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Insights from journalists on the future of the press

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Abstract

The decline of the newspaper industry in Europe and the United States began long before the advent of the Internet. Although the Internet has accelerated this decline, it is unclear whether the future of the industry is indeed in danger. To what extent are the different electronic communications media used in the journalism sector perceived as relevant? To answer this question, we carried out a survey of 239 journalists working for 40 of the most-read newspapers in their respective countries. For each outlet, a questionnaire was administered to up to 5 journalists working on the print edition, and to up to 3 journalists working on the online version. The research was conducted in 11 countries between 2005 and 2006.

Keywords: *Internet, print newspapers, future of the press, journalists' perspective, European journalists*

Introduction

The debate on the future of the press frequently starts with the analysis of the effects that the advent of the Internet produced in the journalistic sector (Sabadin, 2007), and in particular, on newspaper formats and consumption. Such analyses, however, run the risk of being biased due to pure technological determinism and, consequently, resulted in a superficial understanding of the internal dynamics within the professional sector of journalism.

To what extent are different electronic communications media perceived as relevant for the future of the press? What opportunities does the Internet, which is predicted to play a key role for the future of the press, offer from the journalists' point of view? The purpose of this study is to contribute to the debate raised by these questions (Meyer, 2004; Bell, 2007). We describe the way in which a convenience sample of print and online journalists foresee the future of the press in the Internet era, and we investigate cross-national differences and similarities concerning this assessment in several European countries.

The decline of newspaper industry in Europe and the United States started long before the advent of the Internet, as evidenced by several observations: for example, the increasing competition from television news programs and the growing intolerance of readers toward a world of information and issues over which they have no influence. The growth of the Internet has only accelerated this decline, as the number of Internet users who read the news online, the amount of time they spend reading, and the number of pages that they view have been increasing rapidly (Audiweb, 2008). While the Internet has become the main source of information for young people, it is not the only technology that has challenged the press. Mobile phones are aggressive competitors; digital television offers a vast number of national and international news channels; the free press (newspapers that are free of charge) has fostered a new relationship model with its readership; and finally, the analog channels, i.e., television and radio outlets, are far from being extinct.

Although the future of the traditional press in industrialized countries is of concern, the sector's economic outlook is not entirely negative. In Europe and North America

newspapers sales are stationary or declining (Engel, 2003), but an increasing number of free press and online websites have intensified newspaper penetration (WAN, 2008). If we look at the entire world, newspaper sales increased by 2.6 % in 2007; if we consider only the free press, the growth was even higher at 3.7 %. If one takes these broader national and international scenarios into account when looking at the future of the press, the perspective changes considerably.

In this broad context, the future of newspapers remains affected by the combination of old values and new technologies. An investigation of journalists' own views on the future of the press could provide more in-depth insights than an economic or technological analysis of the impact of the Internet on the hard facts of news production and distribution would be able to do. While journalists are not the only relevant actors in the press sector, many are on the frontline of the rapidly changing world. By investigating their perceptions of the future of the press and of the opportunities and challenges provided by the Internet and other evolving electronic technologies as tools of their profession, we gain the anthropocentric data necessary to investigate this issue.

Over the last decade, an increasing number of scholars have adopted social surveys or ethnographic approaches to explore the influence of the Internet on print journalism. These studies have sought to analyze how journalist practices, attitudes, opinions, and values are affected by the Internet (Boczkowski, 2004; Deuze and Paulussen, 2002; Heinonen, 1999; Paulussen, 2004; Quinn and Trench, 2002; Stempel, Hargrove, and Bernt, 2000; Voakes, 1997; Weaver, Beam, Brownlee, Voakes, and Wilhoit, 2006; Weaver, Beam, Brownlee, Voakes, and Wilhoit, 2003).

Our study looks at current electronic technologies, particularly the Internet, as social productions that involve continuous processes of the appropriation of innovation (Boczkowski, 2004; Boczkowski and Ferris 2005) and of domestication (Silverstone, 2006) by journalists in newsrooms. From this perspective, the attitudes that journalists have developed are key elements for the explanation of not only the way that the Internet is socially constructed today, but also for understanding the potential, both positive and negative, that it represents for the future of the press.

We will now provide a brief overview of the future of the press as perceived by journalists and held in their attitudes and shared beliefs. Theories regarding information and communications technology, or ICT, outline three constitutive elements: first, the capabilities required to use ICT effectively; second, the actual electronic devices needed to support and develop these practices; and third, the meanings attributed to ICT and their related practices (Bourdieu, 1990, 1998; Giddens, 1984; Shove and Pantzar 2005; Warde 2005). This theoretical framework has frequently been used in the discussion of the formation and transformation of the practices of use of electronic technologies; research has been done on older media devices such as landline telephones, television, fax machines, computers, as well as mobiles and the Internet.

Several studies have shown that issues related to structural capabilities, technical know-how, and technical support are considered less problematic than those related to social capabilities and support (Haddon et al., 2005; Law, Fortunati, and Yang, 2006; Sørensen and Pica, 2005). Data from COST A20 survey reported in Sarrica et al. (2010) and which is also used in this study, shows that technical support and training opportunities were not relevant difficulties for the journalists interviewed. The picture that emerges from research concerning the meaning journalists ascribe to their own Internet use is more complex. On the positive side, journalists perceive the Internet as a tool that enhances their work. Using the net enables faster and broader interactivity

with readers (Schultz, 2000), and provides new roles for journalists (Kenney, Gorelik, and Mwangi, 2000). The negative aspects of the Internet largely concern the decrease in professionalism that distinguishes amateurs, prosumers, and news workers in general from journalists (Fortunati et al., 2009; Neuberger, Tonnemacher, Biebl, and Duck, 1998; O'Sullivan, 2005; van der Wurff and Lauf, 2005).

