What We Talk about When We Talk about Local Journalism
Tacit Knowledge during the Digital Shift

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orwegian local journalism – as with journalism worldwide – is going through extensive changes due to the digital shift (Nielsen, 2015; Nygren and Dobek-Ostrowska, 2015; Omdal, 2013; Peters and Broersma, 2013; Witschge et al., 2016). The digital shift leads to changing practices, which again lead to changing knowledge and competence requirements (Kramp et al., 2015; Nielsen, 2015; Peters and Broersma, 2013; Singer et al., 2011).

Contemporary (local) journalism is a complex field and, even more so, a field in flux (Witschge et al., 2016). A lot of knowledge is 'in the making'. Little is written about tacit journalistic knowledge, and for online local journalism this remains an untouched field. This interview-driven study seeks to fill that gap, by considering the local journalistic discourse around roles and everyday activity.

The literary reader might notice that the title of this paper is a pun on Raymond Carver's (1981/2010) short story collection, '*What We Talk About When We Talk About Love*'. The title is meant as something more than a clever pun: Carver's stories thematise the complexity of the modern world, and the paper's title also indicates that meaning and knowledge exist between and beyond words. When I was interviewing local journalists about their con-

temporary work situation and role understanding, the following thought struck me: they all talked a lot about 'digital competence' but were unable to articulate the meaning of the term – even when directly asked. It was like they *knew* it, but could not fully verbalise it. This triggered my interest in the tacit knowledge dimensions of the profession.

Tacit knowledge in journalism deserves more research, as it is a matter of scrutinising the core values of journalism – such as newsworthiness (Dimmen, 2009). This interview-driven study aims to clarify some of the underlying tacit knowledge dimensions tied to contemporary professional challenges. This includes online communication, online news production and online roles, as well as how to handle the changes brought on by the shift.

Collins (2010) emphasises that most professional tacit knowledge can be articulated, and is thus easier to transfer. He also argues that explication of tacit knowledge may remove insecurity in professional situations. The current study rests on this notion. As (local) journalism adapts to new frameworks, new technology and limited resources, it is crucial to reflect on practices. An explication of local journalists' discourse around their knowledge and competencies can identify and illustrate what the profession considers unclear and uncertain. It can also clarify the new forms of local journalistic knowledge emerging, including the content of the somewhat fuzzy term 'digital competence'. Through addressing areas of unarticulated (digital) know-how, issues regarding everyday work, professionalism, localness and local journalistic quality can arise, and in turn provide a useful basis for later research. In addition, and in line with Hermida (2011), research on the ongoing changes in contemporary journalism has historical value.

The article answers the following research question: *What tacit knowledge can be elicited from local journalism actors' discourse around online work and activity?*

Discourse is, in this article, understood as "*culturally ingrained and institutionally powerful ways of looking at, experiencing and understanding particular areas of social life*" (Deacon et al., 1999, 147). Analysing journalists' discourse is a fruitful way to comprehend "*what matters*" in journalism (De Maeyer, 2016, 467).

The paper is structured as follows. First, a section elaborating on contextual matters. Next, a presentation of the tacit knowledge theories that provide the analytical toolkit for the analysis. This is followed by a description of the methodology, before the text moves on to the analysis. The analysis section is divided into three main dimensions of tacit knowledge, addressing what local journalists say about (1) their relation to the audience, (2) composing good online stories, and (3) online self-presentation and behaviour.

CONTEXT: DIGITALISATION, PROFESSIONALISM AND LOCALNESS

Norway is part of what Hallin and Mancini (2004, 144) refer to as the *Democratic Corporatist Model*, indicating historically high circulation rates, substantial autonomy, strong professionalism and a strong local press. Looking at its history and development, Norway's media situation is similar to other North-European countries. Norway is called "*the land of local newspapers*", and a majority of the 230 existing newspapers are local (Høst, 2016). In Norway, local media employs most of the journalists, and the local press is the spine of everyday Norwegian media structure (Mathisen, 2010). The district offices of NRK[1] have good ratings as well. Local media is important for the democratic infrastructure, local culture and identity, and for channelling local political information and news (Omdal, 2013). Both in the Norwegian press and in public broadcasting (NRK), online news is gaining increased preference over print, TV and radio. Today, the local press is experiencing severe circulation decline and downsizing after withstanding the general development for a number of years (Høst, 2014).

In this article, (local) journalism is understood as a profession, in line with Abbott's (1988) understanding as a way of structuring expertise, relying on both theoretical and practical knowledge. Freidson (2001) underscores the professional use of *discretion*, implying that the occupation's use of expertise – founded in knowledge and experience – cannot be left with just anyone. For journalism, this is a question of social responsibility (cf. Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2001).

Questions concerning the de-professionalisation of journalism – understood as decreased journalistic autonomy and sense of social responsibility – are under discussion both nationally and internationally (Bjerke, 2009; Freidson, 2001; Nygren, 2008; Nygren and Dobek-Ostrowska, 2015). Convergence, including the impact of social media, blurs many old distinctions (Hermida, 2011). New skills, ways of thinking and modes of working are emerging. Online traffic is important both for revenues and public standing. High traffic means bigger audiences, more money and general interest. Engebretsen (2007)

points to fascination, experience and engagement as indicators of quality in digital journalism. User interaction is a central feature of contemporary journalism (Singer et al., 2011), and several scholars have underscored the increased public power (cf. Picard, 2011). Meanwhile, there has been a change in loyalty among the audience, and multi-platform consumption of news is the new normal (Purcell et al., 2010).

The use of social media is blurring old boundaries of journalism (Hermida, 2016; Steensen, 2016), and new demands of journalistic transparency challenge old professional ideals concerning objectivity and neutrality (Gynnild, 2012). Journalists increasingly use social media and other digital platforms to interact with users and sources (Gulyás, 2013; Hedman, 2015; Hermida, 2016; Zeller and Hermida, 2015). This implies that there is a less institutionalised communicative practice than before (Hermida, 2016), and journalists have a harder job balancing professional and private identities (Steensen, 2016). Journalistically speaking, there may be discrepancies concerning the news outlet's need for credibility and objectivity (Hermida, 2016). Social media involves a loss of control for journalism actors, as the knowledge of who the audience is, as well as when, where and how news is consumed, disappears (ibid.). This is a crucial change for local journalism, where the ideal reader has traditionally been the next-door neighbour (cf. Eco, 1979).

