



# **‘We no longer live in a time of separation’: A comparative analysis of how editorial and commercial integration became a norm**

Journalism

2020, Vol. 21(2) 172–190

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DOI: 10.1177/1464884918779919

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## **Abstract**

The separation between editorial and business activities of news organisations has long been a fundamental norm of journalism. Journalists have traditionally considered this separation as both an ethical principle and an organisational solution to preserve their professional autonomy and isolate their newsrooms from profit-driven pressures exerted by advertising, sales and marketing departments. However, many news organisations are increasingly integrating their editorial and commercial operations. Based on 41 interviews conducted at 12 newspapers and commercial broadcasters in six European countries, we analyse how editors and business managers describe the changing relationship between their departments. Drawing on previous research on journalistic norms and change, we focus on how interviewees use rhetorical discourses and normative statements to de-construct traditional norms, build new professionally accepted norms and legitimise new working practices. We find, first, that the traditional norm of separation no longer plays the central role that it used to. Both editors and managers are working to foster a cultural change that is seen as a prerequisite for

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organisational adaptation to an increasingly challenging environment. Second, we find that a new norm of integration, based on the values of collaboration, adaptation and business thinking, has emerged. Third, we show how the interplay between declining and emerging norms involves a difficult negotiation. Whereas those committed to the traditional norm see commercial considerations as a threat to professional autonomy, our interviewees see the emerging norm as a new way of ensuring professional autonomy by working with other parts of the organisation to jointly ensure commercial sustainability.

### **Keywords**

Cross-functional teams, discourse analysis, editorial–business collaboration, journalism norms, metaphors, native advertising, news organisations, wall of separation

## **Introduction**

The separation between editorial and business operations of news organisations has been regarded as a fundamental norm of journalism in much of Europe, North America, and beyond for more than a century. Journalists have traditionally considered this separation as both an ethical principle and an organisational solution to preserve their professional autonomy and isolate their newsrooms from profit-driven pressures exerted by advertising, sales and marketing departments. However, this traditional norm of separation has recently been challenged as private sector legacy news organisations respond to structural changes in the media environment in part by increasingly integrating editorial and business operations.

In this article, we analyse how senior editors and business managers in a strategic sample of newspaper and broadcasting organisations in six European countries describe the changing relationship between the editorial and the business sides of their organisations. Based on an analysis of 41 semi-structured interviews, we investigate how the norm of separation is discursively articulated and re-negotiated. We focus on editors' and managers' rhetorical and normative discourses to understand how they de-construct traditional norms, build new professionally accepted norms, and legitimise new working practices that are inconsistent with the traditional norms.

We find, first, that the traditional norm of separation no longer plays the central role that it used to. In their rhetorical and normative discourses, both editors and managers stress the need to adopt what they see as more integrated and efficient organisational solutions. Second, we find that a new norm, which we call the norm of integration, has emerged. The new norm is based on combining established editorial values with values such as collaboration, adaptation, and business thinking, and it is already playing an important role in legitimising new practices that are based on frequent exchanges between editorial and the commercial teams. Third, we show how the interplay between traditional and new norms leads to difficult negotiations that are often unresolved. Although most of our interviewees argue for the new norm of integration, they recognise that some do not yet accept this as appropriate. We consider integration to be different from the assimilation of editorial considerations into purely commercial ones that

researchers have found in some news organisations where managers directly control editors (Aneez et al., 2016). Finally, we argue that while integration may challenge one tenet of the professional autonomy of journalism, namely its relative separation from internal commercial pressures, it offers the promise of protecting another component, namely the economic sustainability that keeps professional work isolated from outside pressures exerted by proprietors or other actors (Brüggemann et al., 2016; Hallin and Mancini, 2004; Nielsen, 2016). Indeed, we find that editors see the emerging norm of integration as a new way of ensuring professional autonomy by working with other parts of the organisation to jointly ensure commercial sustainability.

The article is organised as follows. First, we review previous literature on the norm of separation and on professional norms and change. We then formulate our research questions and discuss our method and sample. Next, we present our empirical evidences. We conclude by discussing our findings and their implications for understanding how the key norms and practices of journalism are changing.

## Literature review

### *The norm of separation between news and business*

The separation between editorial and business activities of news organisations has long been one of the key norms in journalistic professionalism. Several studies have pointed out the centrality of this norm (e.g. see Artemas et al., 2016; Carlson, 2015; Coddington, 2015; Mari, 2014; Vos and Finneman, 2017). Coddington (2015), for example, describes the news-business separation as a ‘cultural and occupational assumption’, which is ‘fundamental to the self-understanding of professional journalism’ and is reinforced in the most central sites of its socialisation, that is, newsrooms, journalism schools and textbooks (Coddington, 2015: 67). Other scholars have stressed its key role in journalists’ conceptions of professional autonomy, and defined this separation as a ‘key tenet of journalistic identity’ (Drew and Thomas, 2017: 2), a ‘core norm’ that accommodates journalists’ demands for autonomy (Carlson, 2015: 851), or a key element of ‘journalists’ idealism’ that ‘preserve[s] their independence’ and safeguards the credibility of the information they produce (Delorme and Fedler, 2005: 9).

