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## Journalistic roles and objectivity in Spanish and Swiss journalism. An applied model of analysis of journalism culture

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**Abstract:** This research has been carried out in order to analyse the different perceptions of the institutional roles and objectivity held by journalists from Spanish and Swiss quality newspapers. The journalistic cultures in these newspapers are examined using Hanitzsch's model (2007) and our own model of analysis. The qualitative study is based on interviews with journalists from *El Mundo* (Madrid, Spain) and *Neue Zürcher Zeitung (NZZ)* from Zurich (Switzerland). Results show that there the journalism cultures in Spain and Switzerland are basically different but share some similarities in the perception of the institutional roles and objectivity in news-making.

**Keywords:** objectivity; journalistic roles; journalism culture; *El Mundo*; *NZZ*.

**Summary:** 1. Introduction. 1.1. Theories of Journalism Culture. 1.2. Institutional roles and objectivity. 1.3. The context of journalism culture. 1.4. Our own model to analyse journalism culture. 2. Hypothesis. 3. Methodology and sample. 4. Results. 4.1. The institutional role. 4.2. Objectivity as ideal. 4.3. Objectivity as method. 4.4. Contextual factors. 5. Conclusions. 6. Bibliography.

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### 1. Introduction

Political journalists are important figures, not only in the media system, but also in the social and political systems (as transmitters of information). Therefore, they play a central role in the democratic processes (Deuze, 2002). This article analyses the different criteria of objectivity and the institutional roles among journalists in order to better understand their professional work and the information treatments they perform. In order to consistently study this journalism culture, we have designed a theoretic model of analysis, based on previous theoretical and practical developments in this area, and applied it to a sample of journalists. This is therefore a theoretical project that has been applied empirically to prove its efficiency. The empirical research, however, needs to be amplified in the future. This study can therefore be qualified as theoretical-empirical exploratory proposal.

By use of an empirical field-study, the present study attempts to outline certain characteristics that define the journalism culture within which journalist carry out their daily work and activities. According to Hanitzsch (2007), the analysis of the attitudes of journalists within one country is best achieved by comparing them to the journalistic attitudes existing in another country. Based on this suggestion, we decided to undertake a comparative analysis between two different nations.

Up until now, the majority of comparative studies on journalism culture across different countries have focused on Anglo-Saxon and Northern European countries. The comparison between European countries has been neglected, even though, as Hallin and Mancini (2004) point out, there are great differences and models of media coverage among the different countries of this continent. Thus, this study focuses on the analysis of the characteristics that identify the different journalistic attitudes of news professionals in two countries: Spain and Switzerland. Comparative studies on the journalistic attitudes in Spain and other nations are scarce. Some of the few studies were carried out by Hallin and Mancini (2004), Weaver (1998), and Hanitzsch, Berganza et al. (2009 and 2010) [1]. At the same time, the journalism culture of Switzerland has been poorly compared to other countries. Importantly, Switzerland is a country with strong political and social structures [2] that are very interesting to be compared to the young Spanish democracy.

Switzerland and Spain share, on the one hand, West European values that are the common ground of their journalism cultures, and on the other hand, show different journalism cultures, as Hallin and Mancini (2004) have shown. As some authors (like Kleinstauber, 2003; and Hanitzsch, 2007) point out, these similarities and differences are very interesting when comparing journalism cultures, since they permit integrating the perspectives of concordance and dissonance.

The influence of the so called "quality media" (*leitmedien*) in these two countries is clear due to their strong position within the information systems, and their influence on the public opinion about current affairs (Jarren and Vogel, 2008). This study has chosen two quality newspapers equally situated within the media systems of both countries: *Neue Zürcher Zeitung (NZZ)* [3] with headquarters in Zurich (Switzerland) and *El Mundo* [4] with headquarters in Madrid (Spain).

This selection has been based upon the similar political and social orientation of both newspapers within the media system of their respective countries. In economic and political terms, *El Mundo* supports a liberal right-winged position and considers itself to be an “explicit opinion newspaper” (Canel, 1999). In its origins the *NZZ* newspaper was created as a propaganda medium for the liberal right-wing political party (*FDP*) [5]. Nowadays the *NZZ* is institutionally independent, but maintains political proximity to its founding party (Meier, 2004). *NZZ* is known for its politically liberal orientation towards right-winged opinions on civil rights (Maissen, 2005).

### 1.1. Theories of journalism culture

Journalism culture has been defined from different points of views depending on the scientific discipline that has analysed it. According to authors like Hofstede (1980), this concept is over the frontier line formed by the different national cultures. For Williams (1958), however, its definition is as wide as the definition of culture, understood as a way of life.

In this study the notion of journalism culture is understood as Hanitzsch (2007) defined it: “as a particular set of ideas and practices by which journalists, consciously and unconsciously, legitimate their role in society and render their work meaningful for themselves and others” (Hanitzsch 2007). From this definition one can conclude that the attitudes of journalists are deeply rooted within a journalism culture that contains common values and traditions.

For Hanitzsch journalism culture contains the total of main orientations (values, attitudes and beliefs), practices and artefacts (cultural products and texts) that are present in the work of the news professionals. The author developed a system of empirical analysis for journalism culture based on different dimensions. The current study uses this system to compare the journalistic attitudes of the Spanish and Swiss journalists.

Hanitzsch (2007) situates the identity and personality of a journalist at the centre of the analysis of journalism culture and indicates that therefore the links connecting journalism with the cultural context need to be investigated too. However, as Esser (2004) explains, these different cultures cannot be understood as unities of homogenous values. They are rather hybrids between traditional national elements link to international elements that interact dynamically with each other.

