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Mapping Journalism Cultures across Nations: A Comparative Study of 18 Countries

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Abstract

This article reports key findings from a comparative survey of the role perceptions, epistemological orientations and ethical views of 1800 journalists from 18 countries. The results show that detachment, non-involvement, providing political information and monitoring the government are considered essential journalistic functions around the globe. Impartiality, the reliability and factualness of information, as well as adherence to universal ethical principles are also valued worldwide, though their perceived importance varies across countries. Various aspects of interventionism, objectivism and the importance of separating facts and opinion, on the other hand, seem to play out differently around the globe. Western journalists are generally less supportive of any active promotion of particular values, ideas and social change, and they adhere more to universal principles in their ethical decisions. Journalists from non-western contexts, on the other hand, tend to be more interventionist in their role perceptions and more flexible in their ethical views.

Key Words

Journalism culture, institutional roles, epistemologies, ethical ideologies, journalists, survey, comparative research

Introduction

Theoretical and empirical engagement with journalism culture has gained currency over the past years. Boosted by a general trend towards comparative research in the broader field of communication and media studies, journalism culture as an analytical concept and object of inquiry has become central to journalism scholarship. The work of Deuze (2002),

Hanitzsch (2007), Harrison (2000) and Zelizer (2005) constitutes only a few examples of a large and growing body of literature.

One of the reasons why journalism researchers increasingly gravitate towards the notion of journalism culture seems to be its ability to provide a more intuitive way of looking at the diversity of journalistic practices and orientations. Defined as "a particular set of ideas and practices by which journalists legitimate their role in society and render their work meaningful" (Hanitzsch, 2007, p. 369), the concept captures the field of journalism as being constituted and reaffirmed by a set of culturally negotiated professional values and conventions that operate mostly behind the backs of individual journalists.

Another major advantage of using journalism culture as an analytical starting point rests on two central features of the notion of culture in the social sciences: its inclusiveness and openness. The concept of journalism culture is inclusive enough to integrate very diverse and often isolated scholarly discourses, most notably discussions of professionalism, objectivism, professional role perceptions and ethical standards. Furthermore, it is open to journalism's constant reformulation and reconstitution, as culture itself is a process of continuous change, renegotiation and redefinition. As such, the concept of journalism culture incorporates earlier work on professional norms and practices (e.g. Patterson & Donsbach, 1996; Weaver, 1998). At the same time, it goes beyond these traditional avenues of research by emphasizing the multiple ways journalists make sense of their work and profession.

In the following we report descriptive key findings from the cross-national *Worlds of Journalism* study, a collaborative effort of journalism researchers from 18 countries.[1] The central purpose of the project was to map journalistic cultures onto a grid of common theoretical denominators and explore their variation across nations. The paper outlines major patterns of similarities and differences between national journalism cultures and focuses on the following research questions: How do journalists in the investigated countries perceive journalism's institutional roles, epistemological underpinnings and ethical standards? Which aspects of journalism culture are perceived most differently among journalists from different countries? Do any broader groupings of national journalism cultures exist?

We are aware that such descriptive comparisons can only provide a rough picture of complex real-world differences between journalism cultures as manifold and substantial differences also exist within countries. This paper is therefore only a first step in the analysis of a multifarious data set. The space provided by a journal article nevertheless allows sketching out general patterns of global similarities and differences across journalism cultures.

Literature Review and Conceptual Background

One important point of departure in this study is the view that journalism cultures materialize – and can therefore be observed – in terms of the professional values journalists embrace. In this regard, international studies have found remarkable similarities in journalists' professional role conceptions, ethical views, editorial procedures and socialization processes in countries as diverse as Brazil, Germany, Tanzania, Uganda and the United States (Herscovitz, 2004; Weischenberg, Malik & Scholl, 2006; Ramaprasad, 2001; Mwesige, 2004; Weaver et al., 2006). The values of objectivity and impartiality seem to have taken root in many newsrooms around the world, indicating a "diffusion of occupational ideologies", or "transfer of ideology", from the North to the Global South (Golding, 1977, pp. 292-3).

Despite these obvious signs of convergence, comparative evidence also points to considerable differences in journalistic practices and orientations across countries (Deuze, 2002; Köcher, 1986; Patterson & Donsbach, 1996; Shoemaker & Cohen, 2006; Splichal & Sparks, 1994; Weaver, 1998; Zhu, Weaver, Lo, Chen & Wu, 1997). Weaver (1998), as well as Patterson and Donsbach (1996), found substantial diversity in the professional role perceptions

even among journalists from western countries. This is especially true for the perceived importance of analysis, partisanship, entertainment and a critical attitude towards the powerful.

Journalists also disagree on the epistemological foundations that implicitly underlie their work. Donsbach and Klett (1993, p. 80) found very different perceptions of the objectivity norm in a comparative survey of journalists in Germany, Great Britain, Italy and the United States. They interpreted this disparity in terms of "partially different 'professional cultures' where the boundaries can be drawn between the Anglo-Saxon journalists on the one, and the continental European journalists on the other side." Even larger differences were discovered by Weaver (1998) and Berkowitz, Limor and Singer (2004) with respect to ethical standards in journalism. They concluded that the professional ethics of journalists are largely determined by the national contexts within which they work.

One shortcoming of existing research is that the three central areas in which journalism cultures materialize – the perception of journalism's institutional roles, epistemologies and ethical ideologies – are mostly analyzed independently from each other. However, drawing on a conceptualization proposed by Hanitzsch (2007), we argue that these three domains *together* constitute the basic elements of difference between journalism's cultures. This approach models diversity in journalistic cultures in terms of three constituents:

(1) The domain of *institutional roles* refers to the normative and actual functions of journalism in society. Journalism research often refers to this concept as professional role perceptions, news functions or media roles. An early classification of neutral and participant roles was suggested by Cohen (1963). This approach was further developed by Weaver and Wilhoit (1996, pp. 138-140) who, still in the US context, later distinguished between an "interpreter," "disseminator," "adversarial" and a "populist mobilizer" role. Based on a survey of journalists in Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Sweden and the U.S., Donsbach and Patterson (2004, pp. 265-266) proposed a model that organizes journalists' role perceptions along two analytical dimensions: The passive-active dimension refers to the extent to which journalists act independently of those who have interests in the story, while the neutral-advocate dimension reflects the extent to which the journalist takes a stand on a certain issue. On the basis of this body of work we identified three dimensions according to which we expected the perceptions of journalism's institutional role to vary:

- *Interventionism* reflects the extent to which journalists pursue a particular mission and promote certain values. The distinction tracks along a divide between two types of journalist, the one interventionist, involved, socially committed, assertive and motivated, the other detached and uninvolved, dedicated to objectivity, neutrality, fairness and impartiality.
- *Power distance* refers to the journalist's position towards loci of power in society. The adversary pole of the continuum captures a kind of journalism that, in its capacity as the "Fourth Estate," openly challenges those in power. "Loyal" or opportunist journalists, on the other hand, tend to see themselves more in a collaborative role, as "partners" of the ruling elites in political processes.
- *Market orientation* is reflective of the two principal ways of addressing the audience, primarily in their role as either citizens or consumers. Market orientation is high in journalism cultures that subordinate their goals to the logic of the market. Journalists who give priority to the public interest, on the other hand, emphasize political information and mobilization as a means to create an informed citizenry.