As we begin with journalists' perceptions and attitudes, addressing the question of the future of the press is not constrained by the narrowness of economicism or technologism, instead becoming a social question that reveals many aspects: power conflicts, reconfiguration of information as social need, and changes in the relationship between press and audiences. Starting from these premises we will look at the role of the Internet in the current restructuring of the journalism profession. Potential future scenarios for print information might be framed as the death of the press, a press without journalism, or a 'journalism without journalists,' with audiences acting as neo-journalists (Deuze and Fortunati, 2010).

In addition to this study's focus on the journalists' perspective, two other characteristics of the study are worth highlighting: Firstly, several countries are included in the survey and secondly, the countries are a case in point of the diversity within Europe. The structure of this article is as follows. We first describe the study's goals, the sample used, and the method applied. We then analyze the journalists' perceptions regarding the future of the press by investigating if and to what extent a series of different devices namely the Internet, the mobile phone, digital broadcasting, free newspapers and analog broadcasting were perceived as relevant for the future of the press. Given the assumption that the Internet will play a key role in the future of the press, a subsequent section then examines journalists' attitudes toward the new opportunities this medium offers as well as the possible negative effects that Internet use may have on the press. In the third section we will ask journalists to use 'counterfactual thinking' to describe their perceptions of what would happen to newspaper journalism if the Internet were no longer available. In the last section we discuss the main results of the study, followed by some concluding remarks.

Goals

The aim of the present study is to understand how journalists foresee the future of press in the Internet era. Our main interest is to investigate cross-national differences and similarities concerning this assessment, which makes this study unusual, if not unique, as well the influence on journalists' perceptions of socio-demographic and professional variables such as, respectively, the role of gender and their professional position that is being a print or an online journalist, familiarity with the Internet and the level of their Internet use. Our expectations were that the opinions of journalists in the different countries vary due to different societal backgrounds. Even if Hallin and Mancini (2004) distinction between three main models holds often true, other research show heterogeneity between countries (Canel and Pique´, 1998; Elvestad and Blekesaune, 2008) due to continuous negotiations between professional ideals, practices, and newsroom cultures (Sanders et al., 2008; Deuze, 2003). Therefore, we expected for example that northern journalists value more the Internet as a key technology for the future of the press and that southern journalists (and especially the Italian ones) value less the Internet and maybe more the mobile phone than the other journalists as future platform for news. We expected also variations according to the role in the newsrooms. For example, that female journalists' attitude is less positive towards the Internet than their male colleagues because of the traditional constraints the male-dominated media

sector still imposes at the institutional and professional level on women (Aldoory and Parry-Giles, 2005). We as well expected that a longer familiarity with the Internet, a more intense use of it and a "position" as online journalists would imply a more positive perception of the Internet as a key technology for the future of the press.
As stated above, we have two primary research questions. First, we seek to determine if, and to what extent, the different electronic media used within the journalism sector were perceived as relevant for the future of the press. Second, we investigated journalists' views of the opportunities that the Internet has to offer.

Method

Participants

Journalists from 11 European countries were interviewed, namely Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. The convenience sample that was recruited included 239 journalists who worked for a total of 40 newspapers, each of which was the most highly read within the respective countries.1 We assumed that journalists working for the most popular newspapers would have a broader overview of the future of the press. Participants were selected from the professional network of acquaintances surrounding each department of journalism studies and new media studies whose scholars were involved in this study. For this reason, they cannot be considered as representative of the sphere of journalism. For example it may be argued that journalists working for local newspapers would express different perceptions of the issue under investigation, or that important countries such as Germany, France, and the Netherlands are not included or that the journalists involved in each country are not representative of the journalists of these countries (in particular, the Slovenian case is quite s-balanced since here 30 questionnaires were collected in this country of about 2 million inhabitants and which is arguably not that big of a player in the European journalism scene). Funding and in general resources limitations have prevented the selection of a more representative sample. However, although these limitations of the journalists' sample, it is interesting to have so many different views and we are also confident that previously established relationships of mutual trust guarantee their full collaboration in the research as well as reliable answers (Table 1).

Table 1. *Characteristics of the convenience sample recruited*

Groups of countries		News-papers	Print journalists		Online journalists		Total
			M	F	M	F	
South-Central	Cyprus	2	0	1	5	3	9
	Greece	3	9	5	0	0	14
	Slovenia	3	11	11	6	2	30
Subtotal		*8*	*20*	*17*	*11*	*5*	*53*
Neo-Latin	Italy	4	20	5	7	2	34
	Spain	3	5	4	5	6	20
Subtotal		*7*	*25*	*9*	*12*	*8*	*54*
Atlantic islands	Ireland	5	13	4	4	2	23
	UK	4	7	5	15	6	33
Subtotal		*9*	*20*	*9*	*19*	*8*	*57*[a]
Scandinavian countries	Finland	3	9	9	4	5	27
	Sweden	4	6	6	3	4	19
Subtotal		*7*	*15*	*15*	*7*	*9*	*46*
Baltic countries	Estonia	3	10	1	0	2	13
	Lithuania	6	4	7	3	1	15
Subtotal		*9*	*14*	*8*	*3*	*3*	*29*[a]
Total		40	94	58	52	33	239

Note: Subtotals do not add up correctly due to missing answers: one woman from the UK and one man from Lithuania did not categorize themselves as either a print journalist or an online journalist.