The concept of journalism culture used by Hanitzsch (2007) integrates the idea of “journalism culture” coined by Donsbach and Patterson (2003); the so-called “news culture” of Heinderyckx (1993); and what Esser (2004) calls “professional culture”.

This study is based on Hanitzsch’s (2007) assertion that the theoretical construction of a journalism culture is complex and that therefore its analysis should start from the representation of different institutional manifestations in different stages creating three dimensions of analysis: institutional roles, epistemology, and ethical ideology. He further divides the first dimension into three more dimensions and the other two into two dimensions each. These seven dimensions do not form a continuum but are distinct points of analysis.

Four of the seven dimensions have been chosen to be analysed in this study [6]. Thus, the study includes the analysis of journalists’ institutional roles, in their three dimensions, as well as the concept of institutional objectivity they manifest.

The institutional roles are at the centre of this study as they refer to the way journalists do their work and their functions in society. These functions are understood as the different visions hold by journalists about their institutional role.

The second element, the epistemology, is concerned with the philosophical foundation of journalism that is instrumental in the news-making process. Based on epistemological considerations, journalists wonder whether the news can offer an objective and value-free account of the truth (Anderson and Baym 2004). Therefore, Hanitzsch divided this second element into two dimensions: objectivism and empiricism. Objectivism refers to the idea of objectivity as a real possibility and is divided into “subjectivism”, which is the belief that all news is selective and everyone perceives reality only based on judgments, and “correspondence”, which is the belief that assumes a correspondence between what is said about reality and what really exists. This study will not address the dimension of Empiricism nor the third element, the ethical ideologies and its respective dimensions, relativism and idealism.

Graph 1: Hanitzsch’s dimensions of analysis. Source: Author’s creation.

<b>INSTITUTIONAL ROLES</b>	
	Interventionism
	Power distance
	Market orientation
<b>EPISTEMOLOGIES</b>	
	Objectivism
	Empiricism
<b>ETHICAL IDEOLOGIES</b>	
	Relativism
	Idealism

### 1.2. Institutional roles and objectivity

Within each country, there are different dimensions/factors which define and differentiate journalists’ image of their own role in the media. For Donsbach and Patterson (2003), the institutional journalistic roles are understood and interpreted in different ways, depending on the cultural context. These can be seen in the different ways journalists perceive their institutional role in different countries. Therefore, Donsbach and Patterson developed two different dimensions to examine the institutional roles. On one hand they differentiate between active and passive journalists. On the other hand they consider journalists’ self-perception as political actors. Finally they distinguish between neutral and advocate journalists.

Donsbach and Patterson's categorization is the basis for Hanitzsch's (2007) three dimensions of the roles practiced by journalists at the institutional level. In this way he distinguishes between the dimensions of *Interventionism*, *Power Distance* and the *Market Orientation*. Following this classification, interventionism describes the extent to what the personal judgements and values of journalists come into play in their work. Using this dimension one can distinguish between the "passive" and "interventionist" or "active" journalists. The interventionist pole corresponds to the advocate journalists which get emotionally involved. On the other side is the passive pole that refers to those journalists who keep an institutional distance and are committed to objectivity and impartiality.

The second dimension, the *Power Distance*, describes the journalists' position towards the centre of power within society. Journalists accept the role of the "adversary" when they openly oppose the established power system and function as the "fourth estate" or a countervailing force of democracy. On the other hand, there are the so-called "loyal" journalists, which support the established authorities and centres of power. The last dimension, the *Market Orientation*, is present in journalism culture when it subordinates its goals to the logic of the market to the detriment of the public interests. This indicates that the journalists can distinguish their publics into "consumers" or "citizens".

After the institutional roles, objectivity is the second element of journalism culture that this study has chosen to address. Journalist's understanding of objectivity and the definition of their own roles (often these two concepts are combined) play an important role in the treatment of political information. In some journalism cultures the idea that political positioning and partial statements are to be avoided under any circumstances is deeply rooted. These notions are closely linked to the idea of the objective journalism and media. Personal opinions and treatments made under the notion of objectivity depend on journalists' cultural context and their understanding or idea of the institutional roles (Donsbach and Klett, 1993)

The debate about the concept of objectivity not only takes place among media scholars and journalists, but is also discussed within different areas of philosophy (Lichtenberg, 1996). Following Lichtenberg, we can distinguish between two fundamentally different ways of contemplating the notion of objectivity: as a philosophical ideal and as a journalistic method.

Based on the perspective of objectivity as ideal, in general, objectivity can be considered the first goal of news coverage within journalism cultures in western democracies, despite their cultural differences (Donsbach and Patterson, 2003). However, not everyone supports the conception of objectivity as supreme a value within journalism. Objectivity is seen as a fundamental principle to represent reality and truth and for this to occur, all opinions and positions involved in a political issue must be represented. This means that in order to get close to an objective reality journalists must consider the largest possible number of subjective declarations (Weischenberg, 1995). As Lichtenberg (1996) indicates, this point of view defines those who represent the philosophical branch of realism since they always describe the existing reality, based on the precise and objective representation of what is "out there".

Opposing this view, other critics favour the opinion, because according to them being objective is almost impossible, undesirable and even unachievable (Donsbach and Klett, 1993). These arguments question under a critical constructivist perspective the existence of an objective and absolute truth (Hanitzsch, 2007). Those who represent this point of view can be considered idealists, as they are convinced that the world can only be considered from an independent point of view and under a certain perspective: "The world is our construction in the sense that we inevitably describe it through our concepts and categories" (Lichtenberg, 1996).

Hanitzsch (2007) considers this duality of the concept of objectivity and the objective truth of human knowledge, which is based upon its accessibility. Therefore one of the dimensions he describes in his concept for journalism culture is *objectivism*. He affirms the existence of two different poles: correspondence, where journalists believe in the possibility of being able to represent reality (mirror effect) and subjectivity, where news professionals consider that the information is always linked to interpretations and subjective aspects.