(2) A second domain of journalism culture is the area of journalism's *epistemologies* and is concerned with the accessibility of reality and the nature of acceptable evidence. The epistemological underpinnings of journalism are mostly discussed with reference to objectivity – its possibility, existence, desirability and even different understandings (e.g. Donsbach & Klett, 1993; Lichtenberg, 2000; Tuchman, 1971). In previous studies, these aspects have

mostly been investigated as part of journalists' role perceptions (e.g. Weaver & Wilhoit, 1986). We think, however, that journalisms' epistemologies make up a distinct domain of journalism culture that is not necessarily related to role perceptions. Two dimensions of epistemologies are especially pertinent to journalism culture:

- *Objectivism* is concerned with a philosophical or absolute sense of objectivity. Journalists close to the correspondence pole claim the existence of an objective truth "out there" that can be reported "as it is", and they believe that one can and should separate facts from values. Subjectivist journalists, on the other hand, adhere to the view that there is no such thing as an objective reality, news is just a representation of the world, and all representations are inevitably selective and require interpretation.
- *Empiricism* is concerned with the means by which a truth claim is ultimately justified by the journalist. Journalism cultures that prioritize empirical justification of truth claims emphasize observation, measurement, evidence and experience. Journalists on the other end of the continuum stress the analytical justification of truth claims as they accentuate reason, ideas, values, opinion and analysis.

(3) *Ethical ideologies* make up the third domain of journalism culture and point to the question of how journalists respond to ethical dilemmas. Keeble (2005), for instance, distinguished four mainstream approaches in journalism ethics: The "standard professional approach" stresses journalists' commitment to agreed-upon codes of ethics and editorial guidelines, while the "liberal professional approach" criticizes this perspective from a range of standpoints. For those who follow the "cynical approach," ethical issues have little relevance to journalists, whereas "ethical relativists" promote ad hoc responses to ethical dilemmas. Many surveys of journalists operationalize ethical orientations in terms of questionable reporting methods that might be justified by some journalists while not by others (e.g. Weaver & Wilhoit, 1986). Arguing that the justification of these specific reporting methods very much depends on the respective cultural context, we therefore suggest conceptualizing ethical views in journalism according to a typology that was originally developed by the psychologist Forsyth (1980). Forsyth organized ethical ideologies along two basic dimensions:

- *Relativism* marks the extent to which journalists base their personal moral philosophies on universal ethical rules. While many journalists believe that ethical decisions are very much dependent on the situational context, others argue that professional ethics is universal and journalists should rely on moral absolutes regardless of the actual context.
- *Idealism* refers to the importance of consequences in journalists' reasoning about ethical dilemmas. Highly idealistic journalists are means-oriented as they believe that desirable consequences should always be obtained with the "right" action. Less idealistic journalists, on the other hand, are more goal-oriented for they admit that harm will sometimes be necessary to produce a greater public good.

The approach proposed here does not suggest that western values are generally "better" or "more professional" than others, as the study's impetus and approach was clearly not a normative one. The fact that the social functions of journalism vary across societies inevitably leads to a situation in which journalists bear different professional values in different countries. For this reason, western professional values were not employed as a yardstick against which to measure the "success" or "failure" of non-western countries. The study's conceptual framework was deliberately geared towards diversity as it exists in the global arena of journalism cultures.

Methodology

The selection of countries exploited the idea of a most different systems design (Przeworski & Teune, 1970) in order to account for this cultural diversity. The analysis reported in this paper draws on data from 18 countries, including Australia, Austria, Brazil, Bulgaria, Chile, China, Egypt, Germany, Indonesia, Israel, Mexico, Romania, Russia, Spain, Switzerland, Turkey, Uganda and the United States. The selection of countries cuts across all six inhabited continents, democratic and authoritarian contexts, as well as developed and developing countries. Additional considerations in the selection of countries were the accessibility of pre-existing knowledge about journalists' professional views, as well as the availability of qualified and committed researchers.

In every country we conducted interviews with a quota sample of 100 working journalists drawn from 20 news organizations. In most countries the interviews were done by telephone. In Bulgaria, Egypt and Indonesia, and also partly in China and Mexico, we conducted personal interviews, mostly because we expected journalists in these countries to be not accustomed to or highly distrustful of telephone interviewing. Turkey was the only case where journalists completed questionnaires on their own while a researcher was present. The interviews were conducted between October 2007 and June 2009.

With only 100 journalists interviewed in each country, it is hardly possible to provide a representative picture of news people in the 18 nations. Instead of aiming for samples that were representative in a statistical sense, we followed Hofstede (2001, p. 463) and decided to construct "matched samples" that allow for comparison across countries because of their similar internal compositions. For this strategy, Hofstede suggests minimal sample sizes of at least 20, preferably 50, respondents per country.

In every country, sampling was carried out in two steps. We first selected 20 news organizations in every country according to a common quota scheme (see Table 1). The choice of newsrooms was organized along two first-level parameters: On the first level we distinguished between types of media, as well as between national and local/regional media. On a secondary level we stratified print media into quality (citizen-oriented) and popular (consumer-oriented) outlets, and electronic media according to ownership into public, state-owned or private channels. While the choice of popular print media was based on audience size, the quality outlets were selected according to their agenda-setting power.[2] Online newsrooms were omitted from the sample because the degree of their institutionalization still varied considerably across countries during the time of fieldwork. All national research teams invested a great deal of effort in order to match the overall sampling scheme and, at the same time, achieve a reasonable approximation to the diversity that exists even within their countries.[3] However, due to several idiosyncrasies in some countries, researchers had to make use of alternative options that were also provided as part of the sampling instructions.[4]

--- Table 1 about here ---

Wherever possible we selected five journalists in each newsroom. Journalists were defined as those who had at least some "editorial responsibility" for the content they produce (Weaver & Wilhoit 1986, p. 168). We tried to be as inclusive as possible in capturing the various domains of news work, even if they did not belong to the traditional "hard news" beats, such as sports, travel and celebrity reporters. Within the news organizations, the selected journalists were further stratified according to the extent of their editorial responsibility. Ideally, one journalist was selected from the highest level of the editorial hierarchy (strategic leadership: e.g. chief editors and their deputies), one from the middle level (operational decision-makers: e.g. senior editors and desk heads) and three from the lowest level of the editorial hierarchy (e.g. reporters). The selection of journalists in each of these categories was based on random sampling. A description of basic sample parameters is provided in Table 2.

--- Table 2 about here ---

The enthusiasm of journalists and newsroom managers to participate in the study varied from case to case and country to country, sometimes substantially. From all 356 newsrooms that were chosen in the first place, 22 refused to cooperate and were subsequently replaced. On the level of the journalists, we had to substitute 236 interviewees from the altogether 1800 journalists due to refusal.

The research tools used in this study were collaboratively developed in order to guarantee a maximum degree of intercultural validity. A fully standardized master questionnaire was first developed in English and then translated into the relevant languages. We used relatively simple wording in order to reduce potential translation problems. Since language is not devoid of culture, translation usually involved several people in each country to achieve a best possible approximation to the original master questionnaire.

