

## Peripheral news workers expelled to the periphery: the case of camera reporters

Article (Accepted Version)

Waschkova Cisarova, Lenka and Metykova, Monika (2020) Peripheral news workers expelled to the periphery: the case of camera reporters. Journalism. ISSN 1464-8849

This version is available from Sussex Research Online: <http://sro.sussex.ac.uk/id/eprint/89508/>

This document is made available in accordance with publisher policies and may differ from the published version or from the version of record. If you wish to cite this item you are advised to consult the publisher's version. Please see the URL above for details on accessing the published version.

### **Copyright and reuse:**

Sussex Research Online is a digital repository of the research output of the University.

Copyright and all moral rights to the version of the paper presented here belong to the individual author(s) and/or other copyright owners. To the extent reasonable and practicable, the material made available in SRO has been checked for eligibility before being made available.

Copies of full text items generally can be reproduced, displayed or performed and given to third parties in any format or medium for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge, provided that the authors, title and full bibliographic details are credited, a hyperlink and/or URL is given for the original metadata page and the content is not changed in any way.

**Lenka Waschkova Cisarova (Masaryk University) and Monika Metykova (University of Sussex)**

## **Peripheral news workers expelled to the periphery: The case of camera reporters**

### **Abstract**

The professionals behind television cameras are peripheral contributors to journalism who are often overlooked in journalistic research in contrast with co-workers who occupy clearly demarcated journalistic roles. In this article we use the term camera reporters rather than the more frequently used terms such as cameramen or camera operators as we argue that these professionals are part of the journalistic field and their job titles in themselves question their belonging to this field. The aim of our article is to focus on the role of camera reporters as peripheral actors in the news production process – in this respect we address their journalistic culture, identity, autonomy, and practice – and to understand their role not only in the context of boundary work within journalism but perhaps even more importantly in relation to changes brought about by the move of a television studio from the city centre to a residential suburb. The relocation provides a rare opportunity to study camera reporters in their work places and spaces at a time of disruption and adjustment. Our case study is based in a Czech television studio where we have conducted interviews with camera reporters and news reporters. Our findings are in line with other research on peripheral news workers and illustrate complex issues in the professional standing of camera reporters.

### **Keywords**

camera reporters, peripheral news workers, television studio, boundary making, Czech Republic

### **Introduction**

Camera reporters – our preferred term for professionals who are frequently called cameramen or camera operators – who play a crucial role in the news production process in a Czech television studio have been marginalized in at least three ways. First, they are often overlooked in terms of contributing to journalistic professional practice. The television studio that we studied is geographically and structurally marginalized, situated outside the capital Prague it focuses on local issues. In addition, the television studio was relatively recently moved from the city centre to a residential suburb on the periphery. We also argue that camera reporters are part of the journalistic field as peripheral contributors to journalism (see e.g. Zelizer, 2004; 2009; Deuze, 2009; Ursell, 1998; Wahl-Jorgensen, 2009) and the most frequently used job titles in themselves question their belonging to this field.

The aim of our article is to focus on the role of the camera reporters as peripheral actors in the studio's news production process and we explore them as an interpretive community. The concept of interpretive community was originally developed by the literary theorist Stanley Fish in 1980 and has since been used in audience studies in particular. Barbie Zelizer applied the concept to journalists who "come together by creating stories about their past that they routinely and informally circulate to each other – stories that contain certain constructions of reality, certain kinds of narratives, and certain definitions of appropriate practice" (1993: 223; cf. journalists as communities of practice in Meltzer and Martik, 2017). We propose that similarly to

journalists, camera reporters also create a community through shared discourses, they also negotiate and maintain professional boundaries.

We explore camera reporters through the lens of journalism as a profession, Barbie Zelizer has helpfully summarized the advantages of this approach: “Seeing journalism as a profession has long helped us understand how it works. Sociologists view an occupational group as ‘professional’ when it shows certain combinations of skill, autonomy, training and education, testing of competence, organization, codes of conduct, licensing and service orientation.” She emphasizes that a profession also provides a body of knowledge that instructs individuals what to do and avoid in any given circumstance. ... Journalists thereby gain status through their work by acting ‘professionally’ and exhibiting certain predefined traits of a ‘professional’ community. This generates an ideological orientation toward the production of journalistic work that is necessary for journalism to maintain its communal boundaries. ... As such, the commonality of journalists is determined by a shared frame of reference for doing work (Zelizer, 1993: 220, see also Deuze, 2005; Aldridge and Evetts, 2003).

### **Camera reporters as news workers**

Camera reporters are understood primarily as providers of technical support for broadcast media contents prepared by news reporters, their job titles – such as camera operators (e.g. MacDonald et al., 2016; García Avilés et al., 2004) and craft cameramen (Hemmingway, 2008) - emphasize the technical skills (and qualifications) and the craftsmanship of their profession. The job descriptions similarly focus on technical competence and skills, a camera operator being a person who “will operate a camera with a light attached to it, or carry a battery-powered light for street interviews” (Bignell and Orlebar, 2005: 39). This focus on technical competence, however, unduly limits the role of these professionals who deliver the audio-visual content of the news report and are responsible for decisions about framing (which have significant consequences, for example, for agenda setting see e.g. Grabe and Bucy, 2009, Coleman and Banning, 2006). It is important to note here that while research on news contents focusses on the visual as much as on other elements of a broadcast, practical journalistic training may be lacking in this respect and there are likely to be significant generational differences as well (Boyd et al., 2008; Bignell and Orlebar, 2005; Robertson, 2001). Researchers often do not consider camera work as part of journalistic work and profession (cf. MacDonald et al., 2016; Ursell, 2000), one of the few exceptions in this respect is Gillian Ursell’s work (2000) on developments on the television labour markets in the United Kingdom that covers a broad range of professions, including sound engineers, camera reporters and electricians.