The everyday work and role of journalists are also changing with the digitalisation. In digital local journalism, more time is spent inside the newsroom, journalists produce more news than before and 'glocal' news angles are necessary to make the news generate online traffic (cf. Lamark and Morlandstø, 2014; Nielsen, 2015; Nygren, 2008; Omdal, 2012). However, time is becoming an ever scarcer resource in journalism, and it is hard for journalists to find time to learn new practices and tools (Avilés and Carvajal, 2008; Lamark and Morlandstø, 2014). Still, not *everything* changes in the rhythm of digitalisation. Paulussen (2011, 62), with a reference to Boczkowski (2004), writes: "*Newsroom culture consists of unwritten rules, tacit norms and shared professional values (...) embedded in the habits, hearts and minds of journalists*". Paulussen (2011, 62) underlines that cultural change is a slow process. Unwritten rules, tacit norms and professional values are also the subject of the next section, where I elaborate on theories of tacit knowledge.

Professional tacit knowledge and tacit knowledge in journalism

Professions rest on a basis of knowledge. This knowledge base contains both explicit (spoken/writ-

ten) and tacit knowledge (Grimen, 2008; Molander and Terum, 2008). The classical, scientific definition of knowledge is that statements must be justified through true beliefs (Plato, in Fine, 2003). Professional knowledge, however, consists of *both* intellectual and cognitive knowledge on work ethics, situational discretion, (social) responsibility and practical *know how* (Kennedy, 1987; Oltedal, 2012; Smeby, 2008). This implies a broader understanding of knowledge than Plato's definition. In professional everyday life, much knowledge 'in use' will be of a practical and often unspoken kind: *tacit* (Ryle, 1963; Smeby, 2013). Tacit knowledge evolves from how we experience, judge, act and think based on verbally unarticulated knowledge. The knowledge might be tacit because it is yet to be spoken, or because it is impossible to articulate (Grimen, 2008, 79). Tacit knowledge has always been a crucial part of the journalistic knowledge base, and journalists are viewed as "*intuitive experts*" with professional knowledge that some find difficult to articulate (Dreyfus and Dreyfus, 1986; Gravengaard, 2011).

In the following section, I give a brief description of three main traditions regarding the understanding of tacit knowledge (cf. Grimen, 2008). In addition, I present relevant theories and examples to illuminate the core of these understandings.

The first tradition is the phenomenological tradition. Here, the term *lifeworld* comprehends the horizons of considered and unconsidered thoughts and actions belonging to an individual's concrete and sociocultural world (Berger and Luckman, 1996; Husserl, 1962; Schütz, 2005). Knowledge might be tacit because it is impossible to articulate all that is known at one time, or because it is not reflected upon (Husserl, 1962). In one's lifeworld, knowledge and fields of competence may be implied or presupposed (Habermas, 1981). A local journalist's lifeworld horizon might consist of the local culture, traditions and mindset, as well as his/her interests, work, and relation to friends, family and co-citizens (cf. Molander, 1996). Sumpter (2000) studied work routines of editors, and found that they construct typifications of their audience. These typifications emerge through newsroom interactions or through interactions with acquaintances, friends and family. Typifications are hence imagined audiences, based on lifeworld knowledge. According to Sumpter (2000), audiences influence journalists through the latter's intuition and assumptions – which again creates routines.

Routines bring us to the second tradition, Wittgenstein pragmatics. This tradition emphasises the foundation of rule-bound behaviour (Wittgenstein, 1953; 1969). The term *praxis* comprehends the com-

pleteness of verbal and non-verbal rules and repertoires of action. Praxis is what theories arise from, and speaks for itself. The verbal language is inadequate – yet not unnecessary – when it comes to the knowledge of praxis. In addition, norms and rules of conduct limit what is accepted and expressed through words (Grimen, 2008). Hence, it is a gap between the recognisable and the articulable. One relevant example of journalistic *praxis* is the knowledge of newsworthiness. Schultz (2007) names this seemingly self-evident sense *"the journalistic gut feeling"*. This gut feeling exists both within the bodies of journalists and within the walls of newsrooms, and the knowledge consists of non-negotiable norms, explicit news criteria and disputable arguments. It develops through practice. March and Olsen (2004) describe the unwritten rules and regulations concerning legitimate conduct in organisations as the *"logic of appropriateness"*. This understanding of action is based on adaption and adjustment, and thus contains tacit knowledge. It is possible to transfer professional tacit knowledge. Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1986) show how professionals turn from *novices* to *experts* through the repetition of practices. Benner (1984) points out that this kind of expertise enables the professional to see situations in their completeness. She proposes that one can gain knowledge and skills ("knowing how") without learning the theory ("knowing that"). Gans (1979) showed that journalists only have a vague and abstract sense of what news audiences want, and rely more on professional routines. Journalists think that news values are an abstraction of what the audience values, when in fact news values are learned through processes of professional socialisation (Breed, 1955; Tuchman, 1978). The notion of tacit *relational knowledge* is further developed by Collins (2010), who points out that social interaction (between individuals or within groups) keeps some knowledge unarticulated – either because of norms or because articulation is unnecessary.

The third tradition is based on Polanyi (1962; 1966), and will only be elaborated on briefly here. Polanyi (1966, 4) focuses his interest on what is and what is not possible to articulate verbally. Alternatively, to quote his most well-known phrase: *"we know more than we can tell"*. Polanyi distinguishes between the *focal term* and the *distal term*: the focal term refers to all the small pieces of information, which add up to the bigger picture – *the distal term*. Thus, some elements of the world must be taken for granted – and by being *indwelled*, they constitute a background for our actions (ibid.). Dimmen (2009) analysed tacit journalistic knowledge through Polanyi's concepts, and showed how the *"immunising mantra of journalistic judgement"* is both complex and manifold.