The measures were designed on the basis of the seven dimensions of journalism cultures, as well as an extensive screening of the literature and existing questionnaires. We compiled two lists of items that characterize unique aspects of professional self-perceptions. The first list of 12 items was designed to measure the relative importance of institutional roles and was introduced by following question: "The following list describes some of the things the news media do or try to do." The interviewed journalists were given five response options: "extremely important," "very important," "somewhat important," "little important," and "not important at all". The second list of 14 items was intended to capture the journalists' epistemological beliefs and ethical ideologies and was introduced thus: "The following statements describe different approaches to news coverage." Response options were "strongly agree," "somewhat agree," "neither agree nor disagree," "somewhat disagree" and "strongly disagree."

In the following sections we mainly report descriptive findings based on mean scores of the journalists' responses across countries. The data for this paper was centered in order to remove acquiescence bias, that is, the tendency of an interviewee to respond generally more positively or more negatively to all questions, regardless of their content. Such a tendency is likely to occur in cross-national surveys where the different communication cultures tend to effect survey responses. One commonly recommended procedure to account for acquiescence bias is centering (Fischer, 2004). We centered the country mean scores for each domain of journalism culture – institutional roles, epistemologies and ethical ideologies – separately. We first calculated the overall mean score across all items for every country. The centered scores were then computed by subtracting the overall mean from the raw country mean scores. The resulting scores thus indicate the *relative* importance of a particular aspect of journalism culture in each country. In addition, we interpreted standard deviations as a measure of disagreement among journalists on the importance on an item, as well as Eta-squared values[5] that specify the proportion of variance that is due to differences between countries.

In order to provide a visual mapping of country (dis)similarities, we used an adaptation of multidimensional scaling (MDS) called CoPlot. MDS maps the relative commonalities and differences between objects (i.e. countries) as distances onto a two-dimensional space (Borg & Groenen, 1997). A key limitation of MDS, however, is that does not allow for visualization of objects and variables simultaneously. Moreover, the axes on an MDS map have no inherent meaning (Bravata, Shojania, Olkin, & Raveh, 2008, p. 2234). The CoPlot technique, and especially the specialized software tool *Visual CoPlot*[6], were designed to overcome these limitations.

CoPlot first generates a conventional MDS map to spatially represent the distances between objects. In a second step, vectors are added to indicate the relationships between varia-

bles. The vectors, which emanate from a shared origin, have useful properties: Vectors for highly correlated variables, for instance, point in the same direction, vectors for highly negatively correlated variables point in opposing directions, and vectors for variables that are not correlated are orthogonal to each other. The angle between two vectors therefore represents the correlation between the two variables. A goodness-of-fit measure for the overall solution is the *coefficient of alienation* that indicates the relative loss of information that arises when multidimensional data is transformed into two dimensions. Its value should ideally be less than 0.15. In addition, Bravata et al. (2008, p. 2240) suggest an average of correlations between vectors of 0.7 or greater.

Findings and Discussion

Institutional Roles

With respect to the function and role of journalism in society, our findings clearly show that journalists across the globe pay high regard to the normative ideals of detachment, providing political information, and acting as a watchdog of the government. Table 3 summarizes the descriptive parameters relating to the domain of institutional roles. Providing the most interesting information, as well as the motivational potentials of journalism also rank highly among the value priorities of journalists worldwide. The relatively low standard deviations point to remarkable agreement among the surveyed journalists vis-à-vis the importance of non-involvement and dissemination of political content. Altogether, these findings suggest that traditional western ideals of detachment and being a watchdog of the government flourish among the standards accepted by journalists around the world.

--- Table 3 about here ---

Interventionist aspects of journalism, on the other hand, found much less support. Journalists tend to stray away from influencing public opinion and advocating social change. The somewhat greater standard deviations and Eta-squared values for these indicators point to some disagreement among journalists in general and between countries in particular. Opportunist values in journalism, especially the favorable coverage of political and business elites, find generally little support among journalists in almost all nations. Of all 12 individual aspects of the perception of institutional roles, influencing public opinion and supporting official policies seem to be the most controversial ones across the investigated countries. More than one fourth of the overall variation in journalists' responses to these items is due to cross-country differences (28.0 and 25.5 percent, respectively).

A comparison of centered country means, which is reported in Appendix 1, indicates that interventionism – that is, the active support of particular values, positions, groups and social change – is generally not a characteristic of western journalistic cultures. These professional cultures embrace much more the ideals of detachment and non-interference in their occupational self-awareness. A tendency towards interventionism can be found among journalists from developing societies and transitional democracies. It comes as no surprise that journalists are most willing to promote social change in contexts where such transformation rapidly occurs – or where it seems needed.

With regard to power distance, the findings show that monitoring the political and economic elites is indeed a function of journalism globally. In western contexts, both aspects, acting as a watchdog of the government and a watchdog of business elites, tend to go hand in hand. In other countries, however, the political appeal of journalism's watchdog role does not always highly correlate with a skeptical attitude towards the business world. This is the case in Brazil, Chile, China, Egypt, Indonesia, Israel, Turkey and Uganda. In these countries, the correlations between the two variables are either non-significant (Egypt) or fail to be substan-

tial (Spearman's Rho < 0.4).[7] The least vigilant and critical journalists seem to come from Romania, Russia and, somewhat surprisingly, Israel. Relatively weak power distance, indicated by the willingness of journalists to convey a positive image of political and business leadership, exists among journalists in China, Russia and Uganda. We found the least negative attitude towards supporting official policies in developing and transitional contexts.

With respect to market orientation, the findings point to a relatively strong orientation towards the audience among journalists in China, Indonesia and Russia. Providing interesting information, on the other hand, tends to characterize European journalism. This aspect of journalism culture is least supported in Egypt, Uganda, Turkey and, partially, in China. The importance of a political information function of journalism remains generally unchallenged, though it is least pronounced among journalists in Chile and China. Less agreement was prompted by the motivational and participatory functions of journalism. This role, indicated by the inclination of journalists to motivate people to participate in civic activity and political discussion, was least supported by journalists in China, and it also ranked low in Russia and Chile. A fairly strong emphasis on the motivational potentials of journalism was found among journalists in Germany, Austria and Switzerland, in the Eastern European context (Bulgaria and Romania), as well as in Egypt and Turkey. The United States, despite its lively discussion of public/civic journalism, only occupy a middle ground on this dimension.

Figure 1 maps the country differences onto a two-dimensional space. The relative position of the vectors provides some useful hints as to how to interpret the map. Altogether, the upper left quadrant in Figure 1 can be understood in terms of a "territory" of a broadly understood western or western-orientated journalism culture. A core group consisting of the United States, Germany and Austria strongly exhibits the ideal-typical values of this culture: non-involvement, detachment, monitoring the government, as well as providing political and interesting information to motivate the people to participate in civic activity. With Switzerland, Spain and Australia, the immediate neighborhood of this group is occupied by other western contexts. Brazilian journalists are also relatively close to this cluster due to a strong orientation of Brazilian media towards western journalism. On the fringe of this western cluster we find Bulgaria and Romania, the two Eastern European countries. This might be seen as an empirical indication of an advanced adaptation to western standards, a process that is accelerated by increased activities of Western European media conglomerates in these countries.

