

Theorizing Innovation Journalism

Notes From the Classroom

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Theorizing Innovation Journalism - Notes from the classroom

Innovation Journalism may be understood as a reorientation of basic assumptions underlying the study, practice, research and education in journalism. The concept of Innovation Journalism denotes an idea of a 'beat' or a 'category', but underlying the Stanford University variant of Innovation Journalism is a more comprehensive understanding 'a communication ecology' where 'innovation' seems to be taken for granted as something good for societal development, organizational development, and business development.

Reflecting the profoundly cultural meaning of innovation as an idea, a key question is whether social innovation and business innovation can be understood as two pieces of the same stick, or not? One might understand the term 'ecology' to denote harmony and balance – or society seeking it. Journalism, on the other hand, was born and bred with a focus on conflict and conflict narrative within a framework of democratic publicism. Hence, one aspect of theorizing Innovation Journalism is to clarify its applied understandings of innovation as a content theme in the news. Another is to clarify innovation as a term relating to the role of journalism in societal changes more macroscopically. A middle ground is to critique the notion of innovation as a guideline to the challenges now facing journalism and its narrative forms.

Introduction

Journalism is being studied ever more comprehensively, now often from the point of view of its *future*, its *death* or its *transformation* (Eide, 2009; Bro, 2008; Deuze, 2004). The current state of journalism is essentially being discussed in light of six factors – whose combined consequence was unforeseen less than a decade ago: (1) *intensified degrees of interactivity*, (2) *virtual reality*, (3) *multimodality*, (4) and *audience fragmentation* caused by *user-defined information flow* (Hjarvard, 2009, Tveiten, 2006). This *globalized, intensified and diversified* information flow adds two more issues: (5) the *open-access nature of the Internet* in relation to issue of authoritative quality of information (Keene, 2009), and: (6) *new technology applications* based on bounded Internet spaces where content providers can pursue uniqueness through reinforced revenue streams, (Zittrain, 2009).¹ The future of the Internet, of information quality, and news journalism, are all part of a larger concern with changes in our public spheres (Downie & Schudson, 2009).

¹ Examples would include iPad and iTunes.

In this article we take issue with this debate from the point of view of journalism education. News organizations as well as individual journalists are called upon to re-conceive their relations with audiences; they need to work smarter, compete better with new media ventures, and fine-tune their attention work in a culture of competing voices (Nordfors, 2009b). It seems likely to regard the concept of *innovation* as a key term. There is no lack of consensus that journalism needs to innovate. The question is rather what goes into the term ‘innovation’? Understood by its general usage, innovation is a *positive* term. However, this article begins with a more critical turn: *How does innovation compute with communication? What are the presumed relationships between innovation, communication and journalism? How does communication of innovation relate to journalism not just practically but also theoretically? And what is to be had from answering these questions in light of journalism education?*

What we have in mind in this article is to query different aspects of innovation relating to education in journalism: Formal journalism education concerns itself with *curricula*. We want to ask what ought to be the defining aspects of the innovation theme in a journalism curricula? Is it innovation or is it journalism? Next comes the practical question of *course contents*: What are adequate concepts, courses and contents in an innovation oriented journalism curriculum? Third is the issue of *program development*. What and where does innovation education in journalism occur: In journalism departments, in business school departments, in centers of innovation and entrepreneurship, in the humanities? Running prior to these concerns is the *societal relevance* of a given type of journalism education, rooted in its *intellectual relevance* (Josephi 2005; Glasser 1999; Hume, 1996). In order to discuss the practical matters of fitting innovation into contemporary journalism education, there is in other words a need to elicit the idea of innovation itself, fairly probingly.

Since Stanford University is the early definer of Innovation Journalism as a model and a framework, it is also a likely focal point for this article. The Center for the study of Innovation Journalism at Stanford is not alone in this concern with innovation, but it holds a special interest for many communication researchers, since this is where the first PhD program in communication was once conceived: In the 1950’s, by Wilbur Schramm and colleagues. Many of our contemporary models of communication theory emanate from here. And there is of course more than coincidental links between Schramm and Everett Rogers (2003), the author of *Diffusion of Innovations*, which is essentially a book about communicating innovation. In order to frame this question we first discuss some aspects of the Innovation Journalism as defined on the ‘In-Jo’ website at Stanford, and elsewhere by its founders.² Second, the article reflects on the meaning of the terms *entrepreneurship* and *innovation*. Finally, it situates the challenge of innovation journalism as education within the larger discussion of the “*academization*” of journalism practice (cf. Carey, 1989, 1987, 1974).

² <http://blog.innovationjournalism.org/>

Background: Relating Innovation to Journalism

It is perhaps no coincidence that a Center for Innovation Journalism is localized at Stanford University, in the heart of Silicon Valley. This is where Google had its start as a graduate students' project, and where Facebook found its home after moving out of the Harvard dormitory. It is where Apple built a world empire from a Cupertino garage. It is home to the head quarter of Sun, Cisco, and other software producers with key roles in the invention of contemporary network technologies and therefore also contemporary networked society (House and Price, 2009; Kluger, 2008; Barabasi, 2003).

