

ANNA JUPOWICZ-GINALSKA

GRETA GOBER

THE CHANGING BOUNDARIES OF JOURNALISTIC OBJECTIVITY:  
HYBRID JOURNALISM, STANDPOINT THEORY,  
AND EDITORIAL ETHICS IN POLAND\*

**Abstract.** The concept of journalistic objectivity has undergone scrutiny in recent years. Traditionally regarded as a cornerstone of journalistic integrity, it is increasingly critiqued as an outdated standard that fails to reflect the complexities of contemporary societies. Nowhere is this debate more evident than in Poland, where polarization, government interference, and declining press freedom fuel skepticism about neutrality. At the same time, efforts to promote inclusivity challenge dominant narratives, raising questions about journalistic responsibility. This article examines how Polish media navigate objectivity amid political and economic pressures in an era of epistemic accountability. Through interviews with editors-in-chief and senior editors, the study explores how objectivity is redefined, what deviations from neutrality are deemed legitimate, and how newsrooms negotiate ethical commitments, social responsibility, and editorial independence. Drawing on standpoint theory and hybrid journalism, the analysis identifies five editorial strategies: *values-driven objectivity*, *strategic framing*, *selective pluralism*, *fact-based editorial discipline*, and *critical engagement*. Unlike past studies on ideological divides, this research focuses on how editors balance objectivity with social responsibility, editorial independence, and diversity.

**Keywords:** objectivity; epistemic accountability; hybrid journalism; standpoint theory; editorial strategies

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Dr hab. ANNA JUPOWICZ-GINALSKA – Associate Professor of University of Warsaw, Faculty of Journalism, Information and Book Studies; correspondence address: ul. Bednarska 2/4, 00-310 Warszawa, Poland; e-mail: [a.ginalska@uw.edu.pl](mailto:a.ginalska@uw.edu.pl); ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7016-0427>

Dr GRETA GOBER – Researcher at KTH Royal Institute of Technology; correspondence address: Teknikringen 10B, SE-100 44 Stockholm, Sweden; e-mail: [gober@kth.se](mailto:gober@kth.se), [g.gober@uw.edu.pl](mailto:g.gober@uw.edu.pl); ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5387-6431>

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## INTRODUCTION

The concept of journalistic objectivity has undergone significant scrutiny in recent years. While traditionally regarded as a cornerstone of journalistic integrity, it is increasingly critiqued as an outdated or misleading standard that fails to reflect the complexities of contemporary societies (Downie Jr., and Heyward, 2023). Scholars argue that objectivity is not a neutral ideal but a construct shaped by power structures, political pressures, and professional norms (Carlson, 2023; Callison, and Young, 2019). Similarly, Zamith, and Westlund (2022) highlight that digital transformations have reshaped journalistic practices, prompting a re-evaluation of objectivity in news production. These debates are particularly relevant in politically polarized media environments, where objectivity is contested both as a journalistic principle and a political tool (Masini et al., 2018).

This discussion is part of a broader historical shift from the liberal doctrine of the press to the social responsibility doctrine. While the liberal model emphasized press freedom and minimal state interference, the social responsibility model introduced a framework in which journalism is expected to balance autonomy with ethical obligations, public accountability, and inclusivity (Wolny-Zmorzynski et al., 2008; Płonkowski, 1995). Over time, this doctrine has evolved to highlight diversity as an integral component of responsible journalism (Anderson, Bell, and Shirky, 2012; Borchardt et al., 2019). However, this shift has sparked resistance, particularly from political actors who frame diversity initiatives as ideological bias rather than ethical commitments (Graff, Kapur, and Walters, 2019). As a result, the very principles designed to strengthen journalistic integrity – objectivity, accountability, and representation – have become sites of political contestation.

Nowhere are these tensions more evident than in Poland's media landscape, where historical legacies, regulatory shifts, and political conflicts continue to shape journalistic practices (Wiseman, 2021). The polarization of media outlets, government interference, and the broader decline in press freedom have led to skepticism about traditional neutrality (RSF, 2020). At the same time, efforts to promote inclusivity challenge dominant power structures and raise critical questions about whose voices are heard and whose perspectives shape public discourse (Gober, and Ohia-Nowak, 2022; Pacewicz, 2013). Polish media professionals operate within this evolving landscape, balancing professional commitments with the ethical dilemmas posed by a shifting political and economic environment (Stępińska et al., 2012).