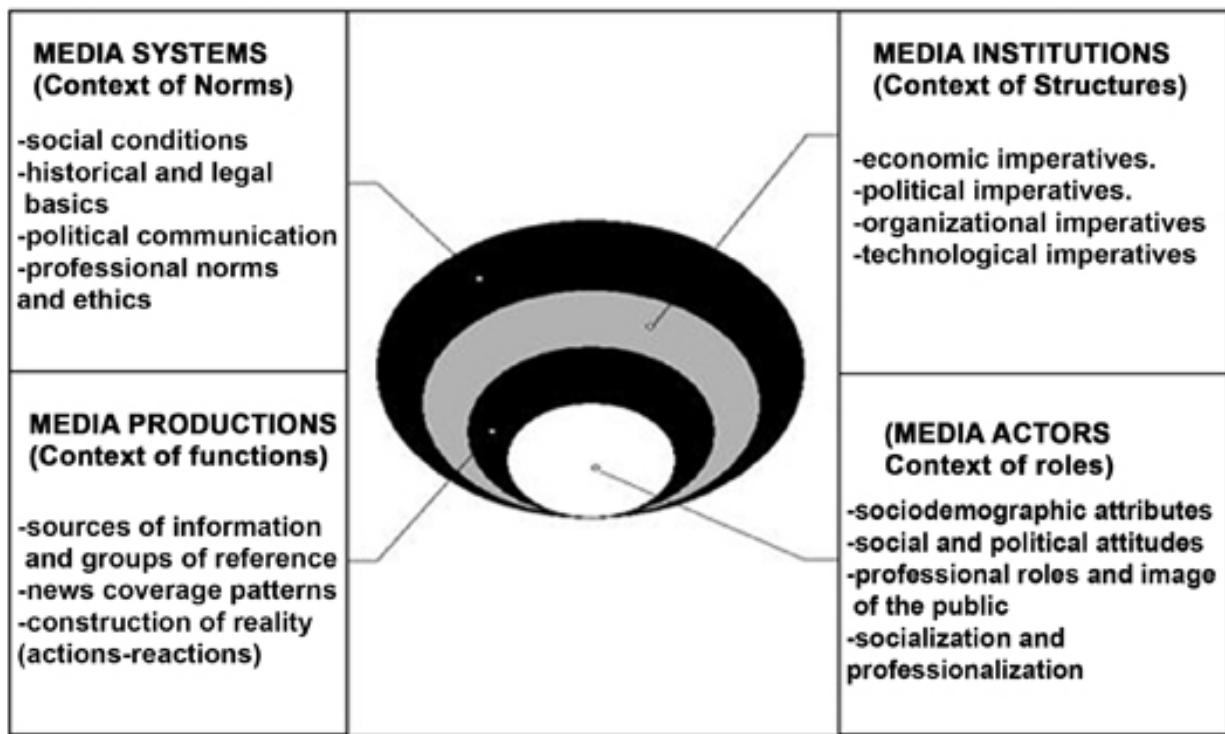
The second perspective of the concept of objectivity is based on the method and the journalistic work model. In the 1920s, objectivity appeared as a method within journalism. This concept was created with a general character within the journalistic world as a method to ensure journalists' security and capacity to exercise the profession (Streckfuss, 1990). Tuchman proposes five work strategies to achieve objectivity: presentation of different points of view; presentation of supporting evidence; the judicious use of quotation marks; structuring information in an appropriate sequence; separation of opinions and facts (Tuchman 1978, cited in Weischenberg 1992).

The view of objectivity as a useful method in the news-making process is the least conflictive aspect of the concept. This article will analyse this point, as the objective is to clarify the importance of objectivity within journalists' methodological processes. The article will also analyse how journalists understand objectivity as an ideal, and how important is it for them as a method. This analysis will be based on Hanitzsch's (2007) dimension of *Objectivism*.

### 1.3. The context of journalism culture

Journalism culture cannot be contemplated apart from the institutional roles and objectivity. Even though this study's perspective focuses on the journalist as actor, the other levels of analysis that can decisively affect journalists' institutional actions cannot be disregarded. The figure of the journalist as actor within the media can be analysed as the central point of a circular whole. Weischenberg (1995) describes the media system through the "onion model". He uses the metaphor of the onion to illustrate that the exterior layers encircle the interior like the layers of an onion. The outermost layer is constituted by the normative media system. The following layer is formed by the structural context, i.e. the institutions that have been formed around the media. This layer contains the political, economic and organizational powers which influence the media. The third layer describes the functional context that contains the results and effects of journalism upon the other systems. In the centre of the model are the actors of the news-making process. Even though they can act autonomously they are in the centre of the informational processes that influence their actions (Weischenberg, 1995). The "onion model" and its four layers are represented in the following picture:

Graph 2: Weischenberg's Onion Model. Source: Authors' creation based on Weischenberg's model.



This representation shows how widely the context influences journalists and their actions. Importantly, it must be noted that not all factors represented in the graphic have the same influence. Nevertheless they need to be considered when analysing journalists' attitudes towards their institutional roles and notion of objectivity.

Hallin and Mancini (2004) work with four dimensions, all situated within the media system level in the context of norms of Weischenberg's model. The first dimension is the "market structure" of the media and the press system developed in a given country. This includes not only the media consumption in a country, but also the relationship of the press with its audience and the social and political communication process. This dimension reflects also other factors, like the clear separation between tabloid journalism and quality journalism. Following these authors, the structure of the media landscape of a country can influence the media and thereby also journalists' views of their institutional roles. Depending on the social, political or economic structure, journalists can for example perceive whether they write for an elite audience or not, or the level of the newspaper they work for.