As shown, not all forms of knowledge reflect the Platonic definition of knowledge. In local journalism, the tacit, indwelled knowledge about the community becomes a specific dimension. Lamark and Morlandstø (2002; 2014) show how the localness of local journalism creates specific challenges in connection with role and activity: the local journalist has to find ways to be proximate, but effective and neutral.

The article returns to these notions in the analysis, after a description of the methodology.

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

This is an interview-driven study, conducted through semi-structured in-depth interviews with 16 local journalism actors who belong to four different newsrooms in two different Norwegian communities.[2] The journalists and editors belong to both local newspapers and the district offices of the national broadcaster, NRK. The NRK district offices are nationwide the most popular local aired media. Through strategic documents, NRK has decided to make a distinct commitment to digital platforms and social media. The two newspapers chosen are typical Norwegian local newspapers in the sense of size, readership and area of coverage. They are also typical in that they are experiencing a digital turnaround with circulation decline and downsizing.

The choice of interviewees was strategic and breadth-based, grounded in the interviewees' fields of work and expertise, experience, age and gender. The common denominator is that they all work full-time in local journalism on both digital and traditional platforms (TV, radio, newspapers). They are anonymised using pseudonyms, but understand and agree with the possibility of indirect identification.

The recorded interviews took place in May and June 2014, and lasted between 45 and 90 minutes. The interview guide – which served as a guideline throughout the conversations – contained questions about practical everyday work, reflections on the journalist's role, quality in journalism, relation to the public and technology/platforms, social responsibility and experiences with the digital shift[3]. It was important that the interviewees were given space to address matters they personally considered to be important.

The analysis draws on theories of tacit knowledge, partly anchored in professional theory. I chose an interactionist-interpretation approach to access the tacit knowledge dimensions (Järvinen and Mik-Meyer, 2005). This implies that the researcher actively goes beyond the interviewees' words,

in order to capture meaning through reflection and analysis. The focus lies not only on what is being said, but also on the choice of words, the tone and atmosphere throughout the talks, as well as possible social conventions binding the interviewees. It was important for me, as a researcher, to consider the social identities negotiated by the local journalists throughout the interviews.

The categorisation and systematisation of the transcript material was achieved by taking the following steps: 1) Going through all the interviews and interview notes, taking notes on what emerged as central topics[4]. 2) Re-reading the transcripts and making sub-topics, by grouping emerging themes under the main topics[5]. 3) Coding the entire material in HyperResearch, systemising all relevant statements under one or several sub-topics. I also made summary notes on each interviewee's narrative, answering the question of *what is essential here.* Each note consisted of two parts: a summary of the central quotes and stories, followed by my interpretation of the statements (cf. Denzin's (1999, 312–313) notion of how description of meaning is also ascription of meaning). The notes also accounted for my role in the interviews. Through all of this, and with the use of existing theories on tacit knowledge, the three dimensions took shape.

Tacit knowledge is not something one can ask about directly. The answers to my research question emerged implicitly, and were discovered through repeatedly reading and dialectically interpreting the material. Metaphorically speaking, it was like discovering small drops of knowledge trickling out between the spoken words. Hence, the analysis rests on interpreting the underlying meaning – bringing these drops into unity.

There are both affordances and limitations to the approach chosen. On the one hand, the underlying meaning is elicited from the local journalists' discourse. On the other hand, the findings remain as interpretations, not as "facts". The answers come from interviewees with interests, motives and a human need to idealise their roles (cf. Goffman, 1992). Hence, the research is *reality-reflecting* more than *reality-establishing* (cf. Staunæs and Søndergaard, 2005, 51). Maintaining a critical distance from the discourse displayed was therefore important for me. Yet, language both produces and discloses the world (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2005), and it would be meaningless to presume that the local journalists' discourse cannot tell us any truths about knowledge in local journalism. As Dawson and Prus (1993, 166) note, language also creates inter-subjectivity and a human will to create and maintain meaning.

With this notion in mind, the text moves on to the analysis.

THREE DIMENSIONS OF TACIT KNOWLEDGE IN LOCAL JOURNALISM

This section of the article presents and analyses relevant data derived from the interviews, and is structured through three different local journalistic dimensions. Each dimension focuses on an area in which tacit knowledge seems to be an important part of the knowledge base. The first section explores dimensions that directly and indirectly relate to the online audience. The second part scrutinises aspects of local journalistic production. The third part looks at the local journalistic role during a time of transparency and change. In sum, the analysis seeks to clarify aspects of local journalistic tacit knowledge – as they appear from the professional discourse.

The New Presence: Audience conceptions and approaches

The interviewees describe the core of local journalism as presence in, and closeness to, their community: "*The most dangerous thing that might happen to a local newspaper is to appear as presumptuous and unapproachable*", according to Hans (44). Both Hans and the other interviewees express the importance of continuous communication with both sources and the public. A contemporary challenge is that the tempo of online production extensively ties them to the newsrooms:

> "*We do indeed lose very many good stories when the capacity of getting around in the community disappears. At least, I think so. However, we are doing a good job on Facebook – we simply have to use social media as a replacement for real-world experiences.*" (Eivind, 47)

The quote represents two common views among the local journalists interviewed: that online arenas of communication are replacing real-life interaction, and that Facebook is the most important social media site. Furthermore, the journalists explain how they try to consciously signalise public-mindedness and down-to-earth-ness in a range of ways when switching from real-life to the web. They use elements from their more general lifeworld-horizon to do so. Katrine, for example, says that she adds a "hug" at the end of her Facebook updates to the audience – just as she does with her friends and family. We see a link to Sumpter's (2000) findings of how journalistic routines emerge through audience typifi-

cations, which again are based on real-life relations. In addition, this is *relational knowledge* (Collins, 2010) – Katrine explains how she has experienced the effectiveness of her "hugs" through testing it on the audience. Eva (45), whose favourite way of collecting news stories earlier was by hanging out in the supermarket with a shopping cart, recounts:

"Today, I do not get many spontaneous tips. That harmless, friendly appearance you can put on when you stroll around with a shopping cart, well, you are without that behind a screen. You appear much, much more intimidating."

