Book Section:

Digital Media and the Diversification of Professionalism: A US-German Comparison of Journalism Cultures

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Introduction

It is common sense in journalism studies that the most significant changes in news making today are connected to digital technologies. There is some disagreement, however, regarding how much journalism changes and stays the same. Most of the overtly universal claims about the state of journalism are based on research in the US. Through a controlled comparison of a particular journalistic setting in the US and Germany, this chapter finds different amalgamations of digital culture and professional journalism. It tells two interwoven stories, one that pluralizes common "future of journalism" scenarios, another about journalism in Germany and the US.

Extensive qualitative field research at two state house press corps, one in Albany, New York, the other in Munich, Bavaria, has demonstrated that, though both groups of reporters have access to and use many of the same digital technologies, they had a much more profound impact on the practice and self-conception of journalists in the US case. The following two vignettes will illustrate this contrast:

A turning point in the professional lives of Albany reporters was when blogs became fixtures in state political news in 2006. Elizabeth Benjamin was at the center of this transition. When she changed positions from *New York Daily News* to news anchor and blogger for the Time Warner news channel YNN in 2010 she was portrayed by *Columbia Journalism Review*. The article was set up on the premise that Benjamin challenged the longstanding dominance of Fred Dicker (state editor of the *New York Post* at the time) within the state political news ecosystem.[1] One important

theme of the story is the conflict between traditional journalism and blogging. Before joining the *Daily News,* Benjamin had worked for the daily newspaper *Albany Times Union* (TU) where she launched a political blog in late 2005.

The portrait described the "modern local political blog" as "devotedly insider-ish, constantly updated, overseen by a hard-working obsessive, and very well-sourced."[2] A supervisor of hers at the TU, Bob Port, argued that Benjamin fits this profile:

> She amassed such a huge audience in such a short time—there were about 10,000 uniques on the web reading her blog—it dwarfed anything else we were doing," he says. It was the result of hard work. "She would feed stuff into it day and night. The rest of us were at home, drinking coffee, trying to wake up, and Liz would be on her computer filing news.

Although Benjamin earned her stripes as a "frizzy-haired muckraker" in the state house press, the article paints a distinctive picture of the modern journalist: not someone who spends weeks on a story, going through government records and talking to a multitude of sources on- and off-the-record but who is able, first and foremost, to process and move a tremendous volume of information in a short amount of time and who essentially never stops doing it.

Benjamin is, no doubt, an exceptional case. However, political reporting markedly gravitated toward that new model of political reporting during the two and a half years of my ethnography at the New York State Capitol.

Blogs, hence also bloggers, are irrelevant in the Bavarian political news ecosystem. During my field research only one reporter had a blog but said that "it's hardly maintained because blogs don't go so well here." Shortly after I left the field in late July of 2012, the state house crew of the public broadcast company Bayerischer

Rundfunk (BR) launched the video blog "Politik aus Bayern," which was born out of an organizational cross-media strategy.

In the inaugural post on December 10, 2012 the BR bureau introduces itself and outlines the purpose of this new undertaking.[3] In an initial standup, the bureau chief of the radio team, Nikolaus Neumaier, says: "we tell you how grand politics is made in the Bavarian Landtag—behind us you see the assembly room—and we tell you smaller stories based on glimpses behind the scenes." Sitting in the editing room, TV reporter Sebastian Kraft turns to the camera and adds understatedly:

> We will also report for you about the Bavarian state cabinet; we are close to what's happening and there are always stories, which don't have that great of a news value but which we want to present to you on the blog because they are exciting to follow. For example: which minister has particular favor with the 'father of the state' or who is annoyed by the latest infamous change of course of the Minister-President.

BR radio reporter Eva Lell takes over and says: "politics not only happens in the assembly room but also on the internet. Politicians twitter, they post comments on Facebook and we look closely at this and are happy to report about it on the internet from now on."

The BR blog provides short but well-produced pieces. Most videos on political blogs in Albany are shaky, smartphone recordings made by newspaper reporters. But even blogs maintained by TV news bureaus contain only few produced video pieces relative to all the other content they provide, including many short news articles, original documents, news aggregation and excerpts of radio interviews, etc.

Most importantly, blogs have different mandates. Blogs in Albany are about breaking news and providing content immediately as political events unfold. "Politik

aus Bayern" supplements rather than drives state political news coverage. This also manifests itself in the quantity of output, which is rarely less than ten items per day and blog in Albany and typically one but sometimes none per day for the BR blog.