--- Figure 1 about here ---

On the right side of the figure one can distinguish two groups of countries, while Israel is somewhat near to these groups but stands by itself. One group contains, with Chile, China, Indonesia, Russia and Uganda, developing countries and emergent nations that have reached different levels of political, economic and social development. Chile and Indonesia have gone through abrupt political reforms since the 1990s, from authoritarian regimes to liberal democracy. This process has brought about an adaptation of news production to western standards, and market orientation is more pronounced in these countries than in China and Uganda. Israel is also located on this side of the map, mostly due to the much smaller importance of the watchdog role. In China, Russia and Uganda, on the other hand, journalists still operate in a political climate that is often hostile to press freedom.[8] This might be the reason why journalists perceive themselves more in a cooperative and supportive role in their relationship to the government and official policy.

Egypt contrasts very much with all the other countries, especially because of a strong interventionist motivation among its journalists and, at the same time, a relatively critical attitude towards the government. The unique position of Egypt might also indicate the existence

of a distinctive journalism culture in the Arab world. Turkey is located between Egypt and the western countries, underscoring its position between the East and the West.

Epistemologies

Regarding journalists' epistemological orientations, the results provide evidence for the global importance of impartiality and neutrality, as well as factualness and reliability of information (see Table 4). In addition, journalists around the world feel that personal beliefs and convictions should not influence their reporting. Here, one can find the strongest agreement between journalists from different countries. Relatively controversial, on the other hand, is the role of subjectivity in news making, especially with regard to the separation of facts and opinion. Substantial disagreement is invited by the question of whether personal evaluation and interpretation should slip into the coverage. Here, differences between countries loom especially large, accounting for a substantial 31.7 percent of the overall variance. Little support, with some considerable variation, was also found among journalists' views towards providing orientation, indicated by the item "I always make clear which side in a dispute has the better position."

--- Table 4 about here ---

The comparison of country scores does not reveal any consistent pattern, however (see Appendix 1). This is true for both dimensions of journalism's epistemologies, objectivism and empiricism. Considerable differences exist even between western countries. The various aspects of objectivism, for instance, seem to be cherished differently in different national contexts. Allowing the news to be influenced by beliefs and convictions is clearly disapproved of by journalists in Germany, Austria and Switzerland, as well as in Brazil, Chile, Spain, Indonesia and Russia. Impartiality is of greater appeal to journalists in Germany and Austria, as well as in Egypt, Chile, China and Romania. Making clear which side in a dispute has the better position tends to be disapproved by journalists in the west, but Turkish journalists are even more averse to this aspect of journalism culture.

The empiricism dimension produces similar results. Large differences between countries exist with respect to the separation of facts and opinion. Journalists in Russia, Turkey, Israel, Mexico, Spain and Australia have the most favorable attitude towards providing analysis, and their American colleagues partly share this inclination. The least positive attitude towards providing analysis exists among journalists in Austria, Germany and Switzerland, as well as in Indonesia. Journalists in the three (mostly) German-speaking countries find it especially important not to publish material that cannot be verified. It is the journalists in South America, Russia and Uganda who seem to be most willing to publish unverified information.

Figure 2 provides a visual map of country similarities. The loss of information due to collapsing eight variables onto a two-dimensional space turned out to be substantial. We therefore eliminated the item "Facts speak for themselves" to improve the solution; and the resulting *coefficient of alienation* just meets the recommended limit of .15. We suspect that, with the exception of providing analysis, the epistemological orientations of journalists mostly depend on individual predispositions and can only be marginally explained by country differences. The small Eta-squared values also support this view.

--- Figure 2 about here ---

The upper half of Figure 2 is an area that is characterized by a relatively high importance given to objective, factual and credible reporting. Austria, Germany and Switzerland belong to this area, but also Indonesia and, to some extent, Brazil, which are, in several ways,

remarkably similar to western countries. Indonesia is a special case, however, as the partly contradictory and counter-intuitive position of Indonesian journalists on the map is largely driven by their extreme disapproval of analytical journalism. Journalists in the United States, but also those in Australia, are located in the lower half of Figure 2 mainly because of their commitment to an interpretative but factual mode of reporting.

In Bulgaria, Israel and Turkey, the appreciation of analysis in journalism also goes together with an emphasis on objectivity and factualness. In the developing and transitional contexts of Egypt, China, Chile, Romania, Russia and, in part, Uganda, journalists pay more attention to providing political direction for their audiences. The small angle between the vectors for "Remain strictly impartial" and "Always make clear which side has better position" in Figure 2 indicates a general trend across several, mostly developing, countries: Although it might seem counter-intuitive to many western journalists, providing direction in a political dispute does not necessarily conflict with an emphasis on impartiality.

Ethical Ideologies

With regard to professional ethics, our results show that most journalists in the surveyed countries tend to obey universal principles that should be followed regardless of situation and context (see Table 5). They also agree on the importance of avoiding questionable methods of reporting, even if this means not getting the story. Much less approval – although the extent of it varies between countries – can be found with respect to the view that due to the inherent complexity of ethical dilemmas, journalists should have more personal latitude in solving these problems. This desire for flexibility does also relate to the relative importance of means vs. ends. Many journalists think that in certain situations, some harm to others would be justified if the result supports a greater public good.

--- Table 5 about here ---

A comparative shows a relatively broad consensus among journalists from the various countries with respect to the general adherence to ethical principles. News workers in western contexts exhibit a stronger tendency to disapprove of a contextual and situational ethics. This attitude, however, also exists in non-western contexts, though less strongly. Chinese and Russian journalists, on the other hand, tend to be most open to situational ethical practices. Consistent with this result, interviewees in western contexts showed little support of the idea that journalists should be allowed to set their own individual ethical standards.

Similarities between journalists from western countries also exist with regard to idealism. Although journalists in all countries agreed on the view that questionable methods of reporting should be avoided, those working in western contexts appreciate this idea more than their colleagues in a developmental and transitional environment. Regarding the acceptance of harmful consequences of reporting for the sake of a greater public good, journalists in most western countries – but also their colleagues in Brazil, Indonesia, Mexico, Turkey and Uganda – tend to keep all options on the table. Journalists in Bulgaria, Chile, China, Egypt, Romania and Russia, on the other hand, exhibit a relatively strong normative orientation with regard to the acceptance of harmful consequences.

Figure 3 not only visualizes similarities between countries but also points to an abstract structure that underpins the configuration. There seems to be a distinction between individual vs. situational ethics on the vertical axis, and between a focus on means (of reporting) vs. their consequences on the horizontal axis. Journalists in Austria, Germany, Switzerland and the United States group together as they are most inclined to follow universal ethical rules and least willing to use questionable methods of reporting. Brazilian journalists are remarkably similar to their colleagues in these countries. Journalists in the developing and transitional

contexts of Bulgaria, Chile, China, Egypt, Indonesia, Romania and Russia seem to be more skeptical towards universal ethical principles and more attuned to the (potential) consequences of their reporting.