In comparison, professional work in photojournalism has been more closely studied in recent years, mainly as a consequence of the increasing number of non-professional photographers contributing to journalistic production and also because of significant technological advances. Professionals behind the photographic lens have been more readily embraced as part of the journalistic profession, studies tend to refer to professional photojournalists (Mortensen and Gade, 2018) and professional photographers (Klein-Avraham and Reich, 2016) who are distinct from amateur photographers or citizen journalists or other non-professional contributors of visual materials.

It is important that despite technological advances, broadcast television (audiovisual) news production continues to rely on teamwork. The traditional team consists of a news

reporter and a “cameraman”<sup>1</sup> (Boyd et al., 2008), and – once we take into account post-production – also an editor, a subeditor, a graphic designer, and a technician (Örnebring, 2010). It is a normative expectation that a television (audiovisual) news team balances the work and responsibility out evenly (cf. Hemmingway, 2008). “A reporter and a cameraman work as a team and both have ideas to contribute about which shots to use in the report. Some friendly rivalry usually exists, often accompanied by a degree of mutual leg pulling of the sort: ‘I’ll get the best pictures. You get the best words.’” (Boyd et al., 2008: 277)

News production can be conceptualized as a range of activities (as proposed, for example by Zelizer, 2017 in a different context) and “journalism consists of a set of regular core practices: observation, selection, processing, distribution and interpretation” (Ahva, 2017: 144–145). Hence we can argue that camera reporters play a crucial role in core journalistic practices and are part of the profession of journalism. This stance is not necessarily widely accepted, however, “the definition of journalistic labour has always been surrounded by controversy and linked to who should be included in the profession and who should not” (Örnebring, 2010: 60). According to Zelizer, “even if [the peripheral actors] are not involved in the collection of information that becomes news, they are clearly involved in the craft work of journalism” (2004: 23).

The context for camera reporters’ news production practice is defined by media organizations and their journalistic cultures. Research on the work of television journalists and its changes stresses the influence of commercialization and technological developments and concludes that the working conditions of television journalists are worsening due to longer working hours, multiskilling, deprofessionalization and increasing precarity (increase in freelance workers, see Ursell, 2000). Two studies on job satisfaction among U.S. television news workers (Reinardy and Bacon, 2014; Reinardy, 2014) conclude that poor leadership, low pay, no future career prospects and being overworked are the most serious issues. Previous research has shown that job (dis)satisfaction is linked to salary, job security, work autonomy, quality of journalism, leadership competence, commercialization of news production and support from the media organization (for an overview see Reinardy and Bacon, 2014; Reinardy, 2014). In comparison, “broadcast journalists were most satisfied in their jobs when they thought managers demonstrated concern for the needs of subordinates” (Reinardy, 2014: 858).

Technology has a variety of potential influences on the television newsrooms and Deuze (2009) suggests that it has raised critical questions about the changing role of the individual in today’s journalism. Technology can drive the broadening of the group of potential journalists (Zelizer, 2004); consolidation of the work of television reporters to multi-skilled video journalists (Saltzis and Dickinson, 2018; Wallace, 2013; Hemmingway, 2008; Ursell, 1998) or operational broadcast journalists (García Avilés et al., 2004). Technological advances and their adoption in newsrooms can result in technical know-how being understood as craft rather than journalism, after all the separation of technical know-how from journalism has a long tradition.

[P]arts of the labour involved in the organizing, producing and presenting of news have for most of the 20th century been differentiated from the labour of journalism, which has mostly been focused on the collection and collating of information, as well as providing the overall narrative structure of the news. This differentiation has been organized along technological lines – in other words, technical skills have largely been separated from journalism. This is changing.

Nowadays, journalists more and more are expected to have technical skills in computer-based and digital technologies of production (Örnebring, 2010: 64).

It is not surprising that under these circumstances increased tensions have been noted among various news workers in television newsrooms (Sehl et al., 2018), including uncertainty among those on the periphery (including camera reporters) concerning job losses (Cottle and Ashton, 1999) and the deterioration of picture and sound quality (Saltzis and Dickinson, 2018; Wallace, 2013).

### **Camera reporters as peripheral news workers**

There are many occupations involved in journalistic work and “many occupational cultures working together to produce news” (Belair-Gagnon and Holton, 2018: 494; cf. Lewis and Usher, 2016). Some work on the periphery of journalism and are termed peripheral actors (Maares and Hanusch, 2018: 3), in-betweeners (Ahva, 2017: 1), semi-affiliated professionals (Deuze, 2009: 85), journalistic strangers (Holton and Belair-Gagnon, 2018: 71), intralopers (Holton and Belair-Gagnon, 2018: 75), second-class journalistic citizens (Zelizer, 2004: 40) and unworthy others (Hanitzsch and Vos, 2018: 147). These are workers who produce journalistic content but who do not belong to “traditional journalism practice” (Holton and Belair-Gagnon, 2018). They are often invisible “as members of the journalistic tribe” (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2009: 30).