This article examines how Polish media managers navigate objectivity in an era of epistemic accountability. Drawing on in-depth interviews with media professionals, we analyze how objectivity is redefined, what deviations from it are considered legitimate, and how journalistic neutrality is negotiated in practice. While previous studies have examined the ideological divisions within Polish journalism (e.g., Kotras, 2013; Popielec, 2017), this article focuses on how editors and editors-in-chief frame objectivity in relation to social responsibility, editorial independence, and diversity.

Our study first examines theoretical debates on objectivity, via standpoint theory, and hybrid journalism. It then contextualizes Polish journalism's historical and contemporary challenges, particularly in media ethics and press freedom. The empirical section outlines the methodology, case selection, and five editorial strategies for negotiating objectivity. Finally, the conclusion discusses the broader implications of the findings.

## 1. THEORETICAL DEBATE: A STANDPOINT THEORY AND HYBRID JOURNALISM APPROACH

The social responsibility doctrine established journalism's ethical obligation to serve the public interest, but contemporary debates highlight how objectivity – rather than being a neutral standard – is shaped by power structures, diversity, and epistemic accountability (Zamith, and Westlund, 2022).

Traditionally, objectivity has been framed as detached neutrality, a model designed to counteract propaganda and misinformation (Schudson, and Anderson, 2008). However, scholars increasingly argue that neutrality can result in false balance, where all perspectives are presented as equally valid, even when some lack factual grounding (Ruotsalainen, Hujanen, and Villi, 2021). This has led to calls for a redefinition of objectivity, particularly through epistemic accountability, which prioritizes transparency over detachment and questions whose perspectives shape journalistic truth-seeking practices (Callison, and Young, 2019).

Two approaches – standpoint theory and hybrid journalism – offer ways to rethink objectivity in contemporary media, moving beyond classical neutrality toward a model that integrates journalistic responsibility and structural power analysis.

*Standpoint Theory: Objectivity as Epistemic Resistance*

Standpoint theory (Harding, 1992) challenges dominant newsroom norms by arguing that knowledge is socially situated and that incorporating marginalized perspectives provides a more accurate understanding of reality. In journalism, this translates to epistemic resistance, where journalists critically engage with dominant narratives to expose blind spots in media representation (Durham, 1998; Maqsood, 2023). Rather than treating objectivity as neutrality, standpoint theory advocates strong objectivity: a commitment to actively incorporating perspectives historically excluded from media discourse (Callison, and Young, 2019).

This model has influenced editorial practices in contexts such as the Swedish public radio, where news diversity is defined not only by ideological balance but by the active inclusion of voices outside traditional newsroom norms (Gober, and Jupowicz-Ginalska, 2023).

*Hybrid Journalism: Objectivity as Epistemic Accountability*

Hybrid journalism moves beyond classical neutrality, emphasizing editorial transparency, contextualization, and selective framing in reporting (Ruotsalainen, Hujanen, and Villi, 2021). Rather than treating objectivity as mere detachment, it integrates interpretation, values, and audience engagement while maintaining factual accuracy (Zamith, and Westlund, 2022).

A challenge in this shift is how journalism defines and enacts viewpoint diversity (Baden, and Springer, 2017; Plaut, 2017; Boesman, and Van Gorp, 2016). While classical objectivity assumes all perspectives should be equally represented, hybrid journalism rejects false equivalence, prioritizing epistemic accountability – ensuring that journalistic knowledge production remains rigorous, fact-driven, and socially responsible (Callison, and Young, 2019). Within this framework, objectivity is redefined as truth-seeking rather than strict neutrality (Downie Jr., 2023). Many digital-native outlets now embrace this approach, openly integrating editorial commitments while upholding factual rigor (Ruotsalainen, Hujanen, and Villi, 2021).

## 2. OBJECTIVITY IN POLISH JOURNALISM: STRUCTURAL CONSTRAINTS AND ETHICAL DILEMMAS

Objectivity in Polish journalism has been shaped by historical shifts, media ownership structures, and evolving professional norms (Nygren, and Dobek-

Ostrowska, 2015). Existing research on epistemic accountability in journalism has focused largely on Western European and North American media (e.g., Callison, and Young, 2019; Zamith, and Westlund, 2022), leaving open the question of how these transformations unfold in post-communist media systems. This is particularly relevant given that the post-communist transition from state-controlled to commercialized media created fragmented ethical standards, complicating efforts to reconcile objectivity with inclusivity. This section examines these developments through the lens of the social responsibility doctrine, political parallelism, and ongoing challenges in press freedom.