The second dimension proposed by Hallin and Mancini (2004) revolves around the relationship between journalism and politics. These authors describe the different connections that can exist between the protagonists of politics and the media, which explain how in some countries the media show certain political orientations and a clear influence on the politic actors. All these factors can decisively influence how objectivity and institutional roles are conceived within a media organization. When there is serious political proximity, Hallin and Mancini (2004) talk about a "political parallelism", which is directly oriented or influenced by politics.

Institutionalization constitutes the third dimension. The authors define the concept of institutionalization within journalism not only as the achievement of university degrees but as something more complex that includes journalistic autonomy, institutional norms, different orientations towards the audience, etc. On the complete opposite, the authors also use the concepts of political and economic instrumentalisation of the media, which in their opinion seriously damage the institutionalism (Hallin and Mancini 2004).

The last dimension is focused on the defining role of the state, which influences the society and media in each country in a different way. This dimension is useful to analyse the state intervention and its influence on the media.

This study concentrates on these four dimensions when analysing journalism culture and its contexts in the two countries under investigation. The contextual analysis will be explicitly presented, and will be as accurate as possible in the interpretation of the qualitative results.

#### 1.4. Our own model to analyse journalism culture

Based on the structure of over layered levels of the previous models we have created our own model, which consists of three different levels: the level of the System, the level of the Institution and the level of the Actor. This model represents the context-factors (influences, forces, structures) that influence the journalistic work. The media system of each country will be analysed on the level of the System, starting from their origins, evolution, constitution, and influence on the entire news-making process. We have already shown how the factors that influence the level of the System are used by Hallin and Mancini (2004) at the moment of performing the comparative analysis of the journalism culture in two countries.

On the level of the Institution the study focuses on the media. The analysis of this level will be based on the factors established by Esser's (2004) model [7].

The level of the Actor is the central object of this study, since it is the one that describes the journalists on an individual level and shows the extent to what the contextual factors exercise influence on the journalist.

The representation of these levels is performed in an interrelated manner. The outer layers exercise an influence on the

interior layers at all moments. In this way, the levels of the System and Institution will influence directly the actions of the journalists through the norms they impose upon them. The relations between the three levels are represented through the yellow arrows in graph 3.

Esser's (1998) observation of journalists' influence upon the exterior levels is not being considered in this model, as this study focuses on the interior level: the level of the Actor. Our model is represented, just like Weischenberg's onion model, through three circles that represent the different levels of the context. In the centre we placed the level of the Actor, where we represent the journalism culture and its two dimensions of analysis which are at the centre of this study.

Graph 3: Representation of the structure by levels. Source: Authors' creation



## 2. Hypothesis

As mentioned earlier, the principal objective of this investigation is to compare the concepts of objectivity (as working method and philosophical value) and the ideas of institutional roles held by journalists working in quality media in Spain and Switzerland.

The first research questions are therefore: What institutional roles do journalists working for quality newspapers in Spain and Switzerland believe they are performing? What are the causes or motives to believe that? Our hypothesis considers the results obtained by Canel and Piqué (1998) and thus expects to find in Spain a difference in the perception of the institutional roles between the younger and the older journalists, because they have learned their profession under different social and political circumstances.

On the other hand, the study will attempt to confirm or reject the idea that Swiss journalists perceive themselves as mere objective transmitters and passive mediators between the public and the information system. Meanwhile, the study expects to find in Spain a greater loyalty of the media to the political power centre and therefore a stronger Interventionism. These last two hypotheses can be deduced from the different classifications of the information systems in which Hallin and Mancini (2004) situate Spain and Switzerland.

The second research question, raised from a more philosophical viewpoint, is: How do journalists understand objectivity as an ideal? We assume that the concept of objectivity as ideal could be recognized as a fundamental value in both democracies. We understand, however, that the idea of objectivity could be perceived in different ways. Following Hallin and Mancini's (2004) models, we supposed that objectivity could be accepted as ideal in Spain's journalistic reality, but also be considered to be unachievable. In this way it could be imagined that Spanish journalism is more subjective than Swiss journalism. In Switzerland the ideal of objectivity could be observed as more accessible, as it becomes a goal within daily journalistic work.

The third research question tries to solve the following problem: As how important do journalists consider objectivity as a method? This could be answered from the responses to the second research question. However, it should also be questioned whether objectivity as a method in the everyday work in the news rooms could have a smaller consideration in Spain than in Switzerland.

## 3. Methodology and sample

The qualitative methodology chosen for the elaboration of this comparative study is oral in-depth-interviews with a

series of journalists. This type of qualitative interviews allows the in-depth examination of the motivations of the interviewees (De Miguel 2005, Lamnek, 2005). We also followed the methodological tendencies elaborated in this area in the last years in Spain [8]. We believe also that use of this qualitative methodology will add to the social analysis and understanding of the multidimensionality of the social reality within the journalistic world (Delgado and Gutierrez, 1998). Qualitative interviews are composed by open questions which are less structured than in quantitative interviews. In qualitative research the interviewer ask precise questions about a topic but does not give the interviewee instructions on how to answer them (De Miguel 2005; Schnell, Hill and Esser, 1999). This implies that the interviewee has the possibility to respond freely, following his or her own ideas, and that interview can be adapted to the cultural context in which it takes place (Glaser and Laudel, 2004). At the same time, a qualitative oral in-depth interview demands the spontaneous valorisation of each answer in order to adapt the following questions accordingly (De Miguel 2005; Schnell, Hill and Esser, 1999). Finally this type of interviews allow to obtain deeper insights into the thoughts and reflections of the interviewee (Alonso, 1994)

The disadvantage of the qualitative interviews is the low comparative capacity of their results, even though, as Schnell, Hill and Esser (1999) point out, this can be eliminated by detailed and precise research about the topic. This research and a well-structured questionnaire can assure that during the interviews all the relevant topics are treated equally (Scholl, 2003). Through this methodology we achieve great advantages for our investigation: We can adapt the qualitative interviews to the context of the journalism culture and we are able to delve into the responses we get.