The periphery description is nowadays used to contextualize non-professionals who produce content for (mainly social and online) media (e.g. Maares and Hanusch, 2018; Ahva, 2017; Ferrucci and Vos, 2017). But peripheral news workers have existed since the beginnings of the profession as journalistic teams evolved from the one-man-band in early newspaper history (Örnebring, 2010), to the one-man-band in the current, converged media newsrooms (Reinardy and Bacon, 2014). There has always been “a whole world of subterranean tasks”, as Zelizer puts it, most of them “technical” and “supportive”, taken up by photographers, “cameramen”, proofreaders, minders, fixers, translators, and drivers (cf. Zelizer, 2004) yet, as Zelizer asks: “why have we not yet developed a way to give them due credit?” (2009: 5).

Although the existence of peripheral news workers may not be new, their increased marginalization seems to be a more recent phenomenon and is possibly due to their freelance positions in the news organization (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2009; Deuze, 2009; 2011; Randle, 2011; Ursell, 1998) or because they are traditionally considered less important in the news media organizations (Hanusch, 2017) and on “the lower rungs of the newsroom hierarchy” (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2009: 30). Gillian Ursell is one of those who use flexibility in their explanations of core and periphery workforces, explaining the flexible firm model this way:

the core workforce comprises essential employees enjoying permanent contracts and career progression opportunities. Associated with claims to the more efficient deployment of core workers, the model anticipates that employers will stimulate multi-skilling, namely functional flexibilities, among core workers, while utilizing the peripherals to protect the core from numerical fluctuations. The periphery, by comparison, comprises other workers undertaking non-essential activities and brought into employment only on temporary and fixed-term contacts at the employer’s behest (1998: 130).

Mark Deuze (2009) notes that the practice of functional flexibility is common throughout the news industry and in addition to the different work conditions and

employment contracts, the peripheral workers often do not see themselves, or are seen by journalistic professionals, as journalists (cf. Wahl-Jorgensen, 2009).

### **Peripheries and boundaries of journalistic work**

Professional journalistic identity – like any other identity – is constructed, interpreted and negotiated all the time and that in relation to the in-group and also those outside the journalistic profession. Importantly, journalistic identity involves both an individual level and a group one (see e.g. Ferrucci and Vos, 2017). We have two important reasons for researching journalists as an interpretive community (Zelizer, 1993; 2004; 2009; Ferrucci and Vos, 2017): (1) we can conceptualize the journalistic community through the profession and explore how boundaries are created; these are important for understanding journalistic practices and how they are – often unevenly – realized in journalistic work; and (2) it enables us to focus on the components of journalistic practice that are important to the journalists themselves and that originate from their everyday work, tacit knowledge, and instinctual gut feelings (Schulz, 2007; Zelizer, 1993; cf. discourse of journalistic roles in Hanitzsch and Vos, 2017). This approach can provide insight into specific, not necessarily widely shared, news worker practices, like informal networking, discussions and conflicts among journalists, and the conceptualization of the journalistic craft through the lenses of peripheral news workers and their subcultures within these interpretive communities.

While we can think about the construction and negotiation of journalistic identities within interpretive communities as happening at a micro level, there is also the macro level of the media organization and the related socialization that is involved in becoming part of the organization, of its culture with shared values, newsroom decision making practices, journalistic routines, and, again, the tension among various groups of professionals, their internal hierarchies, and their professional loyalties (Mellado et al., 2017; Wiik, 2015; Tandoc et al., 2013; Deuze, 2009).

Therefore, when considering camera reporters' professional identity, we need to think in relational and social terms. What is at stake – on the one hand - are individual and group professional identities and their boundary making and maintaining practices. In their work Carlson and Lewis characterize boundary work by drawing a parallel between Thomas Gieryn's work on science and journalism. Gieryn defines boundary work as the "attribution of selected characteristics to the institution of science (i.e., to its practitioners, methods, stock of knowledge, values and work organization) for purposes of constructing a social boundary that distinguishes some intellectual activities as 'non-science'" (2015, p. 2). Substituting "'journalism' for 'science' in the previous quote moves us to questions of how boundaries are constructed, challenged, reinforced, or erased about who should rightfully gather and disseminate the news – and who should not." (ibid.)

In addition, we also need to pay attention to the larger collective identity of the news organization (Belair-Gagnon and Holton, 2018; Wiik, 2015) that reflects the news organizations' structure and hierarchy, with "top-layer journalists who may indeed be regarded as being involved in the rule-setting of the field and enjoying some mobility and autonomy, while the bottom layer comprises replaceable production news workers" (Wiik, 2015: 120).

The organizational level is closely linked to the concept of professional journalistic autonomy – journalists should be able to control their own work and have autonomy in their everyday practice, which is an essential part of the journalistic profession in a democracy, indeed a condition for journalism to constitute a profession and one of the

core parts of this control is “a clear division of labour, and the power to keep others outside the profession” (Witschge and Nygren, 2009: 39). Workplace autonomy is linked to the news organization’s hierarchy and “refers to the extent to which individual autonomy is affected by hierarchical structures in the workplace” (Örnebring et al., 2016: 310).

We propose that camera reporters are part of the journalistic field – the space of the actions and reactions of social agents – which is constituted through doxa, implicit and tacit practical schemes (Bourdieu, 2005). Others have suggested that peripheral news workers can be understood as part of the journalistic field, with Jenny Wiik (2015: 121) arguing that considering journalism to be a professional field allows for the analysis of what can be considered “high and low in the field”, the status determined, for example, by the position of the journalists in the newsroom (cf. Holton and Belair-Gagnon, 2018 on intralopers).