The contrast between Silicon Valley communication thinking and journalism history is poetically sharp for anyone who takes a short drive South, to the Hearst Mansion at St. Simeon. Here, the mansion left by William Randolph Hearst is a testament to an era in media development when the grand entrepreneurs of newspaper empire made it a business to grow and expand the power of journalism. It was not just Hearst, but Bill Paley of CBS, Henry Luce of Time Magazine, the Ochs' dynasty of New York Times, and later the Graham's of Washington Post (Halberstam, 1979). Add to these the names such 'journalism definers' as Walter Lippmann, Walter Cronkite, Edward Murrow, Julian Reuters and more; the contrast to Mark Zuckerberg, Sergej Brin, Larry Page, Bill Gates and Steve Jobs becomes profound. They are all entrepreneurs who in the classical sense of entrepreneurship are successful in combining existing resources in new ways. They have all redefined journalism. But there is one difference and it is fundamental: The last generation has redefined journalism, completely and irreversibly – *from the outside*. We might add Ted Turner, especially Rupert Murdoch, and Al Neuharth to the roster. The rules would be the same, however: Current journalism is structurally redefined from *without*.

Into this scenario, Silicon Valley has introduced an intensified pace of social change and a vision of world information flows. So amply illustrated by Charles L. House and Raymond L. Price in their 2009 book on the history of the Hewlett-Packard company in Silicon Valley, a cluster of factors worked together to create a climate for collaboration and competition, networking and network thinking, venture capital and global outlooks on things local. In the time-span of about 50 years, Silicon Valley became *Silicon Valley*; transformed from an orange orchard into a world hub for technology-driven development. There is in a sense no reason why this particular place on the planet should foster the growth of a world-changing innovations climate. On the whole, there seems to be consensus that the role of Stanford University and Stanford Research International (SRI, formerly Stanford Research Institute) in attracting key researchers at a crucial time, paved the way for building on the invention of the transistor, the microchip and other industrial designs (Kluger, op.cit.). Without foreclosing on the conclusions of this paper, on

might also understand Silicon Valley in light of concept of the 'creative class' as conceived by Richard Florida (2002, 2005).

From Silicon Valley to YOU

Statistical overviews would tell us that from 1975 until 1990, information flows expanded and deepened in the world as a whole (Hjarvard, op.cit.; Thussu, 2007; Tveiten, op.cit.). The key changer was satellite communication (Karam, 2009; Josephi, 2005; Scott, 2005). From 1990 until 1995 the world geopolitical map changed dramatically, with the end of the Cold War, while the globalizing effects of the Internet were beginning to be felt through for instance AOL and the early Netscape (Stevenson, 2003; Thussu, op.cit.). However, these changes were small compared to that which took place between 2005 and 2010. Geopolitical shifts, increased poverty, increased refugee migration, financial crisis, Facebook, Google and other factors add trustworthiness to Giddens' (2002) idea of 'a runaway world': How do we conceptualize the roles, implications, and consequence of the massive communications changes – the mediatization of practically every societal, political and cultural process imaginable?

Where does innovation, and especially innovation journalism enter into the picture? A single word, comes to mind; *YOU*. The June 15th 2009 issue of Time Magazine has a photo of an iPhone on the front cover, accompanied by a story on how Twitter is changing the social fabric of society. Not only is Twitter and other social media presenting us with profound alterations in there way we communicate, according to the cover story: it is also a 'generational thing'. Changes and innovation adoption in media use are coming from the younger generations, the so-called 'media natives'. It is filtering into older generations – social 'media migrants' -- at a slower pace, and gradually fusing with the idea that newspaper journalism, as we know it, is dying. On an average day, a decade after the web2.0 revolution, the avid newspaper reader belongs to a fragmented audience capable of selecting and choosing across cultural borders, nation-state borders and media forms. Like the newspapers, TV and radio have morphed into new multimodal meaning universes, but they have done so in ways that differ from one place to another. The most common comparison to make is that audiences in general have gained editing power, shifting it away from the 'old' media.

Today, anyone who has an Internet connection can get newspapers like the New York Times and International Herald Tribune 'delivered' before the local and national newspapers are on the doorstep. This is only to say that news journalism like other aspects of media culture, relate less and less to clear-cut cultures, whether they be national audiences or boundary-crossing taste-cultures adhering to new distinctions between up and down, elite or popular, high or low. Natives of the digital network age know more about surfing the Internet than senior reporters in the traditional media may do, and journalism education is confronting the same shift of balance. Why would a senior lecturer age 60 confer the same importance to Flickr or YouTube, Twitter or the iPad as the 20 year-old?

