Journalists in local newspaper – traditional press missionaries or digital media workers?

dr hab. Ilona Biernacka-Ligieza
Associated Professor, University of Opole
Department of Political Science
email: ilona-jbl@o2.pl,

Abstract

The article examines Polish local journalists views about their profession and outlines the relation between new media, society and journalists. The core of the paper is build up at findings from survey of local journalism conducted at newsrooms in 2008-2010 in selected poviats in Lower Silesia (Southern Poland). The main aim of the study is to investigate any development in attitudes to different professional values and changes of the local press journalists work conditions due to the ICT, global network rapid growth and market pressure. The interviews cover among others such aspects of journalists' work as: conditions of employment**;** reducing journalist's freedom**;** censorship inside the editorial staff; the pressure of the owner; the pressure coming out of the publishers (e.g. politicians; local government; businessmen); journalism ethic rules; trainings; journalism expectations. The article is exploring the role of the local newspaper journalist. It is being examined the impact of the contraction in the local press on the newsrooms and journalists. Moreover it is being analysed the extent to which the attitude of local journalists to local public life is changing and whether the local media fulfil the watchdog function.

Key words: journalism; local media; newsroom; ICT; economy.

Introduction

The complexity of global media systems in the contemporary world has made it clear that older paradigms within which the processes of media globalization had been understood, e.g. communication for development dependency and cultural imperialism, have to be rethought. Scholars of globalization are beginning to acknowledge that developing countries provide contra-flows against western media domination and develop their own strategies to resist or subvert such homogenization (Sreberny 2005). Deregulation and technological growth have significantly altered communication industries around the world. While policy makers are scrambling to keep satellite signals and computer network messages from freely flowing in and out of their national territories, national and local media are juggling position in a market that has suddenly doubled, or even tripled, in size. In an attempt to understand these processes, Sreberny warns against the 'slippery nature of the linguistic term-, used in international communications analysis':

> [...] 'global' rarely means 'universal' and often implies only the actors of the North. that 'local' is often really 'national' which can be oppressive of the 'local', that 'indigenous' culture is often

already 'contaminated' through older cultural contacts and exists as a political claim rather than a clean analytic construct [...] (Sreberny 2005: 607).

Globalization and local communication context

Globalization has been responsible for major transformations in the structure of news in the world. Privatization and deregulation have enabled cross-border flows of capital and technology. Those changes have opened new ways for media businesses to expand into international markets using output deals, virtual integration, joint ventures, programming sales, and production arrangements. Globalization has unsettled past linkages between state and capital, geography and business, the local and the global. No longer do conflicts fit into the 'national versus foreign'. International and domestic corporations have realized that they mutually need each other, and decide to partner in different ways. While the trend is indeed towards a commercialized, profit-driven model, the results of such changes are a 'multilayer complexity posed by the sheer speed and scope of changes' (Hedge 2005).

Sparks (2000) outlines different analyses of globalization. One theory, Sparks argues, understands globalization as a 'uniform and homogenous process spreading throughout the world', which could be likened to a 'process of bureaucratic rationalization'. The takeover of locally owned media and other similar inflow of foreign capital could be seen as 'the progressive erosion of local media and their incorporation into, or replacement by, larger predators'. For example, could increase pressure on local competitors, leading to an increasingly commercialized media sphere, the further marginalization of media audiences that are not seen as lucrative for advertisers, and the erosion of indigenous cultural content. In a market-driven media, as Thussu (1999) has argued, the pace of the media is set as much by advertisers as by owners and journalists. Increasing commercialization has led to the concentration of ownership, the 'dumbing-down' of content and the 'parochialization of news agendas' (Hegde 2005). A market-driven media often encourages editors to prioritize commercial goals and journalists to avoid specialized or investigative work (Harber 2002). Harber cautions that in such a media environment 'satisfying shareholders will become more important than serving the community, enter-tainment and scandal will gut serious news, foreign bureaus and ambitious reporting will be considered costly frivolities' (Harber 2002, 2). Sparks argues that globaliza-

tion can be viewed alternatively as part of a 'dual movement' in which we find 'media organizations and regulatory structures, migrating 'up' to global forms or 'down' to local forms' (Sparks 2000: 79). In this process, we can observe, as Sparks writes, 'the erosion of the power and influence of the state-based media on the one hand, and a parallel strengthening of both the local and the global media' (Sparks 2000: 79).

The impact of globalization on local media within specific cultural and national contexts could, thus, be multi-faceted. Many scholars analyzing today's media trends notice that the global media concerns if they want to achieve the market must be aware of local needs and they must adjust their programs to the local context. Moreover it is seen that localness year by year is perceived as one of the most important factors of media economy. For example media in Norway and UK are very concerned about the audience and very often the target is to go with the news and adverts of course to the very bottom. So it shouldn't be surprising for anybody that the situation at the North European local and regional press market is rather very stable while the big national titles suffer from huge losses each year. So we could see the process of mutual cooperation on the local, the national and the global level. The process of strengthening both the local and the global media can be seen in more countries each year. This tendency allows media scholars to hope that globalization, characterized by multiplying audiences, does not necessarily lead to cultural homogenization but, rather, reinvigorates cultural diversity in new ways.

Glocalization is of enormous importance because it brings us from the global question down to issues at the human scale, and to issues of humanity and people. As far as a study of political ideas is concerned, the vision of glocalization avoids any form of Utopian rhetoric, while still remaining open to the future. Its added value is its capacity to combine realism - by making glocalization a strategy that can engage and attract the "strong" powers - with idealism - by aiming at a democratically shared development.

Glocalization requires developing an awareness that a meeting point can be found between the global and local, and working in order to make this relationship the driving force of a policy leading to peace and development.