In order to determine the position of the camera reporters in our research within the journalistic field and the television studio, we address their boundary making and boundary maintaining practices, boundaries are crucial as “it is in these grey areas where journalistic norms are contested” (Maares and Hanusch, 2019: 3). We focus on camera reporters’ constructions of professional identity, culture and autonomy (Carlson and Lewis, 2015) and identify how and where they draw the boundary as a result of discursive distinctions between news reporting and audio-visual production at an individual and a collective level. We do not necessarily understand these boundaries as divisions but rather as trading zones (Lewis and Usher, 2016) for the processes of boundary maintenance around boundary objects (e.g. a news report), and for the interpretations, negotiations, and discourses that define the boundary within the group of professional journalists.

### **Newsroom relocation as material boundary and additional periphery**

In addition to the above, boundaries also have a material and a spatial dimension, “[boundaries] orient us not only to the human actors and their rhetorical constructions and social structures – important as they are – but also to where (in what spaces and places) and how (through and around which objects) such boundary work is undertaken” (Carlson and Lewis, 2015: 225–226). Spaces in which news work is conducted are divided by invisible boundaries between the “proper” journalists and the peripheral news workers (see e.g. Wahl-Jorgensen, 2009 and Hemmingway, 2008). However, the relocation of a media organization to a different place and a profound change to its spaces (e.g. a new newsroom, new work spaces) offers a unique opportunity to study how journalists interpret their work at a moment of change and how they renegotiate boundaries (cf. Usher, 2015). When considering the periphery, the relocation of the television studio has at least four possible consequences: (1) how camera reporters use the place and space to produce their work (Usher, 2015), and how the place and space influence their professional culture, identity, practice and autonomy (Reich and Hanitzsch, 2013; Deuze 2005); (2) how the relocation influences relationships in the newsroom (particularly among camera reporters and news reporters); (3) how the relocation transforms the assumed close relationship between journalists and the communities they serve (Abernathy, 2018; Hess and Waller, 2017; Waschková Čísařová, 2017; Nielsen, 2015); and finally (4) the potential impact of the relocation on the television studio’s position in the hierarchy of other media organizations (Wallace, 2013).

## **A Czech television studio**

We illustrate these ideas with a case study of a Czech television studio. In order to ensure the anonymity of our interviewees, we cannot disclose the name, location and further details that would make the workplace identifiable as the Czech television labour market is small and our interviewees would be easily identifiable.

The television studio recently moved from the city centre to a residential suburb on the periphery. The move prompted us to uncover some underlying issues that impact on camera reporters' occupational identity, work practices, and journalistic autonomy, and that are difficult to identify and explore other than at a time of disruption and adjustment (Usher, 2015; cf. Sehl et al., 2018).

A significant difference – which we explore further below – between camera reporters and news reporters relates to their type of employment. While news reporters are employed by the television studio and enjoy a range of benefits, camera reporters are self-employed freelancers whose contract is for services rather than an employment contract. The camera reporters' contracts are long-term (some of the interviewees have been contracted under these terms for more than ten years) and the switch from all television studio workers being on employment contracts to the more flexible arrangements has been gradual, with our interviewees not remembering an exact timeline for the changes. The policies and contracts related directly to the work of “cameramen” – the official job title – focus on the specifics of their craft and technical skills and additionally on ethical standards: the visuals and graphics must comply with basic journalistic standards and values, particularly those of truth and accuracy. The editing of audiovisual news footage should not distort who the source is and what information they provide.

## **Method**

We conducted empirical fieldwork for our case study in the newsroom of a Czech television studio. Our research is framed as a single-case study and we do not claim generalizability (cf. Donmoyer's critique of the traditional view of generalizability and the case study method in Gomm et al., 2000). Through interviews with camera reporters, news reporters, editors, managers, and news producers, we examined the boundaries that delineate the work of camera reporters, their professional practice, their ideology, and their autonomy.

The aim of our article is to focus on the role of camera reporters as peripheral actors in the studio's news production process; to explore their interpretive community that makes and maintains boundaries that link to journalistic culture, identity, autonomy, and practices; and to understand the related changes brought about by moving to the geographical periphery.

We focus on the following research questions:

How do camera reporters and news reporters make and maintain boundaries?

How do camera reporters understand their professional culture and identity?

What are the changes to camera reporters' professional practices and autonomy after their media organization relocated to the geographical periphery?

The fieldwork involved 17 semi-structured in-depth interviews (cf. Bowd, 2004), four with camera reporters and the rest with news reporters, editors, producers and managers. We cannot provide further information about the job titles or positions or our interviewees as this in itself could disclose their work place and would jeopardize our effort at anonymizing them. The interviews were conducted between March 2018 and April 2019, all were conducted at the interviewees' workplace and visits to the



workplace also involved occasional demonstrations of spaces/work practices. The interviews were transcribed and thematic analysis was conducted. The coding and analysis were undertaken by one researcher – this was practical due to the small sample. As customary with thematic analysis, the researcher first familiarised herself with the data, then coded the text manually (the small sample size made computer-assisted coding and analysis unnecessary), searched for themes with broader patterns of meaning and defined and named these. The researchers have been tracking the shifts prior to and following the move of the television studio since 2016. The exact period of the move cannot be disclosed due to the above mention challenge of anonymizing the interviewees.

One of the differences between the camera reporters and other interviewees was their age and work experience, overall the staff are young (under 40) with camera reporters being older on average and having more experience of working at the television studio. In terms of education, there is also a contrast between camera reporters and their colleagues who are considered to be core journalistic workers. Journalism education has undergone significant changes since the institutionalization of journalism studies at universities (on historical debates about how journalists should be educated see e.g. Folkerts, 2014; Frith and Meech, 2007; on Czech journalist's educational characteristics see Urbániková and Volek, 2018) and the younger news reporters tended to be graduates in the field of journalism. This was in contrast with the camera reporters who were educated in other fields and may not have a university degree.

