred around analysing differences between the above-mentioned MPM and the FCC's now-defunct Diversity Index (DI), which was modelled on the HHI and assigned relative weights to different media on the frequency of use which respondents had indicated in a survey commissioned from Nielsen Media Research (Lefever et al., 2013). Napoli (2015) in particular avowedly stated that the Diversity Index was 'a much more limited measure' than the Media Pluralism Monitor and that the MPM was constructed with the critiques geared towards the DI in mind (p. 146).

Citing two known European examples, the British communications regulator Ofcom published a measurement framework for media plurality, also indicating the potential for the diversity of viewpoints in news content across platforms. It made a distinction between three categories: the availability of different news sources, the consumption of said sources, and their impact on consumers (Ofcom, 2015). Germany boasts 14 media regulatory authorities, one of which is the *Kommission zur Ermittlung der Konzentration im Medienbereich* (KEK). Its main task is to quantify the variety of opinions of TV broadcasts using audience shares to correspond to dominant opinion-forming powers (Lefever et al., 2013). In its most recent publicly available report at the time of writing, the KEK admits that the rise of online news has fostered new balances of power, and that it is unsuited for mapping developments on the internet (Kommission zur Ermittlung der Konzentration im Medienbereich, 2019, p. 25).

In Belgium, like Germany a federal state, media policy is strictly divided between the Flemish and French Communities. This includes two distinct media regulators publishing separate reports. The Flemish Regulator for the Media publishes annual reports on media concentration in Belgium's Dutch-speaking region, but takes a traditional, normative own-

ership-centred approach, utilising market shares and HHI and C4/8 analyses, finding that the small Flemish media market is 'highly concentrated' (Vlaamse Regulator voor de Media, 2021). In Norway, the second country of focus for this study, the Norwegian Media Authority (2020) measures supplier, content and exposure diversity. Included in its measure of supplier diversity is "senders" or "actors" and their ownership, and distributors and their ownership; the variety of ownership and financing, geography and brand identity; and workforce diversity (age and gender).

Shortcomings

In evaluating the various measurement tools and theories above, both previous and ongoing efforts either by individual or groups of scholars, or by media regulators, a few main shortcomings are laid bare:

- There are different theoretical foundations at the core of the various proposed methods, blurring the barriers between pluralism or diversity. While those terms are often used interchangeably, diversity is actually best perceived as a means to achieve the (policy) goal of pluralism (Doyle, 2002; Sjøvaag, 2016).
- Media diversity measurement tools tend to take an overt company-centred approach, limiting diversity to market and/or audience shares of media corporations within a given market. By focusing to such an extent on economic-based measures, they neglect actual measures of pluralism or diversity within markets, which would serve better when incorporated in overall results (Iosifidis, 2010).
- Whereas a few proposed methods touch upon online news content (Hindman, 2006; Ofcom, 2015), the majority do not. As news consumption is increasingly taking place through smartphones, existing tools, methods and frameworks risk rendering themselves obsolete as a clear incorporation of news content measuring across platforms is lacking (Kommission zur Ermittlung der Konzentration im Medienbereich, 2019; The Norwegian Media Authority, 2020). This is part of a larger problem which includes persistent vague legal foundations for online news in most media markets (Milosavljević et al., 2020), another example of the extent to which, in many cases, regulation fails to keep up with changing realities.

Aside from these operational problems hindering methodological transferral, the most urgent shortcoming is, arguably, the clear lack of a shared European vision of the concept of news diversity, what it is and what it should be. As the European media market is growing increasingly concentrated with fewer yet more powerful and international active players (Brogi et al., 2020), it is surprising that there is no common framework on news diversity and how it should be approached and assessed. This article wishes to draw attention to this widening gap in research by offering an experimental study in two media markets, intended to serve as a stepping stone for further in-depth analyses at the European level. We wish to overcome said shortcomings by combining two existing conceptual frameworks for news diversity, which are holistic by nature and take into account many other factors and indicators besides purely economic ones. We include online news in our discussion of diversity and propose a shared framework based on examples of two European media markets.

Two models & markets

In trying to operationalise news diversity, we set up a co-operation which included merging our two independently designed models for media and news diversity. It is worth stressing that one of the models was influenced by the other one, as has been outlined in its explanatory conceptual paper (Hendrickx et al., 2020). Other influential taxonomies included the so-called *Big Three* by Denis McQuail in 1992, Voakes et al. in 1996 and Philip Napoli in 1999, as defined by Joris et al. (2020) and revisited earlier on in the article.