The norm of separation is rooted in the rise of the market-driven press in the first half of the 19th century (Schudson, 1978). Although significant cross-national differences in the market and political orientation of the press exist (Hallin and Mancini, 2004), newspapers in much of Europe and North America have progressively moved from being primarily political institutions to primarily business institutions, trading dependence on political forces for dependence on market ones (Coddington, 2015). In order to enable professional news work in part by limiting the influence of profit-seeking owners and advertisers’ demands for special treatment, structural barriers between editorial members responsible for content and managers responsible for profitability were established within many news organisations (Shoemaker and Reese, 2014).

The norm of separation is often enacted by evocative metaphors that invest it with moral force and enhance its normative value (Artemas et al., 2016; Coddington, 2015; Gravengaard, 2012; Mari, 2014). Journalists often employ the metaphor of the ‘wall’ of

separation between editorial and business departments, staff and functions. As suggested by Coddington (2015), this metaphor evokes the separation of ‘church and state’ established in the US First Amendment, and journalists who use it tend to ‘characterise themselves as the church and the business side as the state’. Consequently, the newsroom turf is characterised as ‘sacred’, and breaches such as intrusions of business interests into news production processes are considered ‘heresies’ that damage the purity and integrity of the profession (Coddington, 2015: 73).

Despite its etymological reference to the US context, the norm of separation and the metaphors that enhance it have also traditionally been central in many European journalistic cultures (Andersson and Wiik, 2013; Ferrer and Conill, 2016; Harro-Loit and Saks, 2006; Kunelius and Ruusunoksa, 2008). Indeed, European media systems differ significantly in terms of news media market orientation. In countries included in the Liberal Model elaborated by Hallin and Mancini, especially newspapers show higher levels of commercial orientation compared to those included in the Polarised Pluralist Model, which are rather characterised by an elite-oriented and economically marginal press. The Democratic Corporatist Model, where a commercially successful newspaper industry has traditionally coexisted with some level of political parallelism, shows mixed features (Hallin and Mancini, 2004). However, we lack comparative studies specifically focusing on how the relationship between commercial and editorial departments plays out across European countries.

Despite its symbolic and normative importance within journalistic professionalism, in practice the wall has always presented some level of penetrability. Business considerations have both sustained and constrained journalism from the very outset (Nielsen, 2016), and commercial pressures have constantly shaped the profession (Carlson, 2015). Moreover, since the late 1990s, news organisations have accelerated organisational restructuring and started to move towards a major integration of business and editorial departments. Examples of these processes are the establishment of inter-departmental teams charged with the strategic development of new products (Gade, 2008) and the assignment of sales managers to the editorial sections of newspapers (Mari, 2014). These early processes of integration led to rising concerns with journalism autonomy and an increasing importance of the norm of separation in journalistic rhetorical discourses (Gade, 2008; Mari, 2014). Although the wall has never been impenetrable in practice, its symbolic importance within journalism professionalism has become even more evident in the fervent grievances against its ongoing destruction (Coddington, 2015). In more recent years, editorial–business integration processes have been accelerated in response to structural changes like the move to an increasingly digital media environment, greater competition for audience attention and advertisers’ expenditure, and the declining profitability of many newspaper organisations (Cornia et al., 2016; Grueskin et al., 2011; Newman et al., 2017).

### *Journalistic norms and change*

Journalism, like other social institutions, can be understood as a combination of norms, symbol systems, organisational forms, and practices (Lewis, 2012; Ryfe, 2006; Scott, 2008). These norms are always found in combination, as social institutions are rarely, if

ever, organised around a single norm. Norms in journalism can be formal codes, but are also informal schemas and assumptions, often applied unconsciously, which aim to regulate behaviour and exert moral force (Artemas et al., 2016; Schudson, 2001). The traditional norm of a separation between editorial and business is one such norm. Other editorial norms include a commitment to accuracy, fact-based discourse, the practice of reporting, as well as, to different degrees in different countries and organisations, ideas of fairness, impartiality and/or objectivity. When discursively articulated, norms often take the form of 'ought statements', that is, morally potent prescriptions defining how individuals ought to behave to be consistent with shared values (Horne, 2001: 4).

Although norms have a stabilising nature, social, economic, technological, legal and cultural changes may affect the balance of costs and benefits associated with the content of a norm (Horne, 2001). As a consequence, traditional norms become subject to processes of negotiation and contestation that may lead to the emergence of new norms, changes in established norms, or ceremonial adoption of traditional norms that is decoupled by concrete behaviour (Artemas et al., 2016; Lewis, 2012). Previous research shows that norm-building could be provoked by cultural contact between different professional groups, and new norms may be used to claim both separation and affiliation with other groups. Schudson (2001), for example, found that the emergence of the objectivity norm in American journalism took place in an historical context where journalists sought to affiliate with the prestige of scientific professions and to disaffiliate from the emergent group of public relations specialists. Norm-building does not necessarily involve the wholesale rejection of all inherited norms, but can take the form of new combinations, as can be seen for example from the (often tension-filled) combination of established norms of professional control with new norms for open participation articulated around the affordances and culture of digital technology (see Lewis, 2012).