### **Findings and discussion**

We first consider some aspects of camera reporters' professional identity and culture. They define themselves as technical and visual support for news reporters and were visibly taken aback when asked whether they consider themselves journalists; none of them does so. They justify their reluctance differently but essentially they do not think that they are at that professional level.

I rarely say I am a journalist ... maybe fifty-fifty ... but whether I feel like a journalist, I don't know ... I can't give you an answer. ... I am just shooting pictures. (Interview with Camera reporter 01)

I am a cameraman ... I am a journalist only partly ... I don't have a qualification as one. ... But I can't call myself a journalist because my name is not on the news report, only the reporter's name is. (Interview with Camera reporter 02)

I feel like a journalist, but ... my work is technical or technical-visual. When there is a case concerning journalists in the society, I feel that it also concerns me. ... But I don't think I could call myself a journalist. (Interview with Camera reporter 03)

I am not a journalist. I don't choose news topics, I do not investigate, I only shoot pictures. ... My task is to shoot them well technically. (Interview with Camera reporter 04)

It is clear that they construct their professional identity around the technical and supportive nature of their work. Their professional practices encompass shooting videos and working with sound and light, driving to locations and parking the car

(Interview with Camera reporter 01). In the news production process, they are responsible for the shots and the sound for the news reports.

I take care of the visual and audio parts of the news report. The news reporter takes care of the interviews. Sometimes reporters tell us – I need a certain shot, otherwise they usually leave it to us. (Interview with Camera reporter 03)

While they see technical skills as their domain, they are concerned about how the job impacts their health, they all talk about back pain due to carrying heavy cameras and stress while driving and parking the car. These are issues that are distinctively “theirs”, they are not shared with others taking part in the news production process.

Although they feel that they are not part of the journalistic profession, they value and share some characteristics of their work with journalists, creativity in particular.

When I can play with the pictures and composition, do it my own way and compose pictures for the news report – that makes the result great and it is definitely creative. (Interview with Camera reporter 04)

The fact that camera reporters do not consider themselves journalists is in line with findings in existing literature on other peripheral workers in journalism although most of the recent studies tend to focus on changes driven by technological change and the subsequent disruption to the professional journalistic field (see e.g. Eldridge, 2017). It is clear that camera reporters are not seen as journalists by their news reporting colleagues and managers either, as we demonstrate below. Because of the nature of their work, they tend to be associated with a craft (see e.g. Örnebring, 2010; Hemingway, 2008; Zelizer 2004) rather than a profession, a distinction that has once been central to the debates about the nature of journalism.

Journalism as a profession is characterized by shared professional norms and values and although the camera reporters do not consider themselves journalists, it could be expected that they understand some of the guiding principles of journalism, however, only one interviewee did so. The others referred to regulations on visual depictions of nudity and violence. Yet at the same time, camera reporters tell stories about the potential consequences and impact of framing and visual manipulation that form a regular part of their professional practice.

Every shot evokes something, triggers some emotions, so when we shoot something ugly, maybe I try to add more details ... when we do something nice, there are more shots from above. (Interview with Camera reporter 03)

The assignment was clear, shoot the traffic jam and angry drivers but there was no traffic jam anymore. So you have to make the shot so narrow that even four cars make a traffic jam. (Interview with Camera reporter 01)

We should not influence the news report in any way ... but we create a four-car traffic jam, so it is true that this affects the story. (Interview with Camera reporter 04)

The television news production process inevitably involves teamwork and it can be expected that the professional cultures and identities of news reporters and camera reporters will impact on their working relationship. At face value our interviewees function as a team, however, unhappiness with and criticism of the unequal position of the two professions in the news production team surfaced in the interviews. References

were made in particular to camera reporters as peripheral actors, to the disruption of their professional autonomy, and to the boundary between news reporters and camera reporters within the journalistic field.

I say ok, it's collective work but there are some news reporters ... if you advise them, they just won't do it. (Interview with Camera reporter 01)

The news reporter is in charge of this. He knows what he wants to do and what he wants from the report, and the visual aspect is on us. So he tells us what he wants us to shoot and we say how to shoot it. (Interview with Camera reporter 04)

Similarly, news reporters depict their news production work as teamwork, but even their responses reflect the disparity between the two groups.

We are always a team. The success of the news production process relates to that. ... I can choose a particular cameraman and I am used to doing so because it is my news report! (Interview with News reporter 03)

Camera reporters and news reporters identify as two distinct professional groups with their own set of professional values and skills and one of the manifestations of boundaries and boundary making processes is manifested in team work. Existing research has suggested that tensions arise between the various professionals working on broadcast news (see e.g. Sehl et al., 2018) and our interviews confirm this. Some of the literature suggests that tensions are also due to the threat of job losses (cf. Cottle and Ashton, 1999) but our interviewees did not express such concerns although they were vocal about the nature of their contracts as we outline below.