Journalists categorized themselves as either print journalists, who worked only with physically printed materials, or online journalists, who published either online only, or both online and in print. For each outlet, according to availability, a questionnaire was administered to up to five journalists from the print edition and to up to three journalists from the online version. This difference (five versus 3) depends on the fact that at that time online journalists were less numerous than print journalists. The number of the journalists involved in the study was not decided according to the population of the country or the size of media industry but was fixed as a minimum number of journalists to be able to convey the journalists' perception and culture in the most read newspapers in the countries involved.

Countries were grouped together in order to reduce the dispersion of data. In our decision-making process, we took into account the cultural backgrounds, the similarity of the media landscape between countries, and the necessity to obtain balanced groups for the analysis. On these bases we identified the following five main groups: the UK and Ireland made up the Atlantic Islands group; Finland and Sweden comprised the Scandinavian countries; Italy and Spain were the Neo-Latin countries; Lithuania and Estonia made up the Baltic countries; and Cyprus, Greece, and Slovenia were grouped into the South-Central nations. It should be noted however, that differences between

grouped countries may be relevant, especially with regards to the South-Central nations2.

Men made up the majority of our overall convenience sample at 61.5 %. Gender distribution was similar in Neo-Latin and Atlantic countries; in the South-Central and Baltic countries this gap was less evident. The Scandinavian sample was more balanced, with women having been slightly prevalent. On the whole, our sample had a slightly masculine bias in comparison to male-female ratios in Europe. At the European level, journalists have a better gender balance, although women are in the majority amongst the lower ranks of the profession (Efj-survey, 2006).

Our sample can be considered to be young adults with a mean age of 37.9 years (SD 9.9); only half of the sample were older than 35. From this first view of the data, it seems that the journalism sector is characterized by an intense generational turnover. An analysis of variance (ANOVA) indicated that different countries have different age profiles ($F(4,232)$ 4.02, $p < 0.01$). The South-Central European journalists were in general younger (M 35.66, SD 8.73), while those in the Neo-Latin countries tended to be older (M 42.28, SD 10.00)3. Our respondents had a mean of 14.11 years of work experience (SD 9.60). This meant that, on average, they began their careers when they were approximately 24 years old. The journalists from the Neo-Latin countries had worked for longer (M 17.72, SD 8.91), while the respondents from the Atlantic islands claimed to have been in the profession for a smaller number of years (M 12.03, SD 9.23). Finally, the journalists had been familiar with the Internet for an average of seven years (M 7.63, SD 2.85)4; in this case, no differences emerged between the different countries.

Procedure

A questionnaire was created in the English language and was then translated by the participating researchers into their respective national languages. The use of a common questionnaire was crucial in order to obtain comparable data across countries; nevertheless, the mediation of native researchers, who contributed by identifying the questions, translating them (as well as doing back translations in order to check their accuracy), and by selecting and probing participants, was fundamental in order to ensure the relevance of the answers, the commitment of the participants, and the avoidance of cultural bias in the collection and interpretation of data. The questionnaire was composed of various sections including 11 groups of items to be evaluated on 5-point Likert scales. It was then sent by email to the selected journalists.

Group comparisons were explored using analyses of variance and post-hoc analyses. Moreover, each group of items was subjected to exploratory factor analyses using varimax rotation in order to identify underlying dimensions. Reliable factors (Cronbach's alpha) underwent further analyses: composite factor scores were computed and used in regression models in order to identify the importance of variables such as gender, age, professional role, nationality, intensity of Internet use, and familiarity with the Internet.

To further investigate, frequency data was extracted from the survey question regarding the medium most significant for the future of the press. This information was analyzed via correspondence factor analysis. This method provided an opportunity to reconstruct the underlying dimensions that organized the relationships between categorical variables. The quality of the data in this research was assured through the application of an iterative methodology that validated our interpretation of the results5.

The different items and questions on the survey evaluated various aspects of the role of the Internet regarding changes in European newspaper journalism, including changes in newsrooms and in the profession. Due to space limitations, only data pertaining to respondents' assessment of the future of the press and the Internet are discussed here.

Results

The future of the press

As stated above, traditional European newspapers have not been able to increase their audiences and, in some cases, have risked the loss of readers, while online editions have attracted, on certain occasions, millions of new readers. What this configuration of online news users means with regards to social relationships between newspapers, readerships, and business models remains unclear. Nevertheless, it can be said that the future of the press is at stake. What position do the European journalists

Table 2. *Journalists' perceptions of the relevance a of media for the future of the press (means and standard deviations)*

Medium	Country groups					
	South-Central	Neo-Latin	Atlantic islands	Scandi-navian	Baltic	Mean (*SD*)
The Internet[b]	4.21 (1.17)	4.75 (0.52)	4.67 (0.64)	4.61 (0.71)	4.59 (0.87)	4.56 (0.82)
The mobile phone[b]	3.27 (1.61)	3.23 (1.27)	3.67 (1.19)	3.70 (0.90)	3.93 (1.13)	3.52 (1.28)
Digital broad-casting	3.19 (1.41)	3.21 (1.21)	3.65 (1.08)	3.56 (1.01)	3.79 (1.15)	3.45 (1.20)
Free newspapers[b]	2.57 (1.31)	3.32 (1.38)	3.37 (1.17)	3.40 (1.21)	3.54 (1.14)	3.20 (1.30)
Analogue broad-casting[b]	2.48 (1.35)	2.50 (1.15)	2.37 (1.11)	2.09 (1.05)	3.25 (1.24)	2.48 (1.21)

[a] Scale ranges from 1 (not at all relevant) to 5 (very relevant).
[b] ANOVA and Scheffe post-hoc tests indicated significant differences between countries for this item.

involved in this research express on such an important issue for their profession? To obtain an initial answer we started investigating if, and to what extent, a series of different electronic communications media are perceived as relevant for the future of the press (see Table 2).

