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## Internationalizing "International Communication"

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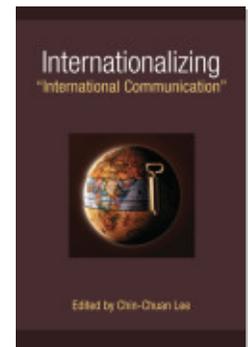
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## Professional Models in Journalism

### *Between Homogenization and Diversity*

Paolo Mancini

This chapter is focused on the discussion of the possible contradiction between the homogenization and fragmentation of professional models in journalism following our *Comparing Media Systems* (Hallin & Mancini, 2004). One of the most frequent criticisms raised about our book concerns the homogenization hypothesis that we discussed in the last chapter of the book. We observed that in all the countries that we analyzed, a clear tendency was emerging: most of the differences in professional journalism observable in the second part of last century were disappearing or had already disappeared. Professional journalism in the 18 countries of our study was becoming closer to what we had defined as the North Atlantic or liberal model, particularly as practiced in the United States and in Great Britain, and that other authors had already defined as the liberal model (Curran, 1991; Waisbord, 2000) or the Anglo-American model (Chalaby, 1996). All those features (partisanship, comment orientation, elite press, and so forth) that could be observed in other models, being very different from those that were inherent to the liberal model, were progressively disappearing. In particular, we stressed how the level of partisanship clearly found in most of continental journalism in Europe up to the 1980s was dramatically decreasing.

I still believe that, yes, the tendency toward homogenization characterizes most of the professional models in western European countries, but, if

we look beyond that part of the world, I have to admit that, no, that same tendency is not so clearly emerging; rather, it is openly contradicted. In the final chapter of *Comparing Media Systems*, we stressed that because of increasing commercialization and the secularization of society, which led to the decline of traditional mass parties in favor of more individualized, media-centered forms of political mobilization, and the consequence of technological innovation, the differences that up to few years before had marked professional journalism in Western democracies were disappearing.

The development of the European Union and then the attention devoted to the formation of a single, unified economic market have favored the exchange of experiences, fostering the adoption of one single professional model. These changes can be seen as pushing European media systems closer to the liberal model, centered around commercial media and mostly information-oriented journalism in which market forces are dominant, as well as are more individualized forms of political communication, which are rooted in the culture of marketing and consumption. These forces are significant in most of the rest of the world as well but not to the extent that a unique, unifying model of professional journalism is emerging.

On the contrary, in many parts of the world beyond the Western one, journalism appears to be something completely different from what most of the scholarly community assumes it ought to be. It is not just that the professional procedures of the dominant Western model of professional journalism (neutral journalism, the separation between news and comment, accuracy, and so forth) do not exist and are not applied, but journalism itself, its own *raison d'être*, is something else from what it is expected to be in the Western world.

Even if journalists perceive that there exists a dominant model of journalism whose practices and principles are spreading around the world, even if they may claim to follow and to apply this normative framework, nevertheless in their everyday activity they perform in a completely different way. At least there exists a gap between the theory of journalism and its everyday practice. A very vivid picture of this contradiction has been given by Silvio Waisbord (2000):

Even if we consider the liberal model in its own terms, without addressing the adequacy of its theoretical bases and prescriptions for the existence of a democratic press, it is obvious that its chances of becoming effective were at odds with South American politics. Its visibility

in public discourse contrasted with the realities of press systems. Its prospects ran against conditions that differed glaringly from original contexts coupled with questionable commitment of press barons. It was improbable that a liberal press would develop in antiliberal capitalist societies, considering that owners rhetorically exalted liberalism but ceaselessly courted states, supported military interventions and only (and vociferously) criticized government intrusion that affected their own political and economic interests.” (p. 51)

With this statement, Waisbord touches on many points that need to be discussed at length, focusing around one major question: the difference between what journalism is supposed to be in our Western view and what journalism is in real practice in many other parts of the world.