--- Figure 3 about here ---

The position of the countries in Figure 3 perfectly resembles the theoretical expectations of Forsyth's (1980: 176) model. On the right side of the map, a situational approach to ethical decisions is clearly distinguished from a subjectivist perspective. However, most countries are actually located in between the two poles. On the left side of Figure 3, there are journalistic cultures (Austria, Brazil, Germany, Switzerland and the United States) that fall within what Forsyth calls the "absolutist" paradigm, while other countries (Turkey and Uganda) show a stronger tendency to the "exceptionist" approach. Among the exceptionists are journalists who usually agree with the importance of universal moral rules but who are also utilitarian in that they remain pragmatically open to exceptions. Generally, it can be said that journalists in countries on the left side of the map usually follow universal rules of ethical-professional conduct, but in some countries they are more open to exceptions from these rules than in others. Journalists in countries on the right side of the map are more considerate of the potential consequences of their reporting, and their differences are related to the extent to which they opt for either a situational or a subjective approach to ethical dilemmas.

Conclusions

Several general patterns of global similarities and differences across journalism cultures emerged from comparative analysis: With respect to similarities, evidence points to the global primacy of role perceptions that are characterized by detachment and non-involvement. Being a watchdog of the government and, to a lesser extent, business elites, as well as providing political information do also belong to the functions of journalism that have universal appeal. In terms of the epistemological foundations of journalism, news workers in the investigated countries agree that personal beliefs and convictions should not be allowed to influence reporting. Reliability and factualness of information as well as the strict adherence to impartiality and neutrality belong to the highly esteemed professional standards of journalism around the globe. Furthermore, comparative evidence points to a relatively strong consensus regarding the adherence to universal principles that should be followed regardless of situation and context. Questionable methods of reporting should be generally avoided, even if this means not getting the story. These commonalities might be understood in terms of a general cultural understanding that is shared by most journalists around the world and that might well belong to a universal professional identity and ideology of journalists as suggested by several researchers (e.g. Deuze, 2005; Weaver, 1998).

Interventionist aspects of journalism, on the other hand, are much less universally supported by the interviewed journalists. The active promotion of particular values, ideas, groups and social change is generally not a characteristic of western journalistic cultures. Such a function, which can be placed in the context of the idea of "development journalism" (Wong, 2004, p. 26), is much more endorsed among journalists in developing societies and transitional contexts. Similarly controversial is the role of subjectivity, even though cross-national comparison did not reveal any consistent pattern. Especially the various aspects of objectivism seem to play out differently in the analyzed national contexts, lending further support to Donsbach and Klett's (1993) observation that the understanding of the objectivity norm is often idiosyncratic even to journalists working in different western contexts. The ideal of the separation of facts and opinion does also account for substantial differences between countries. Here, journalists in the United States exhibit a remarkable tendency to let personal eval-

uation and interpretation slip into the news coverage. This indicates, once again, the growing importance of interpretative elements in American journalism, a fact that resonates with findings from a recent study of US news people (Weaver et al., 2007). As a consequence, the United States might no longer be seen as the epitome of an "objective" journalism. Finally, in the area of professional ethics, non-western journalists tend to approve of the idea of contextual and situational ethical decision-making and the application of individual standards more than their colleagues in the West.

The findings of this study are of theoretical interest for the comparative analysis of journalism cultures, too. For one, our results corroborate expectations that interventionism and power distance substantially discriminate the journalists' perceptions of journalism's institutional roles on the systemic level. In the domain of epistemology, the division tracks along the role of subjectivity and analysis in reporting. Furthermore, in the area of ethical ideologies relativism and idealism have proved to be meaningful dimensions of diversity across countries. Here, the data reveals a division between two different aspects of the contextual pole of idealism: the distinction between journalists who favor a subjective reasoning about ethical dilemmas and those who prefer a situational approach.

Our conclusion is quite similar to Weaver's (1998, p. 478) analysis of surveys of journalists in more than 20 countries. The patterns of similarities and differences are not neatly classifiable along common political or cultural dimensions. However, there are general tendencies in terms of how countries group together: One cluster consists of countries which represent a broadly understood "western journalism culture." In our study, this group includes Austria, Australia, Germany, Spain, Switzerland the United States. Brazil, Bulgaria, Israel, Mexico and Romania form another group that could be described as "peripheral western" and that is composed of countries that are, in many ways, remarkably similar to the West. A third group largely consists of developing countries and transitional democracies, of which some tend to be non-democratic. This is the largest group and includes Chile, China, Egypt, Indonesia, Russia, Turkey and Uganda.

There are, however, a few important limitations that we would like to acknowledge: Originally planned as a pilot study, the individual country samples are rather small and may not warrant a perfect representation of the various national populations of journalists. This does not mean that the samples were insignificant. By holding many crucial factors nearly constant (distributions of media types, ownership, national vs. local media, and editorial ranks), the samples were extremely similar in terms of their internal structure, allowing for comparison of otherwise very different populations of journalists. Furthermore, even in a collaborative research project it is sometimes hard to escape from western ways of thinking that still dominate much of the journalism and communication literature. This might have introduced a certain cultural bias in the concepts and measures used in this study, rendering our conclusions somewhat self-fulfilling.

Another limitation is related to the epistemological status of survey responses. Hallin and Mancini (2004, p. 303) compellingly argue that differences in journalists' practices are actually larger than the differences in their survey responses suggest. Psychological research, on the other hand, has produced ample evidence suggesting that values and behavior are indeed substantially related (Bardi & Schwartz, 2003), yet the journalists' professional orientations may not fully correspond with their practices. Finally, much of the tacit knowledge and the preconceptions journalists have about their work are rooted in everyday experience that is often bound to the cultural context in which they were made. As such, they are often not transferable from one culture to another. In the course of our research we noted that the move away from culture-specific measurement to cross-cultural investigation often entails a substantially higher level of abstraction. As a consequence, many of our general conclusions were eventually pitched at rather abstract levels.

These shortcomings notwithstanding, an advantage of this study is that it shows the larger picture of journalism's diverse cultural manifestations from a relativistic point of view that does not champion any particular cultural perspective. Once journalism cultures are put into the cross-cultural context, differences turn out to be less clear-cut as common sense and previous evidence suggests. Seen through a cultural lens, these differences are more a matter of degree. While much of the variation in journalism's cultures still reflects the traditional distinction between the West and "the rest", there is often enough notable disagreement even among journalists from western countries. Among the contextual factors that seem to bear explanatory power is language, as the many similarities between Austrian, German and Swiss journalists indicate.

Future efforts need to go beyond description by modeling the differences in journalistic cultures and identify key factors that shape their hues. The results reported here provide first hints on potential candidates: Political factors may be especially pertinent to journalists' perceptions of media roles. Journalists who have to manage in a political climate that is relatively hostile to press freedom and democracy do exhibit smaller power distance. Media laws may also substantially shape the journalists' ethical views. We suspect that under the condition of legal uncertainty and weak jurisdiction, journalists need more flexibility in responding to ethical dilemmas, and they focus more on the potential consequences of their decisions. Other systemic factors might well pertain to all dimensions of journalism culture investigated in this project. Among them are the level of development, regional cultural similarities and historical (postcolonial) dependencies.

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[1] This study was funded by several institutions, including the German Research Foundation, Swiss National Science Foundation, Rothschild-Caesarea School of Communication at Tel Aviv University and School of Journalism and Communication at the University of Queensland.