Even though a video blog is different from a typical political blog, the way German reporters interacted with this medium compared to their Albany counterparts is still telling for the larger issues of interest in this book.

Examining Technology-induced Change and Stability in Journalism

What I witnessed in Albany was an emergent hybridity of digital culture and journalistic professionalism. One of the most decisive trends in US journalism today is the advancement of an ethic of transparency through digital media (Bélair-Gagnon 2013; Hellmueller, Vos, and Poepsel 2013; Karlsson 2010; Lewis and Usher 2013; Revers 2014a). Despite of the fact that transparency as a journalistic value is not new (neither is speed) but has been a ongoing current in the professionalization of journalism,[4] whilst closely observing the hectic daily routine of reporters in Albany I could not shake the sense that there is something fundamentally novel going on. This sense intensified during the German field research, which almost seemed like a peek into the past in comparison.

This raises the following questions: What changes and stays the same when journalism is hit by the "digital revolution"? What explains the different implications of digital media in these two cases and what does this suggest about journalism in the United States and Germany? And what "does" technology in the process of transformation?

Starting with the last, more theoretical question, constructivist new media scholars argue that technology itself only contributes possibilities of use (affordances)

to its adoption, emphasizing the contingent and negotiated character of technology-induced innovation within news organizations (Boczkowski 2004; Domingo 2008; Schmitz Weiss and Domingo 2010). This study considers the significance of digital media while trying to avoid conflating voluntarism and idealism, determinism and materialism, which haunts so many studies of the materiality of technologies (Leonardi and Barley 2008): accounting for human agency does not mean ignoring material constraints and facilitations of action; accounting for efficacies external to human agents does not mean disregarding ideal dimensions of social action.

In this chapter, digital media are envisioned as cultural environments, "encouraging certain types of interaction while discouraging others." (Meyrowitz 2009:520) Emphasizing *encouragement*—as "rendering desirable"—rather than mere *affordance*—as "making possible"—avoids tilting on one side of the determinism/voluntarism continuum. McDonnell's (2010) distinction between affordances and qualities of objects is helpful here, though he had more material qualities in mind. The former only manifest themselves through interaction with the object while the latter are inherent and antecedent to it.

By the time a journalist adopts a certain piece of technology, it already constitutes a bundle of materiality, designers' inscriptions and previous users' conventions of engagement (Orlikowski 2000). In practice, qualities of technologies are material/algorithmic as well as cultural. Not even when it is first introduced is a technology free from cultural meaning: they meet cultural demands; they may be similar to other technologies already ascribed with meaning; in the case of new digital technologies, they arise from and are already embedded in digital culture.

Thus, when journalists adopted Twitter it already bore "cultural baggage," including hierarchized forms of engagements and communicative roles, which limit

and guide possible forms of practice. Followers on Twitter are important in this respect because they are not just tangible audiences for journalists but provide socialization into the social network by raising expectations (Marwick and boyd 2011). Through these expectations, journalists become aware of possible and desirable practices and self-presentations on Twitter.

Furthermore, a technology is not isolated but "situated within a number of nested and overlapping social systems" (Orlikowski 2000:411). Thus, not only digital cultural values flow into the journalistic engagement with new technologies (Deuze 2006) but also the historical backdrop of crisis of legacy news media. Domingo (2008) theorized the myth of interactivity as an interaction between these two aspects.

Aside from those complex cultural efficacies of digital media, they encounter rather resilient notions of journalistic professionalism, which draw from entrenched symbols and sacred discourses of journalism. In practice, professionalism manifests itself in journalists' self-conceptions and expressions, including boundary work (Gieryn 1983; Lamont 1992) to protect the professional jurisdiction against competing occupations (Abbott 1988) as well as deviant insiders (Bishop 1999). In the following analysis this interrelation between structure and practice will be conceived as a cultural performance (Alexander 2004), in which collective representations of professionalism provide the symbolic strength and substantive basis for scripts to act professionally in concrete situations.