Another reason for abandoning the idea of professional homogenization is the increasing fragmentation of the media system. There are two main aspects to be considered: the increasing commercialization of the media system, and technological innovation. The first point is very well illustrated by the experience of Fox News: to compete within a very crowded market and essentially to compete with its most direct competitor, CNN, Fox News has clearly chosen its own market niche composed mostly of conservative people. Rupert Murdoch’s television network offers a product that fits very well with the expectations of a conservative audience whose beliefs have been pushed even further rightward by reactions to President Obama’s health care reform and by the Tea Party movement. The ideal of neutral, objective, detached journalism is progressively disappearing on Fox News.

Of course, the commercialization process was already well developed when we wrote *Comparing Media Systems*. Indeed, Elihu Katz had written that article with the very appealing title “And Deliver Us from Segmentation” (Katz, 1996) in which he pointed out that, because of the segmentation of the market linked to the process of commercialization, there was the risk of the disappearance of the wider public sphere, including all the different interests acting in the society, in which all these different voices could meet and discuss problems of general interest. In 1992 Daniel Hallin himself had written another paper in which he discussed the possible weakening of that strong ideology of neutrality and objectivity that characterized U.S. journalism in the ’60s and ’70s because of the increasing fragmentation of the mass media market.

Today, the Internet, and technological innovation in general, pushes

even further the process of fragmentation: blogs and social networks favor the birth and the development of “micro” niches of users who are drawn together by a common affiliation and by the sharing of common feelings, interests, habits, and beliefs. These “virtual communities,” as Rheingold (2000) has named them, introduce specific practices and routines that very often are of very particular nature and that, moreover, are aimed at reinforcing a common affiliation and pre-existing feelings and opinions.

All these observations underscore the importance of abandoning the traditional Western-centrism of media studies (and, more important, the Western-centrism that very often directs professional education in journalism), the assumption that Western journalism, what Jean Chalaby (1996) defines as the Anglo-American model, *is journalism*. In many parts of the world journalism is something completely different and the tendency toward the adoption of a unique professional model today seems to be contradicted both by increasing commercialization and the Internet.

#### Instrumentalization and the Diffusion of the Polarized-Pluralist Model

In a very general way it could be said that if we observe countries beyond the Western world, journalism is no longer an instrument to spread news but, first of all, it is an instrument to take an active part in the decision-making process, to intervene in the public arena, to influence not just the construction of a consensus but the actions of government, to promote the interests, both economic and political, of the groups that own the media outlets. In *Comparing Media Systems* we used the word “instrumentalization” to stress that, contrary to the mythical idea of liberal journalism, whose main goal ought to be the construction of an informed citizen, in many parts of the world the diffusion of news is exactly an “instrument” to reach particular goals that do not pertain solely to the distribution of knowledge within a community. In particular, our study found that instrumentalization was to be found in the so-called Mediterranean or polarized-pluralist model.

In a written comment after his first reading of *Comparing Media Systems*, Stylianos Papathanassopoulos, one of our Greek colleagues whom we had asked to comment on the initial draft of our book, reported a widely circulated statement among the political community in Greece: when a new government is established politicians aiming at important government positions are not afraid to tell the appointee prime minister: “If you don’t give

me a ministry, I [will] start a newspaper.” We defined “instrumentalization as the control of the media by outside actors, parties, politicians, social groups or movements, or economic actors, seeking political influence, who use them to intervene in the world of politics” (Hallin & Mancini, 2004, p. 37). In this case the candidate minister who is starting a newspaper, or threatening to do so, is not at all interested in spreading news and in facilitating the distribution of knowledge. He wants to start a newspaper to be used against the prime minister who has not given him the opportunity to become a minister in the government. He is not interested either in fostering political participation or in narrowing the links between political actors and citizens. He is just interested in influencing the decision-making process to better guarantee his own interests and, in this case, to get a position of high responsibility.

