

The London School of Economics and Political Science

The digital newsroom

Social media and journalistic practice in The Guardian

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# Abstract

This thesis explores the influence of social media on institutional journalism. In particular, it addresses the question of how journalists understand their practices, identities, and relationships as social media dominate their routines and activities in networked newsrooms.

A large body of literature understands the introduction of social media in newsrooms as generating change and hybridity in the practice of journalism, while on the counter side, other research emphasises the elements of continuity that persist as relations of power and control are replicated in journalistic institutions. I demonstrate that this theoretical and empirical binary cannot productively capture and explain the interrelated processes of journalistic change and continuity, especially with respect to how journalists themselves reflexively negotiate the new contradictions of their profession.

In order to transcend the aforementioned limitation, I develop an eclectic argument which highlights elements of both change and continuity. Theoretically, this approach is grounded in a Discourse Theory framework (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999) within which journalism emerges as a symbolic practice constituted through the discourse of its practitioners. Drawing additionally on pragmatic sociology (Boltanski 2011), I understand journalists as reflexive practitioners who discursively attribute value to various orders of worth in order to justify their professional practice, evaluate their own identities, and qualify their relations with others. Taking the British news organisation *The Guardian* as my case study, my analysis of ten newsroom interviews demonstrates how journalists develop these series of justifications, evaluations, and qualifications in order to define their journalistic practice, identify themselves as professionals and relate to others – mainly news audiences turned news producers.

My analysis of these interviews demonstrates the discursive process by which journalists amalgamate elements of change and continuity in their talk. Specifically, my findings confirm a shift in the ways that journalists justify their practice, which is today associated with a new valorisation of networking. This networking logic is further responsible both for the ways in which individual journalists evaluate themselves as social media-driven professionals and, at the same time, for the ways in which they qualify their connections with increasingly diverse audiences in terms of participatory journalism. This shift towards networking, however, does not necessarily undermine long-standing journalistic values. As I find, the journalists continue to justify their practices in terms of institutional norms, instrumentalising social media in their pre-existing routines and occasionally cooperating with online users in order to corroborate the journalistic truth. It is ultimately their institutional identities that they re-invent through social media, and it is according to their institutional expertise that they evaluate themselves as professionals. And, whilst they do use social media in order to sustain their relations with sources, peers, and audiences, it is this grounding on their institutional standpoint that makes it possible for them to criticise these media as hostile and unreliable platforms regulated by opaque algorithms and profit-oriented principles.

In conclusion, my analysis and discussion enable me to advance a critical understanding of change and continuity in social media driven professional journalism; one that is grounded on a major discursive contradiction, namely that journalists embrace both the networking logic of social media and the critique of its civic shortcomings, in order to represent journalism as an institution of reformed and civic-minded networked action.

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# Table of Contents

<b>1. Introduction .....</b>	<b>9</b>
1.1 Social media in the newsroom .....	9
1.2 Thesis outline.....	18
<b>2. Literature review: journalism between continuity and change.....</b>	<b>26</b>
2.1 Introduction .....	26
2.2 The roots and decline of high-modern journalism.....	28
2.3 Change: Network-induced hybridity in journalism .....	32
2.4 Continuity: the relative closure of journalism.....	41
2.5 Discussion .....	49
<b>3. Conceptualising journalistic practice .....</b>	<b>53</b>
3.1 Introduction .....	53
3.2 Language and social life .....	55
3.3 Discourse and power.....	59
3.4 Practice and reflexivity.....	63
3.5 Journalism as the discursive practice of reflexive practitioners .....	71
<b>4. Methodology: towards the empirical analysis of journalistic discourse.....</b>	<b>76</b>
4.1 Introduction .....	76
4.2 The research questions .....	78
4.3 The phronetic approach to empirical research.....	80
4.4 The Guardian as a paradigmatic case of digital journalism.....	82
4.5 Narrative interviews with elite participants.....	88
4.6 The hermeneutic process of discourse analysis.....	96
<b>5. The institution of journalism: justification of practice .....</b>	<b>102</b>
5.1 Introduction .....	102
5.2 Civic journalism: solidarity with the ordinary citizen .....	106
5.2.1 <i>Talking about inequality</i> .....	107

5.2.2 <i>Against fake news: the contingency of truth</i> .....	108
5.2.3 <i>'What kind of journalism is this?'</i> .....	110
5.3 Industrial journalism: verification of public opinion .....	112
5.3.1 <i>Verifying social media content</i> .....	114
5.3.2 <i>Extremists on social media</i> .....	115
5.3.3 <i>Verification as institutional test</i> .....	117
5.4 Social media journalism: the connectionist conception of public opinion .....	120
5.4.1 <i>The inspired construction of the audience</i> .....	121
5.4.2 <i>'Journalese': the constraints of institutional journalism</i> .....	123
5.4.3 <i>Relationships with diffused audiences</i> .....	124
5.5 Networked journalism: reforming institutional journalistic practice .....	127
5.5.1 <i>Finding the people</i> .....	128
5.5.2 <i>The inertia of the past</i> .....	129
5.5.3 <i>The old with the new</i> .....	130
5.6 Concluding reflections .....	133
<b>6. The journalistic subject: evaluation of worth</b> .....	<b>139</b>
6.1 Introduction .....	139
6.2 Authority and tradition .....	144
6.2.1 <i>Authority and hierarchy</i> .....	145
6.2.2 <i>Self-branding and cat videos</i> .....	146
6.2.3 <i>An old-fashioned character</i> .....	148
6.3 Distinction.....	150
6.3.1 <i>Esteem and prestige</i> .....	151
6.3.2 <i>The problem with online traffic</i> .....	152
6.3.3 <i>A special contribution</i> .....	154
6.4 The industrial worth of work.....	157
6.4.1 <i>The work of the craftsman reporter</i> .....	158
6.4.2 <i>Facebook as editor</i> .....	159
6.4.3 <i>Good journalists across organisations</i> .....	162

6.5 The worth of networked popularity .....	164
6.5.1 Reputation-building activity.....	164
6.5.2 Interpreting the data.....	166
6.5.3 The personal with the institutional.....	168
6.6 Concluding reflections .....	171
<b>7. Journalists and others: qualification of relations.....</b>	<b>176</b>
7.1 Introduction .....	176
7.2 Openness.....	180
7.2.1 Transparent reportage.....	182
7.2.2 The limits of social media engagement.....	184
7.2.3 Active audiences .....	186
7.3 Truthfulness .....	189
7.3.1 Keeping newspapers honest.....	190
7.3.2 Politics, businesses, and amateurs.....	192
7.3.3 Sources and witnesses.....	194
7.4 Recognition.....	197
7.4.1 A unique quality.....	198
7.4.2 Tabloids and virality.....	200
7.4.3 A journalistic elite.....	202
7.5 Care .....	204
7.5.1 The dominant motivation.....	205
7.5.2 Passive and aggressive social media users .....	206
7.5.3 Workers and real people.....	208
7.6 Concluding reflections .....	211
<b>8. Findings and concluding remarks .....</b>	<b>216</b>
8.1 Introduction .....	216
8.2 Conceptual and empirical contribution.....	217
8.2.1 The economies of worth in journalistic practice.....	217
8.2.2 Empirical findings.....	220

8.2.2.1 Social media in the paradigms of journalism .....	221
8.2.2.2 The resilient values of the journalistic identity .....	225
8.2.2.3 Enhancement of diverse relations with others.....	229
8.3 Concluding remarks.....	232
<i>8.3.1 How journalism changes and how it remains the same.....</i>	<i>232</i>
<i>8.3.2 The connectionist institution of journalism .....</i>	<i>235</i>
<i>8.3.3 Civic journalism and its limitations .....</i>	<i>237</i>
8.4 Future directions: the autonomy of creative journalists .....	239
<b>References.....</b>	<b>242</b>



# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Social media in the newsroom

*Twitter would become an astonishing tool in a reporter's armoury. Formidable at distribution, aggregation and immediacy, it would greatly help the process of verification as well as spread falsehoods. It would be an indispensable marketing weapon. It would change the tone of public engagement and conversation, level the playing field between the voiced and the previously voiceless. It would create a flatter society. There would be common conversations across geographies where none existed previously. It would speed the world up. It would have different news values from the agendas set by mainstream media. The power of hundreds of thousands of people articulating their own news values would wash back into newsrooms. [...] It would change accepted notions of authority – who was an 'expert'; and of the value of the 'expert' in relation to the power of peer-to-peer authority (Rusbridger 2018, 142).*

The author of the words above is Alan Rusbridger, the former editor of The Guardian who led the news organisation for 20 years, seeing it grow from a comparatively small newspaper for British progressives and liberals, into the globally recognised, digital news operation that it is today. The quote is from his latest book, where he offers an account of this intense, transformative period of The Guardian and the wider journalistic sector, from a perspective 'at the eye of the storm' as he puts it (Rusbridger 2018, 21). Evidently, his is an overwhelmingly positive appraisal of the influence that digital technologies, and in particular social media such as Twitter, might have on the ways that the public conversation is conducted, and consequently on the practice of journalism. This position is hardly surprising; Rusbridger had been one of the most enthusiastic proponents of the integration of web 2.0 technologies in the editorial and publishing processes of mainstream journalistic organisations, such as The Guardian. He had famously articulated the vision that guided The Guardian's innovative approach to the convergence

of their print and digital operations, as 'open journalism'. Openness signified a different approach to journalism's relationships with its readers, suggesting a break with the 'closed', exclusionary practices of the past. With the adoption and operationalisation of blogs, the invitation to user generated contributions, the various inventive reimaginings of news formats, and simultaneously, the integration of social media in the newsroom, The Guardian was oriented towards the 'mutualisation of news'. Mutualised news is conceived as co-produced by journalists and audiences. Their cooperation is grounded on democratic ethics: if journalists are to serve a democratic citizenry, they have to establish peer-to-peer relationships with the plurality of ordinary citizens who are now empowered to voice their concerns on networks. In his book, Rusbridger acknowledges the influence of Jay Rosen, Clay Shirky, and Jeff Jarvis on his thinking, the academics who have argued for the democratising influence of network technologies on journalism (Rosen 2012; Jarvis 2006; Shirky 2009). This vision has now become reality, Rusbridger seems to claim above, and journalism is now closer than ever to being what James Carey had hoped, a conversation (Carey 1995).

At the time, almost a decade ago, that The Guardian began to systematically introduce social media into its journalistic practice and experiment with their various affordances, I was employed as an editor with a big, legacy news publisher in Athens, Greece. When I joined the news organisation in 2011, the convergence of their print and digital news production had been only recently initiated, and there was still uncertainty about how this fusion could actually be implemented. This was a period during which the journalistic world was seemingly synchronised in an international debate about the future of news (Curran 2010; Franklin 2014, 2012). With the global news industry in financial crisis, the question that journalists were pondering could be framed largely thus: what kind of journalism should we be doing now in order for the profession to remain relevant in the

future? We turned for answers and inspiration to other major international news organisations, such as The Guardian, The New York Times, the Financial Times, or Le Monde, and followed the metajournalistic conversations on social media or websites such as the Columbia Journalism Review. I identify the origins of this thesis in this period, when I experienced the tensions and contradictions of a profession that was essentially grappling with its existential questions: what it means to do journalism, and who can be considered a good journalist.

The Guardian's answer to the existential journalistic questions, in the form of Rusbridger's vision of a social media-driven journalism, seemed the more compelling to me at the time. With a background in magazine journalism, I was in a position to identify with the creative spirit of social networking and appreciate the more subjective kind of writing that was possible with social media posts. I was also coming to understand that there were additional, practical benefits to be gained by being active on social media. They represented an easier way to find various sources, to pick up interesting facts, follow trails of information, keep up with breaking events as they happened, and come across communities and their leading voices, as they were beginning to make themselves heard on the social platforms. Although these affordances seemed less significant for my colleagues who had already established relationships in their beats, they were especially beneficial for generalists such as myself, or journalists who were beginning to develop their networks. As I observed, for the journalists who knew how to use social media, in order to gauge the trends of public opinion, and knew how to promote their stories, the possibility suddenly existed to make a name for themselves, whatever their organisational position. It was equally possible that one could establish one's own beat, as the interlocutor of a particular group of people, or as a member of a particular culture, bypassing the organisation's established castes and rites of passage. Moreover, to have a

piece go viral was to have a better chance of getting the attention of the editors who mattered across the sector.

The incorporation of social media into the newsrooms was at the same time an attractive project for the managers of institutional news media (Micó, Masip, and Domingo 2013; Andersson and Wiik 2013). The managerial argument in my own organisation was posited in terms of a logic of risk and opportunity. There was the risk of losing relevance and revenue in a rapidly changing news industry where social media and the new 'digital native' news sites were gaining ground, and, at the same time, the opportunity to use the technologies of our competitors in order to capitalise on the considerable prestige, loyal readership, and business connections that we had accumulated as a legacy publisher. With dwindling advertising revenue, and older readerships that did not exactly match the advertisers' target audiences, the turn to social media seemed a necessary move towards a bigger and more dynamic audience. Social media were able to direct droves of their users to news content, competing with Google in referrals of online traffic (Carlson 2018). The expectation of the editors and the business departments, which were now preoccupied with revenue models (Picard 2014), was that the news organisations would be able to monetise social media traffic, effectively continuing to offer readers to advertisers as before.

To be sure, during that period of convergence (Jenkins 2004), the longstanding routines of print newsrooms were still in place in my organisation. Our news production continued to be organised in terms of the various desks. The reporters covered their beats daily and filed their copy to their supervising editors. The various stories went through a stage of proofreading and additional editing, before they were finally published, first in print and sometime later during the day on our website. To have your byline printed in

the newspaper, to have your piece published as a spread, or a section cover, were still among the accolades for which the journalists in my organisation competed. The senior editors, the leader-writers, the veteran reporters were still revered. They were grooming a cohort of junior journalists who aspired to careers in the organisation's desks, as they were building up their connections in their assigned beats. To be part of the digital hierarchy of the news organisation, to edit or write for the various sections of the website, to look after the social media accounts, were significantly less prestigious activities. With political and financial news already extensively covered by the desks of the print edition, the news stories that were written exclusively for the web were largely considered less serious – less professional.

I could understand that in many cases these criticisms against online news production were justified. As we routinely diverted our attention to social media, a heightened desire for immediacy and relevance dominated our editorial practices. As a result, the volume of our news production increased, with less time devoted to original reportage. It was more efficient to repurpose existing content: public relations newsletters that promoted particular products or services, political parties' press releases, news agency material, and even other news organisations' articles. What was required for a potentially popular article was a different angle on the pre-existing material, which could be clearly signified in the social media posts with which we diffused our stories. This shift towards commodified and efficient news production that the relevant academic research had identified (Fenton 2010; Phillips 2012) was even more pronounced in the newer digital news sites that were rapidly emerging. I was aware that my colleagues in these websites were expected to meet production and traffic quotas, as they endured long hours of deskbound shifts, working in increasingly thinning teams. It was my understanding then that the 'culture of the click' (Anderson 2011) fed off and contributed to the precarious

labour conditions in journalism. The worries about the vanishing prospects of long-term journalistic careers and the trivialisation of our work dominated the conversations of my journalistic community. The themes of our discussions coordinated with the international debates of the journalistic world where the shifts in the profession were largely perceived as a major crisis (Schlesinger and Doyle 2015; Zelizer 2015); to be a professional journalist was becoming increasingly meaningless. These experiential reflections on the shifts in the journalistic sector and the ambivalent journalistic negotiations of newer and older practices gradually translated into my research concern about the influence of social media on institutional journalism that has led to this thesis.

Social networking platforms are today an ubiquitous staple of everyday journalistic practice (Lewis and Molyneux 2018). Journalists turn to social media, such as Twitter (Molyneux and Mourão 2017), Facebook (Paulussen, Harder, and Johnson 2017), or Instagram among others (Vázquez-Herrero, Direito-Rebollal, and López-García 2019), in order to monitor and gather the news (Beckers and Harder 2016), identify potential sources and witnesses (Broersma and Graham 2012), share and diffuse their own journalistic production (Hermida et al. 2012), answer and pose questions in the various conversations (Chorley and Mottershead 2016), gauge the trends of public opinion (McGregor 2019) and, quite frequently, verify the various claims that emerge in the public square (Hermida 2015). Overall, social media are embedded integrally in various newsroom processes, facilitating the publishing, investigation, and diffusion of the news, as well as enabling the participation of audiences and the monitoring of online users (Neuberger, Nuernbergk, and Langenohl 2019). The ability to construct a social media identity by joining and developing a network of connections is recognised as a vital professional capacity in the current journalistic milieu (Molyneux, Holton, and Lewis 2017). Journalists view their engagement with social media communities as a

participatory practice (Singer et al. 2011); a way of building relationships of reciprocity with their audiences, thus earning their trust (Lewis, Holton, and Coddington 2014).

And yet, there is reason to doubt that all journalists share a positive view on social media. In the wake of the 2016 US election and the rise of right-wing populism in Europe, journalists became concerned with social media's contribution to the toxification of the democratic public sphere (Ward 2019). This concern was evident in the investigative work of big journalistic organisations that probed into the various cases where social media were gamed to spread misinformation and disinformation as part of political communication campaigns (Tandoc, Jenkins, and Craft 2019). The key investigation that shifted the wider social perceptions of social media, problematising their democratising promise, was conducted by various legacy news organisations, and unveiled the role of Cambridge Analytica in the US election. By revealing that the political consulting firm harvested millions of social media profiles in order to spread political propaganda, journalists effectively called for the regulation of social media companies (Crilley and Gillespie 2019). The calls for the regulation of social media also highlight the phenomenon of online harassment; social media users frequently experience hostility and aggression (Quandt 2018). Journalists, particularly women and members of minority social groups, are routinely targeted by 'trolls' (Adams 2018; Robinson 2017). With little known about the ways that social media algorithms regulate the connections and conversations on the platforms, journalists question their news selection principles (Bell et al. 2017). In a shift of perspective related to the absorption of online advertising revenue by the big technological platforms (Newman 2019), journalists now perceive social media companies as antagonistic publishers (Kleis Nielsen and Ganter 2018). In this light, concerns with social media analytics intensify, as journalists contest their influence on editorial decisions (Hanusch 2017). Overall, current journalism very

frequently seems to instigate and amplify critical stances against social media as powerful and yet unregulated companies. In support of their criticisms, journalists undertake investigative projects with the intent to bring the facts about social media to their audiences (Ryfe 2019), operating according to the long-standing conventions of their practice (Zelizer 2004).

In the picture of current journalism that I have painted in broad strokes above, drawing on a brief selection of research into journalistic attitudes vis à vis social media, I can tentatively identify the ambivalence in the face of change that I have experienced as a practitioner. Journalists, on the one hand, embrace social media as an invaluable element of their everyday practice. On the other, they denounce social media, concerned with their power over the public conversation and journalism in particular. What is made clear, however, is that the ambivalent negotiations of journalists in the present-day happen in the settings of networked newsrooms where social media dominate the journalistic routines and activities. It is this shift in the conditions of actual journalistic practice that in my view warrants anew the investigation of the influence of social media on institutional journalism.

Hence I claim that, if we are to understand how journalism is practised in the era of social media, we need to take a deep look into the actual journalistic practices of digital newsrooms. Towards that end, the primary line of inquiry of this thesis refers to the questions that seemingly emerge in practice, apparent in the journalistic negotiations of the profession's new contradictions. *What does it mean to do journalism in the era of social media? Who can be considered a good journalist today? What do good journalists do and how do they relate with others?* It is by seeking answers to questions such as the ones that I tentatively formulate here that I hope to gain a deep understanding of the ambivalence



and contradictions of journalistic change, with a view to illuminating the ways in which social media influence institutional journalism.

In this thesis, I turn to the journalists for answers to my questions. I take the view that journalists are experienced and knowledgeable practitioners, capable of critical reflection on the conditions of their practice. Insofar as modern-day journalists are active daily in the networked newsrooms of their organisations, their experiences and perspectives are valuable for our understanding of social media-driven journalism. In particular, I was interested to know what journalists from The Guardian had to say about the practices in their own newsroom. As I have indicated earlier, I consider The Guardian a leading example of how a mainstream news organisation incorporates social media into its journalistic routines.

Before I proceed to offer an outline of this thesis, allow me to conclude this introduction in the same manner that I began, with an excerpt from Alan Rusbridger's book (2018, 359), where he describes a business meeting with representatives from Facebook. I can appreciate here the symbolic value of this interaction, where the social media executive asks the news editor:

'This journalism you think we should be supporting, what does it look like? [...] What is journalism? Who gets to do it? Do you all agree on a core set of standards and ethics and methods? Do you all agree on a common concept of public interest?'

Insofar as we are interested in the relationship between social media and journalism, I find that it is worth taking seriously what journalists have to say about what journalism is, their ethics, and indeed 'who gets to do it'.

## 1.2 Thesis outline

The thesis consists of eight chapters of which this introduction is the first. In the following Chapter 2, I review the relevant academic literature. I begin the chapter with a selection from the scholarship that historicises the rise of industrial journalism and criticises its shortcomings. In the section that follows, I review a body of literature that focuses on how journalism changes, emphasising the network-induced hybridity of journalistic practices. I begin this section by briefly identifying the major social theories that have contributed to our understanding of the networked relationships of late-modern societies. I then review the work of scholars who draw on these theories in order to elaborate the ways in which social media effect change and hybridity in journalism. From this perspective, social media induce the networked restructuring of journalism. This transformation entails changes in the journalists' relationships with others, and in particular with the audience, which now participates in the production of the news. Consequently, journalistic ethics become enriched with the values of transparency and openness, which the practitioners enact in the process of their networked identification. In the following section, I review a different body of scholarship, which concentrates on the continuities of journalism. Researchers here draw mostly on various sociological theories, in order to approach journalism as a profession that defends its autonomy, an institution with persistent structures, and as a field of practice under the heteronomous influence of the powerful fields of politics and the market. The findings of this strand of research indicate that journalists largely uphold the boundaries of their field, repairing their practical paradigms, as they continue to envision their social roles as political. Effectively, social media are normalised in journalism, fitting into existing routines, in line with existing norms. The journalists are shown to foreground their expertise in order to expel other

actors from their professional jurisdiction, as amateurs. Concomitantly, their audiences insist on the preservation of journalistic standards. The values associated with professional journalism – objectivity, autonomy and public service – are found to persist. In the final section, I critically evaluate the two bodies of scholarship that I reviewed. First, I identify a major pitfall in the research that emphasises social media-induced change in journalism. Specifically, I take issue with the lack of reflection on the entrenched relations of power that social media activity reproduces. I then evaluate the literature that emphasises journalistic continuity and find that the researchers here largely underestimate the reflexivity of journalists, thus foreclosing the possibility of meaningful change. I argue that in order to study productively the dialectics of continuity and change in journalism we need to focus on the discourse of journalists as reflexive practitioners.

In Chapter 3, I synthesise the conceptual framework that allows me to understand journalism as the discursive practice of reflexive practitioners. I draw on the theoretical framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999a; Fairclough 1992, 1989) in order to understand how discourse, as the social use of language, constitutes social practices. In the first section, I briefly refer to the genealogy of CDA, which I trace in the theories of the ‘linguistic turn’, in order to substantiate my understanding of the social character of language and its capacity to shape the various domains of action. In the following section, I show how CDA draws on post-structuralist thought in order to enhance our understanding of the dialectics of language and meaning with power. Following this line of thinking, I refer to the dialectics of meaning and power within the concept of discourse. In discourse, relations of power and relations of meaning are fused in order to produce knowledge, beliefs, and identities. In the section that follows, I argue that it is with the articulation of various discourses that the elements of

social practices are structured in meaningful arrangements. The logic of the articulation is antagonistic: a particular discourse is constituted against another, excluded discourse. It is in this articulatory process that particular practices are instituted as distinct fields. Nonetheless, it is on account of the same process that institutional discourses can be subverted by other, antagonistic discourses. The antagonisms between the discourses are enacted in the conflicts of actors situated in particular contexts. In the struggles of the various fields, actors draw on various discourses in order to justify their action and criticise that of others. In this process, they refer to a plurality of conceptions of the common good. I refer to these patterns of moral meaning, after Boltanski and Thévenot (2006), as *polities*, and I understand them as the abstract discourses that form around economies of worth. In the final section, I operationalise the conceptual framework in order to offer a theorisation of journalistic practice. From my perspective, journalists articulate a variety of discourses as they draw reflexively on the *polities* in order to institute their practice and act vis-à-vis others. They institute journalism as a distinct field when they draw on the *polities* in order to justify their practice. They act in two ways: they identify themselves when they draw on the *polities* in order to evaluate their worth. And they negotiate their relationships with others when they draw on the *polities* in order to qualify these relationships.

In Chapter 4, I begin by operationalising my conceptual vocabulary in order to formulate the research questions of this thesis. I pose my primary research question thus: *How do journalists understand their practices, identities and relationships now that social media dominate their routines and activities in networked newsrooms?* My secondary questions guide my investigation of how journalists institute their practice, identify themselves and relate with others. I ask: *How do journalists justify their practice? How do journalists evaluate their worth? How do journalists qualify their relationships with others?* I then

proceed to outline the methodology of my research. In the first section, I explain my approach to the study of journalistic practice by reference to the principles of phronetic social science. I adopt a phronetic approach to the design of this research, with the objective of studying the practical knowledge of situated journalists in order to understand the ethics and power relations of journalism. As I explain in the following section, this entails the study of particular contexts and particular cases. I present The Guardian as a paradigmatic case of digital journalism and argue that it is by focusing on the understandings of its journalists that we can offer analytical generalisations about contemporary journalistic practice. In the section that follows, I identify my method of data generation and describe the various stages of my empirical research. I have conducted narrative interviews with ten Guardian journalists, thus gaining access to my interlocutors' deep knowledge of actual newsroom practice. The journalists that I spoke with blended in their narratives accounts of their experience with understandings of good journalistic practice, thus offering me rich empirical material. In the final section, I detail the method that I followed in order to analyse my transcribed interviews. I have analysed the texts following the principles of CDA, in order to elucidate the socio-discursive processes of journalism. Effectively, this was a hermeneutic analytical practice that entailed a cycle between the journalists' understandings, the meanings of the texts, and my theoretically grounded interpretations. In the course of my analysis, I identified the various discourses on which journalists draw in order to justify their practice, evaluate themselves, and qualify their relationships. I organise these interpretations and reflections on journalistic practice as answers to the questions of this thesis, in the three empirical chapters that follow.

In the first empirical chapter, Chapter 5, I explore how journalists justify their practice. I find that they articulate four discourses, as paradigms of journalistic practice, as they

draw upon a plurality of polities. The first paradigm, civic journalism, refers to the civic polity, which valorises collective life. It calls for solidarity with the citizens, whose causes the journalists should take on as they facilitate their participation in the public debate. Social media are viewed suspiciously from this perspective, as implicated in the reproduction of inequalities. In the second paradigm, industrial journalism, the journalists aspire to be the expert professionals in matters of public opinion. Drawing on the polities of industry and public opinion, this discourse speaks of the need for the verification of facts by truth-seeking journalists. Social media are here some of the instruments of journalistic work as well as an additional field of reportage to be scrutinised. Social media are fundamental in another journalistic paradigm, which I call social media journalism, according to which journalists connect with various social groups on the networking platforms. Drawing on the polities of connectionism and public opinion, which valorise networking and the opinions of others respectively, social media journalists contest the hierarchies of institutional journalism and assume the individual responsibility to develop their networks. Finally, networked journalism presents itself as a vision for the participatory reform of institutional practice. It is a hybrid paradigm, in which journalists move between the offline and online world, connecting with others on social media as well as more traditional ways of communication. This hybridity is grounded on the articulation of the connectionist polity with the polities of civic life and public opinion, which allows the journalists to represent their social media activity as participatory practice. Overall, I find that the new connectionist vision of participatory, networked journalism co-exists with the long-standing ideal of professional journalism as the fourth estate, according to which expert journalists can instrumentalise and scrutinise social media.

In Chapter 6, I look at how journalists evaluate their worth, the discursive process by which they identify themselves. I have found that the journalists evaluate themselves in terms of four types of worth. First, they draw on the domestic polity, in order to identify themselves as figures of traditional authority. Social media are rejected in this logic of identification, as traditionalists see them as a threat to journalistic quality. Another understanding of worth, distinction, refers to the polity of public opinion. Journalists here use social media as part of their efforts to distinguish themselves among their peers, whilst being mindful of their instrumentalisation by their managers. In another professional understanding of worth, it is objectivity, impartiality and the production of 'hard' news that are valorised. All of these worthy attributes refer to the principle of efficiency which journalists articulate as they draw on the industrial polity. Finally, it is by hybridising the polities of public opinion and connectionism that the journalists construe a new type of worth, networked popularity. Journalists increase their networked popularity when they develop their connections on social media and actively brand themselves. In this process of networked identification, they negotiate the personal and professional aspects of their self-identities, leaning towards the latter. Overall, I find that journalists hold on to the established values of their profession, even whilst they strive to develop their social media profiles. In particular, they seem to explicitly reject the accumulation of profit as a marker of journalistic worth. I also find that the civic type of worth that I have located previously in the journalistic justifications is missing from the array of the journalists' desirable evaluations.

In Chapter 7, I turn my attention to how journalists qualify their relationships with others. I find that their conflicts and agreements are grounded on a plurality of moral qualities, which the journalists articulate in four discourses. In the first discourse, a quality of openness characterises relationships with active audiences and other members of

networked groups. The journalists who act according to the connectionist logic of openness and transparency engage with others online and offline, incorporating their contributions to the stories that they publish. Another quality, that of truthfulness, comes from the industrial polity and characterises the relationships of journalists with their audiences and sources. These are relations that can now also be established in social media interactions. The professional journalists who seek the truth often invite readers' contributions over social media so that they can present facts and verified evidence. In contrast, for the journalists who seek to establish relations of recognition with their peers, relationships with audiences are less important. The relations of the journalistic community can now be constituted online as well as offline. Significantly more inclusive relations are those of care towards others. This is the quality that characterises the relationships of journalists with ordinary people. Drawing on the civic polity, the journalists take care to represent the discontents of ordinary citizens and offer them a platform to tell their own stories. Overall, I find that social media have empowered journalists to expand the diversity of their relations, adding various other actors to their customary interlocutors. Nonetheless, considering the critiques in all of the above discourses, I find that journalists are simultaneously highly suspicious of social media, seeing them as hostile and unreliable platforms regulated by opaque algorithms and profit-oriented principles.

I conclude the thesis in Chapter 8, where I indicate my academic contribution, as I draw together the main findings of the study, discuss its main themes, and reflect on future possibilities for research. Overall, I find that indeed a shift has taken place in institutional journalism, which is associated with the induction of social media into journalistic routines. This shift is first evident in the journalists' justifications of their practice. Journalists draw on the connectionist polity, in order to justify social media-driven



journalism as participatory practice. Nonetheless, traditional, industrial journalistic justifications continue to be extremely relevant: journalists use social media according to their long-standing standards in their professional routines of truth-seeking. Considering the journalistic evaluations, I find that whilst journalists seek to accrue the newer worth of networked popularity, they still aspire to be reputed as good professionals, as authorities, or experts in matters of public interest. In terms of the ways in which they qualify their relations, I find that journalists open up to social media users and expand the range of their interlocutors. Nevertheless, journalists launch a scathing critique against social media as hostile and unreliable platforms that undermine political deliberation and function as monopolistic publishers. Considering the contradiction in the journalists' simultaneous embrace of the connectionist spirit and the critique of its civic shortcomings, I argue that they seek to represent journalism as an institution of reformed and civic-minded networked action. Finally, I consider the civic critique against the networking logic of social media, and identify its limitations. As I contemplate avenues for future research in the last section of the chapter, I propose to address the limitations of civic minded journalism and develop a normative framework that would couple journalistic civic duty with personal creativity.

## 2. Literature review: journalism between continuity and change

### 2.1 Introduction

In this thesis, I seek to explore the influence of social media on institutional journalism. I begin by reviewing, in this chapter, what existing literature offers in terms of the ways that journalism is practised, the factors that determine the worth of journalists, and the ways in which journalists claim their autonomy, paying particular attention to recent research on the relationship of social media and journalism.

I commence my review of relevant theoretical and empirical contributions to the field of journalism studies with a selection from the literature on the history, values, and politics of institutional journalism, which has been mostly identified with its professional, objective journalistic paradigm. In the main body of the review, I present and critically evaluate the literature that looks specifically at the relationship between social media and journalism. I identify two major strands of thought with different views on the introduction of social media into journalism, which I review in two sections. In the first of these sections, I include work by researchers who have contributed to our understanding of social media-induced changes in journalism. This body of scholarship views change from the perspective of theories that understand the fluidity of late-modern societies in terms of the networked reorganisation of social relations. Actors organise in social networks that intermesh with the rising digital networks in ways that destabilise existing power structures and identities. Social media can be considered as socio-technical networks that challenge long-standing norms and routines of journalism and play a major role in inducing heterogeneity and hybridity in journalistic practice. Due to the horizontal character of network relations, the new kinds of journalism that are

possible with social media seemingly facilitate the participation of others in news production, effectively blurring the lines between journalists and their audiences. In the section that follows, I turn to a contrasting, variegated body of scholarship, which concentrates on the continuities of journalism. Journalism is approached here as a profession, a field of practice, and an institution. From these conceptual optics, journalism continues to defend its autonomy and jurisdiction over the public square. Enmeshed in relationships with the state and the market, journalism moves to reinforce its boundaries, mostly with its self-attachment to the professional values of efficiency, objectivity, and civic duty. Social media, as this strand of research finds, are included in journalistic practice to the extent that they are compatible with existing journalistic values and can be instrumentalised as part of existing routines.

In the final section, I draw together the threads of appreciation and critique of the literature that I review, and position my own study vis-à-vis the existing research. I find that the first body of scholarship that I assess has contributed greatly towards our understanding of journalistic change as hybridity and heterogeneity, while offering valuable insights into the role that social media play in the current flux of journalistic practice. Nevertheless, I would argue that this strand of thought underestimates the relations of power that networks, and social media in particular, reproduce, as the more critical scholarship helps us understand. In contrast, the second body of literature that I review is keenly aware of relations of power and their reproduction. The theoretical and empirical contributions of this strand of researchers illuminate the workings of journalistic continuity and underline the endurance of the norms and routines that enable journalists to circumscribe their practice. Nonetheless, I find that the focus on reproduction is sustained at the cost of underestimating the reflexivity of journalists, whose choices appear to be a priori determined by their relationships with political and

financial power. I argue that to approach the study of journalism in the era of social media either with a resolute focus on change, as the first body of literature suggests, or to insist a priori on the continuity of professional practice, as the second group of researchers seemingly do, would be unproductive. What we need, in order to transcend this binary opposition of continuity and change, is a theoretical perspective, together with a research design, that appreciates the dialectics of continuity and change. Hence, it is my intention to contribute with this thesis the theoretical and empirical findings that can help us understand how journalism changes and how it remains the same.

## 2.2 The roots and decline of high-modern journalism

Before I examine the recent literature that looks at how social media relate with current journalistic practice, I will try, with the help of relevant scholarship, to briefly outline the historical trajectory of institutional journalism. Specifically, I will sketch how the journalistic, objectivist paradigm emerged, came to dominate the high-modern practice of Western journalism, and eventually entered a period of decline. By drawing on the scholarship that historicises the rise of journalism and critiques traditional journalistic practice, I aim to offer a knowledge basis that will help us understand the context in which a network-driven journalism emerged.

There are many accounts of the emergence of modern journalism amidst the wide structural transformations of the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, which can be reconciled in the view that journalism's consolidation as a discipline was largely in place by the 1880s, first in the US and soon afterwards across Europe. Influenced by the positivist spirit of that time (Nerone 2013), journalists claimed to publish the facts about current events on the basis of their reporting work (Muhlmann 2008). It was American journalism that first anchored the truth of its reports in objectivity, in a move that was seemingly influenced by the

Progressivist spirit of the 1920s (Waisbord 2013). Objective journalism was grounded on the claim that the truth could be verified by the journalists as experts whose work refers to scientific principles (Maras 2013; Ward 2004). This was a technocratic paradigm of journalism that seemingly realised Lippmann's (1920) vision for the social role of journalists (Schudson 2008a). Objective journalism was institutionalised in the American universities (Carey 1965; Vos 2012), and offered to journalists normative support for the circumscription of their professional jurisdiction. Journalism could not rely on credentials, regulated admission, and a self-governing body in order to differentiate itself. The objectivity norm (Schudson 2001) functioned as the main way of instituting journalism as a profession that produces a unique kind of knowledge, namely information about current events (Schudson and Anderson 2009). The journalists who insisted on the objective reporting of events were able to cut the ties between newspapers and political parties and claim autonomy (Schudson 1978). From a complementary perspective that looks at the economy of journalism, it was the conditions of industrialisation, capital expansion, and ownership concentration of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century in Britain and the US that shaped the journalistic field (Chalaby 1998). From this optic, the claim to objectivity enabled journalists to assume a centrist political position that made their news production more appealing to larger numbers of readers (Schiller 1979). Eventually, the norm of objectivity formed a professional ethos that regulated journalistic work in the interests of a news industry that needed to efficiently produce its commodities (Glasser 1992). It seems, then, that the institution of journalism as a profession that claimed objectivity has been approached by different scholars either with an emphasis on its relations with politics, or with the market (Nerone 2013). The tension between these two powerful fields is not merely a matter of differing academic perspectives. It underlies the

contradictions of actual practice (Bourdieu 2005) and influences the ways in which journalism addresses its audiences, as citizens and consumers.

The tension between journalism's self-proclaimed obligations to citizens and the demands of its consumers was seemingly resolved in the context of the post-war years, when a wide political consensus, economic stability, and a profitable news industry nurtured high-modern journalism (Hallin 1992). In these favourable conditions for journalism, a journalistic vision became dominant, which explicitly associated the professional norm of objectivity with the notion that journalists have a responsibility to promote diversity, debate, and individual rights in the political context of liberal democracies (Siebert et al. 1956). It is this articulation of the ideals of objectivity and public service that underpinned the classical liberal journalistic paradigm of high-modernity (Benson 2008), which came to influence journalism internationally (Waisbord 2013). This professional journalistic paradigm is an ideology, Deuze (2005) argues, which construes a particular journalistic identity in terms of a set of values that appear to be shared among journalists across the world. As he claims, this professional identity comprises the beliefs that journalists provide a public service, that they are objective and fair, that they should be autonomous, and that they have a sense of immediacy and ethics. Following these principles, journalists interact with their sources, verifying the facts that they provide to their audiences (Maras 2013), whom they imagine as citizens who should be informed about the issues that pertain to life in liberal democracies (Donsbach 2009). Objective, high-modern journalism began to wane as the 1960s came to an end, and political and financial changes swept Western democracies (Hallin 1992). The journalistic claims to objectivity came under the scrutiny of academic research that showed them to be no more than rituals that journalists perform strategically in order to

deflect criticism (Tuchman 1972). In the same vein, the journalistic preoccupation with facts, reality and the truth came under suspicion, in light of the interpretative processes at play in the production of journalism (Zelizer 1993). Effectively, when journalists claim objectivity they practice value exclusion, argues Gans (2004). To avoid taking a moral stance is ultimately to the journalists' detriment, as it allows for their subordination to their sources, claims Glasser (1992), and obscures the actual value of journalistic investigations (Ettema and Glasser 1998). The attacks against institutional journalism intensified, as academic critique took issue with the journalistic ideal of the fourth estate (Hampton 2010). According to the main points of this critique, the Press seems to be detached from the citizens (Gans 2003), it is vulnerable to the influence of political communication (McNair 2012), and depends on conglomerate financial power (Curran and Seaton 2009). Because of the latter heteronomous influence, journalists unwittingly extend the hold of the market into the social fields between which they mediate (Bourdieu 1998a). The multiple discontents with journalism culminated in academic attempts to reimagine the practice in more participatory terms. Among these reformist visions, which largely drew on Dewey's (1946) thinking on democratic publics, Carey's idea of journalism as a dialogic conversation with citizens (Carey 1995), the movement of public or civic journalism (Rosen 2000; Glasser 1999), and investigative journalism as moral practice (Glasser and Ettema 2008), stand out. Evidence from international practice demonstrated that journalistic change can be more than imagined. As alternative models of professional journalism have been shown to be active across the world (Hallin and Mancini 2004; Hanitzsch et al. 2019; Örnebring and Mellado 2018), the roles that journalists can perform within the context of liberal democracies demonstrably transcend the confines of objective journalism (Christians et al. 2010; Baker 2001).

Against this backdrop of chronic discontent with objective journalism, the rise of the internet was hailed in its potential to break open the gates of institutional journalistic practice (Singer 2003). As we see next, this optimism was grounded on an argument that associated changes in the ways in which the public debate is conducted with wide-reaching social change: if new voices can be heard in public (Gillmor 2006; Pavlik 2001) and alternative paradigms of journalism can be tested (Atton 2009; Papacharissi 2009), a more pluralistic model of the public sphere would emerge (boyd 2011), which would eventually destabilise the entrenched inequalities of liberal democracies.

### 2.3 Change: Network-induced hybridity in journalism

The strand of scholarship that I examine first concentrates on the networked restructuring of journalism as the process behind the practice's apparently dynamised hybridity. The researchers whose work I present in this section see a welcome change in the empowerment of various social actors to participate in the public debates, who can now reconstruct and extend their social relations on networks. Concomitantly, new, hybrid types of journalism seem to arise, which challenge institutional practice, and push journalists towards collaborative relationships with their audiences. A simultaneous redefinition of journalistic ethics occurs, as these networked relations are grounded on the emergent values of openness and transparency. Before I present the literature that demonstrates the decisive role of social media in these shifts of the journalistic field, I will begin by identifying the major social theories that seemingly underpin this strand's views on network-induced change.

The idea that the new internet technologies would change journalism for the better was expressed in the research of the early 2000s that held strong technological-deterministic views on change. 'Journalism has always been shaped by technology,' argued Pavlik



(2000, 229), who saw that that positive change could happen in the process of *convergence*, which he understood as the material fusion of telecommunications, computing, and traditional media technologies (Pavlik 2001). From this perspective, convergence can be understood in two ways: it refers to the creative hybridisation of technologies of computing and communications that gave us database-driven websites, blogs, or later social media, but it also signifies the process of their integration with the traditional technologies of newsrooms (Pavlik 2013). A similar perspective that draws from Rogers' (2003) theory of the 'diffusion of innovations' views convergence not just as the production of new technological objects, but as *innovation* in itself: the process of restructuring newsrooms towards cross-platform production (Singer 2004; Ekdale et al. 2015; Lawson-Borders 2006).