[2] In every country, there exists a tacit consensus among journalists and media scholars regarding the media that shape the national political agenda. We selected those quality outlets which are commonly believed to have the greatest impact in this regard. For popular print media we selected the outlets with the highest circulation figures, while the selection of radio and TV stations was based on the ratings of their newscasts.

[3] This was especially true for local media. Here, we sampled media outlets produced in various parts of the countries: in urban centers and rural areas or, as in the case of Switzerland and Indonesia, in the regions inhabited by the major cultural populations.

[4] This was the case in Austria, Egypt and Uganda. Austria had no significant local TV station, so the number of national channels was increased. In the absence of local newspapers and private radio stations in Egypt, we decided to raise the number of national newspapers and state-owned radio channels, respectively. In Uganda, we increased the number of local radio stations to compensate for the lack of local TV stations; hence, the resulting sample also reflected the prominence of radio in the country.

[5] Calculated by one-way independent ANOVA.

[6] The program was developed by Adi Raveh and David Talby; it is freely available from http://www.cs.huji.ac.il/~davidt/vcoplot/index.html.

[7] Spearman's rank order correlation coefficient Rho: Australia: 0.719***, Austria 0.641***, Brazil 0.385***, Bulgaria 0.523***, Chile 0.341***, China 0.478***, Egypt 0.181(n.s.), Germany 0.589***, Indonesia 0.305**, Israel 0.377***, Mexico 0.671***, Romania 0.488***, Russia 0.423***, Spain 0.687***, Switzerland 0.589***, Turkey 0.214*, Uganda 0.271**, USA 0.617*** (*p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001).

[8] See http://freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=16.

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Table 1: Sampling scheme

Type of medium	Sublevel	National	Local	Total
Daily newspaper	quality: citizen-oriented	2 (10)	3 (15)	5 (25)
	popular: consumer-oriented	1 (5)	1 (5)	2 (10)
General interest weekly (magazine/newspaper)	quality: citizen-oriented	1 (5)	–	1 (5)
	popular: consumer-oriented	1 (5)	–	1 (5)
News agency		1 (5)	–	1 (5)
Television	state-owned/public	1 (5)	1 (5)	2 (10)
	private	3 (15)	1 (5)	4 (20)
Radio	state-owned/public	1 (5)	1 (5)	2 (10)
	private	1 (5)	1 (5)	2 (10)
Total		12 (60)	8 (40)	20 (100)

Cell entries contain following information: number of news organizations (number of journalists).

Table 2: Basic sample parameters

	Australia	Austria	Brazil	Bulgaria	Chile	China	Egypt	Germany	Indonesia	Israel	Mexico	Romania	Russia	Spain	Switzerland	Turkey	Uganda	USA	*Total*
Female journalists (%)	40	35	45	64	61	46	36	25	33	41	30	65	51	40	33	36	31	42	*42*
Age (Mean)	38	41	39	36	36	32	43	43	36	38	38	32	30	40	41	35	32	47	*38*
Graduated from college (%)	74	66	96	94	89	96	99	82	88	69	89	97	87	99	58	70	54	94	*86*
Worked as journalist (years, Mean)	15	17	17	12	12	9	20	16	10	13	15	8	9	17	15	12	8	23	*14*

Table 3: Institutional roles

	N	Mean	SD	Eta²
To provide citizens with the information they need to make political decisions	1781	4.38	.92	.088
To be an absolutely detached observer	1773	4.22	.96	.154
To act as watchdog of the government	1782	4.05	1.11	.120
To provide the audience with the information that is most interesting	1784	3.80	1.12	.205
To motivate people to participate in civic activity and political discussion	1772	3.76	1.11	.068
To act as watchdog of business elites	1767	3.47	1.29	.102
To concentrate mainly on news that will attract the widest possible audience	1781	3.37	1.12	.084
To advocate for social change	1749	3.37	1.23	.206
To influence public opinion	1767	3.23	1.27	.280
To set the political agenda	1767	2.94	1.17	.104
To support official policies to bring about prosperity and development	1758	2.70	1.33	.256
To convey a positive image of political and business leadership	1770	1.90	1.08	.164

Table 4: Epistemologies

	N	Mean	SD	Eta²
I make claims only if they are substantiated by hard evidence and reliable sources	1769	4.42	.83	.062
I do not allow my own beliefs and convictions to influence my reporting	1775	4.09	1.02	.037
I remain strictly impartial in my work	1774	4.08	.97	.076
I always stay away from information that cannot be verified	1779	3.97	1.18	.088
I think that facts speak for themselves	1772	3.90	1.04	.059
I provide analysis of events and issues in my work	1773	3.93	1.20	.317
I think that journalists can depict reality as it is	1762	3.62	1.17	.075
I always make clear which side in a dispute has the better position	1734	2.61	1.24	.168

Table 5: Ethical ideologies

	N	Mean	SD	Eta²
There are ethical principles which are so important that they should be followed by all journalists, regardless of situation and context	1784	4.43	.88	.115
Journalists should avoid questionable methods of reporting in any case, even if this means not getting the story	1758	3.83	1.16	.089
There are situations in which harm is justifiable if it results in a story that produces a greater good	1734	3.51	1.23	.124
What is ethical in journalism varies from one situation to another	1759	3.03	1.39	.116
Ethical dilemmas in news coverage are often so complex that journalists should be allowed to formulate their own individual codes of conduct	1755	2.87	1.33	.172
Reporting and publishing a story that can potentially harm others is always wrong, irrespective of the benefits to be gained	1750	2.76	1.34	.140

Figure 1: Position of countries regarding institutional roles, CoPlot, coefficient of alienation = .147, average of correlations = .769