The Internet was rated by our respondents as the most relevant medium. The mobile telephone ranked at a distant second and is seen as important for future opportunities with respect to the expansion of information access. Digital channels were perceived as moderately relevant, closely followed by free papers. This last result diverges from what Santambrogio (1997, p. 482) finds, that is, "free press brought in competition with traditional (with fee) press on the gathering of local advertisements (rather than on contents), and has enlarged the audience of readers, reaching youths and immigrants." The journalists' position on the free press differed from the editors' opinions collected and reported in World Editors Forum (2008) reported above. Analog channels were considered less important for the future of the press.

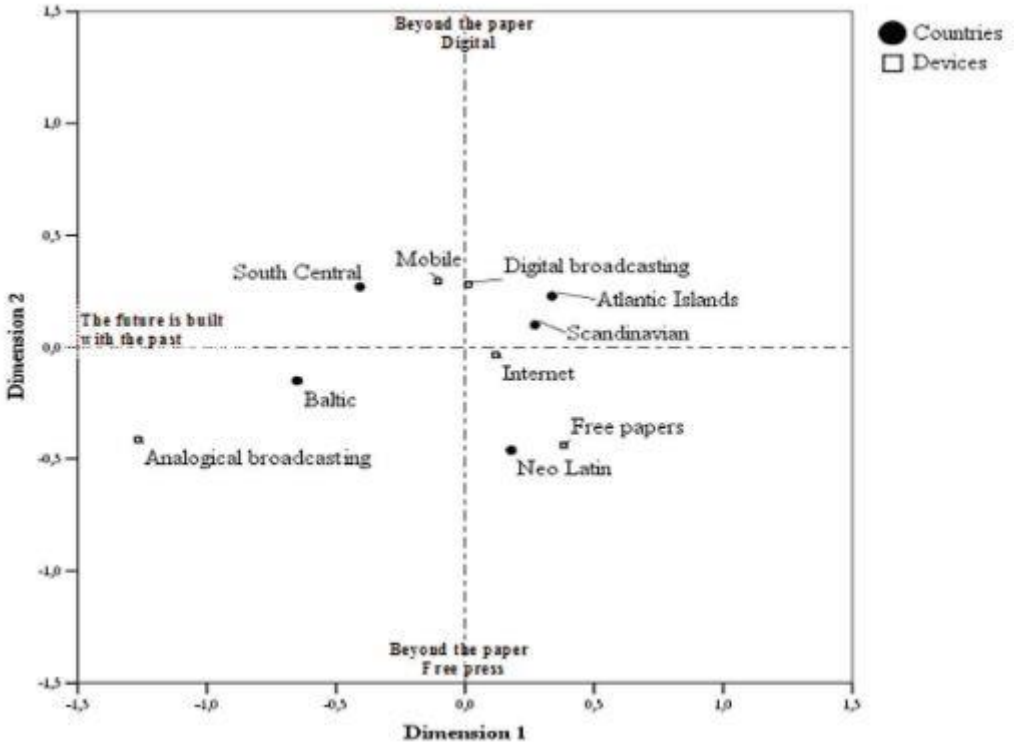
With varying levels of intensity, journalists from different countries expressed their evaluations of all the media, except for the digital broadcasting (e.g., digital TV). In particular, the Neo-Latin respondents rated the Internet as more highly to become the key medium or the future of the press ($F(4,233)$ 3.61, $p < 0.01$). Other recent studies show however that these respondents have been shown to be the most concerned about the computerization of their work (Fortunati et al., 2009; Sarrica et al., 2010). Our interviewees from South-Central European countries were less enthusiastic about the Internet and the free press ($F(4,231)$ 4.53, $p < 0.01$), and once again confirmed (Fortunati et al., 2009) the importance that they attributed to traditional printed newspapers. Respondents from the Baltic countries were the only ones who considered analog channels to still be relevant for the future of journalism ($F(4,228)$ 4.30, $p < 0.01$). Similarly, they attached more importance than their colleagues to the mobile phone ($F(4,230)$ 2.43, $p < 0.05$) and the free press ($F(4,231)$ 4.53, $p < 0.01$). This finding leads to the question of the nature of the relationships between perceptions of the importance of a medium and the actual diffusion of the devices of this medium in the countries studied. For example, the Neo-Latin journalists (particularly the Italians) involved in this study ascribed less importance than the other respondents to the mobile phone, despite the fact that Italy has one of the highest rates of mobile phones per capita in the world. These answers suggest that the relationship between perceptions and technology is not straightforward. Neo-Latin journalists, who were concerned about the Internet (Fortunati et al., 2009; Sarrica et al., 2010), at the same time perceived it as the most relevant tool for their future. In a reverse scenario, they were very familiar with the mobile phone, which is ubiquitous in Neo-Latin countries, but attributed less importance to it.

Journalists' self-categorization as either online journalists or print journalists strongly influenced the judgments they expressed. Online journalists considered the mobile phone (M 3.76, SD 1.09), digital channels (M 3.65, SD 1.18) and the free press (M 3.49, SD 1.17) to be more relevant for the future of the press than print journalists did (for Item 2: M 3.37, SD 1.36, $t(231)$ 2.28, $p < .05$; for Item 3: M 3.31, SD 1.19, $t(230)$ 2.12, $p < .05$; for Item 4: M 3.05 SD 3,05, $t(232)$ 2.58, $p < .05$). The roles of the Internet and analog channels were evaluated in a similar way. In addition, gender influenced only the assessment of the mobile phone, which was perceived to be more important by female (M 3.74, SD 1.29) than male journalists (M 3.38, SD 1.25, $t(233)$ 2.15, $p < .05$). The frequency of daily Internet usage correlated significantly with the importance our respondents attributed to the mobile phone ($r(233)$ .26, $p < .01$), digital devices ($r(232)$ .15, $p < .05$) and the free press ($r(234)$ .15, $p < .05$).