### *The Social Responsibility Doctrine and Polish Media Ethics*

The social responsibility doctrine emerged in the mid-20th century to address the shortcomings of the liberal press model, which prioritized press freedom but often led to sensationalism and misinformation. It introduced the expectation that journalists would balance autonomy with ethical self-regulation and accountability (Wolny-Zmorzyński et al., 2008; Płonkowski, 1995). This shift was institutionalized in ethical codes such as the IFJ Declaration of Principles adapted in 1954 and the IFJ Global Charter of Ethics adapted in 2019, which explicitly mandate counteracting discrimination in media narratives.

In Poland, the integration of social responsibility into journalism has been uneven. The post-communist shift from state-controlled media to a highly liberalized and commercialized press system led to a fragmented approach to media ethics. Polish journalists largely embraced press freedom in line with the liberal press model, often rejecting ethical oversight as a remnant of state censorship (Gober, 2018). As a result, ethical codes developed inconsistently and, unlike international standards, placed limited emphasis on diversity and non-discrimination.

For example, Poland's Media Ethics Charter (Rada Etyki Mediów, n.d.), developed by leading journalistic associations, broadly aligns with the IFJ Declaration of Principles but notably omits an explicit obligation to counteract discrimination (Gober, 2018, pp. 91-96). While the IFJ Declaration instructs journalists to actively avoid reinforcing discrimination,<sup>1</sup> the Polish charter focuses on individual integrity rather than structural biases in media representation.

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<sup>1</sup> Point 7 of the IFJ Declaration of Principles says: "The journalist shall be aware of the danger of discrimination being furthered by the media, and shall do the utmost to avoid facilitating such discrimination based on, among other things, race, sex, sexual orientation, language, religion, political or other opinions, and national or social origins." <https://research.tuni.fi/ethicnet/country/ifj-declaration-of-principles-on-the-conduct-of-journalists/>

This distinction has influenced how objectivity is framed in Poland, often limiting efforts to address systemic inequalities in media coverage.

### *Political Parallelism and the Crisis of Objectivity*

Since 2015, Poland has experienced a sharp decline in press freedom, with the ruling Law and Justice (PiS) party consolidating control over public media (RSF, n.d.). Legislative reforms have transformed state broadcasters into government-aligned outlets, leading to mass dismissals of journalists, and editorial interference (RSF, 2020; Towarzystwo Dziennikarskie, n.d.). Poland's media landscape exhibits high political parallelism, mirroring trends observed in Hungary and Italy, where state-aligned journalism serves as an ideological reinforcement mechanism rather than an independent watchdog (Dobek-Ostrowska, 2012).

This crisis of objectivity is further compounded by media ownership structures. In 2021, a state-controlled company PKN Orlen acquired Polska Press, a major publisher of regional newspapers, effectively expanding government influence over local journalism (DW, 2020). Such ownership shifts highlight the growing instrumentalization of objectivity, where neutrality serves as a rhetorical tool to legitimize political agendas rather than a professional standard.

### *Implications for Journalistic Ethics in Poland*

The absence of an explicit non-discrimination clause in Polish journalistic ethics has practical consequences. Research shows that Polish journalists rarely perceive diversity as a journalistic responsibility, and some reject it outright as a political agenda (Gober, 2018). While neutrality is often invoked to oppose gender equality or diversity efforts, discriminatory norms – such as age and gender biases in hiring – are frequently justified through commercial or editorial rationales (Gober, 2020).

Moreover, Polish journalism reflects broader trends of de-professionalization, where precarious employment conditions and commercial pressures weaken ethical standards (Splichal, and Dahlgren, 2016). Instead of prioritizing public interest reporting, many media organizations favor click-driven infotainment, further undermining journalism's social responsibility role (e.g., Naruszewicz-Duchlińska, 2013; Sarna, and Tyc, 2024).

Objectivity in Poland is neither a fixed professional ideal nor a neutral practice – it is continuously redefined by institutional hierarchies, political pressures, and market forces. While journalistic codes present objectivity as

balance and impartiality, in practice, it often reinforces dominant perspectives while excluding alternative voices.

### 3. EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION: OBJECTIVITY IN PRACTICE IN POLISH NEWSROOMS

This section explores how Polish media professionals navigate the tensions between objectivity, diversity, and ethical responsibility. It first outlines the methodological approach and then presents the findings, analyzing how various editorial strategies reflect or challenge the theoretical models of epistemic accountability, standpoint theory, and hybrid journalism.