In order to answer the research questions we decided to interview 10 journalists from Spain and 10 from Switzerland [9]. All of them belonged to quality newspapers, which are published nationwide and share a similar position within their media systems. As mentioned before, we chose the Spanish newspaper *El Mundo* and the Swiss newspaper *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* (NZZ) with headquarters in Zurich. The chosen journalists were in similar situations concerning their professional level within the newspapers, so they can be compared to each other. They were active and responsible for the political news coverage either internationally, nationally or locally. These are fundamental factors when it comes to comparing the ideas of objectivity, the understanding of institutional roles and showing the principal relationships that exist within the network of national politics.

Graph 4. Representation of the chosen cases. Source: Authors' creation

	Switzerland	Spain
<b>Section</b>		
National (Switzerland / National)		
Local (Zürich and Region / M2)	5	2
Editorial	5	4
Investigative journalist		2
		1
<b>Sex</b>		
Female	4	2
Male	6	7
<b>Age</b>		
Less than 35 years		
Between 35 and 44 years	4	4
Between 45 and 54 years	1	2
Between 55 and 65 years	5	2
		1
<b>Education</b>		
Vocational School or mid-level education		
University degree (other fields)	1	1
University degree (Journalism)	8	8
	1	
<b>Total of interviewed journalists</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>9</b>

#### 4. Results

The results have been structured according to the principal concepts in this study: the conceptions of the institutional roles and objectivity among journalists.

##### 4.1. The institutional role

For the journalists of *El Mundo*, the institutional role of the "transmitter" of information is the most important. In this case, half of the interviewed journalists talk about the necessity of joining the role of the "transmitter" and reporter to the role of the "watchdog".

The NZZ journalists responded in a more general way when asked about their personal perception of their institutional role within the editorial office. Only one answered precisely and said he exercised an active and interventionist journalistic role. A majority (six) referred to their function as transmitters of information. However, this transmission of information is not disconnected from interpretation and opinions, as the interviewed journalists understand their work as something more than the simple reproduction of information.

a) Interventionism: Regarding the first dimension established by Hanitzsch (2007), the *interventionism*, the results show a certain aversion towards the concepts of the "advocate" and the "missionary" as journalistic roles. There were

opposite answers among the Swiss and Spanish journalists. In Switzerland seven journalists of the *NZZ* affirm that they always got involved into the topics they addressed, but kept enough distance to not be influenced by emotions or sensations during the information process. In this way it can be established that for the Swiss journalists the necessity to inform is the most important. For the Spanish journalists the possible influences of journalism on politics is much more important than for the Swiss journalists.

b) *Power Distance*: The *Power Distance* connects the journalistic activity with the political activity. In Spain close relationships exist between the political lobbies and the journalists. This seems to be a necessity because otherwise the journalists would be kept outside of the flow of information. Seven Spanish journalists affirmed to have very close relationships or even friendships with relevant politicians. In Switzerland the journalists emphasized much more their independence towards the government and the political lobbies. Only one journalist admitted that he used the "per Du" (the informal personal address) with top politicians.

c) *Market Orientation*. In Spain different opinions have been found regarding the dimension *Market Orientation*. Two journalists confirmed categorically their vision of the reader as citizen (not as simple consumers of information). In this way they conceive the information to have the primary function of helping the readers to participate in the political processes and decisions. On the other side of the scale are to be situated the majority of the persons interviewed, as they see the readers mainly as consumers. These journalists support the realization of market research so they can get to know the profile of their audience. Additionally they are aware of the fact that their newspaper is usually bought by its readers every day at the kiosk. The direct democracy seems to have a greater political weight in Switzerland. In fact, six journalists referred to it when answering the question concerning market orientation. They accentuated that the media in general and the *NZZ* in particular should invite citizens to participate actively in the political life of the country. So it can be stated that the image the journalists of the *NZZ* have of their readers is primarily one of citizens.

#### 4.2. Objectivity as ideal

The Spanish journalists who have been interviewed were quite sceptic towards the concept of objectivity in journalism. All of them stated primarily that absolute objectivity does not exist and that in its place a "subjective truth" exists for each journalist. They also position themselves between objectivity and subjectivity, as they say that one has to try to be as objective as possible. The Spanish interviewees understand objectivity, on a general level, more as a goal that shows the direction to take, as "a lighthouse in the distance". They worry more about the aspects of their daily work and give less the importance to this issue, which they consider to be too philosophical.

The Swiss journalists held quite evenly distributed opinions on the dimension of objectivity, although they avoided situating themselves in the extreme of total correspondence, as nobody affirmed that reality could be copied in the media as if it were a mirror. In the first group are six journalists, who affirmed that objectivity does not exist, even though it could be seen as a desirable goal. The second group was situated closer to the pole of subjectivity and included the journalists who insisted on their individual subjectivity by arguing that they select the news, make the commentaries, and present personal arguments. This second group of *NZZ*-journalists understands objectivity more like an "individual subjectivity" in which everything depends upon the individual perspective.

#### 4.3. Objectivity as method

The majority of journalists mentioned that the lack of time to do their work was the great enemy of the objectivity as method. When we asked journalists about objectivity as method we explained that we specifically referred to the use of the five strategies mentioned by Tuchman (1998), and thus asked different questions about each strategy.