This attitude seems very widespread outside the Western world. As to Russia, Svetlana Pasti has written, “Like ordinary people, journalists must manage through common sense and effort to find a niche in the new prosperous Russia. Therefore they serve the interests of those who possess political and economic capital, i.e. the state and business elite” (Pasti, 2005, p. 109). Outside eastern Europe, the situation doesn’t seem to be very different: discussing journalism in Southeast Asia, Duncan McCargo writes, “In short, rapid economic growth and rapid social change gives media a heightened political salience, and empowers media to be much more potent political actors in their own right than has generally been the case in the West” (McCargo, 2012). In most of the cases instrumentalization is linked to clientelism as Chin-Chuan Lee has demonstrated as to the media in Taiwan (Lee, 2000).

What has been described in these previous statements was characteristic of Western journalism when it was born and it still represents an important reason for its existence today in many parts of the world. Instrumentalization is one of the main features of what we have defined as the “Mediterranean or polarized-pluralist model”: in the view of many scholars who refer to our interpretive schema, the polarized-pluralist model seems to be a widely diffused model outside the Western world, with its strong prevalence of partisan media, a tendency to instrumentalization of the media by political and economic elites and their use as tools of bargaining and maneuvering among those elites, frequent state intervention and involvement in the media system, lesser development of journalistic professionalism, and lower newspaper circulation.

But there is no doubt that even the polarized-pluralist model may as-

sume very particular forms beyond the Western world. In most cases, it mixes with a dramatic influence of mass media commercialization, very close to the competitive situation that is possible to observe in the liberal model and the already quoted influence of the ideal principles of liberal professionalism. These principles could direct the behavior of reporters if they don't clash with their everyday activities, which are also determined by the instrumentalization practices that we just discussed. But in most cases the principles of liberal journalism constitute a sort of "false ideology" of the profession (false as in most cases it is not really applicable) that is taught in schools, that is illustrated in textbooks, and that, in some way or another, constitutes a continuous reference for all discussions around the profession, influencing both those who are already part of it, those who want to enter it, and those who interact with it in different ways. In this way a situation of hybridization may emerge. I shall return to this later.

#### Political Parallelism beyond the Western World

The forms that the polarized-pluralist model of journalism assumes beyond the Western world may be different from what was possible, and still is possible, to observe in some of the countries studied in *Comparing Media Systems*. One of the major differences seems to lie in the experience of mass parties that was so important in the European context (and in a minor degree in the United States too); political parallelism was one of the most important features affecting the relationship between media and politics in our polarized-pluralist model. Both the experience of mass parties and the idea of political parallelism are deeply tied to the particular political history of western Europe and can hardly be observable beyond that area. Indeed, in western Europe there were patterns of development centered around multiparty democracy, built around the competition of mass parties and other organized groups, such as unions, that are rooted in broad socio-economic interests. European mass parties historically have represented the most important means to participate in the life of the community and to address problems of general interest. They have had a strong influence in many processes of socialization, including the mass media, which in the strongest forms of party-press parallelism played the roles of diffusing political "faith" and information to members and of reinforcing and linking together the organization of the party. The mass party systems of western Europe provided a clear structure to political conflict mostly centered around the Left-Right spectrum, and media tended to have stable rela-

tionships with these groups, or stable ideological identities rooted in their conflicts, or both. The print media in most of the West, and the broadcast media in many countries, were born within this framework of ideological links and affiliations.

But this is a very particular political history. In other countries political parties tend to be relatively shallow and transient: they do not have deep social roots or clear ideological identities; they tend to appear and disappear very quickly; neither voters nor political leaders have strong, stable attachments to them. In many cases we face personalized parties, with political organizations, in most cases very weak organizations, built around the figure of a single politician or businessman who decides to enter the political arena for specific goals and interests. A very good prototype of this is represented by Berlusconi's *Popolo della libertà*. This is a party without a real organizational structure that is dependent on the symbolic, charismatic, and economic resources of its founder. Similar structures may be found in many other countries as well and particularly in eastern Europe and in Asia.