Hence, the personalisation of digital local journalism is, according to the local journalistic discourse, based on what Örnebring (2009, 12) refers to as *re-skilling*, more than de-skilling or de-professionalisation. The local journalists try to transmit some traditional and personal elements of presence into the online sphere. The interviewees are concerned with the amount of informal and unspoken codes, practices and rules online – tacit knowledge dimensions they have to *relationally* (cf. Collins, 2010) learn by doing. Those who lack a "*digital gut feeling*" (cf. Schultz, 2007) are likely to stay away from online news, social media, debate moderation and general public communication. "*Employees shying away from social media and other digital platforms is a bigger problem than employees misusing the new possibilities*", according to editor Björn (51). This becomes a paradox, as gaining experience presupposes participation. All of the interviewees know the importance of social media. Nevertheless, *knowing that* is something quite different from *knowing how* (Ryle, 1963). *Knowing how* is – for the interviewees – learned through the repetition and internalisation of a practice which is under development. The local journalists are on their way from being online novices to reaching some level of online expertise.

Some respondents describe the interpretation and internalisation of adequate online behaviour as extremely demanding – they underline the '*on*' in online. This said, the discourse around being a well-adjusted local journalist does not promote the digital avant-garde journalist. Rather, the interviewees underline the importance of knowing which levels and rhythms are appropriate for their public. Hans (44) explains that the newsroom does not use Snapchat unless the majority of the public do. It is a matter of connecting to a virtual local community as well as the real one. How does the newsroom, then, know the digital level of their hometown? Looking at different parts of the interviews, the following answer appeared: By noticing what does and does not work on their website. By noticing what people talk about on social media, as well as at parties and meetings.

By noticing which channels the audience uses to address the newsroom and journalists. By talking to friends and families, sources and tippers, and by being aware of general trends and developments. Both local life and journalistic technological developments constitute *the distal point*, the background, while digital strategy is the focus, *the focal point* (cf. Polanyi, 1966). In everyday work, the journalists see the sum, not the parts. Additionally, the discourse seems to contain tacit knowledge about *closeness*. Björn (51) explains:

"We have to develop constantly. At the same time, we have to provide the public with services they can relate to and understand. So, as a local media we must know how to succeed with both development and tradition, in order to stay close to the public."

Björn underscores that traffic-generating curiosa and infotainment is something the audience want, and therefore should have. In his eyes, this does not displace the more serious journalism. We see how the contemporary *logic of appropriateness* (March and Olsen, 2004) – the adjustment to the new unwritten rules – includes a certain service-mindedness. Most of the interviewees regard public power and participation as a journalistic benefit – the newsrooms do not get away with mistakes, negligence or carelessness as easily as before. The discourse contains a notion of local journalism depending on the public. Underlying here is the tacit relational perception (cf. Collins, 2010) of the audience as a proper guideline for what local journalism should be online. Yet, as Gans (1979) pointed out, journalists' sense of what the audience wants is vague and abstract. The local journalists, however, claim not to uncritically adjust to what generates online traffic. An NRK journalist states the following about curiosa and infotainment vs. seriousness and public education in online news:

"It is a 60/40- or 70/30-percent kind of thing. Clickbait journalism and critical journalism connect in this sense. If we, stubbornly, only publish what we think is important, serious and socially beneficial, well, the readers will eventually abandon us. Therefore, we have to learn ways of giving them a little bit of both." (Katrine, 42)

This is not something journalists mathematically or strategically work out during production, it is a gut-based notion, according to Katrine. Sverre (61) states that local journalists and their audience are "*on the same team*", while Mads (60) underlines the act of "*inviting the public in*". However, these things remain undiscussed in the newsroom. According to Katrine, it would be breaking a silent norm to ver-

bally embrace the conceived importance of curiosa. It is against the underlying and often unspoken rules and repertoires of action; the newsroom *praxis* (cf. Wittgenstein, 1969). Still, the expressed notion of public-mindedness is in line with Heinonen's (2011) idea of contemporary journalism being less about demarcation and more about dialogue. Then, it becomes clear that the context-specific knowledge of "*what is going on in our community*" (Inger, 28) is important. What your friend is busy doing is as important as what the mayor is busy doing.

Then, who do the journalists regard as their online audience, geographically speaking? They seem to think in terms of levels that do not exist when producing content for local newspapers, radio or TV. Tools can influence practice in subtle ways (cf. Boczkowski, 2009; Domingo, 2008; Heinonen, 2011). Online, there is an always-present chance of reaching out regionally, nationally or globally. Consequently, the discourse around online audiences becomes quantified and blurry. For some journalists, even confusing:

"*It is difficult to know where to put your focus and energy. We disagree on whether our expertise should be hyperlocal or more general. Moreover, which segments of the public should we aim most heavily for? The young ones? The very young ones? The old and loyal ones?*" (Eivind, 47)

The interviewee craves for concrete, articulated knowledge about how to prioritise. The newsroom's *journalistic gut feeling* is not sufficiently developed at present. Another challenge is that clickbait journalism – according to some of the interviewees – is viewed as the enemy of decent local journalism. Finn (30) explains:

"*The ratings are unimportant. I am comfortable writing the least read online news, as long as I know someone is reading it. When writing about community politics, you will never be a winner, speaking in terms of online traffic. The point is that readers should have the possibility to read such stories, ratings unconsidered.*" (Finn, 30)

Finn tells me that he thinks this way because he is more concerned with his *community* than with *journalism* per se. "*The local citizens are the most important part of local journalism*", he states. According to Finn and other interviewees, expressing such thoughts is considered somewhat reactionary within the newsroom – where going viral is the spoken ideal. Again, we see an example of something left silent because it conflicts with newsroom *praxis*.