For that matter, glocalization, in the proper sense of the word, cannot refer to a simple appeal for power and independence on the part of local communities (localism) or to the creation of partnerships or horizontal networks that link up

exclusively local subjects (multi-localism). Without a doubt, glocalization is based on the actions of a number of different local actors that are interconnected in networks - at times of planetary dimensions - or connected in clusters or in pairs, often with the objective of creating bridges between north and south, or between countries that find themselves on opposing sides of a conflict. In any event, one fundamental element of the approach in question is the ability to link and interact with global actors, be they international organizations or, under certain conditions, the global private sector.

In short, the word 'glocalization' is meant to point to a strategy involving a substantial reform of the different aspects of globalization, with the goal being both to establish a link between the benefits of the global dimension - in terms of technology, information and economics - and local realities, while, at the same time, establishing a bottom-up system for the governance of globalization, based on greater equality in the distribution of the planet's resources and on an authentic social and cultural rebirth of disadvantaged populations.

Moreover, looking for the diffusion of specific features of glocalization allows us to be fairly optimistic about the future of the glocalization project, since some of these features have already been found embedded in the modus operandi of actors of some weight as well as small but strongly charismatic actors.

Robertson (1997) creates the theory of :

> [...] glocalization as a way of accounting for both global and local, not as opposites but rather as 'mutually formative, complementary competitors, feeding off each other as they struggle for influence'. Robertson's idea of glocalization allows media scholars to escape 'the pull of the global/local polarity' and the fear that the local is dead. Rather than pitching global against the local, glocalization hopes to break down the 'ontologically secure homes' of each and present them as interconnected forces (Robertson 1997: 25).

Robertson ultimately hopes to dispel the 'notion of homogenization of all cultures' by the forces of transnational capital (Robertson 1997: 25). Glocalization is not what Thussu (1999) refers to as 'desi globalization - when foreign business interests and media emphasize their native credentials to present a more acceptable face of globalization' (Thussu 1999: 46). Instead, Luke argues 'glocalization attests that every global, virtualizing force is met by a stubborn alterity, a 'dialectical intensification of both globalism and localism' (Luke 1997: 89). While some social theorists have attacked the concept of glocalization as being particularly apolitical, 'without any teeth or resistance to the sinister forces of globalization' (Thornton

2000: 79), Robertson calls for both 'understanding the global-local nexus and seeing glocalization as a tool of resistance and change' (Robertson 1997: 26).

The process by which, in the globalized world, individual cultures relentlessly tend to decrease in importance or to be overwhelmed by giving room to a single global culture, is often source of concern. The resulting bewilderment materializes in one of two ways: exaggerated devotion to the past, often a reinvented past, in the name of tradition and the opposite tendency, namely the non-critical adoption of any cultural input coming from the outside.

Instead of these two extreme, equally losing attitudes, the glocal approach suggests that local cultures be valorized and revitalized through the means and opportunities offered by globalization in order to make them a source of enrichment for all the individuals involved.

Current trends such as technological convergence, free movement of goods, services and capital, as well as market mergers and acquisitions, often jeopardize the potential growth of local cultures, particularly in developing countries and in transition countries. Cultural industries are increasingly concentrated in the hands of a few players who have advanced technical capacities for producing and distributing creative products.

On the other hand, in order to flourish, what local cultures need is not to be preserved unchanged, like insects in amber, but to live and develop in their own way, as they themselves choose. And in this, they can benefit from the use of the new tools of information, knowledge and communication which they can obtain only by increasing their connections to the larger world. Cultural exchange is also a key factoring breaking down the barriers to good relations between peoples and human groups and a powerful instrument of "preventive diplomacy".

Instead of a superficial interest for local habits and folklore, glocalization involves the belief in an active multiculturalism based on the acknowledgement and valorization of differences between cultures, and on the promotion of cultural exchanges whereby people from diverse societies can express and communicate to each other their visions, values and traditions to one another.

Journalism at the globalized reality

The effects of media globalization contributed to shifts in media ownership, content, and structures, but it has also wielded influence on the level of professional ideologies, ethical frameworks and practices of media workers. The 'neoliberal model of global media development' has made possible a far more sophisticated global market system and new contexts of sharing political, economic, and cultural ideas (Calabrese 2004: 324). Journalism has become a mix of the global and local.

While research (Deuze 2005; Weaver 1998) suggests some similarities in the way that journalists around the world are 'professionalized', there is no consensus on universal normative standards and values. Bertrand (Bertrand 2000: 44) links the definition of ethical (and unethical) journalistic conduct to the 'culture of a nation, its economic stage of development, its political regime'. While journalists worldwide seem to display relative agreement about certain roles, like reporting the news quickly and providing a space for public opinion, there is less agreement on ethical principles like objective reporting or fulfilling a watchdog function (Weaver 1998). Weaver (1998) concludes that there is 'more disagreement than agreement' over journalistic roles and 'very large differences' between journalists from different nations, refuting the claim that universal occupational ethical values are emerging. Deuze (2005) suggests that there exists a dominant global ideology of journalism, but that this ideology is interpreted differently in local contexts and in different media. The 'twin forces of globalization and localization' have led to a 'liquid modern state of affairs' in which journalism ideologies, norms, and formats are rapidly and constantly shifting.

The influx of new technologies, new types of journalisms, 24-hour news channels, and satellite uplinks have obliterated the pre-existing boundaries between North and South, East and West and replaced them with 'deeply fragmented and divided criss-crossing lines of power, patterns of communication activity, and modes of identification' (Hegde 2005). In such readings of globality, the epistemology and practice of journalism ethics needs to be understood as an incendiary mix of technology, culture, and morality; it both accepts modern forms of communication and competition and resists exclusive and linear western notions of ideology and identity politics. In such a scenario, Sparks' global-local dual movement (2000) and Robertson's theoretical postulate of glocalization help us understand the discourses and practices of journalism.

Focusing on the geographic sense of the word 'community' it should be mentioned that regional/local/hyperlocal newspapers are supposed to be the ones that will survive for longer because some local news (especially issued on the hyperlocal level) can't be find online - at least not yet but even those newspapers understand the importance of taking the step into online media.