Media scholars agree that journalism is selectively receptive to new technological engagements, that is, only insofar as they confirm and help further established occupational goals and values (Domingo 2008; Papacharissi and de Fatima Oliveira 2012; Robinson 2011). Thus, the result is always more complex than what is simplistically understood as "technological change." Furthermore,

contemporary journalism is hardly at an endpoint but still transforming. This is why the "normalization of technologies" thesis (e.g. Lasorsa, Lewis, and Holton 2012; Quandt 2008; Ryfe 2012; Singer 2005) seems hasty by suggesting that journalism adopts new media merely in ways that reinforce and perpetuate traditional occupational norms.[5]

In any case, the result of digital media adoption is a hybridity of old and new forms of journalism, which may or may not have a profound impact on professionalism. Even thought the internet played a big role in their professional lives, understanding the Bavarian state house press in categories of traditional journalism was still reasonably comprehensive during my research. The Albany state house, on the other hand, constituted a laboratory of a "hybrid media system" (Chadwick 2013) where newer and older media practices intersect in a context in which media and politics interpenetrate. Though the Albany press corps was constituted by reporters from legacy media outlets, their practices could not be understood through categories of traditional journalism alone.

Performances of journalistic professionalism were examined on different levels: when reporters dealt with sources; when interviewed by me; in meta-discourse, i.e. when journalists talked about journalism in situ as well as in public venues;[6] at ritual moments of occupational consecration. This study is based on field research on the Legislative Correspondents Association (LCA) in Albany and the Landtagspresse (LP) in Munich, conducted between April of 2009 and July of 2012. It involved participant observation and 72 situated interviews, which included journalists from 31 different news organizations and ten spokespeople from different branches of government and legislature. The research also involved a content analysis of tweets

and an extensive analysis of journalism award statements and obituaries of journalists in Germany and the US, which will only play a minor role in this chapter.

Beyond shedding further light on technological transformation of journalism, the conditions of change and stasis illuminate properties of professional cultures themselves. Comparative media research, inspired by Hallin and Mancini (2004), emphasizes institutional arrangements to explain cross-national variation while ignoring or underspecifying media/journalism *cultures*, partly for theoretical reasons (a lack of a theory of culture), partly for methodological reasons, that is, measuring culture content-analytically (e.g. Curran et al. 2009; Esser and Umbricht 2013; Strombäck and Dimitrova 2006) or by way of survey research (e.g. Hanitzsch et al. 2011; Patterson and Donsbach 1996; Weaver and Willnat 2012). While these studies have deepened our understanding of how news media operate in different national contexts, there is more to be explored and explained in terms of how collective imaginaries of journalists guide these operations.

Germany: Hesitant and Controlled Adoption of Digital Media

Reporters' motivations to start using Twitter were markedly different in Bavaria compared to their New York counterparts, for whom I am hesitant to designate the term "use" rather than *engage with* Twitter. As a rare instance of meta-discourse, journalists of the Landtagspresse (LP) talked about their views on Twitter and Facebook in an entry on the Politik aus Bayern blog, titled "The Landtagspresse twitters and posts" (using the German translation of twitter, *zwitschern*, in the original).[7] Social media are described as "good and quick sources of information," by Henry Stern from the daily *Main-Post*, who adds that "you can be a bit more informal than in other media, perhaps." Frank Müller (*Süddeutsche Zeitung*), a Twitter-pioneer and by far the most active LP tweeter, reports: "We have had good experiences with

representatives presenting themselves very authentically." His competitor-colleague, Christian Deutschländer from *Münchner Merkur*, echoes this notion and elaborates: "I'm on there regularly because I'm aware that politicians post a lot, they like it and also like to post emotionally. And that is great for us journalists when something gets to us that is not filtered by some spokesperson."

Perhaps they both had a story in mind which Müller published more than a year earlier in *Süddeutsche Zeitung,* titled "when politicians twitter." It discussed a representative's Twitter feed, which was criticized for promulgating blonde jokes:

> Aiwanger's mishap sheds a light on how speed and content of the political debate in Bavaria changes through new media. Appearances of politicians accumulate on the leading social networks, Facebook and Twitter, and journalists and followers are also diligently involved. Spontaneous political discussions evolve, which are similar to a regulars' table: sometimes loud, sometimes thoughtful, entertaining or rough. And occasionally misogynistic as well. [8]

The story focuses not only on such social media pitfalls but also on the inauthenticity of politicians not operating their own social media identities. This is what allegedly happened in this case, in which representative Hubert Aiwanger blamed his staff for tweeting these politically incorrect jokes. The article quotes the politician saying, "if it goes on like this I will turn this crap off." When another questionable joke followed on his Twitter feed, not even two weeks later, it was again castigated by political opponents online and the Twitter account was taken down. [9]

Despite of the clumsiness of social media engagement, Bavarian politicians were forging ahead in the digital era relative to the reporters covering them. *If* LP journalists paid attention to social media at all (several reporters did not during the

research period), they solely valued them for the ability to monitor politicians'
activities. One young LP reporter, who did not have any online news production
obligation, said:

> I've got a Twitter account and a Facebook account for research purposes, just
> to be able to observe what happens, but I don't provide my own journalistic
> impulses there or use it to publish my work.