First model: external & internal media diversity
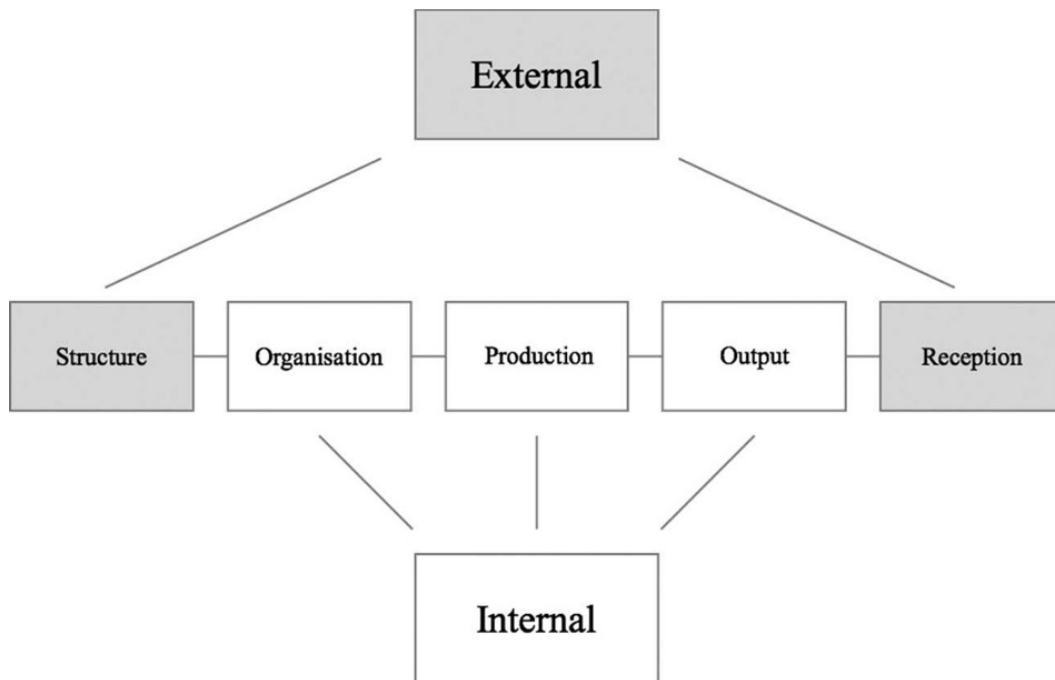
**Figure 1:** External & internal media diversity (Sjøvaag, 2016)

The model above outlines five levels where media diversity can be analysed to evaluate the contribution of media systems to pluralist democracy in the context of digitalisation, and was developed for the Norwegian media market. Operationalisations of media diversity in the digital context tend to focus on how digital technology affects production and user situations in highly local settings, such as newsrooms or in everyday life (Sjøvaag, 2016, p. 1). The model therefore aims to consider the structural effects of the digital media ecology, economy and technology on a more comprehensive scale to account for the role that platforms (e.g. Google), aggregation (e.g. YouTube) and social media (e.g. Facebook) play in changing news production, distribution and consumption. Not least in the context of national media systems, where governments have low jurisdiction at the global infrastructure level. The model outlines the five levels where news diversity can be accessed and measured, mapping internal/external pluralism in the process. The framework conditions facilitating media production and reception constitute the external context, while the organisation, production, and output of media industries constitute the internal context (ibid, p. 2):

- Structural conditions refer to ownership structures, competition and market conditions, and the level of political pluralism;

- Organisational conditions refer to variations in newsroom conditions, resource management and corporate identity, often to analyse ownership impact;
- Production conditions refer to professional cultures, including reporting norms and practices;
- Output diversity refers to the distribution and frequency of topics, themes, views, voices and opinions;
- Reception or exposure diversity refers to the extent to which the news diets of media audiences are in themselves diverse;

The model is motivated by two needs in particular: the need to find out if the content disseminated by news media is diverse, and the need to ascertain to what extent their framework conditions facilitate diverse news production. At the start of the chain, the conditions for media industries reflect the framework that democratic societies need to ensure a free and diverse media structure. At the end of the chain, the media diets of citizens constitute the condition for democratic debate and political accountability conducted through the deliberation and voting process. In the middle are the features that, enabled by the structure, produce the content that informs democratic debate enabling political pluralism at the national level (Sjøvaag, 2016, p. 10)