The closeness to the community is another advantage that local newspapers have over national and international media - not only do they talk about the issues that matter to people but their offices are generally closer to the readers and this isn't just a minor detail. It isn't rare for local journalists to have a reader coming in the newsroom just to say hello or give his 2 pennies about an article - that relationship between the news producer and the news consumer is vital. The consumer (feels more like he) is a part of the process that can be compared to what makes social media networks so successful - interaction - and that explains why newspapers' websites have started allowing comments like bloggers were already doing - they realised that the readers didn't want to be at the end of the chain and just receive the message in a passive way - they wanted to see their opinions taken into consideration. So we could rather suspect – from the audience analyse – that local and regional media should play an important role in creating contemporary societies so in that case the role of journalist and the quality of its works seems to be extremely important.

Local media in Poland after the communism time

Together with the administration reform introduced in 1990, the concept of local democracy entered into the Polish vocabulary. After 1989 in the Polish press market three kinds of information and opinion-forming press emerged. The nationwide range – central dailies and weeklies published mostly in Warsaw, regional range – dailies published in voivodship cities and local range – weeklies, biweeklies and monthlies published in poviat and municipality towns and other places. There were two main trends in local press: periodicals published by local governments and those published by independent publishers – one were from the local authorities, the other ones from the big capita. It is estimated that there are around 1000 titles that are issued by independent publishers and they are as diverse as they can get. On the one hand there are newspapers whose circulation is around a few hundred issues,

they are often biased and serve as a tool for political, family, economic or any other arguments. On the other, there are weeklies whose range encompasses a few poviats and whose circulation is ca. 30.000 issues, they are a reliable source of information and a platform where views are exchanged.

The main part of this spectrum is constituted by weeklies whose range encompasses one or a few poviats and whose circulation is from 3.000 to 10.000 issues, there are ca. 300 of them in Poland. Their publishers want all readers to consider their periodicals as 'their own', they attract those who voted on specific political party. However, it has to be noticed that – except for the ideological reasons – this approach is also influenced by economic impulses: if we address the newspaper only to the supporters of one political option we will lose a number of people interested in reading the newspaper. Therefore, independent local newspapers with the highest circulation always keep an equal distance to all political powers (Ksieski 2011).

Whereas independent press depends only on the readers and advertisers, it is private and commercial press that is able to influence peoples' opinions and execute its control functions, this press is apolitical and contributes to the communities' cultural life, it is 'ours', it belongs to the people. Generally speaking, an independent newspaper is one whose publisher and journalists are not financially, politically and personally dependent on state, religions, economic institutions or on local divisions of political parties (Chorazki 1994). Therefore, it only depends on the readers who buy it and the advertisers who pay for posting their ads (Mianowski 2009).

Before the local democratic elections in 1990, the majority of local newspapers were linked to the communist system. However, independent press started to emerge and they were mostly published by Kotmitety Obywatleskie [Citizens' Committees]. The overall majority would publish citizens bulletin and plenty of them issued at first irregularly and then systematically newspapers addressed to local communities.

The local press boom erupted during the local elections in 1990 and in subsequent years. Today, this phenomenon cannot be overrated. It is already a part of the history of political transformations in Poland. Freedom of speech has become a fact and was the biggest achievement of the democratic changes next to free elections and local governments. Those two kinds of freedom are treated by me equally because they constitute the foundation of the new territorial government. The Act on

local government, even though formally had nothing to do with the media, it created a scope of activity for the press, including local press (Mianowski 2011).

The initial years of self-government Poland, it was mostly local authorities who established their own newspapers that provided the news about the local government's activities and contact with the local community, yet quite quickly those newspapers turned into the authorities' propaganda tool. In the initial phase of democratic development of the local government, those periodicals were the subject of interest for the inhabitants of the communes. Yet, the local communities quickly realized what was happening and started to reach for independent newspapers more eagerly. They did that especially when it turned out that the council members do not fulfill their hopes and, what is more they are greedy for money and offices as well as quarrelsome and high-handed (Mianowski 2011). The ambition of the authorities of towns, communes and poviats was to possess their own newspaper, even though there were elections every four years. Of course this is not against the law but if such a title is introduced into the retail market and includes advertisements of local businesses, such a situation is not only deplorable but also corruption-prone. Pokrzycka claims that one of the leading function for the contemporary local press in Poland is to control the authorities and this aspect cannot be executed by bulletins being run by local authorities because it is rather impossible to realize that the local government controls itself. On top of all that, such newspapers are usually run by the employees of the local offices who will not date criticize their superiors (Pokrzycka 2008).

In those times almost every institution felt the need to publish its own periodical. Some newspapers evolved, other were started from scratch. They were published not only by the committees mentioned before which later handed over their newspapers into private hands, but also, to a growing extent by local authorities, in minority also by social organizations, political parties and even parishes. Local governments were leading this abundance because they wanted to reach all citizens of towns and communes at all cost, their aim was to promote the activities of a democratic local government and present their projects and achievements (Mianowski 2008). Every year the number of titles increased and the majority of communes had their own local newspaper. Local press developed slightly better in regions with longstanding publishing traditions: Wielkopolska, Silesia and

Pomerania. Włodzimierz Chorazki (1999) states that in the first decade the number of titles of local and sub-local press was never lower than 1.600 and never higher than 2.500. In 1999, the Press Research Center at the Jagiellonian University had 2.428 local and sub-local titles in its data base. Periodicals run by local authorities constituted 36% of those titles, independent press – 26%, remaining 38% (including 22% of parish newspapers). Therefore, the press was published in 27% of rural communes and in 59% of towns. All of those periodicals still perform, to a larger or lesser extent. According to media researchers basic functions of contemporary local media in Poland are such as: deliver comprehensive, current local news; act as a local community tribune; integrate local community; shape local public opinion; control local authorities; promote local or supra-local organizations and comities; support local culture; promote local heritage „little homeland"; spread cultural and historical knowledge about the region; educate in political, social and economic cases; provide advertisements and announcements posting that serves local business; struggle for economic success on the market; entertain local community; concentrate on local content, form and authorship in most of published materials (Gierula 2004).