> When I asked one LP bureau chief about the most significant changes in
journalism of the last decade, he mentioned Facebook as one of the "new tools for
investigation and identifying issues." He said that he tells interns to conceive
Facebook in this way, since politicians sometimes post messages that provide insights
in what is going on at a given moment. To him, social media are useful add-ons rather
than competition.

LP reporters referred to the state of affairs regarding social media as a trial
period in conversations. They raised questions about a possible future that was
already reality for their US counterparts. One of them said:

> How to operate all these new channels? What is this new type of journalist
> like who does all these things? Does that mean – we see it with our colleagues
> from the online department who are actually expected to tweet at night!

After my field research in Munich and particularly in the context of the 2013
election, many remaining LP reporters joined Twitter (including the one I just
quoted). However, even in 2014, their twitterverse was not nearly as multimedial,
interactive and, above all, immediate as their US counterparts'.

Most newspaper reporters I talked to in Munich did not have any online news
production duties. Though LP journalists experienced an increasing workload in
previous years, this additional work was typically not digital but occurred in legacy

news outlets as responses to the greater public access to information through the internet. LP reporters perceived a weakening of gatekeeping authority as the most fundamental change of their occupational role. One LP correspondent of a national newspaper stressed how the internet has exposed journalism to greater public control and took the example of a political document he reported on. Earlier, when readers could not access this information themselves on the internet, journalists were in principle able to arbitrarily pick certain aspects and omit others according to their own preferences, he told me, whereas nowadays they would be called out by readers.

The privatization of broadcast media in 1984 was another important transformative dynamic in German journalism. One public radio journalist in the LP referred to a new information station his company added in the early 1990s in response to the new competitive situation as "a vacuum cleaner." One of his colleagues said: "This news machine is enormously voracious; it demands to be constantly fed with news, from 6 in the morning until midnight."

Responding to the question about most significant changes in their jobs, to my surprise, several LP reporters highlighted mobile phone text messaging, even though it had been present for almost two decades. They regarded text messages as significant because of how it allowed them to penetrate spatial boundaries of information, for instance, by sending and receiving text messages into/from closed session committee meetings. Similar but more powerful (spatial) dynamics can be observed in New York, with a medium that is modeled after text messaging, Twitter, with the important difference that it is public and participatory.

Upheaval and Diversification of Professionalism in the US

Related to an overall acceleration of news production, a proliferation of news channels in conjunction with reduction of news staff, LCA journalists experienced a

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steep increase of workload. All reporters in the LCA had some and most of them extensive online duties (publishing advance online stories before the final story for the print edition, blogging, tweeting, producing multimedia content, etc.). As already mentioned, blogging had been *the* game changer in their work lives.

Far from perceiving it uncritically, many LCA journalists, particularly those who were only indirectly affected by it, disapproved of blogs' emphasis on immediacy and speed: "What happened when blogging accelerated and the instant posting on your news website accelerated is … the emphasis on speed took away from judgment, took away from being able to evaluate things." Another reporter said, "you're doing blogs and you never stop to worry" before mentioning her issues with repetitive strain injury, which she attributed to "writing all day."

Even one of the most Twitter-resistant and generally digital media-critical reporter, I will call him Ned, produced volumes of news reporting for print and online that would be inconceivable for LP reporters. In the interview we did he told me that he used to write one story per day, sometimes per week if he worked on a longer project, very similar to how many newspaper reporters in the LP still operated. Nowadays, Ned's workload is on a different level: "the other day, I did four stories. … All four go on the internet. … Two will end up in print with me updating it with newer information for the print version. It's just become nonstop."

Ned constitutes a one-person bureau and is thus incredibly busy. Scheduling an interview and later shadowing appointments were true challenges for me. When we finally did the interview in May of 2010, he took his computer with him in absence of a smart phone, frequently refreshing his web browser because he was waiting for a Supreme Court ruling to be released. The interview, though it turned out to be an engaged conversation, was initially overshadowed by this distraction:

This interview is a perfect example [of how this job changed]. I can't sit here and give you 100% attention. Every four or five minutes I'm having to update because—and I shouldn't have to be doing this, it's all about feeding the web. I mean normally … I could sit and talk for an hour. But I've sort of got this fear that if I see [name versus] case come up, it's like I'm flying out of here, because I've got to quickly read a 200 page court case and get it out to the web … on a really complicated legal issue.