This is again where the Time cover story may prove useful as a focal point in assessing Innovation Journalism from an educational point of view: Who needs deep

news delivered on paper by serious men and women who cultivate language when Twitter and Facebook give you not the *local*, but the *personal*? TIME Magazine, as we know, voted 'YOU' the Man of the year in the 2009. But YOU is also a problem for educational narratives in journalism, because YOU require a different concept of the public. The implication of the Time cover story on Twitter and the iPhone is that journalism is in the deep well, struggling to find a means of survival, economically but also conceptually. It is perhaps not the technology that divides the 'old' and the 'young' generations of journalism, as much as the new and altered understanding of the YOU society and its modes of doing or 'duding' democracy – heroes, rappers, jerks and hip-hop political philosophy mixed and remixed in ways that require journalism to rethink its language and societal role from the bottom up rather than the top down. The part of journalism that seems to find itself deepest down the well is the middle: the *regional*, and the *second choice*. Hyper local, hyper niche, and smart commercial survives better (Downie & Schudson, op.cit).

In terms of teaching, there is a new universe meeting the old. New networks are forming, new network modes are forming, and perhaps there is also a new journalism ethos of dialogue and community building on the rise? Certainly, there is a development of a new strand of Internet-based and networking oriented institutions now doing journalism, such as NGO networks like Human Rights Watch or Open Democracy, and what previously was called 'alternative media' such as Mother Jones, In These Times and others. Add to this some of the rockets in the blogosphere of recent years like Huffington Post and Politico.com. Add a mixture of websites, think tanks and global networks on Twitter, Facebook and like/minded services. Add also European journalistic institutions like LeMonde Diplomatique or the website Open Democracy (www.opendemocracy.org) – and the awareness that elsewhere in the world similarly transforming forces are at work> All this is certainly innovative, and it certainly is innovation, but perhaps of a kind that still leave the journalism educator with far more questions than answers? YOU has also darkened the path for some, and lightened it for others.

Innovation Journalism Stanford Style: An appraisal

In sum, it seems evident that journalism is undergoing a paradigm shift where innovation is called for. But what kind of innovation is called for, and why bother to make a societal vision of it – as is the case at Stanford University? The question is neither rhetorical nor necessarily negative.

Attempting an answer by way of an illustration, the Innovation Journalism Blog at Stanford University comments on how the chairman of Nokia and Royal Dutch Shell, Jorma Ollila places high value on the increase in innovation-related stories in Finnish media (see [link](#) to story): His interest in this particular quote is an interest in *innovation as content in the news*: The article refers to the establishment of a Finnish counterpart to the Innovation Journalism Center at Stanford, as a direct

consequence of established links through journalism fellows and visiting researchers to Stanford from Finland. What these Fellows learn through their Stanford engagements, translates into more innovation stories in the Finnish media. As is known to most potential readers of this article, the Innovation Journalism Center at Stanford each year provides fellowships for mid-career journalists to come to Silicon Valley in order to encounter the innovations culture in this region. The concept is clear: If more journalists and editors understand the value of innovation as a journalism beat, the more stories will appear. The more innovation finds its place into the news media and into journalism in a wider sense, the more likelihood that societies will cultivate innovation. And when societies, do, innovation will catalyze positive social change. This is the model.

The question is what goes into the concept of innovation and innovation processes? Head of the Innovation Journalism spin-off in Finland, the Fin-Jo project, Carl-Gustav Linden, says that “even though Finland has been ahead of the rest in forming innovation policy, there is a need for politicization and democratization and I believe Fin-Jo is just the right venue for these discussions” (op.cit.). He adds: “I think it’s easier to get the message through if we talk about renewal processes or social change. I also believe that the deep recession Finland and parts of the world is in right now makes the issue more urgent and people more responsive. It’s a sort of Finland 2.0 discourse”.

Linden, who is a business writer and researcher at the University of Helsinki, echoes the same concern as In-Jo co-founder David Nordfors in terms of the multifaceted nature of the challenge (cf. Nordfors, 2008; 2009a; 2009b): Fin-Jo brings a broad variety of experts together – journalists, communication specialists, researchers, bureaucrats and business people for sharing thoughts on topics varying from the effects of social media to the R&D policy of the European Union. The key element is creating a job-producing economy through cultivating a keener social debate on innovations, innovation processes, success stories and the cultural right to fail – and then try again. In so doing, Linden echoes the core framework of the program, which Nordfors identifies as: (1) The professional norms, values, and codes of ethics and principles of innovation journalism. (2) How newsrooms and other professional organizations affect the coverage of innovation. 3) The modes of newsroom organization routines and ethics of innovation journalism related to larger, societal aspects of democracy, governance, and the role of journalism in a global innovation ecology.

A key term comes implicitly from Davenport and Beck (2002) and the study of *the role of time, time-span and attention* in the creative economies of post-industrial society. It is not elaborated much on the website as a contemporary entrepreneurial framework, yet one will find much inspiration from Davenport and Beck in literature than now begins to come out from the Innovation Journalism tradition (c.f. Salonen, 2010, Uskali, 2005; Nordfors, op.cit.). For instance, the TEKES foundation in Finland when setting up its Innovation Journalism project in 2005, notes the intellectual history of the concept of innovation. Kauhanen and Noppari (2007) refer in their final TEKES report to Josef Schumpeter’s classical formulation of ‘creative chaos’ in describing truly qualitative societal change and development. I will not take up their excellent argument here, but it bears repeating that Innova-

tion Journalism in fact does have its old intellectual roots, as well as its more modern ones. Kauhanen and Noppari relates, as well, to the much more recent writings of Richard Florida (op.cit.) and his reference to the role of public policy in the 'attention economy'.