Local newspapers' journalism in Poland – challenges and threats

According to mentioned above circumstances of rising up local democratic media system in Poland the qualitative research has been followed in different local newsrooms. The survey is based on interviews with regional and local reporters, producers, editors, and executives work in local media sector. There were questioned 85 respondents from Poland (mainly Lower Silesia region)[1]. The interviews cover such aspects of journalists' work as: conditions of employment**;** reducing journalist's freedom**;** censorship inside the editorial staff; the pressure of the owner; the pressure coming out of the publishers (e.g. politicians; local government; businessmen); journalism ethic rules; trainings; journalism expectations. Research main aspect was to analyse local journalism challenges at the time of new communication technologies and global movement reign. The article is exploring the role of the local newspaper journalist. It is being examined the impact of the contraction in the local press on the newsrooms and journalists. Moreover it is being analysed the extent to which the

[1] The survey was followed in Poland at the time of the year 2006-2008.

attitude of local journalists to local public life is changing and whether the local media are able to control local politicians/ businessmen etc.

More than a half of journalists in Polish local and regional media outlets (61%), believe that journalism is going in the wrong direction, as significant majorities of journalists have come to believe that increased bottom line pressure is "seriously hurting" the quality of news coverage. This is the view of 68% of journalists questioned in this survey. Both print and broadcast journalists voice high levels of concern about this problem, as do majorities working at nearly all levels of news organizations.

Journalists - also find increased worries about economic pressures in the responses to an open-ended question about the biggest problem facing journalism today. Underscoring these worries, the polling finds a continuing rise in the percentage of journalists believing that news reports are full of factual errors (58%). One of the of the interviewed journalist claims, that:

> Journalism is becoming more and more a business operation. What news stories will make our station/newspaper the most profitable? This has always been part of the 'business' but now it has become the major factor.
>
> (source: interview with head of the journalists' union at a local paper, march 2008)

Journalists whose own newsrooms have undergone staff reductions are among the most worried that bottom-line pressures are undermining quality. For those local journalists who have experienced staff cuts at their workplace say bottom-line pressures are seriously hurting the quality of news coverage. Those not reporting staff reductions are far more likely to that business pressure is just changing newsgathering techniques.

Beyond the stress of shrinking workplaces, there are a number of specific criticisms of the news media that are closely associated with the view that bottom-line pressure is hurting the quality of news coverage. First, there is almost universal agreement among those who worry about growing financial pressure that the media is paying too little attention to complex stories. And most journalists who worry about declining quality due to bottom-line pressures say that the press is "too timid" these days (62% of positive answers in questionnaires).

In that regard, the poll finds that many journalists believe that the local media has not been critical enough of politics and politicians. Many of Polish print and broadcast journalists believe the press has been insufficiently critical of the administration (64%). Generally, there has been a steep decline in the percentage of local news people who think the traditional criticism of the press as too cynical still holds up. If anything, more news people today fault the press for being too timid, not too cynical. Young reporter says, that:

> We don't ask 'why' - or 'why not' - nearly as much as we should, particularly when covering our local government.
>
> (source: interview with journalist at a local daily newspaper, may 2008).

Some of journalists think that the press has gone too soft in describing political life, they express considerably less confidence in the political judgment of the public life than they had before. Nonetheless, journalists have at least as much confidence in the public's electoral judgments as does the public itself. Journalists who think the press is not critical enough of politicians are no more likely than others to express skepticism about the public's judgments.

A lot of local and regional journalists (58%) believe it is a bad thing if some news organizations have a "decidedly ideological point of view" in their news coverage. With this point we should remain about the communism time and the censorship in Polish media until the 1989. There are some ideological differences among news people in attitudes toward coverage of political news but in terms of their overall ideological outlook, majorities of regional and local journalists (62%) continue to describe themselves as moderates – not presenting any particular political point of view (62%).

Values and virtues of local journalism

While journalists voice increasing concern over sloppy and error-filled news reports, there is no evidence that scandals are having a significant impact on the way journalists view the profession. The bigger number of journalists who cite "ethics and standards" as the problem facing journalism we can find between representatives of small titles dependent from local governments.

Journalists are divided over whether their profession is advancing or regressing. Only about half of local journalists feel their profession is moving in the right direction. In particular, TV and radio journalists are the most negative, with saying the field is headed in the wrong direction (53%).

There also is a significant divide between executives and reporters in media organizations, with executives seeing the profession headed in the right direction (62%) while reporters say things are declining (49%).

Problems with the quality of coverage remains a major concern of journalists, but an increasing percentage mention business and financial factors. Among local and regional journalists, however, business and financial problems are now mentioned as frequently as concerns over the quality of coverage. More than a third of local news people (42%) cite business and financial factors as the biggest problem facing journalism. Moreover they also pointed out the following problems in their responses: the need for accuracy; and a lack of depth, relevance and objectivity. Journalists working for local newspapers also mentioned about poor working conditions; lack of trainings; poor wages and lack of motivation.

There are significant differences among journalists in different media, as well as those working at local and regional news organizations, over the biggest problem confronting journalism. Broadcast journalists, cite issues relating to quality much more often than do their print counterparts. Roughly half of broadcast journalists (47%) cite quality concerns, compared with (33%) of print journalists.

Declining audience is cited mainly by Polish press journalists at both regional and local level also broadcast journalists state the loss of audience as the most important concern. Broadcast journalists view limits on resources - and the pressure to make profits and get bigger ratings - as the biggest financial problems. Despite the growing concern over business and financial issues, fewer journalists mention an overly competitive media environment as the biggest problem it is just about (27%).

While the quality of coverage and business concerns are seen as the leading problems facing journalism, the single word mentioned more frequently than any other by journalists assessing their profession is "credibility." Roughly a quarter of both regional and local journalists mentioned problems with public trust and confidence in some form, and one-in-five specifically mentioned credibility as the biggest concern for the profession.