Journalism research has addressed how journalists make sense of major changes in their environment and how these conceptualisations impact on professional norms and practices by engaging, in particular, with discourse analysis (e.g. see Carlson, 2016; Gravengaard, 2012; Jenkins, 2016; Kunelius and Ruusunoksa, 2008; Vos and Finneman, 2017). In this study, we draw on conceptions of discourse that see language and society as having a mutually shaping relationship: discourses are structured by social relations and, at the same time, they play an important role in creating social reality, identities and norms (Gravengaard, 2012; see also Berger and Luckmann, 1966).

Previous research has extensively investigated the changing nature of the editorial–business relationship and, in particular, closely related developments such as native advertising, that is, advertisements that look like news content (e.g. see Cornia et al., 2016; Ferrer Conill, 2016; Harro-Loit and Saks, 2006; Underwood, 1993). However, only a few recent empirical studies have engaged with discourse analysis to understand how the norm of separation is re-negotiated and how new working practices that blur traditional boundaries are legitimised or contested by journalists (Andersson and Wiik, 2013; Artemas et al., 2016; Carlson, 2015; Coddington, 2015; Li, 2017; Raviola, 2012).

A significant contribution to our understanding of how the editorial–business separation is discursively negotiated comes from Artemas et al. (2016), who investigated how 18 news and advertising executives at US newspapers rhetorically reformulate the norm of the wall. Both their approach and their findings are particularly interesting for our study.

They focused, in particular, on the interviewees' use of metaphors, which are considered rhetorical devices that express institutional norms in everyday language and confer legitimacy to traditional and new working practices. They show that interviewees used 'building' and 'spatial' metaphors implying a strong separation (e.g. by referring to 'walls', 'silos' and 'boundaries') to represent the past, whereas they used rhetorical forms connoting a softer separation (e.g. 'a shorter wall', 'a wall with holes' and 'a blurred line') to represent current practices. Moreover, they found that executives also adopted 'ecological' metaphors based on concepts such as 'adaptation' and 'evolution'. This alternative perspective posits that organisms must adapt to survive major environmental changes; likewise, it suggests that, faced with diminished profits and layoffs, news companies are 'naturally' responding to structural changes by pursuing higher integration between news and advertising. By adapting new metaphors, journalists legitimise new practices that clash with the traditional norm of separation (Artemas et al., 2016).

Artemas et al. (2016) conclude that the wall metaphor retains a symbolic place in the American journalism imagination, but a strict separation between news and advertising is no longer considered a dominant norm. However, although they recognise they expected to find stronger differences in the rhetorical discourses of advertising and editorial executives, they do not consider the use of the ecological metaphors as a sign of the emergence of a new norm based on the values of organisational adaptation and inter-departmental collaboration. Instead, they consider the power of the new metaphors as that of simply framing the more integrated practices in 'natural, and hence amoral, terms', thus removing them 'from the realm of normative consideration' (Artemas et al., 2016: 12). As will be discussed in the conclusion, our findings suggest that the legitimisation of these new practices has moved further on to the extent that new norms have emerged.

Other studies have addressed the question of how the editorial and business relationship is rhetorically negotiated in journalistic discourses. Like Artemas et al. (2016), these studies have only considered single countries (generally the United States and, in few cases, Scandinavian countries) and newspaper organisations. In addition, they have mainly focused on journalists, leaving the perspective of the business side of news organisations relatively unexplored. Coddington (2015), for example, investigates US journalists' discursive strategies around the news-business boundary and concludes that the wall metaphor has surrendered to the 'rhetoric of survival and industry crisis' and 'its era as a dominant norm is over' (Coddington, 2015: 78–79). Similarly, Andersson and Wiik (2013) focus on Swedish newspapers and find a strengthened influence of managerialism and business thinking in editors-in-chief's discourses.

## Research design

### Research questions

Thus, previous research advances our knowledge of how the norm of separation is discursively articulated and re-negotiated by journalists, but we still lack a systematic understanding of how this process shapes the professional discourses of both journalists and business managers, how it occurs across different European countries and different

types of news organisations, and whether and how new norms are emerging in journalistic discourse. Our first research questions ask the following:

*RQ1.* How do senior editors and managers across different countries and types of media organisations rhetorically articulate the changing relationship between media organisation departments?

*RQ1a.* In particular, how do they refer to the traditional norm of separation?

*RQ1b.* How do they legitimise or contest new working practices that diverge from the traditional norm of separation?