The first strategy is the "presentation of opposite points of view". Some of the factors which impede this strategy are "time pressure", "inaccessible sources", who do not want to give statements, the media editorial guidelines, etc. This strategy is for six of the nine Spanish journalists the most important method to reach objectivity. However they also mentioned that there are different factors which impede in many cases the comparison of opposite views obtained from various sources. There are two different points of view among the Swiss journalists concerning this strategy: Some think that before they can start writing about a topic they need to obtain all the different points of view first, and some others believe that it is not always necessary to "represent all the opinions" about a subject.

The second strategy of Tuchman (1998), the "Presentation of supporting evidence", is concerned with the presentation of facts and the necessary truthfulness of the journalists towards them. The Spanish journalists maintain an open attitude towards this subject. Two of them are convinced that they would not publish a news item without confirming it. Others said that this depended upon how much they trust their sources. On the other hand, the journalists of the *NZZ* maintained a critical position. Only one journalist answered that it is impossible for her to publish rumours and speculations. However, the majority is conscious that "often there are rumours and assumptions behind the journalistic work".

The third strategy of Tuchman (1998) is concerned with the "judicious use of quotation marks". The Spanish journalists have different opinions about this subject. Two of them indicated that they would not publish a news item without mentioning the sources. However, five Spanish journalists said they would publish information without citing the source in order to protect the source. Among the Swiss journalists five are convinced that all declarations need to be clearly attributed to a source. There are however two who admitted that it is not always possible to strictly indicate all the sources. There could be exceptions if the source has to be protected but in this case the reason for this protection should be clarified.

The fourth strategy of Tuchman (1998), "Structuring information in an appropriate sequence" refers to the classic news structure according to "inverted pyramid" model. None of the Spanish journalists defended the inverted pyramid as a medium that facilitates objective news coverage. The opinions of the journalists of the *NZZ* can be separated in two equal groups. Five declared that they based their work on this principle, although not strictly. The other five refused the news structure of the inverted pyramid because they believed that the news items should be contemplated in their entirety and that there is no reason to structure them in a way so that their narration can start from the end.

The fifth strategy of Tuchman (1998), the "separation of opinion and facts", is achieved at a formal level in the Spanish

journalism in general and in particular in the editorial of *El Mundo*. On a personal level the journalists affirmed that they believe they should try to avoid including their own opinions within the news items. However, they recognized that at certain occasions this separation cannot be achieved. In the Swiss journalism opinions and facts are clearly differentiated. This is even more so in the newspaper *NZZ*, as this difference is reflected in the typography of the newspaper: the editorials are printed in larger fonts than news articles. The majority of the journalists, 8 to be exact, believe the audience of the *NZZ* would prefer that the newspaper expressed its opinions also within the news articles.

#### 4.4. Contextual factors

In the following section we will compare the results with the theoretic concepts formulated in the introduction. The first objective is to answer the research questions on the different context levels: The level of the System, the level of the Institution and the level of the Actor. In this way the results can be interpreted within a precise contextual frame. First of all we will answer the first research question: What institutional roles are perceived by the journalists working for quality newspapers in Spain and Switzerland? What are the causes or motives behind these roles? Afterwards we will consider the second research question: How do journalists understand objectivity as an ideal? Finally we will respond the third research question: As how important do journalists consider objectivity as a method?

##### a) Institutional roles and context factors

After the analysis of the results obtained from the interviewed journalists, we can state that it is not possible to establish the institutional role exercised within one concrete and precise role. Among the Swiss journalists there is a certain tendency towards the analytical informative journalism. In Spain the transmission of information is considered to be the most important function in the news profession. However, this communicating role is linked in many cases to the "watchdog" role, which concentrates on the control of the political powers; which sometimes leads journalists to exercise opinion journalism instead of informative journalism.

This could be justified by the influence of the media market on the level of the System. While the competition of the free daily newspapers and online newspapers grows increasingly, the traditional print newspapers have to offer something more than simple information. On the level of the System we also found that the Spanish journalists are more critical and pay more attention to any changes or negative situations due to the recent past and the history of the country. The Swiss journalists have lived their entire lives within a much more stable political structure, so the importance of neutrality within the country encourages journalists to be more objective and to maintain the distance towards any type of power centre.

The long tradition of the *NZZ* as a quality newspaper in Switzerland indicates that in the level of the Institution it will let its journalists to play any interventionist roles. Within the *NZZ* journalists are encouraged to maintain the distance when they investigate a topic rather than to act as an advocate or judge for a certain cause. *El Mundo* has another tradition, which is based on the journalism of investigation. Throughout its history the newspaper has already won several battles through its interventionist style.

It can be concluded that it is difficult to integrate all the different characteristics shown by the news professionals within one precise institutional role.

##### b) Objectivity as ideal and context factors

The obtained results about the perception of the concept of objectivity as ideal have to be gradated. Neither the Swiss nor the Spanish journalists reject the concept easily. However, the Spanish journalists situated on a higher hierarchical level tend to reject objectivity as the ultimate goal within journalism.

Within the level of the System, the results show, on one hand, that the Spanish journalists oppose a type of journalism based on the clear differentiation between opinion and information. On the other hand, the journalists of the *NZZ* attach great importance to the value of neutrality, but show also certain scepticism towards the idea of objectivity as ultimate, desirable aim.

On the level of the Institution it can be established that within the *NZZ* objectivity is being considered as a criteria for quality that can serve to protect those who exercise the profession from being criticised for being "too partial". In doing so the *NZZ* could be defined as "independent" within the political and economic landscape of Switzerland. *El Mundo* is characterized by its style of investigative journalism. The journalists of this newspaper do not contemplate the concept of objectivity as ideal in their daily work. They think it is desirable to orientate their work towards a journalism of investigation, which "advocate" certain causes and therefore is inclined towards judgments and opinions.