In many parts of the world the specific kind of political parallelism that was tied to the historical experience of mass parties is today replaced by completely different forms of parallelisms. News media overlap with a range of different organizations: with ethnic or religious organizations that very often represent interests that are not just based on ethnicity and religion but that also embrace political and economic constituencies or interests. Very often news media overlap with different forms of business organizations and interests to the point that, mostly in relationship to central and eastern Europe, scholars have described this as “business parallelism” (Ornebring, 2010). This is a very complex form of instrumentalization, also observable in Western countries, that mixes together business, politics, and the news media within a system of reciprocal clientelistic links, with reciprocal advantages and disadvantages. As Colin Sparks has observed, “there exist a close set of relations between politicians, businessmen and the media that leads to a routine interchange between different groups in post-communist countries” (Sparks, 2000, p. 42). Sparks himself defines “political capital” as the “overlapping between economics, politics and the media” (Sparks, 2000, p. 42).

Not differently, Duncan McCargo uses the formula “partisan polyvalence” to indicate the weakness of traditional political parallelism and how the media in East Asia may be used for (and may be instrumentalized by) a multiplicity of different goals, such as supporting one political figure (or one political program) and pursuing business goals at the same time. The

news media can also shift from one goal to another in a very brief period of time without losing their traditional formula and readership.

Alina Mungiu Pippidi has been studying corruption for many years and she argues that “in societies based on particularism rather than free competition media outlets are not ordinary business ventures. Rather, investors use their channels for blackmail or for trading influence” (Mungiu Pippidi, 2010, p. 126). And Alena V. Ledeneva confirms this: “[T]he black PR discourse is symptomatic of a situation where certain defects of formal institutions, weakness of political parties, lack of independent media, disrespect for the law create incentives for informal practices to spread” (Ledeneva, 2004, p. 36). Peter Gross adds that “the profit making incentive of some media owners was simply married to the political use of the media, which is to say, some media owners are also politicians” (Gross, 2003, p. 87).

So, if we look beyond the Western world, what we see is that the news media play a mixture of different roles within which the provision of news and the goal of facilitating an informed citizen are not the major objectives. They undergo different forms of parallelism: the traditional political parallelism, which was characteristic of many news outlets in the Western world in past years, is not the most important one, and very frequently it mixes with “business parallelism.”

The idea of “political parallelism” presupposes the existence of strong party organizations that are active in different sectors including the production of news. But, and this is the main difference, the experience of mass parties is a Western experience, deeply rooted in Western history and in the economic context within which they were born and developed. They are the product of specific economic, social, and cultural conditions that do not exist or are very different beyond the Western world today. They are—better, they were—the product of those “cleavages” that characterized the European situation in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and that motivated their existence.

Of course, political parties exist beyond the Western world but they are very different organizations: as already said, very often they assume the form and the structure of “personal parties” built around the figure of one single politician and around the specific interests and symbolic connotations of this single figure. Their ideological dimension is very weak. The system of common values that was at the very root of European mass parties does not exist either, and therefore a “culture” to be transmitted is almost completely absent. News media are not means to socialize people to the culture of their own group.

In other situations, party organizations are weak and volatile: they are

established for particular goals and under particular contingencies but when these contingencies disappear, the parties, too, suddenly either disappear or change their nature and name. This is what has happened very frequently in eastern Europe, where the shift from communism to democracy has given rise to a situation of uncertainty and continuous change in which stable party organizations have not been able to develop. Parties are not broadly inclusive organizations and the number of members is limited: they act essentially at the electoral moment, thus confirming the well-known typology of Angelo Panebianco and the existence of the so-called electoral-professional party (Panebianco, 1998) supported by professionals in the field of communication, press, advertising, and being active just in the moment of an election campaign. This form of party organization also confirms the instrumental role of the news media: they are mostly used at election time when they have to produce consensus around single political figures or specific political programs and proposals, but stable political parallelism doesn't exist because stable and strong political organizations don't exist either. Religious parties are very common beyond the Western world; in their experience, too, parallelism assumes forms very different from those that it is possible to observe in Europe.