The logic of these technological-deterministic approaches to change has been shown to be reductive by scholars who viewed the technologies of news production as themselves socially and culturally produced, and embedded in particular organisational contexts (Cottle and Ashton 1999; Bardoel and Deuze 2001). By the same token, given the multidirectional or even regressive character of social shifts, we would need to establish empirically whether technologically induced change could justify attitudes of optimism (Lievrouw and Livingstone 2002). From this temporal point onwards, I find that research on the phenomenon of journalistic change is strongly influenced by the variegated theories that are located in the wide space of social constructionism. This is the theoretical perspective that largely refers to the idea that human beings construct the social world in the meanings that they give to objects and relationships with others (Couldry and Hepp 2018).

I identify three major constructionist theories on which researchers have drawn in the field of journalism studies, and that of media studies more widely, in order to understand and investigate journalistic change. Manuel Castells' theory of the Network Society is a dominant reference for those researchers who insist on the emancipatory character of network-driven change. Castells theorises the network society as a new globalising order where actors connect with each other in horizontal relations, as nodes in networks. These social networks are fused with digital networks, such as the internet, to form a new materiality that becomes the backbone of network society (Castells 1996, 2012, 2009). A similar view of the interrelations of the cultural and the material underlies Jenkins' (2006) theorisation of convergence as a multi-layered process: 'Convergence is a word that manages to describe technological, industrial, cultural, and social changes', he writes (Jenkins 2006, 3). The process of convergence has political effects, in that it empowers alternative communities to renegotiate their relationships with powerful institutions (Jenkins and Carpentier 2013; Jenkins 2004). I consider that, to an extent, Actor Network Theory (ANT) with its emphasis on technology, networks, and hybridity, similarly recognises the power of networks to induce progressive change. It differs from the two major socio-cultural theories that I have mentioned, in that ANT emphasises the material aspect of technology (Couldry 2008). Technological objects are important for ANT as *actants* that have the power to influence action in networks, as much as humans (Primo and Zago 2015). Whilst in recent years, ANT has become the dominant paradigm (Turner 2005) within the science and technology studies (STS) subfield of media studies (Boczkowski and Lievrouw 2008; Boczkowski 2004), I find that ANT's influence on the research production of journalism studies was stronger in the earlier period of the digitisation of journalism, when the debates referred to the convergence of print and digital practices. One of the strengths of the ANT approach, favourable as it is to

ethnomethodological observation (Benson 2015), has been the production of detailed descriptions of how journalists negotiated the increasing hybridity of their practice at that time (Hemmingway 2007; Plesner 2009; Schmitz Weiss and Domingo 2010; Micó, Masip, and Domingo 2013; Anderson 2013).

By importing these theoretical perspectives and research attitudes into the field of journalism studies, the researchers within this body of scholarship were able to argue for a participatory journalism that was possible on digital networks, where the news is produced and consumed by professionals and audiences alike (Bardoel and Deuze 2001; Deuze, Bruns, and Neuberger 2007). The participation of networked audiences in news production blurs the traditional lines between producers and consumers (Bruns 2008). This traditional opposition is transcended as the two roles merge into the hybrid category of the *producers*, the networked actors with the newfound power to shape the public debate (Bruns 2005). Producers are ordinary citizens; they use the various online platforms, including blogs, forums, and the interactively enhanced journalistic websites, in order to gather, correct, publish, distribute, comment on, and publicly discuss the news (Singer et al. 2011, 15). This participatory (Borger et al. 2013; Domingo et al. 2008), *citizen journalism* challenges institutional journalism (Allan and Thorsen 2009; Lewis, Kaufhold, and Lasorsa 2010; Deuze 2009; Papacharissi 2009). Specifically, participatory news production questions the journalistic prerogative to act as the gatekeeper who decides what can be included in public conversations (Shoemaker and Vos 2009). On digital networks, the gatekeepers adjust their filtering mechanisms depending on the characteristics of the 'gated' groups, which suggests a more politically powerful position for the latter (Barzilai-Nahon 2008). Social media, which followed online forums and blogs (Bruns and Highfield 2012), arguably did more than their web 2.0 predecessors towards the empowerment of citizens to tell their own stories and represent their

personal experiences, opinions, and emotions (Papacharissi 2014, 2013). Social media storytelling can be understood as a new type of journalism. This is the social journalism, as Hermida puts it (2012a), that is constituted in the online conversations between social media users, where the distinctions between private/public, and professional/amateur become unclear (Hermida 2011). This journalism, co-created by citizens and professional journalists in their social media interactions, takes on an ambient quality, as it is shared continuously on the always-on newsfeeds of the platforms (Hermida 2010).

For journalists, to adopt social media was presented as a way to reconfigure their relationships with their audiences (Loosen and Schmidt 2012) and realise the long-standing vision of journalism as a conversation with the citizens (Rosen 1997; Paulussen, Harder, and Johnson 2017). This is the vision of networked journalism, according to which journalists actively cooperate with their audiences as citizens (Van der Haak, Parks, and Castells 2012; Beckett and Mansell 2008). Arguably, this kind of journalism, where the emphasis is on network relations, can be considered post-industrial (Anderson, Bell, and Shirky 2012): rather than delivering the news report as a finite 'product' to their audiences, which was the end-objective of industrial journalism, journalists now seek to provide a service to various networked communities (Tremayne, Weiss, and Alves 2007; Kovach and Rosenstiel 2011; Robinson 2011). The journalism of service is to the mutual benefit of journalists and the members of the communities that they address (Lewis, Holton, and Coddington 2014). The journalistic coverage of the issues that matter to particular social groups contributes to their cohesion (Usher 2012). In turn, the various communities reciprocate with a renewed trust in the press (Lewis 2020).

During the last decade, social media, and in particular Facebook (Carlson 2018; Paulussen, Harder, and Johnson 2017) and Twitter (Parmelee 2013; Cozma and Chen 2013) have proven very popular with journalists, who use them consistently to gather the news, as well as to promote and diffuse their work (Neuberger, vom Hofe, and Nuernbergk 2014). In addition, and besides continuously monitoring the social media timelines for new information (Hermida 2012a, 2010), journalists engage on social media in order to ‘crowdsource’ knowledge and co-create news stories with their online audiences (Aitamurto 2013). As journalists turn to social media for their sourcing (Hermida, Lewis, and Zamith 2014), they include a variety of other voices in their news stories (Paulussen and Harder 2014). Journalists view these individual testimonies in a manner akin to ‘vox pops’, interpreting them as representative of the currents of public opinion (Beckers and Harder 2016). Social media content is frequently embedded in the journalistic live-blog feeds, where the audience is active, ‘commenting below the line’, ‘suggesting’ and ‘interacting’ with the journalist (Thurman and Newman 2014; Steensen 2014). The utility of social media in the coverage of breaking news (Allan 2012; Vis 2012) or elections (Broersma and Graham 2012; Knight 2012) is greatly appreciated by the journalists. Nonetheless, it seems that social media sourcing is not an opportunistic venture for journalists, but a well-established component of their everyday routines (Heinrich 2012; Paulussen, Harder, and Johnson 2017). Overall, the importance of social media has become so significant in the news industry that the platforms seem to greatly influence the news judgement of journalists (McGregor 2019).

Beyond shifts in the relationships of journalists with others, and in particular with their audiences, social media seem to induce changes in the journalists’ relationships to themselves, that is, in the ways in which they identify themselves, and the values to which they commit. The process of self-identification is itself a constant preoccupation for social

media users (Papacharissi 2013). Consequently, the journalists who are active in social media actively engage in the construction of their online profiles as much as their audiences (Ottovordemgentschenfelde 2017). Journalists view this engagement as an opportunity to promote themselves and their work, practising what they understand as self-branding (Hanusch and Bruns 2017; Brems et al. 2017; Greer and Ferguson 2011). The creation of a journalistic brand entails the negotiation of the personal, organisational, and professional aspects of a self-identity (Molyneux, Holton, and Lewis 2017; Holton and Molyneux 2017). This means that journalists, in addition to their news work, often share opinions and details from their personal lives, adopting the casual and humorous tone of social media conversations (Molyneux 2015; Holton and Lewis 2011).

The networked presentation of the self to others in a way that is intended to convey authenticity is justified by reference to a value that has recently entered the set of journalistic ethics. This is the value of transparency, which some consider as the moral norm that is particular to networks (Phillips 2010; Revers 2014). Journalistic transparency does not merely refer to the practitioners' openness to networked others, but it additionally implies their accountability to their audiences (Karlsson 2011). As news production becomes transparent to audiences who now monitor and intervene in journalistic activities, journalism 'foregoes a measure of autonomy to gain legitimacy' (Vos and Craft 2017, 1517). Whilst transparency is conceived as replacing the professional ethos of objectivity (Karlsson 2010; Hellmueller, Vos, and Poepsel 2012; Hedman 2016), the traditional values that constituted the journalistic identity, such as the obligation to the truth, objectivity, and public service (Deuze 2005b) do not disappear. It seems rather the case that the values that justify journalistic truth-telling take on different meanings in the context of networked news production (Singer 2012, 2008). As Singer and Dorsher (2011) claim, these meanings include a revitalised sense of

honesty and respect for others. Overall, it seems that newer and older values co-exist in the journalistic set of ethics (Hermida 2012a), and are hybridised in order to accommodate social media in institutional practice (Bentivegna and Marchetti 2018).

As has become clear so far, hybridity is a key concept in this body of scholarship, which refers to the blurring of formerly discrete identities, norms, and practices. I find a potent theorisation of hybridity in the work of Andrew Chadwick (Chadwick and Collister 2014; Chadwick 2013, 2007), who considers it the defining feature of the current media system, in which journalism participates as a key institution. Specifically, Chadwick understands hybridity as the fusion of older and newer media logics, 'where logics are defined as technologies, genres, norms, behaviors, and organizational forms' (Chadwick 2013, 4). The implications of journalistic hybridity are considered to be more radical, as regards to the destabilisation of journalism's institutional status, in the work of scholars who insist on the networked restructuring of the practice. As journalism reforms itself as a network, with the various news organisations functioning as its nodes (Heinrich 2011), it becomes part of an encompassing 'new social news media network' where, in addition to journalists, various other institutional and individual actors partake in news-making (Bruns 2018). This theorisation seems consistent with the real-world practice that Anderson (2013) documents: journalism does not happen exclusively in newsrooms anymore; journalists and their organisations are now part of an 'ecosystem', where non-journalists, activists and politicians co-produce the news. In these conditions of the news industry, journalists follow atypical career paths, moving in and out of news organisations (Deuze 2017), out of financial necessity (Deuze 2019) or following their entrepreneurial visions (Vos and Singer 2016). As Deuze and Witschge (2018) argue, journalism gradually becomes something other than what it used to be.

The scholarship that I have reviewed in this section offers thoughtful theorisations and insightful findings that advance our understanding of the role that social media play in the current shifts within journalism. The particular strength of this strand of investigation is its emphasis on journalism's hybridity: older and newer practices, norms, and roles co-exist and intermesh creatively in the fluctuating space of journalism. The driving process behind this dynamic restructuring of journalism, the various authors here argue, seems to be the late-modern reconfiguration of social relations, which now assume the form of network connections between various actors. Such networks appear to have a hybrid socio-technical materiality; they amalgamate the soft, cultural elements with hard, technological objects. Social media are objects of this hybrid type. Due to the horizontal character of network relations, social media have the potential to flatten existing asymmetries and enhance the agency of ordinary citizens vis-à-vis long-standing institutions such as journalism. Individuals connect with each other on social media and speak about what matters to them. Journalists have responded by inducting social media into their everyday routines, collaborating with their audiences in news-making. Consequently, they have changed their practices, norms, and roles, hybridising older and newer elements. These shifts, this line of argument concludes, constitute nothing less than the transformation of journalism, which is further propelled away from its past.

The valuable contribution of this strand of research to our understanding of journalistic change notwithstanding, I find that as a whole it is largely imbued with an optimism about the emancipatory character of networks (Markham 2009), and social media in particular. In my view, this is a perspective that fails to take into account the contested position of social media in academic research and wider social experience. I find that this limitation is due to a lack of attention to the problems with entrenched relations of power, and argue that we need to adopt a critical perspective on the study of social media in journalism.



Towards that end, we need to appreciate and build on already existing critical work that has revealed how social media are associated with the reproduction of late-modern capitalist economies. Such work, where issues of political economy are of important concern, has brought to our awareness how social media individuate and fragment political action (Fenton and Barassi 2011; Fenton 2012); how they enable social movements to be formed as temporary projects that are eventually abandoned (Cammaerts and Couldry 2016); how they essentially make unpaid labour possible (Fuchs 2017); how they commodify a culture of connectivity (van Dijck 2013) and effectively contribute to the intensification of journalistic commodification (Poell and Van Dijck 2014); how social media companies approach their users as data providers rather than producers (Van Dijck 2009), and how participation can turn 'dark' when misinformation, trolling and hate campaigns happen online (Quandt 2018).

In the next body of scholarship that I review, the question of power is more prominent, as journalism is considered in terms of its internal stratification as well as its relationships with politics, markets and business. This concentration allows the authors to contribute a wealth of knowledge on what the literature that I examined above has underestimated: the continuity of journalism and the tendencies of journalists to maintain the definitions and relations of their practice.

## 2.4 Continuity: the relative closure of journalism

The second body of scholarship that I review puts its primary emphasis on the elements of continuity in journalism. This is a strand of research that has contributed deep knowledge about how journalism is practised, what kind of values dominate the aspirations of journalists, and, very importantly, how journalists strive to circumscribe a domain of autonomous action for themselves. This interest in the distinctiveness and

continuity of journalism is shared by researchers with a plurality of theoretical standpoints. For the most part, I find that these are approaches that draw on various sociological theories. In this section, I begin by identifying some of the key theories that have shaped the perspectives of the researchers within this strand. I then proceed with the findings of the various authors that bring into view the perseverance of professional journalism, the confirmation of existing values and relations, and the journalists' suspicion of social media.

As we have seen in the first section of this chapter, the concepts and rationales of the sociology of professions have been fruitfully operationalised by the researchers who sought to understand the rise of professional journalism. This sociological strand of journalism studies is concerned with journalism's professionalisation: the process by which the journalists seek to assert their jurisdiction over the provision of accurate information about public affairs via their work (Abbott 1988; Schudson 1978; Schudson and Anderson 2009; Aldridge and Evetts 2003). The strength of this approach is its emphasis on matters that pertain to journalistic autonomy; nonetheless, it does not neglect the role that professional values and culture play in the successful defence of journalistic jurisdiction against outsiders.

Similarly, the authors who draw on the sociological work of Pierre Bourdieu also concentrate on the issue of journalism's autonomy, and it is due to this affinity that these two sociological strands have cross-fertilised in recent research (Wiik 2015, 2009). Field theory, nonetheless, is a critical project of social research that has exposed the asymmetrical relations of power that make the division of labour possible. As regards journalism, field theorists have shown the impossibility of its full autonomisation from the powerful fields of politics and the market (Champagne 2005; Marlière 1998; Bourdieu

2005). Operationalising the rich conceptual vocabulary of this critical sociology, researchers have shown how deeply entrenched doxic beliefs and types of knowledge that are specific to journalism (Schultz 2007) constitute the field's immanent cultural capital. This is a symbolic resource for which journalists compete in their struggles for distinction, and strategically mobilise in order to defend their field's boundaries (Benson 1999; Markham 2008, 2011b).

Another, similar approach focuses specifically on acts of boundary work in journalism, which in addition to the protection of its independence, include the expansion of journalistic practice across other domains, and the expulsion of deviant actors and practices (Carlson 2015). Journalists perform boundary work when outsiders encroach on the journalistic jurisdiction, by repairing their practical paradigms – in this case that of professional, objective journalism, which precisely makes possible the division between insiders and outsiders, professionals and amateurs (Vos and Moore 2018). Boundaries are erected in speech; when journalists speak about their profession, in what can be understood as meta-journalistic discourse, they offer definitions of what they do and so legitimate their practice (Carlson 2016).

From the perspectives of the various strands of institutionalism, journalists follow long-standing rules, perform well-established routines, and execute cognitive scripts, all of which actions are made possible by the institution of journalism. To think of journalism as an institution is to focus on its relative stability, which is achieved overtime, with the reproduction of its norms and rules (Lowrey 2018; Vos 2019; Ryfe 2006; Benson 2006, 2004). This process of reproduction consolidates activities in routines which are perceived by journalists to define 'good' or 'real' journalism (Ryfe 2009). These definitions are resistant to change; it is a central feature of institutions to either resist

change or direct it towards a particular path, holds the historical institutionalist approach (Starr 2004). Arguably, the most important historical relationship of journalism is that with politics, which has given grounds for researchers to claim that journalism is a political institution (Cook 2006; Kaplan 2006). Journalists perceive their political roles in democratic polities in varied ways, performing what Christians et al. (2010) have classified as monitorial, facilitative, radical, and collaborative tasks, and assuming passive or active, neutral or advocacy stances (Donsbach and Patterson 2004). Nonetheless, other research has underlined how, in recent years, it is economics, not least via media ownership, that exerts significant power over the news industry (Sparrow 2006).

From the standpoint that the above theoretical approaches constitute, journalism in the era of social media tends more to the reproduction of existing practices than to their abandonment. This is the position that Ryfe (2019) takes, who, in light of the many continuities of journalism, concludes that journalists do not move radically from older to newer ways of news making. Journalists have normalised social media such as Twitter so that they fit into existing norms and routines (Lasorsa, Lewis, and Holton 2011), continuing to approach the content that users bring to their attention in line with their traditional standards and priorities (Hermida and Thurman 2008). What this attitude shows, as Lowrey (2017) puts it, is that the digital networking logic that social media represent is not fully legitimate in journalism. Against this 'interactive journalism' of social media, which they denounce as part of market driven organisational strategies (Witschge and Nygren 2009), journalists are keen to emphasise the core values of their occupation, particularly their commitment to public service (Vos and Thomas 2018b). Overall, social media journalism does not threaten the professional jurisdiction of the practice, insofar as the journalists agree on norms and procedures, finds Waisbord (2013). Nonetheless, whilst professional practice persists, journalism seems to add to its

range of coverage, in addition to public affairs, the domain of everyday life, with stories on consumption, identity-making, and emotion (Hanitzsch and Vos 2018).

Let us now turn to see in more detail what this strand of research contributes to our understanding of the relationships of journalists with other actors, and in particular with their networked audiences. Here we find that the distinction between professionals and amateurs continues to be enforced, even when journalists invite the contribution of users via social media and/or their own websites (Wahl-Jorgensen 2015). It is even the case that the collaboration between audiences and journalists is hindered by the long-standing routines that are still firmly in place in legacy media such as the BBC (Williams, Wardle, and Wahl-Jorgensen 2011). Other research throws light onto the perspective of journalistic audiences, who are found themselves to uphold institutional definitions. Members of the audience work to preserve the traditional journalistic standards, find Craft, Vos, and Wolfgang (2016), and they consider non-transparent articles to be more credible (Tandoc and Thomas 2017). Citizen journalists help the journalists to report on the communities that they cover, and thus do not appear to threaten the traditional gatekeeping function of institutional journalism (Lewis, Kaufhold, and Lasorsa 2010). More widely, it can be ascertained that, whilst other actors imitate journalistic practice (Robinson 2015), they do not challenge the boundaries of journalism, whose mediation they appreciate as legitimatory of their perspectives (Domingo and Le Cam 2015). To these findings of continuity in the relationships of journalists with their audiences, the tendency for journalistic homophily should be added: as it has been often observed, journalists use social media in order to have conversations among themselves (Molyneux and Mourão 2017; Usher, Holcomb, and Littman 2018).

Relations with others, as per this strand's rationale, are negotiated in terms of the values with which journalists identify. Overall, researchers here find that the traditional, professional values of journalists persist. It is even the case that the values of objectivity and neutrality not only regain potency, but are even spreading to countries, such as Sweden, with a different journalistic tradition than that of the US and the UK (Wiik 2014). The belief in the value of journalistic gatekeeping, which is mostly justified in terms of the journalists' sense of public service, resurfaces in the wake of the events of 2016 (fake news, US elections, trending topics scandal) that problematised social media's role in democratic life (Vos and Thomas 2018a). The civic role of journalism as the fourth estate is also found to endure as a journalistic ideal (Hedman and Djerf-Pierre 2013). The persistence of traditional norms is most potently exhibited when new players in the field, who otherwise rely on their content going viral on social media, seem willing to be perceived as professional journalistic entities (Tandoc and Jenkins 2017). Newer values, to the extent that they are associated with social media networking, are shown to have little hold over journalists' self-conceptions. The newer norm of transparency is frequently invoked in the field, but it does not seem to transfer over to actual practice (Vos and Craft 2017). Furthermore, the idea that the journalists are expected to market their own work on social media clashes with the traditional understanding of newsworthiness (Tandoc and Vos 2016). Even when journalists appreciate social media in terms of making them more accountable to the public, they are still suspicious of their effect on the quality and integrity of news (Weaver and Willnat 2016). Especially for those who identify with an elitist, traditional conception of journalism, social media are directly antithetical to their ideas about quality (Grubenmann and Meckel 2017).

The journalists are deeply suspicious of social media, according to this body of scholarship, even whilst they induct them in their routines. Journalists perceive social

media as threats to their autonomy; they associate them with managerial strategies and are conscious of the platforms' market-driven rationale. Journalists locate an avenue of undue market influence over their practice in the metrics of online traffic, which include data from social media. Indeed, the various systems of measuring the behaviour of online readers that are now active in newsrooms around the world introduce profit-oriented norms and values into professional journalism (Belair-Gagnon and Holton 2018; Tandoc 2014). The need to respond to audience demands is part of a managerial logic in journalism (Bunce 2019), which contrasts with the occupational values of autonomy and self-regulation (Andersson and Wiik 2013). Against the logic of social media algorithms, which construct 'calculated publics' by unspecified criteria, the journalists assert their own subjective choices as experts, validated by their own institutional processes (Gillespie 2014). Journalists exhibit contradictory attitudes when they use web analytics as part of their newsroom routines. Whilst they consult the metrics data in order to change the placement of news stories on their websites (Lee, Lewis, and Powers 2014), it is ultimately professional norms that guide their editorial decisions (Zamith 2018a). Furthermore, whilst editors are keen to monitor user behaviour online (Vu 2013), they do not seem to adjust news coverage decisions in response to the data (Lowrey and Woo 2010). These attitudes of distance-taking from audience preferences might even be conducive to a more civic-minded journalism (Tandoc and Thomas 2015).

In the body of scholarship that I have reviewed above, journalism comes into view as a profession, field, or institution that preserves its long-standing values, its hierarchies of internal stratification, and its relationships with audiences and other institutions. The role of social media in effecting change in the practice is mostly answered here by pointing to evidence of their normalisation: they are operationalised according to existing norms, as part of professional routines. Effectively, this means that relationships with

others (audiences, managers, antagonistic businesses) are negotiated so that journalists continue to assert their subjective interpretations of what is newsworthy, which they justify by recourse to their professional principles. The prerogative to define what counts as news, which for journalists is at the same time to define what good journalism is, is neither contested by their readers, nor by the newer digital organisations that have entered the industry.

As I have stressed earlier, this strand of research is alive to the question of power in the current shifts and negotiations in journalistic practice. This focus is served by a shared understanding of the conflictual character of social relations that underpins the conceptual perspectives of the authors. Moreover, it is a focus that becomes prominent in the examinations of journalism's relationships with the state and politics, as well as markets and businesses. With regards to the latter relationship, where journalists clash with managers, competitors in the media field, and the social media companies, it seems that some of the ideas of the critique against social media that I have enumerated in the previous section emerge. Social media, in the journalistic denunciations and researchers' findings, are seen to contribute to the commodification and rationalisation of journalistic work. With regard to journalism's relation with politics, the perception of journalism as an important institution of democratic life continues to dominate the journalistic imaginary. Journalists justify their autonomy by foregrounding their sense of public service, and in particular their long-standing ideal to function as the fourth estate that holds power to account and mediates between different social groups.

The studies that I have reviewed offer valuable insights into the state of contemporary journalism, making apparent that journalists are oriented towards preserving the fundamentals of their practice. Nonetheless, I find that by emphasising stasis over change,



the various authors seem to assume that journalism is, and always has been, this particular practice that makes objective claims, verifies facts, and promises to speak the truth. In my view, this picture of journalism as a profession that remains remarkably unchanged in comparison with its high-modern period does not do justice to the conspicuous shifts in journalistic practice that have taken place, and ultimately does not elucidate its struggles. I consider that at the heart of these limitations lies the researchers' underestimation of journalistic reflexivity. From the perspective of new institutionalist approaches, journalists seem unreflexively bound in traditions which they quite irrationally uphold in the face of change. Through the lens of field theory, journalists seem equally unreflexive, and yet strategic, as they move reactively to protect their professional interests with boundary work. From these optics, it is unclear how the continuities that the researchers observe can be the contingent outcome of journalistic negotiations. I would exempt from this critique the work by Hanitzsch and Vos (2018), who view journalism as a discursive institution, where older, professional practice co-exists with a newer logic that valorises the journalism of everyday life that addresses the audiences' emotional, identificational, and consumerist concerns. In appreciation of this dialectical perspective, I identify my own standpoint as one where we need to understand how the journalists themselves reflexively negotiate the new contradictions of their profession.

## 2.5 Discussion

The story that this literature review tells is one of a practice caught in the tension between tradition and change (Mitchelstein and Boczkowski 2009), or as Lewis (2012) puts it, in the conflict between a logic of participation and a logic of professional control. The first body of research that I reviewed identifies change with the logic of participation; it

proposes that social media restructure journalism as a network, increasing the hybridity of its practice. The second body of research identifies tradition with professional control; it insists on the continuity of journalism, showing how social media are operationalised according to institutional norms, rules, and routines. In my view, we need to transcend the binary focus on either continuity or change if we are to produce knowledgeable answers to the questions raised by the introduction of social media in journalistic practice.

Let me briefly recap the contradictions that I have identified between the two bodies of scholarship in this review, beginning with their general views on journalism. The first body of research centres on change in terms of the hybridity of journalistic practice. The researchers argue that the apparent hybridity is induced by the networked restructuring of journalism, in which social media are a key feature. Social media introduce into journalism a networking logic, according to which journalists relax the gates of their institution and engage with their audiences as citizens in cooperative ways. In contrast, the second body of research centres on the persistence of the traditional way of doing journalism and the strategies of professional journalists to maintain control over their jurisdiction. The researchers here find that social media are inducted into the existing norms and routines of the profession, so that the relations of journalism remain in their existing balance.

In terms of the values to which journalists commit in order to identify themselves, the two bodies of scholarship that I reviewed are divided. The first strand of scholarship finds that the values of transparency, participation, reciprocity etc., which are associated with networked activity, are now an integral part of journalistic ethics. In contrast, most of the researchers in the second body of scholarship recognise the persistence, or resurgence,

of the ideals of an objective or impartial journalism. Journalists continue to justify their contribution to democratic life in terms of their function as the citizens' watchdog vigilant in its monitoring of the powerful. Consequently, the ways in which journalists relate with others are approached in terms of either a newly found openness, or in accordance with traditional hierarchies of cooperation. On the one hand, journalists are seen to increasingly open up to citizens, and audiences, via networks such as social media. On the other, the imperative to maintain independence from the influence of politics and the market dominates the journalistic strategies of control over whose voice can be included in the news.

In my view, the investigation of the role of social media in journalism cannot be fruitfully approached when we think in terms of the bipoles that I have identified above. To be sure, I can locate in both strands more nuanced approaches that offer us accounts of journalistic practice that are sensitive to the dialectics of continuity and change, such as those by Chadwick (2013) and Hanitzsch and Vos (2018). It is my intention to contribute to this line of investigation, when I argue that the relations between old and new, control and participation, continuity and change, should be examined in their practical context, if we are to understand what changes and what remains the same in journalism. As I have claimed above, this entails an approach that deals with the limitations that I identify in the literature that I reviewed: with regards to the first strand, the absence of a critical perspective on the networking logic of social media, and, as regards the second, the downplay of journalistic reflexivity. Hence, I propose that in order to understand the role of social media in journalistic practice, we must be attentive to the dialectics of continuity and change in journalism. What this entails is to approach the journalists as reflexive practitioners who are capable of moral discourse and critique.

In the next chapter, I set out the conceptual framework that allows me to view journalism as discursive practice, and seek to understand how journalists negotiate relations of power, how they construe various ways of doing journalism, and how they define the values of their profession. I bring together theories of discourse, practice, and justification, in order to develop my conceptual vocabulary. With this synthesis, I theorise journalism as a symbolic practice that is constituted in the speech of its practitioners, who draw on various conceptions of morality in order to justify their autonomy and act as the representatives of their institution in their relationships with others.

### 3. Conceptualising journalistic practice

#### 3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I have offered a review of the literature that provides the theorisations and empirical findings that have advanced our understanding of journalistic practice in the era of social media. I have identified two competing strands of research with differing views on the ways that social media influence the practice of journalism, the values of journalists and their relationships with others. In the first strand I discern a focus on the hybridity of journalism, which, as the researchers here argue, is induced by the networked restructuring of its practice. The second strand insists on the continuity of journalism, seeing how journalists hold on to the professional values that allow them to negotiate their autonomy vis-à-vis others, political and financial actors in particular. I have argued that we need to avoid the pitfall of narrowing our focus on either continuity or change in journalism. To that end, I claim that a productive investigation of the role of social media in journalism will entail an approach that is alive to the dialectics of continuity and change. Such a perspective would be simultaneously attentive to the question of power, by examining the relations and conflicts of journalists, as well as to the question of culture, by taking seriously the beliefs of journalists. This is the perspective that I adopt in this thesis, when I argue that we need to take into account how the journalists themselves reflexively negotiate the contradictions of their profession. In this chapter, I outline the conceptual framework that allows me to understand journalists as reflexive practitioners who are capable of critical discourse. I have construed this framework eclectically, drawing primarily on theories of discourse, practice, and justification.

The concept of discourse is fundamental to this thesis' conceptual perspective and research design. By discourse I refer to the social use of language, as the practice that constitutes social life. For this perspective, I have turned to Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999a), as the wider tradition of socio-linguistic research in which I situate this thesis. As I show in the first section of this chapter, the genealogy of CDA extends back to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century theories of the 'linguistic turn' and the idea that language is a social resource, rather than a private capacity. This kind of thinking about the social character of language builds on the movements of structuralism, phenomenology, and hermeneutics. To structuralism, CDA owes the understanding that humans organise their social life in terms of a relational logic, the logic of the system of signification that is language. From within the wider phenomenological tradition, where the focus is on the meanings of everyday social interactions, comes the idea of the performative use of language – that is, the idea that language does not merely represent but constitutes action. And it is on hermeneutics that CDA draws in order to analyse texts with a view to uncover the patterned cultural traditions that shape and envelop human experience. The appreciation and critique of these intellectual strands comes nonetheless from a post-structuralist position, which gestures to the inextricable bond of language and meaning with power. As I show in the second section of the chapter, 'discourse' refers precisely to the relationship of meaning and power, which structures social life and forms subjectivities. In this view, identification is a process of subjectification, which happens as individuals socialised into their cultural contexts come to identify with the various subject positions construed in the different discourses. I understand discourses as existing patterns of meaning; they are formed with the articulation of the various elements of social practices which include, among others, subjects, activities, and systems of knowledge and belief. Articulation is, then, the discursive process that structures

action in the various domains of social life by arranging meaningfully its various elements. The regularities and continuity of action in social fields that Bourdieu (1990) has theorised can be attributed to the relative stability of discursive formations (Fairclough 1992). Nonetheless, as I argue in the third section, the CDA view on social life is not one where practices and identities are permanently fixed by the dominant discourses. Insofar as the logic of the articulation is dialectical, it is understood that the conflicts between the various discourses prevent their fixed hold over the various domains of social action and open the path towards change. Actors draw on the various competing discourses during their own conflicts; they do so as they reflect on the conditions of their practice, potentially with a critical attitude, and offer justifications for their action. In this sense, they reflexively articulate discourses with moral meanings, that is, with different ideas about what constitutes the common good. I refer to these moral discourses, after Boltanski and Thévenot (2006), as *polities*. Actors draw on the *polities* in order to (a) justify their practice and institute it as distinct from other practices, (b) evaluate and identify themselves, and (c) qualify their relationships with others. In the concluding section, I operationalise the conceptual framework that I have synthesised, in order to offer a theorisation of journalism as the discursive practice of reflexive practitioners.

### 3.2 Language and social life

As the previous chapter clearly demonstrates, to approach journalism as practice is a common entry point into the investigation of its current state, that unites a constructionist assemblage of approaches, as divergent as Actor Network Theory (ANT) and field theory (Ryfe 2018). Theories of practice approach social life with a keen awareness of the role that meaning, signification, and language have in human behaviour

(Couldry 2004). This perspective on the interrelations of social action and language can be traced back to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century ‘linguistic turn’ in philosophy. Theories of practice owe a major debt to Wittgenstein’s later philosophy of language as action in the world, in which he departed from his own earlier emphasis on the representational aspect of language (Couldry 2012). In particular, his understanding of ‘language games’ is frequently identified as the key influence behind the ‘practical turn’ of social theory (Schatzki 1996). The Wittgensteinian concept of the ‘language games’ is premised on the idea that linguistic action is governed by the rules of particular social contexts, so that meaning, rather than referring to the intention of the speaker, or the ‘nature’ of the sign, emerges in the social relations between actors (Chouliaraki 2008). This idea lies within the shared intellectual ancestry of sociological theories of practice, and the particular post-structuralist approach that I adopt in this thesis, namely Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999a).

Post-structuralism emerged as a philosophical movement that offered new ways of thinking about social life, as a response to structuralism. Structuralism, a dominant post-war research paradigm, exemplified in the anthropological work of Levi-Strauss, posited that we could investigate social orders as systems of related elements. This mode of social research was grounded on the understanding that social orders adhere to the specific relational logic that is inherent to humans, the logic of language (Joas and Knöbl 2009). Whilst post-structuralism develops precisely on the denunciation of the universality and rigidity of social structures, as implied in the structuralist thesis, it retains and builds on several structuralist principles, whose origins can be found in Saussure’s structural linguistics. Ferdinand de Saussure had radically reoriented the study of language, by showing that the relation between the *signifier* and the *signified*, which together constitute the *sign*, is arbitrary. The meaning of any given sign is then understood



relationally, as the difference with other signs within a system of language, the *langue* (Howarth 2000). Breaking with the then dominant positivist and empiricist paradigms, Saussure's linguistics have contributed to social sciences the understanding of the relational logic of systems and the shared character of linguistic structures.

An alternative take on the study of language is represented by the interpretive approaches, in which ethnomethodology and symbolic interactionism can be included. Drawing from phenomenology and American pragmatism respectively, these two socio-theoretical strands converge on an interest in action and the co-construction of meaning in human interaction. Ethnomethodology is particularly interested in commonplace activities and how actors make sense of them and communicate with each other. It contributes to the study of language, among other things, the concept of linguistic performativity: it is the linguistic performance that construes reality (Chouliaraki 2008). Symbolic interactionism has a similar interest in the study of joint action, and how actors connect with each other in face to face and mediated interactions (Denzin 1992; Lunt 2020). A critique of the interpretive approaches acknowledges the value of studying language in real world conversations and exchanges between actors, and yet contends that the emphasis on the individualist aspect of meaning making underestimates the givenness of historical structures (Chouliaraki 2008).

Hermeneutics, on the other hand, is the paradigm which views historical structures of meaning as the shapers of individual experience. These structures can be unearthed as the deeper meanings of texts in the course of our cyclical processes of interpretation and understanding. It should be noted that interpretation is not understood here as coming from the standpoint of the individual, but rather refers to the traditions and prejudices that shape our very attempts to understand (Warnke 1987). This approach to linguistic

analysis, particularly in Gadamer's hermeneutics, implies a view of language that extends even beyond culture, in a way that totalises the human experience of the world. From a critical perspective, this is a theoretical view of language that leaves no space for the evaluation of different interpretations, or indeed a way to account for the struggles between divergent representations (Chouliaraki 2008).

On the contrary, language is evaluative and ideological in the work of Mikhail Bakhtin, whose challenge to Saussurean structuralist linguistics has been rediscovered and appropriated by the post-structuralists. The social and historical character of language is made prominent by Bakhtin, who pays attention to how language is implicated in the conflicts between social groups. These conflicts are played out in terms of a tension between unifying, centripetal, and fragmenting, centrifugal forces (Maybin 2001). The latter produce different social languages, including genres, which are the fairly standardised ways of speaking in particular contexts of communication (Bakhtin 1986). Change (and conflict) happen as different languages and genres mix with each other, producing texts. This endows texts with a dialogical quality; they internalise the voices of others in addition to that of the author (Bakhtin 1981).

The idea that language is a social entity, and not a personal capacity or type of knowledge, draws together the various theories that have constituted the linguistic turn of social theory and research. Nevertheless, with social theory dominated by the major tension between phenomenology and hermeneutics, an account of the dialectic between the shared linguistic structures and action with language was lacking. Another problematic expression of the sociological tension between agency and structure could be located in the clash between structuralism and action theories. In the structuralist tradition, the conception of reality as an external plane that is indexed by language prevails, whilst in

the theories of action it is the subject who is the carrier of meanings and signifies the world. From these perspectives, (against which Bakhtinian analysis can be seen as an early attempt to transcend the above contradictions), it is still unclear how language becomes intertwined with the power relations that hold together the real world and position subjects. With the post-structuralist conceptualisation of language as discourse that CDA adopts, it becomes possible to speak about the relationships between power and culture, and between agency and structure, in terms of their dialectics.

### 3.3 Discourse and power

The principles and methods of the theories of the linguistic turn, despite their epistemic and ontological differences, are selectively drawn together in the paradigm of post-structuralist discourse analysis in which this thesis is situated (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999a; Fairclough 1992). Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a theory and method for the study of meaning-making that seeks to unveil how language establishes and changes power relations (Fairclough 1989). The critical perspective of CDA is informed by various strands of critical social research, including neo-Marxism and the Frankfurt School, which are integrated with the analysis of text (Fairclough 2003). Nonetheless, it is in the work of Michel Foucault that CDA finds a theorisation of power as inseparable from meaning, a fusion that throws into relief the socially constitutive function of discourse.

Foucault's oeuvre represents a move beyond phenomenology and hermeneutics that starts off from a structuralist position. In reaction to the phenomenological meaning-giving subject, structuralism insists on the rule-bound relations that determine social action, whilst hermeneutics recognises meaning as deeply entrenched in texts and social practices (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1982). Foucault's position comes from the dialogisation

of the two approaches that he performs in the two stages of his thinking about discourse. In what is often termed his archaeological phase, Foucault speaks of discourse as an autonomous field (Foucault 1969). It is the rules by which various statements are related with each other that circumscribe 'discursive formations', and make particular enunciations possible in particular contexts. These are rules that delineate the construction of institutions, subject positions, theories, and strategies, and they are formed in combinations of discursive and non-discursive elements. This is a view of discourse as constitutive of social life: discourse creates subjects and their ways of acting in relation to others, as well as the conceptual frameworks on which the various fields of activity depend. The emphasis here is in the interdependency of the discourses, which also speaks to their availability as historical resources (Fairclough 1992). The move of relating discourse with power comes in Foucault's genealogical period, in which the concept of truth is problematised. Foucault argues that the truth of statements in a discourse is not only governed by the relations between them, but it is at the same time determined by power and the struggle for power. From this perspective, the field of power is not external to discourse, insofar as power produces discourse and is exercised with discursive techniques. The understanding of the fusion of power and discourse allows Foucault to demonstrate that modern power and the maintenance of order relies on self-disciplined behaviour: subjects are formed by the various discourses; it is discourse that simultaneously produces and restrains human subjectivity (Chouliaraki 2016). Whilst this theorisation of identification has attracted the critique that it negates individual agency (ibid.), in my view it is a position that leaves open the possibility of emancipation. This is a possibility that becomes available to us, as I will argue later, insofar as we understand that human subjects are endowed with the reflexivity to recognise the constructedness of their personalities and social contexts.

In addition to the work of Foucault, CDA draws selectively from the distinct approach to discourse that Jacques Derrida represents. This mostly happens via the incorporation of the concept of 'articulation' as the process by which discourses are constructed. CDA borrows this concept from the work of Laclau and Mouffe (1985), who, in turn, have leaned heavily on Derridean thought. Derrida engages with phenomenology and hermeneutics in order to articulate a critique of structuralism. His is a critique that brings into view structuralism's weaknesses: by introducing a distinction between the plane of reality and that of language, structuralist thinking presumes a direct relationship between the signifier and the signified. This fixity implies a meaningful essence for the inside part of any binary opposition, and effectively leads to a view of hierarchies as unchangeable entities. For Derrida (1974), discourses are relational systems of signs, as per the structuralist view, but they are far from fixed and complete. Insofar as the sign relies on the excluded part of a binary set of relations for its meaning, it is not positivity, but difference that constructs its identity. Since this is a dialectic process where signs become part of new sets of relations, meaning is never fixed; it is always contingent on the relations of difference. Hence, there can be no meaningful essence in the sign, and no permanence in hierarchies. The sign itself can be thought of as 'trace', a Derridean concept that dispenses with the division between a material signifier and an abstract signified. The idea that subjects are formed by historical structures of meaning is equally present here, but in Derrida's thought this refers to a conception of discourse as totalising the social ontology and, inevitably, human experience (Howarth 2000).

Derrida's anti-positivist and anti-essentialist positioning is taken up by Laclau and Mouffe (1985) who have elucidated the political implications of the theory of deconstruction in their project to reconceptualise the Gramscian concept of hegemony. Hegemony refers to the political project of stabilising a system of meaning, a discourse, so that it appears to

be objective. The formation of a discourse happens with the articulation of various social elements, as signifiers, in a chain of equivalence. The meanings of this chain are grasped vis-à-vis an outside, excluded discourse, that is, in difference. The equivalential chain relies for its partial fixation on nodal points, and predicates one of its signifiers as its unifying representative. It is the dialectic relation between inside and outside discourse, their antagonism, that causes over time their dislocation, thus opening up the space for new constructions (Laclau 1990). Following Derrida, Laclau and Mouffe understand human reality as constituted in discourse, rejecting the ontological distinction between discursive and non-discursive practice. Insofar as discourse is performative, it has a material character and constitutes objects.