Like other studies that engaged with discourse analysis, we will take into consideration the use of metaphors, intended as rhetorical tools that, by transferring the legitimacy of one conceptual domain to another conceptual domain or semantic area (Artemas et al., 2016; Gravengaard, 2012; Mari, 2014), define desirable relationships between editorial and business activities. However, our analytical focus goes beyond the use of rhetorical tropes, and we will also consider normative statements articulating the ‘right and wrong’ in journalism practices, that is, how journalists *should* structure their work and relate with other parts of the organisations. Thus, our second and third research questions ask the following:

*RQ2.* Are new norms emerging from their rhetorical discourses and normative statements on the changing relationship between editorial and business?

*RQ3.* How do senior editors and managers deal with possible inconsistencies between the principles expressed by traditional and new norms?

### *Sample and method*

The study is based on qualitative interviews conducted in a strategic sample of newspaper and broadcasting organisations in Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Poland and the United Kingdom. These countries represent a range of European media systems that are marked by different levels of news media commercial orientation: Italy and France are part of the Polarised Pluralist Model, Finland and Germany of the Democratic Pluralist Model, and the United Kingdom of the Liberal Model (Brüggemann et al., 2014; Hallin and Mancini, 2004). Poland is considered a hybrid case: it shows many characteristics of the Polarised Pluralist Model, although recent political developments set it apart from the other countries covered here in terms of media freedom and processes of privatisation and commercialisation pushed it towards the Liberal Model (Dobek-Ostrowska, 2012).

Semi-structured interviews were conducted between April and June 2017 with 41 senior editors and managers at a strategic sample of 12 private sector legacy media organisations. In each of the six countries, we selected one newspaper and one TV broadcasting organisation among those with the widest offline reach (in Finland, where it was not possible to include a commercial broadcaster, we included two national newspapers).

The interviewees were selected in each organisation among editors and managers that had previously taken part in the development of new digital news products.<sup>1</sup> The projects explored during the interviews, which triggered the discussion on the changing organisational arrangements within the new organisations, include a range of editorial and business initiatives, from investment in content designed to drive subscriptions, over mobile apps and social media initiatives, to experimentation with documentaries and data journalism. Thus, our interviewees also constitute a strategically chosen sample because they engaged with the development of new projects, which often implies changes in organisational set-ups (Drew and Thomas, 2017; Sehl et al., 2017).

Specific questions on the role of business units in the development of the projects and, more generally, on the changing relationship between editorial and commercial departments were asked during each interview. Our interview approach was in line with other similar studies (e.g. Artemas et al., 2016): no questions that would necessarily trigger the use of metaphors or lead interviewees towards any particular normative viewpoint were asked. The interviews were mostly conducted face-to-face by the authors, transcribed, and qualitatively analysed through NVivo. In France, Germany and Italy, interviews were conducted in the native language of the interviewees. In Finland, Poland and the United Kingdom, they were conducted in English. The units of analysis are discourses containing metaphors and normative statements on how inter-departmental relationship *should be* organised or how journalists and business representatives *should* relate each other. These discourses were selected, translated when relevant, and analysed. A comparative table including the selected quotes was used to keep track of possible variation across professional roles (senior editors vs. managers), types of news organisation (newspapers vs. broadcasters), and countries, as well as to inform the discussion of the findings.

## Findings

### *De-constructing a traditional norm (RQ1)*

The relationship between editorial and business departments is described by our interviewees as a collaboration, rather than in terms of separation; it is almost always framed in positive ways and often characterised as the result of an ongoing process of change that has been intentionally pursued to adapt to a changing media environment. This emerges, for example, from the following quote from an interview with a senior editor at a newspaper organisation in Finland, who rhetorically justifies the increasingly close collaboration between departments by stressing how ‘everybody understands’ that separations are not viable any longer. The quote also expresses the desirability of these changes and exemplifies how often international high-prestige news outlets are considered benchmarks against which domestic intra-organisational integration processes are evaluated:

The collaboration between technical, commercial, and editorial teams has been getting closer. I think this is also something *we’ve tried to push a lot* because, I think, *everybody understands* that a strict *division* between technical, business, and editorial teams is *not viable anymore*. Of course, we’ve not gone as far as the Washington Post or ... But I think we work very closely



nowadays. I think *it's a very good thing*, and *we could even work more closely*. Probably in the future we will. (Editor, newspaper, Finland, our emphasis)

Rhetorical articulations based on the metaphor of the *wall* or similar concepts implying *separations* are also present in our corpus. However, they are almost exclusively used to represent the past. Contrary to what we would have expected on the basis of the literature reviewed in the previous section, we found almost no reference to an idealised, glorious past characterised by sacred walls and more ethical ways of organising journalists' work; rather, the traditional newsroom and its divisions is represented as a legacy of the past that *has to be* abandoned in order to move forward towards more efficient organisational solutions. Characterising past solutions as less efficient means de-constructing the traditional norm of separation and legitimising new practices that would once have been considered breaches and violations of shared principles.