#### About the Nature of the State

Another important difference between what it is possible to observe in the Western world and what is observable beyond the Western world as to the relationship between politics and news media lies in the very nature of the state. We are used to referencing the existence and the activity of news media to our specific idea of the state and then to the question of its government. Indeed, following the thesis of the polarized-pluralist model, in many countries in the Western world the relationship between state and news media is very strict: news media are an instrument for different organizations to compete for government within a stable and consolidated state organization. In the polarized-pluralist model and in the democratic-corporatist model too, news media are strongly connected to the state. They depend on it not just for rules ensuring their freedom but also for a framework of different interventions aimed at making possible a better and more comprehensive pluralism and therefore making possible, also through economic subsidies, the existence of papers and other media outlets representing the voice of different minority organizations. Very of-

ten this is an occasion through which parties in government try to shape and to influence news media to get more support for their actions.

But the form of state we are referring to is very rare beyond the Western world: in many countries and in many parts of the world, including in eastern Europe (where we have a large amount of evidence), the state is still something that has to be constructed in a stable and consolidated manner. First, it is not a unitary actor behaving in an organized and homogeneous way (Grzymala-Busse & Jones-Luong, 2002; McCargo, 2012), as we often assume in the Western world. It includes many different parts that very often act in a contradictory way and not rarely compete and struggle with each other. Very often, rather than “nation building” we face a situation of “state building,” as the existing state is weak, is contradictory, and often acts in a confusing way. This is what is possible to observe in most of the so-called transitional democracies: “Oligarchs, political parties and president on one hand and international financial institutions or regional trade associations on the other, all have access to the nascent state structures and exert considerable pressures on the process of state formation” (Grzymala-Busse & Jones-Luong, 2002, p. 533).

The construction of the state is a question of struggle among elites. In this situation the state can't play any role in facilitating a free market of ideas and pluralism, neither stressing freedom of the press nor its neutrality, as we assume it ought to do. Rather, news media are used instrumentally by the different elites to compete for the formation and the control of the state. In this situation, as we have seen, political parallelism is just one of the many components that direct the behavior of the media.

In an opposite way, there are social contexts in which the state plays a much more important role that not rarely ends in censorship, and this doesn't just apply to authoritarian and totalitarian regimes but also to many young democracies as well. As McCargo (2012) argues:

The dominant order of state-media relations, especially as regards electronic media, is that states interfere wherever they can. This is particularly true in middle-income developing countries, where newspaper readership is typically low, yet most people have ready access to television and radio. But the idea of state intervention is also complicated by questions concerning the nature of the state itself. In many developing countries, the state has a patrimonial character and is used as a vehicle for rent-seeking. In other words,

the state or certain elements thereof has been captured by private, elite interests. In great swathes of the developing world, the much-vaunted distinction between public and private, on which so many heuristic categories and so much of the basic tool kit of social science relies, turns out to be something of an urban myth. Under such circumstances, state intervention in media is the norm rather than the exception. The same applies to censorship: rather than imagining that media is free to report whatever it wishes, unless subject to specific external interference, in much of the world it is safe to assume that such freedom is always highly contingent. (p. 213)

Very often, both in the newborn democracies in the moment of “state building” and in those countries on the path toward democracy where a strong state already exists, there is mixture of formal and informal rules that doesn’t facilitate an independent and neutral role for the media. Indeed, in these situations the media are part of the many negotiation practices that take place among elites as the space for reciprocal accommodation exists because of either the prevalence of informal rules or the contradiction that often exists between formal and informal rules (Borocz, 2000; Park, Kim, & Sohn, 2000; Ledeneva, 2004). In this case, too, the state can’t be that guarantor of press freedom and independence as it is assumed to be in the most classic liberal model.