When I shadowed him a year later and followed him doing rounds through the Capitol, I asked him at one point who he was trying to meet. Ned responded, "just one out of 15 people," and told me his concern was not only today's but several other stories coming up, including one for the weekend edition. He added that he always had a lot going on because of being a one-person bureau. While we walked towards the Assembly, I told Ned that the more I learned about this place the more I got the sense that I can only scratch the surface. He said it was similar for him, describing his job as a "fire fighter," by which he meant that most of his reporting is "damage control" by covering only the most essential stories in the journalistic mainstream.

While it is interesting that even the most traditionalist LCA journalists—Ned being one of them—were *way* "more digital" than any LP reporter in this study, there is a striking difference between traditionalists who were pulled into the digital era and younger journalists were socialized into it. One of the latter type said: "I've always kind of been with the internet. I think it puts increasing pressure to get things up quickly, it allows less time for contemplation and digestion, which I think is probably bad." Another young reporter echoes this sense of digital nativeness, the inevitability of speed and his own lack of reference point to a different situation:

The idea to me of news happens—you write about it whenever it happens and

send it to the web, put it online—*that* to me is much more natural than: the first edition deadline is seven o' clock, the second edition is 8:30.

These young journalists were driving forces of technological change in the Albany press corps. The contrast to young reporters in the LP, who did not distinguish themselves as pressing ahead with digital media, could also not be starker. The most tech-savvy LP reporters were in their forties.

Yet, reporters in both context saw themselves under tremendous and almost unmanageable time pressures. This has long been a basic condition of journalism, which James Carey traced back in the United States to the introduction of the penny press in the early 19th century when "the value of timeliness was generalized … into the cardinal value of journalism" (1986:164).

Twitter and the Ethic of Transparency

Besides blogs, Twitter stimulated debates about journalistic professionalism in the Albany press corps during the research period. The passage of same-sex marriage (SSM) law in New York in late June of 2011 was not only a significant political moment but an iconic social media event for LCA journalists. This was not only due to the momentary national attention to their tweets but how their twitterverse suddenly turned into an instantaneous space of public discussion, contrary to its frequent depiction as just another echo chamber.

State editor of the *Albany Times Union*, Casey Seiler, titled his column after the law passed "A Twitter convert's testament." Describing himself as a late converter and initial skeptic of Twitter, he writes that his awakening occurred during the SSM debate when he realized what Twitter is or can be, both a "deeply stocked newsstand" and "a communal notebook that's open to the public."[10] Not only that, but a platform to exert accountability (to a modest extent) in that "an errant quote from a politician

or advocate is posted and then handed around to thousands of followers in little more time than it takes to be typed."

I have argued elsewhere (Revers 2014a) that LCA journalists assume a different professional role on Twitter, engaging in a performance of transparency. This performance is not limited to Twitter but has arisen from the entire digital formation of mediated communication that has developed over the previous decade, including smartphones and their video recording and app-extension capabilities, blogs and other social networks. These elements are all infused with digital cultural values of openness, interactivity and participation, which Karlsson (2010) discussed jointly as *participatory transparency*.

Besides fulfilling very similar legacy news duties as their German counterparts, blogging and tweeting LCA journalists now understand their professional role in part as providers of original and instantly shared content. Transparency also means that the journalist herself steps out of the twilight of authoritative distance into the social medial limelight, inventing a personality (or a "personal brand" in media corporate speak) that more openly shares assessments on issues as well as glimpses into her personal life.

Transparency clashed with the professional logic of control over the jurisdiction of news making (Lewis 2012). Contention in this period of transition divided the LCA into three groups: innovators who adopted Twitter and transparency wholeheartedly; traditionalists (in the minority) who rejected new forms of engagements entirely; skeptics who felt or were in fact compelled to adopt Twitter but are ideologically closer to traditionalists. One skeptic, who I expected to be one of the last to join Twitter but who was told to by his editors, said:

You have to embrace some of these things if you want to survive. ... You can

be kind of funny and sarcastic on Twitter; no one is editing you, which is kind of fun. You can definitely be more personal on Twitter and if you're *not* you gonna come off kind of buttoned-down, you know, so I think you have to [be more personal].

