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The News Agency Goes Internet

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1. Where should I start?

The following quotation is included on the cover of my thesis at University of Jyväskylä, Finland. I found in it true wisdom regardless of the fact that the writer came to his conclusion about 500 years ago. That is why I want to start this thesis with the same quotation.

"It ought to be remembered that there is nothing more difficult to take in hand, more perilous to conduct, or more uncertain in its success, than to take the lead in the introduction of a new order of things. Because the innovator has for enemies all those who have done well under the old conditions, and indifferent defenders among those who may do well under the new." ((Niccolo Machiavelli (1469-1527): The Prince.))

Here's another quotation, but a recent one. David Schlesinger, the editor in chief Reuters, Thomson Reuters, gave the following answer when I asked him what the most important aspects are in managing and leading successful changes in a news organization. (email 29th November 2010.)

"You need to be clear about how you're changing and why. And then you have to communicate constantly. Journalists hate change - they witness so much on the outside that they want their own lives to be stable. Therefore you have to be patient yet persistent and you have to be able to articulate a vision."

Keeping these quotations in mind, I argue that in the process of change many aspects of the process can go wrong. I also know what an opportunity change can be and how it can inspire all those who are working for the particular organization. I personally tend to relate to changes more in a positive than a negative way - provided there is a sense in the change in question. But I have also experienced how difficult for some individuals some changes can be and how much just the thought of some shifts in the future can disturb a person and affect their work achievements and raise their stress level.

At present, the media are undergoing a period of an unusually intense change. This is due to a number of factors:

- The global recession and its effects on the media business primarily in western countries
- Rapidly developing social media
- The progress of internet and its impacts on journalism and media companies
- Recently introduced new platforms and technologies, such as internet phones and tablets, and those to be introduced in the future

I argue that the upheaval within the media is causing more radical changes in journalism, editorial practices, job specifications and financial frameworks than at any time in history. Therefore the reasoning and the basic themes for my study are simple: the news and press agencies must decide what kind of a stand they will take towards all these changes within the internet era and what kind of strategic decisions are needed. Furthermore, how can the news agencies keep up with the speed of change and how can the journalistic processes of change within the news agencies be successfully managed?

My study will be divided in five parts:

- A) Background information about the news agency business and the current general media environment
- B) Knowledge workers and their demands for leadership
- C) A case study
- D) Social media and news agencies
- E) Future prospects for news agencies

I am concentrating on the demands and the pressures of content in the world of the internet era and its requirements for journalists for the reason that, whatever change or reform is carried out today, sooner or later we will have to face the impact of the internet and the social media, of multi-skill or multi-tasking, of reorganizing and training, and also the use of new technologies. It is my opinion that a precondition for modern - and successful - management of change in editorial offices is a perception of a new order of the media as well as the successful handling by those in charge of all the other numerous demands facing management.

In my study I will draw on the latest research regarding management, especially how to lead knowledge workers, leadership and changes but also on the latest published research on media developments and future expectations.

Previous Finnish dissertations have examined the way various editorial processes of change have been experienced and assessed by journalists, and how these processes have been seen in everyday editorial work. There have been fewer studies from the point of view of leaders. In my study the editor and supervisor levels are also going to have a voice that must be heard. I have been working as a mid-level leader for several years in different media organizations in Finland. Currently my position is a news editor for the Finnish News Agency, STT. One thing that I have learnt during the past ten years is that a leader or a manager always looks at even the simplest issues in a different light than the rest of the staff. It is inevitable, and leaders usually learn this lesson at an early stage of their career.

In this paper I am going to investigate the way the Finnish News Agency, STT has prepared to face the challenges of the future in its operations, and how the changes have been or will be applied. I will concentrate on STT but will also take a look at some of the other European news agencies as well. They are ANP from Netherlands (Algemeen Nederlands Persbureau), APA from Austria (Austria Presse Agentur), DPA

from Germany (Deutsche Presse Agentur), PA from England (The Press Association Limited) and Thomson Reuters. I have carried out interviews with ANP, PA, Reuters and STT. The ANP, APA, DPA plus PA have kindly answered a questionnaire and emails I sent to their representatives about these issues.

I have also made several interviews in Britain with researchers who are specialized in the latest media developments. Their views have helped me to understand those dramatic changes the media business in general is going through and what kind of a future we might expect.

How do managers, executives and editorial supervisors feel that they are surviving the continuing changes and coping with the enforcement of the changes in the midst of the pressures of economic realities, the upheaval within the media, including the well-being of the staff and the further development of their skills? Also, how should they communicate these changes to the staff and persuade them to commit themselves to the changes? And in what kind of an environment are the news agencies operating in the future? Is there a future for news agencies?

Poistettu:

I fully understand that I cannot give any definite answers but this study aims to clarify some factors about change and how the news organisations, and news agencies in particular, have to adapt to the current and future situation.

So, how to proceed? I will start in chapter 2 with a short presentation about news agencies and continue with some facts and figures, which rely on the latest OECD report regarding the state of the media business in certain European countries. I will also take a quick look in chapter 3 at the impact of the internet both as a news source and on the everyday life of journalists.

Next, in chapter 4 I will present some concepts regarding leadership, change and knowledge workers. I have reviewed some of the vast amount of published literature about managing change and will concentrate on knowledge workers.

In the following chapter I will describe the case of The Finnish News Agency, STT, and its major changes. This part will cover interviews with my colleagues back in Finland and let them impart their views and enlighten me with their valuable thoughts.

Chapter 6 presents the situation within the social media and how news agencies are operating there. I will also describe the presence of certain newspapers and broadcasting companies within the social media. This chapter includes responses to a questionnaire sent to selected agencies and also some brief interviews and findings.

Lastly in chapter 7 I will draw some conclusions and also take a look into the future, following discussions with some experts. The focus will be on the most interesting points that appear relevant for the future news agency business and its journalism.

My focus is on journalism and its development. I will not take a stance on the ways agencies are operating outside the journalistic activities because I had to narrow this study down. This part of news agency businesses could be an interesting follow up

research topic due to the fact that many news agencies get most of their sales from operations outside the traditional news wire service.

2. News agencies in short

The world's first news agency, Agence France-Presse AFP, was established in 1835 (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/News_agency).

Traditionally a news agency provides services for newspapers and broadcasting companies and has often been owned by them. Many of them operate cooperatively and generate their news as sort of wholesalers on the customers' behalf. Particularly in smaller countries there tends to be one national news agency which dominates the market. The core values for news agencies are reliability, speed, impartiality and independence. As one of the agencies, the German DPA charter, states: "Reporting must be free of bias and unfettered by political, economic or governmental ideologies."

Currently many of the news agency customers are suffering from the global recession and the decline of the media market especially in western countries. The changes in the market caused by the internet, loss of advertising and decreasing circulation are weakening the financial position of many of the media companies. For the news agencies the changed situation is challenging: What services do customers need and how to produce them in an affordable way?

News agencies differ from other media organizations because of their nature as wholesalers. The news agency distributes its stories and other materials to a large number of customers who either publish the stories as they are or use them as background or supplementary material for the newspaper, radio station, website, TV channel etc. Because of the nature of the news agency business there is a lack of direct contact with media customers and the consumers.

The journalists who work for a news agency don't know beforehand how the customers are going to use the story or the picture - or if they are going to use it at all. A news agency journalist does not get as much feedback from the audience as a newspaper or broadcast journalist because the relationship between the news agency journalist and his audience is relatively distant and in some cases anonymous. For a reader or a listener it is natural and easy to contact the local newspaper or radio station and give some feedback. The media organizations are even tempting their audiences to do so ("call us, email us, send a picture, a video, post a Facebook or Twitter comment") but the news agency does not have this possibility. The medium wants to direct its audience to contact the particular medium, not a news agency.

The news agencies I'm looking at are, as I have earlier mentioned, mostly European ones. Their size and their business models vary from one to the other. Because of its size and reputation, Thomson Reuters plays in its own league.

Many news agencies are owned by national media and broadcasting corporations and companies. The most significant exceptions considered in this study are Thomson Reuters as a commercial company and the Dutch ANP as a private company, which are operating independently in the media and commercial market.

The sources I have used are mostly the company's external websites, annual reports, company's press releases, Wikipedia, questionnaires or a personal enquiry if the information has not been published.

Austria Press Agency, APA is the country's national news agency and it operates as a business-to-business service. Austrian newspapers and the ORF TV and Radio network own the agency. It was founded in 1849 and its staff is about 400 persons.

APA's revenue in 2009 was 58.6 million euros and the figure was more or less the same in 2008. The financial success of a news agency relies heavily on its customer's prosperity but also the general economic situation. That is also the case regarding APA, as it is said in the latest published annual report: "Year 2009 was the most difficult year in recent history." One reason for this is the general decline in Austria's economy which hit also the media companies.

The agency is dealing with uncertainty for example in its internet activities. Chief Editor Verena Krawarik points out that "Online Media departments are uncertain about the appropriate business model for digital services which leads to a lot of discussion about out tariffs and compensation fees." (Questionnaire, 21st November 2010.)

APA and its subsidiaries focus on the areas of news agency services (text, pictures, graphics, audio and video) for different platforms, research, information management and IT development plus its solutions as well as financial and media analyses, database providing, information search services and background information services plus dissemination of press releases.

The Finnish News Agency, STT was founded in 1887. Its staff is about 180 persons and it is owned by 41 Finnish media companies. A vast majority of them are currently STT's customers. The largest shareholders are Sanoma News (34% of shares), Alma Media (24%) and TS-Yhtymä (18%).

The turnover in 2010 was 17.9 million euros and in 2009 about 14 million euros, and the earnings before interest and taxes in 2010 was 579,000 euros. The merger with a picture agency affected the result.

The agency is providing wholesale services for media customers for different platforms and business-to-business services, for example media monitoring, press releases distributing and event listings as well as TV programme listings. I will concentrate in chapter 5 on STT and its current developments.

The German Press Agency, DPA was founded in 1949. Its staff is about 1,700. Around 190 German shareholders (newspaper and magazine publication houses, publishers,

broadcasting corporations and media groups) own the country's biggest news agency. To limit the power for a single shareholder and too strong an influence, the corporate structure stipulates that a shareholder can't hold up more than 1.5% of its total capital, with a maximum of 25% of share capital being held by broadcasters. The turnover was 90 million euros in 2009 (94 million year 2007). Yearly surplus after tax was -3.8 million (4.4 million in 2007).

The company provides services in German, English, Spanish and Arabic and has a presence in around 80 countries and customers in 100 countries. DPA is serving print media, radio, TV, online, mobile phone and tens of national news agencies plus mobile communication providers and intranets.

"The online operation becomes more and more of a driver for the journalistic work of the agency", wrote DPA's CEO Malte von Trotha in November 2010. (Questionnaire 2nd.)

It also provides data research-services and an archive service called DPA platform, which is also a place for content providers to sell and exchange content. The company has also started its operations with tablets and applications for them.

In spite of its size and influence, DPA is facing the harsh economic reality and has suffered from some customer losses. The Deutsche Welle, DW pointed out on its website article (18th August 2009) that the loss of the German leading publisher, WAZ Mediengruppe, cost DPA three million euros in lost earnings, and it faces a relatively grim future: According to the DW article, some German papers are increasingly trying a 'go it alone' strategy. In addition there are other uncertainties threatening the business. "...the international competition isn't the only pressure facing the company today. With newspapers yet to come to grips with a business model that can prosper in the age of the internet, news agencies are finding that some of their biggest customers are increasingly unable to afford their services."

<http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,,4579908,00.html>

The Netherlands National News Agency, ANP was founded in 1934 by the daily newspapers in the Netherlands. Now it is a private company and it operates independently in the media market. The size of the staff is between 200 and 250.

The company does not give out any financial details, according to managing editor Patrick Selbach (email 30th May 2011).

ANP provides the text, photo, radio, online and mobile phone services as well as videos for television and major websites. The daily production consists of general, political, financial, sports and entertainment news. The company offers also a wide range of other services, such as communication and pr, media monitoring and analyzing services, amongst others.

Press Association, PA from Britain is a multimedia provider supplying news and sport content (text, pictures, video, and data) to most of the national and regional papers, broadcasters and websites. In addition the company is also for example in the business

of weather forecasting, media monitoring, press release distribution, PR services and journalistic training.