On the level of the Actor the concept of objectivity seems to be linked to the education of journalists. The majority of the Spanish journalists finished their university studies in journalism, which implies a theoretical education about the concept of objectivity and the debate around it. Most Swiss journalists, however, have university education but only one has majored in journalism [10], which means that most Swiss journalists have learnt about the concept of objectivity along the process of socialization in the day to day work within the editorial office.

Finally the results show that the complex concept that forms the dimension of Objectivism in the daily work of an editorial office is being reduced to the journalists' concepts of objectivity, like accuracy, [righteousness](#), presentation of contrary sources, etc., which are notions that could be more operational and do not require such complex considerations.

##### c) Objectivity as method and context factors

On the level of the System the importance of the first strategy of Tuchman (1998) can be explained by the tradition of consensus and neutrality existing in the Swiss culture. In Spain this was impossible during the Franco regime. Currently the Spanish journalists enjoy a relatively "recent" liberty brought on by the democracy.

Regarding the presentation of facts, the second strategy of Tuchman (1998), the Swiss journalists do not conceive it in a strict way, but recognize that a news item can be developed out of a rumour. This opinion is mostly hold by the younger journalists who declare the necessity to publish certain news that come from uncertain sources when they can be important.

According to the guidelines of *El Mundo*, the editorial office should at all times limit itself to the facts. However, this is not always handled this way as the interviewed journalists recognize that a rumour coming from a trustworthy source can become a news item in the newspaper.

Generally it can be said that not only the journalists of the *NZZ*, but also those of the *El Mundo* have interiorized the third strategy of Tuchman (1998). In both cultures of journalism the identification of sources and their opinions is seen and enforced as a method to achieve objectivity. However, in Spain the protection and privacy of sources is preferred over the attribution of all the quotations to their sources when this holds a risk for these sources.

The fourth strategy, the inverted pyramid is neither in Spain nor in Switzerland considered being a relevant method in order to achieve objectivity. While the majority of interviewed journalists know the principle of structure, few use it.

The fifth strategy of Tuchman (1998), the separation of opinion and information can be recognized in the *NZZ* primarily on the typographic level (as said earlier: the articles of opinion are printed in larger letters). Despite this fact the journalists hold the idea that it can be more interesting for the lectures if the points of view of the journalists are reflected in the article. For *El Mundo* the separation between opinion and fact is inevitable as all opinion articles are united in a separate section in the first couple of pages of the newspaper. However, this clear separation, which the newspaper seems to offer, is not equally understood by all journalists.

On the level of the Institution the factor of the newspaper's tradition holds an important role. The *NZZ* is 200 years older than *El Mundo* and therefore it is stronger rooted within its journalistic tradition. The *NZZ* understands this positioning as something natural within its editorial. Since 1988, when the board of administration of the newspaper does not have to be constituted by members of the political party *FDP*, the *NZZ* maintains a functional policy based upon neutrality. *El Mundo*, with much less tradition, has been founded out of a completely different political, social, economic and historical context. The newspaper started out under the management of Pedro J. Ramirez, who was strongly influenced by the Anglo-Saxon journalism, which he acquired during his stay as teacher in the USA. In the Anglo-Saxon culture the clear separation of opinion and fact has a long tradition.

The factor of the tradition is also very important on the level of the Actor. The Swiss journalists do not build their work upon the strategies of Tuchman as they have already interiorized other methods through which they try to achieve objectivity. Only the first strategy appears explicitly within the daily work of the interviewed journalists. On the contrary the separation of opinion and fact is being rejected by the great majority. The Spanish journalists seem to feel themselves more obliged to use these strategies in the editorial office because part of their formation at university was based on these methods.

Graph 5: Summary of investigation results. Source: Authors' creation

<b>Institutional Roles</b>	<b><i>NZZ</i></b>	<b><i>El Mundo</i></b>
Interventionism	Rather passive ideas towards neutral and distanced information. Analytical journalism.	Seen as an institutional idea based on the "advocate" and "interventionist" roles that favour the collective good.
Power Distance	The relationship is based on and oriented to an understanding but from a distance. Next to loyalty there exists a critical scepticism.	They conceive this role as opposing the centres of power. There exists a great personal and institutional closeness to politicians. Journalists search to detect scandals and disturbing affairs.
Market Orientation	The ideal of the audience as citizens dominates, but among the youngest journalists the idea of the readers as consumers is gaining support.	They see the audience both as citizen and consumer, but they are inclined more towards the latter, as the commercialization of the newspaper is understood to be most important.
<b>Concept of Objectivity</b>	<b><i>NZZ</i></b>	<b><i>El Mundo</i></b>
Objectivity as Ideal	Scepticism towards the notion of objectivity. Two groups have been found: those who hold on to the concept of objectivity and those who treasure the subjectivity. The concept of objectivity is important as criteria of quality within a newspaper.	The concept of absolute objectivity is denied by the majority. It is only understood as a "lighthouse". The journalists show tendencies towards subjectivity, as they believe that they can only inform the audience from their individual points of view.
Objectivity as Method	Tuchman's first strategy is perceived as a method of objectivity. The rest of the strategies are known to the journalists, but not specifically employed as methods in their daily work. The separation of opinion and facts is being rejected.	Tuchman's principal methods of objectivity are employed, but with some exceptions. The application of objective methods, like identifying the sources, is often neglected, in favour of the protection of the sources. The inverted pyramid is being rejected.

## 5. Conclusions

The final analysis of the results shows that the interviewed journalists possess different ideas about their institutional roles, depending on each country:

a. The Spanish journalists are inclined towards the role of interventionism and can be situated on the pole opposing the power centres. Their notion of the audience is closer to the consumers as they are aware that the ultimate aim of their company is to maximize revenue and newspaper sales at the kiosk.

b. The Swiss journalists tend to be more passive and objective; they keep the distance at all times to the topics they treat. They value the analytical journalism highly. They do not see themselves as opposing the power centres, but rather tend to be loyal towards them. The journalists of the *NZZ* perceive their audience principally as citizens who need to be informed to exercise their role in the democratic system of the country. However, the youngest journalists tend to see the public also as simple consumers of the news product they manufacture.