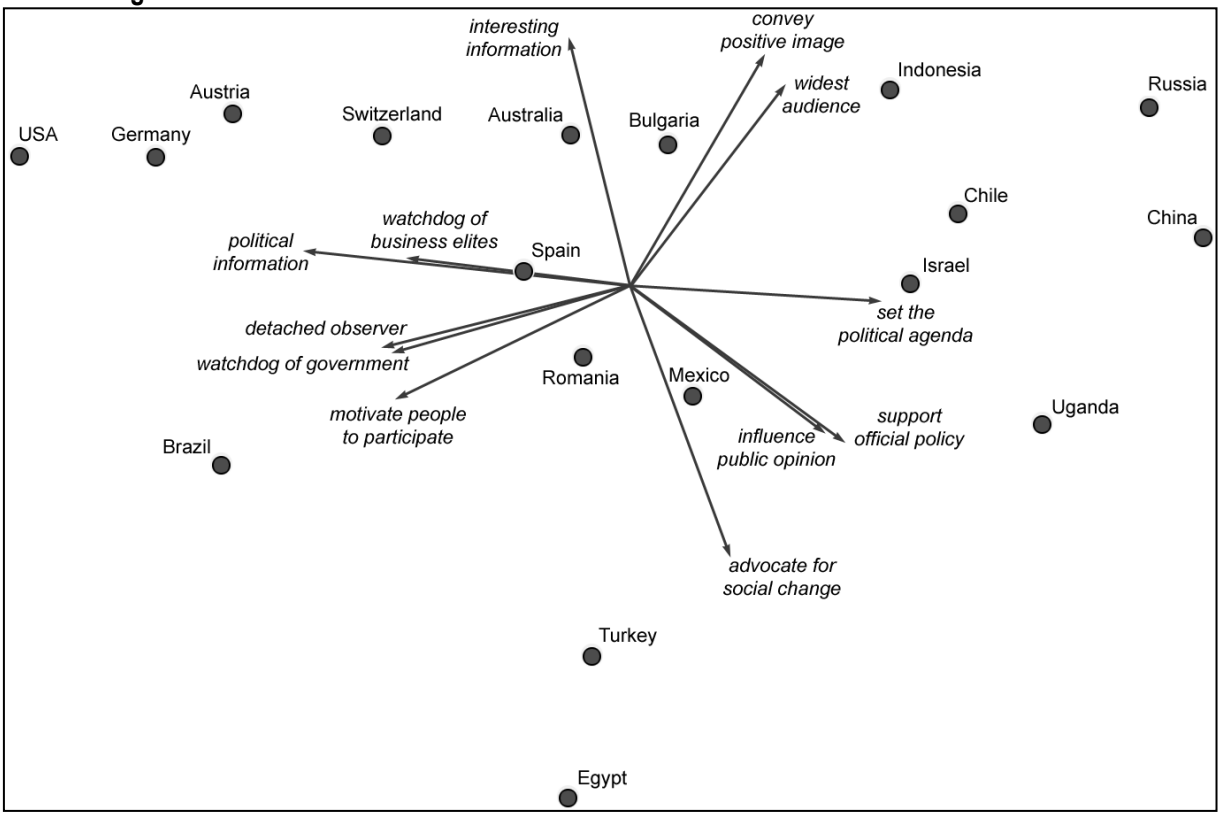


Figure 2: Position of countries regarding epistemologies, CoPlot, coefficient of alienation = .153, average of correlations = .780

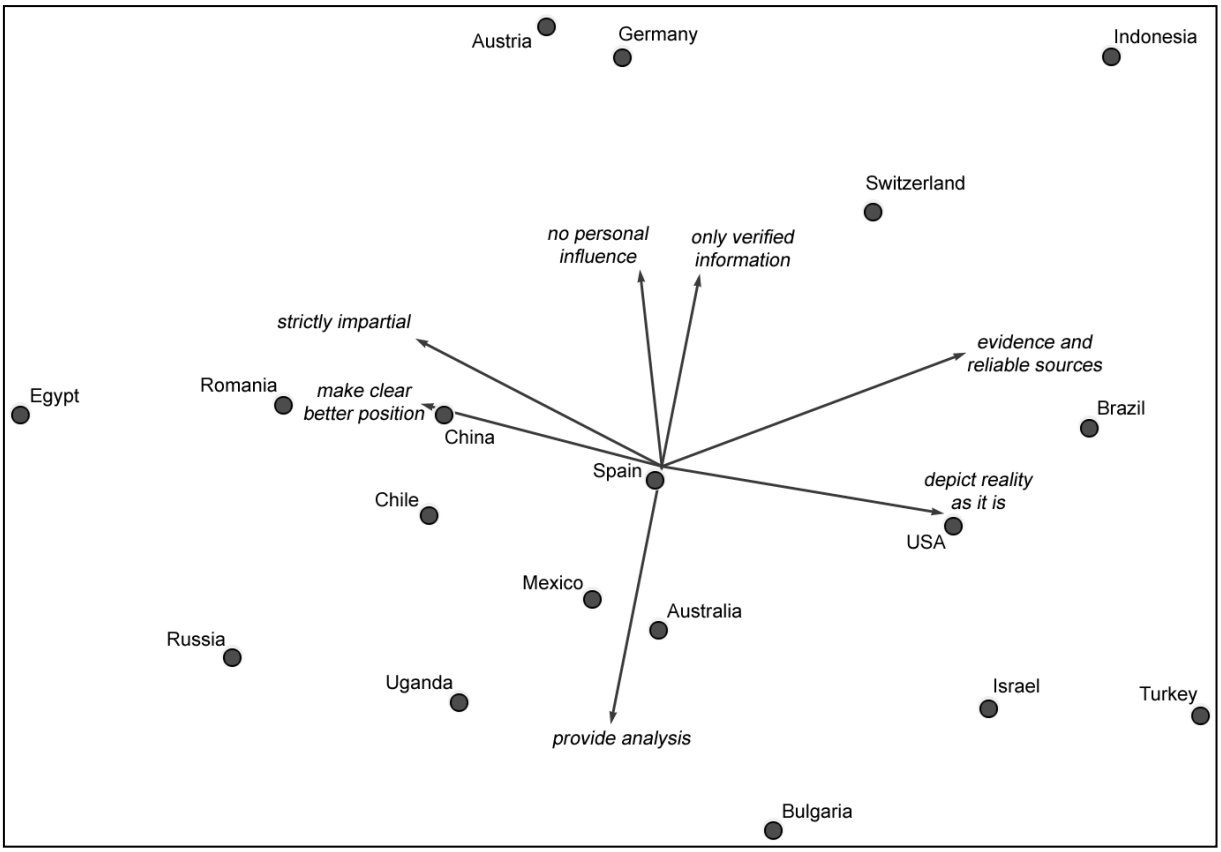
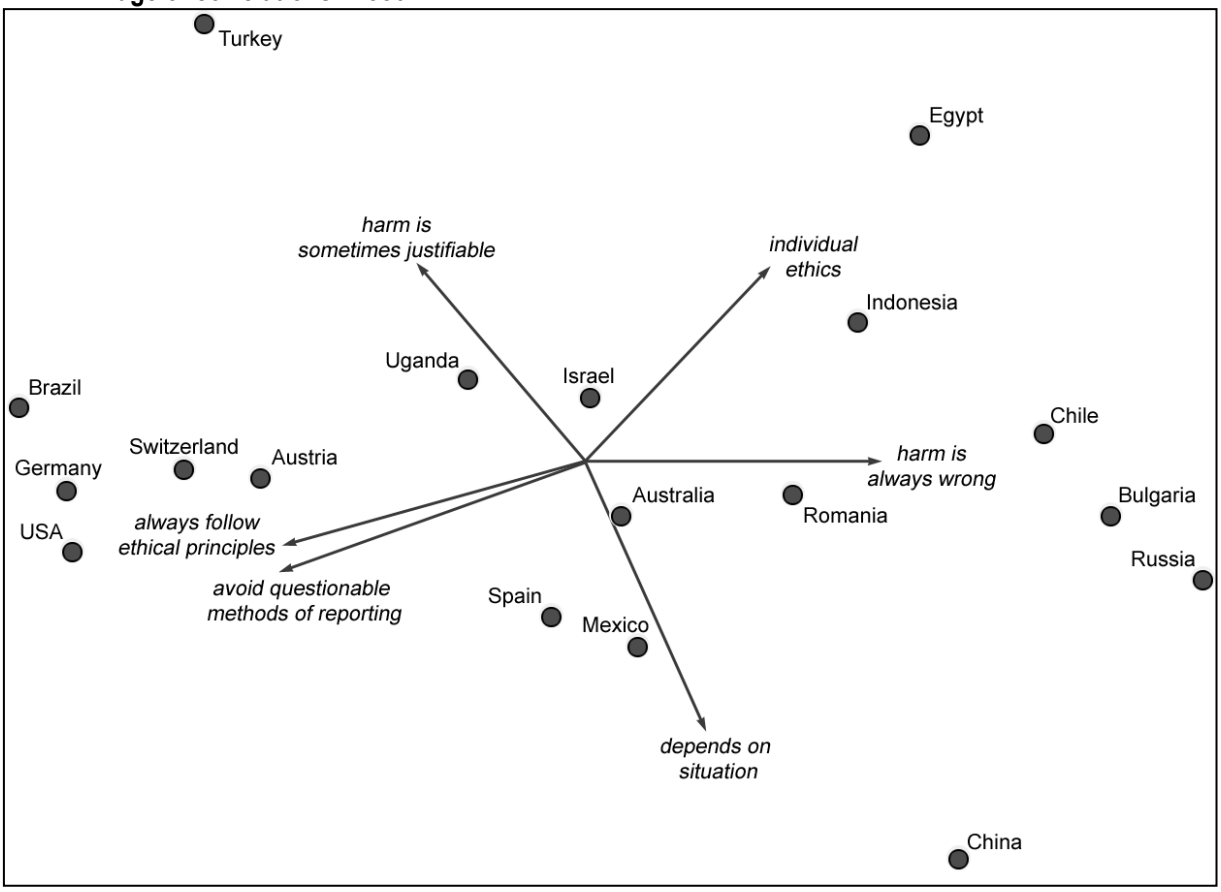


