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# Exploring innovative learning culture in the newsroom

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## Abstract

Culture has been viewed as the biggest obstacle to change in the legacy media newsroom. Older as well as recent literature points out that professional culture typically hinders newsroom innovation processes, and newsrooms in transformation often seem to find culture clashes on their path. These transformational problems, however, appear to be viewed predominantly from a management point of view. By looking at journalism culture from the broader perspective of a learning culture which fosters innovation, including both management and newsroom workers, a more nuanced picture can be presented. In this article, the concept of innovative learning culture is introduced to provide a different lens through which drivers and obstacles of innovation in the newsroom can be observed. Furthermore, innovative learning culture can be used in empirical research to gain insights in the learning and innovation processes of professional journalists, a strikingly under-researched area. As such, innovative learning culture as a concept fills gaps in the empirical as well as in the more theoretical literature, which may enhance future newsroom research.

## Keywords

Innovative learning culture, legacy media newsroom, media innovation, newsroom culture, newsroom transformation, professional ideology

## Introduction

In this article, the concept of innovative learning culture (ILC) is explored, referring to a learning culture that triggers and fosters innovation in the legacy media newsroom. Innovation processes are of key interest to the study of journalism, as legacy media

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organizations are expected to transform their newsrooms towards multi-media online platforms to maximize chances for long-term survival (Küng, 2015; Westlund and Lewis, 2014). The reasons for exploring the concept of ILC are 3-fold.

First, research on learning and innovation processes in the legacy media newsroom is scarce. Studies on learning processes are limited to student experiences in journalism education (Brandon, 2002; Steel et al., 2007; Steensen, 2016). Learning and innovation are inextricably linked (Brown and Duguid, 1991, 1998; Kline and Rosenberg, 1986; March, 1991). However, apart from the scholarly attention to newsroom (multi)skilling, which refers to acquiring the skills necessary to deal with new technologies (Cottle and Ashton, 1999; Nygren, 2014; Wallace, 2013), the question of how journalists actually learn in the newsroom, and how they learn to innovate in it, is still an under-researched area. By addressing these issues using ILC as a perspective, new insights in learning and innovation processes can be gained when studying newsrooms in transformation.

Second, newsroom studies tend to lack insights into the cultural prerequisites of innovation. This is remarkable, as at the same time culture is perceived to be the biggest obstacle to change in journalism (Ekdale et al., 2015; Ryfe, 2012). Yet the bulk of the studies on the transformation of a traditional newsroom to one offering 'a truly continuous product' with multi-media and online platforms (Dickinson et al., 2013: 4) mainly focus on the diffusion of technological innovation and the management of this diffusion (Rogers, 2003). However, technology is never a driver for action all by itself, as it is inextricably linked to the social and cultural context (Boczkowski, 2004; Cottle and Ashton, 1999; Dickinson et al., 2013; Örnebring, 2010). Newsroom workers will, for example, need to have a welcoming mind-set to new technologies, if they want to profit from possible online options (Borger, 2016). As the cultural side of innovation has yet to be thoroughly understood, ILC can help identify cultural drivers and obstacles of innovation processes in the newsroom.

Third, newsroom studies that do deal with the cultural side of innovation view culture predominantly as problematic, and they typically view it from a management perspective. Culture tends to be viewed in terms of culture clashes as a result of transformational processes (Lee-Wright, 2010; Lewis, 2012). Professional culture specifically is seen as a hindrance to innovation in the newsroom, and this culture is said to be very hard to change (Borger, 2016; Buijs, 2014; Ryfe, 2012; Tameling, 2015; Usher, 2014). Notwithstanding the interesting and detailed analyses in these studies, at least five pre-suppositions seem to underlie their conclusions: (1) change is positive, (2) newsroom management initiates change, (3) journalists do not appear to comply enough, (4) this impacts the planned change negatively and (5) for this – predominantly – journalists are to blame. Seen from a management point of view, journalists do not seem to act as they are told by their superiors, hence they get the finger pointed at them. Using ILC as a concept, encompassing both management and journalists, a more nuanced picture of newsroom innovation processes can be achieved.

Looking at the latter reason for introducing ILC, studying change from a management perspective is not limited to the study of journalism, as it characterizes a large part of the organizational change literature (Alvesson and Sveningsson, 2008). Generally speaking, these situations are viewed from only one side of the story, that of the *change agents*, the ones that, as often occurs, initiate change. Whereas the *change recipients*, the people

who are supposed to undergo or execute change, are systematically portrayed in a negative way (Dent and Goldberg, 1999; Ford et al., 2008; King and Anderson, 1995; Meston and King, 1996). This management perspective, then, may blur thorough understandings of what actually goes on in the newsroom, informing the common held belief that journalists are just too conservative to innovate (Smit, 2013). Following Ekdale et al. (2015), who have countered this view as 'to miss the point' (p. 955), this article assumes that a more integrated view is needed to understand, for instance, the findings of these authors. They show that journalists actually are open to innovation, provided their professional ideology is not tampered with and their management demonstrates a clear vision, while it communicates unambiguously to newsroom workers what is expected of them.

In the larger context, media scholars stress the need for radical change and urge legacy media organizations to hurry, to escape 'the valley of death' they are in (Küng, 2015: 105) to maximize chances for survival (Küng, 2015; Storsul and Krumsvik, 2013; Westlund and Lewis, 2014). However, change just for the sake of it, even radical change, may not be enough to ensure future survival of news organizations. Innovation is different from change in that the former contains elements of novelty. Innovation thus may be viewed as part of organizational change, but not all organizational change relates to innovation (Evans, 2016). Instead of viewing change, innovation and long-term survival as processes having to do with an adaptation to technology, a more productive and inclusive view may come from the perspective of resilient organizations (Seville, 2017). Resilient organizations do more than merely adapt and survive the next external threat. Instead, they 'are future-ready, with an inbuilt capacity not only to weather the storms of change, but to be able to thrive in such environments' (Seville, 2017: 3). Resilient organizations, the author states, have an intrinsic drive to thrive and create their own new opportunities, while riding and exploring the waves of crises and changes. According to Seville, resilience emerges from an organizational culture that evolves around people first, not technology. The author sums up five major ingredients resilient organizations cannot do without: leadership, staff engagement, effective partnerships, situation awareness and innovation and creativity. This article is mainly concerned with the last, and not the least, two ingredients on the list.

In this article, a theoretical framework on ILC is introduced, where ILC is understood as a learning culture that drives and fosters innovation in the newsroom. It seeks to address the overarching questions of what the cultural parameters for learning and innovation in the newsroom are and how professional journalists learn and innovate in it. In other words, does the newsroom culture allow for new ideas, and what are the drivers and obstacles for those new ideas to blossom and, ultimately, to lead to innovation in the newsroom? Looking at the key reasons for exploring ILC, we can use ILC as a conceptual perspective, a 'looking glass', as well as an analytical tool to discover possible drivers for, and obstacles of, innovation processes. This article is mainly concerned with introducing ILC as a conceptual perspective.

The following pages are written with newspaper organizations in mind. Not only because the digital disruption seems to impact the newspaper industry more dramatically than other legacy media (Evans, 2016). Print organizations also find it more difficult to change than other news media do (Tameling, 2015). This may be due, at least in part, to the largely unchanged print production processes until today. ILC takes an

interdisciplinary approach by building on empirical and theoretical insights not only from journalism studies but also from educational sciences, innovation studies and organizational sciences. This relevant body of literature is used to enrich the study of innovation processes in journalism. The following paragraphs explain how a definition of ILC is derived, what this concept consists of, and how it fills gaps in the existing literature.

## Theoretical context

The ultimate goal of using ILC as a concept is to discover to what extent the cultural prerequisites for innovation are actually present in the transforming newsroom, and how such a culture can be triggered and fostered to enhance innovation processes. By analysing drivers and obstacles for ILC in the newsroom, newspapers can be helped to reinvent themselves. The following definition of ILC is used:

*innovative learning culture is a social climate that stimulates people to work and learn together, to grow as an individual and as a group (team, organization), and that provides people with the autonomy needed to be flexible, to experiment, to be creative, and to investigate radical possibilities in order for the organization to have better chances for survival in the long run. This is facilitated by serving leadership, open communication, mutual trust, a supporting culture, shared goals, appreciation of individual achievement, and training and development.*

ILC as a concept builds upon prior insights regarding professional learning culture (PLC), a term coined by Oberon et al. (2014), and processes concerning explorative innovation (Bartlett and Goshal, 1989; Gibson and Birkinshaw, 2004; March, 1991; O'Reilly and Tushman, 2013). Expanding upon these authors, PLC and explorative innovation culture (EIC) have been conceptualized and are explicated in detail below. ILC is argued to be the conceptual sum of PLC and EIC (see Figure 1).

### PLC

To understand what PLC stands for, it is important to first look at its related concepts: culture, organizational culture, learning culture and PLC.

*Culture and organizational culture.* How to view culture and organizational culture that stems from it? Smircich (1983) divides the research approaches to culture and organizational culture into two strands: culture seen as a variable, something the organization *has* (and can be changed for managerial purposes), and culture regarded as a root metaphor, viewed as something an organization *is*. According to Smircich, organizations *are* cultures. Schein (1990) combines the two strands but predominantly sees culture as something that is changeable. He views organizational culture as having three interrelated levels of culture: external observable *artefacts*, internal *values* and even deeper underlying basic *assumptions*. In reaction to Smircich's (1983) distinction, Grey (2009) sees two sorts of organizational cultures. One is a 'real', spontaneous and informal one. That is, it is a culture 'but it doesn't necessarily conform to what managers want'. The other is a



**Figure 1.** ILC displayed as the conceptual sum of PLC and EIC.

formally ‘imposed’ culture, ‘based on the idea that cultural values are hierarchically defined, that is by senior managers or by head office’ (Grey, 2009: 73).

These considerations give rise to the question to what extent organizational culture actually can be changed at all? Alvesson and Sveningsson (2008) see cultural change as ‘wishful thinking and fantasies’ (p. 35) and are sceptical of the high expectations a large part of the organizational literature seems to foster. The authors do, however, build upon Schein’s mental model approach, adding the ‘construction of meaning and sense making’ (Alvesson and Sveningsson, 2008: 37) and how these are expressed in language, stories and rituals: ‘culture refers to what stands behind and guides behaviour rather than the behaviour as such’ (p. 36). Not only can an organizational culture be expressed in terms of language, stories and rituals but also its meanings are shaped by organizational members, as culture is produced in social interaction and the processes that derive from these interactions (Pantjes, 2013). Based on these authors, for the purpose of this article, the following definition of organizational culture will be considered:

**organizational culture** is the whole of conscious and unconscious assumptions, norms and values of members of an organization (or group), processed by spontaneous construction and dynamic sense making among members, resulting in concrete expressions or artefacts.

This definition is the basic understanding of how a learning culture that fosters innovation is viewed in this article. It is assumed that all cultural aspects of an organization are part of organizational culture. Hence, learning culture, PLC and ILC are part of organizational culture.

*Learning culture and PLC.* For an organization to innovate at all, it has to be open to change and cannot do without a strong learning culture that improves innovative capabilities (Heijboer et al., 2013). A learning culture is about allowing creativity and flexibility into the organization, according to Van Der Merwe and Quinlan (2010). In the educational sciences literature, learning culture is not an unknown term when dealing with pupils or students. Where the learning culture of teachers is concerned, the term professional learning culture is used (Oberon et al., 2014). Only those organizations that encourage a true culture of learning among their members have the best chances to innovate (Cameron and Quinn, 2011; Heijboer et al., 2013), to obtain advantages over the competition (Baars-Van Moorsel, 2003; Watkins and Marsick, 1996; Yolles, 2009), to transform themselves by creating new knowledge (Schenke, 2015) and to

survive disruptions in the long run (March, 1991; O'Reilly and Tushman, 2013). Exact definitions of learning culture, however, are scarce. The term is generally used in an informal way to indicate a social context or climate that is favourable to learning (Baars-Van Moorsel, 2003). Heijboer et al. (2013) describe learning culture as 'a collective, dynamic system of basic assumptions, values and norms, that guides how people learn in an organization' (p. 6), based on Schein (1990). Learning culture then is an observable artefact, steered by experienced norms as well as more deeper underlying basic assumptions, the latter being unobservable. Both Heijboer et al. (2013) and Pantjes (2013), based on Watkins and Marsick (1996), consider a learning culture to be a *collective* learning culture, and not an *individual* learning culture. Only a collective learning culture can make sure *continuous* learning in the organization takes place. Pantjes (2013) distinguishes three key characteristics (leadership, collaboration and communication) that differ in individual and collective learning cultures. In an individual learning culture, the focus is on formal education, predominantly in official courses, the leadership style is directive, there is little collaboration between the organizational members and communication is said to be one-sided or closed. In a collective learning culture, on the other hand, there is formal and informal learning, the leadership style is participative, among the members there is considerable collaboration and there is an open and transparent dialogue in the organization.

In trying to get a grip on collective learning culture, strikingly, neither Heijboer et al. (2013) nor Pantjes (2013) mention trust as an element. While it is trust that seems to be a key condition to be able to learn collectively. Wenger et al. (2002) state, when speaking about *communities of practices*:

Learning requires an atmosphere of openness. Each community develops a unique atmosphere [...] the key is to build a foundation for collective inquiry. An effective community of practice offers a place of exploration where it is safe to speak the truth and ask hard questions. Trust is key to this process. (p. 37)

Another argument to include trust as a key element is that trust is needed to be able to firmly discuss and to debate matters, and not avoid conflicts. As Wenger et al. (2002) state, strong communities cannot do without conflict as 'members can even use conflict as a way to deepen their relationships and their learning' (p. 37). The aspect of trust comes back in the educational research literature (Oberon et al., 2014). In the literature on resilient organizations, this theme returns as 'high trust', which resilient organizations cannot do without (Seville, 2017: 18). Based on these authors, it seems logical to view trust as an important element for a strong learning culture in an organization. Oberon et al. (2014) define their PLC in schools as 'a climate in which all members in a school work together to reflect, to research and to professionalize' (p. 6). This definition can be seen as an integration of the earlier mentioned aspects of learning culture from other authors. Oberon et al. (2014) also make an explicit distinction between *characteristics* of PLC (collaboration, learning from each other, inquiring attitude) and *conditions* for a PLC (leadership, communication, support, mutual trust). Based on Oberon et al. (2014), PLC's definition is the following:

**professional learning culture** is a social climate in which all members of a newsroom learn by working together to reflect, to research and to professionalize. This is facilitated by serving leadership, clear communication, support among the members, and mutual trust in each other and in the organization.

Having dealt with PLC, we continue with EIC, which constitutes the other conceptual part of ILC.

## EIC

Innovation is the implementation of an idea into a market or a social setting (Fagerberg, 2005). For organizations to survive in the long run, the execution of both exploitative and explorative innovation is paramount (March, 1991; O'Reilly and Tushman, 2004, 2013). March (1991) defines exploitative innovation in terms of exploiting old certainties, characterized by refinement, choice, production, efficiency, selection, implementation and execution. He describes explorative innovation as exploring new possibilities, characterized by search, variation, risk-taking, experimenting, play, flexibility, discovery and innovation. In the newsroom, explorative innovation may translate into discovering and experimenting with new ways of reaching audiences, other ways of working, novel ways of thinking and using tools that may lead to new business opportunities.

The orientation of people within print newsrooms, however, is predominantly still on the newspaper (Buijs, 2014; O'Reilly and Tushman, 2004; Ryfe, 2012; Smit, 2013; Tameling, 2015; Tameling and Broersma, 2012, 2013; Usher, 2014), and thus reflects a predominance of a culture of exploitative innovation. Storsul and Krumsvik (2013) find that in media organizations, as elsewhere, most innovations are incremental and involve small changes in products or processes that do not challenge the logic of the market. For the newspaper industry, this means that by doing what it always has done, it will find itself challenged or disrupted by outsiders who are more engaged in explorative innovation. By doing so, the newspaper business risks obsolescence (Küng, 2015).

According to March (1991), the efficiency and short term rationality of organizations tend to lead automatically to exploitative innovation with its typical lack of experiments, and its precise and predictable outcomes. The author sees this tendency as 'potentially self-destructive' (March, 1991: 73) for an organization. March's statements date from long before the Internet, Google and Facebook disrupted the news industry. Since exploration is vital to newspapers' long-term survival as it informs the ability to reinvent themselves, the question is whether and how explorative innovation is actually triggered and fostered in print newsrooms. Newspapers with an online presence may just be copying their competitors, rather than harvest the fruits of their own explorative innovation. Furthermore, research has shown that online journalism seems to be less innovative than many scholars had foreseen (Steensen, 2009), leaving questions open to why this is possible. One explanation for this may lie in the somewhat adventurous side of explorative innovation. Experimenting without knowing the outcome beforehand can be quite expensive (March, 1991). Another explanation may lie in the observation that new technology alone is no guarantee innovation takes place (Borger, 2016).



Based on the apparent poor explorative innovational capabilities of newsrooms (Buijs, 2014; Ryfe, 2009, 2012; Tameling, 2015; Usher, 2014), as well as on the necessity to explore for legacy media in trying to survive (Küng, 2015; O'Reilly and Tushman, 2013), ILC encompasses an inherent focus on EIC. As mentioned before, it is this type of innovation culture that is specifically called for in legacy print newsrooms to avoid extinction (March, 1991; O'Reilly and Tushman, 2013). To come to a definition of EIC, different authors are taken into account. Following Oberon et al. (2014) with PLC, we look for characteristics of, as well as conditions for, EIC. The following eight *characteristics* are found, based on March (1991) and O'Reilly and Tushman (2013): insecurity (of the outcome of innovation), (re)search/investigation, discovery, autonomous, creative, experimental, flexible and radical. The *conditions* for EIC are based on Bartlett and Goshal (1989) and Gibson and Birkinshaw (2004): trust, support, supporting culture, shared goals, collective identity, appreciation of individual achievement, training and development and culture of excellence. Based on these, we adopt the following definition:

**explorative innovation culture** is a social climate in which people are supported to (relatively) autonomously investigate, experiment, be flexible and learn to develop creative new and/or radical ideas, products, services or ways of working that ultimately will improve the news organization's market position and increase its chances of survival in the long run. This is facilitated by trust, supporting culture, shared goals, collective identity, appreciation of individual achievement, training and development, and a culture of excellence.

With both critical ingredients present, we can now look at what they mean for ILC. As mentioned earlier, ILC is the conceptual sum of PLC and EIC. When looking at the characteristics and conditions for both, we see both overlap and differences between the two concepts. To start with the differences, PLC is aimed, literally, at learning while working together. It is about togetherness: working together – while reflecting, investigating and professionalizing – to grow with each other. EIC's focus is on searching and experimenting, stressing the relative autonomy needed for the individual or a small group to do so, instead of doing this collectively. The individual and his or her achievement count. Togetherness is an option, not a necessity. EIC, however, does support the individual(s) engaged in explorative innovation. The overlap between the two concerns the room the organization provides its members to develop. After the elimination of synonyms, seven characteristics and seven conditions for ILC remain.

To arrive at these ILC characteristics and conditions, the following process has been adopted. 'Learning from each other' has been favoured over 'collaboration', as the former is the fruit of collaboration that is considered relevant here, and 'inquiring attitude' has been eliminated in favour of '(re)search/investigation', as the latter term is considered more specific. Both 'insecurity' and 'discovery' have been discarded; the former is an intrinsic aspect of all things 'experimental' and as such has been viewed as overlap. The second may or may not be an outcome of 'experimental' or '(re)search/investigation' and, with respect to ILC, is regarded less crucial than the process that could lead towards it. For conditions, 'support' has been eliminated in favour of the more richer term 'supportive culture' which refers to a larger culture perceived as being supportive, rather than

the incidental support given in a certain situation. Furthermore, ‘mutual trust’ has been favoured over ‘trust’ as the former expresses better its reciprocal core, and ‘culture of excellence’ has been discarded for reasons of irrelevancy. ‘Excellence’ is inclined to be defined as what is ‘known’ to be excellent, whereas the future outcomes of explorative innovation are insecure by their very nature. ‘Collective identity’, finally, has been eliminated because it would, at most, only refer to the PLC part of ILC. To sum up, the seven *characteristics* of ILC, and their brief definitions, are as follows:

- |                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| 1. Learning from each other | learning from others in the workplace community       |
| 2. (Re)search/investigation | investigation aimed at improving (one’s) work         |
| 3. Experimental             | trying out new possibilities with insecure outcomes   |
| 4. Autonomous               | agency to make decisions about (one’s own) work       |
| 5. Creative                 | inspiring the development of new ideas                |
| 6. Radical                  | stimulating all that is very different from the usual |
| 7. Flexible                 | capacity of people to easily adjust, switch or change |

The seven *conditions* for ILC, and their brief definitions, are as follows:

- |                           |  |
|---------------------------|--|
| 1. Leadership             | management focussing on enabling people to change  |
| 2. Communication          | open dialogue between members in the organization  |
| 3. Mutual trust           | people trusting each other in the organization     |
| 4. Supporting culture     | climate wherein receiving support is self-evident  |
| 5. Shared goals           | workers and management pursuing the same targets   |
| 6. Appreciation           | explicit appreciation of individual success        |
| 7. Training & development | systematic attention for the development of people |

## Relevance

In the following sections, it is shown how ILC can be relevant to the empirical study of newsroom transformation and how it may add to the literature on media innovation theory.

### *Empirical relevance*

From the new millennium and onwards, scholars of journalism studies and media innovation have been focussing mainly on how newsrooms adapt to the new technological reality, rather than on newsrooms’ capacity to reinvent themselves. The latter entails a larger scope than just reacting to external incentives, as it taps into the intrinsic resilience of a newsroom, hardly researched in journalism studies. This inherently leaves a potential area of research waiting to be addressed. ILC can be an instrument to access this under-researched area.

In the larger part of newsroom studies, the focus on management, which sees culture as a problem, appears to be dominant. A closer look of these aspects illustrates to what extent they relate to ILC.

*Management.* The fact that technological change in the newsroom is most often a management decision has not gone unnoticed in the literature (MacGregor, 1997; Singer, 2004a). It is a so-called authority innovation decision (Rogers, 2003) as opposed to a collectively or an individually made one. This may have consequences for the adoption and, hence, the diffusion of innovation (Rogers, 2003). Change processes in the newsroom are therefore to be regarded as socially constructed, whereby technology is an instrument for other goals to be achieved, for example, to enhance the quality of journalism or the quality of production processes. Goals may also encompass efficiency, such as getting more production out of multi-skilled and flexible resources (Saltzis and Dickinson, 2008), or cost-cutting through lay-offs as a result of reorganizations (Cottle and Ashton, 1999; Saltzis and Dickinson, 2008). Hence, some newsroom studies are specifically concerned with management issues on how to manage transformation processes and if these goals are achieved or not (Gade, 2004; Gade and Perry, 2003; Gade and Raviola, 2009; Killebrew, 2003; Sylvie and Gade, 2009).

ILC, however, focusses on what happens in the newsroom with respect to what *precedes* an actual innovation, as it is concerned with the available room for new ideas to blossom (Kline and Rosenberg, 1986). The focal interest thus is to discover to what extent people in the newsroom experience an ILC that triggers and fosters explorative innovation, as mentioned earlier. As ILC refers to a specific culture in the newsroom, the concept can be operationalized in quantitative as well as qualitative research instruments, which allows for measuring the perceptions of ILC of both journalists and their managers. This is briefly explored at the end of this paragraph. By avoiding a management-centred view on change, this enhances a more nuanced picture of newsroom transformation.

*Culture clashes.* Empirical newsroom studies typically have focussed on the impact of technological innovation on journalistic work practices, the quality of journalistic products and the management of these processes. Interestingly, a good part of the findings of these studies appears to be more about culture clashes in the newsroom as a result of transformation, than about the diffusion of technology, which was the primary aspect some of these studies were set out to measure.

Transformational processes have been reported on, in some studies, with moderate optimism. The quality of journalistic products has not been altered by these processes, at least some research on mixed-media newsrooms (Huang et al., 2004, 2006; Meier, 2007) state. Technological innovation processes have also triggered American journalists to see clear advantages for themselves as a result of the transformation, despite consistent cultural issues that need to be overcome (Singer, 2004a).

Despite this optimism, the outcome of the bulk of newsroom studies is that making the transition from a traditional print newsroom to a more online oriented one is quite hard to achieve. This may not come as a surprise, as newsrooms find themselves in a paradigm shift, being forced economically to trade a 20th-century offer-focussed production model for a 21st-century demand-focussed one (Domingo et al., 2007). This can result in fear and anxiety, and hence in clashes in the newsroom (Killebrew, 2003). Different newsroom studies show culture clashes as a result of transformation. Gade (2004) finds a clash of cultures between ‘the core values of two cultures – marketing and

journalism' (p. 45). Van den Bulck and Tambuyzer (2013) even distinguish several culture clashes: 'between organizational versus professional [...] culture [...], between the impact of technological versus human factors [...] and between news managers and news workers' (p. 54).

The biggest culture clashes, however, seem to occur between management and newsroom workers. Perceptions of transformation and their effects typically seem to differ between these two parties (Beam, 2006; Buijs, 2014; Cottle and Ashton, 1999; Daniels and Hollifield, 2002; Ekdale et al., 2015; Gade, 2004; Gade and Perry, 2003; Ryfe, 2009, 2012; Saltzis and Dickinson, 2008; Singer, 2004a, 2004b; Smith et al., 2007; Tameling, 2015; Tameling and Broersma, 2013; Usher, 2014; Van Den Bulck and Tambuyzer, 2013). Different authors give different words to this phenomenon. Gade (2004) described it as a 'gulf' (p. 45) between marketing and journalism, Quinn (2005) states it to be 'the fundamental dichotomy' between a business ideal and a journalistic ideal (p. 29) and Van Den Bulck and Tambuyzer (2013) speak about multiple 'collisions of convergence' all closely related to a clash between 'organizational and professional [...] culture' (p. 54). These different perceptions of transformation between journalists and management seem difficult to resolve (Gade, 2004; Gade and Perry, 2003; Gade and Raviola, 2009; Killebrew, 2003; Sylvie and Gade, 2009).

In these studies, management is, at least in part, held accountable for their outdated management structures, their poor communication and coaching skills and their vagueness in general of how to translate transformation processes into everyday practices for the people they manage (Killebrew, 2003; Ryfe, 2009, 2012; Sylvie and Gade, 2009; Tameling, 2015; Tameling and Broersma, 2013). But at the same time in these studies journalists are seen as being reluctant to change because of their professional culture (Buijs, 2014; Ryfe, 2009, 2012; Sylvie and Gade, 2009; Tameling, 2015; Usher, 2014). This culture, however, most often has not been defined in a way that it can be operationalized. Using ILC, focussing on learning and innovation processes of both management and news workers, professional culture in the innovating newsroom can be made more tangible and, hence, more accessible to eventual transformation.

*Professional identity.* In earlier as well as present newsroom studies, it is suggested that the apparent reluctance of journalists to change lies in what journalists perceive transformation to mean for their professional role as a journalist, as it may endanger their ability to produce quality journalism (Beam, 2006; Cottle and Ashton, 1999; Daniels and Hollifield, 2002; Ekdale et al., 2015; Gade and Perry, 2003; Gade and Raviola, 2009; Lewis, 2012; Ryfe, 2009, 2012; Saltzis and Dickinson, 2008; Smith et al., 2007; Tameling, 2015). In short, when transformation is perceived as incompatible with, or entrenching upon, journalistic norms and professional identity, transformation is regarded as rather negative. If it is true, as Ekdale et al. (2015) point out, that journalists are not opposed to change or innovation per se, this poses questions currently not addressed, such as how do journalists actually take in new things? How do they, the newsroom workers, actually learn in the newsroom? To what extent do journalists perceive a learning culture in the newsroom that fosters change and innovation? And how do they keep up with technological developments while proper training is often been denied to journalists, even when journalists themselves are eager to learn (Küng, 2008; Singer, 2004b; Steensen, 2009)?

The concept of ILC can be operationalized into different research instruments to address these kinds of questions. The focus of this article is a conceptual one, but to touch briefly upon the operationalization of the ILC concept, a mixed-methods research approach seems suitable. One can think of measuring perceptions of the characteristics and conditions of ILC in a survey, distributed among newsroom management and workers. This can be followed up with interviews with management and workers, not only to validate the survey results but also to ask them whether they can explain the outcomes of the survey. Together with a separate ethnographic study, focussing on the characteristics and conditions of ILC in the newsroom with respect to new ideas, this could round up a newsroom study that seeks to answer to what extent, and how, ILC is being perceived, and what happens with new ideas in the newsroom.

### *Theoretical relevance*

The media landscape is innovating and scholars increasingly refer to the innovation concept, but at the same time notice an academic gap, as it misses more theoretical and methodological contributions (Dogruel, 2014, 2015; Küng, 2008). According to Evans (2016), the innovation speak in both journalism and journalism studies has been so ‘rampant’ (p. 1) that it is turning into a problem, ‘because many institutions may strive for innovation without enough reflection on what that term actually means to them’ (pp. 1–2). For an overview of the literature on innovation theory, see Crossan and Apaydin (2010), Fagerberg (2005), Fagerberg and Verspagen (2009), Fagerberg et al. (2012) and Hall and Rosenberg (2010).

Dogruel (2014, 2015) sees a limitation in the current literature on media innovation with its narrow focus on diffusion, adoption and acceptance of the final technological innovation product that enters a market or is implemented in a media organization. This largely ignores the design and development stages of innovation. Innovation theory, however, stresses that innovation encompasses an entire cycle from its invention – an idea – to its diffusion or implementation (Kline and Rosenberg, 1986). Dogruel calls for an integrated approach that fits the innovation cycle in all its phases. ILC as a concept answers Dogruel’s call. It focusses on learning processes in the newsroom and takes an inherent interest in the initial phases of innovation development (Kline and Rosenberg, 1986), which starts with a new idea, and the room for development of that new idea. Learning processes may also entail the whole innovation cycle, from idea to diffusion, therefore answering Dogruel’s call for an integrated approach.

The biggest gap in the media innovation literature, however, seems to be the scarcity in scholarly attention to learning and innovation processes of professional journalists in innovating newsrooms. This is striking, because innovation, as mentioned earlier, is inextricably linked to learning processes: without learning there is no innovation. However, for people to be able to learn at all, a social climate with a certain level of trust is needed to allow for people to learn, experiment, dare to make mistakes and dare to disagree (Seville, 2017; Wenger et al., 2002). In the context of resilient news organizations, this asks for a perspective that inherently looks at the development of people first and then technology, not the other way around (Seville, 2017). This is when ILC as a new

perspective can step in when operationalized. When doing so, and following Tavakoli (2010), it may be the case that current culture clashes in transforming newsrooms will be seen in a more productive light and hence, not as a 'clash' any more.

## Conclusion

In this article, it is argued that the concept of ILC can constitute a new lens to look at newsroom learning and innovation processes, an under-researched area. With the definition of ILC and its underlying characteristics and conditions, the concept can be operationalized in further research. With an ILC perspective, including both management and journalists, culture in the newsroom can be made more tangible than is found in the literature thus far. This may result in insights in how professionals in the newsroom actually learn and innovate, and to what extent a learning culture allows them to do so in the first place. ILC can detect the drivers and obstacles for newsroom learning and innovation processes that have not been identified earlier, as newsrooms have not been considered from a learning culture perspective before. Furthermore, with ILC a closer look can be taken at the newsroom's own capabilities for innovation, as ILC taps into the intrinsic resilience and creativity of the newsroom.

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