The final analysis of the results shows that the interviewed journalists have different considerations about objectivity as

ideal:

c. The journalists of *El Mundo* can be situated rather at the subjective pole of the dimension of Objectivism. They reject objectivity as an ideal and exclude the concept therefore from their daily work.

d. The journalists of the *NZZ* show contrary tendencies. On one hand there are those who can be situated at the "correspondence" pole on the dimension of Objectivism: They want to represent the reality like it is and search for objectivity as ultimate goal. On the contrary pole of "subjectivity" there are those who consciously declare to be against objectivity, as they trust the diversity of the media and the plurality of opinions they produce.

The final analysis of the results allows drawing the following conclusions about the concept of objectivity as method:

e. Even though Tuchman's strategies appear as journalistic norms in the guidelines of both newspapers, they are not strictly or generally applied in *El Mundo* or the *NZZ*. Some methods and strategies are used on certain occasions to improve the degree of objectivity in news items, but only few times is the structure of the articles based upon these structures. Furthermore the interviewed journalists attach different levels of importance to these strategies, valuing generally the highest the use of quotation marks and the fidelity to facts.

f. For the Spanish journalists the protection of their sources is considered more important than the objectivity of news items, except certain cases.

g. For Swiss journalists the personal conviction to inform their readers with news of quality and importance is most highly valued.

h. The majority of the interviewed journalists, in Spain and in Switzerland, value highly the presentation of all possible perspectives in an article and reject the use of the inverted pyramid to achieve objectivity in a news item, even more so in Spain.

i. The Swiss journalists reject the separation of opinion and facts, since these journalists have never been influenced by the Anglo-Saxon journalism culture and its ideal of objectivity.

These results have been related to the different context levels (level of the System, the level of the Institution and the level of the Actor) and have been formulated in the following conclusions:

j. The preference of the Spanish journalists for the role of the "advocate" can be explained within the level of the System, since they strongly believe that their work should monitor and prevent that the relatively young Spanish democracy can be affected by individual interests and disappear again.

k. For the Swiss journalists these considerations do not exist as their situation within the level of the System is completely different.

l. The Spanish journalists are more inclined towards the "interventionist" role than the Swiss are. This can be explained through the level of the Institution. Within the editorial office of *El Mundo* the conviction to execute an investigative journalism is deeply rooted as the newspaper's guidelines encourage the journalists to be rather "advocates" for certain causes than "neutral" or "passive".

m. The younger journalists who work in the local section tend to see their audience rather as "consumers" than "citizens". This holds true for both countries. This can be explained on the level of the Actor as the younger population is more sensitized to current socio-demographic and economic factors in society, where the crisis of journalism is especially present. To this adds the thought that if they offer the audience what it wants, the section of local journalism becomes a greater weight within the editorial office.

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## 7. Notes

1. In this context there is a relevant international research project directed by Thomas Hanitzsch that compared journalists from 18 different countries. All the information can be found on this website: [www.worldsofjournalisms.org](http://www.worldsofjournalisms.org).
2. The Swiss Federal State was constituted in 1848 as a political result of the approval of the new federal constitution. It was created as a modern federal State built on the values of republicanism and subsidiarity.
3. The *Neue Zürcher Zeitung (NZZ)* is one of the European newspapers with the longest tradition. It was first published on the 12th of January 1780 and is internationally recognized as a quality newspaper (Meier, 2004). In 2008 the *NZZ* was acknowledged to be the third most read daily pay newspaper in Switzerland. The newspaper's publisher is now the *NZZ Group* (Meyer, 2005).
4. *El Mundo* was founded on the 23rd of October 1989. According to data from the Spanish "Oficina de Justificación de la Difusión", *El Mundo* has been the second most read daily general-information newspaper in 2008 in Spain. Pedro J. Ramírez is the founder, chief editor and editor of *El Mundo*. The newspaper belongs to the publishing group *Unidad Editorial* (Sanders, Canel, 2006).
5. Until 1988 the board of administration of the *NZZ* had been exclusively composed of party members of the *Free Democratic Party of Switzerland (FDP)*.
6. These four dimensions have been chosen because they are closely related to the object of investigation for this study: the three dimensions that examine journalists' institutional roles and the dimension referring to the concept of objectivity.
7. Esser presents his theoretic model consisting of four different layers. The outside layer contains the the social sphere which includes the historic-cultural conditions of a society in general. On the following layer we find the structure of the press with its norms, forces and interests. The third layer is the institutional sphere, which includes the different profiles of news coverage, the organizational structure and the institutional image of the media. Finally, the central sphere includes the journalist as individual and principal actor. This layer holds the journalists' subjective values, political ideas, institutional roles, etc. (Esser, 1998).

8. In 1995 the Complutense University of Madrid published an interview-based survey about journalism and society. In 1999, following the same methodology, the Centre for Sociological Investigations published another study about journalists. In 2000 two other papers were published, one written by Ortega and Humanes and the other by García Cortazar and García de León (Canel, Rodríguez and Sánchez, 2000).

9. In Spain only nine interviews were conducted as one journalist was not able to attend the interview due to personal problems. Eventually 19 interviews were conducted, ten in Switzerland and nine in Spain.

10. The great majority of Swiss journalists do not have any specific journalistic education. The access to the profession is usually obtained through internships. The number of university graduates among journalists does not reach 44%. Moreover, only 17% of them majored in journalism at university (Marr et al., 2001).

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