The weakness of the state and its brutal intervention in limiting freedom of the press seems to be a characteristic in all those countries that are on the path toward democratization and in most transitional democracies (Vltmer, 2012). The so-called developmental state (Clark, 2000) contradicts our Western view of the state and its role also in regard to the news media. That framework of interventions, warrants, and attitudes that we expect in our view of the state should not be expected where this particular state doesn’t exist.

The discussion about the role of the state may be viewed also in a different light. As the successful book by the English journalist John Kampfner (2010) has put before Western public opinion, in many countries, mostly in East Asia, there is a completely different idea of both state and government and their role. In its attempt to improve the economic status of the country’s citizens the state can limit press freedom and influence the behavior of the news media to establish that harmony whose roots are to be found in Confucian philosophy (Gunaratne, 1999). The possibility of

criticism by the media is therefore limited to pursuing harmony in the press-government relationship that may persuade citizens to be part of a society in which conflicts are rare and are not welcome, and in which they are stimulated to collaborate to reach the common good and to improve the life conditions of the entire community.

This is a completely different view from the Western idea of the state, where, on the contrary, the role of the press is rooted in the oppositional design that allots to journalists the duty to control and limit the power of the rulers. As is well known, this interpretation of the role of the press is not just part of professional education and everyday professional practice in the so-called liberal model, but it was clearly stressed by Jürgen Habermas (1989), who, as Niklas Luhmann (1998) has pointed out, saw the birth of the public sphere as an instrument of the struggle between the absolute power of the king and the newborn needs of the bourgeoisie. This view, very much rooted in Western political philosophy, could be enlarged to understand, still in the oppositional logic, the relationship between the press and the rulers in today's society. The press found, and is still finding, its primary goal in the attempt to control power holders. In Western world common sense and in the professional culture of the journalists this oppositional view of the relationship between the press and the government has produced the well-known catchword of "watch-dog" journalism. This may have a hard time in contexts where, on the contrary, a different view of this relationship prevails that is based on the Confucian harmonic design.

### Which Interpretive Categories?

With this, we have reached a central point and it seems necessary to revive an old concept that has been used for many years: "cultural imperialism." In this case, these words aren't about the export of meaning and cultural product, as they were in the original work of Herbert Schiller and his followers, but they concern the interpretive frameworks we apply to look at realities beyond the Western world. It is not easy to admit this, but there is a cultural imperialism that is linked to our own work as scholars and, specifically, as media scholars. Very frequently we pretend to observe realities beyond our own using our own interpretive categories, which are taken, as Curran and Park already observed in 2000, from "a tiny handful of countries" (Curran & Park, 2000, p. 3). "The tiny handful of countries" refers to our Western experience. Therefore, for instance, we assume that

the idea of the mass party that was (and partially still is) so influential in Western history is some sort of universal category that is possible to apply everywhere, as mass parties represent the principal instrument for political participation and for the life of democracy and also affect journalistic performance. Equally, very often it is assumed that the state as we have experienced it in the Western world is the only possible form of state, whereas, instead, this idea of the state is profoundly rooted in specific historical conditions. The idea of “democracy” itself, as developed in the Western world, may be questioned by different frameworks of cultural values and historical conditions. This point has been discussed by political scientists and particularly by all those who have criticized Samuel Huntington’s thesis on democratization.

In other words, in the field of media studies, as in many other social scientific fields, very often it is assumed that our history is *the* history. On the basis of our particular experience and the interpretive categories that “this specific history” produced we can observe and interpret social realities that come from completely or partially different experiences. Most of the time, to be culturally correct, we don’t pretend to export our models of how things ought to be done; we are not normative at that point, but, perhaps unconsciously, we observe different realities with our own eyes. Undoubtedly, we suffer from an almost unavoidable Western bias. With regard to the news media, we are not only pushed to believe that whatever deviation from the ideal type we have constructed on the basis of our own experience has to be interpreted as degeneration or bad functioning, but we apply our interpretive categories to realities where these categories don’t find room. In part, this is almost unavoidable: the categories that we apply cannot but be based on our own history and experience. To avoid this sort of “interpretive imperialism” we could abstain from analyzing countries beyond our own experience, but there is no doubt that this does not serve scientific inquiry.