#### *Methodology*

This article draws on findings from the project “Diversity Management as Innovation in Journalism” (2021-2023),<sup>2</sup> funded by Norway Grants. It examined diversity management (DM) practices in newsrooms across Poland, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. It aimed to broaden the understanding of how DM is defined, organized, and implemented in different newsroom environments as well as how these practices are experienced by journalists – the individuals directly affected by diversity initiatives.

#### *Case Selection*

The newsrooms were selected based on the observation that innovative DM efforts were taking place within these organizations. The selection process used the “windows studies” approach (Czarniawska, 2014), which involves extensive desk research, followed by interview invitations sent to media managers and journalists, seeking information on recent or innovative DM initiatives. The study was designed to give equal weight to two groups central to news production: media managers and journalists. While managers, diversity officers, and senior editors provided insight into newsroom strategies, journalists reflected on and assessed how DM initiatives influenced their daily work.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://managingnewsroomdiversity.com>

### *Sample and Data Collection*

The final sample in Poland included a commercial radio station (TOK FM), digital news platforms (Gazeta.pl, Onet.pl, Noizz.pl, Ukrayina.pl), and an independent investigative news organization (OKO.press). Between January and June 2022,<sup>3</sup> a total of 26 semi-structured interviews were carried out with 14 managers and 12 journalists. Each session lasted between 60 and 120 minutes and was held by one or two researchers. All interviews were transcribed, and all identifying information, including names, was anonymized.

A preliminary analysis of the transcripts led to the selection of 8 interviews (with media managers: editors-in-chief and editors) that contained substantive discussions on the themes of “objectivity,” “impartiality,” and “neutrality.” These interviews, all of which happened to be with women, represented all studied newsrooms except Ukrayina.pl and formed the basis for the analysis.

### *Data Analysis*

In processing the verbatim transcripts, we employed a qualitative, interpretive content analysis, focusing on case-based examination (Kohlbacher, 2006). Instead of coding broad themes across the dataset, we selected illustrative cases that demonstrate distinct ways in which objectivity is negotiated. The analysis followed two main steps:

1. Identifying key cases that illustrate different epistemic approaches to objectivity, including values-driven objectivity, strategic framing, selective pluralism, fact-based editorial discipline, and critical engagement.
2. Interpreting how these cases align with hybrid journalism and standpoint theory, examining editorial justifications for deviating from classical neutrality and assessing how journalistic epistemology informs newsroom policies.

The five cases are illustrated with individual examples of editorial strategies, each representing a unique way in which neutrality is negotiated within hybrid journalism and standpoint-informed reporting.

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<sup>3</sup> Follow-up interviews were carried out in Poland around June 2023 because of the Russia’s 2022 invasion of Ukraine.



#### 4. EDITORIAL STRATEGIES FOR NEGOTIATING OBJECTIVITY IN POLISH NEWSROOMS

The following analysis examines how media managers approach objectivity, focusing on how hybrid journalism and standpoint theory shape editorial decisions. While these frameworks often intersect, the analysis distinguishes which dimensions of each case align with hybrid journalism and which reflect standpoint theory. The five cases illustrate how different outlets navigate evolving models of objectivity in contemporary Polish journalism.

##### *Objectivity as a Commitment to Values*

Joanna, a deputy editor-in-chief, challenges the notion that “Rzeczpospolita” (a traditionally center-right Polish daily) represents objectivity simply because it avoids overt political stances. When the interviewer recalls a journalism association representative claiming that her outlet is “not diverse” because it “writes for the left” while “Rzeczpospolita” is the most neutral (and therefore diverse) outlet in Poland, Joanna pushes back. “I think he got it wrong,” she states. “I would say he confused objectivity with a very classical understanding of objectivity.” She argues that paper’s neutrality is a superficial form of objectivity: “They try to be neutral, theoretically in terms of the worldview. That’s nonsense because, first of all, such a thing doesn’t exist.”

Joanna asserts that her newsroom defines objectivity not as detachment but as a commitment to core journalistic values: “We do not follow political parties but rather specific values. And these values are indisputable.” She explains that while her newsroom refuses to platform certain perspectives, it privileges others: “We openly advocate for human rights. You won’t see fascists invited to a debate here. We are inflexible when it comes to our core values and will not give equal weight to both sides of the argument.” This stance aligns with hybrid journalism’s redefinition of fairness, where epistemic accountability replaces classical neutrality. Instead of treating all perspectives as equally valid, Joanna’s newsroom sees objectivity as an ethical commitment.