While Finn makes a tacit typification of the audience as co-inhabitants in need of local journalism (cf. Gans, 1979; Sumpter, 2000), the more digitally oriented journalists see the audience in a more quantified and general way. They also see the audience as more powerful: "*If we do not give the people what they want, they will forget us very quickly. That is how it works nowadays*", according to Hans (44). Through the quotes from Finn and Hans, we see a discrepancy in the individual *journalistic gut feeling* (cf. Schultz, 2007) of what the audience is, needs and wants – or, in line with Collins (2010), two different kinds of relational knowledge. Relational knowledge is also essential in the next section, which deals with the everyday production of news.

The New Practice: Writing for different levels and platforms

According to the interviewees, local journalists produce more and work faster than before. Consequently, professional discussions and occupational aloud-thinking decreases (cf. Lamark and Morlandstø, 2014). Both journalists and editors describe the present as a time of feeling one's way towards what online news should be. They seek knowledge that might secure journalistic boundaries, economy and social responsibility. It is a question of sticking to the rules of *praxis* (cf. Wittgenstein, 1953), both in terms of traditional norms and new demands. Furthermore, the *logic of appropriateness* requires the competence of juggling traditional news criteria with new and shifting norms of presentation. As Hermida (2011) notes, the development is not merely technology-driven, but a complex interaction between professional culture, and public and journalists' views on the Internet and technology.

Furthermore, the interviewees describe the use of a local journalistic gut feeling (cf. Schultz, 2007) when moving towards appropriate online content. In sum, this is news "*affecting the hearts, wallets or everyday world of the public*" (Katrine). It is important to find news that can transform into the "talk of the town" – what everyone discusses during lunch. This, again, relies on *relational knowledge*. When talking to the interviewees, the local context arose as both a precondition and a challenge. In Tønsberg, the public were concerned with infrastructure politics, while the conservation of the New Norwegian dialect was a hot potato in Førde. The journalists struggled to find intersections where such material could work in the local context and, hopefully, go viral. Again, the gut feeling is at play, balancing a myriad of more or less considered elements, *focal terms* (cf. Polanyi, 1962), tied to the specific cases.

'The Brown Cheese Case', became a viral story in 2014, mainly due to social media. One of the newsrooms wrote a story about a kindergarten forbidding the traditional Norwegian cheese at the children's lunch due to the amount of sugar it contained. The local story turned into a huge national debate concerning personal health, bureaucracy, meal traditions, kindergarten policies, national health policies and parents' freedom of choice. One of the journalist remarks:

"It practically became the story of the year! In my eyes, the way the online story was presented by the front editor was very tabloid. (…) I had NEVER predicted such a trivial matter to go viral. But, I seldom predict those sorts of things." (Mads, 60)

Hence, prediction is difficult. Feeling one's way also implies the risk of failing. Another newsroom put both economic and human resources into a large graphics project. However, the newsroom suffered from a relational knowledge shortage. The local audience were uninterested in graphical illustrations of news stories. Seemingly, the new priority was more in line with explicit and general knowledge about digital journalism than with the tacit lifeworld knowledge about the local audience.

When reaching out for audience responses (online traffic), the interviewees explain that they adopt an audience perspective to generate know-how on writing a good clickbait story. In the research interviews, they often referred to personal reading habits as well. Hence, they use both tacit lifeworld knowledge and social imagination based on personal media use when writing for digital platforms. An NRK journalist tries to explain how to make a good online headline:

"Oh my God! That is SO difficult to explain – may I gaze at my Facebook to comment? I am only using myself here, but I guess I am quite normal: not so highly educated (…). Well, "Investigating gaps in the search for Maddie" is quite poor. However, this one is good: "Declined Dancing with the Stars for something completely different". It generates curiosity. You just know it spot on when the headline works!" (Katrine, 42)

We see how Katrine relates to the public ("normal", average education) and follows her own notions to determine what a good clickbait headline is. That said, the journalists generally claim to deplore the extent of too "easy-going" journalism online, craving news that is more substantial. They describe making local journalism as an act of balancing – between different levels (local/regional/national), tabloid and solid, entertain-

ment and seriousness. They are trying to find a way of doing what Tuchman (1973) calls *"routinizing the unexpected"*. Sverre (61) humorously describes the staff as *"clickbait whores"*, but underlines the fine balance:

"(…) at all times. Our position in the local community is super important, so online traffic is essential – much more than payment through online subscriptions. The number of readers means everything!"

Sverre further explains that online news is defined as the number one priority. This goes for all the newsrooms. Still, the discourse is heavily tied to traditional platforms. Jens (35) explains:

"We discuss the front-page headline every single day. We relate to the newspaper frequency at all times, and believe there can only be one main story per day – one story that ought to carry the rest of the product."

The quote points towards the fact that the newsroom walls are still full of traditional journalistic gut feelings (cf. Schultz, 2007). This is in line with what Witschge and Nygren (2009) found in their research on Swedish and English journalists. Print journalists tend to think in old styles and terms to a greater extent than TV and radio journalists. Nevertheless, clinging completely to traditional ways of doing local journalism is neither accepted nor really discussed, according to the interviewees. Still, some journalists have strong feelings and arguments for the traditional platforms. Olav (46) says he is:

"…emotionally stuck in the old days with the print. It worries me that the things I write about – local politics and such – may appear as boring to read online."

This quote is in line with what different scholars describe as journalists' professional narrative of decline (Davies, 2008; Örnebring, 2009). As shown, new norms and rules of conduct regulate what is socially accepted as relevant knowledge, statements and strategies in both local journalistic interaction and writing. Molander (1996) underscores how tacit dimensions of knowledge are tied to social structures and status. Furthermore, he notes that the articulation of certain forms of tacit knowledge is not arranged for. Examples of this are also given in the next section, which scrutinises elements of the new professional role.