Traditionalists denoted the flow of unfiltered political information through blogs and Twitter as "stenography," "news candy" and "performative information." They were particularly averse to the erosion of the separation between opinion and news. As one of them said:

[The wall] is crumbling particularly because of blogging. Some bloggers have a style of being snarky or witty or funny or inserting themselves into the blog post. You automatically get some opinion, some adjectives, and a framing of the blog post.

Even though the legacy news generated by their tweeting colleagues conformed to their standards for the most part, traditionalists opposed the overall diversification of professional performances on different platforms. One of them argued: "I see a lot of times people *do* cross the line. And it's like, on the next day they are reporting on the same thing in a supposed hands-off [style in the paper] ... *that* to me is mind-boggling." Traditionalists held an essentialist view of professionalism, which suggested that deviation from conventional professional norms on one platform undermined journalism altogether. Innovators, representing about half of the LCA, believed in the value of diversification of professional performances, on the other hand.

The Culturality of Twitter

As Twitter gradually seized the State Capitol, it affected not only journalism but the whole nexus of political communication in New York State. The impact of

this digital formation manifests itself in the interaction between spatial-temporal orders of digital and non-digital (Revers 2014b). One instance which made this quite obvious occurred in early 2012. Bill Hammond of the *New York Daily News* described an education hearing he attended in his weekly column and noted how dissatisfied he was with how Assemblywoman Catherine Nolan led the debate:

> The situation was so odd that I posted a Twitter update from my seat in the hearing room: Nolan "isn't asking Walcott about the hottest topic in city schools — teacher eval," I wrote. The comment was passed along by a few of my equally curious fellow journalists. Imagine my surprise when Nolan reacted to that message about half an hour later, just as Walcott was about to wrap up his testimony.[11]

Assemblywoman Nolan reaction was to ask New York City Education Commissioner, Dennis Walcott: "the twitterverse wants me to ask you about teacher evaluation." Although expressed sarcastically, she responded to Hammond's criticism. Most significantly, Hammond was able to interfere in political deliberations that usually forbid public interference. Twitter served Hammond in this moment as a public stage to claim accountability, which penetrated a delimited political space by generating a sense of instant publicity.

Like other electronic media (Meyrowitz 1985), Twitter has space-transcending implications. This transcendence is enabled by how journalists perform on Twitter and the information flows this entails. We may frame this impact of Twitter as its "materiality." I argue that it is better understood as its *culturality* because the causal agent here is Twitter's cultural baggage, that is, engagements, speech conventions and communicative roles that have developed on it, the meanings and symbolic hierarchies attached to them, etc. The imperatives to be always-on, open and personal

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constitute such attachments that particularly resonate with journalistic professionalism. They are brought to live in performances, which stress instant sharing of insights, appreciation of journalistic accomplishment (including those by others), assessments and critique.

As another consequence, Twitter furthers a defining feature of on-site reporting, which is to not only to witness events but anticipate them before they occur (in order to then witness them) and thus taming the "anarchy of events" (Schudson 2007). The immediacy of Twitter enhances awareness and the capability of anticipating, while requiring coordinative efforts in order to avoid inconsistencies and misperceptions between different, digital and non-digital, layers of communication.

What Accounts for the Differences of Adoption?

Following Rod Benson's (2014) challenge of what he calls the "new descriptivism" (aimed at new media scholarship influenced by actor-network theory) and call for more explanation in communication research, the following will attempt to explain the observed differences. Notwithstanding the subdivision in material and cultural factors, it should be mphasized that even the most objectivized structures enter consciousness through interpretive filters, or as Reed (2008:121) put it, "through the grid of culture." Thus, economic factors may constitute "real" organizational constraints for reporters but they do not involve concrete guidelines for action. Instead, they feed back, translate into and amplify meanings of professionalism that guide reporters.

Media Systemic Contextual Conditions

The economic situation of newspapers is not as precarious in Germany as it is in the US. Despite the fact that the overall circulation of newspapers has been decreasing by the same proportion—17% between 2000 and 2009 to be precise—

revenues in the German newspaper industry have not plummeted as dramatically, especially in the wake of the most recent economic crisis (WAN 2010).