Figure 3: Position of countries regarding ethical ideologies, CoPlot, coefficient of alienation = .118, average of correlations = .856



APPENDIX 1: Journalism cultures across countries

	Australia	Austria	Brazil	Bulgaria	Chile	China	Egypt	Germany	Indonesia	Israel	Mexico	Romania	Russia	Spain	Switzerland	Turkey	Uganda	USA
Institutional Roles																		
Set the political agenda	-.51	-.76	-.74	-.54	-.21	-.46	-.68	-.54	-.34	-.13	-.43	-.33	-.12	-.95	-.48	-.18	-.39	-1.04
Influence public opinion	-.43	-1.06	-.80	.46	.42	.21	.74	-.73	-.11	.09	-.08	-.80	.26	-.46	-.88	.28	-.03	-.70
Advocate for social change	-.28	-.42	.11	-.35	-.26	.04	.64	-.75	.16	.13	.26	.20	-.33	-.07	-.51	.53	.40	-.61
Be absolutely detached observer	.62	1.40	1.04	.10	.73	.49	.95	1.21	.04	.49	.85	1.16	.59	1.09	1.16	.95	.17	1.11
Act as watchdog of government	.81	.82	1.06	.67	.29	.54	.93	.99	.53	.20	.27	.11	.20	.48	.46	.80	.58	1.28
Act as watchdog of business elites	.53	.24	-.11	-.09	.01	-.12	.34	.42	.10	-.53	-.14	-.59	-.39	-.02	.15	.32	-.33	.87
Support official policies to bring about prosperity	-.98	-1.53	-.21	-.92	-.28	.06	-.28	-1.70	-.84	-.61	-.52	-.43	-.70	-.46	-1.19	-1.36	.23	-1.37
Convey positive image of political and business leadership	-1.41	-1.32	-1.96	-1.70	-1.50	-1.02	-2.11	-1.66	-1.34	-1.77	-1.93	-1.52	-.62	-1.54	-1.23	-2.13	-1.12	-1.73
Concentrate on news that attract the widest audience	.00	-.07	-.65	.01	-.07	.24	-.07	-.08	.41	.15	-.24	-.20	.25	-.11	-.11	-.31	-.18	-.06
Provide interesting information	.50	.98	.46	.84	.38	-.12	-1.78	.80	.48	.86	.52	.88	.24	.85	.88	-.34	-.26	.41
Provide citizens with political information	.93	1.23	1.42	1.00	.47	.44	.83	1.47	.58	.90	.86	1.02	.63	.82	1.25	.86	.76	1.47
Motivate people to participate in civic activity	.24	.49	.35	.51	.00	-.30	.49	.57	.32	.22	.53	.50	.01	.37	.49	.58	.17	.36
Epistemologies																		
Journalists can depict reality as it is	-.12	-.50	.24	-.06	-.23	-.42	-.72	-.50	.33	-.11	-.20	-.21	-.62	-.22	-.29	.10	-.14	.00
Do not allow beliefs and convictions to influence reporting	.18	.42	.48	-.02	.44	.03	.20	.44	.43	.03	.26	.21	.37	.44	.37	-.04	.15	.27
Remain strictly impartial	.26	.46	.17	-.08	.39	.42	.41	.36	.12	-.06	.32	.46	.25	.32	.10	.14	.27	.18
Always make clear which side has better position	-1.37	-1.20	-1.55	-1.05	-.85	-1.22	-.51	-1.29	-.62	-1.50	-1.24	-.91	-.83	-1.45	-1.42	-2.15	-.90	-1.86
Make claims only if verified by evidence and reliable sources	.54	.81	.90	.54	.51	.48	.06	.95	.75	.80	.58	.17	.28	.53	.88	.77	.31	.83
Stay away from information that cannot be verified	-.17	.70	-.35	-.03	-.30	.36	.35	.63	.32	.25	-.36	.37	-.23	.11	.68	.41	-.38	.21
Facts speak for themselves	.17	.29	-.05	.35	-.10	.16	-.05	.21	.04	-.03	.14	-.03	-.10	-.23	.15	.12	.29	.07
Provide analysis of events and issues	.51	-.98	.16	.37	.14	.19	.26	-.82	-1.37	.62	.53	-.06	.89	.51	-.48	.66	.40	.30
Ethical ideologies																		
What is ethical depends on situation	.00	-.55	-.94	-.16	-.33	.48	-.99	-.67	-.14	-.06	-.27	-.32	.38	-.17	-.48	-1.44	-.49	-.52
Journalists may formulate their own codes of conduct	-.72	-.83	-1.01	.13	-.03	-.52	-.41	-1.17	.12	-.61	-.63	-.37	-.25	-.58	-1.06	.35	-.70	-1.30
Some ethical principles should be followed by all journalists	.67	1.21	1.73	.80	.42	1.09	.92	1.31	.49	.98	1.16	.86	.57	1.08	1.28	1.26	1.27	1.39
Reporting a story that can harm others is always wrong	-.73	-.97	-.93	-.21	-.16	-.24	.31	-1.08	-.86	-.91	-.45	-.46	-.20	-.78	-1.08	-1.21	-.66	-1.01
Questionable methods of reporting should always be avoided	.51	.85	.93	-.16	.22	.24	.12	.85	.14	.06	.54	.29	-.21	.71	.68	.63	.10	1.09
Some situations justify harm if the story produces a greater good	.27	.28	.22	-.40	-.12	-1.04	.06	.78	.26	.55	-.36	.00	-.31	-.26	.66	.41	.49	.35

Centered mean scores: values indicate the importance of the item in relation to the overall country mean across all items belonging to the same domain of journalism culture (institutional roles, epistemologies, ethical ideologies). Original scores ranges between 5 = "extremely important"/"strongly agree" and 1 = "not important at all"/"strongly disagree".