The New Professional Role: Coping with transparency and new ideals

According to the interviewees, social media use requires knowledge about new unwritten rules and

codes of conduct – adequate online behaviour is a question of "*cracking the code*", "*balancing*", "*juggling*", "*coping with changes*", "*feeling one's way*", "*having a gut feeling for what works digitally*", "*keeping a flexible attitude*" or being "*in line with the public*" – just some of the challenges the journalists mention when talking about being online. Praxis – the unwritten rules of conduct – changes in several ways, but "*balancing*" and "*juggling*" have never been subjects in journalism courses. It is *know-how* more than *know-that* (cf. Kennedy, 1987), based on practice as well as lifeworld knowledge about the local.

Ragnar (47) recounts a time when he posted a picture on Facebook that showed him with a bottle of wine. His comment underneath the photo contained a humorous, yet tough, comment about a current local problem involving farmers speeding with tractors. He narrates:

> "*After five minutes I removed the post. It was relatively innocent, but I want people to regard me as a serious person; it is important for the job. I wish people were a little less… well, I have quite a few truck drivers as Facebook friends, and they can be ironic, careless and out-of-control as much as they want. I sometimes wish I had a job like theirs – where I could ignore what local people may think about me.*"

The journalist is indirectly expressing that the local journalistic *praxis* (cf. Wittgenstein, 1969) puts a strain on him. Ragnar, as well as the other interviewees, underlines a conscious balance between personal and professional roles. This generates a consciousness about conduct and self-presentation online; little is casual or spontaneous. An editor explains: "*It is all about staging yourself! I am kind of a fake persona online. (…) I am mainly cynical and calculating when using social media*" (Björn, 51).

As shown earlier, personalisation has become an important strategy for many of the local journalists. Personal elements on social media might spice up the professional presentation. These journalists underline the importance of presence and visibility. However, the rules and ethics of this practice are few. There seems to be a silent, yet diverse, understanding of what is socially acceptable or not online; delivering semi-rude and half-drunk comments about local farmers is clearly over the top. This understanding relies on *relational tacit knowledge* (cf. Collins, 2010). The tacit normativity of both the local and 'global' must be considered on social media. The audience might be "*the average reader, the viral community, my grandmother, my editor, old friends or politicians that follow me – and that is challen-

ging*" (Finn, 30). The solution is often to keep things harmless:

> "*Letting people know which films and books I enjoy, is not something affecting my professional role. I also share music, funny videos and aphorisms…those sorts of things. I try to keep it positive and optimistic. It is nice to let people know that we are more than stiff and boring journalists. That we are like them.*" (Katrine, 42)

Katrine is trying to keep shared posts easygoing and positive, both on the newsroom's page and her own, knowing that no controversies will arise from that. Professionally, she tries to be "*the same person as in my spare time*". Again, we see how relational knowledge about face-to-face interactions is transmitted to online interactions. Oltedal (2012) underscores how the new media landscape, with social media and increased informational access, tests existing professional journalistic ideals. My research confirms this, as the *personal transparency* (Hedman, 2015, 8) – revelation of personal information – is a question of balancing, staging, trying and failing. The interviewees all consider themselves to be careful. Yet, the rules that nobody tells you can be hard to handle, and are often learned by crossing that fine line of appropriateness – as illustrated with the tractor-and-wine example. This example also underlines how journalists are forced to take (possible) responses from the *local* culture into consideration. In the tractor case, local farmers had been the subject and source of debate for quite some time.

The new local journalistic role is a complex matter. The journalists relate to a range of public, editorial, ethical, technological and professional demands. The digital shift comes with new requirements regarding where to work, when to work, how to work, and what and whom to be occupied with. The interviewees say they are concerned with several ways of coping with the new situation, and with finding their place in the new landscape. Eva describes it as a question of coping. Throughout the interview she mentions coping with the amount of changes, coping with tempo and productivity demands, coping with insecurity and coping with new forms of interaction. The interviewees are also concerned with the balance between neutrality and transparency – the latter mainly considered beneficial. According to several of the local journalists, all of these aspects are often complained about, yet seldom discussed within the newsroom. A typical response *after* the research interviews was:

"I appreciated having some time to talk about my professional role and everyday tasks. We seldom do so around here. There is really no time for it." (Knut, 35)

Two thirds of the interviewees claim that they experience an absence of professional reflection, which makes their professional role feel more blurred. Again, we see the unspoken part of *praxis* (cf. Wittgenstein, 1953). The quote from Knut is an invitation for more of what Schön (1987, 26) calls *reflection-on-action.* This kind of reflection relies on *reflection-in-action.* Schön's point is that dialoguing with situations might evoke answers. The brown cheese journalists were, for instance, uncertain about the strength of their stories. Nevertheless, after reflection, something in the situation told them to pursue the matter in a range of directions. Reflection on such situations – where discretion is the journalists' main guideline – might provide local journalists with sundry answers to what they should and should not be in the future.

Another challenge tied to the lack of reflection is the existing discrepancy between digitally and traditionally oriented journalists. This blurs the concept of digital competence even more. As mentioned, throughout the research interviews, all the interviewees underlined the current focus on digital competence. Björn, for instance, states that: *"…it is the journalists with a digital attitude who will survive in the future. You do not need research to determine that"*. Web journalist Siri (27) remarks that the term is somewhat a buzzword, *"still important, yet hard to explain. It is just something you know when working here"*. Digital competence hence rose from the discourse as both a future presupposition and a contemporary insurance for keeping the job in a time of downsizing, and was furthermore considered as a trait that is unevenly distributed. Johanne (31) has several thoughts on the discrepancy between the traditional and digital journalists. She is worried that the traditional journalists do not understand the extent of the changes, and remarks:

"Among other things, online journalists relate to something invisible for those working mainly with printed news: ratings. Statistics are very important to us. Every story measures up against every other story. It is easy to determine whether we have done a good job or not."