In the approaches that I have discussed, discourse does not solely refer to language and systems of signification in terms of their representational function, but makes strong claims for the power of discursive formations to constitute reality. In this sense, to speak of the social character of discourse is not just to gesture to its availability as a shared resource, the knowledge of a language, but to throw into relief the structuredness of this knowledge in terms of relations of power. This leads to the view of discourse as a social practice which can only be analytically distinguished from power; in Foucault's words 'discourse is not simply that which translates struggles or systems of domination, but is the thing for which and by which there is struggle, discourse is the power which is to be seized' (Foucault 1981, 52). The logic by which discourse produces material reality is that of articulating elements as signifiers in chains of equivalence against other, antagonistic discursive chains, as Laclau and Mouffe (1985) have shown. What this suggests, is a position beyond the division between idealism and realism, to an understanding of discourse as the material of social life. This understanding of discourse contradicts CDA's view of articulation as constrained by the other social elements, which are historically

given as already formed texts and discourses. Whilst discourse can produce systems of knowledge and belief, subjects, and relations between subject positions, this is a process constrained by historical reality, argues Fairclough (1992).

In this debate, I will argue with Chouliaraki (2002) for the recognition of the multi-materiality of social life, proposing the coupling of a constructionist ontology with a realist epistemology. This articulation makes possible the argument that, whilst it is discourse that produces the social world, human experience is always situated in historical contexts, positioned in perspectives from which the effects of discourse are perceived as real. In order to account for these sedimentations, relevant vocabularies that describe the various logics of social life are needed, which can be drawn from a range of sociological theories. With the import of sociological insights in this framework I will speak of discourse as social practice constituted in terms of power relations and economies of worth. I will draw on the same literature to make the case for human reflexivity, and conceptualise articulation as the reflexive process that explains the modification of discourses, and, ultimately, social change.

### 3.4 Practice and reflexivity

What the CDA model of the social use of language that I have reconstructed above suggests is that discourse is itself a social practice, as well as a moment of the practices in which it emerges (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999a). From the epistemological view that I have adopted, discourse is simultaneously a system of signification, in the sense of language with its distinct logic, and a system that produces social hybridity. It is the discursive articulation of existing texts, and thus the appropriation and modification of existing practices and their elements, that produces hybridity (Chouliaraki 2002). Discourses can be relatively fixed in 'orders of discourse' (Fairclough 1992), which

structure the various spaces of social action that can be thought of, after Bourdieu, as fields of practice.

Bourdieu shares with the theories of discourse a relational view of social life, but differs fundamentally in his understanding of the social use of language (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999b). In Bourdieu's theory, distinct and interconnected fields of practice are held together in relations between positions for which agents compete (Bourdieu 1990; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). The conflicts for positioning within a field presuppose a shared acceptance of the doxic beliefs that are particular to it and, consequently, to the kinds of reward that these stipulate. It is the regularities of the relations, depending on the stability of a value system, that differentiate the field from its adjacent practices. The rewards come in the form of symbolic capital, which Bourdieu further specifies as cultural knowledge, social connections and their associated skills, and financial resources (Bourdieu 1986). In this typology, language is understood as a form of cultural capital; it is valuable within a linguistic market that prizes the knowledge of certain genres or vernaculars (Bourdieu 1991).

The actors compete for the capital that is available within their fields, by mobilising their own particular types of capital. In the conflicts that ensue, the very rules and norms that define a particular field become the stakes of the actors' struggles. Conflict for capital is conflict for power, which is differentially distributed among fields, so that they are hierarchised and effectively dominated by politics and the market. As they move through life, situated actors internalise the beliefs and knowledge of the fields that they inhabit, thus forming their habitus. The habitus refers to the embodied knowledge that is accessed intuitively as a sense, or disposition, and is fairly resilient to change. In the cyclical relationship between habitus and field, the relations of power that hold a system



together reproduce themselves because they are misrecognised, and by reproducing themselves, they produce misrecognition (Celikates 2012, 164).

Bourdieu's critics challenge his understanding of human action, which they view as deterministic, or even functionalist (Mouzelis 2007). As Lunt (2020, 2951) succinctly puts it, 'Bourdieu emphasizes the social shaping of individual desires and motivations'. Habitual action leaves little space for the articulation of critique against the overbearing power of the dominant fields. From this optic, language has merely exchange value, and moral beliefs form the necessary misrecognitions that obscure strategic and calculative action. In other words, the Bourdieusian view suggests that it is power that determines discourse (Hasan 1998), and all discursive struggle amounts to the struggle for distinction (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1993). Thus, the actors of the fields of practice are represented as strategic and unreflexive; reflexivity for Bourdieu is epistemic and thus the prerogative of the field of sociological research (Maton 2003).

With the conceptualisation of discourse as social practice, CDA unifies Bourdieu's fragmented conceptualisation of culture, moral values, and language, and moves to introduce reflexivity into the fields of practice (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999a). As already discussed, from a CDA perspective, the reflexivity of actors is discernible in the process of the articulation of discourses. Actors articulate reflexive representations of the practice in which they participate, in the course of their activity within the practice (Fairclough 2003). It is also possible to think of reflexivity as the defining mode of late-modern structuration (Giddens 1984): interrelated structures of signification, power, and legitimation are produced and reproduced, as agents monitor and reorient their action in line with new knowledge. This is the knowledge that social fields as expert systems produce, and whose structural constitution can be modified as an outcome of

this recursive process. Whilst Giddens' structuration theory clarifies the interrelatedness of structure and agency by throwing into relief the duality of structure, and in the process links reflexivity with social change, it does so at the expense of critique. This lack of critical edge has been explained as the pitfall of Giddens' dispensing with the category of class (Skeggs 2013). Whilst this could be a valid criticism, in my view, the limitations of structuration theory stem from its narrow understanding of conceptions of the common good as structures of legitimation. Instead of a focus on legitimation, I would argue that we should consider these discursively articulated conceptions of worth as the resources that enable justification. To speak of justification is to focus on the cyclical relationship between agency and structure as dialectical rather than recursive. In other words, to centre on justification is to keep open the possibility that actors can seize on the same resources that 'legitimate' power in order to criticise power. For this association of reflexivity with critique and a view of justification beyond legitimation, I draw on pragmatic sociology.

Pragmatic sociology, a project for the renewal of social sciences in which Luc Boltanski is a central figure (Blokker 2011), expands significantly our understanding of human reflexivity. Against Bourdieu's rendering of largely unreflexive agency, and beyond Giddens' knowledgeable and rational agents, Boltanski (2011) speaks of conscious actors who are capable of justifying their actions and criticising the normative terms of their context. The contents of ordinary and sociological critique, Boltanski finds (2012), are remarkably similar, due to the lay actors' appropriation of scientific research. Thus, it is the performance of justification and critique that pragmatic sociology considers the markers of human reflexivity.

Critique emerges in the disputes between actors who seek to define the valid moral order of a particular practical situation. As an appeal to shared conceptions of justice, critique is launched as part of the actors' justification of their practice. This is the moment of reflexivity. Actors reflect on the situation at hand and justify their practice as they draw on a plurality of moral discourses. In the language of Boltanski and Thévenot (2006), these general discourses are the *politiques* (cités), the frameworks (Chiapello and Fairclough 2002) that form around particular principles for the distribution of worth. The *politiques* include subjects, objects, activities, and tests for the distribution of worth to persons. There can be identified seven *politiques*: the polity of inspiration valorises creativity, authenticity and intuition, and is present in artistic and spiritual practices. The industrial polity values, above all, efficiency in the application of means to ends, and can be considered the moral backbone of the professions and sciences. The domestic polity is founded on respect for hierarchies and principles and, beyond familial and intergenerational relationships, it refers to traditional modes of organisation where seniority is respected. In the polity of fame, the opinions of others bestow worth as recognition and renown, and this is where journalists are central figures. In the polity of the market, the pursuit of profit is considered moral behaviour. The civic polity values collectivity and community and justifies the organisation of individuals in groups, which includes political action. In the projective (or connectionist) polity, activity is of utmost importance, as actors move from one project to the next, traversing networks and developing connections. This hybrid polity comes from the articulation of the rationales of the artistic and market moral frameworks, and furnishes capitalism with its justifications, as its 'new spirit' (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005). The *politiques* are formed in antagonisms with each other, on the basis of which critique is launched, but they also emerge in 'alliances' that give rise to hybrid discourses of justification. The type of action

that the polity model of pragmatic sociology suggests is one of both egoistic and altruistic intents. The principles of worth that regulate the polities affirm the personal rights to dignity by connecting their confirmation with the affirmation of several conceptions of the common good. Social relations, then, are not just established by power but, insofar as power has to be qualified, they are simultaneously normative relations. By the same token, the legitimacy of actors' interests, rather than being enforced in relations of domination, is problematised and has to be justified.

From the perspective of pragmatic sociology, whilst it is possible to accept the Bourdieusian model for the type of action that is largely tolerant of domination, at the moment of justification actors raise themselves to the level of reflexivity, so realising their critical capacity (Boltanski 2011). Taking the dialogisation of Bourdieu's critical sociology and Boltanski's pragmatic sociology further, it is possible to think of fields as spaces of action that require frameworks of justification, and the polities as those discursive frameworks that constitute relations of structural division (Susen 2014). This dialectic between meaning and relations of power which, as we have seen, is constituted in discourse, Boltanski captures with the concept of the institution. To speak of institutions on the one hand draws attention to the meanings that sustain institutional practice and, on the other, connects with the empirical aspect of practical relationships between actors in 'real-world' settings (Browne 2014). Institutions are for Boltanski, in a line of reasoning similar to that of Castoriadis (1987), socially instituted and instituting entities, at the heart of which lies a 'hermeneutic contradiction' (Boltanski 2011, 84). This contradiction relates precisely to the 'in-between' character of institutions as symbolic practices. Thus, as Browne (2014) has argued, it is possible to understand a field (of practice) as an institution. Both terms refer to distinct spaces of action, structured in relatively stable routines by the norms and rules that make agreements between

positioned actors (or exclusions) possible. The theoretical perspective of CDA that I have already expounded allows us to clarify that it is discourse, the socially instituted use of language, that institutes the various fields. Put another way, actors draw on existing discourses, including the polities, in order to articulate various ways for the institution of a practice, that is, for the practice's construction as a distinct field with its own rules and norms. Whilst a plurality of competing discourses offers visions for the institution of a practice, we recognise as institutional practice that which is structured by the prevailing, hegemonic discourse (Carpentier 2005).

As I have already stressed, the articulation of a discourse does not merely entail the representation of a practice, but it is simultaneously a means of identification and of establishing relations with others. As we have seen, identification happens as individuals attach themselves to the subject positions that are construed in the various discourses, internalising their various characteristics, not least the moral values with which these subjects are associated (Du Gay 2007). For these values, or in the language of pragmatic sociology, types of worth, the actors draw on the polities that I have already discussed. To commit personally to a particular type of worth entails the rejection of another, competing type. I view this process of attaching worth to the self and others as evaluation. Insofar as evaluation implicates the self in the dialectics between various moral discourses, I consider it to be a key process of reflexive identification. It is according to the same logic that actors negotiate their relationships with others. In the articulation of the various discourses, actors construe relationships of agreement with or antagonism to others. These relationships are predicated on the types of worth that are included in the polities, in what I consider to be the articulatory process of qualification. Hence, actors are able to qualify their agreements as relationships of a particular type of worth, a particular quality.

When the various threads of my conceptual framework, as discussed above, are pulled together, what I primarily suggest is that discourse constitutes social life. This view of discourse refers to the ontological claim that I have made, arguing for the discursive materiality of the social world: for humans, what exists always does so in relation to meaning. By the same token, the various systems of signification, not least language, do not merely represent an external world of events, but they produce this world at the very moment that they represent it. The production of the social happens in the articulation of the various social elements in the relations of equivalence (and difference) of the various discourses that attempt to order particular spaces of action. The success of a discourse in totalising a particular social space can be perceived at the epistemological level, from a perspective within a specific historical context, as the real conditions of action. With the articulation of social elements in meaningful relations, discourse produces subjects, as well as various systems of knowledge and belief. The latter include a plurality of moral frameworks, on the basis of which worth is distributed in the various social spaces and agreements are made possible. The reproduction of a particular value system within a particular social space will confirm the already formed relations and identities, and thus solidify power asymmetries. Insofar as a particular space is structured in terms of a set of values and held together by relations of power between various subject positions, it can be considered a distinct field of practice, or, as I have argued, an institution. Nonetheless, the articulation of a particular discourse always entails the construction of an excluded discourse, in an antagonistic relationship which prevents the fixity of institutional practice. It is in these discursive struggles that human reflexivity emerges, which refers, in my view, to the capacity of actors to articulate discourses. Articulation is not just the process by which actors justify and institute their practice, but it is simultaneously the way in which they evaluate their worth and identify themselves, as

well how they qualify their relationships with others. It is then in articulation that actors can take critical stances against institutional practice and challenge established ways of identification and entrenched power relations. From this conceptual perspective, I am now able to view journalism as a symbolic practice reflexively instituted in the discourse of its practitioners.

### 3.5 Journalism as the discursive practice of reflexive practitioners

It is perhaps quite straightforward to recognise the discursive character of journalism, given the importance of language in its practice. Journalists routinely produce representations of action in the world as they report, document, and comment on current affairs and more generally issues of public interest (Schudson 1978). From my conceptual perspective, the articulation of these representations of the various practices produces journalism. By representing the various different other practices, journalists constitute their own practice as an institution, in terms of the ways that journalism should be performed, what good journalists do, and how they relate with others.

To answer what it means to do journalism, which entails the self-representation of journalistic practice, is an act that, in my view, institutes journalism as a distinct practice. I view the institution of journalism in terms of the discursive process of articulation. To articulate an instituting discourse for journalism is to arrange the various elements of journalistic practice in a meaningful way. In the language of journalism studies, these discourses that offer particular visions for journalistic practice are frequently understood as paradigms (Vos and Moore 2018). As we have seen in the previous chapter, the discourse of industrial journalism has succeeded in establishing itself as the institutional paradigm of modern journalism (Hallin 1992). Nevertheless, insofar as the fixation of a particular discourse over a field of practice is not permanent, but rather contingent on

the dialectic relation between an 'inside' and an 'outside' discourse, the possibility of change is always alive, as the subversion or the modification of the institutional paradigm.

As I have already argued, the articulation of particular discourses entails reference to various conceptions of worth. Following Boltanski and Thévenot (2006), I identify as *politiques* a plurality of abstract discourses that form around principles for the distribution of particular types of worth. When journalists articulate various discourses in order to represent their practice, drawing on the *politiques*, I consider that they perform justifications. From this perspective, justification is intertwined with critique: to justify a practice is at the same time to criticise another excluded practice. In other words, to justify a particular way of doing journalism, a journalistic paradigm, is at the same time to criticise another, competing paradigm or, more widely, another antagonistic practice. The articulation of critique alerts us to the capacity of journalists to reflect on the conditions of their context and elect to denounce what they might consider unjust. It is in this sense that I consider that journalists break from the largely tolerant regime of everyday routines and raise themselves to reflexivity when they justify their practice. Thus, from the conceptual perspective of this thesis, it is the journalists as reflexive practitioners who institute journalism, when they offer justifications of their practice.

To recognise the reflexive capacity of journalists is to understand the ways in which they identify themselves in terms of a similar articulatory process, that of evaluation. In my view, identification happens when journalists seek to answer the question of who is a good journalist, that is, when they evaluate themselves and others. Allow me to substantiate this view. As I have already mentioned, I understand identification as the process by which individuals form themselves as particular persons by internalising various social attributes, including moral values (Du Gay 2007). These attributes are



offered as the characteristics of the subjects that the various discourses construe when they represent the practice in the various fields. Individuals come to identify with these subject positions as they act in the space that the discourses represent (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999a). Following this logic, the journalistic subject is a social identity; it is an identity that is variably construed in the various discourses that seek to institute the practice, and it is an identity enacted by individuals in the field of journalism. Journalistic identification should not be understood as a closed process. In my view, journalists identify themselves as they negotiate the particular values to which they commit. I find that this is a reflexive process that happens when journalists perform evaluations, that is, when they attach particular types of worth to themselves and others. For the various species of worth the journalists draw on the polities that I have already discussed above (Boltanski and Thévenot 2006). Thus, to act journalistically in a way that confirms the principle of a particular polity bestows a particular type worth to individual journalists. Journalists measure themselves against these scales of worth, establishing agreements between themselves that give rise to internal hierarchies of worthiness. These hierarchies can be destabilised; insofar as there exists a plurality of conceptions of worth, who is a good journalist might be evaluated in different ways. Hence, I claim that the discursive act of evaluation is an important component of the journalists' reflexive processes of identification.

As an articulatory process, identification entails the construction of different, non-journalistic subjects, with whom the journalists enter into some types of relations. Insofar as these relations are constituted discursively, they can be of two general types: relationships of cooperation with or antagonism to others. In my view, relationships of agreement and cooperation are constituted by the articulation of relations of equivalence between the various subjects of a particular discourse. In contrast, antagonistic

relationships are constituted as relations of difference between two conflicting discourses (Laclau and Mouffe 1985). The particular types of agreement or antagonism between journalists and others are specified when journalists draw on the polities (Boltanski and Thévenot 2006), in order to represent their relationships with others. I view this act of specification as the qualification of journalistic relations. In the case of agreement, a relation can be said to assume a particular quality. For example, in situations where journalists and others mutually accept the industrial worth of efficiency, their relationship might assume the quality of honesty. It should be understood that this quality refers primarily to journalistic action; it is the journalist who is the acting subject that forms relationships with others. Hence, it is my understanding that relationships with others can assume different qualities depending on the journalists' reflexive action.

In this chapter, I have outlined the conceptual framework of the thesis, in order to elucidate the perspective from which I will approach the investigation of journalistic practice. I have argued that key to the productive examination of the role of social media in contemporary journalistic practice is to be attentive to the dialectics of continuity and change in journalism. What this entails is to understand that journalism is a symbolic practice that is instituted in the discourse of journalists as reflexive practitioners. Journalists draw on the various existing formations of meaning that I call discourses in order to institute their practice, identify themselves and negotiate their relationships with others. I find that this happens as they simultaneously articulate various types of worth in their discourse. This allows them to justify their practice, evaluate their worth, and qualify their relationships with others. In this sense, when the journalists talk about what it means to do journalism, they offer justifications for their practice, and thus construe it as distinct field. When they answer the question of who is a good journalist, they offer evaluations of their worth, and thus identify themselves. And when they talk

about their relationships with others, they seek to qualify their agreements and antagonisms. Having clarified my conceptual perspective and developed my analytical vocabulary, I now move to the following chapter where I formulate the questions of this research and subsequently offer a detailed outline of the methodology that I have employed in order to answer them.

## 4. Methodology: towards the empirical analysis of journalistic discourse

### 4.1 Introduction

In Chapter 2, I have found that the existing literature on the role of social media in contemporary journalism offers conclusions that emphasise either the continuity of journalistic practice or its radical restructuring. I have argued that we need to adopt a perspective that is attentive to the dialectics of continuity and change, if we are to produce answers to the question of how journalism is practised in the era of social media. I have outlined the dialectical rationale of this study in the previous chapter where I elaborated my conceptual framework. Specifically, I have argued that we need to approach journalism as a symbolic practice constituted in the discourse of journalists as reflexive practitioners. For this optic on journalistic practice, I have turned to Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999a), a theoretical framework that advances an understanding of discourse as the social use of language that constitutes social life. CDA captures productively the dialectics of discourse and social practice with the concept of articulation. It is with the articulation of a particular discourse that the various social elements of a practice are meaningfully ordered, so that a distinct domain of structured action is circumscribed. And it is in articulation that established discourses can be modified and challenged, with a view to social change. I have posited that in the process of articulation actors reflexively represent their practice, identify themselves and negotiate their relationships with others. Drawing additionally on pragmatic sociology (Boltanski 2011), I have advanced the view that actors, such as the journalists of my study, realise their capacity for reflexivity when they articulate in their discourse various conceptions of worth. These are offered in the abstract discourses that internalise a

plurality of types of worth, which, after Boltanski and Thévenot (2006) I understand as polities. Actors draw on the polities in order to justify their practice, evaluate their worth, and qualify their relationships. Hence, to view journalists as reflexive practitioners is to understand that (a) they justify their practice in order to institute it as a distinct field, (b) they evaluate their worth in order to identify themselves, and (c) they qualify their relationships in order to negotiate their autonomy.

In this chapter, I first draw on the vocabulary of my conceptual framework in order to formulate my research questions. I identify my primary research question as: *How do journalists understand their practices, identities and relationships now that social media dominate their routines and activities in networked newsrooms?* With my three sub-questions, I direct my investigation towards understanding how journalists justify their practice, evaluate their worth, and qualify their relationships. I then outline in four sections the methodology that I have followed in order to answer these questions. I first draw on the principles of phronetic social science in order to justify my analytical focus on the practical knowledge of journalists as knowledgeable practitioners. As I explain in the following section, to adopt a phronetic approach to empirical research is to investigate particular contexts and specific cases. I argue that it is with the study of single cases, and in particular cases that are paradigmatic of a practice, that we are able to contribute analytical generalisations. Taking this into account, I introduce in the following section The Guardian as a paradigmatic case of digital journalism, a status recognised by journalists and journalism studies researchers. In the third section, I elaborate on the method that I employed in order to generate the empirical data of this thesis. I have elected to conduct narrative interviews with Guardian journalists, in order to gain access to their experience-based, practical knowledge. I detail the stages of the interviewing process referring to the advantages and limitations of speaking with elite

practitioners. In the final section, I elaborate the process of analysing the textual material that I have produced, in the wake of the transcription of the ten interviews that I have conducted. I have chosen to analyse the data following the principles of CDA, which, as a method of discourse analysis, allows for the elucidation of the dialectical relationships between social processes, discourses, and texts. I have interpreted the representational, identificational, and relational meanings of the texts by reference to the socio-discursive categories of my conceptual framework, in order to explore the journalistic justifications, evaluations, and qualifications. This hermeneutic analysis constitutes the empirical contribution of this thesis, which I organise in the three chapters that follow.

## 4.2 The research questions

As I have restated in the introduction of this chapter, in this thesis I aim to explore the influence of social media on institutional journalism. From the perspective that I elaborated in my conceptual framework, a productive investigation entails that we understand journalism as a symbolic practice that is constituted in the discourse of journalists as reflexive practitioners. As I have shown, this epistemological position requires that we focus on the journalists' understandings of their own practices, identities, and relationships with others. I am thus able to reformulate the overarching research question of this thesis in this way:

*How do journalists understand their practices, identities and relationships now that social media dominate their routines and activities in networked newsrooms?*

As I have argued in the previous chapter, when journalists elaborate their understandings of their practice, that is, when they talk about what journalism means to them, they represent journalism in a way that differentiates it from other practices. Thus, with the

articulation of these representations, journalists institute journalism as a distinct field of practice. In my view, the institution of journalism as a distinct field happens when journalists represent journalism by reference to various types of worth, that is, when they justify their practice. Hence, in order to focus on the first element of my primary research question, how journalists understand their practice, I ask:

*How do journalists justify their practice?*

In my second line of inquiry, I direct my attention to the second element of the primary research question, the journalistic identities. As elaborated in the previous chapter, the journalists identify themselves with the various subjects of the discourses that they articulate. In so doing, they simultaneously commit to particular types of worth, a process in which they evaluate their worthiness. Thus, in order to understand how journalists identify themselves we need to look at the ways in which they evaluate their worth. The second sub-question, then, I pose as:

*How do journalists evaluate their worth?*

With the third line of inquiry that I follow, I intend to further unpack journalistic action by looking at the relationships of journalists with others. In my view, journalists negotiate their agreements and antagonisms with other actors on the grounds of various types of worth. I understand that this is a discursive process that happens when journalists qualify their relationships in their talk. Thus, in order to understand how journalists act with or on others, I ask:

*How do journalists qualify their relationships with others?*

In order to answer the above research questions productively, I would need to gain knowledge of the perspectives of journalists on the contradictions of their profession. What is then required, as regards this study's methodology, is a research design that

brings into view the journalists as knowledgeable and experienced practitioners immersed in specific real-world settings of journalistic practice. The design would also incorporate methods for interacting with journalists that would allow me to access their knowledge, as well as for the subsequent analysis of the anticipated empirical material. In the sections that follow, I outline the methodology that I have followed and justify my choices: designing this doctoral research project as a case study, generating the data by conducting narrative interviews with expert journalists, and analysing the empirical material following CDA's principles of discourse and textual analysis.

### 4.3 The phronetic approach to empirical research

As I have elucidated in my conceptual framework, in order to understand the dialectics of continuity and change in journalism we need to understand that this social process is substantively shaped by discourse (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999a). Thus, in order to understand the dialectics of journalism we need to pay attention to the discursively articulated understandings of its practitioners. Insofar as journalists are immersed in the real-world settings of journalistic practice, their understandings are valuable as deep knowledge of the contradictions of journalism.

As I have made clear thus far, to view journalism as the discursive practice of reflexive practitioners is to be simultaneously attentive to questions of power – the conflicts and relations of journalism; and questions of meaning – the norms and types of knowledge that are specific to the profession. This double orientation to the study of practice I share with the phronetic approach to social scientific research. Phronetic social science associates the Aristotelian understanding of scientific knowledge as *episteme* with a logic of instrumental rationality, the dominant way of modern thinking according to Weber (1978). Denouncing the dominance of instrumental reason over science and social action,



phronetic research is oriented towards the production of practical knowledge, *phronesis* according to Aristotle, which is of a value-rational logic (as per the Weberian typology of rationality). From the phronetic perspective, value-rational knowledge, that is, knowledge of what is good as well as in whose interests, is the type of knowledge that human actors acquire and produce in practice (Flyvbjerg 2001).

Phronetic social science owes its understanding of human learning to theories of practice, and chiefly field theory, from which it draws the idea that learning is grounded on the real-world experience of actual practice (Bourdieu 1990). The accumulation of practical experience in specific social contexts translates over time into the expert performance of the skills that are valued in particular fields. What becomes apparent is that expert performance does not rely on a fastidious reflection on rules and rational calculations; this rules-based knowledge is the characteristic of novice practitioners. Expert knowledge is accessed intuitively as practical reason, a feel for the game (Bourdieu 1998b). Thus, in order to learn about contemporary journalistic practice, we first need to understand that journalists are expert practitioners with deep, embodied knowledge of the norms, rules, and activities of journalism that allows them to navigate the power relations of their field.

The phronetic approach shares with the hermeneutical science in which this thesis is also situated an emphasis on discourse as a social process and an orientation to the interpretation of texts as the solid instantiations of discourse (Flyvbjerg 2012). It is, then, by probing into the journalists' experience-based justifications, evaluations, and qualifications, that I intend to understand their situational ethics and the relations of power within journalism. Insofar as I understand this practical knowledge as context-dependent, I would need to examine the particular context of journalistic practice, an

objective which is served by the study of a particular case. It is via the exposition of concrete cases, experienced (from the position of the journalists), or narrated (from the perspective of this thesis and its intended academic audience), that we acquire and produce context-based, value-rational knowledge (Flyvbjerg 2001). But, what kind of case would be most conducive to the understanding of the role of social media in journalism? Allow me to answer this question in the following section.

#### 4.4 The Guardian as a paradigmatic case of digital journalism

As I have made clear in the previous section, in order to answer the dynamic ‘how’ questions of this thesis, I would be well served by a methodology that would facilitate an in-depth understanding of journalists’ practical knowledge. The phronetic approach that I espouse opposes strongly the idea that rules-based, context-independent knowledge produced, for instance, by the statistical analysis of large samples of population or corpora of textual data, is more valuable for rigorous social scientific research than practical, context-dependent knowledge. Insofar as human learning happens via the exposition of thousands of cases, what is needed is a focus on particular contexts and concrete cases. Hence, what this thesis requires is the study of a single case, a specific example of real-world journalistic practice. As Bourdieu, quoting Husserl, suggests: ‘you must immerse yourself in the particular to find in it the invariant’ (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 77).

The social scientific research that employs case studies has been often criticised precisely because of its focus on single cases rather than large, representative samples. Arguing from a social scientific position that valorises the paradigms of the natural sciences, the critics of case study research claim that it does not allow for generalisation (Flyvbjerg 2006). Whilst indeed the findings of case studies are not amenable to formal, statistical

generalisation to a larger population, they are nonetheless generalisable according to another, analytical logic. Analytical generalisation refers to the researcher's reflection on the workings of practices in order to make logical inferences and offer propositions, whilst formal generalisation depends on observations and offers propositions on the basis of statistical significance (Yin 2015). Insofar as this thesis aims to produce value-rational knowledge in the form of hermeneutic interpretations of the journalists' understandings, what is of primary concern is the analytical generalisability of the study's research findings.

But what kind of case would be most conducive to the formulation of analytical generalisations? Cases can be selected on account of their ability to falsify propositions on the basis of a single, critical observation (Flyvbjerg 2001). To study a critical case, however, would be unproductive for this thesis, insofar as I neither seek to confirm nor negate the relationship between social media and journalism, but rather understand how this relationship unfolds in real-world settings from the perspective of journalists. Other case studies might be designed on the basis of extreme examples, which is considered a strategy that embellishes with greater resonance the study's generalisations. Nonetheless, an outlier of journalistic practice, as a possibly idiosyncratic exception from the norm, could not credibly support findings that refer to how the field of journalism changes or remains the same. Analytical generalisation, in my view, could be productively grounded on the study of a paradigm of journalism, or else, a paradigmatic case. A paradigmatic case is not a typical case. As Mills, Durepos, and Wiebe (2010, 646) put it: 'as an example, it steps out of a class at the very moment that it reveals and defines it'. A paradigmatic case, then, emerges from and constitutes the practice to which it belongs. To study a paradigm of journalism is, then, to identify and exhibit the general characteristics and contextual conventions that are recognisable as prototypical by a

relevant community (Flyvbjerg 2006, 16). With regards to this thesis, the communities of relevance are that of the journalists and that of the scholars in journalism studies. Taking this into account, allow me to introduce the British news organisation The Guardian as a paradigmatic case of journalistic practice.

‘Everyone loves The Guardian – well, everyone except Rupert Murdoch, the British intelligence apparatus, the American intelligence apparatus, and bullies, sneaks, and abusers of authority everywhere’, writes Dean Starkman (2013) of the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists. What he refers to in this piece in the Columbia Journalism Review are the investigative successes of the organisation in revealing the phone hacking carried out by the Murdoch owned, and subsequently defunct, News of the World, as well as the publication of Edward Snowden’s leaked documents. For breaking the latter story, The Guardian became the first non-American publication to receive the Pulitzer prize, sharing it in 2014 with The Washington Post. The Guardian routinely receives awards for its print and digital editions, and its journalists are equally recognised by the field’s various institutions, including the British Press Awards. In 2014 The Guardian had announced that it had overtaken ‘the NYT to become the leading serious English-language website in the world’ (Rusbridger 2018, 336).

Founded in Manchester in 1821 and traditionally considered the newspaper of British progressives, The Guardian rose to international prominence as an authoritative journalistic organisation in the past two decades. Under its former editor, Alan Rusbridger, The Guardian expanded to employ 1,950 people (Gapper 2016), invested in its American and Australian editions, and pioneered the adoption of online technologies. Investing early in the development of their website and allowing free access to The Guardian’s journalism to an international English-speaking audience, this legacy news

organisation has been known for its innovative approach to the convergence of its print and digital operations. At the time that I visited their Kings Place headquarters in 2016, The Guardian newsroom had been restructured to include a 'social media team', which produced content exclusively for the organisation's social media channels, whilst another 'community team' managed the user-generated content. The Guardian has famously insisted on not installing a paywall that would permit access to the content of its website only to paying subscribers. With this strategic choice it differentiated itself from the other legacy news publishers who have sought to boost their subscribers' base in order to manage the financial pressures of operating in a news industry that was losing advertising revenue to the big technological companies. What has made this decision financially viable was partly The Guardian's ownership status. The news organisation is fully owned by the Scott Trust, a company created in 1936 by John Scott, with the sole objective to fund The Guardian. The Trust's mission, as per the statement published on their website on 26 June 2015, is to 'secure the financial and editorial independence of The Guardian in perpetuity and to safeguard the journalistic freedom and liberal values of The Guardian free from commercial or political interference'.

The decisions to offer free access to their website and integrate web 2.0 technologies such as blogs and social media into The Guardian's newsroom routines were guided by a vision for journalistic practice that was styled 'open journalism'. This vision was articulated by Alan Rusbridger, The Guardian's editor from 1995 until 2015, who spoke of the 'mutualisation of news'. Practising open, mutualised journalism, The Guardian journalists moved to reform the newspaper's relationships with its audience, guided by the values of participation, collaboration, diversity, and transparency. The ideas that Rusbridger brought to the practice of Guardian journalism seemed to directly reference the thought of Deuze and Bruns who spoke of the networked restructuring of journalism as a project

for its democratic reform (Singer and Ashman 2009). In his own account of his editorship, Rusbridger (2018) credits the scholars Clay Shirky, Jay Rosen, and Jeff Jarvis with the ideas and inspiration to open up The Guardian to its readers.

Despite the backing of the Trust, The Guardian has been historically known to record annual losses, and this was the state of affairs at the time that Alan Rusbridger stepped down (Benton 2019). Katherine Viner was selected as the new editor-in-chief in a decision supported by the 53% of The Guardian staff who voted for her, as reported in The Guardian on 5 March 2015. Viner initiated a three-year plan for the reduction of costs by a fifth, which resulted in the loss of 450 jobs, including 120 in the editorial department (Financial Times, 1 May 2019). The Guardian's membership scheme was introduced in 2014, asking readers for contributions, and in 2019 it had reached 655,000 monthly paying supporters and 300,000 one-off contributions (Financial Times, 1 May 2019). As a result of cutting costs and raising revenue from readers and digital advertising, The Guardian reported on its website on 1 May 2019 that it had finally made a profit, after several decades of losses. The spirit of open journalism still defines The Guardian's journalistic practice, with Viner echoing Rusbridger in her own mission statement (Viner 2017). The news organisation continues to produce quality investigative work, including the recent successes in revealing the scandals of Cambridge Analytica and Windrush. In the UK, according to data from the Published Audience Measurement Company, The Guardian is the most trusted newspaper (The Guardian, 16 December 2018).

To be sure, the digitisation of Guardian's journalism has been intensively examined by the scholars in the field of media and journalism studies. A relevant search on Google Scholar returns 400,000 entries of recent academic publications with some reference to the news organisation. Among them a great number of studies on the journalistic use of

social media such as Twitter, Facebook or Instagram draw their data from The Guardian in addition to other outlets. This body of research includes work by Newman (2009); Vis (2012); Broersma and Graham (2012); Singer et al. (2011); Phillips (2012); von Nordheim, Boczek, and Koppers (2018), among others.

The Guardian has been frequently studied as a case of digital journalism. Singer and Ashman (2009) have approached The Guardian as a case of the incorporation of user-generated content in journalistic practices. Thurman and Walters (2012) have focused on The Guardian's operationalisation of the live-blog, the microblogging format that the organisation has been using since 1999, and which has proven very popular in news publishing worldwide. Graham and Wright (2015) looked at the comments 'below the line' of articles published on The Guardian website, in which debates between readers frequently ensue. Wright, Jackson, and Graham (2019) have adopted a slightly different focus on the same issue, concentrating on how journalists themselves engage in on-platform commentary. Daniel and Flew (2010) have taken The Guardian as a case of computational journalism, in their analysis of the organisation's 2009 investigation of the MP expenses scandal. Chadwick and Collister (2014) have found that The Guardian's publishing of the National Security Agency documents leaked by Edward Snowden has fed into its own establishment as a journalistic exemplar with the power to draw the boundaries of journalism. To the best of my knowledge, the one case study on how Guardian journalists use Twitter has been contributed by Ahmad (2010).

To recap, it is according to the principles of phronetic research that call for the empirical investigation of the relations of power and moral value and gesture to practice as productive of context-dependent knowledge, that I have chosen to study The Guardian as a paradigmatic case of journalistic practice. An internationally acclaimed news

organisation, The Guardian produces highly recognised journalism that influences the profession well beyond its immediate British context. I view the organisation as an exemplar of digital journalism, a practice in which digital networks are integral (Waisbord 2019; Duffy and Ang 2019). Academic research has consistently approached The Guardian as an object of study throughout the past two decades during which the organisation, practising the open journalism that it champions, has innovatively adopted various web technologies, including social media, in order to engage with its readers. It is, then, The Guardian's journalists that I identify as the experts who can offer knowledgeable understandings about what it means to do journalism and who is considered a good journalist in the current conditions of social-media driven newsrooms. As I explicate in the next section, I have constructed this case study by interviewing some of The Guardian's journalists in order to generate the textual data that I require for my analysis.

#### 4.5 Narrative interviews with elite participants

As I have made clear in the previous section, it is through speaking with journalists from The Guardian, whom I consider to be expert practitioners active in the real-world settings of an exemplar of digital journalism, that I intend to answer the research questions of this thesis. As per the phronetic research design of this study, my objective is to encounter the journalists and to probe into their practical knowledge, in order to elicit their narrative reflections of their experience, thereby generating the texts required for textual and discourse analysis. It is then my interpretations of their understandings that will constitute the empirical contribution of this thesis to the study of social media-driven journalism.



Insofar as my focus on journalistic practice is theoretically and methodologically interconnected with the understanding and interpretation of meaning, I consider that the most appropriate method for generating empirical data is qualitative, in-depth interviews. By depth I refer precisely to the nuance of subjective experience that this type of interview reveals. The participants of depth interviews are invited to reflect on their experiences, ideas, and values, and share the meanings in terms of which they understand their behaviour (Arksey and Knight 1999). Ideally, depth interviews are conducted one on one, rather than collectively with a focus group, a method that would be more appropriate to research interested in the dynamics of relationships between the interview participants (Bryman 2016).

The particular type of depth interviews that suited this research, where the objective was to incite the journalists to narrate their experiences, was narrative interviews. This type of interview differs from other kinds of depth interviews, of the structured or semi-structured type, in that it dispenses with the question-answer organisation of the conversation (Kvale 2008). In narrative interviews, the researcher invites the participant to tell stories, to narrate their experiences. Events are enveloped in the meanings of the narratives; the speaker orders lived experience in particular ways, in particular linguistic styles, referring to the various moral values that matter to the self. A narrative, then, refers to the active process of making sense of various experiences as one comes to reflect on them (Kartch 2017). As the participant shares her perspectives, she identifies herself in the situation of the interview, where meaning is intersubjectively construed by the researcher and the participant (Joas 1987).

Another method of inquiry into the practice of journalism that I considered in combination with my interviews was ethnographic participant observation. From the

phronetic perspective of this research, detailed descriptions of the actual workings of journalistic newsrooms would complement my understanding of how journalists draw on ethical values in order to negotiate their relations (Flyvbjerg 2001). Nevertheless, my requests for this type of access to The Guardian newsroom went unanswered, for reasons that I consider related to the elite status of The Guardian journalists. Bearing in mind that this kind of observation would have functioned in a complementary way to my analysis of journalistic interviews, I find that my objective to elicit reflexive understandings from my journalist interlocutors has been fully satisfied by the narrative interviews that I conducted. In my view, it is in the situation of the interview that some of the limitations associated with ethnographic work, such as the production of overly descriptive accounts, or the passivation of the participants (Hammersley 2006) are avoided, so that the interviewees emerge as the subjects of the worlds that they discursively construe and inhabit (Wetherell and Potter 1988). Having identified the method for generating the texts that I would need for my empirical analysis, I then considered which journalists in particular would make good participants in this study, and the strategies that I would have to follow in order to gain access to them.

As a paradigmatic organisation of journalistic practice and a widely trusted publication, The Guardian occupies an elite position within the journalistic field and wider society, which gives its journalists significant power vis-à-vis actors from other sectors (Bourdieu 2005). Elite groups often overlap with experts insofar as the organisation of modern life relies on expert knowledge for the determination of practices and institutions (Giddens 1984). In this sense, journalists from The Guardian fall within both expert and elite categories of social groups. I view them as elite members of an expert group, with the power to shape public opinion, and hence very much among 'the influential, the prominent, the well-informed' strata of society (Dexter 2006, 19). For the purposes of

this research the status of Guardian journalists presented significant advantages, but also some problems.

The major problem with securing elite interviews is that of access. As I have already mentioned, it had not been possible to gain permission for an ethnographic study. I began the procedure of gaining access to Guardian journalists first by identifying the potential participants to the interviews that I intended to conduct, a process that I approached as the purposive selection of journalists, rather than the more quantitatively minded process of sampling (Gaskell 2000). The single criterion for my selection was that the participants would have to be practising journalism exclusively for The Guardian. Insofar as I intended to study a single case of journalistic practice, it was crucial that this criterion was satisfied. The enforcement of this condition also meant that freelancing journalists, who might collaborate with various other organisations, or other occasional, non-journalist contributors, would have to be excluded from the pool of potential participants.

The procedure that I undertook in order to identify individual Guardian journalists commenced with the examination of online resources, and particularly websites with lists and databases of British journalists, which are mostly intended to supply public relations professionals with journalistic contact details. I found that the most useful, in terms of the volume of journalists listed and the details included on the individual profiles of the journalists (roles, Twitter profiles, email contacts) was Muckrack.com. At the time of my research, a high level of information on individual journalists was still freely available to non-paying browsers of the website. As a second step, I compared the information from Muckrack against the journalists' Twitter bio entries. This is the space on Twitter profiles where journalists tend to identify themselves in terms of their position within the organisation and give their email address, so that potential sources can communicate

with them. All of the journalists that I had identified had a Twitter account, even though their engagement varied in terms of the quantity of their posted tweets. As a third step, I went through the pages on The Guardian website of the individual journalists that I had identified, where various articles are grouped by author. The lists of articles in these pages are headed by a brief presentation of the journalist's experience, roles and relationship with the news organisation. As a fourth step, I browsed The Guardian website daily for a period of a week, in order to identify any journalists that I might have missed in my previous efforts. By means of this four-pronged process, I was able to identify 79 individuals who I was certain were exclusively employed as journalists by The Guardian.

During the second stage of my attempts to gain access to Guardian journalists, I contacted those in the list that I had compiled via the email addresses that I had collected. In the emails that I sent, I identified myself as a PhD researcher at LSE and briefly introduced my research interest in journalism. I indicated that I was particularly interested in their own perspectives and experiences as regards social media in journalism (Jovchelovitch and Bauer 2000), and asked for their availability for a face-to-face interview, 'the gold standard of the interview situation' (Bogner, Littig, and Menz 2018, 660). This stage of contacting possible participants overlapped with the stage of conducting the interviews that I was able to secure. During a period of three months, between October and December 2016, I asked for, organised, and conducted interviews with the 10 Guardian journalists who responded positively to my request. Most of my emails went unanswered, despite my follow-up attempts; a few journalists responded in order to let me know that they would not have time to participate. I considered that the list of participants that I secured represented a diversity of journalistic expertise, and thus offered a wide range of perspectives on actual practice. The journalists that I interviewed were active in a

number of journalistic beats and positions: from covering national and international politics, sports, media, culture, finance, and producing video journalism, to editing long-form features, or social media stories, and writing opinion columns (Table 1).