Some of the reasons for why representatives of the two groups use the words "we" and "they" are related to the professional culture of the news organization. Camera reporters understand themselves and are understood by their colleagues to be mainly peripheral actors in the newsroom, in the words of a producer:

This is the trickle-down effect of the newsroom's slogan that the boss on the set is the news reporter, because he is somehow the real author of the news report, while the cameraman is ... only a worker. ... The news reporter is the author of the news report, there is such a hierarchy. The newsroom is the number one, production is number two. ... In that way, it may feel like a bone of contention [in what] are said to be teams but there are two in the team, and the organization behaves differently to each of them. (Interview with Producer)

Camera reporters complain about their status as freelancers. The different types of contracts are linked to different working conditions and additional benefits, with the contract for services that camera reporters are on being less advantageous. News reporters on employment contracts get a week off every month and can buy lunches at a subsidized price in the canteen. This organizational approach is in line with how peripheral workers are treated in the flexible firm model:

Such people do not enjoy career prospects, nor employer-sponsored training towards functional flexibility, job security or other non-pay employment benefits. Given employer moves to numerical flexibility (that is, reducing the size of the core workforce in favour of a greater proportion of peripherals), most of those in the peripheral workforce are there involuntarily. (Ursell, 1998: 130)

Although this causes some bitterness, the camera reporters actually appreciate those news reporter colleagues who understand their role, their sense of humour, or choose topics that suit the camera reporter (Interviews with Camera reporter 01; 04).

News reporters approach camera reporters from a position of superiority, as colleagues who mostly only do what they have to, and in addition they still have to be watched and checked on. The most important part of the mutual cooperation is time – the quicker the camera reporter is, the better it is for the news reporter. There is no time or indeed no identified role for the camera reporter in terms of a substantive contribution to the news story.

It is, however, not only the news reporters that tend to operate within a very tightly defined professional group. News reporters as well as camera reporters tended to understand the news production process as work conducted by a team of two professionals with distinct realms of expertise – the journalistic and the (audiovisual) technical. Interviewees describe the television news team as a news reporter and a “cameraman” but there are more media professionals involved in the news production process, particularly in post-production. Although camera reporters enjoy professional autonomy in terms of technical expertise and tools – they have their allocated cameras and cars – while they produce important parts of the news report – visual and audio – they do not participate in the whole production process. They do not attend editorial meetings, they usually do not get detailed information about the story, they do not participate in editing and they only occasionally watch the final news reports before they are broadcast.

We'll be back from shooting and the rest of the news production is without us ... the editing. ... It is common practice, the editor knows how to edit, we know how to shoot. (Interview with Camera reporter 03)

For me, it's all done the moment I finish shooting because I don't edit the footage. I provide the material and so it's a closed chapter for me. (Interview with Camera reporter 04)

In addition, the collective work lacks any feedback to the camera reporter, whether from editors, producers, news reporters or from the chief camera reporter (Interviews with Camera reporter 04; Producer). Journalistic production processes have become increasingly more fragmented and Zelizer (2009: 85) argues that the fragmentation of newswork is further facilitated by outsourcing, subcontracting and offshoring and it is the peripheral group that “tends to be temporarily employed in subcontracted or outsourcing arrangements and consists mainly of freelancers (in broadcast news called ‘stringers’, in print journalism ‘correspondents’).” This clearly applies to our case and the management of the news production process is also in line with the flexible firm model.

The relocation of the television studio allowed us to map the key aspects of the spatial and material boundaries of the camera reporters’ professional work. Distances have increased following relocation and more driving is involved, making camera reporters’ jobs more tiring and stressful (Interviews with Camera reporter 01; 02; 03). However, the most important negative consequence mentioned by all camera reporters was disruption to interpersonal relationships in the newsroom:

When we needed to make a noise about something, we had a beer. ... Now we don't have the feedback and it is a problem. (Interview with Camera reporter 02)

We can't go for a beer here on the periphery ... having a beer you can say something that you don't normally say. (Interview with Camera reporter 03)

The disappearance of these occasions for fostering informal relationships and after-work gatherings is significant as these can play a role in overcoming some of the professional boundaries and they can also open up new spaces for semi-professional discussions and improve team work (see e.g. Somech and Khalaili, 2014).

News reporters, more than the camera reporters, mentioned the loss of the connection with the newsroom, local sources, and local audiences following the relocation. The relocation was similarly disruptive in terms of the changed space of the newsroom for camera reporters, producers and news reporters. Spaces in which various news workers operate always have their boundaries and are the consequences of habits and tacit knowledge of journalistic work in a particular news organisation (Hemmingway, 2008). Wahl-Jorgensen refers to “the margins of this spatially delimited news production universe” (2009: 23), however, the open-plan nature of the new newsroom seems to isolate camera reporters:

We've got our office a lot closer now. In the old building, we were completely cut off but we were closer to the news reporters ... it may be because the whole newsroom is open-plan and you don't want to disturb anyone. (Interview with Camera reporter 01)

## **Conclusions**

Our case study on camera reporters as peripheral actors in a Czech television studio's news production process is in line with much of what the literature on the subject already proposes. However, recent literature on peripheral news workers discusses cases of content makers for social media or indeed non-journalistic media organizations (such as data analytics firms) that have an impact on the journalistic profession. We have very consciously opted for “old” peripheral news workers as we think that it is important to keep in mind that the definitions and boundaries of professional journalistic work are constantly evolving and that there are unanswered questions related to these.

Boundary making and maintenance is a process that involves various actors in the news production process and is linked to the in-groups and out-groups of professionals at the micro level of interpretive communities and to the media organization's culture at the macro level (it is at this level that core and peripheral news workers are distinguished in human resources categories, types of contracts and benefits). We have maintained throughout that peripheral news workers are part of the journalistic field and although the camera reporters whom we interviewed for this research did not identify as journalists per se, they clearly identified their work and expertise as belonging to the journalistic field. They were very aware of the peripheral nature of their professional existence, of their subordination to the core news reporters and that this was ingrained in the organization's professional culture and is to some extent the consequence of the implementation of the flexible firm model in their organization.