Could we avoid stating that clientelism is clientelism wherever it occurs? That corruption is corruption everywhere? Again, avoiding these sorts of statements would badly serve scientific inquiry. Nevertheless, we have to be aware that to interpret these phenomena correctly we have to place them within the set of particular conditions within which they developed in each part of the world. Journalism doesn’t grow up in a vacuum: it is the product of specific historical, economic, social, and cultural conditions that have very local roots.

### Journalism Culture as a “Shortcut” to Avoid Our Western Bias

Indeed, as a conclusion to this paper, I would like to advance the idea of journalism culture as a possible means to avoid our almost unavoidable “Western bias.” Indeed, the concept of “journalism culture,” at least in the way in which it is conceived in this chapter, may be useful because it offers two advantages. First, it allows journalism to be placed in the widest social and political context in which it develops. The idea of journalism culture may include all those technical skills and practices necessary for everyday work and the assumptions of a very broad nature regarding the political culture of each country and the role of professional journalism within this set of expectations. Unlike other professions, such as medicine or engineering, journalism is not a neutral, aseptic profession that can be separated from the surrounding social, cultural, and political reality. Like many other professions, journalism is made up of skills that we could define as being technical and specialist, but their cultural and political dimension is so important and their relationships with other social subsystems are so frequent and profound that it is impossible to isolate the specific type of professionalism from the society in which it develops. For this reason, the concept of journalism culture not only allows us to view journalism as a profession, with its own routines, practices, and specific ethics (that can have some sort of universal nature), but also to link this profession to the country’s more general culture and especially to its political culture. Indeed, journalism doesn’t grow up in a vacuum. This simple, almost commonplace statement is shared by many scholars and, nevertheless, most of the time it remains a sort of dead letter that doesn’t produce any further interpretive improvement. Since the classic *Four Theories of the Press*, many media scholars have stressed the need to place journalism within a broader context. At the very beginning of their book, Siebert, Peterson, and Schramm wrote in 1956: “The thesis of this volume is that the press always takes on the form and coloration of the social and political structures within which it operates. Especially it reflects the system of social control whereby the relations of individuals and institutions are adjusted” (Siebert, Peterson, & Schramm, 1956, p. 1). Nevertheless, as some critics have pointed out (Nerone, 1995), *Four Theories of the Press* seems to assume one model, the libertarian model and its “social responsibility” derivation, as a sort of ideal model independently from the surrounding social context; at least it is conceived as the one that constitutes the basis for the evalu-

ation of all the others. An interpretive category, rooted in Western world experience, has become the category to interpret and to judge journalism in other parts of the world. On the same path as Siebert, Peterson, and Schramm is Herbert Gans, who concluded his seminal work *Deciding What's News* with these words: “This study has, thus far, ignored the intriguing possibility that journalists and their firms are pawns of larger and more basic social processes to which they unwittingly respond. Perhaps journalists perform unintended or unrecognized (latent) functions for the nation and society as a whole which are necessary enough to force journalists to act as they do” (Gans, 1979, p. 290).

All these statements and many others (Schudson, 1995; Cook, 2006; Hanusch, 2009) have not been followed by studies and interpretations that have placed journalism within the social contexts in which it develops. In most cases, in Western media studies, journalism has been studied as a closed system in itself; the stated connections with the broader society have been forgotten and very few works have been able to address them in a productive way. Journalism procedures, routines, and professionalization processes have been analyzed as if it were possible to abstract them from each single social context. Progressively, mass media have been studied in themselves and this attitude has grown with the development of the media studies field that has produced, on the one hand, a positive academic autonomy from other scientific fields, but, on the other, has separated the mass media from their social and political context, undermining a better understanding of their functioning.