*Table 1: List of the journalists who participated in my interviews*

#	Role	Main activities
1	Senior Video Producer	Video Journalist. Produces video reportages on public affairs that are published on the Guardian's website
2	Social and new formats editor	Head of the social media team; produces, commissions, and edits textual and multimedia content for dissemination on social media
3	Sports journalist	Investigative reporter covering sports
4	European affairs correspondent / features writer	Reports European news; produces long-form features
5	Editor/sub-editor/writer	Edits and contributes to the 'Books' section of the Guardian
6	Assistant Media Editor	Reports and comments on the media sector
7	Columnist	Comments on current politics; writes lead editorials
8	Editor/Financial journalist	Edits and reports for the 'Money' section of the Guardian's website
9	Features editor	Commissions and edits long-form features
10	Political correspondent	Reports on UK politics

Apart from a single telephone interview, and one interview that took place at LSE, all other meetings with my interviewees were held at The Guardian's headquarters in Kings Place, London. In terms of deciding on the setting of the meetings, following the logic of minimising my influence over the situation of the interview (Jovchelovitch and Bauer 2000), I accommodated my interviewees' requests. I followed the same logic during the interviews, avoiding the imposition of a particular structure on my conversations with the journalists. Journalists are very experienced in the situation of the interview; they are

trained to ask questions and readily offer opinions and arguments. Their expertise is even more pronounced when the conversational topics pertain to their own practice (Gillham 2000). Nonetheless, the tendency of elite participants such as The Guardian journalists to assume control of the interview (Plesner 2011) I considered to be conducive to the objectives of this study. During the interviews, it was precisely my intention to encourage my journalist-informants to describe and reflect on their professional experiences in full detail, a course of action in which they keenly engaged.

In preparation of the interviews, I designed a questionnaire that could function as the guide for a semi-structured interview (Kvale 2008). I had identified several of the themes of this research in terms that reflected the categories of my conceptual framework as well as matters of journalistic practice. These themes referred to issues of justification, evaluation, and qualification, newsgathering, sourcing, social media production and diffusion, organisational procedures, journalistic autonomy, and perceptions of journalism's social role. I had also formulated questions that could trigger discussions around these themes (Rubin and Rubin 2005). With this preparatory work, I intended to gain preliminary knowledge of the topics that might arise in the interview so that I could tentatively connect them to my specific research interests. In addition, I intended to use this document during the conversation, in case I needed questions to keep the narrative flowing (Gaskell 2000).

In the actual interviews that I conducted I used some of the questions from that preparatory document, in no particular order. Thus, in confirmation of methodological literature on narrative interviews (Jovchelovitch and Bauer 2000; Flick 2018), I found that in the setting of the actual interview the boundaries between narrative and semi-structured interviews are not discrete. In the interviews that I conducted, long stretches

of narrative are interrupted by questions and answers (Kvale 2008). I initiated the interviews by explaining again my interest in journalistic change and social media, and by asking them to introduce themselves and talk about what they do in The Guardian. From then onwards the interviews diverged as the journalists began to narrate stories and offer their opinions, with some broad themes emerging as common patterns between them. Among them were: specific events where social media featured in their journalistic practice, ideas about what constitutes good and bad journalism, relationships with audiences, citizens, sources, and management, evaluations of social media and related technologies, reflections on the state of the field and the conditions of professional journalism. Insofar as my interest was in the meanings that the journalists brought to their experiences, I followed up on their associations in order to give them the opportunity to develop further their ideas and opinions about their profession (Kohler Riessman 2004). The journalists blended descriptions of specific events with generalisations about their practice as they argued for particular ways of good journalism. From my perspective, this blend referred precisely to the experience-based practical knowledge that experts possess, the valuable understandings which I aimed to clarify and reveal by asking follow-up questions from my interview guide. All of the interviews lasted between 45 and 60 minutes, and all the journalists signed a form giving their consent to the recording of the interview, the use of their quotes in this research, and their anonymisation, in accordance with LSE ethical research procedure.

At the latest phase of the interviewing period, and as I was beginning to listen to my recordings again in order to transcribe them, I noticed the repetition of various themes pertaining to the journalists' ideas about good journalistic practice. At that stage, and bearing in mind that the transcriptions of the interviews were intended for discourse analysis, a method that produces large amounts of text, I considered that the ten

interviews that I had conducted offered me the data that I needed. As the literature suggests, in qualitative studies such as this thesis, the average number of conducted interviews ranges between six (Guest, Bunce, and Johnson 2006) and fifteen (Brinkmann 2013). I considered that the material that I had was very rich, covering many aspects of journalistic practice in nuanced ways, so that the general rule to ‘interview as many subjects as necessary to find out what you need to know’ (Kvale and Brinkmann 2008, 113) was satisfied. The transition to the next phase of this research that entailed the analysis of the empirical data, which I detail in the next section, happened gradually, as I was transcribing and reading the texts.

#### 4.6 The hermeneutic process of discourse analysis

With the analysis of the interviews that I have conducted, I have sought to reveal the dialectical relationships of social processes, discourses, and texts (Fairclough, Jessop, and Sayer 2004, 7). This analytical endeavour refers to the dialectic between the journalists’ understandings, as identified in the texts, and my theoretically grounded interpretations of them. It is this dialectical process of hermeneutic analysis, which entailed numerous iterations of a cyclical, interpretive movement between the texts and my conceptual framework, that produced the empirical examination that I explicate in the following three analytical chapters. What this suggests is that the logic of hermeneutic interpretation is not one of induction, where the movement is from the particular to the general. Neither does it represent a deductive movement from the general to the particular in order to connect whole to part. Rather, its logic is abductive. Abduction entails a logical oscillation between the general and the particular (Thomas 2010), which in terms of the research design of a CDA project is precisely that recursive movement



between the theoretical assumptions of a framework and the specific meanings of the textual data (Wodak and Meyer 2015, 18).

The dialectical approach to the investigation of social change coupled with a clear orientation to the analysis of texts are the particular strengths of the CDA paradigm (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999a; Fairclough 1992, 1989) that I have operationalised as my method for analysing texts and discourses. Compared to other methods of textual analysis, CDA is sensitive to relations of power and their critique, which is a vital concern for this project. This is one of the points of convergence with the other approaches that form the field of Critical Discourse Studies (CDS) (Van Dijk 2011), together with an interest in the ideological and hegemonic effects of patterns of meaning, and understanding of the dual character of language as socially constitutive and shaped. Insofar as my research is concerned with discourses and moral frameworks as generally available resources, the CDS methods that emphasise the micro level of interaction, such as the discourse-historical (Wodak 1999) or the social actors approach (Van Leeuwen 2013), would have been less amenable to my objectives. I also considered that the analytical approaches, largely understood as Foucauldian, that focus on discourse without paying close attention to the linguistic features of texts (Jäger and Maier 2015), would be less productive. Nevertheless, CDA does not erect hard borders with other methods of textual analysis. To the extent that they can serve the objectives of the research, other textual analytics can be brought into the hermeneutic process.

Bearing in mind, then, that the texts that I would generate were intended for Critical Discourse Analysis, and that it was their meanings that would be my main analytical focus, I elected to follow a minimal notation style for the transcription of the audio recordings (Fairclough 1992). According to the typology offered by Gibson and Brown

(2009), this can be considered unfocused transcription, as it is not organised according to an index of time, neither does it represent how something was said, except for noting turns in speaking. I did, however, represent repetitions and pauses in speech which, according to Fairclough (2003), are good indicators of the limits of a particular discourse.

I initiated an intense analytical process with a thematic analysis of the transcribed interviews, a method which I have employed as an exploratory technique. The basic strategy of this method is coding, which entails identifying segments of text that refer to a particular topic, and labelling it so that several passages can be grouped under the same signifier (Lapadat 2010). I have identified themes in an inductive way, in the language of the journalists, when they were speaking about several aspects of their practice, for instance in terms of reportage, sourcing, tweeting, metrics etc., or even in their more abstract discussions about being objective, fake news, the pressures of advertising, etc. Themes were also identified deductively, in the language of my conceptual vocabulary (Braun and Clarke 2006), where the meanings of stretches of text seemed to refer to a discussion of relationships with antagonistic actors, the critique of financial pressures, the autonomy of the journalistic field, etc. I used various versions of NVivo, a software for qualitative research, in order to assign codes (labels) to stretches of text without making any use of its automated textual processing affordances.

With this thematic analysis, I have identified a large number of passages where journalists defended their practice as good journalism, often against the practices of other organisations, social groups, and actors. In these stretches of text, the journalist is textured as the narrator who frequently identifies with the protagonistic subject who enters in some type of relationship with variably represented others. In the analytical vocabulary of CDA, these meanings refer to the *ideational* and *interpersonal* functions of

texts (Fairclough 2003). Ideational meaning refers to the various ways in which practices are represented in texts. Interpersonal meaning refers to action: the ways in which actors identify themselves vis-à-vis others in the texts. These textual functions are interrelated with the socio-discursive processes that I intend to study, as per my research questions. Thus, when the journalists ideate about their practice, they construe representations of that practice, that is, they articulate discourses of justification, which, as we have seen, have the power to institute journalism as a distinct field. When they identify themselves as the subjects of these discourses, they articulate evaluations, thus enacting their agency. Simultaneously, when they refer to others, they seek to negotiate their relationships with them, with the articulation of qualifications.

Representational and interpersonal (identificational and relational) meanings co-exist in the passages that I identified with my thematic analysis. In the interest of a rigorous examination, I further divided the data in three thematic categories in order to focus separately on the representational, identificational and relational meanings of the texts. Seeking to relate the particular excerpts with the discursive processes identified in my research questions, I categorised the various excerpts in terms of the journalists' strategies of justification, evaluation, and qualification. I thus produced three corpora of transcript excerpts: in the corpus of justification (representational meanings), I included texts where journalists represent their practice in ways that a normative orientation seems to prevail; in the corpus of evaluation (identificational meanings), the journalistic 'I' features very prominently; and in the corpus of qualification (relational meanings), others seem to preoccupy journalists. The excerpts of the three corpora are somewhat extended stretches of text. I considered that in order to capture the heterogeneity-inducing processes of articulation I would have to widen my analytical lens (Jenner et al.

2004; Tomkins and Eatough 2018). (I provide these data in the three appendices of the thesis, which correspond to the three empirical chapters).

Finally, I analysed the texts that I created following the hermeneutic logic of CDA (Fairclough 2003). This entailed paying attention to the texts' vocabulary, semantic, and grammatical relations, that is, looking closely at the relationships between words, clauses, and sentences. Depending on the corpus on which I concentrated analytically, I shifted my attention to how these text-internal relations produced representational, identificational, and relational meanings. I noticed several common patterns of meaning across excerpts from various interviews, which I considered to be the various discourses on which the journalists draw in order to formulate their understandings. I identified the various discourses, first by locating the polities of worth that they internalise, secondly by concentrating on their exclusions of different practices and types of worth, and thirdly by seeing how journalists draw on the discourses in order to justify their practice, evaluate their worth, and qualify their relationships. With this discourse-analytical process, I produced the interpretations and reflections that I elaborate in the discussion of my empirical material.

The following three chapters are dedicated to the analysis of my empirical data, the transcripts of the interviews that I conducted. This analytical exploration is organised by reference to the research questions of this thesis. Allow me to offer here a very brief outline of each of these chapters.

In Chapter 5, I seek to answer how journalists justify their practice, the discursive process that I consider to be dialectically related with the institution of journalism. Paying close attention to the representational meanings of various excerpts from my interviews, I identify four discourses of justification, or in other words, four normative journalistic

paradigms. I classify them in terms of the type of worth that they articulate as civic, industrial, social media, and networked journalism. As I find, newer paradigms of journalistic practice that draw on the connectionist type of worth co-exist with the older, institutional paradigm of industrial journalism. Whilst the latter, established discourse conceives of journalism as a technocratic institution that collaborates with and criticises the fields of the state and politics on the grounds of objective knowledge, the newer paradigms call for relationships of participation between journalists and audiences.

In Chapter 6, I seek to answer how journalists evaluate their worth, the process in which I consider that they identify themselves. As I demonstrate, journalists commit to four types of worth: authority, distinction, professional work, and networked popularity. I find that journalists overwhelmingly draw on the traditional professional values associated with the industrial paradigm of journalism, for their identification. Whilst they have indeed accepted the value of social media networking, they seek to represent themselves as good professionals online, making sure to exclude the market logic of profit from their measures of evaluation.

In Chapter 7, I seek to answer how journalists qualify their relationships with others, which I consider to be the discursive process by which they negotiate their relationships. With the analysis of the relational meanings of various excerpts from my interviews, I identify four qualities, on the grounds of which journalists cooperate with or exclude others. The four are: care, truthfulness, recognition, and openness. I find that journalists, inculcated with the connectionist logic of openness, have operationalised social media in order to expand the diversity of their interlocutors. Nevertheless, they criticise these media as hostile and unreliable platforms regulated by opaque algorithms and profit-oriented principles.

## 5. The institution of journalism: justification of practice

### 5.1 Introduction

Journalism promises the truth about what happens in the world. This, for journalists, is a constant preoccupation, as they seek to know the truth about world events, and apply the methods that can justify true knowledge. It could be argued that this preoccupation largely falls under an empiricist epistemology, which is associated with establishing externally verified facts about particular social issues, based on experience (Zelizer 2004). Consider, nevertheless, this statement by one of the journalists that I interviewed:

*So I might get a bit philosophical here but... pre the internet.. what we thought of as the truth, and I'm suggesting that there's almost no such thing as objective truth, but there was a consensus built around the truth based upon a combination of people's lived experience and what the small number of people in the media decided was the truth.*

(Journalist 6)

The power of journalism to claim the truth is reflexively opened up here as a field of contestation around the long-standing journalistic norm of objectivity (Schudson 2001). The contest seems to be between the idea of an objective reality that exists independently of the journalist and the idea of the world as socially constructed. Simultaneously, a political terrain is revealed in which a model of social organisation oriented towards *consensus* is threatened by the participatory rationale of a *networked* society (Van der Haak, Parks, and Castells 2012). Consequently, the contest also highlights a struggle between truth as the property of a professional *elite* and truth as the property of the *people*. The epistemic and the political seem to blur: what truly matters, human experience of the many, or the decisions of the few?

The journalist quoted above articulates a critique of institutional journalism. By adopting this critical stance, I argue, he breaks with the habitual performance of journalism, and raises himself to a reflexive register, in order to interrogate the conditions of journalistic practice. He does this by referring to a disjunction between the 'lived experience' of the people and the decisions of professionals 'in the media'. As Boltanski (2011) has shown, critique indeed emerges in the representations of a discrepancy between the institutional definition of reality, and that of the 'actual' state of affairs. Nevertheless, as critique seizes on aspects of the world in order to *represent* them in alternative ways, the discrepancy cannot be understood as a contradiction between the 'symbolic' and the 'real'.

I view this difference in the representation of journalism in terms of a clash between different discourses. I understand 'discourse' here to refer to the representation of a practice from a perspective within another practice. A discourse is formed with the articulation of the various elements of a social practice (including persons, objects, activities, values, etc.) which are understood against an antagonistic, excluded discourse (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999a). The concept of discourse incorporates the idea that representations do not reflect an external reality, but that they constitute the practical reality that they represent. Let us now consider how journalism is discursively constituted in difference with another practice, as we move to another excerpt where one of my journalist interviewees refers to a paradigm of journalism in which social media are central, speaking from his professional perspective.

*Citizen journalism as they call it is more and more active and some of it it's terrific. Although I would say that a professional service with.. a pedigree and a reliable kind of institutional structure and solidity is needed as well, one hopes.*

(Journalist 5)

The journalist talks about – represents – ‘citizen journalism’, from a position within his own journalistic practice, which he construes as ‘professional’ and ‘reliable’, having ‘structure’, ‘pedigree’, and ‘solidity’. The exclusion here lies in the representation of ‘citizen journalism’ in terms of its lack of these particular types of value, which the institutional practice claims. I view this process, whereby a discourse articulates general conceptions of moral value, as justification. Justification entails critique, insofar as the discursive self-representation of a practice entails the representation of its excluded other.

For the justification of their practice, actors draw on the wider discourses that form around principles for the distribution of particular types of value. After Boltanski and Thévenot (2006), I understand these discourses as polities. Following the authors’ typology, I identify seven polities: a polity of public opinion where the opinions of others bestow recognition; the polity of inspiration where creativity and divinity coexist; the civic polity that valorises collective will; the domestic polity that values hierarchies of tradition; the market which places profit as its ultimate end; the industrial polity where efficacy is the highest principle; and finally the polity of connectionism (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005), where continuous activity on networks and the flexibility to build projects and connections is highly appreciated.

In my view, the justification of any practice seeks to fix the action within a social field in terms of particular types of value, and ensure its relative autonomy. In this sense justification is implicated in the construction of institutions; these I view as the social entities that structure action in meaning, making agreements between actors possible (Boltanski 2011). Insofar as justification is a dialectic process, several discourses may



exist simultaneously within an institutional space, with different ideas about what constitutes good practice.

The two excerpts above from my interviews with practising journalists refer to network technologies – that is to say, the internet and the online platforms that citizen journalists use, in contrasting ways. Within the excerpts, it is possible to identify two antagonistic visions for the institution of journalism, each justified by reference to different types of value. What this conflict seems to suggest is an uncertainty around the underlying principles that justify the institution of journalism. This is the issue that I explore in this chapter, when I ask: how do journalists justify their practice?

In the following sections I identify and discuss four major discourses that vie for the hegemonic position in justifying journalistic practice. The four are: a discourse of civic solidarity and reportage which I call civic journalism; a discourse of objectivity and verification, which I identify as industrial journalism; a ‘connectionist’ discourse of social media journalism; and the discourse of networked journalism.

I have identified these discourses following a CDA methodology (Fairclough 2003) in order to look at the various representations of journalistic practice present within the interviews I conducted with ten Guardian journalists. My analysis of each of the discourses falls into three subsections: in the first I identify the politics from which each discourse draws; in the second I show how the particular discourse articulates a critique of an excluded practice; in the third I look at the practice that is justified and reflect briefly on the implications in terms of the institution of journalism. My analysis focuses on the journalists’ extended answers, rather than small stretches of text (Jenner et al. 2004), in order to gain a nuanced understanding of the articulation of the politics (Flick 2007). I consider that the excerpts that I have drawn from the various interviews exemplify how

reflexive journalists situated in their particular social context draw from the shared meanings available to them in order to justify and criticise (Boltanski 2011). (I provide all the relevant excerpts for this chapter, categorised in terms of the politics on which they draw, in Appendix 1 of the thesis).

## 5.2 Civic journalism: solidarity with the ordinary citizen

The first discourse that I identify in terms of its justifications for journalistic practice stresses the importance of bonds of solidarity with citizens. I should note that the ideas of this discourse were not widely shared among my interviewees. I identified them in the two interviews from which I select and include here relevant excerpts. The first interview from which I draw is with a financial journalist, whose duties include editing The Guardian website's 'Money' section. As she tells me, in addition to editing and commissioning pieces, she writes and reports for the section. She routinely uses Twitter, in order to share news, retweet 'interesting facts', or gauge audience reactions to the published stories. In this process, she gathers information from various sources, such as banks, think tanks, and economists, and frequently searches on social media for views on relevant issues from ordinary people. The second speaker is a 'video journalist', as he describes himself, who has been a member of The Guardian multimedia team ever since it was formed nearly ten years ago. He shoots and edits video on current affairs, which is then uploaded to The Guardian website; a small number of his videos are intended for social media diffusion. His primary project is a series which features 'vox pops' mostly with citizens living outside London, who are invited to share their experiences and opinions on political matters and the living conditions in their town.

The two journalists articulate a paradigm of journalism according to which the good practitioners give a public platform to ordinary people, so that they can share their

experiences and position themselves on current issues of common concern. This paradigm also incorporates the idea that journalists should act as the mouthpiece of ordinary citizens, whose interests they should aim to represent. The civic polity, where collective life in its various forms is valued, dominates the justifications of this discourse. The references to civic values are evident in both journalists' preoccupation with the various tensions of political life. The journalists position themselves in solidarity with the ordinary citizens and simultaneously express their suspicion against claims to objectivity, thus forming a critique that targets equally social media and institutional journalism. In so doing, the journalists seem to put forward an alternative vision for journalism as an institution with the political role to facilitate civic participation in democratic deliberation.

### *5.2.1 Talking about inequality*

The journalist who speaks first identifies herself as a financial journalist who edits the 'Money' section of The Guardian website. Hosted within the 'Lifestyle' category, this section offers news on real estate, pensions, savings, loans, etc. with a view to helping readers with their personal finances. As she explains in the following excerpt, the coverage of these particular news categories is greatly informed by considerations of class.

*I suppose the kind of way we write about wealthy people as well, I suppose we're a bit, the FT would kind of maybe talk about 1% and their property, and their kind of wealth knowing that some of their readers are in that position whereas ours probably aren't. So we kind of talk about inequality I suppose.*

(Journalist 8)

The journalist declares a concern with 'inequality' as the major influence behind the way that she and her colleagues produce their stories. This is an inequality of 'wealth', in terms

of which she identifies two social groups. On the one hand are the 'wealthy people', the '1%', and on the other those who 'aren't' in the same position, the majority of the less privileged. This is 'probably' the majority of Guardian 'readers', who are contrasted against 'some of the readers' of the Financial Times. The 'way' in which The Guardian journalists cover financial news is justified by their claim to adopt the perspective of their less privileged readers. Drawing from the discourse that denounces the '1%', the journalist here articulates a civic principle of solidarity with the ordinary citizen as the reader, whom she aims to represent in her writing.

This journalist is certainly aware of opposing perspectives on the coverage of financial news, which she identifies with the Financial Times. Nonetheless, the antagonism that she construes between the two journalistic approaches is performed in a hedged language ('kind of') which, in my view, lowers the intensity of the conflict. This attitude towards conflict, I argue, seems to coincide with a particular conception of politics, in which public deliberation between antagonistic social groups should be facilitated. Journalism, according to a long-standing conception of its democratic role, (Christians et al. 2010), should act as the facilitator of that public debate. This journalist's reflexive awareness of the influence of power relations (inequality) over the production of news renders visible another major idea of this discourse, which seems to refer to the relativity of truth claims. Let us now see how this relativism is consolidated against the idea of objective knowledge in the following section, where the discussion refers to the problem of fake news.

### *5.2.2 Against fake news: the contingency of truth*

At the time of the interviews, in the wake of Trump's election in 2016, the debate on fake news had intensified with contests over their definition, who produces them, and to

whose benefit (Tandoc, Jenkins, and Craft 2019; Tandoc, Lim, and Ling 2018). Some of these questions emerged in my discussion with the video journalist, who took the opportunity to put forward an epistemological position that doubts the positive knowledge of the truth.

*I don't think that the fake news thing exists on its own far away from all of the good truthful news that everyone else is doing. I feel like it's part, an extreme part of a wider problem. So you have of course and this is about sort of, because you know truth, I studied philosophy right, truth is a very slippery concept right, it depends on context, it depends on how you frame stuff, it depends on various of your assumptions. So there are very few facts that could be put out like that, that can't be twisted or distorted, presented in a certain way that pushes people to interpret it in a certain way. And mainstream news organisations are doing that left, right and centre, right?*

(Journalist 1)

The argument against the idea of objective truth is here grounded on academic knowledge ('I studied philosophy'). According to this position, truth is contingent, as the journalist claims, on 'context', 'frame', and 'assumptions'. This contingency reveals the positioned character of the truth, which appears to be a fluid, 'slippery concept'. This malleability allows for the 'mainstream news organisations' to 'present' 'facts' in 'twisted' and 'distorted' ways, 'pushing people' towards particular interpretations. Fake news, then, is not an object external to the field of journalism ('away from all of the good truthful news'), this journalist claims, but rather represents its failed state ('an extreme part of a wider problem'). In my view, the video journalist localises the academic critique against objectivity in the journalistic context, in order to challenge the institutional journalism of mainstream media.

Social media nevertheless are not excluded from his critique. As this journalist expounds his views on fake news, he insists on the relativity of truth claims, pointing to the intense emotions of social media conversations.

*So the fake news for me it's one extreme end of a spectrum of.. content on Facebook which is all sort of screaming and saying something. Not much of it is very coolly presented, calm, nuanced, truth in a way right, if such a thing is possible*

(Journalist 1)

As he argues against objectivity, the video journalist articulates two widely shared criticisms. The first, directed against mainstream media and represented in the previous excerpt, attacks journalism as a political institution that collaborates with the state (Cook 1998). The second, in the excerpt above, directed at social media, gestures to their affective character: they are 'driven by intensity and not factuality' as Papacharissi (2014, 35) notes. Insofar as knowledge of an objective truth is untenable, as this discourse claims, social and mainstream media are equally, although in different ways, obfuscating relations of power. How is the civically responsible journalist to act, then? Let us see next how this paradigm further constitutes good journalistic practice.

### 5.2.3 'What kind of journalism is this?'

As the video journalist develops his narrative, he reflects on the experience of filming his regular video series. A particular event comes up in his recollection, involving critical comments made by readers on his coverage of a Conservative Party conference. This gives him the opportunity to expound his critique of institutional journalism and make the case for an empirical journalism of face to face interactions with ordinary people.

*Now with our [...] films we went out, to physically places we've never been before and the media don't often go and we've physically come face to face with people and that was very very important. And you go to them without your preconceptions and*

*your stories already decided. [...] we sort of put this film out there saying we've gone to people in the streets and they agree with this whether you like it or not. And the comments underneath were oh why are you making a propaganda film for the Tory party, what kind of journalism is this, why.. so people didn't like that yeah, people haven't always liked what we've done. Because it's kind of confronting a little bit*

(Journalist 8)

The reporter moves to 'places' where 'the media don't often go' thus breaking the habitual continuity of journalistic practice, to meet the 'people' 'physically' in 'face to face' encounters. Immersed in the world, the journalist encounters and appropriates a critique that challenges established perceptions. This critique is represented in the 'stories that didn't go down well with our viewers', denounced as Conservative rhetoric: 'why are you making a propaganda film for the Tory party'. The audience seems to denounce a rupture in their identificational relationship with The Guardian as an anti-conservative institution. This is rejected by the journalist with a civic justification that emphasises the duty to the ordinary citizen: 'we've gone to people in the streets and they agree with this whether you like it or not'. In the particular context of the British press' coverage of Brexit, this is the critique of institutional journalism as an insular elite, shared for instance by journalist Glenn Greenwald, as referenced by Zelizer (2018). Against this insularity, the civic journalist practises a journalism of face to face encounters, declaring a priori his allegiance to the 'people in the streets', even against the readership, which moves to uphold the institutional barriers, in a reaction also noted in research by Craft, Vos, and Wolfgang (2016).

To give to ordinary citizens a place in the news and to act as the mouthpiece of the disenfranchised are the propositions of my interlocutors in this section. In my view, these two journalistic functions refer to different conceptions of democratic life. The latter

journalistic function, to act as the representative of a dominated social group, arguably can be understood in terms of a 'radical' approach of civic solidarity, insofar as it signifies an adversarial position for journalism against political authority (Hanitzsch and Vos 2018). The former function, to enable participation in the public debate, is related with what Christians et al. (2010) have theorised as journalism's role of facilitating civic deliberation. I find that these two political positions and journalistic functions co-exist within the paradigm of civic journalism. As the case of my second interlocutor illustrates, to take seriously the critique of ordinary citizens is to reflexively question institutional journalism and upset the expectations of audiences. Nonetheless, as he admits, this journalist is 'confronting a little bit' his institutional audience with the populist discourse of Brexit (Ward 2019) that pitted the de-industrialised English towns against the London elites. Thus, whilst he articulates a radical critique against elites, he ultimately acts in accordance with the ideal of journalism as a forum of deliberation (Ettema 2007). What becomes clear is that, from the perspective of civic journalism, social media are detrimental to democratic politics; they are represented as distributors of fake news and unreliable forums that reward agitating behaviour. In the following section, I discuss the main antagonist of civic journalism, the paradigm of industrial journalism, whose politics, in my view, are influenced by classical liberal thinking.

### 5.3 Industrial journalism: verification of public opinion

The ideas that form the paradigm that I identify as industrial journalism emerged very frequently in most of the interviews that I conducted. In this section I have selected excerpts from two interviews, where I consider that the meanings are most clearly formulated. The first interview is with a social media editor, who is responsible for the production of journalistic content intended to be disseminated on The Guardian's various



social networking channels. He leads a team of journalists, assigning them with various stories on a daily basis, but he also contributes his own writing. With a professional background in digital publishing, he draws mostly on the paradigm of social media journalism, which I discuss in the following section. Nevertheless, he frequently refers to the professional practice of reportage which he recognises as ‘proper journalism’. The second journalist is a political correspondent with more than 10 years of reporting experience in The Guardian. He has incorporated social media, and in particular Twitter, in his everyday routines, appreciating their practical advantages (‘it makes my life easier overall’), whilst remaining cautious of their truth claims. We talked at length about the procedures of verifying social media content, and the importance of verification in the negotiation of journalism’s relationship with politics.

According to the paradigm of industrial journalism, journalists are the professional experts in matters of public opinion. They claim their expertise by applying, in their work, types of knowledge that emphasise measurement, evidence, and experience (Abbott 1988), in order to empirically establish facts about various events and public claims (Schudson 2003). Hence, industrial journalism seems to share an objectivist epistemology with various other professional fields, as well as the sciences. On the grounds of this shared epistemology, journalism appears to be part of an institutional order. As a member of this order, it is in dialogue with the political field. At the same time, it seeks to safeguard its autonomy from political influence, precisely by claiming a position of impartiality. In terms of its justifications, industrial journalism draws on and hybridises two polities: the polity of public opinion, where the opinions of others are highly valued, and the industrial polity, where efficiency is the most desirable type of worth.

### 5.3.1 Verifying social media content

Most of the journalists that I interviewed approached social media as an additional field of reportage, where various reports of events emerge, originating from a diverse number of actors. For the professional journalist, this pluralism of reports presents a significant challenge to the quest for true knowledge, but also a welcome opportunity. The opportunity, as I find in the following excerpt from my interview with the social media editor, lies in confirming journalism's power to classify public opinion, on the basis of expert work.

*the question for me is what's the thing that is uniquely Guardian about the way we're gonna do it. So the things I look for are proving, seeing something that's gone viral on Twitter and proving it's not true. So that is I think an interesting kind of public service journalism type of thing. [...] And then where you can get more on the background on this thing. [...] can you be the person that goes the extra mile to find the person or get different photos of it*

(Journalist 2)

The primary motivation for this journalist when he uses social media, the 'question' as he puts it, is to act in a 'way' that will confirm that The Guardian is an organisation committed to the public, in 'a kind of public service journalism'. Towards that end, he takes issue with 'viral' Twitter posts, scrutinising their factual accuracy. Fact-checking, as a process of verification, is considered to be one of the pillars of industrial journalism, as its 'essence' (Kovach and Rosenstiel 2014).

The professional performance of verification is construed here as work: going 'the extra mile', to gather 'background' information, identify the 'person' who posted the content, and compare 'different photos'. In my view, what this procedural endeavour seems to reveal is an objectivist perception of reality as independent from the perceiver's

viewpoint, which is, as Hanitzsch (2007) argues, the epistemic position that professional journalists seek to defend. It is, then, the performance of verification as work, which is valued in the industrial polity, that institutes journalism as that field which can order public opinion. It is the prerogative of professional journalists to evaluate the various public claims in terms of their accuracy and validity. I will return to the practice of verification later in this section, but, first, having established that it is the politics of industry and public opinion that furnish this paradigm with its justifications, let us now examine how excluded actors and practices are represented.

### *5.3.2 Extremists on social media*

The professional journalists' claims to jurisdiction over the public square is seemingly challenged by social media. This does not go unnoticed by the political actors who devise communication strategies on social media in order to sway public opinion in their favour (Ekman and Widholm 2015). This is the practice that is excluded in this discourse, as this excerpt from my interview with the political correspondent suggests, where we talk about how extreme right wing groups use social media in order to amplify their messages (Ward 2019; Wettstein et al. 2018).

*in the absence of people like the BNP you have these very small groups like I think they're called Britain First and they say that some councils are quite kind of worried about them and when they've threatened to march they've put up big plans, but there's only a handful of members it's just that their social media presence is massive. They've got something like a million Facebook likes and they can post a lot of stuff and when they... they've.. people associated with them targeted the Labour MP Luciana Berger for anti-Semitic abuse and she got thousands and thousands of messages but they seemed to be the same people using multiple Twitter accounts. So this group isn't big but they can magnify what they say just using social media and it's very hard to kind of... gauge how strong an opinion really is.*

Britain First is a British fascist organisation, recently deregistered as a party, whose leaders were jailed for anti-Muslim hate crimes in 2018. The journalist points to a gap between their social media presence and their actual political power. Even though they are 'very small groups', with 'a handful of members', they have 'put up big plans', they have a massive 'social media presence', sending out 'thousands of messages', so that they can 'magnify what they say'. There is the danger that their online activity can have real effects on collective life ('some councils are quite kind of worried about them'). What seems to be suggested here is that truth refers to gauging 'how strong an opinion really is', which is up to the experts to establish.

Industrial journalism is construed in the excerpt above as a defender of the values of liberal democracies, in what Christians et al. (2010) conceptualise as a role of collaboration with the political system. Institutional, industrial journalism assumes the political position of the representative of a liberal polity, excluding the right-wing populist groups as threatening political minorities, in a reaction against the rise of this type of political actors that Akkerman (2011) finds to be generalised among elite and tabloid newspapers. This exclusion is nonetheless discursively performed in the detached language of the watchdog that scrutinises the various political actors, fact-checking their claims (McQuail 2013). By casting doubt on social media's accuracy, the journalist here seeks to confirm the truth-telling power of institutional journalism, whilst he enunciates a political position with a technocratic vocabulary. Let us now explore in more detail how the journalistic expertise is consolidated, as I return to the practice of verification.

### 5.3.3 Verification as institutional test

The Guardian journalists have received special training on the techniques of social media verification, which was especially useful in the coverage of the Syrian civil war, where social media were weaponised to an unprecedented degree (Lynch, Freelon, and Aday 2014). As my interlocutor, the political correspondent, puts it in the following excerpt, this set of principles and techniques is akin to a 'kind of a mini science'. Construed as a technocratic procedure, the verification of social media content, in my view, seeks to confirm the journalistic jurisdiction over the public sphere.

*I mean there's different levels, there can be someone you trust ideally if the tweet is from someone of your colleagues you can trust it, or if it's from a colleague from another paper you can trust it, there's kind of different levels. And if it's someone you don't know, then there's all sorts of things about whether they're posting video, whether they're posting pictures which makes it much more credible, you know even pictures can be altered can be faked so if there's multiple people posting similar pictures from different angles then you can be fairly sure if that's true. One of the biggest problems that we've had with this was in the.. early days of the Syrian civil war, there was an awful lot of video being posted. By various groups claiming to show you know attacks or defeats or stuff like that. [...] you could look back at the weather report for that day and if it was raining that day but the video showed it was sunshine then you could think well that's probably not true. And you could look at the.. kind of buildings of the town and then look at a verified photo of which buildings have been destroyed and damaged and then compare that. So for example if there are buildings which you knew they'd been destroyed in Thursday and there were showing a video coming from Saturday when they were there you knew that it probably wasn't right. And there's all sorts of stuff you can do that it's become this kind of mini science of verifying stuff on social media.*

(Journalist 10)

Whilst the journalist here is interested in the opinions of others, and in this sense, refers to the polity of the public opinion, he is not motivated by its rewards of renown. He believes in the efficiency of a set of verifying procedures, with which he orders the public square, a space which includes social media, in terms of the factuality of the various claims. To verify is to undertake a series of operations, ('all sorts of things'), in order to validate truth claims, by investigating various objects ('video', 'pictures'). Verification is textured as a logical procedure with a series of if-then statements: if 'they're posting pictures', 'then you can be fairly sure'; 'if it was raining', 'then you could think' etc. The journalist 'looks' at the objects, 'compares', and then he can 'know', or 'be fairly sure'. In my view, what these empiricist procedures reveal is not the journalist's firm conviction of a positive reality, but rather his understanding of the existence of various conflicting viewpoints. In this sense, I concur with Schudson (1978) and Hanitzsch (2007) whose work contributes to our understanding of journalistic objectivity in terms of the establishment of intersubjective agreements.

The procedures of verification function as the tests that construe a hierarchy of cooperation and suspicion. High on the pole of coordination are fellow Guardian journalists, followed by colleagues from other media. Journalists also coordinate with other experts, professionals and scientists, to whom they turn for the facts of a 'weather report', or an already 'verified photo'. Suspicion is reserved for the non-journalists, the non-experts, the 'various groups' engaged in conflict, or more generally 'someone you don't know'. Social media host the voices of unknown others, who are lacking institutional credentials, or seem politically motivated. Thus, social media constitute a field external to professional journalism; cooperation with the users of social media is possible in the wake of tests that verify their claims and identities. In this sense, the verification of social media content can be considered a strategy for the segregation of professionals and

amateurs (Wahl-Jorgensen 2015) (as we see in detail in chapter 7), a tactic that aims to uphold the institutional boundary of journalism (Hermida 2015).

Before we move on, let us consider the two paradigms that I have discussed so far, which seem in direct competition with each other for the institution of journalism. They offer starkly opposing conceptions of journalism's political role, each entailing a different approach to the negotiation of journalists' distance from powerful elites (Hanitzsch 2007). Civic journalism openly recognises the social as traversed by conflicts and declares the journalistic commitment to give voice to the majority of the less powerful and represent them in the public debate (Christians 1997). This is a vision according to which journalists can act as 'custodians of critical engagement' and promote dissenting views (Markham 2014). Industrial journalism, whilst similarly cognisant of political conflicts, seeks to unify the liberal political spectrum against its enemies (Muhlmann 2008). As I have shown, civic journalism espouses a subjectivist epistemology on the basis of which journalists challenge claims to objectivity. What objectivity means for industrial journalism, a long-standing issue of problematisation for journalism studies (Gillmor 2005; Glasser 1992; Hampton 2008; Maras 2013; Schiller 1979; Schudson 2001; Tuchman 1972), seems to refer less to a belief in positive knowledge, and more to a faith in expert methods of evaluating a plurality of viewpoints (Ward 2004). Civic journalism is acutely suspicious of social media as unreliable forums with a potentially deleterious influence on political life. Industrial journalism shares these concerns, but approaches social media as yet another field of reportage where information can be harvested and scrutinised. I should note here a point of convergence between the two antagonistic paradigms, in terms of their mutual valorisation of face to face conversations as the ideal mode of reportage. In stark contrast, for the paradigm that I discuss next, social media

journalism, the world can in fact be known online, in the course of networked interactions.

#### 5.4 Social media journalism: the connectionist conception of public opinion

At the time of the interviews, The Guardian had reorganised its newsroom to create an 'editorial audience team', which dealt with all matters pertaining to communication with readers. This team was split into two others, closely collaborating with each other: the 'community team' which managed the curation of user generated content, and the 'social media team' which produced and promoted journalistic content for social media. The head of the latter team, the social and new formats editor, whom I quote first in this section, has developed The Guardian's social media strategy. He has had 'an unconventional route into journalism', with his resumé including positions such as 'product manager', 'information architect', 'user experience designer', as well as editor. Dissatisfied with the strict hierarchies of institutional journalism in which the 'human interest' stories that are popular on social media find low purchase, he prefers a journalism of online platforms where he is free to wear the hat of the journalist at will, in addition to the other facets of his online self. The second interviewee quoted here, a journalist who covers the media sector, relies heavily on Twitter for newsgathering and sourcing, construing them as activities that enable him to be recognised as a knowledgeable expert. This type of recognition he considers to be sustained in the online relationships with audiences and sources. Overall, it is relations, as connections made on social media, that he continuously aims to develop, practising what he calls a journalism of 'service' rather than 'product' (Kovach and Rosenstiel 2011; Artwick 2013).

In this paradigm, journalists seem to draw their justifications from two different polities. On the one hand, they are preoccupied with knowing the opinions of others and they



strive for recognition, both of which orientations signify the workings of the public opinion polity. The journalists understand the attainment of recognition as an individual responsibility: they have to take it upon themselves to consolidate their renown by developing their networks. This is the logic of the connectionist polity, according to which valuable network connections are created as an individual keeps moving from one project to the next (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005). I find that the journalists' representations of social media practice in this discourse bring these two polities together, introducing an alternative, post-industrial rationale to the ordering of the public sphere. Its politics do not seem to refer to collectivities as the two previous paradigms of civic and industrial journalism do, but rather to everyday life choices and individual struggles for identification.

#### *5.4.1 The inspired construction of the audience*

As a social media editor who commissions stories, the journalist that I quote first here generates ideas on a daily basis for the pieces that his team will be producing, taking into consideration their pitches. In the excerpt that follows, he elaborates on this editorial process, which includes monitoring the social media timelines, ascribing a central role to online audiences.

*Yeah I'm a very heavy Twitter user, I also can sometimes be inspired to do stuff because I've seen my friends talking about it on Facebook, or a few, interestingly I belong to some Facebook groups that are really kind of cliquey, fandom, sort of quite niche things. And some quite mainstream things but quite niche things. And sometimes you see people having a conversation about something that will spark things off [...] Sometimes with a story, it starts not with a story but with a... thinking about the audience.. before I was with The Guardian at the last job I was at, I kind of developed this mantra.. with the journalists who are basically, on my team,*

*basically saying that if you can't answer, about a piece, if you can't answer who is gonna share this and why then maybe you haven't finessed the angle enough?*

(Journalist 2)

The journalist imagines an audience from a particular perspective, an 'angle' construed in terms of 'who is gonna share this and why'. The cues that inform this imaginary construction of the audience (Marwick and boyd 2011) come from his own engagement as a member of networked groups that form around niche interests (non 'mainstream', 'niche things', 'cliquey' groups based on 'fandom'). This is a process tied to social media's emphasis on the self. On social media, the self-identity simultaneously draws on the domestic ('my friends') and the professional, the public, and the private (Papacharissi 2013). It is according to the logic of social media connectivity that the journalist, influenced by online conversations, publishes on The Guardian, with the objective to speak back to this particular group, and imagined others like them (and him).