Second model: five gears of news diversity
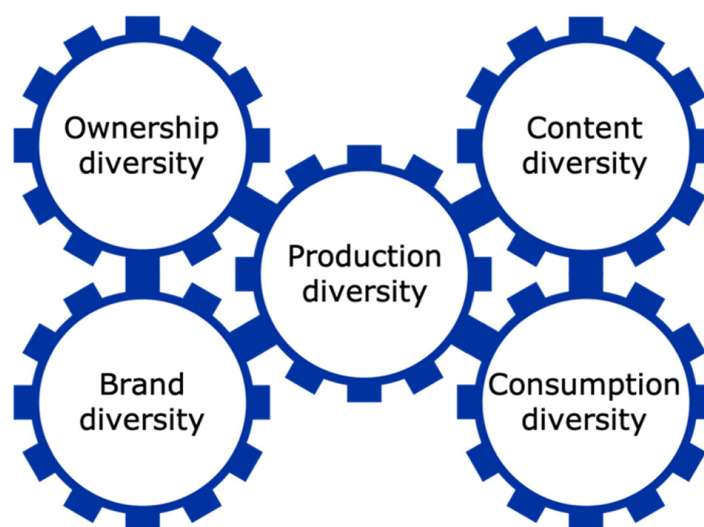
Figure 2: Five gears of news diversity (Hendrickx et al., 2020)

The second model was developed with the Flemish media market in mind, but can be considered as transferable to other markets and landscapes as well. It departs from the viewpoint that 'news diversity' encompasses more than just news articles. Hence, it holistically highlights the different mechanisms involved in news diversity, which are visualised as metaphorical connected 'gears' in a machine which will eventually all be set in motion as soon as one of the gears starts to turn (Hendrickx et al., 2020). Thus, this model proposes a vision of news diversity as simultaneously influenced by and affecting all parts of a media market. It too distinguishes between five main parts:

- Ownership diversity: the variety of ownership in media markets, government policies regarding political pluralism, competition and antitrust law;

- Brand diversity: the relevance of individual media titles and their identity within ever-larger media corporations and media landscapes as a whole;
- Production diversity: deliberately placed centrally in the model, it is the only one which both influences and is influenced by all other four 'gears'. It looks at how the production of news content is altered by changes in terms of ownership, brand, content and consumption diversity, with the individual working journalist taking the centre stage. Other fields of interest include professional cultures and workforce diversity and its effects on reporting (Everbach et al., 2019);
- Content diversity: news can be studied quantitatively, qualitatively or both and at the levels of articles, (parts of) a media market or multiple markets at once;
- Consumption diversity looks at both diversity *as consumed* and *as considered* by media users, with special interest for recent trends of diminishing trust levels in institutions and journalists and news avoidance.

In order to fully assess news diversity in a given market, all five 'gears' should be considered for research, as they all influence and complement each other organically (Hendrickx et al., 2020).

Combining both models

We seek to operationalise news diversity through an explorative study in which we combine two existing and recently developed typologies of the term. The main similarities and differences of both models will be outlined below, after which relevant and, most importantly, recent secondary data will be incorporated to apply and experimentally operationalise news diversity for the Norwegian and Flemish media markets.

Table 1: Combining both models

External & internal media diversity (Norway)	= / ≠	Five gears of news diversity (Flanders)
Structure	=	Ownership
Organisation	≠	Brand
Production	=	Production
Output	=	Content
Reception	=	Consumption

Four of the five dimensions of media/news diversity correspond between the two different models. This is not a surprise in itself since, as mentioned before, the latter model was influenced by the former. Both *structure* and *organisation* diversity are said to correspond to the notion of *ownership* diversity, whereas *brand* diversity is the novel type or 'gear' which sets it apart from other existing typologies. It has also been under-researched in the field of media studies, though studied extensively in economics research (Lopez & Leenders, 2019). The high degree of similarity between the models, and hence perhaps slightly ironically the lack of diversity between them, facilitates applying it to both media markets simultaneously. This approach allows us to deductively compare two different European media markets while combining all elements from two different conceptual frameworks on news diversity, in this case by retrieving recent and relevant data from both markets on the acknowledged subcategories of news diversity outlined above.