The second reason to prefer the expression “journalism culture” is that this concept may represent a very useful tool for comparative research because, at least in the sense I’m proposing it, it is deeply rooted in the different national contexts that can therefore confront each other (Hanitzsch, 2007). But in spite of its importance, the concept of journalism culture is very hard to study empirically. Different proposals have been advanced to catch it empirically (Servaes, 1999; Hanitzsch, 2007), but the difficulty remains. This concept is multifaceted, maybe contradictory in its different aspects, and is difficult to transform into quantitative indicators; it deals with factors of cultural and emotional nature that the people we interview in our studies rarely are willing to express freely and sincerely. The complexity of this concept is very well synthesized by the expression that Richard Hoggart used several years ago to introduce *Bad News*. He used the expression “the cultural air we breathe” in the light of the specific topic of

that book and to indicate how news, and its interpretation, has to be placed within a framework of a sort of common sense that tells us that “some things can be said and others had best not to be said” (Hoggart, 1981). Michael Schudson has further developed his idea: “Hoggart has written that the most important filter through which news is constructed is the cultural air we breathe, the whole ideological atmosphere of our society, which tells us that some things can be said and that others had best not to be said. That cultural air is one that in part ruling groups and institutions create but it is in part one in whose context their own establishment takes place” (Schudson, 2005, p. 189). Some years before this sentence Schudson himself had already pointed out the importance of the cultural environment within which journalists work: “The news then is produced by people who operate often unwittingly within a cultural system, a reservoir of stored cultural meanings and patterns of discourse. . . . news as a form of culture incorporates assumptions about what matters, what makes sense, what time and place we live in, what range of considerations we should take seriously” (Schudson, 1995, p. 14).

This cultural heritage is what permeates journalism culture and practices everywhere; it is the product of history and particular social, cultural, economic, and political conditions. This heritage is very hard to observe empirically and it is almost impossible to define in precise terms. It is “the cultural air we breathe”: something that is in the air, that is volatile, that goes with the wind, and that, nevertheless, is there in that specific place where we breathe it.

The concept of journalism culture may be very useful in understanding why our word today is “hybridization” (Norris & Inglehart, 2009). On the one hand, globalization is something that nobody can deny. Journalists practice a profession that has some kind of universal nature and this universal nature goes around the entire world through movies, textbooks, seminars, global events, education, media ownership, media concentration, and so forth. This universal nature is first of all rooted in the idea (and practice) of news as a good for the market, news as a product to be sold and to be consumed. Today, market and news are strictly interrelated as they were when the idea of the “marketplace of ideas” was born in the Western world. This universal nature takes shape essentially in a whole of professional rules, and may be identified in what is called the liberal model of professional journalism. The influence of the liberal model of journalism is something very hard to deny: it depends on the strong tendency

toward commercialization but also on the influence that Western thought (and our own scholarship and education efforts) exercises consciously and unconsciously.

Nevertheless, the universal nature of journalism takes shape in relation to the different cultural contexts where it occurs. As Barbie Zelizer puts it, “Despite the prevalence of arguments of journalism’s universal nature, the culture of journalism presupposes that journalistic conventions, routines and practices are dynamic and contingent on situational and historical circumstances” (Zelizer, 2005, p. 211). This is the reason why many authors, in connection to the interpretive framework proposed in *Comparing Media Systems*, have talked of a situation of hybridization (Voltmer, 2012; Dobek-Ostrowska, 2012; Chadwick, 2013) between what we defined as the liberal model of professional journalism and the polarized-pluralist model where we found that instrumentalization was, and still is, a very common feature. Indeed, if one looks beyond the Western world the set of conditions that feature the polarized-pluralist model seem to construct the common framework even if with specific features that vary country by country.

The liberal professional model mixes together with local conditions, producing a hybrid that we tend to look at and to interpret on the basis of our Western categories. In some ways the hybridization between the liberal and the polarized-pluralism model that, following our *Comparing Media Systems*, is seen by several scholars as the most appropriate model to explain professional journalism beyond the Western world, may suffer from the Western bias deriving from the application to different realities of categories that are deeply rooted in the Western experience within which they were conceived.

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