This use of the metaphor of the wall is evident, first of all, in the rhetorical articulations of business managers across different countries. In the following quote, for example, a manager of a Polish newspaper explains how moving a business unit dedicated to paid content and social media strategies into the newsroom had required special care, but eventually had positive outcomes in terms of efficiency and, especially, acceptance among journalists:

It really requires a [great deal] of trust from both sides. *We had this expression here*, for many years, '*the Chinese Wall*' between the business side and the editorial side. Right now, [journalists] can see us every day, because we sit in the newsroom, and we are really interested in the work. We're attending all the meetings. [...] We have a lot of promotional tools. *Now, they know that it kind of pays off*. (Manager, newspaper, Poland, our emphasis)

Separations belonging to the past are also rhetorically constructed through metaphors suggesting that journalists were previously working within structures that operated in complete isolation from the rest of the world. A manager overseeing the digital operations of a British newspaper, for example, used the concept of *vacuum* (implying that such excessive isolation was not an ideal organisational solution) to represent the past, while using the concept of *sensitivity* (implying a more pronounced attitude to detect and respond to environmental changes) to represent the current situation:

We work very closely with the marketing and the editorial teams [...] to really promote our [content]. We have a much greater *sensitivity* to the needs of marketing [...] So, it's not done completely *in a vacuum* in the way that it might have been done years or a decade ago. (Manager, newspaper, UK, our emphasis)

Similar rhetorical formulations are also used within broadcasting organisations. A manager of a German television group, for example, characterised the current relationship between the newsroom and commercial departments by using the concepts of *openness* and *understanding*, as implicitly opposed to the negative concepts of *closure* and *lack of comprehension* of others' contribution to shared goals that would characterise the past:

The editorial side is *more open* to the fact that marketing is relevant. So, the editor – who before used to say: ‘ah, we do not need advertising’ – *has now also understood* that advertising has a relevance. (Manager, TV, Germany, our emphasis)

A sharp opposition between past times marked by walls and boundaries and present times marked by more positive concepts such as openness, collaboration and dialogue is also rhetorically constructed by editors. As stressed by a senior editor at an Italian broadcaster, for example, journalists are now more inclined to engage in teamwork with business departments:

In the past, there were two *separate dimensions*: people dealing with editorial content production and [other] people dealing with the management of this content. [...] I deal with content production, but it is clear that [now] the trend is *to do more teamwork* on issues that don’t just have to do with content. So, I’m also involved in internal discussions on business aspects. (Editor, TV, Italy, our emphasis)

The rhetorical construction of the past-present opposition that is taking place within European media organisations is based on an evolutionary conception of time. The move towards more efficient organisational solutions is framed as an inevitable result of a natural process whereby organisations, as living organisms, have developed from earlier to more modern and adaptive forms. As added by the previously mentioned Italian editor, editorial and business departments ‘have *naturally evolved* towards a closer relationship’, and collaboration is ‘*unavoidable*’. A similar evolutionary concept of time is expressed by an editor of an Italian newspaper, who uses several normative statements to stress how the separation between state and church is no longer in line with current times:

I am convinced that, today, *it is not possible to think of* building a sustainable business model if the editorial component does not *constantly talk* to the business component. The *traditional canonical separation* between the state and the church *has no raison d’être any longer*, and this is because *we no longer live in a time of separation* between the state and the church. We are at a time when [...] the business component, the management, *needs to keep listening* to the editorial component, [...] and, at the same time, the editorial component *cannot pretend* that it does not have a sustainability model on its horizon, because otherwise I don’t think we are going anywhere. (Editor, newspaper, Italy, our emphasis)

Thus, the picture that results from our analysis is very consistent across different professional roles, kinds of news organisation, and countries. Both senior editors and managers, employed in both newspaper and broadcasting organisations operating in all the countries we cover, rhetorically refer to the norm of separation in surprisingly similar ways.

### *Constructing new norms (RQ2)*

The process of de-construction of the traditional norm of separation is accompanied by the construction of a new norm, which we call the *norm of integration*. This new norm is based on three main concepts – collaboration, adaptability and business thinking – as well as on an underlying holistic conception of media organisations that equate effectiveness

with more integrated organisational solutions. The new concepts supplement the traditional value of editorial autonomy and norms of accuracy, fact-based discourse and a commitment to the practice of reporting, but seek to ensure it through integration rather than separation.

As already discussed, *collaboration* is a concept often used to distinguish between past and present and between early and more evolved organisational forms. It is important to stress here how collaboration becomes a central value in the process of norm-building. A manager of a Finnish newspaper, for example, stresses how cross-functional teams representing editorial, marketing, sales and tech departments *need to* be involved when new digital products are designed. Inter-departmental collaboration is thus normatively framed as a necessary condition to favour exchanges of ideas and innovation in a digital environment:

I think that this was the first time more people and different parts of the organisation were involved. [...] When you deal with digital [products], everybody *needs to be* involved. [...] The more people we get generating ideas, the better it is. (Manager, newspaper, Finland, our emphasis)

The second concept, *adaptability*, is also framed as a key value. This is clearly illustrated, for instance, in the following quote from a manager of a French broadcaster:

I don't know if tomorrow the job that we do today will be the same. Our business keeps changing every day. And, in fact, I think *the key to success is adaptability*. It is not easy if we do not have journalistic, marketing, and business teams that are *able to adapt to changes*. (Manager, TV, France, our emphasis)

*Business thinking* is the third concept that emerges as a central value in the norm-building process. Like the other key values, it exerts moral force. This is illustrated, for example, in the following quote from an editor of the previously mentioned French broadcaster, who normatively frames the development of business-thinking skills within editorial departments as a new essential requirement:

Now it's clear, especially for a journalist, that *it's important to know* if the content you're producing can bring money in. A few years ago, this might have seemed crazy, but *now we have to know, if we want to survive*, whether what we produce can have economic [gains]. (Editor, TV, France, our emphasis)

Rhetorical and normative reference to the core values of collaboration, adaptation and business thinking facilitates the legitimization of new practices that were previously considered violations of the norm of separation. A manager of a Finnish newspaper, for example, explains that editors are now keener to accept journalists' involvement in native advertising production because of the increased awareness, within editorial departments, of the necessity to adapt to a changing business situation:

I think that, *five years ago, it would have been impossible* for editors *to even think* that [journalists] could write [sponsored content]. But now, I think, it's more and more common. [...] And even the *editors get it that*, okay, *this is where the money comes [from] nowadays*, and *this is what they need to do*. (Manager, newspaper, Finland, our emphasis)

A senior editor of the same Finnish newspaper confirms that new practices that blur traditional boundaries between editorial and commercial content are increasingly accepted by journalists:

We want [...] [to] have mutual projects with the marketing side, [...] and to have commercially related material on the editorial side. It's still quite a small thing [today], but *everybody understands* that if you are [...] not a state-funded media, but a commercial media, *you have to sell the product*. (Editor, newspaper, Finland, our emphasis)

The new norm is also embodied in normative statements on how journalists should develop new skills and adopt different approaches to their daily work in order to favour organisational adaptation. The following quote from an editor of another Finnish newspaper offers an example of these new expectations. Journalists' use of audience analytics has been strengthened in order to optimise the production of news that generates new digital subscriptions. As stressed by the interviewee, journalists are expected not only to develop new skills but also to fulfil a new role, that is, the role of 'subscription sellers':

My biggest [lesson] learned is: 'Put the numbers on the table and then let the journalists be very creative and find their way to those numbers'. [...] *You need goals and parameters* that you can follow every day [...] in order to *get people understanding the need for change* [...] [and] that *their work actually affects the whole newspaper*. [...] They just need to be activated, not by saying what they need to do, but *they must become* both problem solvers and *subscription sellers*. (Editor, newspaper, Finland, our emphasis)

New normative expectations of how journalists' approach to news should change are also illustrated by a manager of a Polish newspaper, who clearly associates the value of innovation with efforts to create a 'business-oriented newsroom':

We've tried to work more like an *innovative company*. [...] It's really connected with [...] *creating a business oriented newsroom*. Right now, we're in the process of making the journalists, the editors, aware of the value of their content. (Manager, newspaper, Poland, our emphasis)

The link between the norm of integration and attempts to change journalists' approach is very clearly expressed in the following quote from a manager of another organisation, which we further anonymise at the interviewee's request. Interestingly, this is one of the few instances in which interviewees mentioned that some journalists have not adhered to the new norm of integration and resisted changes in their working practices:

[Journalists] do not just do journalism for the sake of doing journalism, *they do journalism to make money*. The business challenge is completely acquired by [the editor] and this is *what he tries to make his team understand*. [...] [One journalist] just left, he did not understand. He said 'I'm a journalist, I cannot make money'. [...] I think *it's a culture. It will change with time*. [...] So, a journalist is trained to have an ethic, to investigate. Basically, we should not ask him to make money. But unfortunately, when you're in a private group, you have to understand why you work. (Not for attribution, our emphasis)

### *The interplay between declining and emerging norms (RQ3)*

Although most rhetorical articulations on intra-organisational relationships show adherence to the norm of integration and use the wall metaphor to represent the past, in some instances, traditional and new norms seem to co-exist. An editor of a German newspaper, for example, explains that some sort of separation is still considered desirable, but this has to be accompanied by a holistic understanding of the organisation that also includes its business objectives:

*It's still important that we have a clear separation between editorial and advertising. But I think it is essential that editorial colleagues also understand how the business model works. That does not mean they need to like it [or] promote it themselves. [...] But people need to know how [the whole] house works and why we need to develop things so that our company has a future. (Editor, newspaper, Germany, our emphasis)*

How do the interviewees make sense of the potential conflict between a declining traditional norm calling for separation, and a new emergent norm suggesting stronger intra-organisational integration and broader diffusion of business thinking as more evolved solutions? It is clear from the analysis that the residual elements of the traditional norm of separation are articulated in terms of *role distinctions* and respect for others' professionalism, rather than in terms of *physical* or *operational divisions*. In other words, journalists are expected to share spaces and collaborate with people from sales, advertising, marketing and IT units, but at the same time non-editorial professionals are expected to be respectful of the journalists' role and avoid inappropriate requests. An editor of a French newspaper involved in a new digital project, for example, explained that the collaboration with business units was working well because they have 'respected' her editorial autonomy, without questioning any editorial decision or suggesting what topics to cover and how to cover them (Editor, newspaper, France).

