

Hope as a Portal to Change: Reimagining Journalism’s Value(s)

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Abstract

In this article, we explore how normative understandings of what “proper journalism” is affects journalistic practices, particularly for those who are trying to develop new types of practices. Drawing on the autoethnography of one of the authors of this article, who is both an academic and an entrepreneurial journalist, we explore how explicit and implicit norms of journalism, and the central values they imply, impact individual experiences of doing journalism. We highlight the pressure that these dominant values and understandings can induce and explore an alternative value that can help guide innovation in journalism. We argue that putting the value of “hope” centrally in the discourse and practice of journalism can help change journalism for the better. By seeing how hope is a driver of change in entrepreneurial journalism — as its practitioners see what is possible, but not yet actual — we provide a new conceptualization of innovation in journalism. In redirecting our attention away from pressure, and toward hope, we also redirect our focus to what is possible in the field. By doing so we can tap into the huge potential for change journalism’s hopeful practitioners endeavor to realize.

Keywords: Pressure; hope; entrepreneurial journalism; innovation; autoethnography.

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1 Introduction

Something is pushing
I am moving

Something is pushing
Turn into a stone

Something is pushing
Run to keep up

Something is pushing
Now what do I do?

Amanda Brouwers

When journalists are called to defend journalistic values and journalism's value in society, they are inadvertently confronted with the question: "what is journalism?" It is a simple, yet infinitely complicated question. Indeed, it has proven quite difficult and even controversial for both researchers and practitioners to define what journalism and news is (Malik & Shapiro, 2016, p. 16; Young & Carson, 2018). What makes defining journalism even more difficult is the many forms of journalism that are constantly forming and "flourishing" next to one another (Deuze & Witschge, 2018, p. 121). In this flux, practitioners appear continuously engaged in "boundary-building discourses" (Eldridge, 2018, p. x) centering on what journalism is, and what it is for. This ultimately leads them to questions regarding the values that are practiced, and how individual journalists can demonstrate these values in their practices, whether explicitly or implicitly. In this article, we explore the normative demands this boundary work makes and how it affects journalistic practices, particularly of those trying to develop new types of practices.

In particular, we need to understand (and challenge) the pressure that comes with maintaining standards and values that are embedded in normative understandings of journalism. Understanding this would allow us, we argue, to adequately respond to the myriad of changing practices in journalism and the existing desire for innovation in the journalistic field (Vos & Singer, 2016). The pressure we speak of is most tangible when journalists attempt to divert from traditional standards and values, and aim to pursue change. Recent research has pointed to entrepreneurial journalists as actors in the journalistic field that are driven by a desire for personal and collective change (Hepp & Loosen, 2019; Wagemans et al., 2016; Wagemans et al., 2019). Therefore, these entrepreneurial journalists are the focus of this article. We examine the way in which entrepreneurial journalism is conceptualized as one of the ways to resolve crises in journalism (Cohen, 2015; Jarvis, in Briggs, 2012; Kreiss & Brennen, 2016) and discuss how this impacts practices, in particular how it puts a pressure on journalists to perform in a certain way.

Ultimately, we do not want to repeat and feed existing normative understandings of journalism, which more often than not are defensive, static and reactionary (Singer, 2015). Instead, we want to challenge these and ask for a more *hopeful* understanding of journalism. Conceptualizing hope as a practice (Mattingly & Jensen, 2015), specifically one that is based on conjectural knowing (Pedersen & Liisberg, 2015), we challenge scholarship that predominantly views journalism from a sense of lack, or treats journalism with a sense of "suspicion" (Witschge & Deuze, 2020). We consider entrepreneurs as those longing for change in journalism (Deuze & Witschge, 2020), which means they operate not from a known, fixed understanding of the

field, but much more from a sense of what is “not yet” (Bloch, in Miyazaki, 2004) and from the possible. In this article we moreover consider the implications of valuing hope for journalism research: with hope as method, we identify the richness and value of current and emerging practices rather than be blinded by what journalism should be and “what it is not.” This opens up a discussion, not about which journalistic values are lost and compromised with change, but about the broad range of values that are already part of, and could be a part of journalistic practices.

To explore how implicit and explicit standards or norms with regard to journalistic values can have an impact on everyday practice, we use an auto-ethnographic approach (Ellis, 2014). In 2016, Amanda co-launched an entrepreneurial journalistic venture: the audio production company called *PodGront*. She did so to collect data on everyday experiences of entrepreneurial journalism for her PhD project which is part of the broader research program “Entrepreneurship at Work”, funded by the Dutch Science Council (2015–2021) and run by Tamara Witschge. We draw on her daily diary entries collected from February 2016 until October 2018, and her personal reflections that continue until 2020. This data is the basis of the critical interrogation of how having to defend specific values as a journalist impacted her work, well-being and creative liberty. Insight into her experiences provides us with the data that allow us to make explicit taken-for-granted assumptions, values, norms and beliefs that are a part of (entrepreneurial) journalism as a practice (Singer, 2018; Steyaert & Landström, 2011; Witschge, 2015).

This auto-ethnographic approach allows us to gain unique knowledge on entrepreneurial journalism. As pointed out by Bengt Johannisson (2011, p. 144), research into entrepreneurship demands a very specific type of interactive research in order to gain insight into the situated knowledge that is part of entrepreneurship: “Since the phenomenon concerns initiating a process, only an invitation that coincides with the very instigation of the process will be appropriate.” Enactive research — in which “the researcher her/himself instigates an entrepreneurial process and practices auto-ethnography or self-ethnography” (Johannisson, 2011, p. 144) — allows us to gain insight into personal experiences which is where the impact of normative understandings is felt and can be researched (Schatzki, 2001). Such an account provides unique insight that retrospective approaches of entrepreneurship cannot attain:

the uniqueness that we associate with entrepreneuring can only be revealed if its initiation and unique development trajectory is tracked by a researcher who is present throughout the process. Accounts of its cognitive and emotive as well as its material manifestations must be captured in the very context in which they are experienced (Johannisson, 2011, p. 147).

In this article, we first outline the discourse on entrepreneurial journalists in academic work centrally featuring the “saviour-discourse” (Deuze & Witschge, 2020), in which the entrepreneurial journalist is mostly defined and valued as the saviour of existing journalistic forms and values. We show how this normative understanding of entrepreneurial journalism brings forth a pressure on individuals and impacts journalist’ practices. To then re-conceptualize entrepreneurial journalism and the focus on change that we can find in the discourse on and in the practices of entrepreneurial journalists (Deuze & Witschge, 2020), we introduce the concept of hope. Allowing for hope as a central driving force in the reconceptualization of what journalism is and what it is for, we are able to do justice to the diversity of values that are practiced throughout journalism. To tap into and highlight this diversity, we argue that we as scholars,

can benefit from a similar drawing on hope as a method for understanding change in journalism: centering on hope we redirect our attention not on that which was, but rather on what is “not yet,” that which is deemed possible under the banner of journalism by its hopeful practitioners.

2 Valuing the Entrepreneur as Saviour of Journalism

Entrepreneurship started gaining popularity in journalism practice and studies at the same time as academic researchers identified several crises in the journalistic field (Gitlin, 2011; Leurdijk, 2015; Singer, 2018; Vos & Singer, 2016). In various countries, media companies reported declining circulation and audience numbers, and faced increasing competition, failing business models and declining levels of trust (Gitlin, 2011; Witschge, 2015). Established media organizations saw themselves forced to reorganize and innovate, changing newsroom structures and cutting jobs in the process (Bruno & Nielsen, 2012; Deuze & Witschge, 2018). In this time of flux, individual journalists experienced increasing levels of precarity in their work (Cohen, 2015; Deuze, 2007; O'Donnell & Zion, 2019). Entrepreneurial journalism has been proposed as an answer to this precarity (Cohen, 2015) and entrepreneurial journalists have been put forward as a solution to the crises. Their search for new forms and practices of journalism was considered to lead to change needed in the broader journalistic field (Ruotsalainen et al., 2019).

Since that time, entrepreneurial journalism found its way into journalistic practices and journalism education (Singer & Broersma, 2019), though no standard definition has emerged (Rafter, 2016; Vos & Singer, 2016). The term is used to refer to a number of different actors, developments and content forms in the journalistic field, including the emergence and growth of a start-up culture in journalism (Wagemans et al., 2016) and the growing number of online start-ups (Marsden, 2017) and freelancers in the journalistic field (Leurdijk, 2015). It tends to include content forms ranging from investigative journalism to hyperlocal news sites (Arends & Van 't Hof, 2020; Singer, 2018).

Entrepreneurial journalism has furthermore introduced a set of specific values at the heart of journalism that may not have been deemed standard in the field. Descriptions of entrepreneurship usually introduce a focus on the individual in charge (rather than brands or newsrooms or other more collective understandings of who produce journalism). They also foreground the ability for monetizing and selling or marketing content and the need to be innovative in one's own practices. Last, entrepreneurs are deemed to be capable to grasp opportunities and respond to (or better yet: shape) its environment. Entrepreneurial journalists have therefore been dubbed “pioneers” (Hepp & Loosen, 2019) and research has emphasized the way in which they search for new forms and new practices of journalism (Leurdijk, 2015; Singer & Broersma, 2019; Wagemans et al., 2016).

Entrepreneurial journalists are not only deemed capable of bringing change to the field, they are actually deemed the saviours of journalism: as answer to the crises they are deemed to help journalism survive. Nicole Cohen observes and explains the saviour-discourse as such:

Central to this discourse is the journalist as entrepreneur, an individual hero called upon to renew journalism's relevance and reinvigorate stagnating business models. (...) The championing of entrepreneurial journalism is a response to spreading precarity, a way to cope with job scarcity, declining wages, declining faith in the occupation, and journalists' declining autonomy and control (2015, pp. 514–516).

The entrepreneurial journalist, while responding to her own precarious working conditions, is proposed as the champion that saves journalism in both academic and popular discourse (Kreiss & Brennen, 2016). Rather than slaying dragons and saving princes, our entrepreneurial journalist constructs working business models, finds ways to renew trust in journalists and re-engages audiences.

Specifically, entrepreneurial journalists are valued for being equipped to address the issue of failing business models, because they have to sell their content as well as produce it (Singer, 2015). This means they can act as an exception to one of the long-standing professional markers of good journalism: the adherence to not crossing “the wall” between editorial and financial content (Coddington, 2015). Entrepreneurial journalists are expected to be able to produce as well as know how to generate an income from content (Singer, 2015) and in doing so are able to change (or rather *be*) the future of journalism: “Entrepreneurs will be the salvation of the news business (...). Journalists must now take on the urgent *responsibility* of building the future of news” (Jarvis, in Briggs, 2012, pp. xv–xvi). Referring to the entrepreneur’s ability to create something new out of existing elements, they are expected to be innovative and agile, coming up with new solutions when slow moving, large companies and rigid governments cannot (Briggs, 2012).

Practicing entrepreneurial journalism with the saviour-discourse in mind means journalists create and design their own jobs, in theory having free range to experiment and innovate with journalism’s form, content and practices. Advocates of entrepreneurial journalism envision these local innovations to then serve as a model for the rest of the news industry (Jarvis, in Briggs, 2012). In this way, entrepreneurial journalists are seen as spearheading change first for themselves, and subsequently for journalism as a whole (Ruotsalainen et al., 2019).

Research into the motivations and practices of entrepreneurial journalists indeed shows their desire for personal and collective change (Arends & Van ’t Hof, 2020; Hepp & Loosen, 2019; Wagemans et al., 2019). It is clear that there is a central focus on change as part of both the discourse and the practice of entrepreneurial journalism. As such a high ideal of what entrepreneurial journalism can offer to the field of journalism as a whole has come into being. But what is the cost of such idealization of the tremendous value put onto change that is supposed to come from the individual practitioner in a field that is deemed in crisis? In other words: how is this specific discourse that is used by advocates and researchers in both academic and popular texts, affecting experiences of individual (entrepreneurial) journalists? We find one answer to this question in Amanda’s experiences when introduced to entrepreneurial journalism at journalism school.

I am sitting in a lecture room. It is almost silent around me. Almost. Behind me, two rows of computers are buzzing. Above me, TL lights are humming. Next to me, I hear pens scratch on the paper, keyboards click under the pressure of fingers. But mostly I listen in front of me. Hanging back, my arms folded, I look at my lecturer. I listen to his booming voice. He is passionate, voice raised, arms moving wildly, eyes spitting fire, trying to motivate us to become entrepreneurial journalists. And all I can think was:

No.

No.

The teacher tries to lure us in by telling us how important we are. We, journalism students, are the future of journalism. We, journalism students, could be more important than everybody who was already working in the field. His words should make me feel special, I guess. My eyes move away from him towards the edge of the table while I let his words sink in.

No.

We, the students, could be the saviours of journalism.

NO.

I don't want to. It's too much pressure. Does that make me a coward? A feeling of insecurity creeps up. Is it my duty to be an entrepreneurial journalist?

But no. I really don't want to. I can feel anger, which is a rare feeling for me. I'm ready to stand up for myself.

In my mind I speak the words that I actually want to say out loud: "I am not doing this. I am not going to present myself as the saviour of journalism. Why do I have to be the one to do so? Can't someone else do it? Someone with more experience?"

This lecture is supposed to motivate us. But rather than hearing a story about an exciting challenge, I hear a story that oozes with major responsibility. Do I not have enough confidence to take it up? Do I genuinely think the task is too big? Do I think it is unfair to expect students to save journalism? Or am I just scared? I feel as if I am rejecting entrepreneurial journalism. It becomes clear that I won't become an entrepreneurial journalist any time soon. In fact, as soon as I hear the word "entrepreneurial journalism" I experience a paralyzing pressure. My body is set in stone and it feels like it can never be moved.

3 The Costs of the Saviour-Discourse

In the saviour-discourse, we see a focus on the *individual* that is expected to save journalism. For, at the heart of the discourse on the entrepreneur as saviour, is the idea of the "committed individual" who is bringing about the necessary change to save journalism: "Thanks to entrepreneurial journalism and the work of the committed individuals leading its charge, the world runs little risk of a future without information" (Kelly, 2015, p. 95). Where journalism for long has been understood as a practice thoroughly embedded in institutional structures, the focus on entrepreneurship shows a significant shift in journalism education, critique and practice where the future of journalism is envisaged to (also) lie in journalistic start-ups, changes in individual journalist's mindsets, and journalists' capability to recognize and grasp business opportunities. Emphasizing individual traits, skills and mindsets, the future of journalism is envisaged in the form of journalists who (alone or in collaboration) are able to monetise content in innovative ways, connect to its publics in interactive new formats, grasp opportunities and respond to (and shape) its environment (see, for instance, Briggs, 2012). Thus, in presenting the entrepreneur as a "saviour" of journalism, we see the focus has been largely on the traits of individual journalists, and less on structural issues underlying production processes, such as the increasing levels of stress journalists have to cope with (Reinardy, 2011) and the lack of a

steady job-security in the journalistic field (Cohen, 2015), or the arbitrariness often involved in the process (Görling & Rehn, 2008).

Such a focus on individuals as the future of journalism, we argue here, produces a pressure on individuals that is detrimental in the long run, and is hindering innovation rather than bringing it about. This pressure was already observable in the first experience Amanda described, and continued as she developed her own company.

In 2016 I created PodGront with five other people. We all loved audio stories, and we all wanted to produce work that we thought would not fit within existing media outlets. To us that meant work that was focussed on background less than on the latest news and work that experimented with form rather than fit into existing structures — f.e. a “choose-your-own-adventure”-podcast or a podcast made from the viewpoint of diseases. I enjoyed working on PodGront, but also noticed that I was doing a lot of the work, and over the course of two years, came to consider myself as the only active member of PodGront. I was lonely and felt powerless: the company was not sustainable yet and I had no idea how to achieve this on my own. Then I received an e-mail, from someone who introduced himself, not as a journalist, but as a serial entrepreneur. He told me he needed podcast producers for his prospective company, and proposed working together. I felt relieved by the promise of help. And I felt flattered a “proper” entrepreneur wanted to talk to me.

So, he and I discussed his request over Skype. We debated our terms and conditions. We discussed what the future would look like if we would work together. I remember feeling both enthusiastic and sceptic about working with this stranger. But there was one moment in the conversation in which I went from envisioning possibilities to completely shutting down. The Entrepreneur told me that having ideals and doing small projects is absolutely fine, but he was done with it. He knew, through his years of experience, that he also needed to pay the bills, and he wanted a company that was big. Well, he didn't say “big”. He said he did not want to operate in the margins. And I froze up as soon as he said this.

I became confused, and a feeling of unrest ignited. It was the way the Entrepreneur said it... as if not wanting to operate in the margins was a universal wish. As if it made perfect sense that one did not want to be in the margins, but... but where? Sitting behind my laptop, I imagined letting my anger out and subjecting the Entrepreneur to a number of questions: What was the opposite of the margins? The centre? The centre of what? Does one only matter if one's company aspires some sort of significance? If your goals are big and you (want to) make a grand impact? In reality, I believe I smiled and I nodded at my screen, but right below my skin, I could feel my body getting frustrated. Slowly but surely, my body was being set on fire. I was rejecting this man, and especially, I was rejecting his ideas. I felt like a small child, sitting on her chair in the corner of the room, stomping her little feet to the ground and yelling on the top of her lungs: “No! I do not want this! Don't make me do this!” Once again, I felt how my body was turning into stone.

In Amanda's experiences it is clear that she is feeling rejection toward the pressure to save journalism and to take up the responsibility of playing a big role in the journalistic field. This is not to say all journalists feel this resistance. As Vos and Ferrucci (2019, p. 50) show, a number of journalists embrace the saviour-role: “‘Who am I? I'm the salvation of journalism.’ The digital journalists studied here are not humble. They seek to see their subgroup in positive terms, and they are supported by the broader journalistic field in those efforts.” We argue here that, despite the individual responses, we need to consider the consequences of the “offloading” of

“the responsibility for journalism’s future onto individuals” (Cohen, 2015, p. 526). Here we would like to highlight in particular, the consequences that are prominent in Amanda’s experiences and our reading of the existing research: (1) a normalization of stress as part of the job, (2) a downplaying of the increasing precarity of journalists’ working conditions and particularly its consequences, (3) a decrease in space to experiment and play, (4) and an aversion to failure. This is not to say these consequences are applicable to every entrepreneurial journalists’ experiences. Rather, it means the saviour-discourse is playing into these consequences, and therefore it is important to both acknowledge and counter this prominent discourse when talking about entrepreneurial journalists.

(1) Amanda’s experience expressed in her reflection in Section 2 shows how she felt an immobilizing pressure when invited to make the lasting change deemed necessary in the field. These feelings of pressure are not unique to entrepreneurial journalism. They are deemed normal throughout or even inherent to journalistic practices. In newspaper journalism, as Reinardy (2006, p. 400) claims “a certain degree of stress is an acceptable consequence of the job.” This normalization of pressure is illustrated by the fact that some journalists even state that “if you burnout, you are not suitable for this profession” (Douwes, 2018). In entrepreneurial journalism this is combined with the “commitment” that is expected when striking on your own — and the pressure that that comes with such a responsibility. In Brouwers and Witschge (2019), we explicate how the norms in the two fields of practice can be seen to reinforce the normalization of hard work. In entrepreneurship the focus is on the responsibility of the individual for making it work, which makes it hard to resist the implicit norms surrounding the amount of stress, pressure and work you should be able to “endure.” With the entrepreneur as saviour, she is attributed “God-like qualities” (Sørensen, 2008), presenting him as a “super-individual”, who should be able to take on the world. As such, questioning whether the amount of pressure is acceptable, is to question whether you are actually a “good” entrepreneur in the field of journalism.

(2) Related to accepting stress and pressure as the status quo in entrepreneurial journalism, precarity is an equally uncontested part of the discourse. This is also not unique to entrepreneurial journalism, as it is a normalized condition of journalism in general (Deuze & Witschge, 2020). However, in entrepreneurial journalism, there is an added relation to precarity: it is mentioned time and time again as a reason for the increasing popularity of entrepreneurial journalism (Cohen, 2015; O’Donnell & Zion, 2019; see also Deuze & Witschge, 2018), and as such is not only part and parcel of the practice, but even the reason people practice it. What remains hidden is how people experience these working conditions once they become a freelancer, set up their own start-up, or start a company with other entrepreneurial journalists. Deuze and Witschge (2020) show that working for a start-up can feel just as, if not more, precarious as working in an existing newsroom. This emotional downside of these working conditions is downplayed as those engaging in entrepreneurial journalism argue that they made an active choice, and thus have to accept these conditions without complaint (Deuze & Witschge, 2020). This does not mean however, that there are no downsides, or that entrepreneurial journalists are not consciously aware of them, as Amanda’s experiences show.

(3) Precarity and pressure can have a rather specific negative consequence that we wish to highlight here, and which is reflected in Amanda’s opening poem: paralysis. Entrepreneurial journalism is deemed *the* space for free play (think of the table tennis tables in all start-ups and the playful design of start-up spaces), and innovation (given their pioneer status). Yet, Amanda’s experiences suggest that the pressure put on individuals can counter the space for these elements. Her experiences show the costs that come with the thought of having to fit

the norms of working hard (see Brouwers & Witschge, 2019), the individual commitment to work beyond what the “job” calls for, and the high expectations placed on entrepreneurs. Furthermore, the idea that an individual needs to “save” journalism suggests a strong normative understanding of what journalism should be, seeing as it is valuable enough to save. Amanda’s auto-ethnographic data show that this normative understanding is precisely what held her back in being free to perform journalism as she liked. Ideas of what was “proper” journalism kept demanding her to come back to what she deemed to be “right”. We see that by placing an emphasis on saving journalism, the saviour narrative implicitly places an unevenly great value on journalism’s current form and function in society.

(4) We see that the offloading of the “responsibility for journalism’s future onto individuals” (Cohen, 2015) also holds consequences for journalists’ engagement with failure. The majority of start-ups fail (Dinnar & Susskind, 2019), also in journalism (Bruno & Nielsen, 2012; Deuze & Witschge, 2020), and failure is considered inherent to both innovation and entrepreneurship (Briggs, 2012; Shepherd et al., 2016). However, the responsibility that is now placed on the shoulders of entrepreneurial journalists weighs heavily on this process of trial and error. An attitude that is geared to survival, and in particular towards saving journalism, may put innovation or learning on the backburner, though this is precisely what is needed, we argue, both for individuals and for the industry to thrive (for the importance of experiment and failure, see also Brouwers, 2017). The question is: how can innovation happen from within this strong normative understanding of the entrepreneurial journalist?

4 Valuing Hope as Driver for Change

In the saviour-discourse on entrepreneurial journalism there are a number of myths that make it hard to live up to the normative expectations put to the individual. As an entrepreneurial journalist you, individually, need to save journalism and ensure its future, amidst societies in which trust in journalism and interest in news are declining. You, individually, need to be able to deal with precarious working conditions, and find a working business model where large news organizations failed. We have argued that we need to consider the pressure and the broader implications that come with this discourse as it impedes the spirit of innovation, playfulness and fearlessness. Having said this, we do not suggest that all entrepreneurial journalists feel the same pressure, paralysis, and limitation of free play, or that they all understand themselves as saviours. Nor do we suggest that there is no pursuit of change or innovative energy in entrepreneurial journalism. Quite the opposite. We argue that if we take the innovative spirit and the well-being and resilience of both individual journalists and the field as a whole seriously, we need to counter the dominant discourse that places pressure and lack at the heart of entrepreneurial journalism.

Here we want to turn to Amanda’s experience more in detail, to consider what we can learn from her relation to change. Resisting the pressure that comes with accepting the task of saving journalism and the responsibility of upholding its traditional values, Amanda does not necessarily resist the label of entrepreneurial journalism (or at least not indefinitely) or the pursuit of change. Rather, with her podcast company she explicitly aimed for innovation in the field, as a lot of other entrepreneurial journalists do as well (Deuze and Witschge, 2020). Upon creating PodGront in 2016, she writes in her notebook: “It’s simple: more space for curiosity, empathy, and experiment.” And she was able to bring about change and produce innovative projects that diverged from how she had considered and had been taught what was journalism, which was particularly focussed on the idea that her journalistic output needed to be immediately relevant

to society. She created a game-based audio tour with both historic and fictional material about the Second World War, experimented with live cooking shows, and explored interactional story structures in a podcast about dogs. All productions produced within the freedom of her own company. Why then do we make such a fuss to resist the normative understanding that depicts the entrepreneur as the harbinger of change and subsequently the saviour of journalism?

The simple answer is that these innovative projects came about not because of Amanda's desire to save journalism, but in spite of this discourse that is prominent in academic and popular texts about entrepreneurial journalism. Indeed, Amanda did not regard any of her PodGront productions as directed towards saving journalism. Her experience and desire for change is not congruent with the way in which change is framed in the saviour discourse. We therefore propose to understand her work with PodGront, and the work of other entrepreneurial journalists, in terms of hope instead. By focusing on hope, we can highlight and understand the rich complexities that are involved in the discourses and practices of Amanda and others. Yes, they can be seen as pioneers, but do not see themselves as saviours of what was. Yes, they uphold a strong set of values that guide them in their endeavor, propelling them forward, and pushing boundaries, but no, they do not want to accept the burden of having to uphold all traditional values. Certainly, there is overlap in the values of entrepreneurs and those of traditional journalism. But it is the normative straitjacket that is what is causing the pressure.

We understand hope as a *future-oriented* practice (Mattingly & Jensen, 2015; Miyazaki, 2004), which is based on *conjectural knowing* (Pedersen & Liisberg, 2015). This means that hope as a practice relies on "what has 'not-yet' become" (Miyazaki, 2004, p. 14), on the future (Miyazaki, 2004; Wentzer, 2015), imaginative horizons (Mattingly, 2010), and change. What people do under the label of hope, they do so based on *missing* information. Hope is asking about and acting upon "what if?", instead of acting on the basis of existing information. Though hope is often understood as a positive feeling or attitude (Rasmussen, 2015), we do not confuse it with optimism. Mattingly and Jensen (2015) show us that "paradoxically, hope is on intimate terms with despair. (...) It is poised for disappointment" (p. 35). Hoping is acting in the face of disappointment. This is the driving force of change: feelings of despair, sadness and frustration causes one to move, and pursue change. And in such a practice of hope, imagination can lead us to envision change which may be improbable, or even unrealistic, and thus surprising or radical.

Within the saviour-discourse, efforts to pursue change would be evaluated in terms of what came before. In her diary entries, Amanda kept coming back to whether she was doing journalism "right", basing her judgment of her actions on what she had understood to be "proper" journalism. With a frame of hope for the future, which is different from a longing for the past, we let go of the shackles of normative frames of how things "ought to be done" and move on to creating something even more beautiful. For Amanda, reflecting on her efforts in through the lens of hope allowed her to do three things:

First, the longer PodGront existed, the less she seemed interested in fitting a specific existing definition or understanding of journalism, and the less defensive she felt for practicing journalism in the way that she did (at some stage she wasn't even bothered anymore with the question if what she was doing, was journalism at all). PodGront became more and more interesting to her the more its projects went beyond journalism as she had predominantly understood it: as a way to report information to citizens.

Second, as she became able to sit with feelings of insecurity and frustration (rather than wishing them away), she could see how these actual feelings were the portal to change. PodGront itself was created in 2016 arising out of feelings of frustration about the lack of experi-

ment in the Dutch podcasting scene at the time, imagining something better was possible.

And, third, once released of the burden of having to save this grand intangible thing called journalism, Amanda's creative spirit kicked in more and more, and where she had experienced anxiety and doubt, came pleasure and energized focus. She started to recognize more and more how any hint at this type of responsibility impeded the spirit of innovation and playfulness she wanted, needed to feel to be able to make anything. The reconceptualization of her work in terms of hope granted her with a sense of space she needed to enjoy her company.

I am sitting on a patch of grass, looking over the pond in a local park. My eyes wander over the ducks and other people relaxing. Across the water I see bright containers and thousand little lights, that are part of our local theatre festival. In a couple of days, I will host my own little party at here. My new business partner Egbert, with whom I am currently running PodGront and organizing this party, is sitting next to me in the grass. It is such a pleasant moment. I feel really... safe. A sensation of warmth creeps over my body — like chemicals have just been released in my abdomen. I imagine, and feel, how they find their way throughout my chest, fill my heart, and finally, make my fingers tingle a little bit. It is not a feeling of relaxation. No. It is energy. It creates a space in which nothing will ever go wrong, whatever I say or do. So I share with him the story of the Entrepreneur.

As I am retelling this story, I feel calm instead of angry. And I wonder: who I was really mad at? Is it fair to now place the Entrepreneur into my story as some kind of villain? I can still feel the anger thinking back, but time has given me some space to reflect. And what I find underneath the anger is fear, not about him, but toward myself. This man identified so clearly with being an entrepreneur, had introduced himself as such, and he mentioned he did not want to operate in the margins. But I did not identify with him nor with his ideas. So I feared, and still fear, for my future: Can I still be an entrepreneur? Can I act as an entrepreneur without wanting to play some big part in the journalistic field? There was a feeling of relief when I realized that I wanted my company to remain small. And at the same time: a brick landing in my stomach, igniting despair. I imagined I was holding my tiny business in the palm of my hand, and people laughing at me when I showed them. I was scared to do things my own way, was afraid I would not belong. It had been easier to blame someone else.

I attempt to explain to Egbert my feelings of frustration by making my internal reaction implicit: "But what is wrong with operating in the margins? I quite like it! Why would I have to operate in the centre?" There is a moment of suspense, in which my words hang in the air, and can either be embraced or stricken down. Egbert answers: "Yes! Exactly! I love working in a niche and making something exceptional for that niche. And I love that for every niche, people may wonder, is there a podcast for that? And then there is something really awesome! For that tiny niche!"

With his response, I feel opportunities opening up. The warm sensation I felt before strengthens, solidifies. I feel safe. I feel accepted. My mind immediately starts tracing "what-ifs". It is already in overdrive, searching for possibilities, for chances, for opportunities in a broader framework. In what is niche. I think of audio tours, festival podcasts, playing with sounds around a park. My body brimming with energy...

5 The Implications of Hope

Hope is a word packed with numerous possibilities. In our concluding remarks we would like to highlight that adopting hope as lens to understand new forms of journalism, also holds implications for how we approach the field. For adopting hope as lens means to have space for emotions, which within this understanding hold the key to understanding change. We have not been good with dealing with emotions in the field (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2019), and particularly allowing the more uncomfortable ones to surface in our research is demanding. To sit with and see how frustration, anger and sadness are driving forces is harder than to suggest a blind optimism to be at the heart of change.

Hope as lens also means that we need to have faith in and attention for another type of knowing than we normally do. In journalism studies, as in other fields, entrepreneurship is understood as a strategic process, with “reliance on conscious intention and goal-orientation” (Chia, 2017, p. 107). Here we suggest that we start to understand more that (and how) “conjectural knowing” (and even non-knowing) are at the basis of action and change. This means that in our studies we need to pay attention also to tacit knowing (Polanyi, 1966), which is all the more difficult to grasp. Understanding the different ways of knowing would ask us to adopt an approach much more focused on experiences. In this way we can also start to see how values that may be deemed to be clashing, can sit side by side and each inform journalistic practice in its own way (see also Witschge et al., 2019).

Last, a lens of hope suggests that we let go of our preconceived ideas of what is journalism (as some of the practitioners we mentioned do), and start to look in a more open, receptive way at the diversity of practices happening in the field (see also Witschge & Deuze, 2020). If we use traditional values and understandings of journalism as benchmarks, we do not only miss out on seeing a rich diversity but also feed the discourses that we, in this article, have shown to hinder change and well-being. If we hope for another journalism, as scholars we need to see our contributions to the vested ways. Can we expand our imaginative horizons and help journalists create something more beautiful?

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