News diversity in Norway and Flanders

Table 3: Operationalising news diversity in Norway and Flanders

Type of diversity	Norway	Flanders
Structure, organisation / Ownership	Newspapers: 230 papers in total; 3 main owners with 70% market share; 15% independent ownership; geographic concentration (Medietilsynet, 2020) Radio: 3 main owners, 398 licences (of which 197 for FM); geographic concentration; 66% market share for PSB (ibid) Television: 4 main owners with 92% market share; 39% for PSB (ibid); only 2 produce news content Online news: A handful of online-only news outlets, mainly hyperlocal (ibid). Very high dominance of & trust in legacy news brands (Newman et al., 2020)	Newspapers: 10 papers in total; 2 main owners with 70% market share; no independent ownership; geographic concentration for 3 regional papers (Vlaamse Regulator voor de Media, 2021) Radio: 2 main owners, 63 licences (of which 11 for FM); 62% market share for PSB (cim.be, 2019) Television: 3 main owners; 36% market share for PSB (cim.be, 2019); only 2 produce news content Online news: No online-only news outlets, very high dominance of & trust in legacy news brands (Newman et al., 2020)
Brand	Stable number of brands at the national level, with traces of party press history. High degree of localism ensures brand diversity despite ownership concentration (Sjøvaag & Pedersen, 2019)	Stable number of news brands in spite of recent merger wave; brand identities increasingly important to maintain internal & external independence (Van Damme et al., 2019)
Production	45% female journalists; 24% female editors (20% in newspapers, 46% in broadcasting); 33% female sub-editors in newspapers, 38% in broadcasting; normal age distribution (Medietilsynet 2020)	31% female journalists (but 45% among those younger than 35); 29% female management positions; 31% independent or freelance journalists; average age 48 years old (Van Leuven et al., 2019)
Output / content	No evidence of increased news content homogeneity after media mergers (Sjøvaag, 2014), but organisational and strategic homogeneity within corporations (Sjøvaag et al., 2020)	Clear evidence of increased print and online news content homogeneity after media merger (Hendrickx, 2019; Hendrickx & Ranaivoson, 2019; Hendrickx & Van Remoortere, 2021)
Reception / consumption	Online most common news source (85%), smartphone most popular device (76%); Established sources dominate; 45% pay for online news; Relatively high trust in news (57%) (Newman et al., 2021)	Online most common news source (78%), smartphone most popular device (59%); Established sources dominate; 16% pay for online news; High trust in news (61%) (Newman et al., 2021)

We relied on secondary data sets, either from our own published academic works, or those of peers and relevant (inter)national reports by research groups and/or government regulators and assembled a basic list of indicators per subcategory of news diversity, which are underlined in the table above. We observe a string of notable differences and similarities in news diversity within the Norwegian and Flemish media markets, based on the exploratory study.

- The Norwegian media market appears to be 'richer' in terms of number of (news) titles and brands than its Flemish counterpart. This striking difference is to be explained by the geographical spread of the populations, political history (Hallin & Mancini, 2017) and the size of the analysed media market which create more opportunities for regional and local media ecosystems and brands, whereas the high density and proximity removes this need within Belgium's Dutch-speaking region. It is then no surprise to find out that Norway boasts 15 inhabitants per square kilometre, while Flanders has 463;

- The Norwegian news landscape has more working female journalists;
- Flanders has seen its news content grow consistently more homogenous over time, while little proof of this has thus far been detected in Norwegian news media;
- The use of online news and/through smartphones is much more commonplace in Norway, which particularly translates in the large difference in the population willing to pay for online news;
- Both markets are concentrated on the supplier side, with three main players in main market segments of newspaper ownership, broadcasting and radio;
- Both markets enjoy enduring popularity of the public service broadcasters across the traditional media carriers, with high radio and television market shares for both VRT and NRK.

Discussion & conclusions

In this paper, we departed from the viewpoint that theoretical and empirical progress on the diversity of news within media landscapes has been highly limited within academia, notwithstanding recent valuable contributions (Joris et al., 2020; Loecherbach et al., 2020; Masini et al., 2018) which confirm the increased attention for news diversity research (Hendrickx et al., 2020). We discussed the disarray in media markets, both globally and increasingly globalised, noting in particular the lack of a sustainable business model coupled with increased digitisation on both the news production and consumption side and diminishing trust levels in institutions and (legacy) media organisations.