The crisis had a more forceful impact on US newspapers because of the different revenue structures. Revenues were almost equally distributed on copy sales (49%) and advertisement (51%) among German newspapers in 2008 (WAN 2010). US newspapers, on the other hand, are much more dependent on advertising revenues. The OECD reported a proportion of 87% generated through advertisement against 13% through copy sales in 2008.[12] Furthermore, a significant share of the effective circulation drop in Germany can be attributed to tabloid newspapers and *Bild* in particular, which lost 2 million or 44% of sold circulation between 1998 and 2012 (it used to be 4.6 million in 1998). National newspapers remained relatively stable in the same time period (*Süddeutsche Zeitung* gained 2%, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* lost 8%, the weekly *Die Zeit* gained 9% in circulation).[13]

A consequence of the relative economic health of the newspaper industry is that there has been less fluctuation in the Landtagspresse (LP), whose members have consequently more beat-seniority. To LP reporters themselves, age and seniority served as explanations for the relative reluctance to adopt digital media. Talking about social media, one mid-career journalist said she had colleagues "who are very innovation-friendly and then there are colleagues who say they will make it until retirement somehow and don't need all that."

Connected to the higher reliance on sales, Germany traditionally has had a much stronger newspaper readership base in the population. The reach of newspapers (daily exposure to the medium of the adult population) was 70% in Germany in 2009 and has remained relatively steady over the 10 years before (78% in 1999). In the US, only 43% of the adult population had daily exposure to a newspaper in 2007 (WAN

2010). One reason for the stable newspaper readership in Germany is a segmented and relatively weakly competitive newspaper market—with many small, family-owned newspapers with strong regional as well as editorial/ideological identities, which correspond to the multiparty, parliamentary political system in Germany. There are relatively strong relations between editorial directions of newspapers and political party ideologies in such societies, which Hallin and Mancini (2004) term *political parallelism*. Both, regional and editorial divisions, are associated to high reader loyalty (Esser and Brüggemann 2010).

Finally, newspaper readers in Germany have not migrated to the internet to the same degree as in the US. In 2008, 57% of the US adult population read online newspapers compared to only 21% in Germany (Picard 2010).

These characteristics of the US media system do not in themselves cause or impede technological adoption and professional change processes but generate an overall climate, in which adapting to newer media logics is more or less encouraged. In the case of Twitter, I have found that its adoption was specifically promoted by its participatory promise in the US case study (Revers 2014a). This promise echoed corporate interests of strengthening consumer loyalty and professional concerns with regaining discursive authority in the networked public sphere by more directly engaging with the public. Simply put, Twitter succeeded because it became associated both to the economic and professional survival of journalism. In the Legislative Correspondents Association (LCA), this discursive formation diffused vertically down newsroom hierarchies and horizontally across competitor-colleagues.

Porousness and Robustness of Professional Cultures

The differences in these two case studies point to the porousness of each journalistic field for newer practices and openness of each professional culture for a diversity of performances.

The more active engagement with social media in Albany and the more passive use by reporters in Munich, following the lead of politics, corresponds in some ways to comparative media scholars' observation that German media serve more as vehicles of political discourse (Ferree et al. 2002) and that the *political communication culture* in Germany is more politics-driven (Pfetsch 2001). It also resonates with the analysis of professional discourses in German and US journalism award statements and obituaries conducted for this study (Revers 2014c): The ideal German journalist is depicted there as deliberate, reserved, ideologically labeled and sometimes socially entangled with political elites. The model US journalist, on the other hand, is aggressive, proactive, carries conflict with political leaders with pride and actively shapes history rather than just witnessing or explaining it. Excellency in German journalism is achieved through revelation or enhancement of understanding of issues, while US journalism is measured by its social impact and change it brings about.

Though my research found broad agreement of LCA reporters about what symbols of their vocation are central, they diverged in the meanings they assigned to them. Watergate, for instance, was as often associated with investigative and accountability journalism as with the obsession with scandal in US journalism. They acknowledged objectivity as a cardinal rule but some, particularly those inclined towards transparency, distanced themselves from it in favor of more subjective forms of reporting.

In the LP, through there was more agreement about the meaning of professional norms, there was less of a consensus about the collective representation of journalistic professionalism in Germany. Some reporters hesitantly acknowledged *Der Spiegel* as a sacred institution; others did not even refer to pronounced journalistic rather than national symbols, the German reunification for instance, which they described as formative for being or becoming journalists.

Albany reporters did not only diverge in their interpretations, there was also more contestation and boundary drawing between them in my interviews with them as well as in public meta-discourse. Even the structure and purpose of their association (the LCA) was disputed. Neither was the case in the LP, which represented a rather consensual and solidly united group where members stood up for each other.