Newspaper journalists are far more likely than those working for the electronic media to see credibility as the biggest problem facing journalism today. This gap can be seen at the local and regional level with local print journalists ahead of local broadcast journalists citing credibility as their greatest concern (56%).

There is also a sizeable difference between younger and older journalists in perceptions of the credibility problem. Less journalists under age 35 cite concerns about credibility and public trust as the biggest problem facing the profession (38%), compared with about three quarter of those age 35 to 54, and more than a half of those age 55 and older (59%). When it comes to the journalistic ethics, just 42% of Polish journalists cite ethics or a lack of standards as the biggest problem in journalism.

Paper and electronic local media journalists also differ over what journalism is doing well these days. Print journalists most often point to the quality and depth of coverage that is provided. They describe the volume of topics covered, coverage with context and insight, and an ability to make the news interesting and relevant. Most of local and regional newspaper journalists (51%) cited some aspect of the quality of coverage as journalism's best performance trait, compared with just a smaller number of local electronic media journalists (31%).

Those working in television and radio are more likely to cite the timeliness and speed of reporting as what journalism is doing best today. Among local journalists, electronic media journalists are more often prone than those working in newspapers to cite the immediate coverage of live and breaking news as journalism's greatest strength.

The "watchdog function" of the press is cited as journalism's strength by fewer in the field. Print media journalists are more as those in broadcasting to say investigative reporting and watchdog journalism is what the press is doing well these days. By contrast, those in TV and radio make far more mention of the value of news websites and the use of production technology to better deliver news to the public.

More questioned journalists (54%) say the profession does a good job of striking a balance between what audiences want to know and what is important for them to know. This opinion is held by Polish local journalists, as well as among those working in print, broadcast, and Internet media.

Quite a lot of regional and local media workers believe the criticism that the press pays too little attention to complex issues is valid. Most journalists also accept as valid the criticism that the distinction between reporting and commentary has slightly eroded. A growing number of journalists say that news reports are increasingly full of factual errors and sloppy reporting (49%). Asked about the cynicism or timidity, almost of questioned journalists pointed out (41%) that nowadays there is really less cynicism in the press than it used to be before. Journalists also added that sometimes they are not allowed to be critical or cynic because of financial dependency on some local or regional institutions.

In fact, more journalists (51%) say the press is too timid than too cynical. In addition, the proportion who feels the press can be criticized for becoming out of touch with their audience has dropped slightly within both groups of journalists.

Journalists of local media are notably different from the general public in their ideology and attitudes toward political and social issues. Most journalists describe themselves as political moderates.

Most journalists give their own media organization middling grades. Print journalists are particularly critical of network and local TV news. Journalists at local newspapers are, at most, only slightly more favorable. Nearly half of journalists taking part in the survey (43%) give favorable grades to their own field's performance. The print/broadcast gap is slightly narrower among journalists at national outlets, but only because ratings of local TV news are low among all national reporters whether in print or broadcasting.

Journalists were also asked to give a grade for their websites, And the grades among local journalists in Poland are not too high because they admit that the web pages and local portals are still in shaping process and the quality of their content and the graphic design is still not as good as it should be (62%).

In the general evaluation of whether their profession is headed in the right direction or the wrong direction, journalists were almost evenly divided in their view. While those taking a pessimistic view were not asked directly what they had in mind, an analysis of their responses to other questions provides some indication of the factors behind this opinion.

In particular, journalists who say things are going badly are significantly more likely to take their profession and employers to task for the quality of the news

product. They believe the press has become too timid, and almost unanimously say the press pays too little attention to complex issues. Quite a few of journalists say that the profession is headed in the wrong direction.

Concerns about the impact of bottom-line pressures also are far more prevalent among those saying the profession is on the wrong track, which is closely related to concerns about sloppy reporting and the increasing commercialization of the news. Some of them (mainly older generation) say that news reports are increasingly full of factual errors. And those critical of the overall direction of journalism more frequently cite sensationalistic reporting and an emphasis on ratings as the biggest problems facing the profession.

Within the newsroom, those who are unhappy with the leadership of their own editorial staff are far more negative about the profession as a whole compared with those who are satisfied with their leaders. In addition, those who have participated in training or professional development over the past 12 months are significantly more optimistic about the profession as a whole than those who have had no such training. When we look at the possibilities of taking part in different courses and trainees which Polish journalists are heading we must underline the lack of them or very limited number in Polish reality we could understand why more journalists seems to be rather pessimistic towards the future of journalism in the XXI century.

But overall in opinion of mostly all questioned journalists the most problematic case is still economic pressures or staffing cuts at their own place of work. Those who have seen their newsrooms shrink, or who say that resource and staffing limitations are the biggest problem facing the profession, are no more or less likely to be negative about the direction of journalism than those who have not faced resource limitations. Similarly, there are no generation gap or ideological divide on this general evaluation of the state of the profession. Almost all journalists - young and old, liberal, moderate or conservative are all about evenly divided in terms of whether they are optimistic or pessimistic about the field.

Newsroom staff cutbacks are hitting journalism at Polish media market. About half of respondents (48%) say the size of their newsroom staff has slightly decreased in the past year. Relatively few (12%) in the print sector are seeing growth in the number of staff but there is a big threat that the financial crisis is going to hit also the local media sector. It has been seen the shrinking advertising market which results in
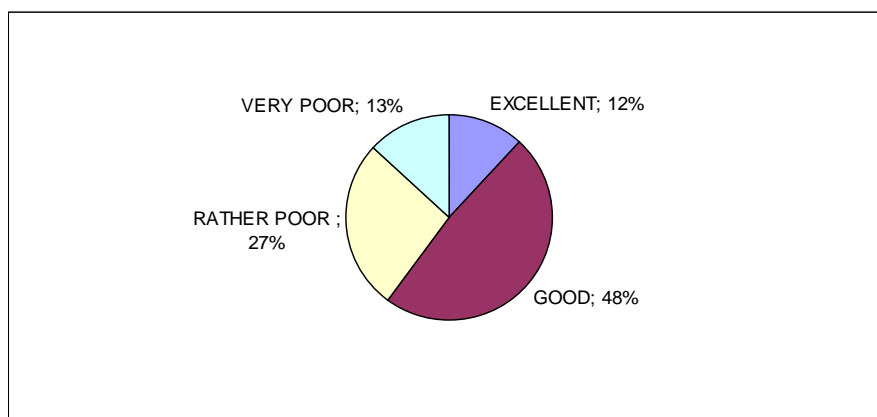
lower profit and staff cutting or changing the way of journalists hiring – from permanent into contemporary or freelance.