To obtain an understanding of any trends in journalists' positions concerning the future of the press, we ran a correspondence factor analysis on this set of items.6 The results are illustrated in Figure 1.

Two dimensions emerged: the first was a unipolar dimension and explained 71 % of inertia. This emergent polarity could be described as 'the future is built with the past', and grouped respondents who were convinced that analog broadcasting is far from becoming a relic of the past

Figure 1. *Perceptions of relevant media for the future of the press. Correspondence factor analysis, first two dimensions.*



and remains a relevant medium for the future of the press. The journalists of the South-Central countries and Baltic republics are projected on this pole: they probably look at traditional television and at the high number of people this medium is still able to attract in their countries and conclude that this situation will remain stable for years to come. Their position is consistent with the enthusiastic response of European audiences to new forms of television, such as digital terrestrial television, Web TV, mobile TV, etc. (Urban, Sapio, and Turk, 2008). British and Irish journalists are placed on the opposite pole of the first dimension.

The second factor (22 % of inertia) was identified as 'beyond the paper'; it distinguished between two forms of new media on either end of a bipolar dimension. At the positive pole we found digital channels and mobile telephones, the two electronic novelties of the last few years, which might represent the future of information. The free press, the print novelty that has changed the landscape of newspapers, characterizes the negative pole. While in Spain, the free press grew from 20 % of total readership in 2002 to 46 % in 2005, in Italy it grew from 26 % to 31 %, with several traditional newspapers beginning to produce a free press edition (Gilberti, 2006).

The positive pole, which values digital channels and mobile phones, considers the disappearance of the press and the transfer of its content to electronic media to be inevitable. On the opposite pole, it is interesting that Neo-Latin journalists consider the winning strategy to be the projection of the logic embodied in the Internet onto the press, that is they see that the press can survive only if it becomes free and giving timely information. These results most likely reflect the resistance to technological development that was expressed by our respondents, but also the difficulty in this historical moment for respondents to think in terms of a mid-term or long-term perspective.

New opportunities offered by the Internet

According to our respondents, the Internet will have a key role for the future of the press. What opportunities does this medium offer in their view?

Internet as threat versus opportunity. In order to address this issue, we asked journalists to assess various possible positive and negative effects that Internet use may have on the press (see Table 3).

According to interviewees, the Internet has opened new opportunities for the management of the processes of news production, widened the journalistic influence in the online setting, offered richer ways to present information through the use of multimedia channels, and allowed journalists to publish quickly without being subject to the time restrictions of press editions. Overall, the Internet is considered by our respondents to be a strong source of innovation and a necessary step toward the future by offering the potential for expansion of communicative practices through multimedia channels (Fortunati et al., 2009; Sarrica et al., 2010).

The Internet to which the journalists referred is however not the same Internet made up of citizen journalists in their view, that Internet will never be 'real journalism'. Professionals are not threatened by do-it-yourself or civic journalism, a view varied neither by country group nor by professional profile. This disparaging attitude and distancing from we-journalism may derive from a kind of defensive attitude. Professional journalists believe they need to differentiate themselves from layman journalists on the dimensions of know-how, skills, and experience in order to preserve higher status and professional privileges. Finally, the Internet is not perceived as devaluing print newspapers, nor is multi-channel or multi-platform publishing seen as a kind of recycling.

In order to better describe our data, we ran a principal component analysis with varimax rotation, with the aim of reducing the dimensionality

TABLE 3

of the data set without invoking specific factorial models (Jolliffe, 2002). A screening of the correlation matrix, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure (KMO .70), Bartlett's test of sphericity (x^2 (45) 324.29, $p < .01$), the diagonals of the anti-image correlation matrix (which were all over .6), and the communalities all indicated the adequacy of the sample for this analysis and the suitability of all 10 items. The initial solution extracted six components with eigenvalues over the criterion of .70 suggested by Jolliffe (2002), and the overall components explained 79.6 % of the variance. The scree plot did not allow the identification of a clear cut-off point, so we tested solutions with two, three, and six components. After deleting an item with low communality (Item 5), the solution with two dimensions, which explained 49 % of the variance, was chosen due to its parsimony. The items which contributed to the first dimension were 1, 2, 3, and 4 (the loadings were .60; .81; .55; and .73, respectively), and we thus interpreted this first dimension as 'the future will be built upon the Internet' (variance 28.2 %, a .64). The items that contributed to the second dimension were 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10 (with loadings of .51; .64; .74; .67; and .55, respectively), and we thus interpreted this second dimension as 'the Internet is a threat to journalism' (variance 14.3 %, a .65, see Table 3).

Respondents from all countries tended to foresee the future of the press as being online and to perceive the as but a modest threat to newspaper journalism. ANOVA showed interesting differences in the degrees to which the groups of countries both in the first (F (4,234) 7.48, $p < 0.0001$) and in the second (F (4,234) 2.97, $p < 0.05$) dimensions held these beliefs. Overall, South-Central journalists were less convinced that the future of print journalism is online. As previously noted, they tended to perceive relatively higher levels of threat, and more so when compared to Neo-Latin journalists. Scandinavian journalists were the least threatened by the Internet. Journalists from the Atlantic Islands were more convinced than the other groups that the future is online, but they appeared to be more apprehensive about the Internet than their Scandinavian peers. With regards to professional profiles, online journalists (M 4.48, SD .60) were more willing than print journalists (M 3.99, SD .69) to trust in the future development of online journalism (t235 5.46, $p < .0001$). Conversely, the convenience sample of print journalists (M 2.73, SD .87) perceived the Internet as a threat to traditional journalism to a greater extent than online journalists (M 2.38, SD .71; t235 3.17, $p < .01$).