Connected to that and related to media systemic differences, LCA reporters may also be more flexible and susceptible to change because there is a pronounced competitive culture in place, which is very different from the associational culture of the LP. Whereas competition was seen as inherently negative in Munich, even though there is much less effective competition, Albany reporters embraced competition as an force that improved their work.

There was also a larger German cultural impediment for professional journalists to adopt transparency on social media. From the vantage point of the experience of mass surveillance during the Nazi era and the communist regime in East Germany, it is not surprising that public discourse on the internet and digital media is so dominated by data security and privacy concerns in Germany. One LP reporter reflected on this issue in the context of his own and his colleagues' reservations about social media:

Journalists are certainly critical people for the most part. Not too long ago we

were fighting against the glass human being [mass surveillance]. Take this generation of journalists; this relentless collection of data – that's scary for many of them and that's probably the reason for the reluctance to just put [data] on Facebook, to reveal one's innermost being to that extent.

He included himself in this category. Accordingly, compared to some social media profiles of LCA reporters who openly share personal pictures, even the most transparent LP reporters' exposure on these platforms is much more reserved.

Conclusion: The More Things Change..

This research highlighted one main dynamic of this current hybrid media systems, namely how traditional news media "adapt and integrate the logics of newer media practices" (Chadwick 2013:4). However, the German case turned out to be significantly less hybridized than the US case. Monitoring the LP twitterverse from afar, two years after leaving the field physically, reveals that most reporters opened Twitter accounts, especially in connection with the 2013 state election. But even in 2014, three years after the first reporters adopted Twitter (a comparable point in time to 2011 in Albany) the LP twitterverse is still much less instantaneous (regarding live tweeting and other practices) and interactive.

Digital media were important for reporters in both cases. The fact that LP reporters did not perceive social media as a threat, however, is not surprising given their limited use as sources of information rather than platforms of expression. For reporters in New York, social media served as stages for professional performance, of conversation among themselves, with sources and the public, as channels for providing live coverage of events and receiving networked expertise. They gave up some of their authoritative distance in favor of sharing subjective assessments of issues and their appreciation for others' journalistic work. The news making process

and their individual involvement in it became more transparent as a consequence, while much still remained backstage, including off-the-record and exclusive information, political convictions, etc. Despite of that, legacy news responsibilities were still primary in Albany and a printed article more dignified than one that merely appeared online. But digital media drew near. Operating one of the most-read blogs became a batch of professional honor, just as having thousands of Twitter followers.

The takeaway of this chapter should not be that digital media are irrelevant in German journalism. However, the fact that they are relatively irrelevant in state politics is noteworthy because the digital revolution appears to have entailed less of a professional revolution in German journalism overall than it did in the United States.

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Endnotes

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[1] The fact that Benjamin or Dicker were framed as dominating figures rather
than Danny Hakim, for instance, who was the bureau chief of the *New York Times* at
the time, who won a Pulitzer Prize and was nominated for another one for his
investigative reporting, is noteworthy in itself.

[2] Meares, Joel. 2010. "The Biggest Fish in Albany?" *Columbia Journalism
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(http://www.cjr.org/campaign_desk/the_biggest_fish_in_albany.php).

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(http://blog.br.de/landespolitik/2012/12/page/2/).

[4] The rise of the author byline in newspaper articles starting in the 1920s
(Schudson 1978), identifying the person behind the news, or the introduction of the
news interview in the late 19th century, framing news reporting as committed to fact
gathering rather than conviction (Schudson 1995:72–93), are steps in the
professionalization of US journalism that increased transparency.

[5] I obviously share the argument that there is significant cultural stability.
However, I take issue with the normative critique of these scholars, which always
aims at the insufficient opening of journalism towards participatory affordances of
digital media, because it assumes an engaged public on the starting blocks, ready to

get involved. Depending on which particular journalistic jurisdiction you look at, this is not always the case—certainly not in state politics.

[6] Carlson (2013) refers to this as "metajournalistic discourse," Esser, Reinemann and Fan (2001) as "metacoverage," Jacobs and Townsley (2011) as metacommentary.

[7] Lell, Eva. 2013. "Die Landtagspresse zwitschert und postet." Politik aus Bayern: Blog der BR-Landtagskorrespondenten, March 22, 2013. Retrieved January 4, 2014 (http://blog.br.de/landespolitik/2013/03/22/die-landtagspresse-zwitschert-und-postet/).

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