Due to its emphasis on the construction of the self-identity, this paradigm suggests that journalists build their own 'brands', whereby, as we see in the next chapter, they have to negotiate the tension between their personal and institutional identities (Holton and Molyneux 2017). This identificational action, at the same time, consolidates the connections between networked communities (Van der Haak, Parks, and Castells 2012), to the extent that the project that brings them together remains relevant (Cammaerts and Couldry 2016). However, let us recognise that, insofar as this discourse is articulated within a professional organisation, it is confronted by the established institutional norms and routines. How it responds is the issue of the next section, where I focus on the language that excludes antagonistic rationales.

#### 5.4.2 'Journalese': the constraints of institutional journalism

The constant engagement with the networked audiences of social media as an endeavour that stimulates inspiration, as we saw earlier, may be favourable to the more creative approaches to news production (Markham 2012), but quite frequently exposes journalists to criticism. My first interviewee, the social media editor, reports an uneasy relationship with Guardian readers, when they question the journalistic standards of social media journalism. Countering the idea that news can only be articulated in the formal language of the institution, my interlocutor argues for lightness and informality, which he finds characteristic of online conversations.

*I did an actual bit of proper journalism, I actually went down to the museum, spoke to some staff and spoke to some visitors, but basically I've been triggered just by seeing that tweet and then you know the next day you publish the story on The Guardian and inevitably the first question is basically like, do you call this news type of thing? And I always think well.. I wasn't ever gonna be sent to the front line of the war in Syria to report. In the comments to the first person that says things like that I always glibly reply something along the lines of no other news stories were harmed in the making of this very short article, cause I feel there's space for lightness and brevity, cause I've been on the internet for a long time, I first got into stuff like using the web in the mid 90s so it's nearly 20 years I've been using the internet and it has got a more, I feel it has a much more informal flexible vernacular about it rather than the journalistic, journalese..*

(Journalist 2)

The tension that the journalist negotiates is between what he acknowledges as 'proper' journalism that requires face to face conversations, and a 'flexible' journalism of the 'internet'. When he practises the latter, he comes under fire from the audience ('do you call this news?'), who seem to act in defence of institutional norms (Lowrey and Woo 2010). In response, he denounces the suffocating 'vernacular' of 'serious' journalism,

seemingly drawing on the connectionist critique of bureaucratic hierarchies (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005). He performs this exclusion ironically ('no other news stories were harmed in the making of this very short article'), arguing for humour and informality. Irony, as Deuze (2005a) has also found, is a strategy that excludes objective journalism as the other. Ironic stances are assumed by journalists who are active in tabloid journalism, which is traditionally considered of low status in the field (Sjøvaag 2015).

Considering the connectionist justifications of this discourse, it is possible to interpret the ironic position above in terms of a wider tension between a classical liberal imaginary that refers to collective politics, and a neoliberal politics that refers to lifestyles (Chouliaraki 2013). Irony seems to be the discursive strategy associated with the latter, and is the way by which this excluded practice of social media owns its difference with industrial journalism. The argument here seems to be that, in addition to the 'serious' institutional paradigm of industrial journalism (Markham 2013), a journalism of everyday life, light and brief in tone and style (Markham 2011a), that caters to the interests of its readers, can be added to the range of news production (Hanitzsch and Vos 2018). In this sense, social media journalism seems to claim a role alongside institutional journalism, by defining itself against it. Let us move on to the next section to examine how the practice of social media journalism is further justified.

#### *5.4.3 Relationships with diffused audiences*

As we have already seen, social media journalism positions itself in difference against the established institutional practice of industrial journalism. This difference, – in addition to the content of social media stories, which refer to the domain of everyday life – is further specified in the following excerpt. The journalist who speaks here is a media

editor, a role which, as he understands it, requires that most of his newsgathering and sourcing happens on social media.

*Also it's just different, it's much more real time, it's much more having a relationship with a group of people who are relevant rather than just I want to get the story together this goes out and it maybe makes a headline. I think because journalism isn't, it's not a product anymore it's very much about a continuous relationship with a diffused audience some of whom are on Twitter, some of whom are on Facebook, some on Twitter, some of whom come to your own page.*

(Journalist 6)

It is 'just different', the journalist says, referring to the practice of social media journalism. This difference can be of a temporal character: social media journalism is 'more real time', and can be understood against a practice of the past, as the adverb 'anymore' suggests. But it is also different in terms of its logic: what matters for social media journalists is not the foreclosed procedure of getting 'the story together', putting it out, and hoping it makes a 'headline'. Journalism is not a 'product', the journalist says, echoing similar claims in the academic literature (Tremayne, Weiss, and Alves 2007; Robinson 2011; Kovach and Rosenstiel 2011). Journalism is about 'having a relationship' with specific groups of people who are 'relevant', the journalist argues. Social media journalism, then, seems to be justified in terms of its own logic, that of the connectionist ethos which prioritises the constant development of network connections. This is positioned as a pragmatic stance: insofar as audiences are fragmented or monitorial (Deuze 2008) and active on networks (Deuze 2009), the journalist should pursue relationships with the individuals who 'come to your own page', or are 'on Facebook' and 'Twitter'.

Let me gather now the justifications for social media journalism, which as a practice seems to be oriented towards the production of journalistic content for diffusion on social

media. Social media journalism positions itself as a new paradigm, against the old journalistic structures and routines. This positioning is partly defended as emancipatory for the individual journalist, whose playful creativity is restrained by institutional journalism. With a flexible attitude, the journalist embarks on a series of projects, developing in the process network connections. This continuous networking activity is valuable for building a journalistic identity. It is also the way in which the journalist relates to the various networked groups, arguably contributing to their cohesion (Usher 2012). Delineating its news production as pertaining to everyday life, social media journalism attributes value to 'human-interest' stories, the genres that industrial journalism considers 'soft news', and the pieces that offer advice and explanation. This stance is associated with an individualised conception of politics, in a departure from the collective narratives of the past, which can be associated with the paradigms of civic and industrial journalism.

Compared to its main antagonist, the paradigm of industrial journalism, with which it shares references to the polity of public opinion, social media journalism has radically different ideas about publicness. The public space, rather than a site of antagonisms which can potentially be unified by reference to institutional discourse, seems to be constituted in activity by individuals that creates relations within and across networked groups, what Castells (2009) has theorised as the 'mass communication of the self'. This proposition stands against the logic of the civic polity, where collective life is the foremost value. As we have already seen, civic journalism is very critical of social media, precisely coming from a perspective of solidarity with the ordinary people. The following paradigm, networked journalism, seeks to unify the civic and connectionist polities, arguing for a connectionist journalism with civic sensibilities.

## 5.5 Networked journalism: reforming institutional journalistic practice

Contrary to the common practice of most news organisations of equivalent calibre, The Guardian does not employ a paywall. The decision to offer its journalism for free was part of the editorial vision of ‘open journalism’ (Rusbridger 2018), which entailed a strategy of wide diffusion: building The Guardian’s social media presence and experimenting with new online formats. One of the two journalists who speak in this section stands out as one of the organisation’s first reporters to fully engage with social media in major journalistic projects. As a long-form writer, he was responsible for ‘Firestorm’, the ground-breaking multimedia story that has greatly influenced the presentation of reportage online (Dowling and Vogan 2015). I had talked with him extensively about another one of his projects, a series of articles about ‘Greece on the breadline’, in which he engaged with Greek social media users, and hosted their voices as part of reportage on the country’s economic crisis. The journalist whom I quote first here edits the financial section of The Guardian. I have also quoted her previously in the section where I talk about civic journalism. She relies heavily on Twitter for gauging reactions to the stories that she publishes, as well as a means of identifying and connecting with sources for her own reportage. She is an experienced user of Twitter, having joined nearly a decade ago, partly due to the encouragement by the then director of digital content, as she says. In her narrative the theme of ‘effecting change’ frequently comes up, as a justification for reporting the news.

In this discourse, justifications from the connectionist polity that stress the value of linking up with others in the course of networked projects are very prominent. The polity of public opinion is also active, insofar as the journalist is attuned to the opinions that emerge in the networked public space. In the statements where the journalists seem to

act in reaction to a problem that affects a large social group, I find that an additional rationale is at play. I identify this as the rationale of the civic polity, precisely because of its emphasis on collective life. The political role that networked journalists seek to enact seems to be as facilitators of public debate and, to a lesser extent, agents of social change.

### *5.5.1 Finding the people*

As we have already seen, the use of social media for newsgathering and sourcing is not just restricted to the coverage of breaking news (Allan 2012), but is part of everyday journalistic routines (Paulussen and Harder 2014). Social media, however, are variably construed in the various paradigms. For industrial journalism, it is the verification of social media content and source before they are reproduced that is of utmost importance. This is not necessarily a requirement for social media journalism, whose practitioners seemingly intend to contribute analyses, explanations, commentary, or practical information to online conversations. Networked journalists, as we see next, utilise the affordances of social media in order to give a platform to particular individuals' experiences that illuminate wider social problems. As the following excerpt suggests, this is justified in terms of diversifying the range of voices that are included in the news.

*if you're looking for case studies, so if you know there's a problem somewhere like on the trains at the moment we use the net to try to find some commuters who are really upset, so we kind of actively go out and search for certain keywords, so just use it in lots of different ways. And it's really changed, it used to be that we were sort of, we were reading those comments on our pieces and we were looking for those stories but it was within kind of our core readership 'cause not everyone comments but now you kind of have access to all those other people.*

(Journalist 8)



Taking her cue from a ‘problem’ that emerges ‘at the moment’ with train service stoppages affecting a large number of ‘commuters’, the journalist seems to engage in a type of crowdsourcing (Aitamurto 2013). She takes advantage of the affordances of networks, where journalists are connected with various others (Hermida 2010), and looks for ‘case studies’ of ‘upset’ commuters, whom she identifies with ‘keyword’ searches (also a BBC practice as Williams, Wardle, and Wahl-Jorgensen (2010) find). It is unclear if this content is included as is, or whether follow-up contact is made with the sources. Regardless, the practice is justified in terms of the increased diversity of the voices that journalists host. The journalist relaxes the gates of the institution (Vos and Heinderyckx 2015) to include ‘all these other people’, who perhaps engage in acts of citizen journalism (Gillmor 2006), in addition to the ‘core’ Guardian readership. A temporal distinction (‘used to be’) signifies this practice as progress compared to the recent past, towards the goal of increasing citizen participation in the news. Let us now take a look at how the past/present distinction is used in order to consolidate the justifications of this discourse, against the traditional paradigm of industrial journalism.

### *5.5.2 The inertia of the past*

With a ten-year stint as The Guardian’s correspondent in Paris, and seven years of experience of freelance reporting from numerous countries, my second interviewee has extensive knowledge of the role of the foreign correspondent. Digging into this knowledge of the traditional way of representing the various parts of the world, he criticises the exclusionary practices of institutional journalism as a thing of the past.

*You know most of the cliché about the foreign correspondent or the special correspondent who goes abroad is that you get told by your editors that something’s happening you’ve got to go this is what used to happen in the old days you’d go and see the research department and they give you a whole bunch of cuttings[...] and*

*you'd get to the hotel and there'd be bunch of another foreign correspondents there and you'd drink a few beers and decide what the story was and if you were feeling particularly daring you'd kinda wander out on the streets and get bit of local colour you know and you'd probably speak to a diplomat you'd speak to the British ambassador or something like that and a couple of analysts*

(Journalist 4)

The habitual practice of the foreign correspondent is ridiculed as a facile 'cliché'. That type of traditional journalist used to connect routinely with other institutional representatives. For this character, to be exposed to the world, ironically, would have been considered 'daring'. In this obsolete practice, the realm of events, 'the streets' were perceived superficially as the 'colour' of an exotic locale. The journalists' reliance on elite sources, built over time on relations of trust and convenience, is a point raised consistently in critiques of institutional journalism (Gans 2004; Ettema and Glasser 1998). The rise of social media has arguably contributed towards the disruption of these exclusive relations, insofar as the voices in the news are now found to be a mix of institutional actors and ordinary people (Hermida, Lewis, and Zamith 2014). By internalising the anti-elitist critique against industrial journalism, which it excludes as anachronistic, this discourse confirms that journalism is able to reform itself. Networked journalism indeed claims to be that reformist paradigm which ensures that journalism remains the institution that addresses the world (Beckett and Mansell 2008). In the next section I will focus precisely on the types of practice that this re-instituting vision considers to be a journalism that is open to the citizens' voices.

### *5.5.3 The old with the new*

Against the convenient reporting of the traditional correspondent, the same journalist goes on to describe how he practises networked journalism in order to cover

international news. In the excerpt that follows, he offers an account of how he used social media in order to reach out to Greek citizens at the peak of the country's economic crisis. It becomes apparent that, whilst his rationale is certainly influenced by the connectionist understanding of a networked public space, he also values offline engagement in face to face conversations in order to verify the identity of his interlocutors.

*we found people who were tweeting a lot about the crisis in Greece and who had a lot of followers. And I contacted them and said I explained the project and said if you like this will you retweet me? And that meant that pretty much as soon as I got off the plane in Athens airport, I basically had an army of people working for me you know. [...] You know that you do need to verify you need to make sure that people are who they say they are*

(Journalist 4)

What the journalist seems to describe here is a process of crowdsourcing and co-creation of news stories (Aitamurto 2013). In this modality, it is the journalist who initiates a news project by reaching out and forging agreements with others through social media, consequently leading an 'army of people'. Their invited contributions, collected online or face to face, are edited in the story that the journalist finally authors. It is after direct contact with others that the journalist decides what is worth including, a process which he views as verification. As we have seen, verification largely refers to establishing the credibility of the content and its source (Brandtzaeg et al. 2016). Let us remember that, in the paradigm of industrial journalism, the aim is to establish the veracity of reports by comparing them to institutionally established facts, towards the accurate knowledge of an event. In the excerpt above, the emphasis seems to be on the sources themselves, and the authentication of their identity, rather than the fact-checking of their claims. Insofar as they are 'who they say they are', their story is newsworthy.

In my view, rather than an affirmation of professional procedure, the emphasis on direct interactions mostly reveals the civic orientation of this paradigm. Face to face conversations are preferable because they provide access to richer accounts of experience (Belair-Gagnon, Nelson, and Lewis 2019), in a manner akin to the ‘vox pops’ of civic journalism. As the networked journalist alternates between online and offline modes of reportage, he seems to enact a political role, which entails enabling citizens to participate in the public deliberation (Hanitzsch and Vos 2018). How these voices are included in the news varies: online posts can be embedded directly or indirectly, their stories fully republished or significantly edited; it is nonetheless ultimately the journalist who acts as the author of the overall narrative.

Networked journalists explicitly articulate their civic sensibilities when they address others as ordinary citizens, and seek to facilitate the expression of their discontent. This is the type of value-driven practice that past research has theorised as participatory journalism (Paulussen et al. 2007; Singer et al. 2011). Whether crowdsourcing local tweets from frustrated commuters, or co-creating stories with distant others suffering from a collapsed economy, the journalist seeks to synthesise and bring to the public debate individuals’ experiences of a social problem (Domingo and Le Cam 2015). In this process, the journalistic identity, vis-à-vis these others, remains distinct, upholding the institutional boundary (Singer 2015). The normative hybridity of this discourse, with the politics of connectionism, civic life, and public opinion brought together, underlies the hybridity of networked journalistic action (Chadwick 2013). On the grounds of their values, the networked journalists shift routinely between older (offline) and newer (online) ways of doing journalism. Networked journalism stands against the older paradigm of industrial journalism, but at the same time it seeks to transcend the antagonism between institutional journalism and social media. It is to that end, I claim,

that it internalises the tension between old and new, presenting itself effectively as a reformed paradigm of institutional journalism.

As I conclude the discussion of journalistic justifications of practice, let me briefly summarise some key points regarding social media, the institution of journalism, and its perceived political roles. The first paradigm that I have identified, civic journalism, speaks of solidarity with ordinary people. Journalists may act as the representatives of majorities against the privileged few, or offer them a public platform in order to express their discontent. Industrial journalism, the paradigm that professionalises the practice, subjects social media to verification. Journalists cooperate with each other and with other institutional representatives, forming relations that autonomise the field and embed it in an order of institutions. In terms of its politics, professional journalism claims an impartial role, seeking to deflect political influence, whilst representing liberal democratic values (McNair 2009). Social media journalists produce content to be shared on the social news streams. In the context of established organisational hierarchies of news coverage, social media journalism refers to the domain of everyday life, rather than public affairs. As such, its conception of the political emphasises individual choices of lifestyle, rather than collective action. Networked journalism, in contrast, opens the field up to social media users as citizens who experience some kind of social problem. Networked journalists begin projects by seeking out others across digital and social networks, with whom they cooperate, shifting from online to offline modes of interaction (Beckett 2010).

## 5.6 Concluding reflections

In this chapter, I have sought to understand how journalists justify their practice, now that social media are a ubiquitous feature of mainstream journalism. Central to my

understanding of justification is the concept of discourse as the social use of language that constitutes reality. Operationalising this concept in the study of a social practice such as journalism helps us understand that the various discourses that represent a practice do not merely reflect what happens, but actively shape action. The constitution of a particular practice happens with the discursive articulation of various social elements (activities, subjects, objects, values etc.) in relations of equivalence and difference (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999a). I view justification as a discursive process of articulation, whereby actors draw on the wider discourses that I call *polities*. The *polities*, as generally shared discourses (Chiapello and Fairclough 2002), form around a plurality of economies of worth (Boltanski and Thévenot 2006). In justification, actors discursively draw upon the *polities* in order to circumscribe a field of practice as an institution, the social entity that seemingly stabilises the uncertainty of social life (Boltanski 2011). Institutional discourse can be challenged, in the context of practice, by alternate discourses that vie for the hegemonic position, which may draw on competing *polities* of justification. I claim that this is precisely the case in the current conjuncture for journalism. Following a CDA methodology in order to analyse my ten interviews with Guardian journalists, which I conducted in order to study the organisation as a paradigmatic case, I have found that the practice of journalism is not exclusively attached to a single paradigm. It rather seems to be constituted in the antagonisms between various normative paradigms, according to which journalists approach social media in different ways.

When it comes to understanding the role of social media in journalistic practice, a persistent debate seems to refer to either their normalisation by journalists (Lasorsa, Lewis, and Holton 2011) or their negotiation into journalists' everyday routines (Tandoc and Vos 2016). The implication of the former attitude is that of continuity: social media

are made to fit within existing journalistic norms (Molyneux and Mourão 2017). In the second case, their negotiation, social media are found to change journalistic conventions (Hermida 2016). In terms of the paradigms that I have identified in this section, it could be argued that industrial journalism, with its insistence on the verification of social media, represents the attitude towards normalisation. In contrast, networked journalism, with its hybrid mode of reportage, seems to reconfigure journalism. Social media journalism potentially even extends the practice outside the institutional barriers. Nevertheless, in my analysis I have found that clear-cut divisions between continuity and change in the ways that journalists justify their practice are untenable.

Social media, as I have shown, are part of the various discourses that propose different visions for the institution of journalism, in ways that throw into relief the dialectics of continuity and change. For the connectionist paradigms, social media and networked journalism, social media are the socio-technical networks with which one can construct a journalistic identity and develop relations with various other individuals and groups. For the social media journalists, this activity seems to take place entirely online: news monitoring, news gathering, interaction with others, news production and diffusion, can all happen on social media. Social media journalists aspire to act as service providers or connectors of networked communities, which can be considered newer journalistic roles (Hanitzsch and Vos 2018). Nevertheless, social media journalists are also keen to establish links with journalistic tradition. They represent their kind of journalism as yet another way of writing with humour and creativity, covering 'human interest' stories, or addressing the needs of everyday life. Networked journalists, whilst similarly guided by the connectionist ethos, do not seem to share the view that the world is entirely mapped by social media. The idea of a networked world, where social networks are connected to digital networks, underpins the continuous movement of journalists between the online

and the offline domains. Networked journalists can thus slip into offline, face to face interactions or into other modes of communication that seem more traditional. For industrial journalists, social media are instruments of journalistic work and yet another field of reportage. Their activities are not dissimilar to those of networked journalists: they too follow the news on social media, scout for trails of information, contact various others, engage with the audiences, etc. It is their insistence on the verification of social media content, fact-checking what is said and authenticating who speaks, that differentiates this paradigm from networked journalism. Civic journalism stands out as the instituting paradigm that rejects social media as arbiters of collective projects of solidarity. Whilst this idea is not widely shared in my data, it is part of a critique against both industrial and connectionist journalism.

I find that the operationalisation of social media is shaped by the journalists' conceptions of their practice's political role. Each of the various discourses that vie for the institution of journalism articulates a vision for its function in democratic polities. This seems to be a contest mostly between two political logics. The first, articulated in a language of civic justifications, seemingly recognises a political terrain that is wider than the field of systemic politics, encompassing all aspects of everyday life. Journalism emerges in this terrain as an institution that pays attention to the problems of various communities, particularly those that refer to violations of the democratic principle of equality. Networked journalists claim that social media can indeed be a public space where citizens can voice their discontent and challenge relations of domination. Civic journalists doubt the quality of social media deliberation and claim that networked interaction prevents alliances between social groups and weakens them vis-à-vis political and financial elites. The second logic seems to be one of a liberal conception of politics as a distinct field, where the representatives of the citizenry (the state, government, parliament, the parties



etc.) are dominant (Christians et al. 2010). Industrial journalism observes and reports on this sphere, with the journalists collaborating with political actors, or holding them to account. As a member of a wider institutional order, journalism organises itself as a technocratic institution situated within the public square, which it classifies in terms of the test of verification. This type of journalism moves to uphold the values of liberal democracy against its enemies, from a position that is textured in the disinterested language of the objective expert (McNair 2012).

Social media journalism does not refer to the large collectivities of publics and citizens as the above paradigms do. Nonetheless, I do not view social media journalists' stance as apolitical, contra Hanitzsch and Vos (2018). Social media journalism, as a 'pure' connectionist vision, articulates a politics that refers to the self (Fenton and Barassi 2011): emancipation is to be found in the networked construction of the self-identity. I find however, that it is positioned weakly in terms of its instituting justifications. Claiming the domain of everyday life as their 'beat', social media journalists occupy a space in the lower part of the journalistic hierarchy, where soft news, tabloids, and more generally market-oriented journalism are classified (Wiik 2015).

In summary, my analysis of journalistic justifications of practice shows that there is a shift towards a newer way of doing journalism that is associated with the connectionist logic of networking activity. Social media are very important in this mode of journalistic practice, insofar as they constitute the networks that connectionist journalists traverse as they continuously connect with various others online and offline. At the same time, traditional, industrial journalism persists, incorporating social media as an additional professional means and field of reportage. What also persists is the importance of journalism's political role for its institution. All of the paradigms that I have discussed

proffer some vision for journalism's contribution to democratic life. In one of these paradigms, civic journalism, I identify a critique that doubts social media's capacity to facilitate public deliberation.

In as much as the focus of this chapter was on journalistic practice and its justifications, my discussion partially included references to the journalists in terms of the various facets of their identity, as well as to a range of other actors with whom they interact. In the two chapters of empirical analysis that follow, I fully engage with the questions that arise in the processes of journalistic identification and the negotiation of relationships with others. I begin, in the following chapter, with the journalistic subject, by looking at the various ways that my interviewees speak about themselves and their colleagues. I view this as a process of evaluation of worth, by which journalists distribute among themselves a plurality of values.

## 6. The journalistic subject: evaluation of worth

### 6.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I have looked at how journalists justify their practice, and found that they articulate four normative paradigms. These are: civic journalism, which emphasises solidarity with citizens; industrial journalism, the professional vision for the practice; social media journalism, which valorises flexible activity on networks; and networked journalism, which seeks to reform the institution on a more participatory basis. Justification is related to the institution of journalism, a process which I have additionally found to be contingent on the articulation of a political role for journalism. I have identified two logics that compete for the definition of journalism's political role. The first, which I associate with industrial journalism, sees politics as a distinct field with which journalists engage in collaboration and critique. The second, associated with civic journalism, and to an extent with networked journalism, envisions the institution of journalism as a democratic practice of civic solidarity.

Social media are central to the paradigms that draw on the connectionist polity, namely networked journalism and social media journalism. In these paradigms, social media are represented as the networks that break down suffocating hierarchies and facilitate the participatory engagement of audiences in the news. Whilst industrial journalism also incorporates social media, their value according to that paradigm is their utility as a professional instrument. A different paradigm, civic journalism, launches a critique against social media, raising the issue of their political effects. In my analysis of the journalists' justifications, issues of journalistic identity and relationships with others, both referring to journalistic agency, have been prominent. In this chapter, I turn my attention to the former process, journalistic identification.

‘Who is a good journalist?’ the journalists whom I have interviewed seem continually to ask while reflecting on the action in their milieu. The question of worthiness appears to delineate a site of contestation in which the practitioners position themselves as they offer their competing principles of worth. In the following excerpt a dispute on worthiness is prominent, and it will give us the chance for a quick first look at the workings of evaluation.

*And they're always promoting the columnists [...] I don't understand why people are obsessed with columnists. If I was a Guardian reader I'd much rather meet you know.. someone like [...]. He's an investigative reporter, quite low key, doesn't have a big name. Very very interesting, intelligent guy, just for example. But these are never the people who are never sort of the face of things externally.*

(Journalist 1)

The prominent antagonism seems to be that between different organisational positions, those of ‘columnists’ and ‘reporters’. Nevertheless, the tensions between employees and their management, and the organisation vis-à-vis its audience, can also be traced in the text. The problematics that are developed around who deserves worth and who gets to decide involve the ideas that to be *worthy* is to be *distinguished*, (in this instance as the ‘face of things’), and that this requires the *recognition* of others. In the excerpt, it is the worth of fame, attached to the popular columnists, which is pitted against the quiet efficiency of investigative reporters. The speaker claims the latter as the worth par excellence of good journalists.

In my view, these disputes between actors over their relative worth are resolved by agreements on the principles that should prevail in the various situations of social life. These are the principles that refer to the various conceptions of the common good articulated in what Boltanski and Thévenot (2006) conceptualise as *polities*. *Polities* are

those general, abstract discourses which form around principles for the distribution of worth (Chiapello and Fairclough 2002). I identify seven polities: a polity of public opinion where the opinions of others confer distinction; the polity of inspiration where creativity and divinity coexist; the civic polity that valorises collective will; the domestic polity that values hierarchies of tradition; the market which places profit as its ultimate end; the industrial polity where work and efficiency signify worth; and, finally, the polity of connectionism (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005), where continuous activity on networks and the flexibility to build projects and connections are highly valued. Let us see how the principles of the polities are implicated in answering the question of who is a good journalist, as we consider this excerpt, where one of my interviewees refers to his action on Twitter.

*I generally try and do to, help create my public image as someone who is informed, interesting and useful to follow which then comes and feeds back to my ability to direct message someone*

(Journalist 6)

It seems that two polities of worth are intertwined in the text. I identify the first in the journalist's action of creating a 'public image' and its appreciation as 'informed, interesting,' etc. Insofar as this type of worth seems to constitute recognition, the polity upon which the journalist draws seems to be that of public opinion. The second polity of worth relates to the action that 'creates' this 'image' and sustains the 'ability to direct message someone' on Twitter, which is seemingly the networked activity valorised in the connectionist polity. What, in my view, is noteworthy in this particular excerpt, is how the speaker commits to these types of worth as an important aspect of himself as a professional journalist. I understand this personal attachment to particular types of worth as an important part of the process of identification.

I view identification as the process by which individuals form themselves as persons by internalising and prioritising various socially instituted attributes (Du Gay 2007). Discourse, as the socially instituted and instituting linguistic practice (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999a), is inextricably implicated in the constitution of identity. In my view, the various types of identity are formed as the subjects of particular discourses, which persons come to enact in the various social contexts that the discourses represent. Identification then entails the articulation of the self-identity in terms of an array of subject positions. In this process, the self is constituted in terms of a dialectic between a personal and a social identity (Fairclough 2003; Brown and Lunt 2002).

An important component of identity refers to the moral values to which persons commit themselves and which are included in the polities of worth that I have discussed above. Identification then entails evaluation, which I consider to be the articulatory attachment of worth to the self and others. In this chapter, I concentrate on the social identity of the journalist, the journalistic subject, as I focus on my interviewees' evaluations, paying particular attention to their references to social media. Hence, the guiding question of this chapter is: how do journalists evaluate their worth?

Following a CDA methodology (Fairclough 2013), I have identified a number of passages in the ten interviews that I have conducted in order to study the case of The Guardian, where journalists evaluate their worth. These are statements where the journalistic 'I' is implicated in explicit evaluations, commitments to what should be done, or value assumptions (Fairclough 2003). In each of the sections that follow, I identify first the polities that seem to be mobilised in the journalistic evaluations. I then focus on how each discourse of evaluation is consolidated, by looking at how other types of worth are excluded. Subsequently, I concentrate on the activation of evaluations in practice, in order

to flesh out the journalistic subject in terms of the concept of worth held by my interviewees. The discussion unfolds around somewhat extended quotes from the interviews (Jenner et al. 2004), which offer us a more nuanced understanding of the stakes of evaluation (Flick 2007). (I provide all the relevant excerpts for this chapter, categorised in terms of the polities upon which they draw, in Appendix 2 of the thesis).

In the discussion that follows, I show that the journalists draw on four discourses with different ideas about what constitutes journalistic worth. The subjects of the first discourse are evaluated in terms of their authority. Drawing from the domestic polity, journalists here argue for tradition and hierarchy, two types of worth in which they find social media to be lacking. I identify the second journalistic subject in terms of a discourse which finds worth in distinction. Drawing on the polity of public opinion, journalists here use social media in order to know the opinions of their audiences and the ones that they themselves recognise: their peers. In the third discourse, the worthy subject is the professional journalist who is evaluated in terms of their work and efficiency, the types of worth of the industrial polity. Whilst social media are valuable as instruments used in the various activities of journalistic work, they are also excluded as competing organisations. In the final discourse, the polities of connectionism and public opinion come together to construe worth as ‘networked popularity’. This is a new type of worth that journalists attain as they create and validate their self-identities on social media. This new, networked way of identification notwithstanding, I find that journalists continue to evaluate themselves according to traditional types of worth, which can be associated with the industrial paradigm of journalism. Hence, I understand the journalistic identity to exhibit significant resilience in the face of change.

## 6.2 Authority and tradition

The Guardian's 10am editorial meeting is open to every journalist in the organisation, even though most of them are too busy to attend, as they are already working away on the stories of the day. This is where the editors of the various sections take turns in listing the stories that they intend to publish. The meeting is headed by either the editor of the paper, or the deputy editor who, towards the end of the meeting, opens the floor for a brief discussion on the leading stories of the day. On the day that I attended the meeting as the guest of a senior columnist of The Guardian, the issue of the day was the Richmond by-election on which my interviewee commented, referring to an inflammatory tweet by a Conservative Party member. Later, in the interview, this gave me the opportunity to begin by asking straightaway about his views on the role of social media in his own practice.

The discourse on which he drew was very suspicious of social media, seeing them as oppositional to principled hierarchies. I identify this as a discourse of tradition, where authority and generation, the values of the domestic polity, are of utmost importance. To speak of authority, in this polity's conception, is not to offer evidence or proof for an evaluation. Rather, authority is already attached to a person who has experience or seniority in some journalistic hierarchy, tradition, or genealogy, and knows how to conduct themselves with reserve and humility. Admittedly, the traditionalist discourse is not widely shared in the narratives of the journalists I interviewed. In addition to the columnist, I have traced it in some critical statements by the video journalist mentioned in the previous chapter and a features writer, who have both been with The Guardian for more than 15 years. They differ in their views on social media: the first is intensely suspicious, whilst the second is an enthusiastic user. Regardless of this contrast, in the



excerpts included here, they are both critical of the rationale of social media networking, which they find superficial. Overall, the traditional journalistic subject finds worth in the values with a long history in the journalistic field: truth, objectivity, and impartiality – all of which, as we have seen in the previous chapter, relate to the traditionally established paradigm of industrial journalism.

### *6.2.1 Authority and hierarchy*

Taking my cue from the incident of that day and what seemed to be an offensive tweet against the newly elected Richmond MP, I asked how someone should behave on social media platforms. My interlocutor, the senior columnist, offered an overview of how he makes use of social media to comment on current affairs. This gave him the chance to argue for the importance of authority and the value of hierarchical relations.

*I think the main thing I would say is to be careful not to getting to saying things that you can't defend. Because I think you can undermine your authority up to the extent you have any by saying off the top of the head daft things which is fine if you're you know a celebrity just sort of shooting from the hip but you know our trade is supposedly.. authority and trustworthiness and objectivity and all that stuff.*

(Journalist 7)

The primary preoccupation, 'the main thing', refers to a principle of caution – 'be careful'. This principle guides the journalist's action of 'saying things', as he recognises the pitfalls that would threaten his status. I refer to status here as the elevated position that the journalist 'defends' by not undermining his 'authority'. Authority, in turn, seems to refer to an established order, and it needs to be preserved, rather than actively pursued, insofar as an individual either 'has any' or does not. Insofar as 'objectivity' and 'trustworthiness', values that come from the industrial polity, are part of the journalistic tradition, they can be articulated in equivalence with authority.

Worthy journalists, in this discourse, embed themselves in hierarchical chains, which can include intellectual traditions, as the next excerpt shows. They are thus associated with figures of superiority in a move that immediately evaluates them positively.

*The previous editor of this paper Alan Rusbridger he once said to me after I've written an editorial that he read the next morning. He said that editorial makes me really proud to be editor of The Guardian. That editorial was a piece I've written about the.. 400th anniversary of the birth of John Milton. It was just an editorial that said John Milton great writer, interesting figure and people have forgotten him.*

(Journalist 7)

The 'editor of the paper', as the figure of highest authority, has the power to proclaim what counts as worthy journalism. Worthy beings, such as the editor and the 'editorial' writer, can share in the 'pride', an internalised, affective sense of worthiness. For their evaluation, they refer to a tradition signified by a second figure of authority. John Milton, the British Renaissance poet, stands as the head of the genealogy of master wordsmiths to which the journalist/writer claims membership. The European tradition of journalism as a literary endeavour (Chalaby 1998) rather than technocratic vocation seems to be signalled here. But 'the people have forgotten him,' claims the speaker, chiding the banality of mass opinion, and thus revealing the tension that we will explore in the following section between traditional worth and social media popularity.

### *6.2.2 Self-branding and cat videos*

The Guardian has famously embraced the spirit of convergence (Rusbridger 2018), inviting readers to partake in the journalistic process. This invitation was complemented by an increase in the production of stories intended primarily for diffusion on social media. For the journalists who speak in the following excerpts, the excesses of this

practice undermine the quality and authority of journalism. Let us consider the first text, taken from the interview with a features writer.

*we don't go in for the kind of skateboarding cat videos you know. We tend to avoid stuff that will pull in massive numbers of clicks just because it's funny. We try to remain a reasonably serious organisation*

(Journalist 4)

The journalist seems to speak here as the representative of The Guardian as a 'serious organisation', which 'avoids' the entertaining practice of sharing 'cat videos'. The phrase refers generally to the logic of virality on social media, with which competitors such as BuzzFeed are identified (Tandoc and Jenkins 2017). I interpret this critique as an attack on the logic of measuring popularity in terms of the maximum number of network connections, the 'massive number of clicks'.

The video journalist, who speaks in the following excerpt, similarly takes issue with this conception of popularity, which he associates with self-branding on social media.

*a friend of mine who said their brand, their personal brand, not just their journalistic brand, is very important to them and if they don't post pictures every day they feel like they're missing a gap in their brains and that. I don't feel like that at all. I mean I went to university and I didn't have a phone, I got my first mobile phone after uni, so I remember those days you know? I didn't grow up with that.*

(Journalist 1)

As we will see later, self-branding on social media is an important consideration for the networked journalists (Brems et al. 2017). Developing a 'journalistic' or a 'personal brand', is here represented, with the indirect reference to the comments of a 'friend', as a practice that demands the incessant posting of content 'every day'. It is excluded as a need for recognition that is experienced affectively as 'a gap in their brains'. This objection

comes from an equally subjective position ('I don't feel like that at all'), and it is further supported by reference to personal biography ('I didn't grow up with that').

The particular conception of popularity that seems to be excluded in the excerpts above, from the perspective of the traditional journalists who aspire to seriousness and self-reliance (Markham 2013), is that which is acquired via online networks. To produce humorous online content is unacceptable for serious journalists. That practice could inject 'serious organisations' with the more entertaining/consumerist rationales that are traditionally held to be of low journalistic worth (Sjøvaag 2015). Furthermore, for self-reliant journalists to pursue their online popularity is to be overly concerned with external validation at the sacrifice of their privacy. In the following section, the case for the moral integrity of this traditional journalistic character is further developed.

### *6.2.3 An old-fashioned character*

Throughout my conversation with the columnist, issues of temporality emerged frequently as divisions between the past and the present, the old and the new. The problem that these polarities pose to the continuity of identities is addressed by recourse to the values of the domestic polity, which transcend 'then' and 'now' with 'always'. The worthy journalist of this discourse does what he has always been doing, even when this entails the incorporation of new objects into his activities.

*I think so many journalists of my time are kind of.. they take a stance they have an attitude they are.. in a sense they regard themselves as protagonists in something or other. I'm cautious about that but I think it's quite good to use Twitter to be slightly humble sometimes if you got something wrong say it, if you've seen something idiotic, if you've seen somebody saying something daft, you know, without being rude..*

(Journalist 7)

The speaker here identifies himself against the other journalists 'of my time' who have 'an attitude', and a 'stance', and 'they regard themselves as protagonists'. From the moral perspective of the domestic polity to claim the spotlight is considered selfish behaviour. 'Good' conduct is to be 'humble' when admitting mistakes. When the circumstance requires the admonition of irrational stances one should not be 'rude'.

Overall, I find that this is a discourse that aims to confirm the positions and relations in the field of journalism as they are, by claiming that this has always been the state of affairs. Tradition should be upheld, the journalists here argue, and hierarchy should be respected, even as new activities enter the daily practice. Similar attitudes of resistance, or of a sceptical adoption of networked technologies, are well documented in the literature, especially during the 2000s, when newsrooms were converging their print and digital operations. Resistance has been variably explained as a reaction to the technologisation of journalism (Hemmingway 2007; Domingo 2008), as an initial step in the process of the diffusion of innovations (Singer 2004), in terms of strategies to protect professional boundaries (Singer 2015) and legitimate authority (Carlson 2017), or as an institutional tendency of stasis (Lowrey 2012), among others.

On the grounds of the above analysis of traditional evaluations, I would argue that resistance, or in other words journalistic reproduction, is rooted in the need for a stable identity in the face of change, as Grubenmann and Meckel (2017) also claim. The journalists that I have quoted above seem to experience change as destabilising the inveterate values that shape their identity as persons with specific backgrounds and experiences. Nonetheless, insofar as they take stock of the logics and conditions of the current journalistic context, their stance cannot be considered unreflexive. In my view, the journalists here rise to reflexivity in order to evaluate themselves and others,

although they immediately move to confirm what feels familiar. Among the familiar meanings, I find the imperative to exclude the market from influencing the criteria of journalistic worth, an influence that traditionalists find to be lurking behind the logic of social media popularity. The following discourse similarly turns against the logic of online popularity, although journalists here show ambivalent stances vis-à-vis social media.

### 6.3 Distinction

In addition to its regular news production, The Guardian publishes three longer pieces weekly that run simultaneously in its print and digital editions. These 5000–6000 word articles carry significant prestige for their writers and editors, as well as the organisations that can afford the considerable investment of time and resources towards their production. The journalist who speaks first in this section is an editor involved in the commissioning and editing of long form reportages and analyses. With over a decade's international experience in the production of this type of journalism, he came to The Guardian from The New Yorker. The second journalist is the columnist that we have encountered in the previous section. Although he is a social media user, he is suspicious of their logic, which he sees as potentially injecting consumerist rationales into news production.

Both journalists are concerned with the opinions of others, which constitute the measure of worth in the polity of public opinion. An original perspective, the argument that no one has made, a unique contribution, are what these journalists strive for in their struggle for distinction. They are both acutely aware of the various public debates, utilising social media to monitor public argumentation. Oriented towards others as they are, their audiences and peers, they grapple with contrasting conceptions of distinction. On the one hand there is the idea of networked popularity measured in online traffic, which they

reject on account of its affinity with the market. On the other, there is the recognition conferred by one's peers, and the coveted reward of distinction, which is what they ultimately prioritise.

### 6.3.1 Esteem and prestige

The editor of the long-form section does not usually follow the website's daily publishing cycle, as the features that he commissions require long-term planning. It is uncertain what would be of relevance at the end of the two- or three-month period that these long-form pieces take to produce. But the uncertainty of the future is appeased by the stable reference to the worth of distinction, as the next excerpt seems to suggest.

*so much of this business is about that right, is sort of about how we describe these things, how do we, how do we create systems of value and esteem and prestige and kind of you know merit in in any kind of journalism but I think especially in the kind of more reflective, more literary, more narrative kinds of journalism is totally about a sort of subjective judgement of a given community.*

(Journalist 9)

The 'business' of journalism, for this speaker, primarily refers to processes of evaluation and 'systems of value', which distribute recognition as 'esteem', 'prestige', and 'merit'. Whilst these 'systems' regulate the entire field, they are 'especially' relevant to a distinguished 'community' of journalists who practise the more 'reflective', 'literary', 'narrative' type of journalism (Neveu 2014). These 'systems' are not structures imposed or inherited since they have to be 'created' by the arbitrary 'subjective judgement' of the very community that will uphold them. Having established the rules of the 'business', let us see how this journalist understands his 'job'.

*my job is to figure out how I kind of counterpoint whatever is happening in the zeitgeist, you know. Whether sometimes that's to go totally in the other direction*

*and to say no one is talking about x and so we're gonna start talking about x but often it's like.. You know we came into work the morning after Brexit and basically the idea was like ok what we do now? We have these various things that have been in process for months and some of them actually fit this kind of new reality that everyone seems to feel that we are in, but what's gonna be our way of kind of reorienting our direction for the next two or three months, right? What are the things that we now think okay, it would be a singular contribution to the debate happening right now if we did this*

(Journalist 9)

Knowledge of the 'zeitgeist' enables the journalist to identify himself in difference with others, 'counterpointing' the other public voices. According to this logic, one tackles the issues that 'no one is talking about' in the various public debates. Insofar as the journalist in this discourse is interested in the opinions of others, including his peers and the public, he is able to move between the world of public debate and the journalistic community, quite unproblematically. A 'singular contribution' in public confers recognition by one's peers, in a twofold understanding of distinction (Bourdieu 1998a). It is unclear what the particular news value of a contribution might be; this is up to the journalist to ascertain in terms of his practical reason (Schultz 2007). But whilst the content of this particular 'contribution' might vary, the principle of this practice which, as this journalist suggests, unites and differentiates the journalistic community, remains stable: the journalist is evaluated in terms of his/her recognition by others. This mode of evaluation is problematised when the relations between journalists and other actors are organised in terms of different rationales, as we see next.