Her newsroom’s approach also aligns with standpoint theory’s critique of dominant media norms. She argues that neutrality itself is a product of existing power structures: “We look at issues from the perspective of exclusion – identifying groups that are in a disadvantaged position and whose stories we want to tell.” This reflects epistemic resistance – challenging traditional neutrality norms to ensure historically excluded voices are prioritized in media discourse. Rather than treating balance as a journalistic goal, Joanna actively corrects

epistemic inequalities in public debate, aligning her newsroom's approach with standpoint theory's emphasis on strong objectivity.

This case exemplifies a hybrid model: it merges hybrid journalism's values-driven objectivity and rejection of false equivalence with standpoint theory's commitment to epistemic resistance.

### *Strategic Framing and Correcting Historical Biases*

Iwona, an editor-in-chief, redefines objectivity when reporting on gender-based violence. She explains: "We decided that we will always, without exception, cover any situation related to mobbing, sexual exploitation, etc. Since we are XYZ,<sup>4</sup> we must do this very objectively, meaning we provide both sides and take great care of this in our reporting. However, when it comes to cases related to sex or the harassment of women, women's voices must be more prominently featured."

This approach recalibrates fairness by ensuring that objectivity is not simply about balance but about strategic framing and contextualization in reporting. By actively adjusting whose perspectives are centered, Iwona's newsroom modifies traditional objectivity with editorial judgment and values-based decision-making, particularly in gendered reporting. This aligns with hybrid journalism's emphasis on epistemic accountability, where objectivity is not about neutral detachment but about responsible knowledge production.

She illustrates this editorial stance with a past media case that made her angry: "There was a case (in the media) that really frustrated me. It wasn't my editorial team that did it – this is an old incident involving an actress who reported her colleague for sexual harassment. Supposedly as a joke, he showed her pornography before a theater performance they were about to act in. And in a media article, five men – his colleagues – were interviewed, defending him, calling her hysterical, saying her reaction was 'abnormal,' etc. Not one article included her perspective or that of another woman."

This exemplifies standpoint theory's critique of epistemic blind spots. Despite the story centering on the woman's experience, the reporting platformed only male voices, reinforcing structural biases in how gendered violence is framed in media discourse. By prioritizing women's testimonies in harassment cases, Iwona's newsroom actively resists this bias in reporting. The editorial decision to foreground women's perspectives is also clearly framed not as bias but as an act of journalistic integrity, acknowledging that historically media have privileged male voices over female narratives in such cases.

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<sup>4</sup> Anonymized name of the media outlet.

Iwona's case illustrates hybrid journalism's strategic modification of objectivity while simultaneously embodying standpoint theory's demand for epistemic resistance to dominant media norms.

### *Editorial Boundaries and the Limits of Pluralism*

Marta, a program director, explains that while her team fosters diverse viewpoints, this diversity operates within clear editorial limits. She states: "A nationalist would probably never end up in our newsroom unless they were really well-disguised. We simply have a kind of ideological barrier here."

Rather than striving for absolute neutrality, Marta's newsroom curates public discourse by filtering out perspectives that are deemed harmful or misaligned with its editorial commitments. This corresponds with hybrid journalism's rejection of classical objectivity, which treats all perspectives as equally valid, instead of emphasizing editorial responsibility and selective framing as tools for epistemic accountability.

She further explains how her newsroom actively defines its values: "Such declarations, I am aware of this, go beyond standard journalism practices. This is something new in Poland. Media here generally don't do this because, as a journalistic community, we still have a strong belief in the need to maintain objectivity in its outdated form – that you have to give both sides a voice, and even if they talk nonsense, you have to let them speak without commentary. Western media, such as *The Guardian*, no longer do this."

Marta describes how her newsroom circumvents traditional objectivity through editorial gatekeeping: "You have to do it cleverly, and yes, it may be called manipulation, but in good faith." She elaborates that her newsroom maintains an informal database of controversial views that it chooses not to legitimize: "We've run this experiment several times. For example, we do not quote politicians who insult the dignity of others. We will present to readers how a parliamentary debate unfolded, but we will not directly quote those words."