The boundaries appear to be impenetrable and following the relocation of the television studio to the suburbs the previously existing informal social contacts that – to some extent – mitigated the consequences of the core/peripheral division seem to have vanished. The relocation seems to have pushed camera reporters further away from the core, forcing them to spend more time driving to locations and effectively acting as chauffeurs to the more valued news reporters. Consequently, camera reporters are less

satisfied with their position in the news organization and their professional autonomy and as a result they increasingly do just what they have to. It is needless to say that this is a worrying state of affairs.

### **Funding Acknowledgement**

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

### **Notes**

1. When other authors use the term cameraman, we put it in quotation marks. Apart from the already outlined conceptual problems that we have with the term, it is also not gender neutral.

### **References**

- Abernathy PM (2018) *The rise of the ghost newspaper*. Available at: [www.usnewsdeserts.com](http://www.usnewsdeserts.com) (accessed 10 May 2019).
- Ahva L (2017) How is Participation Practiced by “In-Betweeners” of Journalism? *Journalism Practice* 11(2–3): 142–159.
- Aldridge M and Evetts J (2003) Rethinking the Concept of Professionalism: The Case of Journalism. *British Journal of Sociology* 54(4): 547–564.
- Belair-Gagnon V and Holton AE (2018) Boundary Work, Interloper Media, And Analytics In Newsrooms. *Digital Journalism* 6(4): 492–508.
- Bourdieu P (2005) The Political Field, the Social Science Field, and the Journalistic Field. In: Benson R and Neveu E (eds) *Bourdieu and the Journalistic Field*. Cambridge, Malden: Polity Press, pp. 29–47.
- Bowd K (2004) Interviewing the interviewers: Methodological considerations in gathering data from journalists. *Australian Journalism Review* 26(2): 115–123.
- Bignell J and Orlebar J (2005) *The Television Handbook*. Third edition. London, New York: Routledge.
- Boyd A, Stewart P and Alexander R (2008) *Broadcast Journalism. Techniques of Radio and Television News*. Sixth edition. Oxford, Burlington: Focal Press.
- Carlson M and Lewis SC (eds) (2015) *Boundaries of Journalism. Professionalism, Practices and Participation*. Oxon, New York: Routledge.
- Coleman R and Banning S (2006) Network TV News' Affective Framing of the Presidential Candidates: Evidence for a Second-Level Agenda-Setting Effect through Visual Framing. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* 83(2): 313–328.
- Cottle S and Ashton M (1999) From BBC Newsroom to BBC Newscentre: On Changing Technology and Journalist Practices. *Convergence* 5(3): 22–43.
- Deuze M (2009) Technology and the Individual Journalist: Agency Beyond Imitation and Change. In: Zelizer B (ed) *The Changing Faces of Journalism. Tabloidization, Technology and Truthiness*. London, New York: Routledge, pp. 82–97.
- Deuze M (2005) What is Journalism? Professional Identity and Ideology of Journalists Reconsidered. *Journalism* 6(4): 442–464.
- Eldridge S A II (2017) *Online Journalism from the Periphery: Interloper Media and the Journalistic Field*. London: Routledge.
- Ferrucci P and Vos T (2017) Who's in, Who's out? Constructing the identity of digital journalists. *Digital Journalism* 5(7): 868–883.
- Fish S (1980) *Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

García Avilés JA, León B, Sanders K and Harrison J (2004) Journalists at digital television newsrooms in Britain and Spain: workflow and multi-skilling in a competitive environment, *Journalism Studies* 5(1): 87–100.

Donmoyer R (2000) Generalizability and the Single-Case Study. (2000) In: Gomm R, Hammersley M and Foster P (eds) *Case Study Method: Key Texts, Key Issues*. London: Sage, pp. 45–68.

Folkerts J (2014) History of journalism education. *Journalism & Communication Monographs* 16(4): 227–299.

Frith S and Meech P (2007). Becoming a journalist: Journalism education and journalism culture. *Journalism* 8(2): 137–164.

Grabe ME and Bucy EP (2009) *Image Bite Politics: News and the Visual Framing of Elections*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Hanitzsch T and Vos TP (2018) Journalism beyond democracy: A new look into journalistic roles in political and everyday life. *Journalism* 19(2): 146–164.

Hanitzsch T and Vos TP (2017) Journalistic Roles and the Struggle Over Institutional Identity: The Discursive Constitution of Journalism. *Communication Theory* 27: 115–135.

Hanusch F (2017) Journalistic Roles and Everyday Life. An empirical account of lifestyle journalists' professional views. *Journalism Studies* 1–19.

Hemmingway E (2008) *Into the Newsroom. Exploring the digital production of regional television news*. Oxon, New York: Routledge.

Hess K and Waller L (2017) *Local journalism in a digital world*. London, New York: Palgrave.

Holton AE and Belair-Gagnon V (2018) Strangers to the Game? Interlopers, Intralopers, and Shifting News Production. *Media and Communication* 6(4): 70–78.

Klein-Avraham I and Reich Z (2016) Out of the frame: A longitudinal perspective on digitization and professional photojournalism. *New media and society* 18(3): 429–446.

Lewis SC and Usher N (2016) Trading zones, boundary objects, and the pursuit of news innovation: A case study of journalists and programmers. *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies* 22(5): 543–560.