### *6.3.2 The problem with online traffic*

The Guardian journalists have access to a proprietary system of metrics called Ophan. On its dashboards they can monitor user behaviour on their own platform, social media, and



the various other channels where their content appears. Some of the editors that I interviewed reported that they routinely adjust their commissioning and publishing strategies in terms of this information.<sup>1</sup> For the columnist who speaks next, this increasing emphasis on metrics should be tempered, so that it does not interfere with the integrity of Guardian journalism.

*And we employ a lot of people who sit there drawing conclusions from these numbers and the problem there is not that that's not worth doing, it is worth doing. The problem is if they simply say well it's not popular enough we should be doing stuff that gets more traffic, well I mean of course you should but on that basis we should run pornography.*

(Journalist 7)

Newsrooms across the world now routinely use statistical software in order to measure the performance of their journalism against the behaviour of various users (Arenberg and Lowrey 2019). These systems seemingly have an effect on what can be published (Vu 2013), and they are certainly used to guide the placement of articles on websites (Lee, Lewis, and Powers 2014). Reactions against them are also well known (Hanusch 2017), and they can be interpreted in terms of long-standing tendencies of aversion to numbers and statistics (Gans 2004), or of the unfavourable views of mass audiences (Atkin, Burgoon, and Burgoon 1983). Taking distance from audience preferences can even be

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<sup>1</sup> The editor of the Money section of The Guardian website here describes how she adjusts the positioning of articles in terms of their traffic.

*So you can tell what someone Googles so you kind of an insight into what people are looking for and what they might be interested and you can tell what they're saying, you can tell how much traffic it's got. So if something's got no traffic at all, there's never no traffic, or if something has tiny traffic then you sort of look at it and say why hasn't that got no traffic, so you can sort of try and do, pull some levers to get it some attention, so you can say well is it on the front?*

(Journalist 8)

considered essential for a journalism that takes its civic role seriously (Tandoc and Thomas 2015).

Arguably, all of these meanings could be read in the excerpt above. In my view, however, these meanings fall into two different conceptions of recognition: the journalistic logic of distinction, according to which recognition is bestowed upon the self by peers, and the networked logic of popularity, according to which recognition can be statistically established. The latter logic seems to be excluded in the excerpt above as informing a managerial strategy of control (Bunce 2019) that increases the rationalisation (Petre 2018) and commodification of journalistic practice (Hanusch and Tandoc 2019). The logic of statistically establishing the popularity of journalistic stories, and consequently their writers' worth, is attached here to a group of Guardian employees, who seem to represent the tier of management. Alternatively, they could potentially be the audience-oriented editors discussed by Ferrer-Conill and Tandoc (2018). Let us turn to see how these two conflicting logics are negotiated and hierarchised by another journalist with editorial duties, in order to establish how the journalists who seek distinction approach social media.

### *6.3.3 A special contribution*

The editor of a section is a senior position in The Guardian's organogram, a role in which one is expected to act simultaneously in a journalistic and managerial capacity (Duffy 2019), commissioning pieces, heading teams, managing budgets, etc. In the digital newsroom this also entails monitoring the online performance of the published articles, which is greatly affected by their distribution on social media (Phillips 2012). In the following excerpt, the editor of The Guardian's long-form section acknowledges this concern, but seeks to defend his editorial autonomy.

*when I first arrived at The Guardian, I was extremely concerned with how much traffic was coming to our pieces. Not because the pieces were conceived to attract traffic and not because I was hired to produce high traffic stuff but because within any journalism organisation or almost any journalism organisation now, I think traffic is a kind of currency and if I had come I moved from New York if I've come to do this job and the traffic was bad it's entirely possible someone might say why are we doing these pieces?*

(Journalist 9)

The journalist contends that traffic is considered a 'currency' in 'almost any organisation now'. This perception could potentially threaten his own practice, which is not 'conceived to attract traffic', and legitimise questions such as 'why are we doing these pieces?'. Happily, more senior Guardian management seems to share his sensibilities, as he was not 'hired to produce high traffic stuff'. What this seems to suggest, is that the concern with traffic differs between organisations, as Hanusch (2017) and Usher (2013) also find. In addition, as I can surmise, the preoccupation with statistics may differ between the various teams of a news organisation. I can then conclude that within the space of an elite journalistic organisation, and for the production of a distinguished genre, it is possible to de-prioritise the metrics.

Seen through the dashboards of analytics, social media are understood as drivers of traffic and they are thus considered to lower standards and therefore as threatening for the journalists who seek distinction. As a forum of public debate, however, they appear compatible with the conception of worth as distinction, as I find in this excerpt.

*I need to be constantly attuned to what's happening in social media, to what happening elsewhere in this world of public argument in order to make sure that my sort of three big things I do every week are as fine-tuned as possible to kind of like what the zeitgeist requires, or what's my special way to contribute to it.*

The journalist is 'constantly attuned' to social media feeds in order to gauge the 'zeitgeist' of 'this world of public argument'. This monitorial behaviour seems to throw into relief the 'ambient' character of these streams of information (Hermida 2010). What the 'zeitgeist requires' is up to the journalist to construe subjectively, as he interprets the various public conversations. The outcome of this process of interpretation is a distinct, 'special way' of 'contributing' 'the three big' stories of the week. What seems to determine their worth is not their potential value as popular items, but rather the extent to which they will be appreciated as 'special'. Social media then contribute to one's distinction to the extent that they offer an overview of the various public debates. It is then by assuming a distinct position in the public dialogue that one gains recognition as a good journalist.

As I conclude the discussion of this discourse, let me reiterate that, according to its principle of worth, the opinions of others are of the utmost importance for the evaluation of journalists. Journalists are doubly oriented towards the opinions of their audiences and their peers, although it is ultimately recognition by the latter group that they seek. The journalists who aspire to distinction among their peers do not consider themselves at odds with their audiences; they rather seem to reject their managers' representations of audience behaviour. It is the managerial practice of the datafication of news, which draws on a networked conception of distinction as quantified popularity, that challenges the journalists with competing representations of their audiences. On account of the segmentation of audiences (Tandoc and Thomas 2015) the journalistic and managerial views of the audience may occasionally coincide: a readership for the more prestigious forms of journalism certainly exists. For journalists, social media as metrics of prestige

are nonetheless unacceptable. As forums of public conversations, however, social media can usefully contribute to the journalists' knowledge of public opinion.

Before we move on, let me note that this discourse of recognition shares some characteristics with the traditionalist discourse of the previous section. Insofar as they envision distinction and authority as the properties of an exclusive dominant group, they are both elitist. They are also both threatened by the emergent networking logic, in which they read the imperatives of profit and post-industrial rationalisation. The discourse that I discuss next could be considered their ally, insofar as it articulates the same critique. Its moral optic, however, is quite different, as it views the worthy journalist first and foremost as an autonomous professional.

#### 6.4 The industrial worth of work

The idea that reportage is journalistic work par excellence was frequently brought up by my journalist interlocutors regardless of their own role in *The Guardian*. This is one of the propositions of a discourse that views journalism in terms of the industrial polity of worth, as work, or craft, performed by professionals. In this section, I include excerpts from four interviews. The first interview was with a political correspondent covering Westminster politics who has a background in press agencies and an extensive track record in reporting national and international news. The second journalist has been an infrequent reporter; currently an editor at *The Guardian*'s 'Books' section, he is keen to emphasise the importance of investigative reporting. The third is a financial journalist with editing duties, for whom social media are not just a field of newsgathering, sourcing, or distribution, but also the statistical tests that inform her editorial decisions. The fourth is a media editor, who, whilst largely inculcated with the networking logic, objects to the influence that social media companies exert on journalism.

These journalists construe reporting as the type of work particular to journalism that requires toiling on long-term projects or grinding through a daily routine of interviews and investigations. The good professional journalist produces ‘hard news’ in an objective and impartial way, regardless of her position in the organisation or the wider journalistic field. To engage in the journalism of social media is considered of low status, insofar as it is determined by a foreign logic, that of networked popularity. Algorithmically enforced, with its ever-shifting priorities hidden, this is the logic of the big tech companies that move to take over journalistic functions.

#### *6.4.1 The work of the craftsman reporter*

One of The Guardian’s most important investigative successes of the past decade was their reporting on the illegal phone hacking practice at News International, the Murdoch-owned news media conglomerate. The scandal was originally broken by Nick Davies, an investigative reporter with The Guardian, who was already very well known in the field, not least because of his critique of ‘churnalism’ (Davies 2011). In terms of journalistic worth, my first interlocutor argues, Nick Davies sets the example.

*And there’s people who very very rarely use social media and they’re really good. For example Nick Davies [...] who did the whole phone hacking stuff he was reluctantly on Twitter you know for the last year or two that he worked [...] but he was an incredibly influential journalist. He kind of changed the course of British media history. [...] If you’re doing six months investigation stories then you might not want to be tweeting you don’t wanna let people know what you’re doing.*

(Journalist 10)

Davies is here accredited with changing ‘the course of British media history’, as ‘an incredibly influential journalist’. Whilst the value of peer recognition is certainly important here, it does not seem to be the highest order of evaluation. Worth is further

qualified by reference to a particular performance of work, ('six months investigation stories'), that requires long-term dedication. This is incompatible with the type of journalism that calls for the high visibility generated by 'tweeting'. The idea that a good journalist does not seek the spotlight is included, among other characteristics, in the following excerpt from an interview with a journalist who, at the time of the interviews, was working for the 'Books' section of The Guardian.

*the job title that I've always wanted but not often had is reporter. And that's, that is kind of the thing I admire most in journalism. It's the aspect of.. the work which is just sort of going out into the world, collecting facts and arranging them in a sensible order. The very unshowy kind of craftsman or artisan work, you know what I mean, just reporting*

(Journalist 5)

The reporter is the subject most worthy of 'admiration' in journalism, whose 'work' requires the specialised skills of a 'craftsman' and the individualist creativity of an 'artisan'. Reporting is defined as a particular chain of activities: to 'collect facts' from the 'world', and 'arrange them', in a 'sensible order'. This representation of reporting that involves 'facts' and reason seems to refer to objectivity (Schudson 2001) – a core value of the industrial polity. The journalism of objectivity, as discussed in the previous chapter, has formed its professional paradigm (Örnebring 2013b), particularly in the UK and the US (Chalaby 1996). Both excerpts construe the industrial worth of the journalist as 'unshowy' work, whereby one is 'reluctantly on Twitter'. Let us take a closer look at what this suspicion of visibility could signify, as we consider this discourse's exclusions.

#### *6.4.2 Facebook as editor*

For the three journalists who speak in this section, the industrial worth of work becomes fully meaningful against an excluded polity of worth, which I identify as connectionism.

They perceive the connectionist polity as a threat to their professional autonomy, because, as we see in the following quote from the financial journalist, it supports a logic that subordinates journalism to the big companies of the techno-business field, such as Facebook.

*Recently I did a piece where I followed a care worker for a day and on our platform it didn't have so many comments as it had on Facebook, so it was getting and that's all clicks for them and advertising revenues so that is a big problem and I suppose there's all those sort of issues that they had and they talked about what sort of what news they prioritise and fake news and those kind of, whether they make editorial decisions about what they share or not. I mean all that has an impact on us and whenever they change their, whenever Facebook change their priorities about what they list sometimes it has a good impact and we get loads of traffic and sometimes it takes traffic away from us*

(Journalist 8)

The 'problem' here is the association of 'comments' with 'clicks', 'traffic' and 'advertising revenue'. When journalistic stories are shared on Facebook, the news organisation is in the position to convert traffic into ad revenue. But in this process, it relinquishes power to Facebook, which has its own 'priorities' on 'what they share' and 'list', effectively making 'editorial decisions' on the basis of its financial interests. The 'impact' on The Guardian may be either positive or negative in terms of traffic, but it certainly cedes control over its internal workings to a competitor. What this journalist seems to suggest, is that to embrace the logic of social media diffusion is to be subordinated to the owners of the social media networks.

For professional journalists, Facebook is increasingly seen as an antagonistic entity that threatens the jurisdiction of journalism, and seeks to impose its own ideas of worthiness, as the next excerpt from an interview with a media editor makes even clearer.



*Facebook makes some of the choices that previously tech newspaper editors and five tv show editors would have made each day and Facebook is making these decisions and no matter how much they say we don't actually make these decisions, yes you fucking do. Your algorithm makes the decisions, someone built the algorithm, you have principles, you have guidelines about what can be shown and what can't.*

(Journalist 6)

Facebook is not a disinterested entity, the journalist contends, but rather an antagonist who replaces the 'editors' as gatekeeper (Shoemaker and Vos 2009). Facebook is endowed with 'decision' making power, founded on the 'principles', and 'guidelines' that are encoded in its 'algorithm', as Poell and Van Dijck (2014) have also argued. What these principles and guidelines actually are is unclear; the point is that Facebook lacks transparency. The critique that becomes articulated here, shared also by Bell et al. (2017), refers to the 'black box' character of Facebook's news feed (DeVito 2017). Johnson and Kelling (2018) consider this a boundary-setting journalistic strategy, by which Facebook is included in the journalistic space and evaluated according to its standards. I would concur that this is indeed a discursive strategy for autonomy, but Facebook, whilst recognised perhaps as an actor in a wider 'news ecosystem' (Carlson 2018), is completely excluded from the journalistic field. It is construed as a non-journalistic entity, with financial interests, which classifies journalistic content on the grounds of an opaque set of ever-shifting priorities. Facebook is thus identified with the logic that is excluded in the critical statements that I have set out in this section, and which generally refer to the connectionist conception of public opinion. In the next section I explore what happens when this logic enters journalism, and how it influences the evaluation of journalistic worth.

### 6.4.3 Good journalists across organisations

News organisations, as has become clear so far, are the sites where multiple conceptions of worth clash with each other. The industrial conception of journalistic worth seeks to appease the uncertainties of these conflicts by gesturing to the good work of individual journalists. What this confirms is that all journalists, regardless of their affiliation, can rise in worthiness, insofar as they do good work according to professional standards. As we will see in the following excerpt from my interview with the political correspondent, criticisms are directed towards digital native media, to the extent that they defy professional conventions.

*there's always been good journalists and bad journalists and again there's the social media effect it just kind of magnifies it. [...] So 40 years ago you'd have to work for radio, tv, newswire and newspaper and that was pretty much it or newsmagazine maybe. And now you can have people like the Canary or Breitbart who are.. for most part being journalists but they're coming at it with very much an agenda. [...] their aim would be to kind of create a splash make something go viral that's their whole kind of again the whole kind of Gawker and to a lesser extent BuzzFeed kind of thing. But even within those there can be a real mixture so for example Buzzfeed obviously is well known for doing listicles you know 40 things you didn't know about xyz, but also does a lot of very very strong news*

(Journalist 10)

The argument here is that the introduction of social media into journalistic practice has only solidified the traditional division between 'good and bad journalists'. The new entrants to the field, whilst 'for the most part being journalists', practise a journalism of lower standards. The leftist website 'Canary' and the alt-right 'Breitbart' breach the objectivity norm with their 'agenda'. What unites them with sites such as 'BuzzFeed' and the now extinct 'Gawker', is their logic of making a 'splash', going 'viral'. 'Interloper media'

(Eldridge 2014) such as these new players, may be recognised as journalistic, but, as the speaker above argues, this is a low-standard journalism of virality. Nevertheless, the possibility of positive evaluation remains open. To the extent that the new entrants publish 'strong news', these organisations and their journalists appear to operate within a 'mixture' of paradigms. As other research also finds, media such as BuzzFeed and Vice indeed seek to differentiate themselves by both challenging and upholding the professional standards of the field (Tandoc 2018; Stringer 2018).

Autonomy, objectivity, public service and membership of a news organisation are some of the 'core' values (Deuze and Witschge 2018; Deuze 2005b) of the professional journalistic identity, which is considered to be the hegemonic conception of the journalistic subject (Carpentier 2005). My analysis above confirms the continuing relevance of these professional values in journalistic identification and shows how they relate to the industrial worth of work. Professional work, as the industrial type of worth, is construed against the connectionist worth of networked popularity. For professional journalists, the pursuit of this type of popularity characterises low-status journalistic media with sensationalist priorities or political agendas. Furthermore, to embrace the logic of social media is to hand over to the big technological companies vital journalistic functions, thus endangering the profession's autonomy. The professional journalists share their denunciation of the connectionist type of worth with the traditionalists and those who seek distinction. Thus, against the connectionist worth of networked popularity, there forms an alliance of three types of worth: professional work, traditional authority, and distinction. But it is time now to turn to the major antagonist of the three discourses that I have discussed so far, and unpack how journalistic worth is evaluated under the connectionist logic of networked popularity.

## 6.5 The worth of networked popularity

The type of worth that I unpack in this section has been cast as undesirable in the three discourses that I have discussed above. As the journalist who speaks first in this section suggests, one accrues this type of worth on social media, by developing online connections. This journalist is a media editor who reports and comments on his professional milieu, whose members are all social media users: ‘my kind of contacts all tend to be on Twitter which is not the real world for normal human beings’, he says. The second journalist that I quote here is a financial editor who speaks about her experience with web analytics, making the case for their positive contribution to journalistic knowledge and production. The third is a social media editor, with experience in the more technical aspects of web publishing, who often finds himself at odds with the established journalistic hierarchies of news organisations.

In the discourse that they articulate, worth, on the one hand, refers to the connectionist imperative for activity in the form of projects of network engagement that will generate new connections. But insofar as these are journalistic projects where the opinions of others are important, another polity is activated, that of public opinion, with its principle of distinction. It is this articulation of networking and distinction that constructs the worth of networked popularity. Social media are very much the space of networked action, where the journalists come to know their audiences’ preferences and opinions, in direct interactions or through the granular data of their online behaviour.

### *6.5.1 Reputation-building activity*

As someone who covers the media sector, the journalist who speaks first in this section considers himself a specialist. This is an identity that he can credibly construct on social media in the course of developing his networks, a project that effectively brings two

polities of worth together. Let us examine how the connectionist polity articulates with the polity of public opinion, to produce what I call the worth of networked popularity.

*as a journalist you're very much a source of information, especially if you're a specialist. And so you need to have a good reputation as providing that service. And part of that is tweeting about things that are interesting that other publications published or tweeting about events that are interesting and maybe make it into an article. You know it's a fully rounded kind of I am providing an information service to people who care about the things I write about.*

(Journalist 6)

To be a 'specialist', as a 'source of information' is to provide a 'service', the speaker argues. 'Part' of this activity happens on Twitter where one finds and disseminates information from other 'publications' or tweets 'about events'. Presumably the other part of this service is distilling this activity 'into an article'. The beneficiaries of the 'service' are the 'people who care' about this information, those interested in the media. As Usher (2012) argues, service journalism is a mode of networked journalism, whereby the journalist functions as the facilitator of a community of common interests.<sup>2</sup> The audience, at once at the producing and receiving end of information diffused on social media, engages with the journalist at the various stages of news production. As already mentioned, this

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<sup>2</sup> Service journalism as Usher (2012) shows, in the context of a mainstream news organisations fits the practice of the personal finance section. The editor of the Money section of The Guardian that I interviewed has described her practice as one of giving financial advice to readers. As the excerpt shows this entails multiple rounds of engagement with them and various stakeholders on social media, with the intention to be 'useful'.

*'that there's a lot of people whom I sort of met on there, because either someone I follow has tweeted like a chart they've done that I thought was useful and then I sort of become aware of what they're doing or like I say sometimes people get in touch with me cause I've written stuff, or sometimes you tweet something and then you see someone's retweeted it with a comment and you think oh that's an interesting comment and yeah so I have got found people that way and found out what people are interested in and kind of gone off.'*

(Journalist 8)

continuous activity of networking that unfolds around a series of journalistic projects is valued in the connectionist polity of worth (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005).

For the journalist in the excerpt above, who in an earlier turn claimed that ‘organisations now more than ever are just about the people who work for them’, relations of trust develop first between the audience and the individual journalist. It is trust in one’s ‘reputation’, a relationship of recognition built with connectionist activity, that enables the further development of more relations and the consolidation of a good professional reputation, a virtuous cycle of ‘a fully rounded thing’. Thus, for this journalistic subject, to develop relationships with networked communities, as part of a service, is simultaneously worthy as identity (brand) building activity (Brems et al. 2017; Hanusch and Bruns 2017). Let us now see how this connectionist discourse responds to the attacks made on it by the discourses that we have discussed earlier, in order to consolidate its own conception of worth.

### *6.5.2 Interpreting the data*

The rising influence of metrics in the newsrooms, as we have seen, has raised concerns among journalists who denounce the heteronomous determination of journalism by the big companies of the techno-business complex, and the increase of the managerial rationalisation of news production. Contrary to these perceptions of web analytics, the journalist whom I quote next, an editor of financial news, finds that these metrics can contribute to the quality of journalistic work and reduce the journalists’ overall workload.

*when I started on the website we didn’t have the sort of tools for measuring traffic, you didn’t find out until the next month how many people have read the piece, so you were really making decisions in the dark, but there was nothing else to do so you’d write, I used to write a lot more when I started I used to write 6 or 7 news pieces a day cause we really thought that that’s what people wanted. Now we kind*

*of realise that's not the case [...] One thing in the last few years was like alright let's not try and get caught up in trying to do everything let's try and keep our heads and make these decisions*

(Journalist 8)

The 'tools for measuring traffic' allow journalists to have a better idea of what 'people want'. Insofar as journalists can interpret the data, they no longer 'make decisions in the dark'. As a result, they can revert to a slower journalism (Le Masurier 2015), rejecting the intensification of content production, which in the recent past has been the characteristic of market-driven aggregation (Bakker 2012), 'churnalism' (Jackson and Moloney 2016), and 'breaking news' culture (Lewis and Cushion 2009; Usher 2018). What the journalist seems to argue is that the data, rather than determining editorial decisions, are always subject to the journalists' interpretation. Once examined, they can in fact confirm agreements between audiences and journalists over the latter's expected role.

By articulating a critique against the 'culture of the click' (Anderson 2011), this connectionist discourse further develops its conception of a worthy journalistic subject. As we have already established, to construct an online identity, (self-branding) is in itself worthy. Insofar as this process of identification entails relations with others on social media, one comes to know their preferences. This knowledge is not only acquired in direct network interaction with other social media users, but equally via monitoring the statistics measuring their behaviour. As the journalists claim, the analytics data, rather than revealing an existing gap between their values and their audiences' preferences (Boczkowski and Peer 2011; Vos, Eichholz, and Karaliova 2019), confirm their agreements on what good journalism is, as Hindman (2017) and Zamith (2018b) also report. It seems, then, that the journalists who draw on the connectionist discourse respond to the critiques of the professional journalists by confirming the value of

established journalistic standards. Whilst a tension between ‘old’ and ‘new’ is identified in this discourse, what is excluded as old, in this case, is an earlier phase of connectionist practice. During that period of bad practice, network connections were treated as objective data, leaving little room for their interpretation by the journalists. Let us understand, however, how this articulation of the newer connectionist logic with older journalistic conceptions of worth creates a tension that journalists have to negotiate when they engage on social media.

### *6.5.3 The personal with the institutional*

To connect with others on networks, as we have already seen, requires the activation of personal creativity and flexibility. An implication of this mode of action is the emphasis on individuals and their projects of self-identification. This emphasis seems to create anxiety among the journalists, as they are now in the position to represent online both their personal and professional facets of their identities (Brems et al. 2017). As the social media editor who speaks in the following excerpt finds, a journalist who is active on social media has to constantly come to terms with the tension between the personal and the institutional.

*I feel that I could probably grow the account.. faster and more stratospherically if I just really focus on just being- I go through these periods of focus where every tweet I'll do should be informative or useful but I sort of also quite enjoy being the class clown, so it's kind of jokes.*

(Journalist 2)

On the one hand, this journalist feels that he should ‘focus’ on being ‘informative or useful’ on Twitter, which entails posting ‘about journalism and media and technology’, as he has told me earlier. On the other, a more personal kind of tweeting is also possible, where he gets to make ‘jokes’, but this seems less rewarding. Indeed, journalists on social media



perceive a tension between the professional/organisational/institutional aspect of their identity and what feels more personal, as other research similarly finds (Hermida 2013; Brems et al. 2017). Whilst for some this ambiguity may be less problematic (Hedman and Djerf-Pierre 2013; Canter 2015; Vis 2012), others experience a pressure to represent themselves as professional members of a news organisation (Holton and Molyneux 2017; Olausson 2017). This journalist does not report any managerial restrictions on his tweeting. He elects to emphasise his professional identity, a choice that is consistent with the logic of the platform if he is to 'grow the account faster'. This negotiation is similarly unproblematic in the action represented in the next excerpt, where the media editor tells me about a colleague whose work he admires.

*Basically he set up an email group for members and asked them where he should go and report. [...] So he used the audience to help guide him but he also created a bond between his reporting and the audience. Which I think has got to be vital because now the only thing keeping people coming to us over someone else is not that they habitually go and buy this paper out of five in the newsagents, they have to constantly choose to want to read what we do*

(Journalist 6)

Whilst networked action here does not happen on social media, it seems that the same connectionist principle brings this journalist in contact with the 'audience' as 'members' of an 'email group'. Arguably this practice could fit under the conceptions of participatory (Domingo et al. 2008), networked (Van der Haak, Parks, and Castells 2012; Beckett 2010), or reciprocal journalism (Lewis, Holton, and Coddington 2014). As the argument above goes, insofar as the readers are not bound to The Guardian by habit, but by choice, they have to 'constantly choose to want to read'. Key to grappling with this monitorial attitude (Deuze 2008), is creating a 'bond between reporting and the audience'. We have seen earlier how this practice of forging connections with an audience as an individual

journalist could be considered self-branding. The formulation above reveals that this mode of identification is not incompatible with the strategies of organisations to establish relations of trust with their audiences. The gains in personal connections that the individual journalist may achieve with networking in turn renew trust in the organisation that one represents, and consequently the institution of journalism.

In summary, networked popularity is the type of worth according to which journalists evaluate themselves that refers to the articulation of the politics of connectionism and public opinion. It is accrued by individual journalists in their projects of identity building as they develop relations with others on networks such as social media. Networked popularity may be quantifiable but, at least for journalists, the statistical data of user behaviour are always subject to interpretation. As journalists construct their online identities in networked relations with others, their individual action is conducive to organisational and institutional strategies. It seems, then, that for journalists on social media the institutional aspect of their self-identities seems to coexist and often prevail over the more personal.

As I conclude the discussion of the various evaluations of journalistic worth, let me very briefly note how they relate to each other. Against worth as networked (connectionist) popularity, stands an alliance between the traditional, professional, and distinguished journalists, who evaluate their worth, respectively, in terms of their authority, work, and distinction. The pursuit of distinction warrants an appreciation of social media as forums of public conversation where audiences and fellow journalists participate. But the journalists who seek distinction mistrust social media as measures of their worth, for which they rely ultimately on the recognition of their peers. The industrial journalists are similarly oriented inwards, invested as they are in maintaining their autonomy. They can

instrumentalise social media for professional purposes but, beyond this function, they view them as determined by other practices (from the fields of business and technology) which seek to subordinate professional journalism to heteronomous principles. For the traditionalists, principles are all that matters. An individual is worthy only by being embedded in a traditional hierarchy, in a position that guarantees authority. I find that a common thread runs through all three professional types of worth: their opposition to the logic of the market. In the discourses of tradition, industry, and distinction, it is worth as networked popularity, identified in the metrics of online behaviour and the practice of self-branding, that guides the commodification of journalism. Connectionist journalists reject these criticisms. By engaging flexibly with monitorial and segmented audiences, individual journalists take it upon themselves to build their reputations as good practitioners online, thus seeking to confirm their institutional allegiance.

## 6.6 Concluding reflections

In this chapter, I have explored how journalists evaluate themselves, now that social media are a ubiquitous feature of their practice. I view evaluation as integral to identification, the process by which individuals internalise various social attributes as they form their sense of personhood (Du Gay 2007). Identification entails the articulation of the self in terms of an array of subject positions: the various types of identity are construed as the subjects of particular discourses, which individuals enact in the various social contexts that these discourses represent and constitute (Chouliaraki 2008). As a discursive construction, identity becomes meaningful in difference from other identities, a process of evaluation which I consider to entail the articulatory attachment of worth to the self and others. For these types of worth, the actors draw upon the polities, the general discourses that form around principles for the distribution of worth (Boltanski and

Thévenot 2006). Following a CDA methodology (Fairclough 2003) in order to analyse data from ten interviews with Guardian journalists, I have found that my interlocutors, in the discourses that they articulate, construe four types of worth, in order to evaluate who is a good journalist.

The first discourse draws its principle of worth from the domestic polity, in order to construe the worthy subject as a figure of traditional authority. The worth of traditional journalists is evident in their personal traits: they are well mannered, self-reliant, and measured. Traditionalists reject social media in terms of their logic of networked popularity, which they see as consumeristic. The second discourse draws on the polity of public opinion and construes worth as distinction: journalists here use social media as monitors of online conversations, in order to inform their efforts to distinguish themselves among their peers. Social media are unacceptable as measures of their worth however, when they seem determined by managerial imperatives of rationalisation and commodification. The third discourse offers a professional understanding of worth as journalistic work characterised by objectivity, impartiality, and the production of 'hard' news. Social media are seen here as threatening the autonomy of journalism; they are the antagonists who interfere with established professional norms and standards. Networked popularity, in contrast, is the type of worth that journalists accrue when they engage in projects of identifying themselves on social media. In this identification process journalists grapple with the tension between the personal and institutional aspects of their identities, but they often find that when they present themselves online as professionals they are rewarded with networked popularity.

I find that overall the journalistic identity, in terms of the principles that measure an individual's worth, exhibits a strong tendency towards continuity. Three types of worth

that can be associated with the industrial paradigm of the practice are still highly valued by journalists. Distinction among one's peers, professional work, and, to a lesser extent, traditional authority, continue to be favourably appraised by the journalists that I have interviewed. I also find that even the new type of worth that journalists value, networked popularity, resonates with established ideas of professional distinction. The practitioners who strive for networked popularity, seek to represent themselves as good journalists, abiding by autochthonous standards of professionalism and distinction, in response to the critique that suspects them of being heteronomously determined by the market.

I also find that a long-standing tension within the journalistic field seems to re-emerge in the practice of the connectionist subject. Let us remember that industrial journalists traditionally balance their preferences for subjective interpretation and qualitative knowledge against the pressures for quantitative methods and rationalisation (Gans 2004), which as we have seen, represent a managerial approach to the profession. I find that this tension re-surfaces in the connectionist journalists' balancing act, when they appreciate social media in 'qualitative' terms, with regards to the meaningful interactions with others, rather than as 'quantitative' metrics of datafied online behaviour. It should be noted that social media seem to be embraced by the journalists whose evaluations refer to the polity of public opinion, that is, those who aspire to either distinction or networked popularity, as Olausson (2017) also finds.

All types of worth, when the journalistic critiques are considered, seemingly converge into a front against market heteronomy. The agents of the market are variously recognised as the big technological companies, the managers who push for the commodification of news, and the entertaining media. For the professional journalists who aspire to gain authority, distinction, and promotion in the professional hierarchy,

the logic of networked popularity opens the door for their own subordination to the techno-business complex (Tandoc and Vos 2016). It could be argued that connectionist journalists share these concerns, when they emphasise their interpretive agency over the quantification of their work as network traffic. Nonetheless, by embracing the connectionist logic, they actively market themselves, amassing the networked social capital that will help them navigate the uncertainty and precariousness of the journalistic sector (Deuze and Witschge 2018).

In the data for this chapter, I have not found evaluations that referred to solidarity with collectivities. The subject that would be proper to the paradigm of civic journalism, enacting the roles of the mobiliser, the voice of the people, the facilitator of participation etc., is missing from my data. This absence could be interpreted in terms of the wider shift away from collective forms of identification towards the individualistic (Wiik 2009; Fenton and Barassi 2011). A related explanation is contributed by the literature that finds a gap between the conceptions of the political role of journalism and its actual performance (Mellado and Van Dalen 2014; Tandoc, Hellmueller, and Vos 2013). I would concur with both explanations, but in terms of the latter, I would clarify that I consider the 'gap' between conception and performance to be intra-discursive as Hanitzsch and Vos (2017) also suggest. It emerges as an incongruity between representation and action with language. As I have found, some of the ideational meanings of the journalistic paradigms that we discussed in the previous chapter are not included in the identificational meanings that the journalists articulate as situated actors.

As I draw together the remarks that I have made above, I find that journalists continue to evaluate themselves in terms of their long-standing types of worth: authority, distinction, and professionalism. In addition, the journalists have come to appreciate a newer type of

worth, networked popularity, which they can accrue in the process of branding themselves on social media. A hybrid of the politics of connectionism and public opinion, networked popularity instils the connectionist logic in the field of journalism, a logic that emphasises the agency of individual journalists. Nonetheless, the connectionist journalists seek to reconstruct their professional identities on social media and move to uphold established journalistic principles. I have also found that identification entails that the journalists negotiate their relations with the market. The traditional subjects, those who seek authority, distinction, and who value work, seek to distance themselves from the imperative of profit, which they consider unworthy. The connectionist subjects, whilst similarly suspicious of the crude quantification of their social media capital by the metric systems, are inculcated with the logic of flexible networking that is conducive to the workings of capitalist markets. Finally, I have not found a civic type of worth to be relevant in journalistic evaluation. This is not to suggest that journalists do not act in accordance with the civic roles that they construe in their paradigms; as we see in the following chapter, relations with citizens are a major journalistic concern. It seems, however, to indicate that this type of action is not converted into personal worth for journalists.

Insofar as the focus of this chapter was on the journalistic subject and the meanings of identification, other actors have frequently emerged in some type of relationship with the journalists. In the following chapter, I engage fully with the issues pertaining to who these others might be and how journalists act with or against them. I approach this as a matter of the qualification of these relations in terms of a plurality of moral values, and concentrate on the relational meanings of journalistic discourse.

## 7. Journalists and others: qualification of relations

### 7.1 Introduction

As discussed in the previous chapter, journalists construct their identities when they draw on four major discourses in order to evaluate themselves and their colleagues. These discourses articulate the established types of worth of authority, distinction, and professionalism, as well as the newer worth of networked popularity. Thus, for the most part, journalists refer to the types of worth that they traditionally value, as the consistent referents of their identities. On the grounds of these types of worth, journalists operationalise social media in their efforts to gain professional recognition, and reject them when they perceive them as the means for the commodification and rationalisation of their work. Journalists make sure to distance themselves from the logic of the market, in defence of their professional autonomy. Insofar as we understand autonomy, of a practice or of the self, in terms of relations, others are an important consideration for journalistic actions.

Who these others are and what kind of relations journalists can have with them seems to be a prominent line of reflection for the journalists that I have interviewed. Before we take a closer look at how others are construed in the journalistic discourses, let us first obtain a broader understanding of the issue of journalistic relations and how it is posed in the field. Consider this excerpt from a fairly recent interview with Katharine Viner (The Guardian, 20 February 2019), The Guardian's editor-in-chief. The particular topic that she discusses here is the membership scheme introduced under her editorship, where readers are invited to subscribe to The Guardian and support the organisation financially.

*We now have 180 million browsers all around the world each month, and readers who live in every country. Our readers help us by bringing us stories and ideas, and*



*they help us understand where we may need to change our approach to a story. The fact that one million people have chosen to support Guardian journalism financially shows that many believe in our mission, our independence, and our reporting – and that’s really inspiring to all of us who work at The Guardian. We hear from our supporters that they find this model, and the support of their fellow readers, inspiring too.*

‘Readers’ are positioned, as part of a conversion strategy, in an intermediate stage between two other groups: the ‘browsers’, casual online visitors to the news site, and ‘supporters’, the people who subscribe to The Guardian. Whilst browsers are completely unknown, and thus with hardly meaningful connections to the organisation, supporters are tied to The Guardian on the grounds of shared beliefs. This is a relationship whose main quality seems to be the sense of inspiration that it triggers in both parties, audiences and journalists. Importantly, supporters are textured as activated others who ‘have chosen’ to subscribe. Similar levels of agency are accepted for readers, insofar as they perform the concrete actions of ‘bringing us stories’ and ‘help us understand’. Readers and supporters can enter into relations of collaboration with journalists, as contributors or editors, and in relations of inspiration, as members of a network. As we will see later, this is one of many ways of addressing others and setting the terms of their relationship with journalists.

From my perspective, actors draw on the shared patterns of meaning that I refer to as discourses, in order to establish relations with others. Let us recall that discourses are the representations that associate meaningfully the various elements of practices (persons, objects, activities, values, etc.) (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999a). A particular discourse is formed with the articulation of relations of equivalence between various social elements, including subjects, against an outside, different discourse (Laclau and Mouffe 1985). The outside discourse is dialectically related to the inside discourse,

constituting the latter's meaning, and yet preventing its fixation. In the previous chapter, we have seen how the articulatory process constitutes the journalistic subjects with which the individuals come to identify. An inextricable part of identification refers precisely to relationships with others: acting with others or on others. As Fairclough (2003, 28) puts it, 'relations with others in turn always entails relations with oneself, and vice versa'. I consider that relations of agreement and cooperation with others to a great extent are established by reference to the relations of equivalence that hold together particular discourses. By the same token, exclusionary relations refer to the relations of difference between antagonistic discourses. Let us see how one of my interviewees talks about his relationships with others in the following excerpt.

*if you know you consider Twitter as a means of contacting and meeting people, then the more you have the better basically. And it means that if you ask for help more people are in principle able to give it to you and if you put your work out there more people in principle will read it and retweet it.*

(Journalist 6)

The journalists use 'Twitter' as the 'means of contacting and meeting' other 'people'. Journalists put their 'work out there', on the platform, and 'ask them for help'. Others similarly use Twitter in order to 'give' help, 'read' and 'retweet'. A 'principle' seems to make these relations possible: it dictates that, in terms of network connections, 'the more you have the better'. This, however, does not seem to be the only type of action that is represented here: journalists also diffuse their 'work' and use Twitter as an instrument. Social media users, in addition to retweeting, are on the receiving end of journalistic work, reading the articles. There certainly seem to be relations of cooperation between the journalists and the 'people', but the particular principle of cooperation is less clear.

The logic of agreements (and exclusions) I understand as moral after Boltanski and Thévenot (2006), a dimension that becomes prominent in the situations where actors negotiate their disputes. They can come to agreement when they mutually accept the moral principles articulated in the various polities of worth (ibid.). Let us remember that the polities are the abstract discourses which form around economies of worth (Chiapello and Fairclough 2002). I identify a polity of public opinion where the opinions of others confer recognition on the self; the polity of inspiration where artistic creativity and religiosity coexist; the civic polity where collective life is the common good; the domestic polity that respects hierarchies of tradition; the market which places profit as its ultimate end; the industrial polity of professional and scientific efficiency; and finally the polity of connectionism (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005), the 'new spirit of capitalism', where flexible individuals network in projects. Hence, from this perspective, journalists negotiate their relationships with others when they represent these relations in terms of a particular type of worth, a particular quality. I refer to this articulatory process as qualification of relations, in line with pragmatic sociology's understanding of the actors' qualifying operations (Thévenot 2007; Susen and Turner 2014).

With the focus in this chapter on the relational meanings of discourses, the question that drives the discussion is how journalists qualify their relationships with others. Following a CDA methodology (Fairclough 2003), I have identified a number of excerpts from the ten interviews with Guardian journalists that I conducted, where others feature prominently vis-à-vis the journalists. At the level of text, I have found relations between the various subjects as textured in terms of semantic and grammatic relations. I have also paid attention to the representation of the types of action that journalists and others undertake, as well as whether these were textured as desirable or not. (I provide all the

relevant excerpts for this chapter, categorised in terms of the polities on which they draw, in Appendix 3 of the thesis).

The discussion that follows is organised according to the particular type of worth by which each discourse construes relations of agreement between journalists and others. I begin each section by looking at the polities that are at play in the excerpts where journalists talk about others, briefly identifying some of these other actors and the practical issues that emerge in their relationships with journalists. In the middle sections, I look at how the discourses are consolidated as they exclude other actors and discourses. It seems that journalists exclude others as the subjects of an antagonistic discourse that articulates a different, 'illegitimate' polity. In the final sections, I look at the representation of others in terms of the positions in which they are classified and the processes in which they engage. It seems that what is at stake in interactions with others is power. Hence, I approach relations of power in terms of the continuity and inclusivity of journalistic relations. As I claim in the concluding section, the journalists incorporate social media into their practice in ways that are consistent with their existing values, but also extend the range of their interlocutors, granting their audiences greater intervening agency in the production of news stories. I also find a minority of critical voices, however, that question whether these changes constitute substantial enhancements to democratic journalistic action.

## 7.2 Openness

It was nearly a decade ago, under the leadership of its former editor, Alan Rusbridger, that The Guardian embraced, and eventually became known for, what he called 'open journalism'. This is the paradigm that I identify in chapter 5 as 'networked journalism', where relations with others are of paramount concern. Rusbridger summarises the

rationale of networked journalism in his latest book: 'Journalism was no longer something done, or sent, to you but a process that was open, transparent and confident enough to welcome the involvement of others. It was never going to be a technique for every story, but it was proving useful in many situations,' (Rusbridger 2018, 203). The first journalist whom I quote here, a features writer and seasoned reporter with several decades of reportage under his belt, produced a series of stories from Athens in 2012–2013, reaching out to social media users and so involving the citizens who were living through the effects of a levelled economy and austerity measures. For the second speaker, a sports journalist, social media did not significantly alter his practice. Whilst he appreciates the opportunity to comment on issues beyond his immediate expertise on Twitter, he is especially frustrated with the uncivil tone of online conversations. The third journalist, a social media editor who is responsible for the production of stories that will be diffused on various platforms, is certainly open to networked users. The participatory aspect of these relationships is less prominent in his reflections, which in my view signifies another paradigm of journalistic networking – what I have described in chapter 5 as 'social media journalism'.

In this discourse, others are primarily networked users, whether they are active on social media or commenting below the line of Guardian articles. Journalists recognise other social media users in the identities that the latter claim for themselves: others can be the members of a WhatsApp group for parents, the indignant Greek citizens, football fans, Brexiteers, etc. Networked journalism, being a hybrid practice that combines online and offline modes of reportage, adds another layer to these identities, identifying them as 'real people' who can be encountered in face to face conversations. Relations of openness under networked journalism are established when journalists perform reporting on networks (including the newer methods of crowdsourcing, collaborative verification)

and engage in conversations with various others online and offline, incorporating their stories, posts, or comments in the reportages that they author or the live-blogs that they curate. Relations of openness are also sustainable under the paradigm of social media journalism, whereby journalists are attuned to the interests of networked groups, providing them with information around which membership bonds are strengthened in conversation.