Johanne makes a demarcation: digital journalists understand something traditionalists do not – they take on a different journalistic role. The digitally oriented, for example, seem to have relational knowledge about what online traffic ratings

imply. Johanne also underscores the tempo of web journalists: *"They have the ability to make a U-turn ten times a day"*. Many of the interviewees mention flexibility, effective time management and faster production as crucial parts of the new demands. Yet, it is hard to put into words how they have adopted or acquired these traits and skills. *"You just have to adjust, there is really no time to think"*, according to Mads (60). As we see, both the newsrooms' *logic of appropriateness* and the tacit relational knowledge of keeping pace with the surroundings plays a part here. The traditionalists, on the other hand, silently and implicitly understand themselves as knights of social responsibility. To maintain the time to do so, they *"cling to the printed newspaper"*, as Olav (46) put it. We saw earlier how Finn refuses to be part of the "clickbait race" when writing online news. Olav sighs:

"I know that I ought to write more cool and catchy headlines, but I am not that interested in such skills. It is not me, if you understand."

As we see, the digital competence Olav rejects and Björn and Siri emphasise – a knowledge and an attitude that is open to clickbait journalism – is relational tacit knowledge, more than explicit and testable technological knowledge. This points towards different horizons of unarticulated knowledge. At the moment, most of the journalists claim to be *"fumbling"* – a word frequently used – between the old and the new. Different kinds of knowledge play out in different situations, much in line with Law and Mol's (2006) emphasis on societal complexity. Alternatively, to paraphrase Mol (2002), local journalism is more than one thing, but less than many. Social responsibility is not the only concern of journalists. As Örnebring (2009), with reference to Evetts (2006), points out, everyday journalistic professionalism might be negotiable and flexible.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS ON TACIT KNOWLEDGE IN CONTEMPORARY LOCAL JOURNALISM

The three analysis sections have pointed at ways in which tacit knowledge plays a role in the understanding and execution of contemporary local journalism. The first section showed how tacit knowledge related to audience conceptions, and how communication is a central part of what is referred to as digital competence. This knowledge is mainly relational lifeworld knowledge. It comes with uncertainty, as traditional and new conceptions collide, and as the local journalists spend less time out in the community. Being present without being present does not come without challenges.

The second section highlighted tacit knowledge challenges in the production of online news – especially regarding the balance between local/viral, between public responsibility/service, and between traditional/digital. The digital competence related to this is *praxis*-bound, and requires a sense of the new *logic of appropriateness* (cf. March and Olsen, 2004), as well as the *journalistic gut feeling* (cf. Schultz, 2007).

The third section dealt with contemporary local journalistic role conceptions. Here, digital competence involves the tacit knowledge of self-evaluation, of dealing with increased transparency and using old concepts of discretion in new situations. As shown, it is also a question of positioning oneself in the intersection between traditional ideals and digital affordances. The local journalistic discourse also disclosed that both individual and collective professional reflection are required in these matters.

In sum, "*digital competence*" arises from the discourse as a question of adequate behaviour and action more than technological *know that* knowledge (cf. Benner, 1984). Legitimate conduct within the profession includes a new sense of tempo, a looser attachment to what is purely local, a new sense of flexibility and a new sense of public approach, as well as the understanding of a more transparent journalistic role. The dimensions outlined reflect the short period of online journalism, and present local journalists as being on their way from web novices to experts (cf. Dreyfus and Dreyfus, 1986). This happens through interactional and relational transmission of knowledge. The importance of practical transmission and learning of digital journalism points to the importance of practical training when educating digital journalists.

This article is an invitation for further research on knowledge dimensions in (local) journalism. The aim has not been to fully scrutinise the tacit dimensions of local journalism, but to point towards important aspects found in the journalistic discourse. Further research, e.g. through ethnographic studies, is needed to map this kind of knowledge more fully. Additionally, the social aspects of digital competence in local journalism require further research, as local journalists' relation to their communities is an essential feature of local journalism – and is seemingly in decline. A looser attachment to localness might harm both the local communities and the professionalism of local media: if the democratic, social and cultural functions of local media are weakened, the professional foundation of local journalism becomes rocky as well.

Tacit knowledge in local journalism has a social and interactional essence, and is a mix of different considerations. When we talk about local journalism, we are talking about digitalisation, geography, practical know-how and professional values – which configure a complex body of tacit knowledge. Explicating this knowledge might remedy some of the uncertainty in new professional, social situations (cf. Collins, 2010). Tacit knowledge has a value of its own, and should not be ignored.

NOTES

[1] NRK is divided into five regions, with 48 local or district offices. Of the 3500 employees, 1000 are working in the district division (https://www.nrk.no/informasjon/slik-er-nrk-organisert-1.6511619).

[2] The newsrooms are Tønsbergs Blad and NRK Vestfold in Tønsberg, and Firda and NRK Sogn og Fjordane in Førde. Tønsberg is a mid-sized city (42,276 inhabitants) in Norway. Førde is a smaller rural town (12,900 inhabitants), but is also the centre of several neighbouring small communities. Tønsbergs Blad has a circulation of 19,033, while Firda's is 10,014.

[3] The interview guide was divided into four thematic sections, entitled 1) "Me – my journalistic life story and everyday work", 2) "On digitalisation and technology", 3) "The role of the local journalist", and 4) "Local newsroom culture".

[4] The main topics roughly correspond to the three dimensions in the analysis.

[5] Examples of sub-topics include: "views on public power", "pictured audience", "grief over journalistic past", "what is quality", and "relation to social media".