The company sees online news services as having a very high strategic importance. "Core media customers continue to face challenges with reducing / fragmenting audiences and revenues. Their move into digital was crucial to their existence and, as a news agency, we need to be attuned to that." (Questionnaire 23rd October 2010.)

The company was founded in 1868 by a consortium of provincial newspaper owners as a co-operative in order to supply news items from across the country to its members. At present its staff is about 1,600 and it is a company with 27 shareholders, most of whom are national and regional newspaper publishers such as Daily Mail and General Trust, News International, United Business Media, Guardian Media Group and The Telegraph Group.

The turnover in 2010 was 99 million pounds and in 2009 101 million pounds. Group profit before taxes in 2010 was 5.7 million pounds and in 2009 6.5 million.

The world's largest international news agency **Reuters** was founded in 1851. Since 2008 the company name has been Thomson Reuters Corporation after Thomson Corporation purchased Reuters. Until the merger with the Thomson Corporation, the Reuters news agency was a part of an independent company, Reuters Group, and it also provided financial marketing data. The traditional news reporting comprised less than 10% of the company's income.

Currently the public company Thomson Reuters is listed on the Toronto and New York stock exchanges. Its staff is about 55,000 in over 100 countries. Company revenue in 2010 was 13.1 billion US dollars. Operating profit margin was 19.6%.

In 2007 the revenue of Reuters Group Limited was 2.6 billion pounds and its net income was 213 million pounds.

The Thomson Reuters provides amongst others a vast amount of news wire, picture and multimedia services, information for financial market professionals, healthcare data, and legal products etc.

3. Follow the money

The current general environment where the leaders of different media organizations operate varies from country to country in Europe. It is more or less 'challenging', as we usually put it when we start to feel nervous, worried or stressed - or simply don't know how to proceed. As a professional journalist I have so far experienced several occasions when the media company that I have been working for has been forced to cut costs in various ways. Sometimes it has meant lay-offs, often it has meant a new organizational model and more or less new duties. Every time it has meant a tight budget and due to that some untried and new procedures regarding my daily work. All these changes mean that the ability to adapt in new situations and change one's behaviour is more and more important for each individual within the organization. I do not believe that this feature will go away. All of us who work within the media business have to prepare ourselves for massive changes, which are going to demand great adaptability - often very rapidly.

In this section I will quote and summarize the latest OECD report (June 2010, The evolution of news and the Internet), which describes an in-depth treatment of the global newspaper publishing market and its evolution. Furthermore, it takes a particular view on the development of online news and related challenges.

The OECD report is about the newspaper business, not the news agency business, but it is possible to draw some conclusions from it and examine the media market in a broader way. It is essential to understand the whole picture; the news agencies are not isolated from the general situation. If and when the newspaper business is in crisis it affects the news agency business in several ways: the newspaper management starts to think about cutting costs, they might start price negotiations, after that they might start to rethink what kind of services they are going to buy from a news agency in the future or whether they need the agency at all. There is no research on how the recession has affected the news agencies *per se* but the agencies tend to follow the general economic development after a certain delay.

The global newspaper market started to slow down from 2004 and this decline continued until 2009. As was mentioned earlier, this has meant that companies have been forced to deal with an ongoing crisis year after year and figure out how to operate in such an environment. According to the OECD report newspapers in 20 out of 31 OECD countries confront either rapid and steep or gradual decline in readership.

"After very profitable years, OECD newspaper publishers face increased competition (free dailies, Internet) and often declining advertising revenues, titles and circulation and declining readership. The economic crisis has compounded this downward development."(OECD report 2010, 22.)

The media market as a whole has to deal with the fact that the economic situation is difficult and at the same time the audiences have started to use media in new and unpredictable ways.

All in all the newspapers reach their readers in various ways. A statistic from 2008 shows that there are huge differences in the way Europeans read newspapers. In Austria the percentage of adults who claim to have read a newspaper recently or the day before is 73%. In Germany the number is 71% and in Netherlands 70%. In Finland the figure is 79% but it includes the population over 12 years. The most dramatic difference is the situation in UK. Only one third of the adult population claims that they have read a newspaper recently. (For comparison, the number in Iceland is 96%, in Japan 92%, in the United States 45% and in Russia 11%.) (OECD report 2010, 29.)

The OECD survey shows that the estimated newspaper publishing market decline between 2007 and 2009 has been: in Austria 2%, in Netherlands 6%, in Finland 7%, in Germany 10% and in UK 21%. The most dramatic change has taken place in US where the decline is 30%. (OECD-report 2010, 18.)

The paid-for circulation numbers has been decreasing among most OECD countries between 2000 and 2008. According to the report the OECD share of total world daily paid newspaper circulation has declined from 49% in 2002 to 42% in 2008. For example in the UK the decrease in daily total average circulation has been 24%, in Netherlands 22% and in Germany 19%. (OECD report 2010, 24.)

The gross operating rate (the percentage of total production capacity for the company) for newspaper publishing has also shifted in some countries in a dramatic way. In Netherlands it was over 14% in 1995 and 4% in 2007. In UK the figures were 22% in 1995 and 14.5% in 2006. In Austria it was about 3% in 1995 and almost 9% in 2007. In Germany the gross operating rate in 1999 was 15% (no figure available from 1995) and in 2007 it was about 12%. In Finland the rate was about 14% in 1995 and in 2006 (the latest figure available) 14.6 %. (OECD report 2010, 40-41.)

A low operating rate is generally accompanied by losses or small profits, although the opportunity for profit growth is still great. Conversely, a high operating rate is generally accompanied by high profits, but limited opportunity for further profit improvement. (<http://business.yourdictionary.com>)

3.1. Internet as a news source

To understand the internet and its huge impact, not only to journalists' everyday work but also in a wider perspective and as a mass media, I start this section by briefly presenting what Professor Manuel Castells says about the different cultures within the internet (Lecture Oxford University, Internet Institute, 18th October 2010.):

- Technological culture with open standards and values of openness
- Hacker culture, passion to create technology but also to gain reputation and change the world
- Virtual communication and communities' culture, using the networks, values of human relationships
- A culture for making money and getting power
- Mobile youth culture; understanding the mobile community in a different way
- The culture of sharing everything; social networking culture, sharing friends, doing things, organizing lives, but also culture of surveillance

As background information I have listed the internet usage in the countries I'm studying. The latest numbers were available from June 2010.

<http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats4.htm>

Country	Internet users	Penetration of population
Netherlands	14.9 million	88.6%
Finland	4.5 million	85.3%
United Kingdom	51.5 million	82.5%
Germany	65.0 million	79.1%
Austria	6.1 million	74.8%

(The highest figures in Europe are in Iceland where the penetration is almost 98 % and in Norway where it is 95%. Low figures are found in Bosnia 31% and Romania 35% but also in Russia 43%, Greece 46%, Portugal 48% and Italy, 52%.)

The OECD statistics show that the internet has become more or less a part of the everyday life as one source of news while the availability of broadband and wireless networks are increasing. But TV, newspapers and the radio are still in many countries the most important sources of news even though the traditional media is losing, or at least is afraid of losing, the audience in a way never experienced before.

The reported estimate is that over 90% newspaper reading is so far done in print (OECD report 2010, 46) but the situation varies from country to country and changes rapidly. The traffic to online news sites has grown over recent years in OECD countries, according to the report (ibid, 47).

The report shows what proportion of individuals reads or downloads online newspapers or news magazines for private purposes. The statistics cover the age groups from 16 to 74. The population proportions doing so in 2008 (most recent available) were: Finland 57%; the Netherlands 43%; UK 37%; Austria 30% and Germany 21%. The online reading doesn't necessarily mean that the audience has abandoned the offline newspaper totally. But most surveys show that active offline newspaper readers often tend to read more news also online, and increasingly fewer and fewer persons rely on printed news alone, and the internet is the main source of news in the 15-24 year age bracket. On the other hand, there are concerns that some of the younger generation never read news at all or do so irregularly. There are some indications also that in younger age groups heavy internet use in general does not necessarily mean that the person is a heavy internet news user. The younger generation seems to rely more on search engines and there also seems to be a lack of critical and analytical skills. (OECD report 2010, 44-46.)

The pattern for those who are using internet as a news source, as is well known, is that the younger generation tends to read online news more than older people. But, for example in Finland 45% of the age group between 55 and 64 said that they were using the internet in the last three months for reading online news, in 2008. In the Netherlands one third of that age group did the same; in UK about 25%; but in Austria and Germany only 15-20% of that age group reads news online. (OECD report 2010, 45.)

An Australian study from year 2009 (Flew et al.) showed three different categories of online news readers: around one third were loyal users and had a preference for an established news brand. Approximately 60% were convenience users, who accessed news from a relatively wide range of sources. And one in ten were 'customisers', who have a highly interactive relationship to news sources. (OECD report 2010, 47.)

3.2. Internet and its impact on journalists' everyday life

As the OECD report puts it:

“The demands on journalists keep on increasing as they are expected to prepare news for a variety of platforms under increased time pressure. The complaints concerning understaffed newsrooms and overworked journalists with sometimes increasingly precarious contracts are on the increase. This is due to increasing job cuts, cuts in editorial resources and the elimination of certain types of professions from the news value chain.” (OECD report 2010, 72.)

The most important value for the news agency is accuracy and the next significant value is speed. I recently had the opportunity to participate in a lecture that Professor Barbara Czarniawska from Göteborg University, Sweden, gave at Said Business School, Oxford University. She had studied three news agencies (the Italian ANSA, Thomson Reuters and the Swedish TT) and she presented some of the results. During her talk she described the requirements of speed in a news agency as follows: “There is this absolute demand for speed. In Reuters, for example, they speak with great pleasure about nanoseconds. Of course they don't mean nanoseconds, they mean milliseconds. But still, you know - everybody is obsessed with speed.” (Lecture 4th March 2011.)

This continuous pressure with timetables and the nature of urgency clearly requires the capability to adapt to this type of work. And because the demands for speed have been increasing during the internet era, it is essential for a journalist to have the skills to work very fast for different platforms and media. But at the same time a journalist must be aware that facts must be checked. Absence of errors is essential for a news agency; if and when (because that happens in the real life sometimes) the news agency makes an error, it spreads in a short time widely and it is almost impossible to assure that every web site and every newspaper, radio or TV station corrects the mistake even though the news agency feeds the correction.

There are many serious considerations about how journalists are adapting to the internet era as a whole and in particular when working within the newsrooms where the successful result often requires multimedia skills as well as the ability to work with great speed.

And furthermore the work at present is very often teamwork. If a reporter is a sort of lone rider he or she faces demands to change that habit. In my experience it is rare for a reporter to write a story without consulting a colleague, supervisor, news editor, sub editor, photographer, graphic artist, or media journalist. There are plenty of opportunities or even demands for communication within the newsroom and between the reporters. In some cases this might represent a change of culture and cause some need for adaptation.

Doctor Henrik Örnebring in his research *Journalism and Technology Use in Six European Countries* describe the situation pertinently: “Whereas older journalists and journalists with more stable positions in the news industry still can opt out of technologization, young journalists do not have that option - they have to be multi-skilled in order to succeed professionally.” (Örnebring, Senior Research Fellow, Oxford University, St Antony's College, Working paper 2010.)

The OECD report says it bluntly:

“Fostering the skills of journalists who increasingly have to be multimedia journalists is central to maintaining a high-quality news environment. News organizations have to invest heavily in the creation of a versatile workforce.” (OECD report 2010, 72.)

And also:

“Fewer and potentially also more inexperienced journalists are responsible for an ever-increasing amount of work. In integrated newsrooms, the work includes new activities such as writing for the Internet webpage, video shooting and editing for which some of the journalists lack the critical skills and / or time.” (OECD report 2010, 60.)

And furthermore, the report quotes the World Editor's Forum in 2009:

“In practical terms, the growing lack of resources and the necessity to update news around the clock in a 24-hour newsroom have resulted in the reduction of bureaus, layoffs and a consequent reduction of in-house editorial content and potentially quality. Editors recognise the trade-offs between the speed, depth and interactivity of the web and what those benefits are costing in terms of accuracy and journalistic standards.” (OECD report 2010, 60.)

All in all the report lists several opportunities and challenges in the changing news environment and the greater access of information. Some of these are:

- The role of the internet as a source of information and its heterogeneous nature
- The way its nature helps to uncover the truth in a much more efficient way than before
- The end of the period which news monopolies controlled the news
- The internet has led to a rise of web publishers and entrepreneurial journalists
- Consequently, the novel news sources balance and challenge the traditional ones

On the other hand there are some concerns relating to quality and reliability because of the growing financial pressures. Rumours or wrong information spreads rapidly via the web, and the nature of the internet's cacophony may mislead the reader. There are also concerns that the online news contributors and citizen journalists just copy (for example news agency material) or comment on the original news material without doing proper journalism themselves.

In spite of the heterogeneous nature of the internet, some of the apprehension is related to the homogeneity of news because it is argued that economic pressures lead to greater dependence on wire services, press release material and non-journalistic

sources rather than editorial content. It is also argued that journalists have an increasing tendency to comment rather than report and also write stories about softer topics and entertainment or sensation.

One of the worries is about the future of investigative journalism as it requires both time and money. The increased fragmentation is also seen as a risk if the online readers are concentrating on just those topics which interest them personally (sports, fashion, food etc.) without leafing through the newspaper. One possibility is that high-quality news will, in the future, be increasingly read only as a result of payment by a smaller group of people who can afford it. (OECD report, 58-61.)

Whatever happens in the future and how challenging the business prospects are, some core values seem to be important. I fully agree with the report by Associate Director Michael P. Smith, Newspaper Management Center. He lists the core values that a group of newspaper editors mentioned: the values of journalism that should be preserved are fairness and balance, editorial judgement, integrity, diversity and community, leadership and involvement. (Smith, Three keys to journalism in a strategic newspaper, 9.)

4. Millions of choices for leaders

If you google the word 'management', it gets around 754,000,000 hits. The word 'leadership' gives something like 130,000,000 hits. And the word 'journalism' gathers about 52,600,000 hits. The two word combination 'managing change' gets 88,000,000 hits and the pair of words 'leading change' gets 118,000,000 hits. Within the Bodleian library collections one can find 99,000 items by searching the word 'management' and 7,500 items with 'leadership'. Obviously there is a lot that has been written on the subject.

In this chapter I will present some general information about change within organizations, mostly those where the specialists and experts work. It is certainly different to lead a car factory than a newsroom. But on the other hand there are still a lot of similarities in how people react and adjust to changes, how they learn new skills and how they need to be motivated in new circumstances. I will comment on and also critique some of the authors' points. I rely on my experience of serving as a journalist for over 20 years and working as a senior leader for about ten years. Before I go to the literature I briefly want to define what kind of a person a good leader is. I assume most of us agree that the phrase 'good leader' includes at least ability and talent in professional skills, fairness, efficiency, reliability, determination capacity, capability in communication and social skills, coherency, ability to implement and surely also a sense of humour.

4.1. Knowledge workers, artists and their special needs

Peter F. Drucker has written over twenty books and works as a professor of social science in the US. He has also been a columnist for the Wall Street Journal from 1975 to 1995. His book 'Management challenges for the 21st century' (1999) concentrates on the action needed because of the profound transition which is going on at present and also in the future regardless of the type of organization. Drucker is talking about knowledge workers and about how they differ as a staff from other workers. He has defined a knowledge worker in a following way:

"Employees such as data analysts, product developers, planners, programmers, and researchers who are engaged primarily in acquisition, analysis, and manipulation of information as opposed to in production of goods or services."
(www.businessdictionary.com)

Allan Alter in his article 'Knowledge Workers Need Better Management' (2005) introduces Professor Thomas H. Davenport's thoughts. US based Davenport has

specialized in business process innovation. His definition of a knowledge worker is: "People whose primary job is to do something with knowledge: to create it, distribute it, apply it." (<http://www.cioinsight.com/c/a/Expert-Voices/Knowledge-Workers-Need-Better-Management/>)

A post doctoral researcher for the Finnish Academy, Doctor Timo Anttila has familiarized himself with working life for years. He and his colleagues have studied *inter alia* knowledge work and work life balance. In this chapter I will refer to Anttila's thoughts because they supplement Drucker's work. Anttila defines a knowledge worker as a person who has a higher education, whose work has a relatively high degree of autonomy and who can arrange daily duties fairly independently. Furthermore, knowledge work is often also quite creative. (Timo Anttila's interview, 15th March 2011.)

Based on these definitions journalists can be considered as knowledge workers without a doubt.

In the book 'Management challenges' Peter Drucker presents the way to manage people. He wants to underline that the executives of different organizations spend more or less the same amount of their time on people problems, which are almost always the same. (Drucker, 1999, 8.) He also reminds us that every institution is a hierarchy and there has to be someone who makes the final decisions; survival of all depends on clear command. (Drucker, 11.)

On the other hand he writes about knowledge workers who make various demands on the leadership. They should be managed like they were working as volunteers, he says.

Allan Alter in his article about Professor Davenport's thoughts quotes the latter: "Knowledge workers have a lot of power, and you don't want to impose things on them that they don't want to do, because they don't like to be told what to do. They may put up with it for a while, but eventually they'll look for a job that gives them the autonomy they think they deserve." (<http://www.cioinsight.com/c/a/Expert-Voices/Knowledge-Workers-Need-Better-Management/>)

Doctor Anttila says that it is not possible to lead a knowledge worker in a traditional way. The management has to have confidence in the knowledge worker and trust that the worker does perform well and devotes himself to the task. On the other hand one challenge for the management is that people are very different and their capacity and talents and their work performance differ greatly from one individual to another. Therefore it is not always easy to measure the productivity and the results or ensure that the workload is fair. According to Anttila, there is a tendency that those who work hard also get more duties and responsibilities. On the other hand Anttila reminds us that it is very easy for a knowledge worker to get hooked on the work and that is why the risk of stress can increase, if the management does not pay attention to the situation. (Interview 15th March 2011.)

I personally find Drucker's ideas about knowledge workers quite well founded and will next take a closer look at them and his publication.

"They (knowledge workers) need, above all, challenge. They need to know the organization's mission and to believe in it. They need continuous training. They need to see results...Increasingly "employees" have to be managed as "partners" - and it is also the definition of a partnership that all partners are equal...and cannot be ordered. They have to be persuaded." (Drucker, 21.)

According to Drucker there are several factors that determine knowledge worker's productivity (142, 145, 147.):

1. It is mandatory to ask the question: What is the task and what should it be?
2. The knowledge workers have to manage themselves and they must have autonomy.
3. Continuing innovation has to be part of their work and they expect relentless learning and teaching.
4. The main task for them is quality and quantity regarding productivity, the definition of quality is a matter of defining the task.
5. They want to be treated as assets rather than a cost.

The author points out that knowledge workers have knowledge coming out of their ears. And therefore it is a huge capital asset but also highly mobile one, if needed. That is why the organization has to understand what it means if the worker is the main asset of an institution and what sort of demands that causes for personnel policy. (Drucker, 149.)

Doctor Anttila shares Drucker's thoughts about knowledge workers assets and says: "The know-how is in the head and if the head leaves, it is not so easy to replace it." (Interview 15th March 2011.)

It seems to be the case that most of the knowledge workers manage and develop themselves. And that requires the capacity to stay young and mentally alive for decades, writes Drucker. (163.) "Knowledge-worker productivity is the biggest of the 21st-century management challenges. In the developed countries it is their first survival requirement." (157.)

I have been working with knowledge workers throughout my career and also consider myself as one. I have noticed as a superior but also as a subordinate that at least journalists, but I believe all the other knowledge workers for that matter, require to be treated as individuals rather than a group of people. I believe that it is very significant and at the same time challenging to act with that perspective. A leader must learn about the staff he is working with and a leader must find time to talk and listen to those people, not only in meetings or formal gatherings but also privately. With this I don't mean that it is mandatory to talk about one's private life but I imply that the leader and the knowledge worker have to hold one-to-one discussions on a regular basis, not only in the development discussion once a year. It is essential to take some time for those kinds of discussions because the hectic newsroom is a place where one usually does not have a possibility to talk about anything else but strictly the daily news agenda and how to cover the stories and subjects needed for the news feed.

Drucker argues that everybody has accepted now that the change is unavoidable and therefore the talks and debates about resistance to change are actually pointless. The change has become the norm and, as he writes it, the only ones who survive are the change leaders, by which he means the whole organization, not only some individuals within it. Succeeding in that requires abandoning yesterday by improving different areas continuously: "If we were to go into this now, knowing what we now know, would we go into it the way we are doing it now?" (21,74,78, 81.)

Once this is solved he urges us to create change and systematic innovation and avoid the traps: unrealistic strategies, lack of knowledge of customer needs, reorganizing too early. The next step before it is possible to implement the change is piloting, testing in a small scale as a test of reality. (Drucker, 84-88.)

The question of continuity, in the middle of the enormous changes so many organizations go through, is important. Drucker states that many institutions are designed for continuity and therefore the thought of change can be contradictory. "People need to know where they stand. They need to know the people with whom they work. They need to know what they can expect. They need to know the values and the rules of the organization. They do not function if the environment is not predictable, not understandable, not known." (90.)

And that is why:

"Balancing change and continuity requires continuous work on information. Nothing disrupts continuity and corrupts relationships more than poor or unreliable information (except perhaps deliberate misinformation). It has to become routine for any enterprise to ask at any change, even the most minor one: "Who needs to be informed of this?" (Drucker, 91.)

Another publication which caught my attention is named 'Managing Media Companies' by Annet Aris and Jacques Bughin (2005). They present interesting ideas about people management in media companies and they raise the question: Is it about creative managers or managed creativity? (Aris and Bughin, 372.) Aris and Bughin are adding to the definition of knowledge workers the artistic and emotional dimension: the author's answer to the question above is that people management in media companies is often more an art than a skill and that the people who are working for a media company are creators and transformers. (Aris and Bughin, 373-374.)

They describe this 'art' and requirements for the management in a following way: "The success... will depend heavily on the people working within the industry and, therefore, motivating and guiding these people as effectively as possible is crucial... The product has to be created anew every day, which is on the one hand a large opportunity, but on the other hand makes the media company very dependent on the day-to-day performance of its people." (373.)

Therefore the authors remind us that leadership is indeed playing a crucial role in attracting these creative and demanding, but highly skilled, persons and ensuring that these people are going to work for the company not only in the present but also in the

future. The company and its management must constantly balance between efficiency without reducing freedom too much, motivating, rewarding and successful recruiting for every position within the organization - also at the top level. (Aris and Bughin, 385-388.)

“Too often, creatively talented employees are promoted, based on their creative performance, and are not assessed rigorously for their managerial skills.” But also: “The challenge of course is to find a leader who combines a good head for business with creative competence.” (Aris and Bughin, 387.)

Because of these relatively high demands, management clearly needs training and continuous learning but that applies also for the creators, the knowledge workers. And therefore the key issue is that there is a need for a learning process throughout the organization. If and when we are calling for brilliant leadership we also must have high expectations for the staff and its skills. Everybody must be willing to learn more and be prepared for the future demands. A Finnish author and academic Katariina Ponteva has summarized the qualities of a good leader: "Be human, fair, positive, inspiring, unyielding, supportive and surprising". (Ponteva, Onnistu Muutoksessa, 2010, 114.) My point of view is that it goes for the employee as well.

Here are some key points to finish this chapter with:

- Knowledge workers need autonomy, independence and the feeling of trust.
- They ought to be treated as partners.
- Knowledge workers are usually attracted by their tasks, the quality of their work and the quality of their work conditions.
- The capital is in their heads and therefore they are easily mobile.
- They demand a lot from their leaders and the working environment.

5. Case STT – small agency, huge changes

Knowledge workers are indeed a demanding but also a rewarding group to lead, as presented in the previous chapter. It is interesting to see how the theory meets reality when I present my study case in this chapter.

The case of The Finnish News Agency, STT, is highly interesting because there are many changes going on at the same time. In spite of the fact that the company is relatively small as is the country, the case presentation can be put into a wider context and be utilized in other organizations as well.

The Finnish News Agency was established in 1887. I believe that never before in the history of the company have so many changes been made in such a short period of time. That is why I find it highly interesting to look at what is going on and how the company is succeeding in reaching all its goals – of which the most important is to provide high quality news service for its customers.

It is really a coincidence that so many things happened in STT at the same time and so many circumstances have changed rapidly and simultaneously. It all started with deliberation regarding the role of the STT. What kind of services did the customers, the media companies, expect from the Agency in the midst of the huge changes within the business? What kind of journalism was required by the customers? These considerations led to a still ongoing process of content reform within the company. The goal is simple: to produce high quality journalism for the clientele. The challenge is obvious: what are the needs of greatly different customers?

1.

STT carries out a customer satisfaction survey once a year. The recent results have shown that the traditional wire service (accurate and fast) is *per se* valued but there is a need for some expanded services as well.

Expansion in this case means stories where the 'ordinary citizens' and consumers are appreciated. It marks new story formats, for example columns, analysis, question-answer-format, different types of fact boxes, background information and various story versions for different platforms. It means packages where the graphics and the story are complementing each other or the main point is the picture, which is accompanied by a short text. There is also a need to use a picture as a starting point for a story, which is a new way of thinking about a format. There is also a demand for customized services. All this means shorter stories than before: at present the longest article STT produces is about 320 words, the medium length is about 200 words and the shortest article format is about 90 words plus the cables which are 40-50 words long. A few years ago it was not uncommon to see a story over 500 words long.

2.

The other major factor was that STT bought the Finnish picture agency called Lehtikuva at the end of 2009 and the merger took place in March 2010. The Lehtikuva was established in 1951 and it was a part of Sanoma Corporation before the STT-Lehtikuvamerger. The picture agency has been the predominant Finnish operator within this field after the other major picture agency in the country went bankrupt in 1996. (www.kilpailuvirasto.fi) (www.medialinnakkeet.com)

This strategic move was carried out to improve the news service in a more visual direction. The old model where the text and the picture were produced separately caused a problem; the story and the picture were not always a match. Traditionally the reporters have written their stories relatively independently and the picture agency's photographers have taken their pictures or the graphic artist has done the graphic and the elements have been delivered separately to the customers.

The content reform should increase the understanding of how to visualize a story, how to use pictures and graphics in a modern way, develop the cooperation and learn new working procedures between the journalists and the photographers and graphic artists.

Also the style of writing is being reviewed, and the company has used an external teacher for feedback and to improve the writing skills of the reporters.

3.

As a result of the news agency and picture agency fusion it soon became obvious that the new company needed a new office because there simply was not enough room for the staff. The move to the new headquarters building took place at the end of 2010 and since then all the news agency and picture agency staff have been working under the same roof.

4.

Finally, the Agency had started in 2009 a project with a totally new editorial system for all journalists. The management of STT was investigating for some years the possibility of changing the editorial system used in the newsroom. The previous one was relatively old and not very reliable and it did not allow working efficiently between various platforms, the internet and with different kinds of products. After a selection process the management decided in 2009 to start the project called Neo. It is a Finnish invention (by the software developer company Anygraaf) for newsrooms, and STT as the pilot company has therefore participated strongly in the development and implementation processes.

After some delays the new technical tool was implemented in May 2011. It is not only a technical tool for the journalists, but it is also a system, which requires a very new perspective within the processes of everyday work.

All those changes have required a lot flexibility and effort from the journalists, leaders and the top management. Next I give the platform to them.

5.1. Voice of the leaders

I have had the opportunity to discuss the changes with my colleagues, the news editors and the heads of the different departments within the newsroom, and the management of the company plus some of the reporters and IT representatives. The latter discussions are considered as background information and not quoted but are highly appreciated.

The interviews took place between September 2010 and April 2011. One of the interviews was made via e-mail, the rest were face to face -meetings.

Most of the quotations I will use are anonymous because it is not important to identify the middle management. The most important thing is what is said. I also wanted to give my interviewees the chance to express their thoughts as freely as possible.

The top management will be quoted by name because they are the official representatives of the company and therefore their views carry weight.

The merger

From what I understand, the merger with the picture agency is considered a successful strategic operation. It is widely accepted within the company that it is important for a news agency to produce both pictures and texts. It is also very clear that it is something the customers need and want from the agency. The fusion is still at its early stage and there is much to be done before the collaboration between reporters and photographers and graphic artists is smooth. The general mood is optimistic but at the same time the leaders understand that the company is still facing challenges and that the process is going to last.

I have translated the following quotations from Finnish and I have tried to be as accurate as possible.

“We have now joined in marriage and we are learning how to live our everyday life together and solving the daily problems. Trying to figure out from which part I am allowed to press the toothpaste...” (Leader E)

“I think that everyday life has begun to run properly and I have not seen any bigger problems. But there are some cultural differences and we don't know each other very well yet.” (Leader B)

“It is between your ears and it is a question about your own attitudes.” (Leader G)

“We have some information gaps between the reporters and the photographers. We don't always know who is doing what and we don't plan the gigs early enough. But the basic feeling is positive.” (Leader J)

“I believe that the merger has succeeded relatively well.” (Leader F)

“I think we have succeeded with the merger brilliantly and the cooperation has been super. Working together has been flourishing. Do I sound too positive...” (Leader C)

“The feeling is very positive. I have started to value the work of a photographer much more now when I know what they are doing.” (Leader D)

“There is still much to be done and it requires personal initiative.” (Leader A)

“It is not a one-night stand and it will take time before the different cultures are becoming one. But all this is getting better, as planned.” (Mika Pettersson, Editor in chief, interview 25th March 2011.)

“We can always give some new instructions and orders but at the end of the day it is about how every individual understands the new way of thinking and the goals of this manoeuvre.” (Minna Holopainen, Editor, interview 30th December 2010.)

Developing the content

The management of STT sees that the content reform is crucial for the company's existence and therefore journalists have to understand and learn the current and future demands:

“Our customers need more and more story packages with different kind of elements, text, pictures etc. They want us to take care of the news event from the beginning to the end in a way that they can publish the stories on different platforms.” (Mika Pettersson, Editor in chief, interview 25th March 2011.)

“I believe that the newspaper's story is going to be invented again. News agency reporters have built their professional identity as 'writers' but now they have to understand the demands of visualization and become also 'visualists'.” (Minna Holopainen, Editor, interview 30th December 2010.)

The heads of different departments and the news editors in the middle management are responsible for the change and the actions in practice. They seem to be relatively well informed about what is required from them, and their general attitude is positive and they fully understand that the change is a necessity.

More than one leader pointed out that the content reform is a project from top to bottom. I have got the impression that some of the leaders would have appreciated the possibility to take part in the process earlier. There seems to be a need to influence, discuss and make plans with the management, not just to be the party who is taking instructions from above. Having said this I dare to say that the middle management is overall very motivated and keen to improve the working methods with the reporters and the management. The leaders are highly interested in the success of the company and are willing to work for a brighter future. Probably that is also why some of the leaders would like to communicate more with the management, not just be informed.

Some of the middle managers are impatient: They are aware of the requirements and they are willing to move forward rapidly. All of them are not sure if the reporters are at the same stage and some of them worry how to communicate about the new demands. The content reform seems to be so significant that the leaders are expressing relatively strong feelings about it.

“The middle management is a key factor and we have a lot of responsibilities within this project. And if we fail the whole newsroom fails. I think especially the younger generation is willing to change but I am worried how we as leaders can allocate time enough to this project and assure the results.” (Leader B)

“This project is fantastic and very important. Our texts has been too long and if I am honest also quite boring and bureaucratic. But we have already started to improve a lot.” (Leader C)

“It would be easier to motivate oneself if we decide together what we are going to do with the content and in which direction we are going to develop our operations. I know the management makes the decisions but I would like at least to have the feeling that my view is important and sit down and talk about the needs and demands.” (Leader L)

“We have to be very careful and listen to the customers; what are their needs. It is essential for us to modernize our practices.” (Leader D)

“I have high expectations and hopes. The direction is right but I don't know if the speed is sufficient. ” (Leader B)

“Unfortunately it seems to me that the younger generation understands the customer satisfaction aspect better than the older.” (Leader K)

“I'm not so sure how my patience lasts, if I have to justify all over again why this change is so crucial. My tolerance can be relatively low because I have been on that track already for a long time.” (Leader E)

“It you imagine a scale, I'm here at one end and I'm concerned that some of the reporters are at the opposite end.” (Leader K)

“I think this is a good improvement and our team is positive about it, but I have some doubts of how the changes are going to happen in real life.” (Leader H)

“Some developments have already happened, but we are still producing too much of that old-fashioned stuff. We as leaders should be more active and give more feedback to our reporters so that they could improve their skills.” (Leader A)

“I justify the need for change by using an example: The automobile industry does not manufacture cars as it did 20 or 5 years ago. The way of doing things has changed everywhere. Why should journalism be the only field, which is in some sort of stagnation.” (Leader K)

The lack of time and the busy days seems to cause stress to some representatives of the middle management, whose workload seems to be relatively heavy in the midpoint of the organization. Some of the leaders have also observed that some of the reporters work too hard and are tired.

“Sometimes I'm confused and I'm not sure in which meeting I'm participating. Is it about this project or that project?” (Leader F)

“All these changes plus the daily routines and responsibilities. It has been pretty hard.” (Leader G)

“I'm tired, if I'm frank.” (Leader E)

“I'm fretting about the situation. And I am exhausted.” (Leader A)

“I have calculated that I should lengthen my every working day by one hour. Then I could take care of my duties in a proper way.” (Leader D)

“I think people are tired. It is not easy to find some enthusiasm within the newsroom. People work very hard and they are committed but at the same time they are under big pressure and struggling with the limited resources.” (Leader B)

In some of the discussions it was brought up that there is a demand for more feedback and also a need to discuss in advance about the stories, the angles and the style of writing. Also some brainstorming is needed plus systematic debriefing especially after bigger news events. These procedures are believed to improve the content.

A new newsroom

As a part of the fusion the company moved at the end of 2010 to a new headquarters building in the centre of Helsinki (the capital of Finland). The move itself went smoothly, as I understand it. The new office had been fully renovated before the newsroom started its operations there. Generally speaking the leaders are happy with the new facilities because the former newsroom was considered cramped and impractical.

In spite of the positive atmosphere there are two things which cause dilemmas for several of the leaders:

“The noise and the narrowness. If I'm speaking on the phone, it's hard to hear what the other person is saying. We are simply too close to each other.” (Leader K)

“The voices carry very well and we are sitting very closely together.” (Leader D)

“Almost everyone is complaining about the lack of silence. It's hard to concentrate when you can hear all the time what you colleagues are doing or speaking about.” (Leader F)

Some of the leaders said that some reporters were working with headsets to avoid the noise and the disturbance. There was also more than one leader who mentioned that the aisles are too close to the reporters and the passers-by are a bother even if they does not mean to be. There is a feeling of some sort of restlessness, as they explain it. On the other hand the leaders say that it is important that the communication is easy and the different departments are close to each other. But the expectations for the improvement of acoustics and the narrowness are still high. One person pointed out that the fear of disturbing the colleague has minimized the unofficial chat and laugh in the newsroom.

The editorial system

The fourth change is the implementation of the new editorial system Neo, as mentioned. The start up has been postponed several times because the program has been incomplete and the technical development has been in progress. The launch took place in May 2011, over a year later than it was originally planned.

The leaders agreed that is better to wait than start to work with an unfinished system but at the same time they expressed some kind of frustration and hesitation. Many of the leaders expressed their satisfaction about the training programme and thanked those who had been in charge of the exercise. The very high standard of the training was mentioned also in some background discussions.

Because the project has been long in coming and it has had its ups and downs the leaders expressed some doubts and fears:

“Well, this is a tragic example of how things can go to the south. I hope we have made a correct choice. But I still believe it's going to be good, at some point. It's wise to postpone the implementation, if the system is incomplete.” (Leader C)

"The change is bigger than many of us understand. Its basis is very different from the current system, and the reporters have to change their way of thinking. I hope we will have enough time to absorb it properly." (Leader I)

"We have started to joke about it and there is some frustration in the air, but I think the attitude is still relatively positive." (Leader F)

"I'm a little bit scared about it because I'm not very proficient with the technique. Hopefully there will be, as we have been promised, enough training." (Leader H)

"Because of the repeated delays I have started to think whether there are some fundamental problems." (Leader L)

"It seems to be quite sensible, but I'm worried about the speed. Is the new system fast enough? The reporter has to fill in a lot of meta-data information before we can send the bulletin out." (Leader D)

"We are a small company and this kind of a project requires time. It has been a champing at the bit for those who have been working heavily with this very ambitious project. But we can't start to use the new system before it is complete, or almost complete, because then we just transfer the developing load on the journalists." (Minna Holopainen, Editor, interview 30th December 2010.)

After a series of discussions about the change processes, I would like to summarize the main points on how the recent developments have been experienced.

- The leaders are highly motivated for the changes and they consider them as a necessity.
- The leaders understand very well that customer satisfaction is crucial for the company's success.
- The leaders are quite well informed about their tasks but some of them would like to participate in the planning processes and discussions more – be a part of the decision making.
- The leaders work hard, some of them are stressed and some of them are in a constant hurry. Some of them would appreciate more support from the management.
- The leaders experience mixed feelings of how the reporters are going to adapt to the future demands. There seem to be some considerations about the age gap.

- The merger with the picture agency is widely regarded as a successful strategic move and the cooperation between reporters and photographers has started relatively well. There are still steps to take. Some of the interviewees expressed their wish for more opportunities to socialize and mingle with the new colleagues; informal parties and meetings.
- The new headquarter building location is perfect but the tightness and the noise of the newsroom is criticized.

I had the opportunity to talk with some reporters about the changes. I wanted to listen to their views as well as to get the whole picture. The interviews are a random sample but they give me an idea about their feelings. It is notable that the reporters I talked to seem to be very interested in developing their skills and expressed their interest in improving the company strategies and practices as well. They seem to be committed to the company. Therefore I believe that there is a lot of potential and willingness to improve the work environment, the content and the processes but I am not sure if all the potential is fully utilised. This might be one standpoint to be considered.

6. The social media and the news agencies

In the previous chapter I described the change and demands for a news agency and how the leaders are coping with a different type of shifts and demands.

In addition it is essential to take a look at social media. The rapid rise of social media also forces news agency journalists and leaders to rethink their professional traditions and working habits regardless of what position they are working.

Different societies are facing huge challenges because of social media, as recent international events have shown.

The Belarus born author Evgeny Morozov gave a lecture at Oxford University during Hilary term 2011. One of his theses was: "The social media landscape is changing tremendously - it is being shaped by forces that most decision makers who speak enthusiastically about internet freedom and twitter revolution don't fully understand." (Morozov, the author of *The Net Delusion*, Oxford University, presentation 18th January, 2011.)

I argue that there is no choice about understanding the mechanism of social media whatever field the journalist is working in. I also argue that it is not a question of whether the journalist is 'liking' or 'disliking' the social media or is willing to use it as a part of his everyday work. The social media is there and it is better to learn how to benefit from it than ignore it.

Clearly many journalists are already using the social media routinely and productively. But, and this I know from my personal experience, there are many journalists out there who are not familiar with the tools of the social media and who are simply not using it at all. I argue that it is just a matter of time before these journalists must start to rethink the way they are practising their profession.

Oxford University Senior Research Fellow Henrik Örnebring is very frank when he describes how journalists should start to change their attitudes about their identity: "If you are a journalist, you are a person who speaks on behalf of others. You are telling the people what to think or you tell people what is important. You are the gatekeeper. And it's clear that a lot of journalists really like that part of the job. They really like to be able to tell people what to think or to decide what it is important. And now you just can't... I would just say to those people: Get over it." (Örnebring, Oxford University, St Antony's College, interview 1st December 2010.)

Reuters Institute Visiting Fellow Nic Newman presents in his working paper 'The rise of social media and its impact on mainstream journalism' some notes about the characteristics of social networks. "Facebook attracts a more mainstream and slightly older audience but has also become the default for students. Twitter, the fastest

growing social network - and the most talked about - is far smaller, but is used extensively for information and news sharing amongst professionals." (Newman, Reuters Institute, Oxford University, 2009, 41.)

An article in *American Journalism Review* says: "Twitter followers have proven to be avid and loyal readers, engaging with reporters who cover fields of interest to them. Facebook pages have become a venue for news organizations and individual reporters to post links to stories and respond directly to comments and questions." (Bret Schulte, *American Journalism Review*, Winter 2009, 23.)

6.1. To be or not to be

The problem for the many news agencies is a sort of cannibalisation. How much can an agency publish news material within the social media? In many cases the news agency is owned by its major customers, which makes the question more complex. The customers are paying for the wire service and naturally they expect to have it first. An agency listens carefully to its customers and cannot start to operate solo.

The Editor in chief of the STT says that the question of publishing content within the social media is 'interesting'. According to him there are plans where several European news agencies are about to start a joint venture project within Facebook. At this point he was not able to say more. There are also ways to monetize the social media by offering monitoring and / or moderating services for the clients. (Mika Petterson, Editor in chief, interview 25th March 2011., The paper of the Union of Journalists in Finland, *Journalisti*, 14th October 2010, 5.) Moderating online newspaper's web forums is often essential but also arduous and it could be done in a centralized way on behalf of the customer. Portal and monitoring services help the customer to organize information and follow certain themes and topics.

I am convinced that news agency reporters must be where the masses are. At present more and more are in the social media. I argue strongly that the reporters and the leaders have to use and monitor and participate within the social media because they simply need the contacts and the information it provides. Clearly it is easy to reach people all over the world via Twitter or Facebook. It is possible to find interviewees or sources, especially for difficult or rare topics. And surely it is possible to get eyewitness stories, photos or videos after breaking news. Crowdsourcing (the practice whereby an organization enlists a variety of freelancers, paid or unpaid, to work on a specific task or problem, Oxford CD-ROM Dictionary, 11th edition, 2009) is easy to put into practice by using the social media.

As Amy Mitchell, deputy director of the Pew Research Centre's Project for Excellence in Journalism says: "We're seeing that the user, the citizen, has become an integral part of the evolution of a news story." (Bret Schulte, *American Journalism Review*, winter 2009, 23.)

I argue that not every journalist is familiar with the social media and has no knowledge of how it works. Many journalists are not particularly interested in the subject or do not see its relevance, as mentioned. In my opinion the leaders have to encourage and motivate the reporters to use the social media, provide systematic training, and ensure that everyone embrace the skills needed. In my view the leaders should not assume that everyone will learn these skills by themselves, spontaneously without any intervention. From my experience the latter approach leads to 'unprofessionalism'.

It was interesting and convincing to read Nic Newman's Working paper, in which he quotes Robin Goad, UK Director of Hitwise. Goad believes that journalists reach success with the Twitter community when they are authentically engaged with it: "...if you have specific journalists, who are asking questions, re-tweeting, forwarding links, engaging properly, they will get much higher click-through rate because they will be seen as a trusted source." (Newman, 2009, 45.) In my interview he underlines: "Basically just keep your nose to the ground. I think Twitter is really becoming the core journalistic tool for both the filtering but also for asking questions, who would be good to talk about this...for researching as you create stories and as you distribute them as well." (7th December 2010.)

However Doctor Henrik Örnebring raises the dilemma which relates to the identity of a journalist: "The very foundation of journalism is that the access to the media space is limited but when you have that access, you speak to millions...Today it is exactly the opposite. The access to the media is free and open to all...Anyone can now speak via the media but you are not guaranteed an audience." (Interview 1st December 2010.)

I mentioned earlier that the reporter should be where the masses are. One cannot forget that the masses are also outside the newsroom and journalism is also about face to face contacts and meetings with the sources. Andrew Currah writes in his book 'What is happening to our news' about the 'prisoners of the screen'. He argues that the journalists have less time to travel and meet people: "The craft of journalism is becoming computer-centric, which search software such as Google mediating the connection between the newsroom and the outside world, and...social networks and blogs funnelling customised news, feeds to the desks of editors and journalists..." (Currah, 2009, 123.)

Also Bret Schulte in his article in American Journalism Review points out: "Now, newsrooms are scrambling to reassert themselves in an era that is nothing less than an uprising of status updates." (Winter 2009, 23.)

I believe Currah and Schulte have a point. A journalist should not be isolated nor should he focus on the web entirely. A journalist finds news by mingling, meeting people, by observing the environment, by living the normal life and participating in grass-root-level activities. It is easy, safe and comfortable to stay inside. And if one is in a hurry - and the reporters often are - it is timesaving to pick up the phone or google or wait for the press release.

The risk for an agency reporter of staying indoors is bigger than for other journalists. It is simple and fast to write a traditional news agency story by using the email, internet

and the telephone because the reporter is not in charge of the final newspaper story. It seems to me that some news agency reporters are used to feeding the wire, not to thinking about the final product. On the other hand the customers (luckily) demand more and more different kind of elements, not just the endless wire feed. The growing need of human interest stories, vox pops, multimedia operations, different distributing platforms and the need for visualization also forces the news agency reporters out of the newsrooms, which cannot be anything else than a blessing.

Some key points

Social media is about getting and gathering information, also fast and from far away. It is a way to find out what people are talking about in their coffee breaks.

It is an effective way to distribute information and reach especially the younger generation.

It gives the opportunity to start new projects and businesses.

With active presence it is possible to strengthen the company's brand.

It is also possible and advisable to build up personal brand and images.

The journalists and the leaders need to be trained to use the social media and reposition themselves.

The news agencies ought to create the guidelines for using it and make sure that the reporters embrace the skills needed.

There is a risk of being a 'prisoner of the screen'.

6.2. Media presence on Facebook and on Twitter

The six news agencies I am investigating seem to use the social media in very different ways. In this context the social media means their presence on Twitter and on Facebook. The numbers in this chapter are approximate and give an impression how the medium is operating and about their popularity. Please note that one medium can have different user names, and accounts and therefore the comparison is a generalization, and Twitter and Facebook activity are growing constantly.

Some of the companies, particularly Reuters, are well-established tweeters while the smaller agencies do not have any presence at all or it is very limited or is concentrating on non-journalistic services. (www.twitter.com)

Table 1

Some news agencies on Twitter (situation 10th June)

Name	Followers	Tweets
Reuters	773,000	44,000
Thomson Reuters	14,000	1,500
British Press Association PA	6,200	160
DPA Infoline, Germany	4,900	2,200
ANP Photo, Netherlands	760	50
STT Info, Finland	200	7,000
APA, Austria	no presence	

As the information below shows, the news agencies, apart from Reuters, had not started their activity on Facebook (www.facebook.com)

Table 2

Some news agencies on Facebook (situation 18th June 2011)

Name	Facebook fans
Reuters	66,000
PA, DPA, ANP, STT, APA	no significant activity

The newspapers and the broadcasting companies are more active in the social media than the agencies. I will compare the situation in Britain, Germany, Netherlands, Austria and Finland and then summarize the general view. Just to show how hugely the use of the social media differs, I have added the figures of BBC and CNN to the end of following tables.

Table 3

Some British newspapers on Twitter (situation 18th June)

Name	Followers	Tweets
Financial Times	388,000	15,000
Guardian News	179,000	47,000
The Guardian	126,000	3,600
Daily Telegraph News	41,000	58,000
Independent News	30,000	24,000
ThePaper	21,000	1,500

Daily Mail	22,000	50,000
News of the World	11,500	2,600
Daily Mirror	9,800	21,600
The Sun	no activity	

Table 4

Some British newspaper fans on Facebook (situation 18th June)

Name	Facebook fans
Financial Times	231,000
Guardian	92,000
News of the World	85,000
Independent	53,000
The Sun	28,400
The Telegraph	26,000
The Times	18,800
Daily Mirror	16,400
Daily Mail	no presence

Table 5

Some German newspapers on Twitter (situation 18th June)

Name	Followers	Tweets
Die Zeit	75,400	40,000
Süddeutsche Zeitung	42,000	16,000
Bild Aktuell	31,000	55,000
Die Welt	31,000	29,700
Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung	22,000	22,000
Tagesspiegel	16,800	2,400
Frankfurter Rundschau	3,800	11,600

Table 6

Some German newspaper fans on Facebook (situation 18th June)

Name	Facebook fans
Bild	196,000
Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung	21,700
Tagesspiegel	5,000
Frankfurter Rundschau	no activity
Süddeutsche Zeitung	no presence
Die Zeit	no presence
Die Welt	no presence

Table 7

Some Dutch newspapers on Twitter (situation 18th June)

Name	Followers	Tweets
De Telegraaf	35,000	233,000
De Volkskrant	22,000	93,000
Algemeen Dagblad	only sports presence	

Table 8

Some Dutch newspaper fans on Facebook (situation 18th June)

Name	Facebook fans
Algemeen Dagblad	15,300
De Volkskrant	7,500
De Telegraaf	7,300

Table 9

Some Austrian newspapers on Twitter (situation 18th June)

Name	Followers	Tweets
Kronen Zeitung	2,700	27,000
Der Standard	2,100	1,000
Die Presse	1,400	36,000
Salzburger Nachrichten	1,400	3,500
Wiener Zeitung	265	340

Table 10

Some Austrian newspaper fans on Facebook (situation 18th June)

Name	Facebook fans
Der Standard	10,400
Wiener Zeitung	2,100
Salzburger Nachrichten	no presence
Kronen Zeitung	no presence
Die Presse	no presence

Table 11

Some Finnish newspapers on Twitter (situation 10th June 2011)

Name	Followers	Tweets
Helsingin Sanomat	6,000	10,000
Kauppalehti	3,400	17,700
Ilta-Sanomat	2,800	11,400
Iltalehti	2,400	14,800
Uusi Suomi	1,500	2,900 (18 th June)
Aamulehti	1,500	28,000 (18 th June)

Table 12

Some Finnish newspaper Facebook fans (situation 10th June 2011)

Name	Facebook fans
Ilta-Sanomat	55,800
Ilta-lehti	30,400
Helsingin Sanomat	18,600
Kauppalehti	8,200
Uusi Suomi	8,400 (18th June)
Aamulehti	3,000 (only basic information about the paper)

Table 13

BBC and CNN on social media (situation 10th June 2011)

Name	Twitter	Facebook
CNN Breaking News	4.5 million followers	2.2 million fans
BBC Breaking News	1.43 million followers	
BBC World (Global News)	821,000 followers	871,000 fans
CNN International	185,000 followers	670,000 fans
BBC News	173,000 followers	122,000 fans

To put previous figures in perspective: according to the Morgan Stanley Internet Trends from 2010 the top brands or products worldwide leveraging Facebook are: Texas Hold'em Poker (Zynga) with 16.5 million Facebook fans, Mafia Wars (Zynga) with 11.4 million fans, Facebook with 8 million fans and Starbucks with 6.5 million fans. Amongst top 20 are no media corporations except Disney. (http://www.morganstanley.com/institutional/techresearch/pdfs/Internet_Trends_041210.pdf)

The use of social media seems to vary greatly in the countries and media in question. Reuters is the only news agency which is using the social media actively. The rest of the news agencies' presence is diminutive. I come to some assessments later.

Those British newspapers which are using the social media (and which I have listed) seem to be very active. Financial Times with almost 400,000 Twitter followers was the most popular paper but the Telegraph and the Guardian had sent far more tweets than the FT. The use of Twitter is divided. The Sun did not use Twitter for its news services.

It is easy to find the same sort of polarisation on Facebook as well. The FT and the Guardian had high numbers of Facebook 'friends' but so did the News of the World. The Times and the Sun were gathering significantly lower 'likes' and the Daily Mail was not present on Facebook at all.

The German newspapers' Twitter followers were much fewer than in Britain. Even the most popular Twitter accounts gathered only tens of thousands followers: Die Zeit had less than one fifth of the followers of the FT. But die Zeit had been tweeting much more than the FT. If one compares the Bild with the British Sun, which might be the correct way to do it given the genre, it is clear that Bild has chosen a totally different strategy to that of the Sun; the latter being relatively passive in the social media. Bild was overwhelmingly popular on Facebook; the next German newspaper (Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung) did not have even nearly the same number of Facebook fans.

Some Dutch newspapers had very high numbers of tweets but relatively moderate numbers of followers. De Telegraaf was the main Twitter-player with over 200,000 tweets. The Facebook-presence was not very significant in June 2011 but the situation changes rapidly so it too early to draw further conclusions on its position. The Austrian newspapers are less active than the others in question. Die Kronen Zeitung (considered a populist paper according to my fellow Austrian journalist fellow, Judith Högerl) and Die Presse (as a quality paper) had sent remarkably more tweets than the other Austrian papers. On the other hand the amount of the followers was low. The Facebook-activity was somewhat low, as well.

In Finland the tabloids and the biggest daily were dominating the newspaper presence within the social media, and Facebook seemed to be the primary platform. The Helsingin Sanomat, with a circulation of almost 400,000 copies, had in June 6,000 Twitter followers and was just about starting its (quickly growing) activity on Facebook. The Finnish Broadcasting company, YLE had in June over 2,500 Twitter followers for their news tweets. YLE had sent over 50,000 tweets.

Some key points

The use of the social media in different European countries clearly varies. Britain has taken the leading role and Austria seems to be moving slowly. In Britain the BBC dominance is clear within the social media.

The situation within each country varies greatly. Some of the media companies are highly operational within the social media and some are passive.

The newspapers and broadcasters are notably more active within the social media than the news agencies.

Only in Finland Facebook seems to be prominently more significant than Twitter.

6.3. News agency tweets and posts

Reuters

Reuters is updating its Facebook profile several times per day but not constantly. The news feed is not shown for understandable reasons, but Reuters publishes relatively more background-stories, witness-stories and analyses from different areas, and mainly foreign news topics. The commentators seem to be mostly matter-of-fact. A Reuters story began on the 8th of April:

“As government militia men robbed and kidnapped guests from their Abidjan hotel, several Reuters journalists were trapped for days, until French forces evacuated the building. Correspondent Tim Cocks tells the harrowing tale of a close encounter with mayhem...” (Reuters Facebook Wall 8th April 2011.)

And as is the nature of social media, the first comment on the story above, four minutes after publishing it, was by John Beara: “Tim cocks...what a name T__T” (Reuters Facebook Wall 8th April 2011.) I should stress that the next comments were about the original topic.

Another example shows a proper discussion when Reuters publishes its material:

“It is not clear how long Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi can last, but the fact he seems to be digging in for a prolonged stay will be disheartening to Western governments under pressure from war-weary publics to deliver a swift conclusion in Libya.” (Reuters Facebook Wall 8th April 2011.)

The first comment is by Byron Harker: “Just as I thought, this will be a second Iraq. As long as Qaddafi can continue this conflict, he holds power and will continue to hold power until he is assassinated or surrenders.” (Reuters Facebook Wall 8th April 2011.)

The seventh comment by Paul Dino Lu: “I hope this won't be the second Iraq. The EU needs to do more and fast before Qaddafi could regain his control in Libya again. (Reuters Facebook Wall 8th April 2011.)

The eight comment is written by Taha Gailani: “Libya is completely different to Iraq, there's no chance that the US or NATO getting stuck in there, Gaddafi's forces could be easily dismantled if the NATO air strikes continued the path of those of the US, French and British. Instead, we are seeing NATO air strikes targeting the rebel forces. I don't know if this is due to inefficiency or a secret deal struck with Gaddafi's family!” (Reuters Facebook Wall 8th April 2011.)

The amount of the Reuters Twitter followers is growing fast. My first check up (on 7.4.2011) showed 605,000 followers and after a few days (10.4.2011) the figure was 612,000 and after ten days (21.4.2011) 635,000 followers. In mid June the number approached 800,000. Reuters publishes via Twitter some flash-news and sort of teasers. But it is not “scooping the wire”, as the Reuters Handbook puts it when instructing reporters to use the micro-blogging system Twitter: “As with blogging within Reuters News, you should make sure that if you have hard news content that is broken first via the wire.” (<http://handbook.reuters.com>)

A couple of tweets from April 2011 show the Reuters-style:

"Former Egypt president Mubarak speaks on Arabiya TV in first statement since being ousted, says allegations against him are unfounded." (Reuters Twitter feed 10th April 2011.)

"Mubarak says he will fight "lies" about assets <http://reut.rs/gZ5vG>" (Reuters Twitter feed 10th April 2011 one hour later.)

"President Obama to lay out approach for long-term deficit reduction later this week - senior adviser Plouffe." (Reuters Twitter feed 10th April 2011.)

"Obama to announce plan to reduce long-term deficit <http://reut.rs/gsfUe4>" (Reuters Twitter feed 10th April 2011 on hour later.)

As a commercial company Reuters has evidently taken an initiative role with the social media. I believe that it wants to enhance its news capacity and strength even though only a limited part of the Reuters production is published via Facebook or Twitter (plus other social media services). With this I mean not only the news competition between the media corporations but also the brand building strategy and the clear opportunity to find news, news material and topics via the social media and its users worldwide. Can you be a relevant operator within the news business if you are not present in the social media? Clearly Reuters is answering 'no'.

It is hard to assess how Reuters is generating a profit from the social media. But if not money, it is surely generating information. The company will seek more and more attention and audiences within the social media and also, when needed, the participation of citizens. With the network already existing and when the company name is already known the probability to get some feedback and information increases. One cannot expect to find for example an eyewitness in the middle of nowhere without an online community. But if one has a large group of 'followers' or 'fans' the chance to find a person willing to assist or deliver some material is, of course, better.

As Mark H Jones, Reuters Global Community Editor says: "The ability to pull together what is available or what might be available if you let people know what you need." (Interview 19th November 2010.)

Reuters will not share its future plans but I present some considerations by Mark Jones:

"We've talked largely about the open social networks and they definitely have a role. They are sucking more and more of the global attention of the population. And I'm sure that is going to carry on. But what I'm now involved in mostly, is building professional networks around narrowed subject areas. And I think you can see in a way the Facebook has developed and the LinkedIn has developed. This idea that maybe there is this other frontier, which is about increasing largish groups but with very clear overlapping interests. And what can you do, if you connect professional groups in that way?" (Interview 19th November 2010.)

Reuters Handbook gives detailed instructions for their journalists on their presence within the social media. The company wants to encourage its journalists to use the social media but at the same time be aware of the risks and obstacles. Reuters reminds

the journalists to be aware that they are not only private individuals but also representing the company and they should not include unnecessary material about their personal lives:

“It's simple to share a link on Twitter, Facebook and other networks but as a Reuters journalist if you repeat something that turns out to be a hoax, or suggests you support a particular line of argument, then you risk undermining your own credibility and that of Reuters News.” (<http://handbook.reuters.com>)

The handbook also lists the demands of a Reuter's blogger. The normal journalist guidelines and standards apply but the company has specific instructions as well. A Reuter's blogger should be interesting and conversational and raise questions, respond to comments made by readers, inject some personality and anecdotes but not be opinionated. A successful blogger is capable of understanding the content and the needs of its audience but also have some visual skills: “Blogging in Reuters is not a license to vent personal views... It should use multimedia and think about a post's layout... It should encourage the readers to give feedback: End each post with the line, 'tell us what you think'.” (<http://handbook.reuters.com>)

The Press Association

The Press Association (PA) has chosen a different approach towards the social media than Reuters. It is using Twitter for advertising and telling the audience what sort of activities the company has at present going on. It also announces what kind of news material is available but does not publish actual news. The company's strategy seems to be that the wire feed is very much apart from Twitter. Some pickings from the PA's Twitter feed on the 13th of April 2011 (www.twitter.com):

“[#royalwedding](#) themed apps are starting to pop up on smartphone app stores including one featuring PA content <http://bbc.in/hhUOT9>”

“I'm hiring! Sport Marketing Manager at Press Association - London, United Kingdom [#jobs](#) <http://lnkd.in/jzdMEk>”

“Follow the live blog on the budget with AOL's WalletPop - everything you need to know: <http://aol.it/hokH5M>”

“Writing a [#PressRelease](#) ? For expert tuition including 15% discount book now. Course running on April 15 in London <http://bit.ly/hJXgz2>”

PA's Editor Jonathan Grun says that the company is considering “of course” the social media as very notable for them. According to Grun it is a significant source of news but at the same time the newsroom has to be aware of the risks and the need for verification: “The internet being what it is. People being what they are. Twitter being what it is. There is a awful lot of hoax stuff going on, an awful lot of people trying to put material on media by claiming to be someone who they are not...There have been fairly

famous occasions where very inaccurate stuff has been flowing around on Twitter.” (Interview 8th November 2010.)

Grun explains that the journalists have not had any formal training for social media but Grun reminds that for example bloggers are also ambassadors for PA, not just private persons. The company has drawn up some guidelines for the use of social media and they were just revising them when the interview took place. (8th November 2010.)

In April 2011 Jonathan Grun wrote via email that they had issued the guidelines: “In essence, we encourage reporters to monitor social media for stories but to check the authenticity of things like tweets before using the content for the wire. We also encourage reporters to set up their own professional Twitter accounts as a newsgathering tool - for example, appealing for witnesses to an incident, although once again checking responses is essential before we use anything. We do not tweet breaking news - that is what the wire is for.” (Email 21st April 2011.)

DPA, ANP, APA and STT

The German DPA has not published any guidelines for the social media on their public websites. The company has the Infoline feed in Twitter where it seems to quote news from different sources. The DPA's Twitter feed is limited to a couple of tweets per day. There seem to be notices about news topics but the material is more or less just tempting to different, outsider, websites. An example from the 12th April shows the link (to the German paper Westfälische Nachrichten) about a story of the former Soviet cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin, who reached space 50 years earlier:

“Und hier der Link zur Sputnik-Geschichte von dpa-Korrespondent Ulf Mauder <http://dpaq.de/vDDYe>” (www.twitter.com)

Another tweet from 12th April is saying that the Fukushima nuclear disaster could be even worse than Chernobyl and shows the link to the actual story (of the German paper Ruhr Nachrichten):

“Fukushima-GAU könnte schlimmer als [#Tschernobyl](#) werden <http://dpaq.de/u59Y2>” (www.twitter.com)

On the other hand DPA's sport department was tweeting news of its own production but only a couple of tweets per day.

On 10th April DPA sport tweeted once, about the Formula 1 driver Sebastian Vettel's win in the second race of 2011:

“Start-Ziel-Sieg beim Großen Preis von Malaysia in Sepang! Weltmeister Sebastian Vettel gewinnt auch das zweite Formel-1-Rennen der Saison.” (www.twitter.com)

The DPA Live Twitter page was not in progress (as at April 2011) even though it had followers.

The Dutch agency ANP is not actively publishing news via Twitter or Facebook, as it is doing business to business, as Managing Editor Patrick Selbach explains. (Telephone conversation, 19th April 2011.) The company started its general online actions in the late nineties, as Selbach wrote via the questionnaire. The online service provides for example push-web-feeds and web-based mobile feeds, videos, text and photos, but not any news service on company's external website. (Questionnaire 22nd October 2010.)

Selbach says that ANP have guidelines for using the social media. The ten point instructions were introduced in early 2010. The main points are: "We ask awareness that social media are part of the public space and that people should be aware not to spread internal information or criticise customers or anything like that. It also states we can use social media as an information gathering source, but always with the use of checks and balances." (Email 18th April 2011.)

The guidelines seem to be clear and easy to understand. Selbach says they remind their journalists that the social media are a public space and the content published must honour the company name and be in line with the general norms and behaviour. The instructions also ban sending any sensitive business information or discussions about business matters or negative messages about colleagues or clients. It is allowed to use the name of the company but professionally and honestly and one should be careful about posting about private matters and life. It is also advised to use one social media profile for profession and one for private life. Commenting about the company-related issues is left to the official representatives of the company. (Telephone conversation, 19th April 2011.)

The guidelines also remind journalists that it is not allowed to post any news before they are published through the wire. "It they spread that through social media before it has reached our clients, of course we are in trouble." (Selbach, via telephone 19th April 2011.)

If someone needs eyewitnesses and is trying to find them via social media, it is required to ask for permission from the management of the newsroom. It is also reminded that the principle of checks and balances is always needed and one can't rely on just one source.

The Austrian APA has given thorough guidelines for its staff regarding the behaviour within the social media (the documents are called 'die Social-Media-Guidelines der APA' and the text is composed by the editorial management and the representative of journalists 'Social Network Empfehlungen für Redakteure und Redakteurinnen'. The instructions are not published on the APA website but they seem to be quite similar to the Reuters Handbook. They give guidance how to act within the social media and how to avoid the risks and how to take advantage from it.

APA's news service is not active on Twitter but the company's representatives are participating in some groups for journalists and communications business professionals. (E-Business-Community, APA-OTS Presseinformationen and OTS-Blog

Plattform). The company also publishes its press release items through Twitter. On Facebook APA participates in a group called OTSconnect which is a network for people working with PR.

The Finnish STT is using Twitter for its press release services but not for the news wire or picture agency services. The company's Facebook page was not progressing (as on June 2011) apart from the Info page, which announces press releases.

The company has not published any guidelines for its reporters regarding the social media. The Editor Minna Holopainen says that due to more urgent projects it has been not possible to focus on the issues regarding the social media. According to her the guidelines are about to come out in the future. In her view there might be some problems if and when people get used to posting their thoughts very freely and without consideration. But basically common sense is a sufficient guideline because the social media differs very little from other types of (public) writing. (Email 13th April 2011.)

Some key points

The use of the social media in different news agencies varies greatly. The questions of verification, false information, pressure of speed and corrections can be troublesome for the agency. Also erroneous information spreads widely through the wire if the verification fails.

Reuters has an overwhelming activity on Twitter and Facebook, but the other news agencies seem to be more invisible and they are not using the social media for news distribution.

Reuters's posts generate discussion and debate.

Reuters has published detailed and thorough instructions about the use of the social media.

The other news agencies guidance varies; ANP has general instructions, APA has a detailed guide, PA has guidelines. STT is planning to give some advice in the future. The instructions seem to be more or less similar in different agencies.

The systematic training for the social media is not a norm, and journalists tend to use it in various ways.

7. The future for news agencies

In this chapter I write about the future prospects for the news agencies. I am not going to give precise answers. One of the interviewees uttered, with a laugh: "If I had the answer, I think I could earn quite a lot of money." (Terhi Rantanen, Professor, London School of Economics, interview 4th March 2011.) I agree with Professor Rantanen and other academics with whom I have talked. However, I am pointing out some thoughts and ideas based on my interviews, literature and my own thinking. Is there a place for a news agency and if so, what kind of a place?

Why did I start to think about this topic in the first place? I got my inspiration for this study from a letter to the editor by Doctor Tomi Lindblom (Helsingin Sanomat -newspaper 7th July 2009.), who is a former editor in chief for one of the minor commercial TV stations (Family Channel) in Finland. He wrote that the traditional news agencies are facing huge changes because of the internet revolution. In his view the 'news' is available, for example via different internet web sites and email services, for free and earlier and than the traditional wire services can publish them. Therefore the need for the agency services is going to decrease remarkably. He predicted that in the future several media companies are going to either reduce or terminate their relationship as customers with the Finnish News Agency. "The traditional news agency business has come to its end", Lindblom argued. He was not available for an interview for this study paper, so unfortunately I did not have a chance to ask him some follow-up questions. Nevertheless I want to give him the credit for inspiring me.

I agree with Dr Lindblom that the agency business is going to face some dramatic changes. The media business in general is experiencing and has experienced a lot of transitions and clearly the agencies are a part of that development. But I am not sure if the traditional agency business has come to its end. Maybe the way of doing business is just going to be different.

Doctor Oliver Boyd-Barret lists several reasons why national news agencies are significant: they provide news at an affordable price compared to the cost of the media providing such news for themselves. The agencies are able to cover a wide range of topics and platforms. They are important sources to political and financial institutions. They tend to be more comprehensive in their news range and they are not driven by audience maximization. They tend to help with building a positive national image. And they often are able to provide to provincial, poorer, media comprehensive services, which they could not afford otherwise. In some cases the national news agency is able to hire more local and international correspondents than the other media companies. In his view it is possible to identify some points of the modern model of how a news agency should operate. Boyd-Barrett's key features are: flexible and tailored arrangement with customers, income streams generated on a commercial basis, higher dependence and a wide range of products for non-media clientele, integrated

multimedia services, multi-lingual services, lower distillation of original sources and a modern journalistic culture. (Boyd-Barrett, Globalizing the National News Agency, Journalism Studies, 2003, 379-384.)

I will next introduce some prognosis about the future prospects. I start with the views of my colleagues at the Finnish News Agency. Several of them are slightly worried and they see the downsides and the threats but also strongly argue that quality journalism has its place and that the wire services will be needed in the future. As mentioned earlier, the leaders are expressing their views anonymously.

7.1. "Hell yes, we are needed!" (Leader E)

"It is going to be tough. We are producing ready-to-publish content for the newspaper customers. If the customer's formats and needs are diverging strongly, we are going to be in difficulty. How can we satisfy all the different demands?" (Leader B)

"When I meet colleagues from other media companies they sometimes argue that they don't need us and our services are redundant. I don't think so: If our operations stopped, I am sure that there would be some kind of a substitute. But we have to move on all the time and be aware in which direction the customers want us to develop our services." (Leader K)

"Our customers have also started joint venture projects with each other. I wonder how those are affecting us." (Leader L)

"I am not so sure if all of our customers are doing enough development work by themselves. Some of them seem to be relatively easy to satisfy and their operations are old-fashioned. It seems to me that the Finnish media landscape is behind its time if I compare it internationally." (Leader A)

"How can we really understand what the new generation wants if we are just slumbering here? And that is what we are doing. Not just 'us' but the media companies. We are so terrified for example about the social media that we don't know what to do with it." (Leader E)

"I don't think the new platforms are the problem. But what kind of content should we generate? Journalism is needed because someone has to try to organize the chaotic world." (Leader D)

The urge to satisfy the customers has been pointed out several times. There is no question about its importance. As one leader said, the future number of joint-venture projects amongst the clients is unclear. For all we know, the media companies tend to work more and more together with each other. They produce joint pages, they

exchange stories and they have reporters working for more than one newspaper simply to share costs.

In the book *Suomen Mediamaisema, The Finnish Media Landscape*, from 2001 (edited by professors Kaarlo Nordenstreng and Osmo A. Wiiö.), it is foreseen that cooperation between media companies could become more popular. (151.)

That has already become reality but also some further development has been experienced: The Finnish Broadcasting Company, YLE detached itself in 2007 from the Finnish News Agency, STT and started an internal news agency called YLE News and continued to buy foreign news services from the global agencies such as Reuters. The broadcasting company put all its news activities and departments, local, domestic and international, under one umbrella and developed this internal wire feed, which serves all the units around the country and abroad. It was, to date, the biggest customer loss for the STT and led to lay-offs and cuts.

Today the Alma Media Corporation seems to want to improve its cooperation between regional newspapers in a determined way. The corporation is still a customer of the STT, but in some of my background discussions, concerns were expressed about its future measures.

This cooperation is by no means only a Finnish phenomenon. The greatest and maybe the most extreme example of it is the recent WikiLeaks story about the 250,000 secret and confidential cables and files. In the book *'WikiLeaks - Inside Julian Assange's War on Secrecy'* the editor of the Guardian Alan Rusbridger writes in the introduction:

“One of the lessons from the WikiLeaks project is that it has shown the possibilities of collaboration. It's difficult to think of any comparable example of news organizations working together in the way the Guardian, New York Times, Der Spiegel, Le Monde and El País have on the WikiLeaks project. I think all five editors would like to imagine ways in which we could harness our resources again.” (David Leigh, Luke Harding, 2011, 10.)

Overall, when Mr Rusbridger estimated how the project went - and despite its various difficulties - he expressed his satisfaction: “Looking back it was a great success.” (Seminar 4th March 2011 Oxford University, Nuffield College.)

7.2. Needed, but....

I recognize some uncertainty amongst the academics I interviewed. The news agencies have their position but what kind of position is it going to be in the future? There are no clear answers but some thoughts, as I will present next.

Professor Terhi Rantanen, who has been studying the news agencies profoundly, claims that one of the dilemmas is that when the news organizations ask the audience to act

like citizen journalists and assist the news organization they give away their copyright to news. And the consequence is that the line between information and news is becoming blurred. And therefore it is more difficult to justify the price of the news production. (Rantanen, professor, London School of Economics LSE, interview 4th March 2011.)

In a publication 'Global Journalism, Topical Issues and Media Systems' Rantanen and Doctor Oliver Boyd-Barret write: "The Internet added new sources of competition and also threatened older principles of news value, copyright and organization, making it more difficult to define and price news. Yet by 2008 the major agencies had reconfigured their business models such that the Internet became central to their operations and constituted a major source of new business opportunity, as in sales of text and video to Internet portals, Web sites and blogs." (Rantanen, Boyd-Barret, 2009, 35.)

Reuters Institute Visiting Fellow Nic Newman has come to the following conclusion about the position of the news agencies: "They have to play quite a difficult game to continue to keep their relationships strong with the newspapers and particularly also to the broadcasters while at the same time trying to build some kind of consumer relationships so they can either get additional revenue streams or pursue different strategies from those that are purely about selling news to other news organizations." (Newman, interview 7th December 2010.)

According to Newman the news agencies could possibly start to use 'semi professionals', as he puts it, a sort of extended stringer. They could work part time when there is the need for a prompt presence for example when a major disaster occurs and when there is an urgent need for eyewitness material. On the other hand Newman points out the possibility of searching for information by using the social media. "Twitter is really becoming the core journalistic tool for both the filtering but also for asking questions." (Newman, interview 7th December 2010.)

Professor Rantanen points out that the media organizations, which own the shares of the national news agencies, are at the same time owners and rivals. "Therefore the owners are not necessarily so eager to develop the activity of the national news agency." She adds: "That everyone wants to have news but no one is willing to pay for them". So, how is it possible to make the business profitable, she asks. (Interview 4th March 2011.)

Two Finnish based researchers have also noticed the dilemma between the owners and the customers when these are the same operators. Professors Nordenstreng and Wiio mention that the owner usually wants to increase the news agency fees and the customer wants to decrease them. (Suomen Mediamaisema, 2001, 124.)

The same theme is puzzling professor Robert Picard: "There is a need for them (news agencies). I do believe there is a future. How it works out...But essentially you are in a position where you have to say: Yes there is a need for them, there is a place for them, but how are we going to finance them?...For the national agencies it has become a real problem, particularly in countries where you have a lot of consolidation and other goings on." (Robert Picard, Professor, University of Jönköping, interview 16th February 2011.)

In Professor Rantanen's opinion the successful news agency must be innovative; it has to rethink its operations, become more multi-skilled and also focus on tailored services for niche markets. (Interview 4th March 2011.)

These services are needed maybe more than ever, if Nic Newman's view comes true: "If the newspapers don't sell, they are trying to reduce their own staff...they need news agencies to plug the gap." He says that we might see solutions of consolidation and partnership, developing business-to-business services but also attempts to build up a direct relationship with the consumers: "I think what we are going to see is competition in that market from some of the new internet businesses. There will be a different kind of news agencies that are providing those kinds of services." (Interview 7th December 2010.)

It seems to me that the customers are outsourcing certain areas to the news agency. Typically these are related to sports, foreign news and events like the Olympics but also some domestic themes. The danger in this is that the customers focus on the most interesting topics and leave the 'boring' routines and the 'bulk' to the news agency.

Professor Picard is urging the agencies to find new ways to collaborate: "National agencies need to cooperate with each other a lot more...They should be exchanging services...but they haven't because they have not needed to." And: "Must they do everything they have always done? Do we need them, really generalized agencies or do we need them to focus on certain kinds of things?" (Interview 16th February 2011.)

Doctor Jonathan Silberstein-Loeb says that on the other hand there is a clear importance for a national-based organization because it can meet the needs of local clients and consumers. But on the other hand there is no reason why an international organization could not do that: "Indeed there are a lot of good reasons why there ought to be only one organization that supplies news to all...but that is highly unlikely not least because people are still nationalistic about these things... the EU is having the same problem. If you cannot maintain a common currency, then it is unlikely that you will be able to have a common news pool." (Interview 3rd December 2010.)

After all, do we need national, independent news agencies? Professor Rantanen says that it is a good question: "In the Baltic countries this has already happened." (Interview 4th March 2011.) (Baltic News Service BNS is a pan-Baltic news agency, which has operations in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania and the Finnish Alma Media Corporation owns it.) (<http://bns.ee/en/>)

The Editor in chief of the Finnish News agency, Mika Pettersson, quotes: "A Swedish colleague of mine has predicted that after 10 years there will be one Nordic news agency." Mr Pettersson continues: "Why, in the German speaking countries, are there several smaller news agencies competing bloodily with each other?" (Interview 25th March 2011.)

The European news agency representatives know each other relatively well and they are already carrying out joint venture projects and exchanging information. For example the Scandinavian agencies have historically a strong bond. One could argue that the social media, as Mr Pettersson earlier hinted, can offer some prospects. Also

the development of editorial systems can be a way to do business not only domestically but also internationally. It is after all just a question of translation. In the future some of the agencies might develop an editorial system together and save money and resources and even sell the product to their clients. At present it seems that editorial system development is done in several countries separately but more or less simultaneously.

There are existing organizations for cooperation: the European Alliance of News Agencies EANA with its 30 members, including ANP, APA, DPA, PA and STT, and the News Alliance MINDS. The goal for EANA is to “pool the resources to create a common platform on key issues such as copyright, tariff policy, technology and access to sources of information”. (<http://www.newsalliance.org/>)

MINDS International is an organization with 18 news agency members, including also ANP, APA, DPA, PA and STT. It is assisting the partner agencies to access international markets and is acting as sales unit for digital services provided by the partners. (<http://www.minds-international.com/>) These organizations are a basis for joint venture projects and content exchange.

The new platform solutions, such as tablets, provide possibilities for collaboration, even internationally or at least nationally but with cooperation with the customers. It is also relatively easy to develop new content for tablets by packaging the news story in a different form as a part of the web services. In my opinion the agencies should start quickly the development work for tablet-suitable content and software.

In March 2011 the Finnish newspaper (in Swedish language) HBL started a project, where they donate a free tablet for a limited group of customers who are living in the peninsula-area far from the mainland. (In Finland the newspapers are distributed very early, usually before 6 am, to the customer's household, and the peninsula-area is extremely hard and costly to reach in those hours.) The paper has come to the conclusion that donating a tablet is cheaper than distributing a relatively small number of copies far away.

As a presentation by Project manager Lotta Holm, KSF Media, said: “... the primary aim is to find a way to deliver the print-paper content 1:1 on tablet PC's for those readers who live in areas with challenging distribution.” The secondary aim for the project is to generate a new, interactive media product.

(http://virtual.vtt.fi/virtual/nextmedia/tulosseminaarin_esitykset/HBL_tablet_paper.pdf)

In her blog Holm posts on the 5th of April that the first experiences have been very positive: “This is going extremely well and the response is great!”

(<http://medieutveckling.blogg.hbl.fi/tag/lasplatta/>)

7.3. Opportunities, threats and visions

In the beginning of my study I asked if the news agencies are needed. My answer is yes. Having said that I realise that the well being of the news agency is at risk because the upheaval within the media is far from over.

But what are the news agencies needed for? Their traditional function as wholesalers for news organizations has not changed but the way of doing business has changed and is going to change. I had to narrow this study and therefore I left out of all the other business prospects except news services. Clearly the other sort of a market is developing faster than the traditional news business and the agencies must look, and they have already looked, for sales there.

I summarize my study with some thoughts about the possible future prospects for the news agencies' journalistic efforts.

1. Cooperation and fusions between news agencies

After several discussions and observations I am convinced that the number of news agencies is going to decrease. Mergers should and will happen due to the assumption that a bigger agency has better economic recourses to face the demanding media environment.

The Baltic News Service, BNS is a pan-Baltic agency in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. I argue that this type of activity could be possible in Scandinavia, German or French speaking countries, in even the Mediterranean or the Balkan area. The similar culture and / or language are a solid basis for mutual business interests and actions.

The news agencies should at any rate deepen their cooperation with each other. It should be possible to share even more content and start international joint venture projects in specialised journalistic tasks.

Also other areas are worth considering; for example shared technological solutions and developments plus mutual editorial systems could help the agencies to be more efficient and save both time and effort.

One possibility to cut costs but still show presence is to share international correspondents overseas and translate the material for each agency.

2. New type of agencies

It is possible that in the future there are going to be more specialized news agencies than at present. Especially in large market areas there might be market niche for services for a limited group of customers who need content from some specific areas but are not interested in the general news flow.

These types of areas could be finance, as for example Reuters has successfully showed, technology, (social) media, medicine, environment, education, politics, culture, sports etc.

As a money-saving option there could also be room for a news agency service which is operating only within the internet environment. All the reporters could work mostly by telecommuting for the same employer, who provides the administrative and leader services. That sort of a model might be suitable especially for part time workers, stringers or for long distance commuters. A type of a lightweight organization might also be a part of a bigger, traditional news agency.

3. Tailoring services for customers

I believe that the clients are going to demand even more tailored services in the future. Previously the news agency was usually serving the same content to every customer via its wire feed.

I anticipate that in the future there is going to be more pressure for selling just some part of the wire or services for the customer. That is happening already but the agencies might face more demands to sell only some components of their content for individual customers, who have to cut costs and / or are reorganizing their contents.

Today a news agency journalist writes different versions for different platforms (internet, newspapers, radio etc). In the future the journalist might be writing not only for different platforms but also in different styles; a tabloid and a regional newspaper are clearly very different to each other even though they might cover the same topic.

If that is the case it requires both broad journalistic skills and efficient technical tools for distributing. First the journalists must know and understand the needs for each customer. Secondly they must have the time and the ability to generate different types of content for a clientele, whose needs differ greatly from each other.

4. Cooperation with the clientele – win win

The media corporations are clearly trying to find more and more ways to cut costs. A news agency client can save by sharing for example foreign correspondents (the most expensive part of the newsroom) with the news agency, as some of the companies have already done. It is a demanding working environment but doable if the partners share mutual interests and are willing to improve their cooperation.

That sort of model could easily put into practice also temporarily to cover breaking news or massive events.

Some media companies are reducing their domestic correspondents. That offers an opportunity for a news agency and its regional functions; by serving high quality journalism and covering the country geographically the news agency can be an indispensable partner for the customer.

5. The clients create alliances with each other

One threat facing a news agency is that its customers start to cooperate among each other or create internal news gathering services within the corporations. This sort of development has already happened to some extent and has led to customer losses.

The internal news gathering model is possible to put into practice if the media corporation is big enough, has sufficient staff and is willing to invest in suitable technical tools.

On the other hand the smaller media companies might find it productive to share costs with each other and diminish the news agency's role. For example some province based regional newspapers (which are not competing with each other) could establish a joint venture department for the capital area, which takes care of the national politics and economics for all the partners.

The risk for these operations increases if the customer is not satisfied with the quality of journalism the agency produces or if there is a possibility to reduce costs.

6. How to benefit from the social media

As I have pointed out earlier, the news agency cannot stay out of the social media. Its journalists must use the social media for information gathering and for finding contacts and sources. If the journalist doesn't have the proper know how, it is essential to embrace the skills needed.

One cannot question the importance of the social media. The only question is: How to use it in an effective and productive way without compromising the core news agency values and reliability in the midst of the continuously growing time pressure.

Also the news agency journalists should start to brand themselves within the social media by postings, columns and by participating in forums and chats. This sort of action means for some journalists that they must move out of their comfort zones and their traditional role as gate keepers.

Successful activity within the social media requires company policy and guidelines from the management. Not all the agencies have those guidelines yet. In my opinion they are needed.

The news agencies have to strike a balance between the wire feed and the social media. The agency can't publish material within the social media before it has been put through the wire. For this reason the news agency is probably not the most significant operator within the social media regarding news publishing.

7. Developing and using technical solutions and platforms

The agencies have to develop their product range for different platforms and make sure that the editorial and distribution systems allow it. Editorial systems are complex,

expensive and time consuming to develop. It might be wise for the news agency to create an alliance with the customers and start to develop some mutual editorial systems. Or start some projects with other agencies; the demands for editorial tools are more or less the same in spite of the country.

All the operators need platforms for text, pictures, graphics, video and sound. The media companies are at present improving their tools for new platforms, such as tablets. A news agency can be and has been a prominent partner for the media company with these types of efforts.

8. Enable the leadership and the high quality

Traditionally an agency's newsroom is organized as a newspaper with the different departments (politics, economy, foreign affairs etc.) The modern agency structure requires more flexibility from the organization and its journalists and emphasizes multimedia operations and the internet environment. In other words: the role of the journalist is going to differ from the past.

It is essential that the agencies care about the professional skills both of the leaders and the reporters. An agency cannot afford to leave some of the staff behind. In the midst of the current media upheaval the risk is considerable and the management should be aware of that and act aggressively, if needed.

The working environment, the newsroom, is stressful and will be pressured in the future too. The knowledge workers demand a lot from their leaders but on the other hand they are committed to their tasks and their achievements can be remarkable. For the managers it means the constant balancing between scarce funds and providing motivating working conditions.

The leaders and the reporters have to comply with the changes. They need training, support and ways to influence their work.

The changes require exceptional journalistic and business skills and ability to embrace new ideas. The management's role is pivotal in leading all the changes.

All the mentioned factors are putting pressure on high quality human resources, services and management skills.

9. Improve the working processes

Regardless of the organization there is room for optimizing the working processes. News agencies are not an exception. Communication inside the agency and the feedback systems are crucial for future developments.

The knowledge workers and leaders are often willing to influence their working conditions and processes. Their commitment is essential for the prosperity of the agency.

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