One significant change in the news business is growth in the practice of repackaging and repurposing news stories for multiple uses. About half of Polish respondents (47%) say they are doing this more now than in the past. Both traditional and new media journalists at each level are similar in this respect. The owner of a small local media group from Lower Silesia claims, that:

> It is the common tendency of the XXI century journalism and there is no escape from this. If a journalist wants to fulfill readers, listeners or viewers expectations he must be quick and has to have the ability of work with different media platforms (source: interview with local media group owner, march 2008).

At the same time, relatively few voice unhappiness with this trend mainly represented by the older generation of journalists for whom the arrow specialization in the journalism profession is the best way to keep up with professionalism of journalism.

Fig. 1. Editorial staff quality

Source: Own research 2008

There is relatively not such a big difference in a leadership rating between Polish journalists. But the excellent grade constituted rather minor part of the whole result (12%). Most of the respondents (48%) got to their leaders good grade but there are also poor grades given (27%) and very poor (13%). Journalists were mainly complaining about: editors' pressure, workload, too little salary, poor working conditions and lack of trainees.

Training and professional development programs are not very common in Polish newsrooms today. The majority of journalists taking part in the survey says that they very rarely take part in any kind of trainee or course. Journalists asked about last year trainees 62% admitted they did not attend to any course. There were only 21% of respondents who answered positively to this question. This is one of the most important factor which influence the judgment given to the local media management by journalists. Respondents who have participated in training rate their own newsroom staff highly than those who have not. Moreover this is more intensively underlined by the reporters working inside the society. As with training and professional development, those who report that their organizations are engaged in this activity rate their management more favorably.

New technologies and local journalist – friends or enemies

Leszek Olszański (2006) claims that since the end of the 90s till today the graphic design of news presentation on nationwide portals in Poland has barely changed. It also applies to local information services, which form has been and still is similar to that of the nationwide portals. Clearly, there are visible differences in the content of the information presented on specific websites. A local portal is a guide through the region. There is not only information about the current events in the poviat, but also about tourism (e.g. accommodation, restaurants, sightseeing places), sport (e.g. league, junior competitions) and culture (e.g. cinema/theatre program, cultural events etc.).

Nevertheless, what is most important for each medium is the placement of information and advertisements in the most appealing spots – in the center or in the right top corner. Articles published on the portal sites do not adhere to the 'purity of the genre'. They are usually devoid of the leads, and the titles have a reporting character. The news is accompanied by miniature photographs and there are photo reports available on the websites, which document the most important events in the poviat.

Content overview is one of the main elements of a website, but it is not the most significant one. Virtual information service publishers decide about the content of the most attractive spot on a website. The positioning of texts on a website is determined by communication, promotion and economic factors. A given spot may

include an announcement of an important news, but usually other, not necessarily informative, elements are placed. The website headlines, in comparison to the traditional media, show that a different approach is taken to the value and treatment of a piece of online news. Portals, which are usually associated with the term 'internet media' by the internet users, rarely draw on the experience of traditional publishers. Even though many readers treat web portals as their basic source of information, the information itself is not the main product here.

The editors of local portals when asked about their sources of information said that they contact spokespersons of particular institutions or companies. They also use information coming directly from the inhabitants or they browse other websites looking for new topics. A piece of information edited on the basis of a brief report from a press office or an enterprise does not usually read the same as the one published in a newspaper.

The language is often plain. It is brief and superficial. It lacks the artistry of real journalism. A piece of news conveyed via the internet has more to do with a minutes report of a council's meeting rather than with a professionally edited press release. Yet, the internet users seem not to mind. They mostly expect a quick overview of daily news.

The impersonal editing style has its virtual enthusiasts as well. They appreciate the lack of didactic tone or commentary often found in the reports of opinion-driven journalists and publicists. The editors of portal services rarely have a chance to express their opinions or even placing their signature under the edited piece of news. They rather focus on a quick search and update of information coming from various sources. As far the commentary is concerned, it can be said that, in the case of internet information services, readers and editors changed roles as now the reader is becoming the chief commentator of the local reality. It often happens that the size of the commentary exceeds the actual size of the news presented. Commentaries become discussion forums, but it must be bore in mind that the content and quality of a commentary greatly differ. Nonetheless, this form of open communication influences significantly the development of the information society; therefore, one should not be very particular about the quality of the Polish language used in the commentaries.

Concluding the discussion about the ways of presenting information on local portals, it must be underlined once more that the basis for opening a dialogue with the audience is the adequate transfer. The content is the most important element of the internet 'puzzle'. Hence, the local information portal creators' task is its continuous update. The reasons why are the following: firstly, the local services provide their readers with information not obtainable on nationwide information services, which apparently affects the already high visits' rankings on those sites. Secondly, continuous update should crown all the work put into the internet information system and the creation of the region's positive image. Websites available in most analyzed poviats from Lower Silesia region are regularly updated and the spokespersons post an overview of the most important events every day, which is also a source of new topics for the journalists. Moreover, each website has an online archive and is enriched by various photo reports from the key events in a town or municipality. However, there is still a lot to be done when it comes to the quality of photographs or the text layout. In comparison to national or world services, the local information services are still waiting for their evolution. For instance, the local portals very rarely accompany the information with sound or video files.