Maares P and Hanusch F (2018) Exploring the boundaries of journalism: Instagram micro-bloggers in the twilight zone of lifestyle journalism. *Journalism* 1–17.

MacDonald J, Saliba AJ, Hodgins G and Ovington LA (2016) Burnout in journalists: A systematic literature review. *Burnout Research* 3: 34–44.

Mellado C, Hellmueller L and Donsbach W (eds) (2017) *Journalistic Role Performance. Concepts, Contexts, and Methods*. New York, London: Routledge.

Meltzer K and Martik E (2017) Journalists as Communities of Practice: Advancing a Theoretical Framework for Understanding Journalism. *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 41(3): 207–226.

Mortensen TM and Gade PJ (2018) Does Photojournalism Matter? News Image Content and Presentation in the Middletown (NY) Times Herald-Record Before and After Layoffs of the Photojournalism Staff. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* 95(4): 990–1010.

Nielsen RK (ed) (2015) *Local journalism. The decline of newspapers and the rise of digital media*. London, New York: Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, I. B. Tauris.

Örnebring H, Lindell J, Clerwall C and Karlsson M (2016) Dimensions of Journalistic Workplace Autonomy: A Five-nation Comparison. *Javnost/The Public* 23(3): 307–326.

Örnebring H (2010) Technology and journalism-as-labour: Historical perspectives. *Journalism* 11(1): 57–74.

Randle K (2011) Understanding Multinational Media Management. In: Deuze M (ed) *Managing Media Work*. Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, Singapore, Washington: Sage, pp. 145–154.

Robertson A (2001) Us, Them and Television News Narratives: constructing Europe in TV news broadcasts. *Conference Narrative, Identity and Order*, University of Tampere. Available at: [http://www15.uta.fi/conference/PAG/PAG\\_papers\\_alexandra\\_robertson.pdf](http://www15.uta.fi/conference/PAG/PAG_papers_alexandra_robertson.pdf) (accessed 7 May 2019).

Reich Z and Hanitzsch T (2013) Determinants of Journalists' Professional Autonomy: Individual and National Level Factors Matter More Than Organizational Ones. *Mass Communication and Society* 16(1): 133–156.

Reinardy S (2014) Autonomy and Perceptions of Work Quality, *Journalism Practice* 8(6): 855–870.

Reinardy S and Bacon C (2014) Feast and famine? Local television news workers expand the offerings but say they are hungry for quality journalism. *Journal of Media Practice* 15(2): 133–145.

Saltz K and Dickinson R (2008) Inside the changing newsroom: journalists' responses to media convergence. *Aslib Proceedings* 60(3): 216–228.

Schulz I (2007) The Journalistic Gut Feeling. Journalistic doxa, news habitus and orthodox news values. *Journalism Practice* 1(2): 190–207.

Sehl A, Cornia A, Graves L and Nielsen RK (2018) Newsroom Integration As An Organizational Challenge. *Journalism Studies* 1–22.

Singer JB (2011) Journalism in a Network. In: Deuze M (ed) *Managing Media Work*. Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, Singapore, Washington: Sage, pp. 103–110.

Somech A and Khalaili A (2014) Team Boundary Activity: Its Mediating Role in the Relationship Between Structural Conditions and Team Innovation. *Group & Organization Management*, 39(3): 274–299.

Spaulding S (2014) The poetics of goodbye: Change and nostalgia in goodbye narratives penned by ex-Baltimore Sun employees. *Journalism* 1(19): 1–19.

Tandoc EC Jr, Hellmüller L and Vos TP (2013) Mind the gap. Between journalistic role conception and role enactment. *Journalism Practice* 7(5): 539–554.

Urbániková M and Volek J (2018) The professional identity of Czech journalists in an international perspective. *International Communication Gazette* 80(5): 452–475.

Ursell G (2000) Television production: issues of exploitation, commodification and subjectivity in UK television labour markets. *Media, Culture and Society* 22(6): 805–825.

Ursell G (1998) Labour flexibility in the UK commercial television sector. *Media, culture and society* 20(1): 129–153.

Usher N (2015) Newsroom Moves and the Newspaper Crisis Evaluated: Space, Place, and Cultural Meaning. *Media, Culture and Society* 37(7): 1005–1021.

Wahl-Jørgensen K (2009) News production, ethnography, and power: On the challenges of newsroom-centricity. In: Bird SE (ed) *The Anthropology of News and Journalism: Global Perspectives*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, pp. 21–34.

Wallace S (2013) The complexities of convergence: Multiskilled journalists working in BBC regional multimedia newsrooms. *The International Communication Gazette* 75(1): 99–117.

Waschková Čísařová L (ed) (2017) *Voice of the Locality: Local Media and Local Audience*. Brno: Munipress.

Wiik J (2015) Internal boundaries. The stratification of the journalistic collective. In: Carlson M. and Lewis SC (eds) *Boundaries of Journalism. Professionalism, Practices and Participation*. Oxon, New York: Routledge, pp. 118–133.



Witschge T and Nygren G (2009) Journalistic Work: A Profession Under Pressure? *Journal of Media Business Studies* 6(1): 37–59.

Zelizer B (ed) (2009) *The Changing Faces of Journalism. Tabloidization, Technology and Truthiness*. London, New York: Routledge.

Zelizer B (2004) *Taking Journalism Seriously. News and the Academy*. Thousand Oaks, London, New Delhi: Sage.

Zelizer B (1993) Journalists as interpretive communities. *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 10(3): 219–237.