In other cases, however, the influence of business considerations on topic selection is considered a more legitimate practice. As explained by an editor of an Italian newspaper, for example, recommendations on topics that are more attractive for advertisers are acceptable, provided that advertising department representatives respect journalists' autonomy in deciding how to cover them:

*The advertising department is increasingly in dialogue with the editorial staff, pointing out what [...] are the sectors [...] we could focus on to attract advertising investments [...] This is happening in all news organisations. In my opinion, this relationship is more virtuous than the previous one, in the sense that, in this case, you still somehow have the church and the state, that is: 'I tell you what are the business areas [that the advertising market is more interested in], and you, somehow, without necessarily degenerating, imagine what could be the product that sparks the interest of that part of the market'. (Editor, newspaper, Italy, our emphasis)*

Similarly, a manager of a Polish newspaper explained that journalists' worries about the previously mentioned introduction of business units within the newsroom were mitigated when they realised that data analysts would have not told them 'what to do exactly':

That it's not a strict rule, that we have to follow all the data [...], it's just a kind of sign or a tip on how to work, maybe on what to [cover] more often and what to [cover] a bit less. (Manager, newspaper, Poland)

Editorial autonomy may be challenged to different extents depending on the various organisational aims that influence news selection, namely promoting paid content, optimising social media visibility or attracting advertising investments. However, our analysis of different interviews does not consistently show either a clear differentiation between more and less legitimate organisational influences or a shared understanding of which editorial practices can or cannot be affected. The difficulties in finding a balance between declining and emergent norms are also illustrated in the following quote from a senior editor of a Finnish newspaper:

In our lifestyle section, especially, there's a lot of cooperation with business units and advertisers [...] There might also be some [cooperation] in some other sections, but *you always have to be able to maintain your independence. Money cannot actually affect the news.* [...] You have to find the right balance *between having the business side working with the editorial side and some sections [that] should be like completely free.* If you're writing about politics, you can't really have anything business-wise in that thing. [...] That's sort of *sacred stuff*; but, then, when you have lifestyle content or that kind of *less serious stuff*... (Editor, newspaper, Finland, our emphasis)

Thus, the interplay between declining and emerging norms involves a difficult, ongoing negotiation between values that those committed to the traditional norm of separation see as practices that risk undermining professional autonomy, but that those who champion the new norm of integration see as a better way of ensuring professional autonomy. While our interviewees clearly argue in favour of the norm of integration, they also explicitly and implicitly recognise that not all their colleagues see the combination of established editorial values and new values like collaboration, adaptation and business thinking as appropriate, as imbued with the moral 'ought' character that define a widely accepted norm.

## Concluding discussion

Based on primary evidence from 41 interviews conducted at 12 newspapers and commercial broadcasters in six European countries, we have analysed how senior editors and managers describe the changing relationship between the editorial and business sides of news organisations.

In response to our first research question (RQ1), we have shown how the traditional norm of separation is de-constructed in both journalistic and managerial discourses and no longer plays the central role that it used to. Rhetorical articulations based on the concept of separation, such as the traditional metaphor of the wall, are used to represent the past and are associated with negative concepts such as excessive isolation, closure and lack of comprehension of environmental changes and organisational goals. Both senior editors and managers stress the need to abandon traditional norms to move forward towards more integrated organisational solutions, which they associate with positive values such as dialogue, openness, sensitivity and understanding of others' contributions to

shared goals. Characterising traditional norms as out-dated and previous organisational solutions as inefficient helps our interviewees to legitimise new practices that would previously have been considered violations of established principles.

In response to our second research question (RQ2), we have found that the de-construction of the traditional norm of separation is accompanied by a simultaneous norm-building process. A new norm of integration, based on combining established editorial values with the values of collaboration, adaptation and business thinking, has emerged and already plays a central role in our interviewees' rhetorical and normative discourses. The switch to the norm of integration in journalistic dominant discourses is based on a holistic conception of media organisations that equate effectiveness with more integrated organisational solutions. It is also based on an evolutionary conception of time, whereby cultural and organisational change is the natural outcome of a process of adaptation. Changes in inter-departmental relationships and in professional norms are presented as being necessary to survive in an increasingly challenging media environment. Our analysis shows that journalists are now expected to develop new skills (e.g. business thinking), to change their working practices (e.g. collaborating with marketing professionals to promote their stories), and to fulfil new roles (e.g. that of subscription sellers). It is also important to note that this norm of integration implies an element of reciprocity in the relationship between editorial and commercial professionals, and is thus clearly different from the kind of assimilation of editorial considerations into purely commercial ones that can be seen in some news organisations in some countries where editors are fully subject to commercial leadership (e.g. see Aneez et al., 2016). The emergent norm based on the concepts of collaboration, adaptability and business thinking continue to value editorial autonomy but seeks to ensure it through integration rather than separation.