A future without the Internet? Another way to assess the relevance of the Internet for the press was to ask journalists to use 'counterfactual thinking' to describe their view of what newspaper journalism would be like

Table 4. *Journalists' perceptions of the effects a of not using the Internet*

Opportunities	Country groups					
	South-Central	Neo-Latin	Atlantic islands	Scandi-navian	Baltic	Mean (*SD*)
1. The Internet has opened up new journalism possibilities for newspapers[b]	4.15 (1.12)	4.26 (1.05)	4.70 (0.53)	4.48 (0.72)	4.34 (0.72)	4.39 (0.89)
2. In the long run, online journalism is a necessary and progressive strategy for newspapers	4.08 (1.07)	4.35 (0.85)	4.47 (0.85)	4.41 (0.88)	4.21 (0.86)	4.31 (0.92)
3. Multimedia is an important new component in presenting stories to the audience[b]	4.02 (0.95)	3.91 (1.15)	4.41 (0.83)	3.85 (1.23)	4.50 (0.73)	4.09 (1.04)
4. Newspapers will have to embrace the Internet in order to survive[b]	3.57 (1.23)	3.09 (1.23)	4.39 (1.11)	4.20 (0.86)	4.50 (0.73)	3.85 (1.22)
5. News should be published online as quickly as possible regardless of the publishing time-table of the printed paper[b]	3.96 (1.30)	3.96 (1.18)	3.25 (1.38)	3.28 (1.50)	3.52 (1.12)	3.61 (1.35)
6. Citizen journalism and blogs are not real journalism	3.70 (1.31)	3.49 (1.37)	3.33 (1.06)	3.24 (1.33)	3.38 (1.41)	3.44 (1.32)
7. Multi-channel publishing is just another word for recycling the same contents across various channels	3.26 (1.48)	3.00 (1.40)	3.30 (1.22)	3.00 (1.17)	3.21 (1.32)	3.16 (1.32)
8. Publishing news free online devalues the work of journalists[b]	2.79 (1.57)	1.85 (0.93)	2.37 (1.26)	2.11 (1.39)	2.50 (1.26)	2.34 (1.36)
9. The public's 'do-it-yourself journalism' online is a threat to newspapers	2.36 (1.42)	2.17 (1.19)	2.32 (1.17)	1.80 (0.92)	2.17 (1.20)	2.18 (1.20)
10. The online edition is a drain on the real function of the newspaper[b]	2.42 (1.43)	1.67 (0.97)	2.04 (1.25)	1.76 (0.98)	2.14 (1.06)	2.00 (1.19)
The future will be built upon the Internet (Items 1, 2, 3, and 4)	3.95 (0.77)	3.90 (0.74)	4.49 (0.52)	4.23 (0.67)	4.33 (0.53)	4.17 (0.70)
The Internet is a threat to journalism (Items 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10)	2.91 (0.93)	2.48 (0.78)	2.67 (0.76)	2.39 (0.78)	2.55 (0.87)	2.61 (0.84)

if the Internet was no longer available (Table 4). According to our respondents, their profession would significantly decline. In particular, potential opportunities to cut costs would decrease, locating relevant issues to write about would be more difficult, and it would be more difficult to keep in touch with newsrooms from abroad. Other consequences that were imagined to be even more damaging were first, a dramatically decreased capability to obtain the latest updates, and second, the lack of access to digital archives (digital seems to have become a common synonym for online) for information retrieval and the publishing real-time breaking news. An additional disadvantage mentioned was a significant decrease in the ability to keep in touch with other journalists. Investigative journalism, the discovery of new ideas, and data checking was only thought to be marginally affected if the Internet were to disappear. Interestingly, interaction with readers without the Internet was assessed as only suffering slightly: this result corresponds with other studies (Fortunati et al., 2009) showing that many interactive features on the net are not yet fully exploited by journalists. An analysis of variance with a Scheffe´ post-hoc test on all of the aforementioned items showed that Neo-Latin respondents judged the potential loss of the Internet in a less negative light than the others7.

The professional role of the journalist was also relevant. Online journalists hypothesized more negative effects than print journalists with regard to the potential effects of the loss of the Internet, except in terms of relationships with colleagues and data checking8. Gender had a marginal relevance: the only difference was that women considered the potential decrease in the possibility of finding sources of news more probable than men did. Internet use, age, and work experience also had effects: those who first, connected less than once a day, second, were younger, and third, who had less work experience hypothesized more negative effects from the loss of the Internet. The effects they considered to be relevant were the loss of the potential possibilities for keeping in touch with other journalists, loss of the capacity to get updates and to gather information quickly, and loss of the ability to publish real-time breaking news. In other words, the less experienced, younger journalists who actually used the Internet less relied more on the Internet for the basic and general features of communication, search, and retrieval.

Discussion and concluding remarks

The starting point for this study was a position arguing that in order to understand the future of the press, it is important to consider not only technological development, but also individual, social, cultural, and professional interaction with technologies. Perceptions, conflicts, emotions, stereotypes, ideas, and feelings of intuition that professional journalists expressed were seen as relevant aspects within the process of the domestication of technologies. Technological innovations are born out of conflicts, resistance, and uncertainties (Bijiker and Law, 1992), and without investigating them, it is impossible to properly understand any sociotechnical processes (Fortunati and Sarrica, 2010). The press sector and its future are no exception.