### *7.2.1 Transparent reportage*

Transparency is a key concept when it comes to establishing networked relations with others. We have already encountered the term in the Rusbridger quote, and it is brought up by my first interlocutor, the features writer, as he reflects on his reportage in crisis-stricken Athens, which he began by turning to Twitter users for information and contacts. He considers transparency and openness to constitute the moral centre of networked journalism. Let us examine in the following excerpt what kind of relations these qualities sustain, with whom, and to what end.

*meeting real people and involving people in the choices of who I was going to meet and where I was going to go, and they felt involved in the whole project. And I think if we can work more transparently and more openly, and more responsibly you know in that way then that kind of thing will help rebuild that bridge of confidence between journalists and readers*

(Journalist 4)

The argument is organised in terms of a solution to a problem: the loss of trust in journalism, the fractured 'bridge of confidence between journalists and readers'. The solution is to work 'transparently' and 'openly', in order to establish relations with two groups: the 'readers', who are 'involved in the project', and the 'real people', whom one meets in real life locations. Posited in very similar terms to Lewis' (2020) justification for

a 'relational journalism', this practice refers to the connectionist logic of networking, imported into journalism with the articulation that I have identified in chapter 5 as networked journalism, and which has been variously theorised as participatory journalism, reciprocal, fluid, liquid, post-industrial etc. (Lewis, Holton, and Coddington 2014; Anderson, Bell, and Shirky 2012; Borger et al. 2013; Hermida 2011; Deuze 2008; Beckett 2010). Social media are the networks that the journalists traverse in order to establish relations, as they move between networked and face to face interactions. In these transitions, the groups of 'real people' and 'readers' overlap and merge, presumably into a networked public (boyd 2011).

Transparency, the text suggests, is that quality which relations with others assume in networked interaction (Singer 2007; Phillips 2010). It is synonymous with openness, as Karlsson (2010) points out, and signifies the participation of other actors in the journalistic process (Hellmueller, Vos, and Poepsel 2012). Whilst the disclosure of background work can also be considered journalistic transparency (Karlsson 2010), what is described above seems rather to refer to the visible performance of *journalistic* activities, for the readers' benefit. Let us remember what this performance entails.

*So with this Greek trip I either tried to meet the people in person, and interview them, and do a proper interview or a story, or if I couldn't, because it's not always kind of just physically possible, I would speak to them on the phone or sometimes they would, if they had very good English, they would write they would write their own story for me and I'd edit it*

(Journalist 4)

In the wake of his activity on Twitter, where users got to engage with him, the journalist 'meets' with others, conducts interviews, and collects 'their own' stories. Ultimately this material is published in The Guardian, edited, or woven into the journalist's reportage. It

is then the journalist as project manager, editor, interviewer, and author who is in the position to address others, as networked readers and citizens experiencing a social problem. Whereas within social media journalism the emphasis is on others like 'us', here the networked journalist is the actor who recognises citizens and readers as others, non-journalists, to whom one is nonetheless bound in terms of moral commitment. We will later return to the performance of transparent reportage, but let us first consider the problems that journalists encounter on social networking platforms, by looking at this discourse's critiques.

### *7.2.2 The limits of social media engagement*

Most of the journalists that I interviewed mentioned instances of uncivil behaviour that they, or their colleagues, have experienced online, coming under attack by users commenting 'below the line' of their Guardian articles, or on Twitter. The journalists who speak in this section have responded to online attacks by breaking their connection with the offenders. Let us see how this sports journalist understands the breakdown of agreement with members of his networked audience.

*But what I've found was that with a lot of the people who have done this on Twitter, that you don't engage in an actual debate, it's just, they carry on telling you what an idiot you are. Now that's not everyone by any means. So sometimes, just basically just finishing up after that point, I basically did not respond to them anymore. I just don't respond.*

(Journalist 3)

The problem with online incivility, abuse, or harassment against journalists on social media and within the comments sections, particularly against female and minority journalists (Adams 2018; Gardiner 2018), is well documented (Coe, Kenski, and Rains 2014; Graham, Jackson, and Wright 2019; Erjavec and Poler-Kovačič 2013). Reactions are



not uniform; some journalists may consider this expression of hostility as professional success (Post and Kepplinger 2019). The nature of the conversation also varies in terms of the platform or medium; it may be the case that The Guardian comments are generally civil (Graham and Wright 2015). For my interviewees, however, this type of ‘dark participation’ (Quandt 2018) is unacceptable. Causing offence constitutes a violation of the rules of ‘an actual debate’ and thus the sense of justice that prevails in these situations seems to come from the polity of public opinion, where respect and recognition are paramount. The features writer’s rationale for excluding others from his network is similar, as we see next, but there seems to be an additional principle that is violated.

*basically now I just do Brexit stuff, and feelings are very strong and very divided about Brexit [...] I put a line on my Twitter profile saying abuse equals block you know? Because if people all they want to do is abuse me then I don't have time for that and I am not interested, and you're not gonna change their minds in a hundred and forty characters. So I you know I feel quite strongly about that. I am very happy to engage with people who have constructive comments to make, and are civil, and will engage themselves you know in a reasonable discussion. But you know as soon as they get nasty I am not interested.*

(Journalist 4)

The first assault on the journalist’s dignity is signified as ‘abuse’ by ‘nasty’ people. The desire to be respected belongs in the polity of public opinion, where the opinions of others distribute the worth of recognition. But the journalist’s denunciations seem to acquire an additional civic inflection when the disputes refer to the ‘strong feelings’ around Brexit among the ‘divided’ British citizens. The condemnation of aggressive behaviour is also performed with a civic vocabulary. The scene that the journalist construes here seems that of a political deliberation; there can be no agreement unless interlocutors are ‘constructive’, ‘civil’, and ‘reasonable’. It seems then that the dignity that suffers is that of

a civic morality: the right to be included in common life. The presence of civic qualifications in the excerpt above indicates the workings of the paradigm of networked journalism. To draw solely from the polity of public opinion, and view the offence as personal disrespect, could allude to either social media or networked journalism, as both paradigms feature that polity in their justifications.

Who the offending others are is unclear in the excerpts. What we know about them is that they are unworthy to remain in relations of openness with journalists. Seeing, then, how others must be known to the journalists if they are to establish agreements with them, let us now return to the actors with whom the journalists cooperate.

### *7.2.3 Active audiences*

When my interviewees referred to social media, they mostly described their practice with Twitter, Facebook, and, to a lesser extent, Instagram. The readers' practice of commenting below the articles of The Guardian's website also featured in our conversations, in ways that did not distinguish it from what is considered 'off platform' engagement with others on social media. In the following excerpt, the media editor refers to yet another type of social media, the messaging apps such as WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger, where users connect in closed groups.

*the reason for doing the piece is that this wasn't a new story about the boycott, or a new story about the census, the idea was that at the exact moment when parents were talking about why we've been asked.. where our kids were born and in like their closed Facebook group or their WhatsApp group they have for the parents of their class, that someone could put that URL in and say this is a really good explainer of why it's being asked and why it's become controversial. So it's a piece of content that you wouldn't have commissioned normally as part of the news cycle but I think would fulfil a role specifically in, as part of a social media conversation.*

(Journalist 2)

The practice of sharing news over Facebook and WhatsApp groups arguably brings together a community of mutual interests, the 'parents' of a particular class. These are exclusive groups, whose opaqueness is possible on platforms like WhatsApp, a characteristic that has earned them the name 'dark social media' (Swart, Peters, and Broersma 2018). The journalist arguably performs a service to this group by compiling an 'explainer' that answers the group's most persistent questions. I would argue that to produce 'a piece of content' as 'part of a social media conversation' falls under the paradigm of social media journalism, as an action that services the needs and interests of communities, effectively contributing to their cohesion (Usher 2012; Lewis, Holton, and Coddington 2014). The users of these groups may be actively conversing with each other, but they are passive when it comes to the relationship with the journalist. A more active role for networked audiences is described in the following excerpt by the social media editor, in which he moves between the online and offline world, hybridising old and new journalistic practice.

*And you know traditionally you would've gone out on the train and interviewed some people and taken some notes and then gone away and written it all up, whereas I've done it all off this I've just spoken to this person, you've got a photo of them, you can do it as the journey's happening and then people are commenting below the line and whilst you're on the train in little periods of downtime between interviewing people you can get in the comments and see what people are suggesting you do next or where you should go. And that feels like a very interactive, two way.. of telling a story and or exploring an issue but also whilst being out on location and interacting with the audience and still doing you know feet on the ground journalism*

(Journalist 2)

In this journalistic modality, live-blogging, the audience is active, 'commenting below the line', 'suggesting' and 'interacting' with the journalist (Thurman and Newman 2014;

Steensen 2014). This type of journalistic action that enables the audience's participation is coupled with a more traditional way of 'on the ground journalism' and 'interviewing people'. Through the journalist's real-time reportage, the audience becomes aware of another group, the commuters of a train. The transparent performance of journalistic work bridges the online and the offline, and brings the concerns of a smaller group of people to the wider group of active Guardian readers.

Considering the above, I would concur with the more optimistic literature that the journalists who establish relations of openness with others are more likely to include non-institutional voices in their stories, and address a variety of social groups (Singer et al. 2011). The logic that makes it possible to connect with others on a variety of platforms, including the organisation's own, in closed or open networks, and even act as the connectors between online and offline groups, I find to be that of the connectionist polity. Let us recall that this valorises the continuous activity on networks, as an individual connects with others around projects. By establishing relations with the various different groups, representing and hosting their voices in its news production, journalism acts as their unifier. It is in the public space that journalism constructs that the fragmented audiences and 'prosumers' come together as a wider collective, the journalistic audience. By implicating its audience in its activities, journalism claims its civic role as an open, participatory institution. But at the same time, connectionist journalists, in the wake of experiences of uncivil online behaviour, assume critical stances against social media, pointing to their failure to sustain respectful and rational deliberation. Networked journalism is not the only possible way of doing journalism, as Rusbridger says above; so let us move on to the various other ways of relating with others, starting with truthfulness, the industrial quality of journalistic agreements with others.

### 7.3 Truthfulness

Traditional news organisations do not only continue to practise the journalism of facts and verification but, as evident in a recent New York Times' advertising campaign (Lischka 2019), they actively seek to be recognised as committed to telling the truth. The journalists that I interviewed referred to truth-telling and truth-seeking as the ways in which they establish agreements with their audiences and sources. How journalists relate truthfully with others, who these others may be, and how social media feature in these relationships, are the issues that I will be discussing in this section. To be sure, a long-standing critique of professional journalism refers precisely to its exclusive relations with powerful others. From this critical perspective, these are relations built and sustained in an opaque context that increase the hold of political and financial power over the journalistic profession. This critique is also raised in the discussion that follows, which unfolds around excerpts from interviews with three journalists. The journalist who speaks first in this section started working in a press agency in the late 90s, before coming to The Guardian as a national news reporter. He worked that beat until recently, when he switched over to the politics desk as a correspondent covering Westminster news. The second journalist is the features writer whom we have already encountered, an equally experienced reporter who has enthusiastically incorporated social media in his practice. The third journalist, a media editor and an avid social media user, is mostly critical of 'just the facts' journalism. Nevertheless, he still insists that reliable information is critical if journalism is to uphold its institutional role.

As aspiring truth-tellers, professional journalists address their audience, seeking to confirm its expectations of factual accounts of public affairs. Towards that end, they offer verified evidence which they attribute to the other groups with which they relate during

their truth-seeking: their sources and eyewitnesses. Whilst establishing relations with others, journalists insist on their autonomy, in contrast both to the amateurs who deprofessionalise their practice and to powerful political and economic actors. For professionals, social media are another field of reportage, an instrument for newsgathering and sourcing, as well as yet another way of qualifying their relations with audiences.

### *7.3.1 Keeping newspapers honest*

The political correspondent, who speaks first in this section, has rather unproblematically incorporated social media into his practice without any ‘top down pressure from management’, as he told me. He appreciates social media as useful tools in his newsgathering and sourcing when it comes to truth-seeking, but he is also keen to stress their value for truth-telling. Let us begin with the latter in this section. As the following excerpt suggests, relations with audiences are harmonised when both sides agree on the value of true knowledge.

*And I think it makes journalists more honest 'cause again 30 years ago you could write a comment piece which didn't entirely make sense and fudged a couple of arguments or even got a fact wrong and the only redress people would have would be to grumble about it with their friends or send a letter to the paper. And now, something really obviously wrong, then within minutes there'll be a hundred tweets saying that and it makes the newspaper look bad so I think it keeps newspapers a little more honest.*

(Journalist 10)

Two polities seem to be active in the text, those of public opinion and industry, which as we have seen in chapter 5, come together to form the industrial paradigm of journalism. The first polity, which looks to others' opinions, I find textured in the readers' actions:

weak in the past, with 'a letter to the paper' as their sole available 'redress' against journalists, they are now empowered to post 'a hundred tweets' and damage the reputation of the 'newspaper'. The second polity, that of industry, I identify in the denunciations of the audience, when they point out 'something obviously wrong', which indicates their commitment to the industrial value of efficiency. As Karlsson, Clerwall, and Nord (2017, 161) find, this is a regular occurrence; the 'audience has not grown accustomed to errors in online news' and demands corrections. The journalist commits to the principles of the industrial polity when he speaks of the errors of an ill-constructed, 'fudged' argument of a 'comment piece' that does not 'make sense', and even more gravely, when 'you get a fact wrong'. Truth, reason, and facts are then the major consideration for this discourse (Zelizer 2004), and the values with which journalists qualify relations with their audiences as 'honest'.

Agreements between journalists and networked audiences are established when the latter take the initiative to suggest corrections, as above, but equally in the collaborative verification that is initiated by the journalists (Hermida 2012b). Insofar as both of these interactions happen on digital networks, it could be argued that they are qualified by reference to the connectionist polity. In my view, the emphasis in acts of verification remains resolutely on the procedures of establishing the truth, and hence, that the highest order of qualifications for these situations refers to the industrial polity. Hence the agreements over journalistic truth-telling that are established over social media, in my view, indicate the 'normalisation' of social media within the established industrial discourse of truthfulness and professionalism (Lasorsa, Lewis, and Holton 2011). As we will see later, in addition to truth-telling, social media are part of the journalistic truth-seeking efforts; but let us first establish who is unqualified to speak the truth.

### 7.3.2 Politics, businesses, and amateurs

Whilst the networked audience can contribute and participate in the verification of true knowledge, the professional journalists seek to ensure that they have the final word. Towards that end, as we have seen in chapter 5, they approach social media primarily as a field of reportage that is to be scrutinised and ordered. With the performance of verification procedures, the professional journalists circumscribe their jurisdiction over the public square and disqualify others as amateurs. This is how my second interviewee, the feature writer, sets up this autonomising boundary.

*everybody can now be a journalist or thinks they can be a journalist and anybody who happens to be at the right place at the right time and has got a Twitter account or a Facebook page or whatever you know.. can do journalism. And the danger is that people come to think that anybody can and that journalism isn't really a profession that has its own skills and its own codes and its own you know, and that, standards.*

(Journalist 4)

Citizen journalists (Allan and Thorsen 2009), that is, 'everybody' who thinks they 'can be a journalist', because they 'are at the right place' and time and have a 'Twitter account', pose a particular 'danger' for journalism – arguably, its de-professionalisation (Wahl-Jorgensen 2015). Against these amateur journalists, the speaker presents the supports of the journalistic professional boundary: 'skills', 'codes' and 'standards'. The journalistic project of professionalisation, as Örnebring (2013a) finds, claims these three interrelated areas of legitimacy: expertise, duty, and autonomy. These principles of professional practice, as we see in this quote from the media editor, hierarchise the field internally and position it politically.



*you look at the British referendum, people in the UK and in fact every country constantly overestimate the number of immigrants. This is the right wing's press' fault to some extent in the UK admittedly. They overestimate the number of immigrants, they overestimate the amount of welfare spending that goes on, on the unemployed compared to pensions etc. etc. People are making their decisions based on dodgy information and it is incredibly important that journalism tackles that*

(Journalist 6)

As I have shown in chapter 5, the institution of journalism hinges on the articulation of a political position. As we see again in the excerpt, the political role of professional journalism is conceived as the provider of factual information to citizens in order to help them make their decisions (Weaver and Willnat 2012). The speaker defends this journalistic role, whilst disqualifying The Guardian's antagonists: the 'right wing press' provides 'dodgy information' when it 'overestimates the number of immigrants' and 'welfare' spending. The claim here seeks to identify The Guardian as the defender of the values of European democracies and a paragon of factual journalism. More widely, journalism claims a broader democratic role in order to achieve professional autonomy from the field of politics, whilst at the same time keeping the market at arm's length, as the political correspondent in the following excerpt also suggests.

*you have this not kind of monopolistic publisher but nearly monopolistic publisher which is a private company. They.. people see them as being just a platform but they're not, they're profit-making company who have their own views. [...] most of the advertising revenue goes to Facebook and Google. [...]*

(Journalist 10)

This is a critique that identifies the market, and its immanent profit rationale, as detrimental to the project of journalism. The journalist here refers to Facebook and Google as 'private', 'profit-making' companies and 'nearly monopolistic' publishers, not

‘just’ platforms. Encroaching on the larger news ecosystem (Carlson 2018), they are far from allies, they ‘have their own views’. In the area where news organisations and these tech companies compete for ‘revenue’, the field of ‘advertising’, the big social media companies occupy an unrivalled ‘powerful position.’ It is this financial dominance that social media exploit in order to obfuscate their material interests, a strategy which the journalist denounces: ‘we shouldn’t see them as neutral entities’.

Evidently, journalists seem to defend their professional autonomy by disqualifying other actors when they seek to perform journalistic functions, pointing to their determination by heteronomous values. Amateurs, private companies, and populist competitors may act within the field of journalism, but they do not share in the values of disinterestedness, work, and factuality. Let us now return to others with whom journalists have positively qualified relations, by focusing on journalistic truth-seeking.

### *7.3.3 Sources and witnesses*

In order to credibly tell the truth about events, and thus respond to their audiences’ expectations, journalists present the facts and evidence that they have gathered with their truth-seeking activities. We have already discussed in chapter 5 how these facts are yielded in the wake of verifying procedures, according to which relations of cooperation are established with sources and eyewitnesses. In this section I will explore how relations with each of these groups are qualified, beginning with eyewitnesses. The following quote from the political correspondent is selected from a longer stretch of text where he discusses his use of social media, particularly in the instance of breaking news.

*So you will quite often with Twitter, in a story like that, do a search for people and particularly I mean you have to be very cautious but if they’re tweeting incredible looking video and pictures and stuff like that then you can contact them, you know that’s quite often how it works, get in touch with them and then they can chat to*

*you. So it's like having a witness on the ground it's a very good way to track down witnesses who were very much there*

(Journalist 10)

Citizen journalists as amateurs, as we saw previously, are unqualified to claim the truth. Their accounts can nonetheless be included in the journalistic story, when they can be addressed as eyewitnesses 'on the ground' (Allan 2013). The immediacy and proximity to an event, being 'very much there' (Hermida 2015), is the quality that can support truth claims. This quality is claimed by the non-conventional journalists who 'tweet' 'video and pictures', in a technologised performance of eyewitnessing (Zelizer 2007). In appreciation of this quality, the journalist 'searches', 'contacts', and 'chats' with them, approaching social media as the means and the field of reportage (Broersma and Graham 2012). They perform these truth-seeking activities with 'caution', as they move to authenticate their claims in direct offline interaction (Brandtzaeg et al. 2016). As eyewitnesses, citizen journalists or, more widely, social media users, are no longer antagonistic. Whilst the objectivity of the knowledge that the eyewitnesses contribute is cautiously evaluated, when it comes to institutional sources, the starting position seems to be that of cooperation. Relations with sources, a thorny issue in journalism as it exposes the practice to the influence of political and financial actors (Gans 2004; Lewis, Williams, and Franklin 2008; Fishman 1988; Carlson 2009) can also be established online and offline. In the excerpt that follows, where a financial journalist speaks, we can see a variety of actors, to whom she routinely turns as sources for factual information.

*I do a lot about property, so I suppose that kind of key people for me are the economists at some of the big lenders, Nationwide and Halifax 'cause they do house prices indices and also there's a lot of people in the big property firms who have research departments, so I'll talk to them quite a lot. Then there's obviously the people near the ground so like an estate agent so I'll talk to them. Quite often I will*

*go to the press office for the big ones but sometimes I'll phone like a little estate agent in a little village and ask them, I suppose they're sort of the key people and then you know all the banks and everyone their kind of press departments and mainly the people who come to us with stories, but sometimes you'll talk to the economists there as well. And then think tanks, I get an awful lot from think tanks so people like the Resolution Foundation, people like that, but sometimes directly from the economists there someone will say I did some analysis are you interested? Sometimes there's a few things from academics*

(Journalist 8)

The main sources are economists from 'banks', 'big property firms', 'think tanks', and academia. The 'press' or 'research departments' of these organisations are also important sources. Against this elite layer of qualified actors, but equally 'key', are the 'little estate agents in a little village', who provide the view 'on the ground'. As she tells me a little later, social media are 'handier in finding academics and people who don't have press offices working for them'. It is then with a mix of traditional and newer ways of communication that this journalist contacts her sources, sustaining relations that seem to have been built over time.

From my discussion above, I can confirm the findings of recent research. Indeed, it seems that traditional and newer technologies such as social media complement each other in truth-seeking (Lecheler and Kruikemeier 2016); ordinary voices are included in the stories, primarily around breaking news (Paulussen and Harder 2014); journalists continue to speak with their customary sources (Knight 2012), whether this happens on Twitter or via other more traditional channels; and for some beats, such as financial journalism, social media matter less as a field for sourcing (Vliegenthart and Boukes 2018). In terms of the democratisation of the pool of journalistic informants that social media arguably enable (Hermida 2013), professional journalism indeed opens up more

to the voices of the ordinary citizens. Nevertheless, I find that this fits under an overall pattern of 'normalisation' (Lasorsa, Lewis, and Holton 2011). In this paradigm, relations with others are qualified largely in continuity with traditional journalistic practice.

Overall, I find that to qualify relationships with audiences, sources and eyewitnesses as truthful, is to establish the autonomy of professional journalism vis-à-vis other fields, and in particular the powerful fields of political and economic activity. In this project, social media are embedded in journalistic routines, as the means of reportage and yet another space of investigation. The journalistic activities of the professional and the networked journalist are not that dissimilar, insofar as they both entail relations with others online and offline, and scouting social media for information and informants. They differ in their approach to relationship-building. For networked journalists it is the relationships per se that matter, whilst for professionals, relationships are subordinated to their commitment to seek and tell the truth. Whilst I consider both paradigms to be instituting, insofar as they articulate a political position and construct a particular journalistic subject, for professional journalism autonomy is less of a dialogical negotiation. The following discourse, where journalists strive for the recognition of their peers, is even more exclusive.

## 7.4 Recognition

As has already been made abundantly clear, being concerned with the opinions of others, the measure of worth in the polity of public opinion, is a dominant journalistic preoccupation. This particular polity, as we have seen in chapter 5, emerges in various articulations: it links up with industrial efficiency to produce the paradigm of professional journalism; it is conjoined with the connectionist rationale to justify social media practice; and it aligns with the journalistic sense of civic duty to guide networked

journalism. Whose opinions matter the most is the concern of the journalists that I quote in this section. My first interlocutor is the editor of The Guardian's long-form section, a position that requires a big portfolio of contacts with writers and reporters. To know their opinions, what they like or dislike, is essential if one is to remain in good standing in the journalistic community. This sentiment is echoed by the second speaker, a media editor, whose job description entails cultivating relationships with various others across the field. The third journalist who speaks here is a columnist, a position that carries with it a certain prestige as the 'face' of an organisation.

Relations with the readers are important in this discourse; the more, the better. But this social capital, generated in the conversations and comments that an article might incite, measured perhaps in numbers of followers on Twitter, or the traffic that a piece attracts, matters insofar as it can be converted to peer recognition. It is ultimately the favourable opinions of one's peers, recognition from those that one recognises, that are of utmost importance. Nonetheless, to stake one's esteem entirely on the preferences of others is not what this discourse suggests. Consumerist audiences are disqualified from relations of recognition; they are characteristic of low-quality, tabloid journalism.

#### *7.4.1 A unique quality*

The first speaker of this section, the editor of long-form feature stories, has spent his career in the world of magazines, including The New Yorker, where he was a staff member. In the span of ten years he has edited magazines in Abu Dhabi, in India, and then back to New York, before arriving at The Guardian in 2014. As he reflects on his career, he anchors his relations in the type of worth that brings together an international journalistic community. In the excerpt that follows, it becomes apparent that this quality refers to the opinions of others, and thus to the polity of public opinion.

*I started working in journalism in 2001 so I didn't precede the internet. But I think about an era in which if someone produced something that was extraordinary you learned about it probably by other people you knew talking about it. That you met someone at a party and they said oh my god did you read that piece that this guy wrote in this magazine*

(Journalist 9)

The particular journalistic genre that this journalist produces is variously termed long-form, literary, or narrative journalism (van Krieken and Sanders 2017). In the excerpt, the appreciation of 'something extraordinary' that 'people you knew' talked about, which refers to the value of recognition, emerges as a stable measure of worth for this journalist. Who the people might be at the 'party' is nevertheless ambiguous; they are most likely fellow writers, but they can also be members of the audience. Before we proceed to establish who these worthy others are, let us turn to another journalist, the media editor, to see how the principle of recognition qualifies relations in the current conjuncture.

*the thing that matters to me about social media presence is the ability to talk to people who is [sic] following me, so I notice when someone who I think is respectable in the industry and he's interesting, who I might want to talk to at a later date follows me*

(Journalist 6)

The industry to which he refers is that of media and journalism, and thus it is relations with 'respectable' peers that this journalist prioritises. In this particular instance, the connectionist element of social media journalism seems to be subordinated to the imperative of recognition: it is the peers that this journalist recognises that stand out in his list of followers. Before I move on to see how this tension between audiences and peers is resolved, I note that, with regards to these two excerpts, the principle of recognition appears as a traditional norm (Benson and Neveu 2005), with continuing

relevance in journalistic practice. The important people at a party at the beginning of the millennium or on Twitter now are still characterised in terms of mutual recognition. As we continue to further investigate the relations of recognition, let us turn to those who are unqualified to join the 'party'.

#### *7.4.2 Tabloids and virality*

The tabloidisation of news is anathema to the journalists who seek the recognition of their peers. Popular journalism, what the British red-tops produce, or the news content that goes viral on social media, is considered here to be identical with bad journalism. In the excerpts that follow, the pursuit of popularity is attached to actors outside the organisation, The Guardian's competitors. The first journalist who speaks here, the leader writer, recalls an incident when another columnist, in a conversation with the editor, sought to confirm The Guardian's editorial strategy.

*I remember her saying to the last editor, to Peter Preston, who was the editor before Rusbridger, she said but Peter any fool can put up the circulation. And it's true of course, she was saying oh why don't you have topless, why don't you put topless women on the front page of The Guardian? It would sell more copies so why not do it? You don't do it because it's wrong. It's not what The Guardian should do, or indeed any other newspaper in my opinion.*

(Journalist 7)

For the journalists who strive for the recognition of their peers, the practitioners of tabloid journalism are unqualified others. These others are identified as the editors who, driven by consumerist logic, appeal to the lowest common denominator, publishing sensationalist content. To measure recognition in terms of a newspaper's 'circulation' is convenient ('any fool can put up the circulation') and 'wrong'. With this critique, as Örnebring and Jönsson (2004) argue, the boundary between elite and low-quality



journalism is erected. To defer to the preferences of the readers, represented by the circulation numbers, was to allow reader-consumers to determine editorial decisions. It seems that web analytics have similar significations for journalists, as I understand from the following excerpt by the media editor.

*We don't use that as the defining feature of our journalism but it's something you're always aware of and it's very good to know what people are likely to read. I think it also probably influences the way we do stories perhaps more than what we cover. Which I think is the responsible approach. We are not as obsessed with viral statistics as some other players in the market. Which is good I think.*

(Journalist 6)

Referring to the range of web analytics that are available to The Guardian journalists, the speaker argues for a 'responsible' approach. Current practice requires an outward-looking orientation towards the opinions of others, 'what people are likely to read', which can be ascertained via the analytics (Vu 2013). This orientation can even 'influence the way we do stories'. This kind of writing seems to imply a particular way of addressing the audience, perhaps in terms of adopting the narrative conventions of social media. Nonetheless, to be responsible, and thus distinct from 'other players in the market', is not to be 'obsessed with viral statistics', and maintain control over 'what we cover'. What seems to be excluded here is the worth of virality, which I identify as the connectionist worth of networked popularity. The journalist represents the space where various news organisations ('players') compete, as a 'market'. Arguably, this reference can be interpreted as an acknowledgement of journalism's attachment to the worth of the market, profit. The responsible approach for the journalists who realise that profitability is an objective for news organisations is to insist on the prevalence of the quality of recognition over networked popularity. Hence what, in my view, becomes evident again

when we consider both excerpts is the continuing relevance of recognition, on the basis of which good and bad journalism are distinguished. Let us now return to harmonious relations with others, and see how audiences and peers are prioritised.

### 7.4.3 *A journalistic elite*

The logic that seems to enable the rationalisation and commodification of news, as we saw above, is relegated to the lower level of the journalistic field, which is occupied by tabloid news and viral social media content. However, this does not imply that social media are unacceptable in the process of qualifying relations with others. In the excerpt that follows, the long-form editor clarifies how social media can be used, so that they can contribute towards relations of the kind that matters: recognition by peers.

*I post to Twitter the pieces that we're publishing and sometimes if I think we've published something very good I'll post it two or three times in a day. I want people to see that we've done it, there's a certain sense of sort of right I want the professional recognition of my peers so I want them to see what I'm doing even if they're not here in London.*

(Journalist 9)

Posting on Twitter refers to a practice of promotion and diffusion of what is 'published' to many, possibly unknown, others. Nevertheless, among these are the ones that this journalist recognises as 'peers', a journalistic community of international extension, whose opinions are the ones that matter (Bell 1991, 71). Let us see, in another turn of the same interview, how this community is represented on social media.

*there is probably a community of kind of you know one hundred to two hundred other journalists mostly in New York, who I know and they know me, and we all know the same two- or three hundred people together. So that if I you know if I was at a party in New York and I met someone, I would know them from Twitter or if I was at a journalism kind of event or something like that. So there is a sense in which*

*this thing that used to be very abstract, which was sort of the collective sentiment of a journalistic elite or the kind of discursive community of professional journalists and what they esteemed and what they disliked, it's visible now*

(Journalist 9)

For the journalists who pursue the recognition of their colleagues, the ability to participate in networked communities steers them inwards to relations with the ones that they recognise, their peers. Others are members of a 'discursive community' of peers; they share in the same values of 'esteem' and are known: 'who I know and they know me, and we all know the same two- or three- hundred people together'. This is a small community of 'one hundred to two hundred journalists'. Their bonds, formed in the course of journalistic action, which includes following each other's work 'from Twitter', will give rise to occasions for face to face interactions at the exclusive location of a 'party' or a journalistic 'event' in 'New York'.

Social media seem to map existing journalistic communities, which they reconstruct and extend as networks. I would argue that this explains the phenomenon of online journalistic homophily, whereby journalists talk mainly to each other in their own 'echo chambers' (Molyneux and Mourão 2017). I understand that this discourse of recognition, just as the previous one, where the primary quality is truthfulness, normalises social media into journalistic practice (Lasorsa, Lewis, and Holton 2011). In my view, normalisation is not discrete from processes of negotiation, as Tandoc and Vos (2016) argue. I understand negotiations to occur in the disputes between actors as to what should constitute normal practice. In these contests, the established and the newer ways of qualifying relations are dialectically related. In this dialectic, new elements, such as social media, are appropriated by the established, 'normal' discourses that refer to truthfulness and recognition. In conclusion, I stress again that the discourse of

recognition, compared to that of truthfulness and openness, is clearly the most exclusive. At the exact opposite end of inclusivity stands the discourse that I discuss next, in which harmonious relations are characterised by the quality of care.

## 7.5 Care

The quality of care, which relationships with others assume in this discourse, I have found to be scarcely mentioned in my interviews. Referring to the civic polity, which valorises collectivities, I identified 'care' in the narratives of two journalists. They are the same ones who have spoken in favour of civic journalism. The first is the video journalist who produces some of the videos that are either uploaded onto The Guardian's website or diffused on its social media. Often away from the organisation's headquarters, he has travelled extensively in parts of the UK that rarely receive national media coverage. He has reported on some of the most prominent events of recent times, travelling with refugees across Europe, and chronicling the build-up of the Trump election in America. The second is the editor of The Guardian's Money section. Primarily drawing on the discourse of networked journalism, which includes the civic polity in its justifications, she slips into a 'pure' civic way of doing journalism and relating with others, when she insists on acting for social change.

Care is associated with the principle of solidarity that I have identified as the core of civic journalism. I will accept in this section, that caring is related to, but not the same as, showing compassion to particular persons. In my view, the latter would indicate the relations of the domestic polity. Caring entails a particular orientation to others, acknowledging their difference, as collectivities; there is a political character to relations of care. The subjects of politics and political economy, citizens and classes, emerge in relations with journalists, and it is to their benefit that journalistic action is directed. To

relate to others with care, as a journalist, entails the responsibility to represent them and facilitate their participation in the public conversation. As we will see, social media are problematic for the journalistic practice of care.

### *7.5.1 The dominant motivation*

The viral success of a video that my first interlocutor, the video journalist, produced, had left him with mixed feelings. Whilst he appreciated the recognition from the readers and his editors, he felt that the story that he wanted to tell was reductively condensed by the online format. This conflict, between demands that come from readers and editors, and his own sense of proper journalistic practice, focused our conversation on the values to which he commits. Starting with the phrase ‘I always try to make my own values,’ my interlocutor explained how his beliefs shape his relations with others.

*I care a lot about the people who I film with, their wellbeing, how they're presented, how we represent them, how we take a piece of their life and edit it. And create a manufactured thing product out of that. I don't do that lightly. It keeps me awake at night sometimes. This is aside from the internet from all of any modern change in the internet. It has always made me worried. [...] And I think I hope that's a healthy thing. Anyone who doesn't feel like that and does this job, is, is sort of behaving recklessly I think. So I take that very very seriously right so that.. I carry that feeling with me and that for me is the dominant motivation.*

(Journalist 1)

Care seems to be a habitual and ingrained sense of moral obligation towards others, discernible at two levels. It is active in the local interaction with particular persons, forming the commitments that come from community. Care is for their ‘wellbeing’, a personal relation of endearment as the presence of the ‘I’ signifies. But this moral imperative is generalised, when the question becomes ‘how we represent them’, how ‘we take a piece of their life’ and ‘create a manufactured thing’. Thus, what is accessed at the

level of a ‘feeling’ or a ‘worry’ as compassion or empathy (Sánchez Laws 2017), at the moment of representation acquires a political character (Boltanski 1999), insofar as it refers to collectivities, and not persons (Pech and Leibel 2006). To express this in the language of politics, whilst relations of care can refer to the particular, which would then be part of the domestic polity, caring for collectivities invests care with the meaning of solidarity, the value of civic journalism that I discussed in chapter 5. Before we proceed to look at these relations, let us first examine what interferes with the exercise of care, and is thus disqualified.

### *7.5.2 Passive and aggressive social media users*

As we saw in chapter 5, civic journalism attacks professional and networked journalism. Claiming that truth is relative to position, civic journalists dismiss the traditional, technocratic conception of journalism effectively as elitist. In the following excerpt, one of the politics of industrial journalism emerges as antagonistic – that of public opinion, which is also present in social media practice. The financial journalist who speaks here grapples with the difference in popularity between two similar reports on the lives of working people, as a problem for her orientation towards others.

*I would like to think that I'd do it again but if you had to weigh up and you had finite resources and there was another kind of celebrity case you'd have to think about doing that. I mean those things you have to think about why you're doing them. you're doing them because you want to effect change and you want, but you're only gonna do that if people read them and if people aren't reading them you've got to think oh how...*

(Journalist 8)

In the networked practice in which she engages, tracking the performance of articles in terms of online traffic, two principles clash. They are meant to be articulated together:

the journalistic role to 'effect change' by addressing citizens hinges on the popularity of articles with audiences, the figures of the polity of public opinion. When 'people aren't reading' the articles, the articulation that turns consuming audiences into active citizens breaks. The journalist is obliged to re-evaluate her actions, considering a 'celebrity angle', or perhaps adjusting the positioning of the articles on the website. In what Boczkowski and Peer (2011) describe as a difference between journalistic values and audience preferences, I identify the disarticulation of the polities of civic and public opinion that the paradigm of networked journalism conjoins. In the following excerpt, where the video journalist speaks again, the problems with networking and social media are further elucidated as pitfalls of the connectionist logic of difference.

*And these things that we're having like Brexit and Trump and all this right you know, these are exposing, not causing, exposing deep not just economic divisions but cultural divisions and I'm a hundred per cent [...] sure that this whole sort of industry and style of communicating is making it worse. And it's not just that people abuse each other on Twitter, of course that's terrible and everyone would agree with that, but it's the level below that. The level below sort of outright abuse, that thing where you have to have the smartest word on something and you've gotta come back, you gotta knock someone down, and you've got to flame them like we say, you've gotta refute them.*

(Journalist 1)

We have already encountered the problem of uncivil online behaviour as 'abuse' from the perspective of networked journalism (Graham, Jackson, and Wright 2019). As this journalist concedes, 'everyone would agree with that'. From his civic perspective, which takes into account political phenomena like 'Trump' and 'Brexit' in terms of 'deep economic and cultural divisions', the violation goes deeper, at a 'level below'. The problem is with connectionism as a competitive logic of construing difference vis-à-vis others,

which demands that ‘you have to have the smartest word’, ‘knock someone down’, and ‘flame them’. Ultimately this is a complete negation of the other who is ‘refuted’. Constituting the exact opposite of care, this logic of aggressive competition recognises only difference. Any possibility of equivalence is denied; others are hostile adversaries that have to be ‘flamed’. How does this discourse then propose that this problem be overcome? Who are the qualified others with whom this journalism of care should relate? And what does it mean to care for others as a journalist? The next sections offers [tentative] answers to some of these questions.

### *7.5.3 Workers and real people*

As we already know from the various quotes I have taken from the financial journalist, the news in the personal finance section in The Guardian have a particular orientation to others that is influenced by considerations of class. Just as real estate and property news are covered as a service to the tenants, the much-debated problems of the ‘gig economy’, as she explains in the following excerpt, are approached from the point of view of the workers.

*we’ve done loads on the workers and the kind of problems, we’ve done a lot on the delivery strike, did stuff earlier on the year on Hermes and covered kind of the Uber case and I suppose we kind of probably are on the side of workers, we’re on the side of workers and we’re kind of saying, we’re probably taking a line that it’s a kind of a bad thing for people to work in the gig economy, which I don’t think all people who work in it agree with so I suppose that’s the stance that was taken.*

(Journalist 8)

The relations that the journalist establishes here are unambiguously with the ‘workers’ of the ‘gig economy’ who ‘strike’ and are implicated in the various controversies around their employment status and rights, to which the text refers with the cases of ‘Hermes’



and 'Uber'. The position of The Guardian is critical: it is 'a bad thing for people to work in the gig economy'. But it is also because of the journalistic relations with the workers that a more nuanced understanding of the issue is possible: not 'all of the people who work in it agree'. The video journalist, who speaks in the following excerpt, makes a similar claim when he speaks of the 'real people'.

*we went to America briefly and we talked about Trump. We've kind of chronicled the rise of it and part of our point has been that it's about escaping the bubble. Your bubbles, your media bubble, your political bubble, your social bubble, and going to a place and just come face to face with real people on the street and giving them space to talk. And we've done this in this series for years and it's delivered repeatedly almost a better reflection of politics and elections than pollsters have, and internet and Facebook and all of that*

(Journalist 1)

The antagonism here is between 'us', members of the 'bubbles', and others, the 'real people on the street'. The 'bubbles' include personal 'social' circles, as well as the powerful 'media' and 'political' fields, and they exclude the voice of the other. To break these power relations is to establish relations with unknown others across boundaries. The political character of this process is explicitly identified, as this relates to 'politics' and 'elections'. The journalistic duty to provide a 'better reflection' on the democratic process entails giving ordinary people the 'space to talk', unmediated by 'pollsters', 'Facebook', and the 'internet'.

The real, ordinary people may be an all-encompassing group that blurs the line between 'us' and 'them', but as residents of a small town, refugees, or workers in the gig economy, they are represented in this discourse in asymmetrical relations with the elites of central politics, the media, and urban centres. Thus, others, from the perspective of civic journalism, are not like 'us'. It is nonetheless the moral duty of the journalist to address

these others, precisely as a different broad collective, and to include them in the conversation. To care for them as a journalist is to offer them a platform, to take up their cause, and represent their views in the news.

These political roles, part of the civic repertoire of journalistic normativity (Christians et al. 2010) that imagines the practice as conversational (Carey 1995), were taken up by the movement of civic journalism in the US (Rosen 2000). With the rise of networked journalism, arguably some of the values and practices of that movement, and more widely the ideals of a journalism of civic duty, were absorbed in the newer paradigm (Nip 2008). In my view, this would explain the scarcity of standalone civic qualifications in my data. What I have found, however, when I considered the critiques against social media launched from the civic perspective, is that the articulation of the politics of connectionism and civic life is contested. The argument seems to be that the connectionist logic of social media and networked journalism that emphasises openness to difference is not a truly civic rationale, insofar as it does not articulate the various social groups in relations of equivalence under an inclusive category. In other words, to care about others, the civic logic goes, is not the same as being open to them. Thus, as regards social media, civic minded journalists can be hostile or sceptical.

As I conclude this discussion of the different ways in which journalists qualify their relations with others, let me briefly summarise some key points, as I rank the discourses in terms of their inclusivity. The quality of care extends journalistic relations to include large majorities; the ordinary people are the major addressees of journalists who actively move to bring their voices to the public. Relations of openness refer to networked others, whom the journalists address as members of various social groups, a significantly diverse range of interlocutors. Professional journalists qualify their relations with others, their

audience and their sources, as truthful. Other institutional actors continue to be a major source of true knowledge, and journalists continue to claim the final word on what really happens, when they address their audiences. Admittedly, this traditional way of qualifying relations acquires a more dialogical character, as others, to an extent, contribute to projects of truth-seeking over social media. The most exclusive way of relating to others refers to the worth of recognition. It is ultimately the recognition of their peers that journalists seek, when they turn to social media in order to monitor the public conversations and diffuse their stories. Social media facilitate their discussions with peers and reinforce the ties of the journalistic community. Overall, I find that journalists have mapped their existing relations onto social media, adding yet another modality of communicating with each other, their audiences, institutional and lay actors. In addition, they have opened up to the agency of others, allowing them greater influence on the stories that the journalists ultimately author. Journalists have not, however, fully embraced the more inclusive political practice of caring for others.

