COZY JOURNALISM
The rise of social cohesion as an ideal in online, participatory journalism

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In recent years applications like CoveritLive have diffused with great speed in online newsrooms. Such technologies create an interface where audience participation and journalistic reporting potentially merge into a text-production system marked by a high degree of immediacy and interactivity. This paper investigates the consequences of such practices for the professional ideology of journalism. What norms and ideals do journalist who initiate and partake in such practices adhere to? To what degree does their practice conflict with traditional ideals of journalistic reporting? The paper analysis the 'live' coverage of football matches in the two most popular Norwegian online newspapers, VG Nett and dagbladet.no. The findings suggest that the merger of audience participation and immediacy creates conflicts of ideals for the journalists involved, and that ideals of subjectivity and social cohesion are promoted by such practices of journalism.

Introduction

He presents himself to the audience as "the host". He is a young online sports journalist, who is about to cover a round of Norwegian premier league football for the online newspaper *dagbladet.no*. It's a Sunday afternoon in May 2010, its 50 minutes to kick-off, and the young journalist has just logged on to the in-house produced software "the studio". His name and profile picture pops up on the left side of the interface beneath the words "Studio hosts right now:" On the right side of the interface he can see that a couple of hundred football fans already have logged on to "the Stand". In-between "the Stand" and "the host", there is a big, white, empty space. The young journalist starts filling that space with the following message: "Greetings, and welcome to this last round of premier league football before the World Cup break. Let's all enjoy this." It's 17.17, and his Sunday afternoon shift has just begun.

What this journalist now is about to do for the rest of his shift is a premier example of the dialogical turn in new media journalism known under names such as "participatory journalism", "civic/public journalism", "wiki-journalism", and the likes. Furthermore, it is an example of the changes the profession of journalism are going through. Researchers argue that the skills, normative demands and practices that journalists adhere to are transforming at great speed, mainly due to the diffusion and socialisation of new technology in both society at large and newsrooms in particular. Audiences are redefined as users and producers, sources become publishers in their own right, and deadlines are dinosaurs of the past. As Singer (2006, p.13) puts it, "virtually all the notions of journalism based on past practices are gone".

These changes potentially disrupt the hierarchy of ideals that journalists define themselves according to. This paper seeks to investigate such changes in the professional

ideology of journalism related to the trends of interactivity and immediacy, the two characteristics that shape the "liquidity" of online journalism (Deuze, 2007). In recent years online newsroom's implementation of new software like *CoveritLive*[1] has fast-forwarded the trend of immediacy and interactivity in online newspapers worldwide, since such applications make it much easier for online newspapers to cover events live while integrating user-generated content. Furthermore, such applications promote immediacy and interactivity through dialogue with the audience to such an extent that journalists using such tools probably practice the most "liquid" of all types of journalism.

The aim of this paper is to investigate how journalists – like the young male covering a round of Norwegian premier league football – cope with dialogue with the audience coupled with immediacy, and how these specifics of online journalism, when taken to their extremes, potentially promote new ideals to the professional ideology of journalism. Two Norwegian online newspapers with different strategies towards covering live football matches are investigated through qualitative interviews with the journalists and observation of newsroom practice. The research is guided by the following research question: What values and ideals do online journalists who cover live sport events adhere to and does this practice of journalism promote any new ideals to the professional ideology of journalism?

The Professional Ideology of Journalism

The paper is framed by an understanding of journalism as a dynamic practice that is both the outcome and medium of a professional ideology. Professional ideology is becoming increasingly important as a defining factor for journalism. What journalists do – select, interpret, frame and distribute information to an audience – is to a lesser extent than before particular to the role of journalists. In our digital age, anyone can do what journalists traditionally have done. Thus, professional ideology becomes what separates the journalist from the blogger, the press agent, the spin-doctor and other professionals and non-professionals, who select, interpret, frame and distribute information to an audience. Consequently, journalists will increasingly be defined not by what they *do*, but by "the degree to which they choose to adhere to the normative goals of their professional culture", according to Singer (2006, p.13).

Studying changes in professional ideology implies looking for new and changed ideals and values that the profession adheres to. Ideology can be understood as a system of ideas (i.e. a set of values, orientations, and predispositions), or, in a more critical tradition, as struggle over dominance (Hanitzsch, 2007, p.370). Both understandings are relevant to the changes that journalism today is undergoing, and taken together they lead us to an understanding of the professional ideology of journalism as comprising of a hierarchy of ideas that form the basis of how journalists "give meaning to their newswork" (Deuze, 2005, p.444). Which ideas are considered part of this ideology and the order of those ideas vary with time, from country to country, and even from newsroom to newsroom. Traditionally, ideas like independence, objectivity, and accuracy, have been portrayed as vital to the professional ideology of journalism (Golding & Elliott, 1979). Deuze (2005; 2008) argues that five ideal-typical values seem to constitute a journalistic ideology: public service, objectivity, autonomy, immediacy and ethics, while Weaver (1998) argues that this ideology, with minor variations, is accepted across nations. These values express a "dominant occupational ideology of journalism on which most news

workers base their professional perceptions and praxis, but which is interpreted, used and applied differently among journalists across media" (Deuze, 2005, p.445; Shoemaker & Reese, 1996, p.11).

Singer (2006) argues that the changes brought forward by the internet, social media and other kinds of new technology, have highlighted two ideals as vital when journalists in western democracies are to distinguish themselves from other providers of information: independency and accountability. Journalists are distinguished from other information providers by their independency from other parties' interests, and by them being accountable both to themselves as professionals and to the public interest. Trustworthiness, credibility, fairness and balance have thus become increasingly important values for journalists, according to Singer (2006, p.7). However, researchers interested in the professional ideology of journalism do almost without exception base their evaluations on practices of *hard* news. Sports journalism and especially football journalism (given this sport's world wide popularity) is on the popular end of journalism and closely tied to the market-driven economy of the modern day press (Boyle, 2006). Within this kind of journalism others ideals, like entertainment, play important roles. Sports journalists might therefore experience a clash of ideals when they base their practice in a professional ideology. As Rowe (2005, p.126) states: "Striking an appropriate balance between information, entertainment and critique is […] a significant dilemma for sports journalism". The distinction between the sports journalist and the sports fan might even be blurred, especially in local sports journalism (ibid.2005, p.132f).

Immediacy and Dialogue in Online Journalism

The two characteristics that make up the "liquid" nature of online journalism are immediacy and interactivity (Deuze, 2007). Journalism has always relied on immediacy. The ability to bring forward news to an audience as fast as possible has been a priority, and an ideal, for practitioners of journalism since the dawn of the profession. In fact, immediacy is embedded in the very concept of what news is – if it isn't delivered with a sense of immediacy, it isn't news (Deuze, 2008).

Broadcast media have traditionally been associated with immediacy to a greater extent than the printed press, since rolling news and live coverage of events has been a priority for both radio and television news casts. The introduction of 24/7 news broadcasters like the CNN, BBC World and so forth promoted immediacy to the very top of the hierarchy of ideals that constitute the ideology behind such journalistic practices. And the introduction of the Internet and thus online newspapers has furthermore boosted the importance of immediacy since the online publication of news is not restricted by definite deadlines.

A wide range of empirical research on online journalism leave little doubt that immediacy is perhaps the most significant norm for such practices of journalism (Aviles et al., 2004; Domingo, 2006; Domingo, 2008; Fortunati et al., 2005; Karlsson & Strombäck, 2010; Quandt et al., 2006; Singer, 1997). Many scholars have, however, expressed concerns about the degree to which the rise of immediacy overshadows other significant journalistic ideals, like accuracy, trustworthiness, credibility and balance. Immediacy as a journalistic ideal promotes speed over fact checking and accuracy, according to Hall (2001, p.134). Paterson, based on similar arguments, concludes that the disappearance of deadlines in online newsrooms has

"negative implications for the quality of news" (2008, p.6) and that online journalists as a consequence have a second-class status within the profession because they fail to adhere to traditional values of journalism, like the above mentioned.

Interactivity is also often portrayed as a core characteristic of online journalism (Dahlgren, 1996; Deuze, 2004), and it is a concept that floods the literature on online journalism with all its different meanings (Steensen, 2011). In this paper I will focus on one particular aspect of interactivity, namely the integration of user-generated content (UGC) in online newspapers – a practice that has paved the way for the dialogical turn in new media journalism. This dialogic turn in journalism has attracted lots of attention from researchers in recent years as a response to the broader trends of web 2.0 and its social media, and the "participatory culture" (Jenkins, 2006) these phenomena are part of. This research is dominated by questions such as the degree to which users are allowed to interact with online newsrooms/online journalists through emails; the extent to which online news sites offer discussion forums; and whether users are allowed to comment on stories or in other ways be involved in the production process (see Steensen, 2011 for an overview). Domingo et al. (2008) argue that there are five different stages in the production process of journalism that users may be invited to participate in: *Access and observation*; *Selection/filtering*; *Processing/Editing*; *Distribution*; and *Interpretation*. However, their analysis reveals that allowing the audience to participate in the selection/filtering stage and especially in the processing/editing stage is rarely to be found in the production of online journalism.

This paper is based on empirical investigations of the coverage of football matches in the two Norwegian online newspapers *VG Nett* and *dagbladet.no*, which both, in different manners, are in the forefront of exploring immediacy and audience participation particularly in their live coverage of sports events. These online newspapers are offspring of the two most popular print tabloids in Norway, which both put great emphasis on sports journalism. However, both *Dagbladet* and *VG* differ from the tabloids found in Britain and elsewhere, as they adhere to what Eide (2004) labels the schizophrenic practice and culture of journalism where quality journalism and sensationalist reporting go hand-in-hand. *Dagbladet* is today divided between a cultural intellectual profile and "boulevard" journalism, while *VG*'s schizophrenia is characterised by a simultaneous occupation with both personalised and sensationalist journalism, and thorough, investigative reporting (Eide, 2004, p.245). The online editions *dagbladet.no* and *VG Nett* have inherited these profiles. We can in other words expect that traditional ideals and values of "quality" newspaper journalism go hand in hand with ideals of entertainment and sensation in these online newspapers.

VG Nett and *dagbladet.no* are chosen for analysis because they have applied different strategies to their online live coverage of Norwegian football. *VG Nett* holds the rights to transmit the matches live (a service that requires a subscription), and they hold the rights to incorporate video clips of important events (like goals scored) into their text-based live coverage. *VG Nett* has therefore focused its resources on developing systems that allow for fast and smooth incorporations of video clips. They use *CoveritLive* as an additional tool separated from the minute-by-minute coverage of matches.

Dagbladet.no, on the other hand, do not hold any rights to transmit video clips, and has therefore devoted its resources to developing a software were incorporation of audience participation is the most prominent feature. *Dagbladet.no* does not use *CoveritLive*, but relies

on a similar, albeit more dynamic and sophisticated in-house produced software. Comparing these two online newspapers therefore allows for an evaluation of the importance of audience participation vs. immediacy when it comes to assessing to what degree these two characteristics promote any new ideals to the professional ideology of journalism.

Notes on Method

The research to be presented is based on 12 semi-structured, qualitative interviews with journalists who cover football matches live (9 interviews) and with editors/journalists who had the responsibility of developing the strategies behind what the coverage looks like in the two online newspapers (3 interviews). The focus of these interviews was to have the journalists describe what they do during the live coverage, what they think is important to their work, and how they relate such a practice to other practices of journalism they are accustomed to. Prior to the interviews, I spent one Sunday afternoon/evening in each of the two newsrooms during a round of the Norwegian (and English) premier league football. The purpose of these small-scale periods of participant observation was mainly to gain insight into how the practice actually unfolded and if I, by watching it as it happened, could discover some values and ideals that could guide the direction of the interviews. The method therefore followed a grounded theory approach, where data from the observation periods were analysed in order to detect relevant themes and incidents that would shape the focus of the interviews. Each and every interview was immediately analysed in order to discover any new themes that could be elaborated further in the next interview in line with the guidelines for grounded theory research proposed by Corbin and Strauss (1990). A research assistant transcribed the interviews and the final analysis was conducted with the aid of the qualitative analysis software *HyperResearch*. Different ideals and conflicts between such were coded as they were identified in the transcripts. For instance, if a journalist would say "now that we have video, we have to follow a higher standard of accuracy in our descriptions", then this part of the interview would be assigned the code "objectivity", since what the journalist here describes is interpreted as belonging to this ideal. The codes allowed the software to produce reports where the spread of different ideals and conflicts could be traced. The most common ideals and conflicts thus emerged from these reports.

Lastly, I will also draw up on a previously conducted content and conversation analysis of a *VG Nett* match-day *CoveritLive* session (Steensen, forthcoming)

Presenting the Cases

Prior to the kick-off of the 2009 football season in Norway, *VG Nett* re-designed their live service ("*VG Live*") where football matches are covered. *VG Live* is a mash-up of among other things statistics, minute-by-minute coverage of matches, video clips, live transmissions of matches and audience participation through *CoveritLive* (see Figure 1). *VG Nett*'s ambition with *VG Live* is that everything associated with live coverage of football matches should be accessible within the same interface. The interface is therefore dynamic – the single user decides which match should be displayed as minute-by-minute coverage in the center, lower half of the interface; whether the *CoveritLive* panel shall be visible or not, etc. Scores on each match are

updated automatically, as is the CoveritLive window and the minute-by-minute coverage of each match.

[Insert Figur 1 about here]

According to the head of development in *VG Nett*, Henrik Odiin, preparing the Live service for video transmission demanded lots of resources, which otherwise might have been used to secure an even tighter integration of for instance user-generated content. "We made priorities according to a 'need to have' list and a 'nice to have' list. Audience participation and user generated content was on the nice-to-have list", says Odiin.[2] Instead of developing their own system for audience participation, they therefore implemented the *CoveritLive* software, but not before the 2010 season kicked off, and not during every round of premier league matches.

Dagbladet.no's live service is based on a piece of in-house produced software called "the studio", which was launched in 2009. This piece of software is used to cover all kinds of events, not only sports. "The studio" is dynamic in the sense that the interface may be changed according to what kind of event that is to be covered. The coverage of football matches uses a specific version of "the studio" called "the football studio" (see Figure 2). In this interface, the right panel is a discussion forum labeled "the stand" (Norwegian: "Tribunen"). Users have to be registered with *dagbladet.no* in order to log on to "the stand".

[Insert Figure 2]

Most of the action in "the football studio" goes on in the wide centre area. Here, the journalists who are logged in as studio hosts cover all matches simultaneously. These journalists comment on developments in the matches, ask questions for the audience to debate, and pull comments from "the stand" on to the main frame. Readers only interested in the developments in one match, can click on the match in the left panel and get a live feed from that match – but this live feed is not written by the *dagbladet.no* journalists.

The main aim of the "studio" is, according to Editor Jon Reidar Hammerfjeld, to have an interface where the journalists can interact with the audience in the coverage of live events. "Since 2000 we have based our practice on the principle that the audience knows a lot more than we do", says Hammerfjeld.[3] Hence, audience participation is something *dagbladet.no* strives for in all its operations, including the live coverage of football matches, according to Hammerfjeld.

Before these two cases are analysed, one question must be dealt with: is the practice of covering live football matches in *VG Nett* and *dagbladet.no* at all journalism? The question is relevant, because the practice no doubt belongs to the outer margins of what journalism is. The journalists – or the "livers", as they call themselves – do little more than watch football matches on television sets/PC screens and write short paragraphs on what's going on. There's close to no gathering of information from other sources involved, next to no critical assessments of information, little consideration for presentation, etc – all things commonly associated with the things journalists do. Yet, the "livers" themselves do not doubt that their practice is a practice of journalism. First, all of them (in both *VG Nett* and *dagbladet.no*) are trained journalists, most of

them with a degree in journalism and all of them with some prior experience with journalism. Second, all the "livers" operate as regular sports journalists on a day-to-day basis. Some of them are permanently hired and have been so for many years, while others are call-on-temps with more irregular working schedules. But all of them consider themselves journalists and all of them are involved in more traditional practices of journalism, like finding story ideas, checking facts, gathering information from sources, and writing stories based on a critical assessment of sources, facts and angel. Only one of the "livers" expressed uncertainty as to whether the practice should be considered journalism. This journalist was not particularly interested in football and did not enjoy being involved with the audience. He argued that someone else, someone who are not professional journalists, could cover the matches live. But he was the only one that expressed such a view, and hence I will for the rest of this paper take for granted that the practice should be considered a practice of journalism – not only because the ones that are involved see themselves as journalists and function as journalists on a regular basis, but also because there is a long tradition of considering live coverage of major sports events as a practice of journalism.

In the following sections I will present the values and ideals found to be important for the coverage in each of the two online newspapers. I will also discuss some clashes of ideals found in both online newsrooms – clashes that may point to power struggles going on within the professional ideology of the journalists involved.

The Divergent Practices of *VG Live*

On the eve of Sunday 25 April 2010, six online sports journalists, two technicians who handle video clips and the online sports editor are ready to cover the five Norwegian premier league matches from within the newsroom of *VG Nett*. In addition, five journalists are present at the different football stadiums. During this round of premier league football, the "livers" of *VG Nett* devote all their time to pay attention to a single match and write minute-by-minute updates on that match in the *VG Live* interface. These journalists do not interact with the audience. Only the one journalist handling the *CoveritLive* chat partakes in such interactions.

The fast and accurate "liver"

The software of *VG Live* allows the "livers" to automatically mark their entries with the precise minute of the events described. The players involved are chosen from a pull-down menu. The score and other kinds of facts, which are represented as symbols – like yellow and red cards, goal chances, free kicks, corners, etc. – are all just a click on the mouse away. These automated operations are all made ready for them to use so that they can concentrate on being as fast and accurate as possible in the actual description of the events on the pitch. During my one-day field observations the "livers" published on average 60 updates per 90-minute match – almost one new entry each one and a half minute.[4] Most entries were one or two periods long, some – particularly descriptions of goals scored – might be up to eight periods long, but that was rare.

The typical entry by a journalist in a minute-by-minute coverage of a football match read like this:

> **80** Shelton tries to get a pass through to Moa, but the Odd defence manages to stop the break through this time.[5]

The entries are mainly descriptive. Some entries may contain normative evaluations; a pass may be described as "fantastic", a goal as "marvellous", etc. Occasionally, the "livers" may give general evaluation like "The home team is still in control of the match" and "No doubt, Haugesund has been the best team so far", but neutral descriptions dominate.[6]

In the interviews, the "livers" of *VG Nett* emphasis the need to be as accurate and fast as possible, in addition to being knowledgeable on football. Being accurate has become even more important for them since video clips became part of the live coverage. As one of them explains:

> Now that we have video, we have to follow a higher standard of accuracy in our descriptions, because the audience might see the events themselves. [...] It's easier to get caught now if you make a mistake. If you write 'scored with his left foot' next to a video clip symbol, and the audience by clicking on that symbol can see that the goal was actually a header ... it just looks stupid. (Interview)

The focus on accurate descriptions pushes *objectivity* towards the top of the hierarchy of ideals, even though this comes into conflict with some thoughts some of the "livers" (the more experienced ones) have on what their practice *should* be like. These "livers" compare their role to for instance the sports commentators' role on television, and argue that their practice to a greater extent should involve subjective evaluations and comments, which is quite common for TV sports commentators. One experienced "liver" says:

> I think that our live coverage could be more subjective. [...] It could be more based on the journalist's impressions – we are perhaps too much of cowards. [...] We write 'could look like a penalty' instead of having a strong opinion on the matter. [...] We could be a bit tougher; at least we shouldn't be so afraid of offending the fans or whatever. (Interview)

Immediacy as an ideal might also come into conflict with such subjectivity. One other experienced "liver" says that he wouldn't mind to be more subjective and personal in his writing, but if the match he covers contains lots of action there is no time for such subjective remarks – he must concentrate on describing the numerous events as accurately as possible.

Another experienced "liver" believes he has found a system to balance immediacy and subjectivity. He uses exclamation marks, which takes next to no time to add, to express a kind of subjective evaluations. He uses one exclamation mark if a team scores once, two if they score twice, three if they score three times, and so forth. So, if a player called Moa makes it 4-0 in the 73ed minute, he would immediately publish an entry that read "73 4-0 Moa!!!!", before he would write a longer, more descriptive entry. The exclamation marks then express both admiration and some kind of emotional response to the goals scored. One would perhaps think that this system would go un-noticed by the audience, but, according to the journalist: "Once

when I used only one [exclamation mark] after the third goal, I was criticised by a reader, who asked me 'why do you use only one exclamation mark?' So they do pay attention..." (interview)

The subjective democracy of CoveritLive

In addition to the minute-by-minute coverage that the "livers" produce, *VG Live* also hosts a *CoveritLive* coverage during most rounds of premier league football. This coverage is normally hosted and moderated by the same journalist – an experienced and highly profiled sports journalist, who also does lots of minute-by-minute coverage. This journalist describes the *CoveritLive* coverage as a very different kind of practice compared to the minute-by-minute coverage – "it's a *completely* different thing", he says (interview). He calls the *CoveritLive* practice "a chat" and says that the aim is to "[...] involve and engage the readers. [...] I write so that the readers should have more fun when they follow the matches live – that's the point" (interview).

The role he takes in the *CoveritLive* "chat" is partly the one of an expert, partly the one of a chat moderator (Steensen, forthcoming). Readers pose questions like "On what place do you think Start will end up this season?"[7] The questions are mostly related to football, but not restricted to the Norwegian premier league and the ongoing matches. The journalist answers most of the questions, even the personal ones, and says he leaves no one out, except questions related to for instance his religion (his name might be interpreted as a Muslim name). In addition, he poses questions to the readers, in form of for instance polls he want readers to participate in, or direct questions for them to debate, like "Are you surprised by the success of Haugesund this season?" He also publishes comments and evaluations on all matters related to football, like an entry were he criticises a ranking of the best Norwegian footballers published in the competing newspaper *Dagbladet* – an evaluation he calls "completely pointless". This might be interpreted as if this practice is driven by an ideal of subjectivity, but this is an ideal he is not quite comfortable with:

> This is the thing that bothers me the most with the chat. All activities on *VG Nett* are dependent upon a front-section visibility, so I have to be very 'tabloid' if the chat is to be fronted on the front-section. I think that's wrong. I have to write some tabloid viewpoint, and then I have to tell the front-section editor that now I have written some tabloid remarks... It just doesn't feel right. (Interview)

Effects of Participation in *Dagbladet.no's* 'Studio'

Dagbladet.no's "football studio" differs from *VG Live* since it does not divide the journalists into two groups – those who cover matches live and those who are involved with the audience. On the eve of Sunday 6 May 2010 three journalists are about to cover five matches. In addition, *Dagbladet* have reporters present at the different stadiums who are supposed to write stories on the matches for both the print and online edition to be published immediately after the games are finished.

The three journalists all log on to the "studio". They all have two PC screens in front of them, one from where they operate the "studio" and other computer related tasks, and another where they watch live transmissions of the matches on web-TV. They do not decide who should cover which games but they do decide on whom of them should be responsible for pulling user-generated comments from "the stand" into the main frame – this is necessary in order for them not to risk dragging the same comment in twice. They start to write comments in the main frame of the "studio" almost 45 minutes before kick-off, comments containing team line-ups and interview statements from coaches, etc.

Subjectivity and humour

It immediately becomes clear that the tone of their comments is rather different from what is common in *VG Live*. 10 minutes before kick-off, one of the journalists quotes the Rosenborg coach Nils Arne Eggen, who made a comeback as coach this evening:

> 17:50 - We shall control this game, there is no reason to state otherwise. But it remains to be seen if we are able to do so, says Eggen to TV 2. He is enjoying himself now – finally back on telly.[8]

Personal remarks, like the one in the last period of the above quote, are quite common in the journalists' way of covering the matches. The importance of such subjectivity is something they emphasise in the interviews when asked to describe their practice. "We use a lot of humour, a lot of personality, we are a bit more self-exposed than if we were just to do sober reporting", says one of the journalists (interview). They find this ideal important to their strive for reader involvement. "We try as best we can to get the readers involved. So we have to be passionate, we have to have a sense of humour, our comments must have a sting to them, so that you can provoke people", says another journalist (interview).

There is, however, a slight discrepancy between their perception of their practice and what they actually do. Most of the comments that the journalists write during the matches are related to major events on the different pitches, and they mostly contain descriptions of these events. These descriptions are generally a bit more colourful then the ones found in *VG Live* – the "livers" of *dagbladet.no* tend to use more adjectives, for instance – but their primary rhetoric function seems to be to inform an audience about ongoing events.

The conflict between dialogue and information diffusion

Occasionally, the journalists pose questions for the readers to debate, but more often they pull comments from the readers that are logged on to "the stand" into the main frame. One motivation for doing so, according to the interviews, is for the journalists to make a point, or a joke, in their response to the reader. An example is when a reader posted the following comment, which was dragged into the main frame: "hehe, as a Brann fan, I guess I had considered it :) My dream of watching Liverpool – Brann in CL [Champions League] will not come true…". The first part of this comment makes no sense, since it clearly is a response to a previous comment on "the stand" – a context, which is no longer visible as the comment is

pulled into the main frame. The reason why the journalist chose to drag this comment into the main frame is to be found in his response – which is a response to the latter part of the comment: "Who has the longest way to go, do you think – Liverpool or Brann?" This comment makes a point of mocking Liverpool's changes to reach the Champions League, even though the reader obviously was occupied with the Norwegian team Brann's chances being slimmer as it was about to lose it's ongoing match.

This journalist-reader exchange points to two interesting observations. First, reading the live coverage in the main frame can be a rather challenging experience, since a lot of the communication is taken out of context and is therefore to some extent deprived of meaning. Second, much of the communication based on comments to and from readers becomes almost like one-to-one communication between a journalist and a single reader. Viewed together, these two observations might leave an impression that the coverage of live football in *dagbladet.no*'s "studio" risks alienating the largest part of the audience, namely those who are *not* logged on to "the stand", because the communication becomes internal and difficult to interpret for outsiders.

This is a risk that the journalists are well aware of. In the interviews, they express concerns as to whether their coverage and their emphasis on involving the active part of the audience might lead them into a state of introversion. Many of the participants on "the stand" are regulars, and even though more than one thousand users are logged on during a typical round of football matches, only a fraction of them contribute with comments on a regular basis. The journalists point out that they feel they know these regulars. One journalist says: "We have 'googled' some of them. [...] I know where some of them live, what they do, how old they are, what team they support, what provokes them and what gets them involved" (interview). This tight bond between the journalists and a small fraction of the audience creates a conflict of interest between different ideals. One journalist says:

> It's a balance between sharing information and participating in a dialogue. You have to constantly be aware of that balance, even though it is easy to forget – you easily get caught up with the dialogue you're involved in. But it's important to stay focused and actually inform about what's going on. [...] Sometimes people think we are *VG* or some of the others who pay more attention to what's going on on the pitch, but we are more like an online community. (interview)

Treating *dialog with readers* as an ideal might in other words compromise another important ideal, namely the basic ideal of providing relevant information to the audience. The journalist quoted above went on to tell about a quarrel he had with a reader, who wanted more facts and less dialogue in "the studio": "I told him 'we are just trying to have a nice time here. If you are to continue this, I suggest you go to *VG Nett*'" (interview).

The journalists' occupation with dialogue with the audience makes them emphasis social skills as important for their practice. The journalist who told a reader "we are just trying to have a nice time", also talks about the importance of making the readers "feel they are seen" (interview). Another journalist says: "It's of vital importance that everyone may have their say and that they *feel* they may have their say" (interview). This journalist also underlines how nice he thinks it is when the readers write comments on how nice a time they are having.

Another journalist emphasises the need to be nice and polite: "Sometimes you get the urge to correct them [the readers] when they are wrong about something, but then you have to do it in a polite way and *not* lose your temper. I believe social skills are important."

Discussion

From the analysis above it seems clear that it is the degree of audience participation that affects the norms and ideals of the journalistic practice of reporting live football in an online newspaper the most. There is a clear divide between, on the one hand, the non-participant minute-by-minute coverage in *VG Live*, and on the other hand the *CoveritLive* "chat" in *VG Live* and "the football studio" in *dagbladet.no*.

For the journalists who do non-participant coverage in *VG Live* traditional norms and ideals dominate. They are pre-occupied with accuracy, trustworthiness and objectivity, although some expresses a willingness to be more normative and thus subjective in their coverage. This practice is therefore to some extent marked by such a conflict of ideals. However, the technological affordance of integrating video clips into this live coverage boosts the traditional ideals, since the journalists feel this feature makes it even more important for them to be accurate. As opposed to what for instance Hall (2001) and Paterson (2008) previously have argued immediacy also seems to boost objectivity as an ideal, since time pressure makes it more difficult for the journalists to write subjective comments – they find it easier and faster to write "objective" descriptions.

The journalistic practice of moderating the *VG Live CoveritLive* chat and hosting the *dagbladet.no* "studio" is marked by audience participation in several of the stages of journalistic production mentioned by Domingo et al. (2008). The audience participates in the *access and observation* stage, since it is allowed to contribute with content within the "story" as it develops. The *processing/editing* stage is also open to audience participation, at least in practice, since the journalists do not edit the user-generated entries. However, the journalist do have the possibility and power to moderate user-generated entries, so this stage is best described as partially open. The *interpretation* stage is also open to audience participation, and even though the journalists maintain control of the *selection/filtering* stage, one might argue that the audience is allowed to participate even in this stage, since almost all entries submitted by the audience are published with minimal to no moderation. This implies that audience participation in such practices of journalism is not to the same extent marked by the rules, conventions and overall performance criteria found to be important for audience participation in for instance the moderation of text messages from the audience during televised public affairs programs (Enli, 2007; Ytreberg, 2004), or in more traditional forums for audience participation, like letters to the editor (Raeymaeckers, 2005; Wahl-Jorgensen, 2002). The only stage that remains closed is the *distribution* stage, since the audience is presented with no options to redistribute the coverage (apart from sharing the url). In sum, the degree of openness for audience participation in *VG Nett*'s *CoveritLive* chat and *dagbladet.no*'s "studio" is much higher than what is found to be common in online journalism in general.

Coupled with this increase in audience participation in the various stages of the journalistic production process is the journalists' tendency to embrace a norm of subjectivity in reporting. This suggests that objectivity is an unwanted and perhaps impossible value to

maintain when journalists engage in direct interactions with the audience, a point also made by Enli (2007). The communication becomes personified, thus prompting the journalists to give something of themselves in order to attract partners in dialog among the audience. However, a norm of subjectivity is not uncommon in sports journalism. Sports commentators feast on the wits of their subjective remarks and the sports reporter might even get tangled up in a discourse of sports fandom (Rowe, 2005, p.133). The research presented here does therefore not provide any evidence for the rise of subjectivity as a more significant ideal in online, participatory journalism than in traditional journalism. It would, however, be interesting to see if further research on practices of participatory journalism not related to sports journalism also could detect an increased emphasis on the ideal of subjectivity.

The analysis presented in this paper does however provide some indications of conflicting ideals brought forward by the combination of audience participation and immediacy in online journalism. The coverage of the football matches in both *VG Live* and *dagbladet.no*'s "studio" is to some extent marked by the core journalistic ideal of providing accurate and immediate information about unfolding events. It seems that this ideal comes into conflict with the ideal of democratic participation brought forward by how software like *CoveritLive* are used. As discussed above, this conflict of ideals led to some confusion as to what the core aim of the journalistic practice was to be. At least one of the journalists revealed having argued with some members of the audiences over these two conflicting ideals. This suggests that an ideal of democratic participation might not be compatible with an ideal of accurate and immediate information diffusion. An increased focus on audience participation in several of the stages of journalism production might therefore result in significant changes to the professional ideology of journalism.

Furthermore, the findings suggest the rise of a new, important professional skill for journalists who are engaged in practices with a high degree of audience participation. These journalists must possess a high level of social competence. They must be good judgers of character in order to know for example how far they can go in making jokes on behalf of participants without alienating them. They must, in other words, know their audience and know how to entertain it. Such people skills thereby promote a new ideal to the professional ideology of journalism – an ideal of social cohesion. This ideal comes into conflict with the traditional ideal of independent reporting, which implies keeping a critical distance to sources rather then cozying up with them. It might also come into conflict with the traditional ideal of providing relevant information as fast as possible to the audience, as the ideal of social cohesion is directed towards pleasing mainly the *participating* part of the audience. Since this part of the audience is likely to be in minority there is a risk that an increased emphasis on social cohesion in the hierarchy of ideals that constitute the professional ideology of journalism might lead to an alienation of the majority of the audience. That, we must assume, is something most journalists do not want, and further research should look into how this potential conflict is dealt with in online newsrooms.

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Notes

[1] Launched in 2007, CoveritLive soon became extremely popular with online newspapers. News sites like *The Globe and Mail* in Canada, *Newsweek*, *Sky News*, all the online newspapers of the British Trinity Mirror group, and leading Scandinavian online newspapers like *Aftonbladet.se* and *VG Nett* have all started using *CoveritLive* to cover not only sports events, but also other kinds of rolling news.

[2] Interview with author, 29 April 2010.

[3] Interview with author, 20 August 2010.

[4] On the Sunday evening (25 April 2010) I was present in the *VG Nett* newsroom, five matches was covered live. The number of entries per match varied from 51 to 73, averaging on 60 entries per match.

[5] Quote from the coverage of the match between Vålerenga and Odd Grenland, 25 April 2010. The original quote in Norwegian read: "80 Shelton forsøker å slå gjennom Moa, men Odd-forsvaret får stoppet gjennomspillet denne gangen."

[6] All the quotes in this paragraph are taken from the five matches covered on 25 April 2010 and translated by me.

[7] This quote and the following are all taken from the *CoveritLive* chat Sunday 25 April 2010 and translated by me.

[8] This quote and the following ones are from dagbladet.no "the studio" 6 May 2010. My translations.

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Figure 1

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Figure 2

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List of Figure Captions

Figure 1: Grab from *VG Live* 25 April 2010. The *CoveritLive* session is positioned in centre, above the minute-by-minute coverage of a single game. (Used with permission.)

Figure 2: Grab from *dagbladet.no/studio* 6 May 2010. The journaists control the main frame, while the audience are allowed to write commonts on "the Stand" ["Tribunen"] to the right. (Used with permission)

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