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Abstract | Resumé | Résumo

What we talk about when we talk about local journalism:
Tacit knowledge during the digital shift

Ce dont on parle quand on parle de journalisme local :
la connaissance tacite au tournant du numérique

É que se fala quando se fala do jornalismo local:
o conhecimento tácito em um contexto de digitalização

En. Norwegian local journalism has become more digitally oriented after a period of lagging behind both national and regional media in the digitalisation process. The shift implies both an increased focus on online newspapers and social media, as well as greater communication with the public. Questions concerning the de-professionalisation of journalism – understood as decreased journalistic autonomy and sense of social responsibility – are under discussion both nationally and internationally. Convergence blurs many old distinctions. New skills, ways of thinking and modes of working are emerging, and the practice of traditional place-bound journalism is changing in many ways. Hence, new practices require new knowledge and tacit knowledge has always been a crucial part of the journalistic knowledge base. In local journalism, the tacit, indwelled knowledge about the community becomes a specific dimension. This article highlights and analyses the dimensions of tacit knowledge elicited from local journalistic discourse. Data are generated through in-depth interviews with 16 local journalism actors from four different Norwegian newsrooms on two locations – including local press and district offices of the Norwegian broadcasting company. The analysis scrutinises audience conceptions and interactions, daily production and local journalistic role conceptions. It shows that what in workday practice is referred to as "digital competence" is to a great extent relational, tacit knowledge. The analysis also points towards new tacit knowledge emerging to deal with increased transparency, digital presence, and role positioning in the intersection between traditional ideals and new demands. Legitimate conduct within the profession includes a new sense of tempo, a looser attachment to what is purely local, a new sense of flexibility and a new sense of public approach, as well as the understanding of a more transparent journalistic role. Communication is a central part of what journalists refer to as digital competence. The analysis draws on tacit knowledge theories and professional theories.

  Keywords: Local journalism, tacit knowledge, digital competence, Facebook, digital journalism

Fr. Le journalisme local en Norvège s'est tourné récemment davantage vers le numérique après une période de retard par rapport aux médias nationaux et régionaux dans la marche vers la digitalisation. Ce changement implique à la fois une concentration accrue sur la partie "en ligne" des médias et les réseaux sociaux, ainsi qu'une plus grande communication avec le public. Des questions concernant la déprofessionnalisation du journalisme –entendue comme une perte d'autonomie journalistique et un sens des responsabilités sociales– sont en cours de discussion aux niveaux national et international. La convergence efface de nombreuses distinctions anciennes. De nouvelles compétences, modes de penser et modes de travail font leur apparition et la pratique du journalisme territorial traditionnel évolue de nombreuses manières. Par conséquent, les nouvelles pratiques nécessitent de nouvelles connaissances et les connaissances tacites ont toujours été une part cruciale de la base de connaissances des journalistes. Dans le journalisme local, la connaissance tacite et de la communauté devient une dimension spécifique. Cet article met en évidence et analyse les dimensions de la connaissance tacite issues du discours journalistique local. Les données sont générées par le biais d'entretiens approfondis avec 16 acteurs du journalisme local provenant de quatre salles de rédaction nor-

végiennes différentes sur deux sites différents - y compris les bureaux locaux de la société de radiodiffusion norvégienne. L'analyse examine les conceptions et les interactions avec le public, la production quotidienne et les conceptions du rôle journalistique local. Elle montre que ce que l'on appelle la « compétence numérique » dans la pratique quotidienne est en grande partie une connaissance relationnelle, tacite. L'analyse met également en évidence de nouvelles connaissances tacites en train de naître pour faire face à une transparence accrue, une présence numérique et un positionnement des rôles à l'intersection des idéaux traditionnels et des nouvelles demandes. Une conduite légitime au sein de la profession comprend un nouveau sens du tempo, un attachement plus modéré à ce qui est purement local, un nouveau sens de la flexibilité et un nouveau sens de l'approche publique, ainsi que la compréhension d'un rôle journalistique plus transparent. La communication est un élément central de ce que les journalistes appellent la compétence numérique. L'analyse s'appuie sur des théories du savoir tacites et des théories professionnelles.

Mots-clés : Journalisme local, connaissance tacite, compétence digitale, Facebook, journalisme digital

Pt. Foi apenas recentemente que o jornalismo local na Noruega adotou o formato digital, com atraso em relação à mídia nacional e regional. Essa mudança implicou, por um lado, em um aumento da concentração no setor da mídia "on-line" e nas redes sociais, bem como uma maior comunicação com o público. Questões ligadas à desprofissionalização do jornalismo – entendida como uma perda da autonomia jornalística e de um sentido de responsabilidade social – estão atualmente em discussão nos níveis nacional e internacional. A convergência apaga várias das antigas distinções. Novas competências, formas de pensar e modos de trabalho fazem parte desse processo e a prática do jornalismo territorial tradicional tem evoluído de várias formas. Como consequência, essas novas práticas requerem novos conhecimentos e os conhecimentos tácitos sempre foram uma parte crucial da base de conhecimento dos jornalistas. No jornalismo local, o conhecimento tácito e o conhecimento partilhado pela comunidade de praticantes adquirem uma dimensão específica. Nesse sentido, este artigo apresenta e analisa as dimensões do conhecimento tácito originárias do discurso jornalístico local. Os dados são gerados por meio de entrevistas em profundidade conduzidas com 16 atores do jornalismo local provenientes de quatro redações norueguesas de duas localidades distintas – incluindo os escritórios locais da sociedade de radiodifusão norueguesa. A análise examina as concepções e as interações com o público, a produção cotidiana da informação e as concepções sobre o papel do jornalismo local. Ela mostra que o que chamamos de "competência digital" em uma prática cotidiana é, em grande parte, um conhecimento relacional, tácito. A análise também evidencia novos conhecimentos tácitos que emergem para dar conta do crescimento da transparência. É o caso da presença digital e de um posicionamento de papeis situados na interseção dos ideais tradicionais do jornalismo e de novas demandas. Uma prática legítima no âmbito da profissão inclui um novo sentido de tempo, um vínculo mais moderado com o que é meramente local, um novo sentido de flexibilidade e um novo sentido de abordagem pública, bem como a compreensão de um papel jornalísticos mais transparente. A comunicação é um elemento central do que os jornalistas chamam de competência digital. A análise se ampara em teorias sobre os saberes tácitos e as teorias sobre a profissão.

Palavras-chave: Jornalismo local, conhecimento tácito, conhecimento digital, Facebook, jornalismo digital