This in turn has impacted reports and government studies on certain dimensions of diversity and/or pluralism, which tend to be flawed on three different levels. Conceptually, there is no consensus on the use of either term and definition, blurring the lines between diversity and pluralism. Methodologically, they are too overtly focused on economic indicators such as market share and HHI results, and thereby neglect news production and content as well as overarching market characteristics. Empirically, most tend to omit the shift to online news production and consumption, although some regulators note an awareness of this shortcoming, e.g. the annual German report (Kommission zur Ermittlung der Konzentration im Medienbereich, 2019). The Media Pluralism Monitor (MPM) is the only European-centred cross-media market comparison tool when it comes to assessing pluralism in EU states' member markets (Brogi, 2018; 2020), deliberately designed with the shortcomings of the American Diversity Index in mind (Napoli, 2015). While an extensive and useful report, it too focuses predominantly on economic variables to pinpoint changes in media pluralism.

We sought to assess news diversity using a much more holistic approach, including various aspects of diversity which collectively comprise the main term. For the sake of this article, we combined our own previously developed typologies for news diversity and applied it to their respective media markets in an exploratory study relying on secondary data derived from relevant academic studies and (inter)national reports. Their combination was operationalised to experimentally assess news diversity in Norway and Flanders (Belgium's Dutch-speaking region with a distinct media landscape), two media markets characterised by relatively high levels of trust and enduring popularity for public service broadcasters (PSBs). Our approach allowed not only for two distinct media markets, but also for two distinct conceptual frameworks on news diversity based on said markets to be compared.

Findings included the abundance of different media titles across platforms in Norway, while it also boasts a slightly fairer gender balance in terms of working journalists and more

embeddedness of (paying for) online news (Newman et al., 2020; The Norwegian Media Authority, 2020; Van Leuven et al., 2019; Vlaamse Regulator voor de Media, 2019). Flanders, on the other hand, was marked by evidence that its recent wave of media mergers has fostered an increase in content homogeneity. (Hendrickx & Ranaivoson, 2019). The application of dimensions from two different news diversity frameworks allowed for a new approach to secondary data gathering in a deductive fashion, with a predefined list of variables for research.

This exploratory approach resulted in findings which are only valid to a limited extent. When relying purely on secondary data from previously published publications and reports, we are dependent on the scopes, scales and sizes of said studies. The fact that we are unable to compare all aspects of news diversity properly could easily be perceived as the main flaw of our experimental analysis. However, we believe that this nevertheless illustrates the key point we wish to make. Individual academic study designs and international reports such as the MPM and the Digital News Report (Newman et al., 2020) prove very influential because of their standardised and transferable research methods, which allow for easy comparisons across media markets around the world. Their value within and beyond academia is not to be underestimated as they are able to clearly pinpoint changes both over time and across various media landscapes. But while we were able to properly compare certain aspects of news diversity, in many cases we could not retrieve easily transferable research designs and outcomes for the Norwegian and Flemish media market.

This pertains in particular to data on brand diversity, absent for both markets, diversity of news production, as well as detailed data on news exposure diversity. As a testament to the continued dominance of established empirical and theoretical frameworks on diversity measuring (e.g. Napoli, 1999) the most comparable secondary data that exist are found at the external level, with ownership concentration and other economic indicators such as market shares for various companies and technologies. Internal diversity measures are still hard to compare, not least the 'inner' gears of the Flanders model, where the conditions for production reside. This, arguably, is where the many 'crises' (Waisbord, 2019) of journalism manifest, and where comparative research would substantiate the extent of their effects across media markets.

Further analyses comparing other markets and situations would, we hypothesise, yield similar results of a profound lack of transferability. In the light of growing internationalisation of media markets and increasing homogeneity in issues they face (e.g. the role of social media, the failure of offline business models, and online advertisement revenues flowing to Google and Facebook), we follow Iosifidis (2010) and Lefever et al. (2013) who, like us, hold the view that a more standardised research design would benefit academics, media companies, policymakers and societies alike. We thereby hope that this article, and its approach of combining different conceptual frameworks on the same research topic, can contribute to further understanding and interest in assessing news diversity for multiple media markets simultaneously, using easily transferable research methods and variables.

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