These aspects of journalism innovation understood in a wider sense than commercial innovation, are elaborated in many of the Nordfors entrances on the In-Jo blog, as well (blog.entries Dec. 6th & 31st 2009, Dec. 3rd 2008). One is the 'flow of attention' in the innovation system, and the other is 'the roles of reputation and trust in innovation eco systems'. Elsewhere on the steadily expanding website, Nordfors expounds on the McLuhan legacy, distinctions between *journalism* and *media*, as well as different in-roads to the concept of innovation. How things are said, written, done, reported, and framed matter – in short. And that is only to say that there are linguistic, discursive and cultural aspects of innovation, added to the business ones and the more funky Silicon Valley stuff.³

Innovation in Journalism – Innovation of Journalism

The Innovation Journalism at Stanford model makes another crucial distinction in need of more elaboration: Innovation as content **in** journalism, and innovation **of** journalism. Kauhanen and Noppari (2007) have provided the so far most advanced theorizing of innovation as a content concept in journalism studies, echoing the strong tradition for discourse analysis in Finland. However, their study invites an even more elaborate theory of narrative and discourse in journalism content, and would as such enable sophisticated studies of innovation as discourse, as ideology, as news frames, as narrative. So far, their analysis stops with an adaptation of frame analysis. For future reference, the call to introduce more innovation content in journalism runs parallel to an interest in studying such content. The question is what kind of content analysis? Discourse analysis would seem particularly well suited.

The study of content and meaning carries explicit and implicit social modeling. But how does innovation in journalism content relate to innovation of journalism institutions? Clearly, advocating that the news media ought to take up innovation as a 'beat', must be understood as a normative standpoint: Why should journalism do this? The answer from Stanford seems to be that it is good for democracy, good for growth, good development, and good for society. But how does what is good for journalism in the next round translate into something good for society? Clearly, the question is normative in its nature. Another future reference is the interest in

³ It is also to say that most probably, Kauhanen and Noppari are unduly harsh in their criticism of the In-Jo vision as it now stands – reflecting rather the original vision brought by Nordfors to Stanford when the Innovation Journalism project emigrated from Sweden to Silicon Valley, about a decade ago. The key element in the TEKES report's critique of Nordfors relates to the concept of innovation and how wide a net to cast: One school would say that innovation relates mostly to business and commercial success. The other would say that innovation is profoundly cultural and that the cultural element is an aspect of public policy, as well. Fin-Jo is in the second school.

theoretical discussions relating normative aspects to empirical ones. As of yet, the challenge is still to further define and enhance the understanding of socially, culturally, and historically specific aspects of innovation – in order to create for comparative modeling and greater theoretical diversity behind the concept of innovation journalism.

What seems clear, for now, is that the model of innovation journalism alludes to agenda-setting rather than to cultivation. Agenda-setting typically refers to correlations, employing quantified content analysis in relation to behavioral data. For cultivation to take root as a central key term, a more sophisticated approach to studies of social change and language is called for. It would require elaborate understandings of the social contract between journalism institutions and democratic publics. It would also solidify a tension that is already there between the professional world of journalism and the academic world of journalism research, since many seasoned professionals interested in innovation journalism would hesitate to follow academic intellectuals into this sort of labyrinth. No doubt, managing such a tension is an innovation in itself. Journalism studies as a tradition has attempted to do so for close to a century.

Consider for instance a key reference on the In-Jo website to the agenda-setting capacity of a TV station in Pakistan to set a new focus on the role of local innovation and local development in Pakistani life: With Pakistani journalists visiting Stanford and ideas taking hold that it is actually possible to conceive of an alternate journalistic agenda. With such an agenda in place, a Pakistani TV series relates directly to issues of central importance for developmental processes over a number of decades, the difference being the central role of TV journalism and a constructive, problem-solving sense of relevance and meaning.

David Nordfors:

"Pakistan used to be a very closed country — almost all journalism in Pakistan is about Pakistan, for Pakistani people. They've actually started taking in In-Jo fellows from other areas of the world as expert commentators," said Nordfors. "It's very nice to see that it actually turned out to be a smash hit because this is really a new creature in Pakistani journalism."

Speaking to Amir Jahangir, Chief Executive Officer of SAMAA TV, he said "The program success is based on hard work and a great network of IN-JO fellows across the world, who through their expertise has been advising on the program content, sharing research, commenting on innovation topics and providing solutions through their input and views. Due to this collaboration, the content of our program has been acknowledged as being credible, containing relevant issues and making efforts in bringing together the relevant stakeholders of each industry to find innovative measures to cater the society needs".