Interestingly, we found many similarities across the different professionals, news organisations and national contexts that we cover. We have considered two different professional groups (senior editors and business managers) that were previously normatively described as separate and, in some cases, even opposed to one another. However, we found that they make sense of environmental and organisational changes in very similar ways: they both show adherence to the norm of integration and draw from the same evolutionary repertoire of concepts to legitimise new practices. Media systems are marked by different levels of news media commercial orientation, and cross-organisational and cross-country differences in the nature and extent to which editorial-commercial integration is organised and pursued are probably quite pronounced. However, the analysis of how the norm of integration is articulated across different organisations and countries shows strong similarities, rather than differences. This finding is in line with other studies that have found strong similarities in journalistic conceptualisations across countries (e.g. Gravengaard, 2012) and in how editorial and commercial representatives make sense of the changing relationship between their departments (Artemas et al., 2016). We consider these similarities as evidence of the emergence of a new norm, because of its spread across different professional roles, media organisations and countries, and because of the moral force it exerts in interviewees' ought statements and the way in which it is used by *both* editors and managers to argue for changes in journalistic work. In line with the theoretical observation that journalism, like other social institutions, can be understood as a combination of a number of norms, symbol systems,

organisational forms and practices (Lewis, 2012; Ryfe, 2006; Scott, 2008), the move from the traditional norm of separation to the new norm of integration is not a wholesale rejection of established editorial values, but a move towards a new combination of norms that retain a commitment to accuracy, fact-based reporting and other journalistic principles.

Our findings suggest that the new norm of integration already plays a central role in the discourses of senior editors. It is important to stress that editors-in-chief and other high-ranking journalists alone are not representative of the broader journalistic professional culture, which also includes rank-and-file journalists. Indeed, senior editors are generally more inclined to support closer organisational integration and promote change in established editorial practices (Andersson and Wiik, 2013; Coddington, 2015; Jenkins, 2016; Kunelius and Ruusunoksa, 2008), whereas rank-and-file journalists would, very likely, consider reorganisations less enthusiastically, as an unavoidable necessity. Indeed, in few instances our interviewees have mentioned cases of journalists resisting transformations they saw as threats to their professionalism. However, senior editors are in a position to facilitate both organisational and cultural change, thus they may act as 'norm entrepreneurs' (Sunstein, 1996: 909) and play an important role in driving change in journalists' professional culture (Artemas et al., 2016; Carlson, 2015; Küng, 2015). Moreover, our interviewees have been involved in the development of new projects, often being part of cross-departmental team. As we have previously discussed, cultural contact with other professional groups could trigger norm-building processes. Indeed, frequent exchanges with representatives of business departments may have fostered editors' inclination to adopt a more holistic view of their organisations and to stress the need to re-negotiate the norm of separation. Possible cross-country differences might be attenuated by the fact that our study focused on individuals that act as change agents, who engage in similar processes of norm-building to promote a change within their organisations. Future research could explore the role the norm of integration plays within the professional culture of rank-and-file journalists and whether cross-country differences affect how rank-and-file journalists adhere to the emergent norm.

In response to our third research question (RQ3), we have shown how the interplay between traditional and new norms leads to difficult negotiations that are often unresolved. Although most of our interviewees clearly champion the new norm of integration, they explicitly and implicitly recognise that some of their colleagues do not yet consider this as appropriate.

It is clear that the emergence of the new norm of integration challenges some tenets of how journalists have traditionally conceptualised their professional autonomy, that is, on the basis of their relative separation from business considerations (Schudson and Anderson, 2009). However, if this norms switch can indeed – as our interviewees suggest – help private sector news media adapt to current structural changes and mounting business challenges, then integration could enable another aspect of professional autonomy that only comes with economic sustainability, that is, the insulation from outside pressures exerted by proprietors or other actors (e.g. political parties, interest groups, the state) that might intervene to sustain news organisations (Brüggemann et al., 2016; Hallin and Mancini, 2004; Nielsen, 2016). In this sense, our editorial interviewees present the emerging norm of integration as a new mean towards an old end. Just as the



norm of separation was supposed to enable professional autonomy in the past, our editorial interviewees argue that the norm of integration is necessary to enable professional autonomy in the future.

### Acknowledgements

We are grateful for input and support from the team at the Reuters Institute, especially Joy Jenkins.

### Declaration of conflicting interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.


### Funding

The authors disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship and/or publication of this article: This work was supported by a grant from Google UK as part of the Digital News Initiative (CTR00220)

### Note

1. We interviewed eight editors and managers in Finland, seven in France, seven in Germany, nine in Italy, seven in Poland and three in the United Kingdom.

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