The present survey provided some interesting primary results. The European journalists who took part in this study saw the Internet as the key technology in the innovation process and for the future of the press. They believed that the Internet is a great resource for their professional work, as it enhanced many tasks done in their work, such as publishing breaking news quickly and using multimedia channels. Particularly regarding work routines, this tool seems to have offered many opportunities

for improvements in the quality of journalists' work. Their views on this point coincided with the views of editors collected and reported in World Editors Forum (2008).

Our respondents' views diverged from those of editors regarding the importance attributed to other technologies. The journalists involved in this study ranked the mobile phone as the second most important tool, and put the free press in fourth place, despite the widespread increase in its use. To the contrary, previous research showed that more than half of editors are convinced that the news will be free in the future and ascribe marginal importance to mobile phones, probably because they do not control this business (WAN, 2008). The views of the journalists who were interviewed seemed to be more realistic, at least in the short term. More recently, people's appetite for up-to-the-second celebrity news has been fed by the mobile phone in connection with social networks (Fortunati, 2009).

Even more important regarding the relevance of mobile phones is the recent emergence of micro journalism (Cohen, 2008), which combines the use of mobiles and, for example, Twitter, to create a practical convergence of press, mobile, and Internet technology. For several years users have been receiving the latest news on their mobile phones, in blocks of 140 characters, directly from newspapers, television channels, or telecom operators, who obtain information from news agencies. In this process, the news is reduced to micro-sized pieces of information. With just a few words sent on 5 January 2008 in an SMS message from John Dickerson, chief political correspondent for the online magazine Slate, micro journalism came of age. Barack Obama subsequently used micro journalism during his presidential campaign, using SMS to send messages containing the latest campaign trail updates.

Another important finding that emerged from the survey was the role played by cognitive processes and biases as well as emotions in terms of the journalists' perceptions and opinions of the future of the press. Contrarily to our expectations, the Neo-Latin journalists who took part in this study (particularly the Italians ones) attributed less importance than others to the mobile phone, despite the fact that Italy is a country with one of the highest mobile phone per capita rates in the world. The mobile, already familiar to them, remained in the background of the picture, and its importance was not fully recognized. We may interpret this result as the effect of being immersed in communication via mobile: since mobile is an everyday tool of communication, the contents of its social representations linked to functional aspects prevail and leave in the background expectancies, imaginations and concerns (Sarrica, in press). In a reversed point of view, they perceived the Internet as the most important medium for the future of the press, and, at the same time, they appreciate this medium less than others. These assessments showed the extent to which emotions might be relevant in mediating the relationship between technology, which is a reoccurring research interest for scholars in this field (Vincent and Fortunati, 2009).

Even if the results cannot be generalized, the survey allowed us to look inside the journalistic world in some degree of detail. Our data showed that belonging to a specific social context influenced the perceptions of the future of the press. As expected, our respondents from the north, which has largely integrated the Internet into society, demonstrated a general appreciation of this integration. Conversely, the views of the southern journalists involved in the study reflected a more problematic and cautious view of the Internet in their everyday lives. The women in our research, contrarily to our expectations, had a more positive and open attitude toward the Internet than the men. However, that positive attitude has yet to enable female journalists to overcome traditional constraints at the institutional and professional level in this male dominated

media sector (Aldoory and Parry-Giles, 2005). In our sample, online journalists, journalists with more Internet experience, and journalists who used the Internet heavily were more positive about the Internet than print journalists, journalists with less Internet experience, and journalists who used the Internet less frequently (and this in line with our hypothesis). As in other research on attitudes and emotions toward technologies, those who used the technologies more appreciated them to a greater extent than did those who used them less (Fortunati & Manganelli 1998). In this study, print journalists and those who used the Internet less frequently also perceived higher levels of threat from the Internet.

Although journalists and editors both identified the Internet as a key technology for the future of the press, in the short term our respondents stated that citizen journalism or we-journalism, which are typical innovations of the Web 2.0 press, is not true journalism. This is striking and significant since most journalists in international surveys maintain that they regularly use news from the Internet in their articles (Middleberg/ Ross Media Survey, 2002; EURO RSCG Magnet and Columbia University Survey of the Media, 2005). This contradictory assessment shows the extent to which stereotypes and inter-group relationships also weigh on journalists' perceptions. Finally, this attitude also represents the current crisis of newspaper journalism as a liberal profession.

Traditionally, journalism has produced a kind of exclusive social closure in order to protect its professional status and to maintain the boundaries of the group. Previously, journalists were valuable allies in the legitimization and defense of economic and political power; for this reason, their privileges were not contested, and their status increased. Particularly over the last two decades, neo-liberal policy makers have however selectively attacked entrenched privilege and the status groups in certain areas in society, introducing trade liberalization and breaking down the perceived monopolies that liberal professions had created through systems of state regulation, licensing, and credentials (Alexander, 2005). In economic terms, journalists have seemed to become a superfluous population (Deuze and Fortunati, 2010).

This study has shown that the Internet is perceived by this convenience sample of journalists to be one of the most relevant forms of media for the future of the press. Its primary usefulness, however, is in terms of the practical aspects of the profession. If these results will be confirmed by broader research, we could conclude that journalists are risking the dissociation of everyday practices and their ideal professional role. Moreover, if they do not recognize that the Internet, as with every new tool, does not play a neutral role in the power dynamics between editors and workers, then their plans to use it to develop their professional role by enhancing their performance may be an illusion. In the long term, the risk for the press sector is not only the loss of readers, but also the loss of professionals who no longer feel part of a recognized and valued social group, but rather, to borrow an expression from Deuze (Deuze and Fortunati, 2010, p. 164), there will be journals without journalists.