Except the new challenges and rising quality of local communication which is the effect of exceeding popularity of new technologies we can observe also the changing attitudes towards new media among journalists themselves. The survey shows that journalists continue to have a positive opinion of the Internet's impact on journalism. Not only do majorities of regional (Poland - 63%) and local journalists (Poland - 52%) believe the Internet has made journalism better, but they give relatively high grades for the websites of national news organizations.

Most news professionals say the emergence of the Internet has made journalism better; very few say it has hurt journalism (mainly older generation). More local and regional journalists say the Internet has had either a positive or negative impact, with percentage divided quite proportionally between supporters and opponents of the Internet impact. Not surprisingly, enthusiasm about the Internet is greatest among younger respondents taking part in the survey. More than half of respondents of those under 35 years (62%) think the Internet has been good for the profession; just one third (28%) view it negatively. Journalists age 35 and older also have rather positive view of the Internet's impact (51%).

Those who believe the Internet has helped journalism most frequently cite its power as a research tool. They see a positive impact of the Internet mention some aspect of the Internet as a convenient place to find timely information, to get data at any hour of the day, and to do fact-checking on deadline. Those who work for local and regional media are especially likely to mention this benefit of the Internet (61%).

Another widely noted positive impact of the Internet is its ability to deliver information to the public more quickly and to promote greater competition among media organizations. This view is much more prevalent among print journalists than among those working in TV and radio. A frequent comment within this theme is that print journalism now has the ability to compete with television and radio for breaking news. Also, the speed of the Internet in delivering information was the single most cited benefit among journalists who work primarily on their organization's websites.

Quite a lot of respondents (56%) say the Internet has helped journalism by making far more information available to the public, and by helping to improve the accuracy of the information.

A related notion, mentioned about as often, is that the Internet has broadened the range of outlets and voices available to the public. This includes more points of view, deeper stories, and coverage of topics and stories that otherwise would not have fit into existing time and space available. These changes have forced journalism to be more innovative and responsive to the public.

A less common argument for why the web has made journalism better is that the Internet has made journalism more accountable by enabling the public - and other journalists - to verify easily the accuracy of information and communicate these concerns directly to those who produced a report.

Those who think the Internet has been bad for journalism most often cite the fact that it promotes the spread of unvetted and unfiltered information to the public (42%). Others express a related concern about the speed and pressure of the Internet leading to too many factual errors in news coverage (37%).

Another concern raised by some respondents is that the Internet has promoted the rise of pseudo-journalism, "junk" sites, and low-brow news. One negative consequence cited by several respondents is that "news" reported on these sites force mainstream journalists to waste time chasing down baseless rumors and innuendo.

In a similar vein, a smaller group refers specifically to the Internet having damaged the credibility of journalism in the mind of the public.

Some of questioned journalists notice the Internet as having a bad influence on journalism say the web has made journalists lazy by allowing them to do research at their desks rather than going out into the field, with some specifically stating that the Internet has made plagiarism too easy.

News people also acknowledge a downside to the Internet - solid majorities of both regional and local journalists think the Internet allows too much posting of links to unfiltered material. In addition, sizable numbers in the regional and local samples say the Internet has intensified the deadline pressure they face. The changing media environment is generally having an impact on journalists' workloads - pluralities of regional and local news people say they are increasingly rewriting and repackaging stories for multiple uses.

Summary

We should realize that in the 21st century journalism cannot simply discard - or exist outside of - forces of globalization or the advent of new technologies. The global and local context of journalism practices helps us to understand the complexity of journalism profession vision in a rapidly changing world. For the journalist practice to undergo an expansion will require a close study of the ways globalization and new technologies go through a process of 'resignification' in the local arena [Kraidy, 2003, 36]. All discussions of the future of journalism and globalization must, therefore, capture the distinctness of the local and its epistemological and material repercussions. Glocalization theorists (e.g. Robertson, Soja, Srebreny, Kraidy) realize that the global-local interaction can be unpredictable, multi-directional, and a combination of homogeneity and hybridity.

Moreover media occupy the centre of intersecting areas of influence. Those are: economy, technology, politics, as well as society and culture. The areas have influence not only the media, but also they cooperate each other. The mutual relation is incredibly complex and more than one vast study would be needed to describe them. For the purpose of this topic, it is worthwhile, however, to write a deeper analysis of the existing relations from the comparative perspective. The study of the

Polish local journalism shows that all social and economic areas mentioned above are extremely important for contemporary local journalism shape, starting from the area of politics, which plays the regulative and control roles in relation to the media, politicians and/or institutions established by them influence the functioning of the media by enacting legal acts and enforcing compliance. The media form, on the other hand, political behaviour of the society directly and indirectly, and, besides, it is also through them that the society may express their views.

Technological development in the field of media is now perceived primarily as development of digital technologies. It influences the increase of convergence of the media, such as in terms of convergence of the transmission technology, which in turn influences the decrease in the diversity of transmission channels and the unification of the media (not only in formal terms), as well as the significant increase in the impact, especially social impact.

REFERENCES:

Aldridge, M. (2007). Understanding the Local Medi., Maidenhead, Open University Press.
Bauman, Z. (1998). On Glocalization: or Globalization for some, Localization for some Others. Thesis Eleven 1998, No. 54, London, Sage. pp. 37-49.
Bauman, Z. (2000). Globalizacja. I co z tego dla ludzi wynika. Warszawa, PIW.
Bertrand, C. J. (2000). Media Ethics and Accountability Systems. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.
Calabrese, A. (2004). The Promise of Civil Society: A Global Movement for Communication Rights. Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies 18(3). pp. 317-29.
Chorązki, W. (1994). Obraz niezależnej prasy lokalnej w Polsce w I połowie 1994 r., Instytut na rzecz Demokracji w Europie Wschodniej (IDEE), Kraków, pp. 21.
Chorązki, W. (1999). Polskie media lokalne i sublokalne 1989-1999. Zeszyty Prasoznawcze No. 1-2: 157-168.
Deuze, M. (2004). Journalism Studies beyond Media: On Ideology and Identity. Ecquid Novi 25(2): 275-93.
Deuze, M. (2005). What is Journalism? Professional Identity and Ideology of Journalists Reconsidered. Journalism 6(4): 442-64.
Franklin, B. (2006). Local Journalism and Local Media; Making the Local News. London, Routledge.
Franklin, B. and Murphy D.+ (1998). Making The Local News: Local Journalism in Context. London, Routledge.
Franklin, B., Murphy D. (1991). What News? The Market, Politics and The Local Press. London, Routledge,
Friedman, Thomas L. (2001). Lexus i drzewo oliwne. Zrozumieć globalizację. Poznań, Dom Wydawniczy Rebis.
Giddens, A. (1990). The Consequences of Modernity. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
Giddens, A. (1985). Time, Space and Regionalisation. In. Derek Gregory and John Urry (eds.) Social Relations and Spatial Structures, London: Macmillan, pp. 265-295.

Gierula, M. (2005). **Polska prasa lokalma 1989-2000**. Typologia i społeczne funkcjonowanie. Katowice, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego.

Gierula, M. (2005). Rola prasy lokalnej w integracji małych miast i wsi. In. **Prasa lokalna w budowie** społeczeństwa obywatelskiego, Kancelaria Senatu, Warszawa, p. 23-24.

Gruchot, A. (2008). Polska prasa lokalna. Sytuacja bieżąca, podstawowe problemy,
Perspektywy. Izba Wydawców Prasy, Warszawa.

Hafez, K. (2007). The Myth of Media Globalization. Polity Press, Cambridge.

Hegde, R. S. (2005). Disciplinary Spaces and Globalization: A Postcolonial Unsettling. Global Media and Communication 1(2): 59-62.

Jachimowski, M. (2006). **Regiony periodycznej komunikacji medialnej.** Katowice, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego.

Kannis, P. (1991). **Making the Local News.** Chicago, University of Chicago Press.

Kowalczyk, R. (2003). Prasa lokalna w systemie komunikowania społecznego. Poznań.

Kowalczyk, R. (2008). Media lokalne w Polsce. Poznań, CONTACT.

Kraidy, M. (2001). From Imperialism to Glocalization: A Theoretical Framework for the Information Age. In. B. Ebo (ed.) Cyberimperialism? Global Relations in the New Electronic Frontier. Westport, CT: Paeger, pp. 3-42.

Kraidy, M. (2003). Glocalisation: An International Communication Framework?. Journal of International Communication 9(2): 29-19.

Księski, D. (2011). Independent local press as a pillar of local democracy [in:] In Ilona Biernacka-Ligięza and Lesław Koćwin (eds.) **Local and Regional Media - Democracy and Civil Society Shaping Process**, Nowa-Ruda – Wrocław, pp. 433-450.

Luke, T. W. (1997). New World Order or Neo-World Orders: Power, Politics and Ideology in Informationalizing Glocalities. In M. Featherstone, S. Lash and R. Robertson (eds.) **Global Modernities.** London: SAGE, pp. 91-107.

Mianowski, J. (2008). Powtórka z rozrywki. Niezależność mediów publicznych w Polsce – realna możliwość czy niedościgły postulat. In Forum Dziennikarzy No. 88/89/90 Warszawa, pp. 58-59.

Mianowski, J. (2009). Niezależni zależni...?. In Nasza Wielkopolska No. 91, Poznań, pp. 6-8.

Mianowski, J. (2011). The role of local media in changing local authorities. In Ilona Biernacka-Ligięza and Lesław Koćwin (eds.) **Local and Regional Media - Democracy and Civil Society Shaping Process**, Nowa-Ruda – Wrocław, pp. 49-62.

Michalczyk, S. (2000). **Media lokalne w systemie komunikowania. Współczesne tendencje i uwarunkowania rozwojowe.** Katowice, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego.

Morris, N. (2002). "The Myth of Unadulterated Culture Meets the Threat of Imported Media'. Media, Culture & Society 24(2): 278-89.

Mroziewicz, K. (2006). Dziennikarz w globalnej wiosce, Bydgoszcz-Warszawa, Branata.

Pokrzycka, L. (2008). Funkcjonowanie prasy lokalnej w Polsce. Trzeci Sektor No. 14, Instytut Spraw Publicznych, Warszawa, p. 50-59.

Pokrzycka, L. (2008). Rozwój mediów Lokalnych i regionalnych po 1989 r. In L. Pokrzycka and B. Romiszewska (eds.) Oblicza polskich mediów. Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie – Skłodowskiej, Lublin, pp.140-141.

Robertson, R. (1994). Globalisation or Glocalisation? Journal of International Communication, 1(1):33-52.

Robertson, R. (1995). Glocalization: Time-Space and Homogeneity-Heterogeneity. In Mike Featherstone, Scott Lash, and Roland Roberston (eds.) Global Modernities. London: Sage, pp. 25-44.

Soja, E. W. (2000). Postmetropolis: Critical Studies of Cities and Regions. Oxford: Blackwell.

Sreberny, A. (2005). The Global and the Local in International Communications. In G. Durham and D. M. Kellner (eds.) Media and Cultural Studies Keyworks. Maiden, MA: Blackwell, pp. 604-26.

Sparks, C. (2000). The Global, the Local and the Public Sphere. In G. Wang, J. Servaes and A. Goonasekera (eds.) The New Communications Landscape: Demystifying Media Globalization. London: Routledge, pp. 74-95.

Thornton, W. H. (2000). Mapping the "Glocal" Village: The Political Limits of Glocalization. Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies 14(1): 79-89.

Thussu, D. K. (1999). Privatizing the Airwaves: The Impact of Globalization on Broadcasting in India. Media, Culture & Society 21(1): 125-31.

Weaver, D. H. (ed.) (1998). The Global Journalist: News People around the World. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton.