

Press “Taboos” and Media Policy: West German Trade Unions and the Urge to Gain Media Attention During the Era of Press Concentration

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In view of an increasing economic concentration in the press sector in the 1960s, media policy discourses on regulation emerged in the Federal Republic of Germany as in other Western countries. Drawing on the theories of mediatization and discursive institutionalism, the study analyzes how the German Journalists’ Union engaged in these discourses. The analyses of archival materials and published sources for the period between 1962 and 1979 reveal that the umbrella organization German Trade Union Confederation remained hesitant about larger public initiatives for media policy. The organization considered its own trade union press and public relations as responses to a media environment characterized by press concentration. The Journalists’ Union also adhered to these ideational rules but got strongly engaged in the media policy debates. Therefore, the Journalists’ Union did not only pursue its own interests but also dealt with the general media attention problem that trade unions perceived to have.

Keywords: Media policy, press concentration, trade unions, press law, mediatization, discursive institutionalism

In the postwar decades, the increasing economic concentration in the press generated media policy discourses about the power over opinion building in the Western world (Van Cuilenburg & McQuail, 2003). Trade unions were among the actors exerting pressure on policy makers to take countermeasures (Humphreys, 1996). When trade unions entered this debate, they had had their own history with the media. Trade unions had experienced that their own press could not compete in a commercial press market. It had received only a lukewarm response from its readers (Beers, 2009; Grace, 1985; Humphreys, 1996; Merkel, 1996). About the privately owned press, trade unions had repeatedly complained about the hostility of its coverage (Beers, 2009). Like “anyone with a message,” trade unions had recognized the value of media attention. Despite their comparatively strong position in the postwar welfare states, these large membership organizations needed this “strategic resource” (Hjarvard, 2008, p. 107) to promote awareness of working

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world issues and support for their actions. Trade unions' attempts to secure this resource through public relations turned out to be limited for various reasons (Hemkes, 2011; Puette, 1992). Therefore, when press concentration and media ownership became an issue for policy makers in the decades after 1945, an opportunity for trade unions emerged to politically shape the conditions of their own visibility in the commercial press.

The present study considers the case of the West German Journalists' Union (Deutsche Journalisten-Union) from 1962 to 1979 to study how trade union media policy was related to their urge to gain media attention. In this time period, debates on media change and political regulation were virulent among trade unionists and in society as a whole. The Journalists' Union represented print journalists and was a small member among the 16 unions within the German Trade Union Confederation (Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund). The union of journalists was involved in two issues closely related to press concentration: the so-called internal freedom of the press and journalism education. The term internal freedom of the press describes the idea of securing journalistic independence by establishing codetermination within a media organization (Humphreys, 1994).

The distinctive engagement of the Journalists' Union led us to pursue the following thesis. By engaging in the discourse about the internal freedom of the press and journalism education from 1962 to 1979, the Journalists' Union did not only pursue its own interests (regulating the relationship between editors and press proprietors) but also dealt with the general attention problem that trade unions perceived to have with commercial press.

There are several arguments about the relevance of this historical study. The first relates to choosing this specific case. By using the example of the German Journalists' Union and its relationship to the Confederation, we can learn how trade unions became involved in press reform initiatives and why they hesitated to do so. That our example is a union for journalists does not create a conflict with this lesson. On the contrary, it is exactly because its officials and members were experts concerning the press and, at the same, time strongly adhered to classical unionist ideas that this example is most suitable. As our study will illustrate, the Journalists' Union was a driver in terms of unionist media policy, while the Confederation was slow in getting more deeply involved. Our study helps to understand why actors articulate certain problem definitions and policy solutions in media policy discourses and why conflicts might emerge within organizations about such issues of definatory power. Actors' need for media attention and the (perceived) conditions to get this attention are key to understanding this question. We accomplish this by linking media policy research to mediatization research (Löblich, 2018b).

The first section establishes the theoretical background. Our study draws on mediatization and discursive institutionalism to study to what extent the Confederation and the Journalists' Union became involved in the West German media policy discourse. The second section describes the historical context, followed by the third, which describes the archival and published sources. Findings (section 4) reveal the hesitancy of the Trade Union Confederation and the special position of the German Journalists' Union in discourses about media policy.

Mediatization and Discursive Institutionalism

Our study applies an institutionalist concept of mediatization (Meyen, Thieroff, & Strenger, 2014; Strömbäck & Esser, 2014), which we combine with discursive institutionalism (Schmidt, 2008). Mediatization provides us with an interpretive framework to understand what the media attention problem was for the trade unions and to which discourses within the Confederation it led.

Mediatization is a reaction of social actors in modern differentiated societies to the mass media that "have become increasingly influential in and deeply integrated into different spheres of society" (Strömbäck & Esser, 2014, p. 4). The basis of this assumption is that social actors believe in the mass media effects on individuals and know that other actors do as well. Trying to take advantage of these effects, they adapt their strategies to the media, shift resources, or change internal rules to receive media attention (Meyen et al., 2014). We conceptualize media policy as a further response of actors to the changing rules of media reality construction apart from public relations or producing one's own media channels. According to mediatization, trade unions responded to structural changes in the media system and to the increasing significance of mass media. They belong to organizations that cannot ignore the public (Stanley, 2018). Historically, several periods of mediatization can be distinguished, each one with its own particularities about the construction of media reality and possible responses (Löblich, 2018b).

Discursive institutionalism specifies the term response. Whereas some institutionalist mediatization research distinguishes perceptions, organizational structures, and communication to be indicators for the mediatization of an organization (Donges & Jarren, 2014), this juxtaposition of indicators was not helpful for the theoretical issue we were interested in. We wanted to understand how and when certain perceptions and interpretations about media attention got power and became rules in terms of adapting to the media or fending off such an adaptation. We intended to find out how the change of organizational structures and communication were guided by such rules. Discursive institutionalism provided this link with its focus on ideas and discourse. Thus, our study went beyond examining "the media activities of individual organizations as a result of mediatization" and dealt with the discursive processes in which mediatization is enacted (Pallas & Fredriksson, 2013, p. 421). We also chose discursive institutionalism because its concept of (collective) actor fits the idea that organizations like trade unions are internally differentiated, have internal conflicts, and porous borders (Donges & Jarren, 2014; Scheu & Olesk, 2018).

Discursive institutionalism aims at understanding how rules, norms, and routines emerge and change within discourse (Schmidt, 2008). It is a dynamic approach to the way actors develop ideas and either embrace or reject them, and thereby influence institutions. Actors are structured by institutional contexts and by the power operating in, over, and through ideas (Carstensen & Schmidt, 2016). Institutions are at the same time contingent (the product of actors' thoughts, words, and actions) and given.

Institutional contexts are meaning contexts (ideational rules to which actors refer and that they cannot ignore). Such rules, shaping discursive practices, are embedded in discursive fora (e.g., union congresses), biography, organization, and the political and media system. Depending on the institutional context, ideas in discourse are weak or strong and linked to particular forms of control (e.g., which idea is considered mentionable; Carstensen & Schmidt, 2016).

Organizations have background ideational abilities and foreground discursive abilities. Background ideational abilities provide ideational rules, meaning certainties, identities, and interests for individual actors within the organization. They are important for institutional maintenance (Carstensen & Schmidt, 2016). Foreground discursive abilities means that, because of their specific biography and role, some actors speak "outside the institutions in which they continue to act" (Schmidt, 2008, p. 315). Their criticism and alternative ideas may change the institutions within their organization.

The Journalists' Union and Press Concentration

In light of the mediatization in the 1960s, a public discourse on media policy emerged in the Federal Republic of Germany, the subject of which was not so much the spread of television or changes in media usage, but the concentration of the daily newspaper market. The increasing concentration had its origins in the licensing policies of the occupation period. The Allies established market-based press structures in the western occupation zones, enabling individual publishers such as Axel Springer to build up large media companies. After licensing was abolished in 1949, the so-called legacy publishers (*Altverleger*), who had published newspapers before 1945, returned to the market. Following a brief boom, a concentrated market structure quickly formed with a few high-circulation titles stemming from the former licensed press, with newspapers that individual legacy publishers took over, and newspapers that emerged from mergers (Humphreys, 1994). Against mounting public concern in view of the dominant position of the conservative Springer group, "the state was finally compelled to act" (Humphreys, 1994, p. 99). In 1967, an expert commission (involving the unions) established by the Grand Coalition of Conservatives and Social Democrats recommended a combination of measures. When the first social-liberal government (1969–1974), drew up plans for a framework legislation for the press sector (*Presserechtsrahmengesetz*), there was an opportunity for trade unions to promote their goals (Holzer, 1980).

The broader discourse focused on press concentration, codetermination within publishing houses, and journalism education, which had essentially consisted of learning on the job until then. Codetermination was legally guaranteed for most branches. However, the Works Constitution Act of 1952 enshrined a so-called *Tendenzschutz*. This principle excluded employees of companies with a specific ideological tendency from this right (Humphreys, 1994). Drafts of a press law included codetermination rights for editors. However, a press law was never passed. By the end of the press reform discourse in the second half of the 1970s, little action had been taken. Instead of a comprehensive reform, the only notable action against press concentration was a stricter (though ineffectual) merger control for publishing houses adopted in 1976 (Holzer, 1980; Humphreys, 1994). Besides legislation, journalism education reform was regarded as a way to counter the consequences of press concentration and support the internal freedom of the press. Committees of publishers, journalists, and scientists supported by government drafted models for an academic journalism education (Fröhlich & Holtz-Bacha, 2003). However, the far-reaching plans of the Journalists' Union and the Trade Union Confederation failed because of the publishers' opposition.

For access to the political system and political enforceability, the change of government in 1969 had promised a golden age for trade unions. Their historical ally, the Social Democratic Party, got rid of the conservatives in government. Trade union leaders were appointed as federal ministers. The Trade Union Confederation in 1974 had more than 7.4 million individual members. It brought together unions of various

sizes from various sectors of the economy. To date, it is the largest organized labor organization in the Federal Republic (Mertsching, 2013). Since 1951, journalists had been organizing themselves within the Union of Print and Paper Workers (IG Druck und Papier), one of the unions with a middle-size membership. As most journalists were members of the rival German Journalists' Association outside the Trade Union Confederation, the group of unionized journalists remained a "significant minority" both within the organization and within journalism (Humphreys, 1994, p. 50).

Trade union press was reestablished after 1945. By 1970, this press had grown considerably. The German Trade Union Confederation distributed various publications; the most important ones were member magazines. In line with the number of members, these magazines reached a total circulation of 7 million in the 1970s. The weekly paper *Welt der Arbeit* (World of Labor) aimed at a broader public, reaching a circulation number of 186,000 in 1977. Overall, the unions' publications comprised almost 150 mostly small titles with a total monthly circulation of about 15 million in the mid-1970s (Jühe, 1977).

Method and Sources

The aim of our work is to determine which ideas the German Journalists' Union and the Confederation publicly used and which they referred to in the media policy discourse around 1970. We also want to understand how their background ideational and foreground discursive abilities were related to the urge to gain media attention. For this purpose, we conducted a historical content and document analysis. This analysis was guided by categories derived from the theoretical framework. In line with the theoretical arguments, the main categories comprise ideas about press and press policy that trade union actors developed in view of media change as well as the institutional contexts that shaped these ideas. The categories are specified below. Drawing on mediatization theory, the unionists' perception of media change and media attention, as well as their dealing with (perceived) changes, are central. Referring to discursive institutionalism, perceptions are, for instance, ideas about problems and potentials of the press emerging because of press concentration. Institutional contexts are specified as both rules of discursive fora as well as rules related to individual and collective actors' background and restraints or opportunities shaped by media, politics, and economy.

Ideas

- Perceptions within the Journalists' Union and German Trade Union Confederation about problems and potentials of the press (trade unions' access to and representation in the press, trade unions' own press).
- Press policy related ideas: solutions and justifications.

Institutional Contexts

- Rules of discursive fora (access, speakers, time, place, procedures).
- Rules related to biography/role/union organization and resources/media system, political system, economic system.

The categories guided the selection and analyses of sources. We analyzed archival material and publications. Sources were selected because of their centrality, relevance, and closeness to the actors. The archival material comprises material from the German Archives of Social Democracy (AdsD), the comprehensive collection of all traditional sources of the German Trade Union Confederation. More specifically, we selected the records from the German Journalists' Union within the files of the German Trade Union Confederation. The archival materials consisted of policy papers, conference reports, correspondence, minutes, and public relations material. Published sources were selected to analyze ideas, rules, and effects of public fora: proceedings of the Federal Congresses of the German Trade Union Federation, membership publications such as *Die Feder*, and volumes on journalism education and press policy edited by the trade union. The news coverage of leading press outlets, journals by the publishers' association, and publications by communication scholars with links to the Journalists' Union were also included. The archival materials and publications were contextualized by means of biographical and autobiographical sources for leading trade unionists. In sum, this combination of sources allows for conclusions about actors' ideas emerging in internal communication, their external circulation, as well as their institutional setting.

In line with the theoretical argument of mediatization research, the investigated period began in the 1960s, when political actors reacted to the increasing influence of media, especially the growing popularity of television (Strömbäck, 2008). More specifically, the time period encompassed the years from 1962, when the debate about press and public relations revived within the Trade Union Confederation, until 1979, when it had become evident that the union's policy initiatives had failed.

Findings

The following sections present our findings structured by the theoretical categories. First, the German Trade Union Confederation's ideas about problems and potentials of the press are described as well as the Confederation's hesitancy and adherence to the idea of trade union press. Afterward, the German Journalists' Union is presented as a foreground actor with specific institutional contexts developing ideas to solve the union's media attention problem, especially by drawing on the internal press freedom regulation and journalism education.

The Hesitancy of German Trade Union Confederation

This first section of findings sets out in chronological order that the Confederation, over the years, kept reinforcing its old idea of a hostile press. It tried to solve its media attention problem by means of improving its own press and public relations. A larger discourse on press policy developed only slowly, and motions to the Federal Congresses did not lead to strong public initiatives.

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, the problems of the Confederation's public image and visibility in the media were being discussed at the Congress, initiated by motions to this discursive forum. At first, in 1962, a bundle of 20 motions from a broad spectrum of member unions and regional representations demanded that the executive board improve public relations to solve these problems. A local unit from Bavaria, for example, justified its motion with this observation: "During the last time, we could state that daily press, radio and television brought more and more substantiated information of our enemies"

(Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund [DGB], 1962, p. 729). The media attention problem was also referred to by the large Union for Chemistry, Paper, and Ceramics: "The enemies of trade unions succeeded in damaging the union image in the public" (DGB, 1962, p. 733). A few years later, the executive board member responsible for publicity, Werner Hansen, explained that more advertisements had been placed, also in mass press, "to express the union's opinion on current issues and to drum up sympathy" (DGB, 1966, p. 110). He was sure that "trade union issues and ideas were increasingly represented" (DGB, 1966, p. 110). In his statement of operation, however, he nourished concerns over the consequences of media commercialization for the working world representation. If publishers such as Axel Springer, conservative owner of the mass circulation *Bild-Zeitung*, would be allowed to offer private television, then "an ever more closing monopoly of opinion" would emerge (DGB, 1966, p. 112). The functionary did not fail to mention that workers preferred to read *Bild-Zeitung*.

The limited influence, both on the larger public and on the union members, was also continuously addressed later. Union press reform became a larger issue (DGB, 1969a, 1971, 1972b). Trade union press would "play only a decent role" within the press landscape, admitted the executive board in 1966 (DGB, 1966, p. 109). In this connection, a postal union functionary stated that "many papers were thrown in the wastepaper basket without having been read" (DGB, 1969a, p. 219). A resolution by the Food, Beverages, and Catering Union demanded to improve "the effectiveness of trade union's press" (DGB, 1969b, p. 414). This resolution was adopted and led to a commission and to a report. This report suggested centralizing the trade union press at the expense of individual member union journals. The national weekly *Welt der Arbeit* was to be relaunched. There were ideas to create an illustrated magazine and a daily newspaper (DGB, 1972a). A plan for a daily paper in the style of Springer's yellow press *Bild-Zeitung* was developed (DGB-Bundesvorstand, 1973). However, ideas to centralize and unify trade union press were given up because member unions wanted to maintain control over their papers (DGB, 1972a).

With mounting public concerns at the end of the 1960s, press concentration became an issue at the Congress. The Journalists' Union and a few others linked press policy and the media attention problem in their motions. A small regional unit justified measures against press concentration and stated that opinions competing with opinions of large business groups, such as trade unions' opinions, would be "largely restricted or even suppressed" (DGB, 1969b, p. 412). Motions on the press and education, often filed by the Print and Paper Union, were mostly approved by the Congress throughout the 1970s (DGB, 1969b, 1975b, 1978b). The Confederation also supported the Union of Print and Paper Workers' draft for a press law, which was intended to secure the internal freedom of the press (Die Feder, 1968). But no larger discourse emerged.

It was the president of the Federation, Heinz Oskar Vetter, who, in the middle of the press concentration debate, stated that unions should become engaged in media policy to deal with their media attention problem. "Certain press business groups," he explained, "pursued a political course which obviously runs contrary to the interests of workforce" (DGB, 1971, p. 35). But in terms of regulatory ideas, Vetter, president from 1969 to 1982, remained vague. The window of opportunity for press regulation was already closed, when Vetter admitted five years later that "after the previous election campaign, we, the trade unions, have to deal with media policy more seriously than before" (Vetter, 1976, p. 85). He complained in an interview with the news magazine *Der Spiegel* that employers "made sure that reports

about working conditions are suppressed" (Vetter, 1976, p. 85). Vetter (1976) assumed a hidden agenda of press owners and industry. This was doubted by *Der Spiegel*, which apparently demonstrated with this piece that unions got access to an influential commercial forum.

Despite promising to do so, leading bodies did not present a larger initiative in the 1970s (DGB, 1972b). It was not until 1978 that a conference was dedicated to media policy (Holzer, 1980). However, the executive board had certainly not been inactive. In a letter, it had protested, for example, against the Grand Coalition's position, according to which press concentration was "no danger for a sufficient democratic information plurality" (ZV+ZV, 1969, p. 575). But it took three years to discuss in several committees a programmatic paper on union media policy that had been developed mainly by the Journalists' Union (DGB-Bundesvorstand, 1972–1974; DGB-Bundesvorstand, 1974–1975). A consensus was not achieved (Kirche und Rundfunk, 1975). However, the executive board's publicity department was renamed as "publicity and media policy." Trade union press, media policy, publicity, and public relations were united within one area of responsibility (DGB, 1979, p. 48). This organizational restructuring does not only indicate that, finally, there was an impulse to institutionalize media policy. It also indicates that, at least internally, the Confederation had discursively linked media policy to the unions' media attention problem.

The hesitancy of leading functionaries in terms of media policy can be seen in several institutional contexts. At first, the internal structure of the Confederation with disparate interests and ideas made joint initiatives complicated. Moreover, contrary to the Journalists' Union, functionaries were wary of becoming too exposed or even critically regarding interventions into capitalist press structures. An internal paper emphasized that the executive board member Günter Stephan, responsible for publicity and for media policy in the 1970s (Mertsching, 2013), had maintained a "middle course" in terms of media policy, and it expressed an appreciation that he had never held an "extreme position" (DGB-Bundesvorstand, 1981). Moreover, before and after 1968, in the face of an anticommunist discourse promoted by *Bild-Zeitung*, union functionaries made publicly clear that they had nothing to do with "left radicals" (DGB, 1969a, p. 484). Publishers campaigned against unions, characterizing them as incompetent about their own press and power seeking (Löblich, 2018a).

There was a long-standing certainty within the unions that powerful parts of the press were hostile and that this press was linked to business interests (Böckler, 1950; Merkel, 1996). This certainty influenced trade union discourse as an ideational rule and led to the idea that the visibility problem was to be solved under the control of the organization: by trade union press.

The German Journalists' Union and the Internal Freedom of the Press

The next two sections explain that the Journalists' Union did not only pursue its own interests, demanding legislation for the internal freedom of the press and journalism education. It also dealt with the general media attention problem that its umbrella organization was perceived to have. We understand this activity by the Journalists' Union's foreground discursive abilities. It drafted and published policy ideas, to some of which the Confederation was associated. It also tried to develop an overall media policy paper for the Confederation. Its foreground discursive abilities let the Journalists' Union emphasize that media policy was important to deal with union visibility. The Journalists' Union adhered to classical unionist ideas and

argued against capitalism, which was too critical in view of the umbrella organization. In the following, the unions' discursive abilities will be explained in terms of their particular institutional contexts.

Like other unions, the Union for Print and Paper Workers addressed the union press problems and emphasized the importance of public relations in the early 1960s (DGB, 1962; IG Medien Hauptvorstand, 1966). But when the Confederation's executive board member, responsible for publicity, suggested that the Confederation "should be willing to provide a forum" for press policy (DGB, 1969a, p. 168), the Journalists' Unions had already been involved for years. The first step was developing a discourse about press policy, addressing press concentration, and arguing that a legislative basis was needed for securing the internal freedom of the press. The second step was communicating that press policy, because of its potential for media attention, had to become an issue for all unions.

For developing a discourse, the member journal *Die Feder*, conferences, and meetings of the Journalists' Union and the Print and Paper Workers Union were instructive. In 1963, a communication scholar was invited to speak at a workshop about "press freedom and the problem of the market" (Koszyk, 1963, p. 3). This scholar addressed deficits about internal freedom because of profit interests. He warned that apart from protections against the state, one should not forget the "chains of capitalist constraint" (Koszyk, 1963, p. 3). Like this scholar, other experts provided arguments against commercialization (Henrich, 1963; Kötterheinrich, 1964). Against the background of National Socialism, after 1945, press freedom was mostly regarded as a defense right against the state. Unionists criticized that the economic dangers remained unnoticed. Then, regulatory ideas were discussed. In 1965, a leading functionary of the Print and Paper Union stated the lack of rules for the internal structure of the press. He suggested a collective employment agreement between publishers and journalists (Stotz, 1965). He hinted at commercial interests as the cause for journalistic dependence: "As long as the private economic structure of our printed public opinion continues to exist, issues of press rights will not be solved in a satisfying manner" (Stotz, 1965, p. 3). In the same year, the Print and Paper Union demanded the extension of codetermination to press companies. Georg Herda, the president of the Journalists' Union, took a clear mission with him into the first meeting of the Federal Government's commission on press concentration. His union demanded "a binding, if need be legal definition of the editors' position within the publishing house" (IG Druck und Papier, 1967, p. 15). Although the Journalists' Union continued seeking a contractual agreement with publishers, it more and more argued for a press law and for the abolition of the publishers' right to define the overall political tendency of a newspaper (Richter, 1973). One context for this formulation of regulatory ideas was the start of the first Social Democratic and Liberal government coalition.

The Journalists' Union became more critical about capitalistic press structures around 1970. Its criticism had to do with a new generation of members and a new leadership. Eckart Spoo, the new chairman, questioned the idea of free market economy and demanded press reforms. He addressed the "monopolization of power over public opinion" (Spoo, 1971a, p. 129). The socialists tried to push the discourse about alternatives to private press, thereby touching upon publishers' hegemony. In contrast to the Trade Union Confederation, which had given up the vision of societal alternatives to capitalism in its revised basic program of 1963, the Journalists' Union referred to such alternatives (Schönhoven, 2014, p. 73). Whereas the Confederation had focused on integrating into capitalism, Spoo emphasized the dividing lines between capital and labor (Spoo, 1971c, p. 3). He argued that for the professional

group of journalists, press concentration represented not only an abstract danger for democracy but also an immediate threat of job loss.

The second step in developing discursive abilities was in the early 1970s. The Journalists' Union linked the media attention problem to press law. In an article entitled "Why we need the internal freedom of the press," Chairman Spoo complained that "over and over again, trade unions have experienced that, usually, it is impossible to articulate themselves by means of the press" (Spoo, 1971a, p. 131). A congress organized by his union, entitled "The Taboos of the Federal German Press" (Rabbow, 1971, p. 184), assembled critical scholars, politicians, and intellectuals. One leading contribution stated that the working world was largely neglected by the press, and if it was portrayed, then this was done in a whitewashed, elitist, or ironic manner. That the press was a working world itself was shrouded (Müller, 1971). The congress and the following book related this problem to regulatory ideas for the press (Rabbow, 1971; Spoo, 1971b). In 1973, media unionists attempted to increase awareness of the importance of media policy to the unions in a special issue of the Confederation's theoretical journal *Gewerkschaftliche Monatshefte*.

The Journalists' Union, together with Print and Paper, formulated concrete policy ideas for reforming press structures. It suggested the unbundling of large publishing houses (such as Axel Springer) and the establishment of alternative financial models. About the internal freedom of the press, it published, for example, a draft law on codetermination rights (Die Feder, 1968). It suggested abolishing the publisher's right to determine the overall political standpoint and tendency of a newspaper (IG Druck und Papier, 1971). Several ideas implied the institutionalization of unions' influence on press coverage:

- Introducing codetermination rights for works councils in personal, economic, and social matters (IG Druck und Papier, 1971). Participation in decisions about leading editorial positions and editorial budget was a way to influence the editorial line of a paper.
- Installing editors' committees in publishing houses to secure the independence of editors. Editors elected as committee members would have been free to be elected to works council, too. The idea was that both institutions could "work together in harmony" (IG Druck und Papier, 1971, p. 44).
- Establishing public control of the press under the participation of trade unions. Press committees control newspapers in a local monopoly position (Die Feder, 1968; IG Medien Hauptvorstand, 1973).

The Journalists' Union took the initiative to develop the first official media policy paper of the Confederation (DGB, 1972b, 1975a). The 13-page-long draft addressed press problems, such as merger control and the internal freedom of the press. This paper was not passed by the Federal Committee (*Bundesausschuss*). No agreement was reached about the abolition of *Tendenzschutz* and the extension of general codetermination rights to publishing houses (Kirche und Rundfunk, 1975). At the Congress of 1978, no consensus was reached. Instead, several individual motions on media policy were adopted, submitted by the Federal Executive Board, regional units, and a small coalition of the Print and Paper Union. While most of them dealt with broadcasting, the Print and Paper motion was an encompassing conception of media policy. Press reform was its first concern: Neither "private ownership of means of production" was prescribed by press freedom, nor the "capitalist market" (DGB, 1978a, 362 Section, para. 4).

The German Journalists' Union and Journalism Education

A further attempt of the German Journalists' Union to gain visibility by means of media policy was reforming journalism education. To gain influence over press publishers and broadcasting directors, this initiative was closely linked to issues of the internal freedom of the press. While the Journalists' Union called for the codetermination of works councils to introduce standards of journalists' training in the editorial offices (Büttner, 1973), the publishers rejected these claims, referring to their privileges secured by *Tendenzschutz* (hn, 1973).

In contrast to other interest groups involved in the discourse about journalism education, the unionists aimed to abolish in-house training. They objected to the widespread notion of journalism as an open or free profession. They stated that the formally open access to the profession was de facto controlled by media corporations. Consequently, they demanded "to take the training from the individual company and to make it controllable" (Helmig, 1971, p. 7). The unionists intended to establish mandatory academic courses at universities under public control and with union participation. Instead of technical training as a "service for the publisher," they argued, journalism education should serve normative, sociopolitical tasks of the vocation (Helmig, 1972, p. 13). In 1973, the Journalists' Union presented its model of academic journalism education (Deutsche Journalisten-Union [DJU], 1973/1975). The publishers tried to delegitimize these demands. They characterized the plans as a restriction of professional access and a limitation of press freedom and equated them with GDR journalism training (Detjen, 1973).

Ultimately, the media policy initiatives of the German Journalists' Union about journalism education aimed at journalistic content and, therefore, were a strategy to deal with the general media attention problem that trade unions were perceived to have. Representatives of the German Journalists' Union and the Print and Paper Union were convinced that education influenced coverage. Detlef Hensche, member of the executive board of the Print and Paper Union, responsible for media policy and for the professional groups of journalists and writers, stated: "News in general comprise the ideology of employers . . . Many journalists somehow internalized the ideology of employers due to their background, their education and their economic dependency" (Hensche, 1976, p. 88). In the opinion of the Journalists' Union, this problem increased because of press concentration, because journalistic work was influenced by the economic and political interests of a diminishing number of publishers. This prevented the plurality of issues and opinions (Die Feder, 1972; Frankfurter Rundschau, 1973).

Just as the German Journalists' Union lamented the established journalism training, it also saw an opportunity to influence media content with a change in education. Hensche stated that education should qualify journalists to realize that

reports about the state of health of a politician or the abdomen of an empress create publicity, while labor disputes, working conditions and investment plans, which are of essential importance for thousands of local employees, for example, are not public. (Hensche, 1979, pp. 643-644)

In line with the conviction that journalism education could have an impact on media content, the Journalists' Union's model for renewed journalism education comprised three main goals. First, members of the working class should be enabled to enter journalism and represent issues of the working world. No general qualification for access to university was seen to be necessary for mandatory academic studies. Thus, the idea was to establish free access to the profession in terms of socioeconomic status. Second, journalists were to be educated about societal conflicts, especially between employers and employees. Journalists should be enabled to educate recipients and "make visible the forces at work in society" (DJU, 1973/1975, p. 305). Third, the Journalists' Union wanted to end the publishers' procedure to hire apprentices at lower wages instead of regular editors (DJU, 1973/1975).

The emergence of ideas for reforming journalism education demonstrates the foreground discursive abilities of the Journalists' Union, which dealt with the media attention problem of unions. The initiative was part of the decidedly left-wing orientation of this union in the 1970s. The new chairman declared the reform of education to be one of his main goals (Spoo, 1971c), to reach a "democratization of the entire consciousness industry" (Spoo, as cited in Siegemann, 1973, p. 10). Representatives of the older generation of trade unionists, including Horst Wolter (1969), still shared with publishers and nonunion journalists certain convictions like the need for unregulated, formally free access to the profession, which the younger officials criticized.

Spoo, who, like his predecessor, Herda, was an editor of the left-liberal *Frankfurter Rundschau*, was supported by a new generation of members. By proposing regulatory measures for the press and education, the Journalists' Union had especially attracted journalists who were supporters of the student movement of 1968 and regarded journalism as a central institution for changing society. Since its foundation, the German Journalists' Union had attracted journalists with a unionist identity, whereas its larger rival organization gathered supporters of corporative ideals (Von Hodenberg, 2006, p. 391; Humphreys, 1996, p. 38). In internal letters, Spoo explained his strategic ideas. He wanted to attract young members by engaging in journalism education and he wanted to create an opportunity for the union to participate in a broader discourse on media policy (Spoo, 1972).

The left-wing course was met with criticism within the Trade Union Confederation. It intensified the conflict with the publishers. Spoo was briefly dismissed by the publisher of the left-liberal *Frankfurter Rundschau* (Rügemer, 2016). In view of the dismissal of journalists because of their promotion of codetermination, the main executive of the superordinate Print and Paper Union, Eugen Stotz, did not take sides with the members of his organization but urged them not to strain the union's relationship with the publishers (Schwab, 1972; Stotz, 1972a). Publicly, Stotz strongly criticized the journalists' orientation toward class-antagonistic rather than social-partnership principles and their commitment to young professionals. In an anticommunist stance, he positioned the union against the new left-wing movements within the Journalists' Union. In his view, the Journalists' Union was a magnet for communists, and the "functionaries are also recruited from these circles" (Stotz, 1972b, p. 5).

In fact, ordinary members, including aspirants and novices, influenced the Journalists' Union's concept for journalism education. The union demanded legislation mandating academic education for editors. A commission appointed by the board of the Journalists' Union drew up a concept (Büttner, 1972).

This concept was presented at a conference where members sharpened their demands. At the request of the left-wing Berlin regional unit, fundamental societal policy, criticism of capitalism, and trade union policy were emphasized. The North Rhine-Westphalian regional union demanded that journalism be committed to "open partisanship" for the interests of employees," but failed (Siegemann, 1973, p. 10). After the Journalists' Union adopted the concept, it was again Stotz, who publicly relativized the far-reaching demands of mandatory academic courses at universities accessible to all aspirants (Stotz, 1974).

Institutional contexts explain that the Journalists' Union maintained its left orientation and developed foreground discursive abilities with respect to journalism education. Members such as Spoo experienced how difficult it was to cover working-world issues in their daily routine in editorial departments, even in self-declared left-leaning newspapers. Against this background, media policy measures about journalism education offered an opportunity to gain influence. The strategy of attracting young and left-leaning (future) journalists by addressing education made it necessary to emphasize a critical attitude toward a capitalist organization of media in general and to present more radical solutions than the Trade Union Confederation offered.

Conclusion

The Confederation was certainly not inactive in the ensuing press policy debate around 1970, but it remained hesitant about larger public initiatives. It adhered to the background idea that the commercial press was hostile and identified papers with a dominant market position as a particular problem. Within the large umbrella organization, union press, public relations were also perceived to be responses to the media reality that a concentrated press had constructed. The Journalists' Union also adhered to these ideational rules but became strongly engaged in the issues of the internal freedom of the press and journalism education, both closely related to press concentration. From a mediatization and discursive institutionalist perspective, this engagement can be understood to have been more than representing its members in their relations with publishers. The Journalists' Union, partly together and partly in conflict with the superordinated Print and Paper Union, also dealt with the general media attention problem of trade unions in two specific ways:

- Discursively linking the visibility problem with regulatory ideas for securing the internal freedom of the press and with a mandatory concept for academic journalism education. The basis for this link was identifying the capitalist press structure as the cause of the problem.
- Proposing regulatory ideas that implied the institutionalization of the unions' influence on press coverage through codetermination rights, public control measures, and access to universities for workers.

The institutionalization of internal freedom of the press and journalism education in discursive fora of the Journalists' Union (member journal, conferences, and workshops) was a precondition for this discursive contribution, as was access to the Confederation's fora, such as its theoretical discussion journal.

The Journalists' Union foreground discursive abilities within the Confederation can be explained by several particular institutional contexts: its clear trade union profile since its foundation, the threat of job cuts for journalists, and new members engaged in the student movement that defended a left-wing course.

Another, larger, context was the new social democratic Federal Government, which promised measures against press concentration.

The case of the West German Journalists' Union and its umbrella organization from 1962 to 1979 exemplifies the significance of changes in the media system for trade unions. Moreover, this case highlights the dilemma of organizations who need media attention but cannot compete with their own services in a commercial media market.

Despite the further expansion and diversification of the media system since the 1970s, current research suggests that the need for (favorable) media attention is a driver of unionist media policy until today (Carneiro & Costa, 2022; DGB-Bundeskongress, 2018; Hemkes, 2011; Schradie, 2015). It is worth further studying whether unionist media policy inherently stands in the way of this need, as, because of their organizational purpose, trade unions have to address critical issues of private media ownership.

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