The results obtained here strengthen previous studies which demonstrated that the world of the press can be seen as a socio-technical system and that it is impossible to understand its evolution and its future paying attention only to technological innovation without considering all the actors involved in the process: journalists, readers, publishers.

Finally, there are several limitations to this exploratory study. The results presented and discussed here were limited by the different numbers of print and online journalists we were able to reach in different countries and in different outlets. This

factor may have produced distortions in the assessments of the questions asked in this survey. Furthermore, the variance found in the regression analyses in several cases was low. Thus, these results and their interpretations should be viewed with caution. Despite these limitations, this study provides new knowledge regarding how this convenience sample of professional journalists assessed the consequences of Internet usage in newsrooms, the opportunities and challenges provided by the Internet to their profession, and the direction in which they perceive the future of the press to be going. In this sense the study offers another piece of information to complete the puzzle of current studies on the future of the press.

To improve upon the limitations of the present research future studies first of all could involve a representative sample of European countries and a representative sample of their journalists as well as readers and publishers. Their voices would be precious for building exhaustive maps of print press future trends, instead of having that usual, technological vision which is unilateral. Investigating these voices in a representative way could take away the exploratory character of the present study and develop research capable to build on the future of the press in a solid and reliable way. Second, in respect to our working hypotheses in this study that, in order to understand an issue such as the future of the press, it is necessary to consider not only technological development, but also individual, social, cultural, and professional interaction with technologies, future studies could investigate the influence of socio-demographic variables on the interaction with technologies in a more appropriate way. Knowing the effects of this influence could provide important data to better understand the processes of re-organization, convergence, and divergence, which are going on nowadays in the press world.

Notes

1. The newspapers involved in the survey are: Aamulehti, Anyksta, breaking news. ie, Corriere della Sera, Dagens Nyheter, Delo, Dnevnik, El Mundo, El Pais, Eleftherotypia, Financial Times, Goteborgsposten, The Guardian, Helsingin Sanomat, Il Sole 24 Ore, ireland.com, Irish Examiner, Irish Independent, The Irish Times, Valeva, Kathimerini, Kauno diena, La Repubblica, La Stampa, La Vanguardia, Lietuvos rytas, Lietuvos zinios, N Echo, Ohtuleht, Päevaleht, Panevezio balsas, Philelefttheros, Postimees, Senska Dagbladet, Simerini, Svenska Dagbladet, Ta Nea, Times, Vecer, Verslo zinos.
2. We discussed the different backgrounds of countries in Fortunati et al., 2009.
3. The seniority of the Neo-Latin sample was mainly due to the Italian respondents,whose average age was significantly higher than that of the Spaniards: M 46.50, SD 8.70, versus M 35.10, SD 7.83; t(52) 4.82, $p < .001$.
4. An outlier who declared that he had 26 years of Internet usage was excluded from the analyses that used this variable.
5. When the results of the research were ready, several meetings were organized with the journalists involved in the survey with the purpose of checking whether they shared our interpretation of the results.
6. Data was organized as follows: in each group of countries we counted how many times each medium was rated as relevant or very relevant; this data was entered in the cells of the matrix country by medium (i. e., a 5 by 5 frequency table).
7. Univariate Anova with factor between group of countries: Item1: $F(4,231)$ 3.63, $p < 0.01$; Item 3: $F(4,233)$ 3.34, $p < 0.05$; Item 6: $F(4,231)$ 2.45, $p < 0.05$; Item 5:

(4,228) 4.30, p < 0.01, Item 9: F(4,230) 2.79, p < 0.05; Item 11: F(4,230) 2.56, p < 0.05; Item 12: F(4,229) 3.49, p < 0.01; Item 13: F(4,232) 3.21, p < 0.05.
8. Connecting with other journalists: print j. M 2.65, SD 1.15; web j. M 2.39, SD 1.06, n.s.; investigative journalism projects: print j. M 2.63, SD 1.01; web j. M 2.33, SD 0.99, t(231) 2.18, p < .05; getting ideas for stories: print j. M 2.54, SD 0.94; web j. M 2.26, SD 0.87, t(234) 2.24, p < .05; data checking: print j. M 2.39, SD 1.06; web j. M 2.25, SD 1.02, n.s.; interaction with readers: print j. M 2.45, SD 1.09; web j. M 2.02, SD 1.07, t(233) 2.92, p < .01; finding sources: print j. M 2.36, SD 1.09; web j. M 1.98, SD 0.92, t(232) 2.72, p < .01; saving costs: print j. M 2.32, SD 1.06; web j. M 1.99, SD 1.11, t(222) 2.21, p < .05; tracking story topics: print j. M 2.32, SD 0.95; web j. M 1.96, SD 0.90, t(233) 2.78, p < .01; ease of keeping in touch with the newsroom while away: print j. M 2.15, SD 1.34; web j. M 1.80, SD 1.09, t(231) 2.05, p < .05; keeping up to date with the news: print j. M 2.04, SD 1.22; web j. M 1.67, SD 1.05, t(233) 2.34, p < .05; digital archives: print j. M 2.01, SD 1.27; web j. M 1.65, SD 1.10, t(231) 2.18, p < .05; real-time publishing of breaking news: print j. M 1.93, SD 1.33; web j. M 1.52, SD 1.17, t(230) 2.34, p < .05; speed of information gathering: print J. M 1.91, SD 1.25; web j. M 1.54, SD 1.17, t(233) 2.20, p < .05.

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