## 7.6 Concluding reflections

In this chapter, I have discussed how journalists qualify their relationships with others. I do not consider the qualification of relations as a neutral rendering of journalistic action, but a process whereby journalists negotiate their relations with other actors. The construction of the various representations of practice I view in terms of the articulation of different discourses (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999a). Journalists cooperate or clash with others in terms of the relational meanings of the particular discourses that they articulate. As historical formations of meaning, the various discourses include ideas about the common good, which are drawn from the polities of worth (Boltanski and Thévenot 2006). Collective life, tradition, recognition, efficiency, networking activity, are some of

the values of the politics that come up in the journalistic discourses. Thus, when the journalists refer to these values in order to establish relations of agreement or difference with others, I consider that they qualify their relations. It is in this sense that an agreement between journalists and others is a relation of a particular quality.

Following the principles of Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough 2003), in order to look at the qualifications that my journalists-interviewees make, I have identified four qualities, which I associate with the journalistic paradigms that I have discussed in chapter 5. The quality of openness characterises relations with active audiences and members of networked groups. The journalists who practise networked or social media journalism perform journalistic activities transparently as they engage with others online and offline, incorporating their contributions into the journalistic text. The quality of truthfulness refers to the relations of journalists with their audiences and sources, which includes social media interactions. It is the prerogative of the professional journalist to seek the truth and present facts and verified evidence, accepting the limitations of this endeavour. In relations of recognition, others may be the large unknown audiences, but, for journalists, it is more meaningful that they receive the recognition of their community of peers. The journalist's interlocutors are here the members of a journalistic elite whose conversations happen offline and online. The quality of care appears in the relations of journalists with ordinary people who claim some kind of injustice. The journalist articulates their discontent, giving others the space to tell their own stories, in recognition of their difference.

I find that journalists have expanded the range of voices that they include in their stories and have added new ways of relating with others, whilst somewhat modifying the existing, more traditional ones. This shift towards inclusivity perhaps does not fully

realise the expectations of optimistic literature about the participation of a variety of actors in the news (Gillmor 2006; Jarvis 2006). It seems that in all the ways of relating with others, the journalist remains the author of the news story (Hermida et al. 2011), addressing others in varying degrees of recognition of their agency (Domingo and Le Cam 2015).

In terms of who the journalistic interlocutors are, my particular findings confirm other recent research. The representatives of other institutions, most notably sources from the fields of politics (Lawrence et al. 2014; Molyneux and Mourão 2017) and finance (Johnson, Paulussen, and Van Aelst 2018; Manning 2013), continue to be important interlocutors for journalists. Journalists turn to their traditional sources routinely, via social media or more traditional ways of communication, when they search for facts and truthful accounts of events. Eyewitnesses continue to be sources of information, once their accounts are verified (Brandtzaeg et al. 2016), and they too can be identified and contacted via social media, especially in situations of breaking news (Hermida 2016; Thurman and Newman 2014; Vis 2012) or various other controversies (Van der Meer et al. 2017). Relations of mutual recognition between fellow journalists are reinforced in exclusive conversations on the various social networking platforms (Hanusch and Nölleke 2019). A broad audience, to which information is disseminated via the various digital channels, continues to be an important addressee of the truth-telling journalists. But others are also addressed with more specificity as members of various social groups, citizens, or members of the public (Hermida, Lewis, and Zamith 2014; De Keyser and Raeymaeckers 2012), when journalists use social media in accordance with the connectionist logic. The broad political category of 'ordinary people' (Kunelius and Renvall 2010), understood from a civic perspective in different terms than the networked social media users, is scarcely represented in journalistic discourse.

I have also found some modifications to the ways in which journalists relate with others. I identify a modification to the traditional, industrial way of doing journalism. The industrial journalists continue to deflect amateurs and political and financial actors from challenging their professional jurisdiction, but they are more willing to involve their audiences in projects of truth-seeking. I view the practice of collaborative verification (Hermida 2012b) as the negotiation of agreements over the truth enacted on digital platforms, and yet ultimately made possible by a shared belief in efficient methods. However, for the journalists who are interested in achieving distinction and renown, change consists merely of the operationalisation of newer technologies, such as social media, for the purposes of self-positioning within the journalistic community. A further modification is apparent in the newer, connectionist way of doing journalism. I have found that journalists who are otherwise enthusiastic about networked engagement have appropriated a critique against the pitfalls of social media communication, namely abuse and harassment. They understand the hostile behaviour of social media users as a violation of the rules of deliberation and perform this exclusion by activating the civic and public opinion politics rather than the connectionist. From another, purely civic, perspective that I trace, the problem of online hostility is related to the connectionist logic of social media, which gives rise to attitudes of competition between individuals.

In terms of their claims to establish relations across difference, the discourse that seems more open to otherness is that of care. This is not so much due to the expansive 'ordinary people' category which it preferentially addresses. It is rather due to the idea that journalists should be in dialogue precisely with those in different circumstances than themselves. At the exact opposite end stands the discourse of recognition, which seems to assume conversations between members of a rarefied journalistic space. Closer to this pole I would situate the discourse of truthfulness, insofar as it prioritises relations

between journalists and other truth-speaking experts. The discourse of openness is significantly more dialogic (Ruotsalainen, Hujanen, and Villi 2019): journalists converse with social media users transparently and include their stories in their own journalistic reportages.

To be sure, most journalists use social media in order to relate with others, in addition to the more traditional ways of interaction that they have at their disposal. The connectionist logic, with which social media are primarily associated, has been established as a logic of institutional journalism, and has contributed towards the permeability of the field: to an extent, journalists invite others to participate in the news and host their texts. Apparently, this has influenced the more traditional practitioners to embrace the idea that truth can be collaboratively verified. Nonetheless, a severe critique against social media is raised, not merely from the more traditional journalists who seek to establish relations of care, recognition, and truthfulness with others, but also from the side of the connectionist journalists. Together, journalists criticise social media as hostile platforms that confine people within their existing social circles, as forums that cannot sustain rational and respectful deliberation, as carriers of sensationalist and unreliable journalism, and as profit-driven monopolistic publishers.

## 8. Findings and concluding remarks

### 8.1 Introduction

In this thesis, I have sought to explore the influence of social media in journalism and investigate how journalists understand them as they reflect on their practice. In each of the previous three chapters – 5, 6 and 7 – I have concentrated on a particular aspect of journalism. In the first, chapter 5, the focus was on how journalists justify their practice, which allowed me to discuss different journalistic paradigms and look at how journalists discursively represent social media. In the next, chapter 6, I concentrated on how journalists evaluate themselves, a focus that gave rise to a discussion of the various ways of journalistic identification and the types of worth for which they strive. Then in chapter 7, I expanded my investigation of journalistic action by examining the ways in which journalists qualify their relationships with others. In this final chapter, I will indicate the academic contribution of my thesis, as I bring together the main findings of this study, discuss some of its themes, and reflect on future possibilities for research.

This chapter begins with a reflection on the conceptual contribution of the thesis. My conceptual framework has enabled me to explore the dialectics of continuity and change in journalism from a perspective that acknowledges the critical capacity of journalists. This optic allows me to see journalists as reflexive practitioners who discursively articulate various conceptions of worth, in order to justify their practice and act journalistically in relations with others. Analysing my empirical data in relation to my research questions, I find that a shift has indeed occurred in journalism that pertains to the introduction of social media into journalistic activities. Journalists refer to the same networking logic that dominates social media engagement, in order to justify their own practice. Nonetheless, traditional, industrial journalistic justifications continue to be



extremely relevant: journalists use social media according to their traditional standards in their professional routines. Considering the question of journalistic evaluations, I find that whilst a newer type of worth, which I call networked popularity, is important for journalists, they still aspire to be reputed as good professionals, as authorities or experts in matters of public interest. In terms of the ways in which they qualify their relations with others, I find that, as journalists become more open to social media users, concomitantly the range of their interlocutors expands. Nevertheless, the journalists I interviewed launch a scathing critique against social media as hostile and unreliable platforms that undermine political deliberation and function as monopolistic publishers. I conclude this chapter with some remarks on the dialectics of continuity and change in journalism, discussing how journalism changes, and how it remains the same. This is followed by a critical look at networked journalism, where I argue that journalists on the one hand represent their social media activities as participatory, whilst on the other they denounce social media for their civic shortcomings. Finally, I consider the civic critique against the networking logic of social media, and identify its limitations. As I contemplate avenues for future research in the last section of the chapter, I propose to address the limitations of civic minded journalism and develop a normative framework that would couple journalistic civic duty with personal creativity.

## 8.2 Conceptual and empirical contribution

### *8.2.1 The economies of worth in journalistic practice*

The investigation of journalism as practice comprises a large and diverse body of literature in journalism studies, to which this thesis contributes. In the more recent research that I reviewed, I identified a continuum of constructionist conceptualisations

of practice that extends from the more ‘materially’ focused theoretical approaches, such as Actor Network Theory (ANT) (e.g. Anderson (2013); Anderson and De Maeyer (2015)) to the various sociological and sociocultural strands of inquiry (e.g. Benson and Neveu (2005); Lowrey (2018); Cammaerts and Couldry (2016); Vos (2019); Witschge and Harbers (2018)), with which I come into dialogue throughout the various chapters of the thesis. I view journalistic practice largely in terms of the relations of situated actors as they refer to various structures in order to circumscribe journalism as a distinct field (Bourdieu 1990; Marlière 1998). But, moving beyond a field theory approach, I have insisted on a focus on journalistic reflexivity, as a way to view current journalistic practice from the perspective of journalists themselves.

In order to look at journalistic practice from the perspective of reflexive journalists, I turned to two other theoretical approaches, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999a), and the pragmatic sociology of critique (Boltanski 2011; Boltanski and Thévenot 2006; Boltanski and Chiapello 2005). The synthesis of theories of practice, discourse, and justification into a conceptual framework for the investigation of journalism, I consider to constitute a productive way of interrogating the dialectics of continuity and change.

The category of discourse I consider to be the conceptual backbone of this thesis. I refer to discourse as the social use of language that constitutes actual practice (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999a). Following this line of thinking, I have shown how journalists, with their representations of their own and others’ practices, do not merely depict action, but themselves act: they institute journalism, identify themselves, and negotiate relations of power. The various ideas about journalism, conceptions of identity, and ways of relating with others are activated in the journalistic field with the articulation of discourses

(Laclau and Mouffe 1985). In articulation, journalists draw upon existing discourses that refer to their practice, in which various activities, subject positions, and values are meaningfully arranged, in order to institute journalism as distinct from external, excluded practices. I consider that journalistic reflexivity is thrown into relief in this articulatory process; journalists reproduce and criticise the various paradigms and norms that vie for the institution of their practice.

In addition to the conceptual vocabulary that I draw from CDA, I speak of reflexivity, politics of worth, critique, and institution by reference to pragmatic sociology, which enables me to recognise the critical capacity of journalists. From this optic, the particular focus is on the articulation of moral values, the process in which I consider that the journalists engage when they localise, by speaking in the vocabulary of their field, the general discourses that I call politics, after Boltanski and Thévenot (2006). Politics are formed around economies of worth that refer to various conceptions of the common good. The domestic polity values traditional authority; the industrial polity, efficiency; the civic polity, collectivities; the inspired polity, creativity; the market polity, profit; and the polity of public opinion valorises recognition. An additional polity, that of connectionism, functions as the 'new spirit of capitalism' (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005) and favours continuous projects of networking activity. In this polity, there exists an element that valorises creativity and opposes hierarchies, which originates in the anti-capitalist critique that found its expression in the May '68 movement. Connectionism, nevertheless, divorces the 'artistic', non-conformist critique from the critique of inequality, effectively calling for the release of creativity at the individual level. This individualistic character, Boltanski and Chiapello (2005) argue, makes connectionism conducive to the workings of capitalist markets. The politics are invoked by journalists in the negotiation of their conflicts, when they raise themselves from the largely tolerant

attitudes of practice to reflexivity, in order to reach agreements with others over the type of worth that should prevail in a situation. Bringing CDA and pragmatic sociology together, I view the articulation of discourses that draw upon the politics to be implicated in the institution of journalism, the identification of journalists and the negotiation of their relations with others. Hence, I consider that when journalists justify their practice, they institute it as a distinct field, when they evaluate their worth, they identify themselves, and when they qualify their relationships they negotiate their relationships with others.

My main research question was: How do journalists understand their practices, identities and relationships now that social media dominate their routines and activities in networked newsrooms? With the secondary questions I focus on three aspects of journalistic practice. I ask, 'how do journalists justify their practice?'; 'how do journalists evaluate their worth?'; 'how do journalists qualify their relationships with others?'. As I have shown, the journalists justify their practice as they offer competing normative visions for its institution, whilst criticising what they consider antagonistic rationales. Simultaneously, they evaluate themselves and qualify their relationships in terms of various types of worth. Let me now expound these findings and contextualise them within current debates on journalistic practice, as I relate them to the research sub-questions.

### *8.2.2 Empirical findings*

In order to gain insight into journalistic practice I studied the case of The Guardian. I consider this British organisation to be a paradigmatic case of journalism (Flyvbjerg 2006). An internationally recognised news organisation, The Guardian has famously embraced digital networks in its practice, arguing for the 'mutualisation of news', as an invitation to the various users of networking platforms, including social media, to

participate in news-making. I conducted narrative interviews (Kartch 2017) with ten of its journalists whom I consider to be experts in their field, with deep knowledge to share about the contemporary practice of journalism. Following the principles of CDA, I analysed their narratives by focusing on the lexical, grammatic, and semantic relations of the transcribed texts, shifting my attention across the three empirical chapters, from the ideational (what we do) to the identificational (who we are) and relational (who we connect with) meanings of the various discourses that they articulated (Fairclough 2003). My interpretations of their understandings, organised as answers to this thesis' research questions across the three analytical chapters, constitute my empirical contribution to the study of journalism.

#### 8.2.2.1 Social media in the paradigms of journalism

In my first empirical chapter, chapter 5, I explored how journalists institute their practice, by looking at the ways they justify their everyday action at work. The issues that emerged in the discussion refer to the ways that journalists implement social media, which seem to be determined by the various journalistic paradigms that seek to define good journalistic practice.

As some of the literature claims, social media blur the boundaries between professionals and 'amateurs' and thus redefine journalism as a participatory practice. Journalism as practised on online networks becomes a fluid endeavour (Hermida 2011; Deuze 2008), a project of continuously becoming something other than what it used to be (Deuze and Witschge 2018). Journalism on social media can be ambient and social (Hermida 2010, 2012a), participatory (Singer et al. 2011) and networked (Beckett 2010), relational (Lewis 2020) and reciprocal (Lewis, Holton, and Coddington 2014), more of a service to various communities than a finite industrial product (Usher 2012; Tremayne, Weiss, and

Alves 2007). Journalists hybridise newer and older norms and technologies (Chadwick 2013), and in this sense reconfigure their values to include social media in their practice (Tandoc and Vos 2016).

Another strand of the literature, however, focuses not on change, but on the persistence of established journalistic practice and values. Journalism as a profession seeks to defend its autonomy vis-à-vis the influence of other practices (Örnebring 2010; Witschge and Nygren 2009), excluding amateurs and other professional rationales just as it appears to welcome them (Wahl-Jorgensen 2015). Newcomers and audiences seemingly come to conform to the autochthonous values of journalism (Stringer 2018; Tandoc and Thomas 2017). Journalists move to defend the various boundaries of their field (Carlson and Lewis 2015), insisting on the importance of verification (Brandtzaeg et al. 2016). Effectively, journalists normalise social media in their practice by using them according to their established values (Lasorsa, Lewis, and Holton 2011; Duffy and Knight 2019).

My findings suggest that indeed journalists justify their practice by drawing on newer journalistic paradigms, which nonetheless co-exist with older, more established ways of ‘doing’ professional journalism. Specifically, my research maps out four normative paradigms that journalists draw upon in order to justify their practice and refer to their operationalisation of social media.

The first two paradigms, which I associate with the logic of connectionism in that they valorise the continuous activity of connecting with others for the duration of projects, are located within the ‘new spirit of capitalism’ (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005). In the first paradigm, which I call social media journalism, the connectionist ethos is bound up with the principle of recognition. Journalistic production according to this paradigm covers the domain of everyday life and is intended for social media diffusion. The second paradigm,

networked journalism, differs in that it conjoins connectionism with ideas about the civic role of journalism. For the journalists who thus justify their practice, to connect with others on social media is to visibly open up their field to participation. The third paradigm is that of industrial journalism which articulates the values of efficient work and recognition. Journalists in this rather traditional paradigm are regarded as the experts in matters of public opinion, who can speak the truth on account of verified information. The final and least popular paradigm, civic journalism, stresses the importance of journalistic solidarity with ordinary citizens.

I find that most of these paradigms internalise newer and older meanings and values of journalistic practice. Networked journalism espouses the newer connectionist logic, according to which journalists build relations with networked others whilst actively constructing their own identity. Nonetheless, this paradigm does not seem to uphold the idea that digital networks such as social media entirely map the world: the journalists continuously move between digital and social networks, online and offline. This, I argue, is due to the more established civic rationale that the paradigm articulates, which calls for the participatory opening up of institutional journalism to others, who can be encountered in direct, even face to face, conversations. The logic of social media journalism, which is also a connectionist paradigm, similarly includes elements of continuity. Whilst it openly challenges established institutional hierarchies, its practitioners also perceive their production as part of a tradition of journalistic humour or 'human interest stories'. The older paradigm of industrial journalism remains extremely relevant in the journalists' justifications. Let us remember that it insists on journalism as the truth-telling practice that verifies information and presents facts about the world. I find, however, that with regards to the norm of objectivity, journalists are now readier to admit that the truth about public affairs is not just a matter to be agreed

among their own professional community, but also with the readers. Unlike the other paradigms, civic journalism, which calls for solidarity with ordinary citizens and stands in opposition to social media and professional journalism, I have not found to hybridise old and new values.

Whilst change seems evident in the ways that journalism is practised, the long-standing idea that journalism has a political function persists, and journalists offer various conceptions about their role in democracies. The first conception is articulated in the paradigms that valorise collective life, namely civic and networked journalism. The journalists that I interviewed who draw on these paradigms recognise that they have a duty to represent the citizens in the public square, facilitate their participation, and give them a platform so that they can voice their discontent. I notice, however, a critique launched from the civic journalists, which doubts social media's claim to represent the people and facilitate deliberation.

Another conception of journalism's political role can be found in the paradigm of industrial journalism, which holds that journalists should observe and report on the field of politics, collaborating with its various political actors or holding them to account. In this role, journalism is embedded as a technocracy in the institutional order of liberal democracy. Its specific jurisdiction is the space of public opinion which it classifies with efficient methods. As we have seen, social media are here instruments for newsgathering and diffusing the news, as well as a field of reportage where sources and their accounts need to be authenticated and verified.

A third conception of journalism's political role can be identified in the paradigm of social media journalism. The political role that is implied in this discourse does not refer to institutions and the large collectivities of citizens or publics; it is oriented towards an



individualistic understanding of relating with others. Journalists, as much as other actors, share the right to express themselves on social media as they engage in conversations with members of various groups. I view this as a process of self-identification, which is what this paradigm considers emancipatory. As I have shown, social media journalism is associated with lifestyle or entertaining news, which in the journalistic field are considered to be driven by consumerist imperatives.

Overall, I find that the introduction of social media into journalistic practice is associated with changes in what it means to do journalism, and in particular with the establishment of connectionism as an institutional logic. Nonetheless, traditional, industrial journalism continues to be a dominant paradigm of practice. These older and newer ways of acting journalistically coexist in the field, with the boundaries between them seemingly not entirely discrete. The newer, connectionist paradigms hybridise innovative with traditional norms and activities. The older, professional paradigm has incorporated social media as instruments of work, even though its practitioners remain suspicious of claims on social media until they can verify them. The conflict between the connectionist and industrial paradigms is also a conflict between different visions for the attachment of journalism to democratic polities. Industrial journalism continues to refer to the ideal of the fourth estate that holds political power to account. In the connectionist paradigms, journalists are imagined as facilitators of citizen participation (networked journalism), or as interlocutors of various members of social groups (social media journalism).

#### 8.2.2.2 The resilient values of the journalistic identity

In chapter 6, I focused on the construction of the journalistic identity, by looking at how journalists evaluate themselves and others. The issues that emerge in the discussion refer

to the types of worth to which the various journalistic subjects attach themselves and how social media contribute (or not) to a journalist's worthiness.

In the relevant academic literature, journalistic identity is mostly associated with the industrial paradigm of the practice. As Deuze (2005b) has shown, journalists identify with the widely shared set of values of this professional paradigm, which includes objectivity, autonomy, and public service. Despite the apparent rigidity of journalistic identity, insofar as it is discursively performed its modification is always a possibility (Bogaerts 2011; Carpentier 2005). From another perspective, identification happens along several continua that refer to the epistemologies, institutional roles, and ethical conceptions of journalism (Hanitzsch 2007). With the introduction of social media into journalism, new values seem to challenge the hegemony of the professional journalistic subject (Grubenmann and Meckel 2017). Journalists seemingly market the news (Tandoc and Vos 2016), and are branding themselves (Brems et al. 2017); they become reflexively aware of identity-building as an essential part of their practice online (Canter 2015); they hybridise traditional and networked values in what Barnard (2016) calls a 'networked habitus'. Managers seem to push towards quantified measures of journalistic worth (Bunce 2019), but, as some researchers note, journalists equally move to reinforce their professional values (Wiik 2009; Olausson 2017).

I have found that, whilst journalists find worth in social media networking, they continue to identify themselves in terms of long-standing professional values. These entail working efficiently and autonomously, striving to earn the recognition of one's peers, and promotion in the hierarchies of the profession. Who is a good journalist remains ultimately up to the members of the journalistic community to evaluate, in terms of their subjective judgement (Gans 2004). The journalists resist the quantified measurement of

their work, which is what web analytics seem to represent. From the journalists' perspective, these metrics are part of a managerial logic of rationalisation and marketisation.

Social media are appreciated by the journalists insofar as they contribute to their professional distinction and reputation. They turn to them as forums of public conversation, in order to gather information, gauge the trends of public opinion, and diffuse their work so that it can be appreciated by their audiences. The production of journalistic work that will be highly appraised by their peers depends on the journalists' knowledge of public opinion and to some extent on their wider renown. What journalists also have come to value is self-branding on social media, a process of establishing their reputations as good professionals as they develop their connections. I find that subjectively evaluated standards of distinction also prevail in the practice of self-branding, as the journalists seek to disassociate their worth from metrics of online connections.

The journalists find that to present themselves as members of a news organisation, or as experts in their 'beats', is rewarded with more connections, which in turn enhances their ability to access information. To build an identity on social media entails negotiations between personal, organisational and professional/institutional modes of identification, as other research also shows (Brems et al. 2017; Molyneux, Holton, and Lewis 2017). I find that journalists choose to emphasise the professional aspect of their identities on social media over the more personal, regardless of pressures from their management to act as representatives of the organisation (Holton and Molyneux 2017). Hence, I claim that even in this newer way of identification, an element of continuity persists, insofar as it is the institutional dimension of a self-identity that ultimately prevails.

The journalists are keen to exclude the market, and its rewards of financial profit, from any type of influence over the evaluation of their worth. The more traditional journalists who measure themselves by the principles of distinction, professionalism, and authority, are suspicious of social media with regards to their determination by market rationales. Journalists often perceive social media as private businesses that threaten their professional autonomy, and they associate them with entertaining journalism of low quality. I find that even the journalists who are more enthusiastic about social media are equally keen to distance themselves from the crude commodification of journalistic work, as when they emphasise 'brand' over number of network connections. This attitude nonetheless entails a different relationship with the market. These journalists accept the precarious conditions of their industry, and work on their reputations on social media in hope of amassing valuable social capital.

Overall, who is a good journalist seems to be evaluated by reference to established types of worth, although, as I found, these do not include civic considerations. To work professionally, to be recognised by one's peers, to be considered an authoritative voice, are traditional aspirations that still resonate with journalists. Whilst they realise that it is now up to them to actively build their reputations using social media, it is towards the validation of their professional reputation that they invest their efforts. Financial profit continues to be an illegitimate measure of journalistic worth, even in the current precarious conditions of the profession. Finally, I note here the absence of civic values that would refer to the worth of collectivities, solidarity with citizens, or more generally the democratic role of journalism. I interpret this as a case of journalists' weak inculcation with the civic aspects of the paradigms of civic and networked journalism.

### 8.2.2.3 Enhancement of diverse relations with others

In chapter 7, I explored how journalists relate with others by looking at their qualifications of these relationships. The issues that emerged in the discussion include the diversity of journalistic addressees and the ways in which journalists construe agreements with others.

Traditionally, the important relationships of journalists are with their sources and the audience, the latter being a category of varied definitions. Professional journalists mostly prefer to refer to their audience as the citizens to whom they provide ‘information and commentary on contemporary affairs’ (Schudson 2008b, 11). To that end, they cultivate relationships with political actors and various experts in order to gather and verify information, which does not preclude adversarial attitudes towards these powerful actors (McNair 2012). The relations with sources are seen as ambivalent negotiations of power, in which journalists often surrender their autonomy (Gans 2004). In their relations with audiences, journalists have been criticised for being elitist (Deuze 2008), instead oriented inwardly to their relationships with their colleagues (Donsbach and Patterson 2004). Under the new paradigms of journalism, where practice becomes participatory (Singer et al. 2011), transparent (Phillips 2010), and audience-oriented (Vu 2013), the diversity of the journalistic interlocutors increases. More voices from a plurality of social groups are now included in journalistic stories (Hermida, Lewis, and Zamith 2014). And yet journalists continue to pursue elite relations (Molyneux and Mourão 2017) and prefer to converse on social media with their colleagues (Hanusch and Nölleke 2019). Rather than a participant in the production of the news (Bruns 2008), the audience is mostly perceived as an active recipient of journalistic text (Hermida et al. 2011), restrained by the journalists who remain in control of what is published.

I found that indeed the diversity of people with whom journalists converse has increased, and more dialogic ways of relating with others have entered their practice. As I have shown, the relationships with others can be characterised by four different qualities. That of openness seems to characterise network relations. I associate this with the connectionist paradigms of networked and social media journalism, whereby journalists contribute to the conversations of the networked groups and include the perspectives of their members in their reporting. Another quality, that of truthfulness, I find to be relevant in the relations of journalists with sources and eyewitnesses, which can partly happen on social media. Here, the professional journalists develop and sustain relations with sources in their truth-seeking efforts, in order to be truthful to their audience. A different quality is that of recognition, which refers to relations within the journalistic community, which can be mapped and developed on social media. The audience is important for these journalists, to the extent that public renown can ultimately contribute to a journalist's positive peer review. Finally, relations of care signify the workings of a civic morality, according to which the journalist speaks with the ordinary people, facilitating the expression of their discontent and taking their side in various conflicts.

To be sure, the industrial practice according to which professional journalists defer to the factual information provided by expert sources, particularly from politics and finance, persists (Manning 2013; Lawrence et al. 2014). In a similar instance of continuity, the accounts of ordinary people matter more as eyewitness reports around breaking news and controversies (Hermida 2016), and they have to be verified before they can count as true knowledge. I also confirm the finding of journalistic homophily on social media (Hanusch and Nölleke 2019). Nevertheless, I find changes in more established ways of relating with others, but also shifts in the newer, networked mode of connecting with them. Social media have empowered the readers to scrutinise the factuality of journalistic

accounts. Professional journalists and audiences often negotiate agreement over what can be considered true. Additionally, in what I consider a fairly recent shift in perception, the phenomenon of online aggression and hostility between social media users has revealed the limitations of social media when it comes to establishing agreement between actors with different identities. It seems that even the connectionist journalists are disillusioned with social media as a public sphere of rational deliberation.

Social media have, to an extent, opened up journalism to others. The introduction of the connectionist logic of openness in journalism, with its insistence on the expansion of journalistic projects on social media, has contributed towards the relaxing of the journalists' exclusionary attitudes. As a result, a breadth of perspectives from members of various social groups is now represented in journalists' stories. Nevertheless, I find that this is not the most positive way in which journalists can relate with others. When it comes to cooperation across difference, the quality that seems most affirmative of otherness, is that of care. Receiving scant attention in the literature, and admittedly represented by a minority of the journalists that I have interviewed, relations of care depend precisely on the recognition of others' different circumstances. Less dialogic stances persist in the relations between truth-speaking experts, and in the conversations among journalists.

Overall, I find that journalists now routinely use social media in order to establish relations with their audiences, sources, and colleagues. Nonetheless, at the same time social media are heavily criticised by both the more traditional journalists as well as those who believe in the emancipatory aspect of networked communication. Journalists express their disillusionment with social media when they point out their failure to sustain respectful and rational deliberation, their tendency to reproduce existing social

groups, the virality of unreliable and sensationalist journalism, and the monopolistic behaviour of the big social media companies.

### 8.3 Concluding remarks

#### *8.3.1 How journalism changes and how it remains the same*

Change in the ways of doing journalism has been largely approached in terms of a new logic of participation that challenged the established logic of institutional control (Lewis 2012). The journalism of networks, a practice that everyone with a social media account can perform (Allan and Thorsen 2009), was introduced as potentially emancipatory for the various groups that industrial journalism shut outside the gates of the space of public debate (Shoemaker and Vos 2009). For journalists, to embrace the networking logic was not merely to keep up with innovations in technologies of communication, but a way to justify their social role in accordance with their self-proclaimed contribution to democratic life. The vision for the 'mutualisation of the news' (Rusbridger 2018), of an open, networked, and participatory journalism (Singer et al. 2011), asserts the journalistic claim to constitute this reformed, democratic practice.

I find that indeed the major tension within journalistic practice seems to be between the newer, connectionist logic and the older, industrial logic. These logics are respectively at the heart of the two fully fledged paradigms that my interviewees articulate: networked and industrial journalism. What my analysis reveals, grounded in a theoretical framework that is sensitive to the dialectics of continuity and change, is that both networked and industrial journalism internalise old and new elements of journalism.

Practising the newer, networked journalism, journalists are active on social media, connecting with others, forming projects around the interests of various social groups,



whilst building their identities online. These are projects of ‘transparent’ reportage and newsgathering, of crowdsourcing and co-creating stories, of updating live-blogs and responding to online comments. At the same time, they are projects of self-branding and of creating a journalistic identity in the course of developing network connections. Indeed, journalists are more empowered to pursue their projects, as they open up to a variety of others, with whom they engage in more dialogic terms.

But this type of networked action happens as journalists conjoin the new with the old: they move between online and offline modes of journalism, operationalising analogue and digital technologies, representing themselves in terms of their personal and professional attributes, speaking with their customary sources in addition to the various other social media users. The amalgamation of new and old elements allows for long-standing journalistic values to acquire a renewed relevance and to shape how journalists think about social media. Journalists do not seem to believe that social media reflect the ‘real’ world, but that they rather constitute a part of it. Most journalists continue to value reporting from physical, ‘real world’ locations, and prefer direct, ideally face to face, conversations with others. Furthermore, journalists seem disillusioned with the deliberative potential of social media, as they experience and witness hostile behaviour on the platforms. When it comes to measuring their work’s resonance with audiences, they cease to defer to the ‘culture of the click’, and continue to prioritise their subjective evaluations. Relatedly, journalists deprioritise the quest for ever more new followers, instead using social media in order to brand themselves as experts.

The industrial way of doing journalism, whereby journalists work in order to present facts and claim efficiency and objectivity, remains very relevant. It can even be argued that in the wake of the scandals that revealed the manipulation of social media for

political communication purposes, journalists have responded by reaffirming their commitment to factuality (McNair 2017). And yet, I contend, a degree of change is discernible in traditional practice. Most conspicuously, change refers to the routine implementation of social media in professional journalism, as new tools in journalistic truth-seeking endeavours as well as in journalists' daily efforts to tap into the zeitgeist and converse with their peers. A more significant shift happens when journalists, on the grounds of an already post-positivist idea of objectivity (Schudson 2001), reach agreements with non-journalists over the veracity of truth claims. There are always errors in journalistic texts, my journalist interviewees repeated often, and the readers help us correct them.

In light of the above, I claim that the important change that is associated with the introduction of social media into institutional journalism is the inculcation of journalists with the logic of connectionism. As Boltanski and Chiapello (2005) argue, connectionism is the discourse of flexible networking that makes capitalism attractive; it empowers individuals to assert their difference and actively pursue their projects. At the same time, as I have shown, the values of institutional journalism continue to dominate the journalists' self-conceptions. Professionalism, distinction, and authority – that is, the values associated with the industrial paradigm of the practice – are the types of worth that journalists seek to attain. Finally, what similarly persists is the attachment of journalism to the life of liberal democracies. The political role of journalism continues to be understood in the familiar tension between two broad liberal imaginaries: journalists should act either as the people's stewards, as watchdogs of and collaborators with the political field, or as the people's advocates, taking up citizens' causes and facilitating their participation in public debate.

### *8.3.2 The connectionist institution of journalism*

The introduction of the connectionist logic of flexible networking in journalism was justified as a strategy of re-establishing relations of trust with the audiences (Beckett 2010; Van der Haak, Parks, and Castells 2012). The connectionist paradigm of networked journalism in particular, which claimed to facilitate the citizens' participation in the news (Singer et al. 2011), has always been vaunted as the paradigm that would renew the bonds of confidence between the institution and the public. It is towards this institutional objective that academic proposals of reciprocal or relational journalism (Lewis, Holton, and Coddington 2014; Lewis 2020) more recently reiterate the call for networked relations with members of various social groups. It is thus clear that connectionist, networked journalism, in its various conceptualisations, would not be the paradigm that dissolved institutional journalism; it was, on the contrary, a proposal for institutional reform. Networked journalism, as an institutional paradigm, articulated a particular conception of journalistic politics and particular ways for journalists to negotiate their interpersonal relations, that seemed to take into account long-standing demands that journalists should substitute their elitism with a conversational attitude.

As I have shown, the operationalisation of social media, in accordance with the connectionist logic, has indeed opened up journalism to a diversity of other actors. Simultaneously, individual journalists have found that they are able to make themselves and their work known to their audiences and peers, bypassing organisational hierarchies of renown. Thus, the connectionist practice of journalism entails that individual journalists on social media, in the course of their self-identification, connect with members of the various social groups, stimulating and enriching the discussions that consolidate the groups' cohesion. The journalistic audience is then construed as the

aggregate of the various identities, which others assume as members of various networked groups. By addressing this pluralistic audience, journalism presents itself as the institution that performs a political role of creating agreement between the different social groups. However, what becomes clear in this connectionist mode of institution is its emphasis on the individual: the individual journalists as well as the individual networked actors with whom they engage. In this individualistic shift, connectionist journalism decisively breaks from the more collectivist orientation of industrial (and civic) journalism.

The individualistic character of connectionism has been criticised in the relevant literature. As Fenton (2012, 142) argues, 'An emphasis on creative autonomy lends itself too neatly to individualistic politics that inhibit progressive social change'. Boltanski and Chiapello (2005) have written, as we have already seen, on the emergence of the connectionist polity as the attractive 'spirit' of capitalist economies. As a culture of connectivity, connectionism is a competitive ethos that allows for the commodification of social media connections (van Dijck 2013). This is the logic that individuates participation, thus robbing social movements of their political power (Fenton and Barassi 2011). Projects of resistance on networks are quickly dissolved, as people abandon them for the next one, in an equally disempowering process (Cammaerts and Couldry 2016).

The ideas of these academic critiques I have also found articulated in the ordinary critiques that journalists launch against social media. As I have shown, journalists understand that a fundamental problem with social media is their logic of creating difference. Taken to its extremes, as they claim, the logic of social media is that of negating the other, which results in the breakdown of deliberation and the confinement of social media users in the safety of their 'echo chambers'. Another major point of journalistic

critique refers to the role of social media as monopolistic publishers. Journalists understand that social media favour sensationalist and unreliable content that generates the maximum amount of network engagement, which, in turn, enables the big technological companies to attract crucial advertising revenue away from news organisations.

By articulating a critique against social media that effectively illuminates the detrimental effects that they can have on the political life of collectivities, journalists find themselves in a contradictory position. Whilst they fully embrace the connectionist logic, representing their own network activity as a participatory practice that democratises journalism, they denounce social media, and effectively connectionism, as deleterious for democratic polities. In my view, with this contradictory articulation, which finds its normative expression in the paradigm of networked journalism, journalists mean to establish their practice as an institution of reformed connectionist action.

### *8.3.3 Civic journalism and its limitations*

The civic critique of social media and connectionism is most fervently articulated by the very few journalists who seemingly argue for a journalism of civic duty. I call the paradigm that they articulate civic journalism, seeing how it refers to solidarity and care for the less powerful, some of the ideas that I identify in a variegated liberal imaginary of democratic life. Dewey's spirit of reflexive cooperation seems to be present in the demand for a professional journalism that acts towards communitarian goals (Honneth 1998). Arendt's republicanism can be identified in their sense of shared democratic bonds (Arendt 1958). And Habermas' proceduralism influences their understanding of journalism as a medium of a public sphere (Habermas 1994). Turning to journalism studies, it is in the work of Ettema and Glasser (1998) where I find these variegated

strands of political thought articulated in a vision for journalism. The authors launch a critique against industrial journalism, urging journalists to commit more strongly to others and to abandon the liberal stance of tolerance towards acquiring insight into difference. Effectively, what this means for journalists is that they acknowledge their moral position as critics of power (Markham 2014), and show solidarity with citizens who experience injustice.

Civic journalism is mostly represented in my interviews as a practice where the journalist consciously breaks out of the confines of their particular editorial beat, in order to converse with people face to face, giving them the space to raise their discontent. 'Others' are very important for civic journalists who represent them in terms of their difference in circumstances and lower positioning in relations of power. The journalist acknowledges their indignation, moved by their narrated experiences of various types of inequality, and communicates their stories to the public with a sense of care for their fair representation. These others, addressed by my interviewees as 'ordinary people', are the civic journalists' preferred interlocutors, a relationship that occasionally disrupts the expectations of traditional audiences of institutional journalism. The civic journalists, inculcated with a democratic communitarian ethos, are morally bound to show care for the dignity of others, when they represent them.

The journalism of civic sensibilities, whilst actually performed by some journalists, is not highly appraised in the field, if at all. As I have demonstrated, the civic type of worth does not contribute to the journalists' positive self-evaluations, although it is present in the ways in which they qualify their relations. This contradiction can create anxiety for the individual journalists who have to negotiate their personal commitments to different types of worth. Overall, taking into consideration the individual journalists and the wider

social relations in which they are positioned, I find the lack of a journalistic subject with civic aspirations to be detrimental to the institution of journalism as the autonomous practice in which autonomous actors would relate altruistically with others.

#### 8.4 Future directions: the autonomy of creative journalists

Seeing the absence of civic worth from journalistic evaluations, which I consider to constitute a problem for the personal commitment of journalists to the principles of collective life, I make the case for the reform of the paradigm of civic journalism, as a project which could be undertaken in future research.

As Boltanski and Chiapello (2005) have shown, connectionism emerged as a new polity out of the dialectic interrelation of the polities of inspiration and the market. The articulation of justifications from these two polities was intended as a response to an 'artistic critique' against capitalism that denounced the suffocating bureaucracies that stifled human creativity. This was, however, an articulation that divorced the demands for creative agency from the 'social critique' against the various social inequalities, with which they were associated. As a rekindling of the artistic and social critiques, I propose to undertake research with the objective to produce a normative framework, in which the paradigm of civic journalism would be enhanced with a subject position of creative worth. This normative proposal, which I tentatively call creative journalism, would be a discourse that, in terms of its principles, hybridises the civic with the inspired polity. When it comes to journalism's institution and relations with others, creative journalism incorporates civic justifications and qualifications; when it comes to self-identification it offers ways of evaluation that refer to the inspired polity's worth of creativity.

The articulation of the civic and inspired polities entails a different understanding of autonomy than the one implied in most of the theoretical works that I have discussed earlier in this section. I find such an understanding in the work of Cornelius Castoriadis, who has formulated a critique against conformism and inequality, arguing for the instituting power of the imagination (Curtis 1997). For Castoriadis, autonomy does not merely refer to the institution of a social space as a distinct field that can fend off interference from external power. In his view, these spaces can very well be heteronomous institutions that produce conformist individuals, for whom to question the law of their field is inconceivable. A more positive understanding of autonomy, then, refers to the institutionalised capacity of a society to challenge the truth of its own institutions (Castoriadis 1992). Put another way, Castoriadis argues that it is only autonomous institutions that can produce the autonomous individuals who can reflexively criticise the rules of their fields, calling them into question.

The claim to autonomy, for Castoriadis, has its seat in human imagination. Individual and collective imagination creates society, he argues. At the social level, it is collective imagination that creates language and institutions, in turn producing the subjectivities that give form to the individual (Castoriadis 1987). It is in this sense that the individual always embodies the social, and their autonomy is contingent on the autonomy of their society. Thus, when I argue for a journalistic subject whose worth is evaluated in terms of creativity, I make the case for the actualisation of human imagination. In the practice of creative journalism, the journalist acts within the wider social space, there becoming aware of other actors' experiences, in particular those that refer to issues of injustice. Their accounts the journalist recontextualises into the story, which addresses society in public, demanding that the rules apply or be changed. In order to tell that story, the



journalist draws from a variety of practices, not least from the technological, in a process that is personally fulfilling as the actualisation of creativity.

In this mode, journalists recontextualise artistic logics in the production of their stories, which may give rise to what Baym (2017) calls ‘televisual public affairs narratives’ that blend news and fiction, the documentaries where art and journalism collide (Kerrigan and McIntyre 2010), or the more established genre of narrative journalism (Neveu 2014). These forms of storytelling challenge existing journalistic conventions and often ignite conversations among the practitioners about whether they actually constitute journalism (Cross 2018). In my view, these debates constitute precisely the site of emergence for alternatives to the principles and practice of the journalistic institution.

There are several cases of current and past journalistic practice that could typify creative journalism. From the long-form pieces of *The New Yorker*, to documentaries such as *RBG*, and dramas such as *The Wire*, there are certainly journalists, writers, filmmakers, and photographers who have produced work of journalistic value, with social sensibilities and a creative attitude. It would be my intention, with this normative undertaking, to offer the moral and discursive grounding to these efforts, so that their reference to their own creativity is emboldened.

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