Amir Jahangir, Chief Executive Officer of SAMAA TV:

Mr. Jahangir further said that "The global development has made our world smaller and our communication more effective. We want to bring in-

novation to the homes of every Pakistani citizen, so that their awareness and ability to be innovative is nurtured. Our future lies in the hands of innovation and for that we need to prepare a workforce which not only knows how to be innovative but also how to link it to the economic development”.

Here we have a clearly formulated agenda-setting proposition relating to social change as economic change. There is nothing wrong with that, but decade-long debates document how innovations might just as well be *cultural*, or for that matter *political* and *organizational*. There is ideology in every word. It is fairly clear that the Stanford Innovation Journalism model has moved beyond a one-dimensional business model of innovation, if it ever had one. We do have a valid agenda-setting perspective. What we do not have, yet, is a justification for assuming that the agenda-setting function of innovation journalism *actually matters*; agenda-setting research typically points to *correlations* not just methodologically but also in its theoretical ambition. The Pakistani example above is a way to underscore the *cultivation component* that is inherent to the concept of *ecology*. An ecological communication model would require a more multi-dimensional narrative. This is of course only an example and in some ways an unfair usage. However, it corroborates the claim that Innovation Journalism is still early in its development of a consistent innovations communication theory.

Expanding the Horizon on the Concept of Innovation

Kauhanen and Noppari (2007) relate the Innovation Journalism to the founder of modern entrepreneurship studies, Josef Schumpeter. They also note the challenge of widening the conception of innovation to include cultural innovation and public policy. They argue that if theorizing on concept of innovation includes consideration of the wider societal dimensions of entrepreneurial drive, it will stand a much better chance of contributing substantially to theoretical as well as empirical advancement. Concurring with this, we should like to add that multifaceted studies of entrepreneurship and innovation do in fact have a fairly long-standing conceptual history, pointing directly into sociology and anthropology as well as journalism studies:

In terms of that history, the role of the entrepreneur and the role of innovation remained an abstract idea until the publication of Schumpeter's *The Theory of Economic Development* in 1912, according to Greenfield et.al. (1979:5). Since then, theories and models of innovation have developed rapidly – perhaps too rapidly for us to keep in mind their origins and basic social science insights. Certainly, according to Greenfield and colleagues, the study of entrepreneurship amounts to much more than the saluting of men in business. As Max Weber noted in *The Protestant Work Ethic* (2002), prior to Schumpeter, motivational drive has a strong cultural component. In fact, theories and models of modernization are to an extent based on similar notions of innovation and entrepreneurship. Witness the Pakistani example above.

So where can we locate a workable theory of entrepreneurship and innovation for practice and studies of journalism? According to Greenfield and his group (op.cit.), development of a theory of entrepreneurship was spurred by the events "...following the 1920's, the accelerated growth of the developed nations after 1945, and the absence of growth in the so-called Third World." A common denominator for all of these events is the abrupt and uneven growth and/or decline in nation-state economies. These events all challenged assumptions of current economics theory. Like social change in Durkheimian theory was thought of as *differentiation* - [inevitable] development from simple to more complex forms, modernization theory envisaged an evolution path from 'traditional' to 'modern' society, where processes of innovation and innovation ecologies stood central.

An essential problem was that modernization did not work according to plan, in part due to a lack of focus on power relationships as well as the critical stages of development where entrepreneurs may play a decisive role in setting a society's given direction of change.

Again we call attention to the Pakistani example above: The devil is, as usual, in the details: 'Critical stages' in society and economics, was a concept introduced by Schumpeter in the 1920's. What the term refers to is that in a transitional period, for instance in a situation in which one technology is in the process of substituting another one, then it is the entrepreneur who defines the direction in which the new technology is being refined. It took a Henry Ford to mass-produce a car, through inventing assembly line production. It took an Al Neuharth to mass-distribute a national newspaper, through regional printing, color graphics, and highly general news of USA Today.⁴ An interesting account, in which the question of entrepreneurship more or less invites itself, is found in Peter Prichard's book *The Making of McPaper*, from 1987. The book details Al Neuharth's role in the creation of USA Today. Its entrepreneur narrative is the quintessential story of a media tycoon with the entrepreneurial vision to go along with the imperial ambition. Prichard implies the theory, however. He does not build on it or use its details.

We see the broader theoretical ramifications of the entrepreneurial role immediately: Economy alone does not account for development, while development occurs in burst and jumps rather than in a continuous and even process. Political acts, cultural conditions, and the means by which society has ordered itself, place limits on the potential for development, which Schumpeter was quick to point out. Schumpeter defined economic development as a "spontaneous and discontinuous change" (1949:64, quoted in Greenfield). This ran counter to the trends in economic theory of his time, which tended to view economic development as an even flow from 'simpler' to better and more complex. He distinguished between 'circular flow' and 'economic development'. Economic development occurred when something totally new is created. Quantitative combination of resources leads to a qualitatively new situation. According to Greenfield, the point is "that the ultimate explanation of economic growth and of societal advancement in Schumpeter's model is to be found in non-economic factors brought into play through the actions of

⁴ A new expanded version in 2007.

entrepreneurs" (1979:7). He located the role of the entrepreneur as one of structurally changing the economic activity, or "carrying out new combinations" (1949:66, quoted in Greenfield). In other words, origins of socio-economic change can be studied through the activities of entrepreneurs during periods of change.

Through it emerges new insights about organizations, including media organizations – or businesses. This may seem trivial. But the interesting aspect of these questions is the socio-cultural dynamics that come into play during these critical stages of transition. The study of entrepreneurship seems to be theoretically situated right in the middle between 'individuality' and various forms of 'determinism', due to this focus on organizational activity during periods of critical change.

Entrepreneurship, culture and business

Critical questions raised by Schumpeter were eventually neglected in studies of entrepreneurship. The field of modernization research, for instance, came to explain the lack of development in developing countries in terms of the lack of entrepreneurship, rather than the structural conditions inhibiting it. And it explained development in the modern world in terms of 'entrepreneurial drive', a personal 'motivation', and achievement incentives. This is the classical debate over modernization vs. dependency, a debate that raged in journalism studies in the 1980's and splitting UNESCO down the middle with most of the professional journalism community in the western world siding with advocates of the 'free flow of information' advocates of western style modernization.

This interest in entrepreneurship from the 1950's and 60's was thus much more narrow than what the Schumpeterian legacy might have given hopes for, also in communication studies.

In the wider social science setting this narrowing deriving from two overlapping lines of inquiry, according to Greenfield (op.cit.). First, theoretical economists attempted to separate profits conceptually from other returns to management in the market system. Profit became the measure of entrepreneurial success. What was left out of the picture was the more *intangible returns to investment*, harder to measure and harder and not as easily compared. Second, in business literature entrepreneurship became the 'celebrated achievements' of 'people in business', according to Greenfield (op.cit.).⁵

Entrepreneurship from a comparative perspective

However, there is in fact a cultural and *comparative legacy* in entrepreneurship studies worth noting: In 1962 Sawyer asked why 'business people behave so differently around the world' (1962:1)."Observable national differences in entrepreneurial activities can not be accounted for in terms of economic factors alone, or in terms of the hero in industry, the distribution of genes or any simple psychological

⁵ An example of how such perspectives as these fit the In-Jo modell, would be Uskali's study from 2007, cf. references.

reductionism" (1962:9). He referred to Max Weber's *The Protestant Work Ethic*, in his own attempt to discern differences in entrepreneurial activity between countries. In analyzing 19th century France and United States, he emphasized conditions for entrepreneurship in terms of the socio-economic structures and in terms of the cultural heritages of the two countries. An open economic structure in the United States and a centrally planned economy in France resulted in a much more fruitful environment for entrepreneurs in the United States:

Whereas the United States, a "virgin continent" (1962:11) identified itself with the Horatio Alger 'rags to riches' myth and Benjamin Franklin's work ethic (which Weber also discusses), the French business ethic struggled to reconcile the effect of the Revolution and the new Republic on the old social order. "In most general terms French entrepreneurial motivation has been seriously compromised by the difficulty of identifying the entrepreneurial function with a broad range of national cultural goals and values (1962:17)." According to Sawyer this led to a failure to take advantage of scientific leads for instance in the automobile industry (1962:19).

Central to all this literature is the idea of innovation and creativity. To various degrees this is a matter of manipulating resources already available, but it is also a question of *originality, quality and hybridity*. Innovation starts with a new perception of an old problem. As Drucker (1985:99) points out, a glass may be 'half empty' or it may be 'half full'. Such notions are often cited in explanations of why one media tycoon succeeds and another fails, one might add. The average entrepreneurial account of Rupert Murdoch will have this scenario either implicit or explicit. However, we might want to pay more attention to the fact that exactly the same argument is made by students of city planning, place marketing and gentrification – whether it be the famed London Docklands, the Guggenheim museum in Bilbao or the Barcelona Olympics. It is all about attraction, about seeing the glass half full rather than half empty – of spotting the openings (Florida, op.cit.). Florida, although often not read that way, addresses cultural policy as much as individual entrepreneurship.

Stevenson and Gumpert, on the other hand, identify entrepreneurship from an individual-oriented perspective: The "encouragement of individuals, imagination, flexibility, and a willingness to accept risks" (1985:85), are the main characteristics of an entrepreneurial organization. Examples of the practical questions they raise are: Where is the opportunity? How do I capitalize on it? What resources do I need? How do I gain control over them? The factors they stress as important external conditions for entrepreneurship are 1) rapid changes in technology, 2) nature of consumer economics, 3) nature of social values, 4) types of political action, and 5) nature of regulatory standards in government. A good entrepreneur, whether it is in business or in some other area, is someone who risks the positive variant when others chose the negative. If for instance a new technology is introduced, or developed by the entrepreneur, the innovative person or organization will perceive potential usages differently, or before, others. There will always be this risk factor to good entrepreneurship. Taking that risk requires perception of a potential benefit.

Entrepreneurship, culture and anthropology: Everyday life

While the quoted literature is fairly old, to illustrate our argument, there is in fact an even older orientation found in social anthropology. The anthropological approach, like the economics oriented literature on entrepreneurship, already holds many of the concepts and models needed in order to bring the cultural and the political into the town square of innovation journalism. However, anthropology digs deeper in its understanding of economics as a fundamentally cultural discipline:

Anthropology seeks to place the entrepreneur within a cultural horizon. Entrepreneurship occurs in all forms of organizations, from family, church, sports organization, to complex organizations like social movements and political parties. Entrepreneurship should rather be thought of as the actions of someone who 'carries out new combinations' of resources. These resources may be far removed from concerns with business. Risk and profit have their cultural aspects, as well. A central concern is thus to identify the entrepreneur's opportunities and the limitations that are constantly being imposed by the local society (Barth, 1963). Relying on Belshaw's definition (1955:147), Barth identifies an entrepreneur as "someone who takes the initiative in administering resources, and pursues an expansive economic policy" (1962:5). This process is as much socially defined as it is defined by the economic conditions. The corporate organization is a social structure in interplay with other social organizations. The entrepreneur is an actor in interplay with others - in the economic, cultural, and political spheres of interaction.

Barth studied local fishing communities in northern Norway. Central to his concept of entrepreneurship is the classical sociological distinction between 'person' and 'role'. The use of the term 'entrepreneur' in the strict sense should be for an "aspect of a role" (1963:6): ".....it relates to actions and activities, and not rights and duties, furthermore it characterizes a certain quality or orientation in this activity which may be present to a greater or less extent in the different institutionalized roles found in the community" (1963:6). When people initiate activities and pursue profit in some discernible form, economic or not, and or manipulate other people and resources, they are acting as entrepreneurs. According to Barth, sources of potential entrepreneurship are institutional and not psychological (1962:6). "In other words, we need to see the rest of the community as composed of actors who also make choices and pursue strategies, and we must analyze routinized, institutionalized community life in terms of the choices that are available and the values that are ascribed - factors to which the entrepreneur, through his relations with other people, is subject, but which he also by his very activity may modify and change" (1963:7).

The focus is on social constraints and possibilities for entrepreneurship. Problems of profit and cost are not only an economic matter, but entails an analysis of the *social* costs as well. Certain technological acts are morally and legally condemned in the local community, writes Barth – forecasting Pierre Bourdieu and his concept

of *social capital*: Entrepreneurial "persons have commitments in specific social relations which hamper them in, or prevent them from, pursuing effective strategies (1963:8). "Thus, in evaluating the prognoses and results of an enterprise, we need a unitary concept of value embracing profit and costs in this expanded sense - which covers all the different forms of tangible and intangible value which, through social processes we can recognize, are convertible into another (1963:9)."

Other anthropologists have investigated entrepreneurship from the same vantage point. Strickon (1979) noted that when settlers came to the Wisconsin area they established communities with varying degrees of interrelationship with the other ethnic groups in the area. The Scandinavians, for instance, tended to stick to themselves. In a study of entrepreneurs among the Scandinavian immigrants, he pointed to two local Norwegian entrepreneurs who were able to carry out activities in the community that competing non-Scandinavian entrepreneurs were not able to, simply because their positions were based on a different set of expectations and constraints by the community. Not only did the community impose a different set of restrictions. The entrepreneurs viewed their social roles as more important because they were insiders in the community. They carried out new combinations both in the cultural and the economic sphere. Where one entrepreneur of English descent failed another one of a Norwegian descent succeeded through a different combination of economic and socio-cultural resources.

Now, it may be that a 30 year old study of Norwegians may not strike a chord in Silicon Valley, but that is to miss the point entirely: What Strickon studies is *immigration, cultural re-mix and the resulting combustion*. To sum up, cultural values, resources and restraints are then often a combining, underlying factor in both social, political and economic innovation. The Gillette company is often used as an illustration of how modern technology changes society through the entrepreneurs' innovative applications of it. Through mass production the Gillette razor became cheap enough for most men to afford it. But it took an innovative idea and systematic marketing strategy, based on cultural knowledge, to bring this about. It also resulted in the demise of a cultural institution: The barbershop. According to Drucker (1985), someone came up with the perceptive idea that most men actually wanted to shave in the first place.

What Kind of Innovation for Innovation Journalism Education?

Ellen Hume (1996) noted some 15 years ago that the new technologies offer a long-awaited opportunity for journalism to get its house in order. One might perhaps understand Innovation Journalism as one aspect of that order? Whichever answer we choose to emphasize, above we have nevertheless provided a roster of ideas, theories, models and discussions of the past which separately and in sum provide us with rich materials for constructing the rhetorical narrative of an innovation journalism education. The literature is much wider and encompassing, our choice being a select overview to demonstrate possibilities for the *creation of a*

teaching narrative in Innovation Journalism. It seems paramount for the Innovation Journalism model to engage in debates concerning its educational value. It also seems evident that education in innovation journalism must begin with journalism and move towards innovation from that point of view, rather than the opposite. And journalism, as we know, is all about narrative – the story-telling component.

Journalists can keep – and expand – their role if they take steps now, Hume argued. They can create a more public or civic approach to journalism without losing the objectivity that is essential to journalism's watchdog role. This kind of reporting connects people to each other and the common issues they face, restoring public information to balance out the private titillations of our entertainment culture. The view stands in contrast to that of the editors at [Columbia Journalism Review](#) who see three following three main challenges generally facing journalism, in 2010: 1) A crisis of confidence, in that news people do not recognize the business they got into, 2) crisis of credibility, in that too much spin has changed the general perception of trustworthiness in the news, 3) and tabloidism, in that the business of serious journalism is giving into life-style and scandal gorging. To this we might add a fourth: Journalism is also sense-making, and innovation journalism must accordingly be an aspect of making sense of innovation, its deeper impacts.

These points merely allude to a beginning discussion about the origins and courses of development in innovation journalism education, but at least we have our connection:

We recognize the debates concerning civic journalism and public journalism, from the 1980's and 1990's. Although there are many nuances, they refer to a journalism that is out of touch with the readers and viewers. True, there are vast differences and quite a lot of journalism practice that works constructively. But we are reminded of the YOU in Time, as well as the general difference between new technology advocates and pessimists. For Innovation Journalism to take hold it must concentrate more on journalism – evolving innovation as an aspect of narrative: If the argument is made that more innovation in journalism cultivates societal innovation, then the same argument is central to the development of journalism as a social institution: The more the media emphasize innovation as a content matter, the more prone they are to cultivate themselves.

That hypothesis may not necessarily be true, but by taking journalism seriously, innovation journalism may also take *theories of innovation as social change seriously* in beginning to construct a believable meta-narrative, its normative model. Journalism already has one, and it is anchored in perspectives on democracy and the 4th estate. It may be faulty, its ideals lofty. It is nevertheless there. Where does innovation journalism want to go? From a professional point of view, an angle such as this simply means taking journalism at face value by locating the *doxa* and *topoi* of innovation journalism events. If innovation is understood in terms of its historical social, cultural and profoundly political qualities alongside its technological and economical ones, then the paradigm of innovation journalism begins to emerge. From that emergence, one may cultivate teaching.

Summary

This ends the discussion and summary for now. With a note that in the US, journalism education evolved from vocational courses given (unwillingly) in departments of English. This meager beginning evolved into the first and still premier academic program, at Columbia University, where most of the first year students in 1912 were foreign (Williams 1912; Yarros 1922; Vance 1930). It is an interesting analogy to the relation between Stanford University's journalism education and its Center for Innovation Journalism, where most of the Fellows are also foreign, and where there is surprisingly little contact between the Center members and the crew at the Stanford university communications department.

The Columbia program was set up only a decade before Walter Lippmann published his classic book *Public Opinion* (1922) and where he essentially argued against John Dewey's idea that people could think – by heralding journalists as a new class of scientifically guided social managers of public opinion. Lippmann's view was of course richer than that, reflecting also his life-long reading of the pragmatist social philosophy of such greats as George Herbert Mead and William James (Splichal 1999). In fact, when journalism education spread over the post-WW2 US continent, it gained its independence in combinations with rural sociology and advertisement programs to form vocationally oriented programs meant for aspiring journalists, run by veteran journalists and not professors in academia. There was a tension – a sense that journalism education was both academic and professional...and never the twain would meet. Lippmann, an intellectual and a journalist, was aware of it and wrote about it.

A decade into the post-print media revolution, the tension may not be as expressed, but it is there, with a journalism training that has become an academic discipline. Journalism has become a *popular* field, with a comparative growth rate worldwide that solidifies it as an academic cornerstone. One might at times wonder whether journalism for practical purposes has become *too academically* inclined? In fact, nowhere is the process of academic reorientation in journalism education more clear than in the range of prefixes given to ideals of journalism in a range of educational programs readily accessible through a 5-minute Google search: *Peace journalism, global journalism, development journalism, public journalism, civic journalism, citizen journalism*, or for that matter also *new (or new) journalism, investigative journalism, art journalism, business journalism and innovation journalism*.

By way of conclusion, this article has argued that an education curriculum that headlights innovation journalism would want to include, historically and comparatively:

- The intellectual history and study of innovation, very broadly
- Innovation as explanation framework in studies of social change
- Innovation in different of sectors: Economics, technology, politics and culture.

- Applications of entrepreneurship and innovation to studies of journalism
- Applications of it to studies of journalists in practice, routines and organizations
- Applications of it to studies of journalism narratives, beats, genres

A key challenge is the pedagogical narrative of innovation journalism education – how it frames the basics of innovation and then the basics of journalism.

At play is the challenge of renewing the social contract binding journalism to its audiences: Not as consumers, but as citizens.

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