This reflects hybrid journalism's move from neutrality to epistemic accountability, where journalism is not merely a platform for competing views but an active curator of legitimate discourse in the public interest. Instead of providing false balance, Marta's newsroom filters public debate through editorial responsibility and value-driven reporting. While Joanna and Iwona's examples also engage with standpoint theory's emphasis on centering marginalized voices, Marta's example does not. Instead, her newsroom's focus is on excluding harmful narratives rather than amplifying alternative standpoints.

Marta's case primarily illustrates hybrid journalism's strategic curation rather than standpoint theory, demonstrating how contemporary journalism can negotiate the boundaries of pluralism while rejecting "outdated" neutrality.

### *Fact-Based Objectivity and Editorial Discipline*

Anna, an editor-in-chief, explains: "For me, diversity means ... different people with different interests. I'm not entirely sure if it also means different viewpoints. Because, in reality, there is an editorial line in the newsroom, and I think there are moments when personal views must be set aside. I remember when the issue of vaccines first came up. I had two people on my team who had private opinions – they were not convinced about vaccinations – but our editorial stance was clear. For me, there is no room for a journalist to express personal views in an article if they contradict the newsroom's position. And this also created tensions. One journalist believed that objective journalism meant not taking sides. For me, objective journalism means conveying information. But if we have scientific facts, they should not be presented as opinions but simply as facts."

Anna's newsroom rejects classical objectivity by taking a fact-driven epistemic stance. In cases of scientific consensus, she argues, objectivity does not mean presenting multiple sides but rather ensuring that facts are reported as facts, without false equivalence. She explains: "If we have scientific facts, they should not be presented as opinions."

This approach aligns with hybrid journalism where objectivity is not about ideological balance but about epistemic accountability. Unlike traditional objectivity, which would suggest presenting pro-vaccine and anti-vaccine arguments equally, Anna's newsroom takes a clear stance, requiring journalists to reflect this editorial position. The newsroom even explicitly stated its pro-vaccine stance on its website, reinforcing its commitment to fact-based reporting as a form of activism.

While hybrid journalism is often values-driven (as seen in other examples, where human rights and social justice shape editorial policies), Anna's case represents a fact-driven form of hybrid journalism. Her example also exposes the internal negotiations within hybrid newsrooms, where tensions arise when individual journalists' views do not align with the newsroom's epistemic commitments. Here, hybrid journalism enforces internal editorial discipline, ensuring journalistic practice remains anchored in factual integrity rather than false balance.

Unlike other cases that incorporate standpoint theory, Anna's newsroom does not foreground marginalized knowledge but instead prioritizes scientific expertise as the foundation for journalistic integrity. This example corresponds exclusively with hybrid journalism, demonstrating a fact-driven epistemic stance rather than a pluralist or values-driven one.

#### *Navigating Activist Pressure and Editorial Independence*

Magdalena, an editor in one of the studied newsrooms, describes the challenge of balancing engagement with activism while maintaining editorial independence: "It's a very big risk, and it's a balancing act between not engaging at all with a topic and not understanding the problems of a particular community, and unfortunately stepping into the shoes of activists. It's very difficult."

Her case highlights the complexities of both hybrid journalism and standpoint-informed reporting in politically charged environments. While her newsroom aims to amplify marginalized voices and engage with activist perspectives, it also seeks to uphold journalistic independence by maintaining editorial scrutiny over activist narratives. She argues that deep involvement in social issues can lead to an uncritical adoption of activist viewpoints, making it difficult for journalists to maintain professional distance.

A key example is a journalist who included a medical expert's perspective on the death of a woman who had been denied an abortion. While activists framed the case solely as a consequence of Poland's newly introduced severe restrictions on access to abortion (CEDAW, 2024), the expert suggested that other medical complications may have been involved. This led to backlash from activists, who accused the journalist of undermining their cause: "The journalist, who focuses on women's rights, was attacked by activists. In the comments, activists were lecturing her, questioning how she could possibly publish such a perspective. But she wasn't saying that this was the truth – she was only including another angle."

Magdalena notes that activist pressure can create an informal censorship mechanism, where journalists fear exclusion or reputational damage if they fail to align with dominant activist narratives: "Once you start interacting with activists, they watch everything you write. If they don't like something, they won't engage with you again, or they'll start sending messages, creating an informal pressure system."

However, rather than rejecting activist engagement outright, her newsroom resists activist capture by emphasizing expertise and specialization as tools for journalistic integrity. Magdalena argues that hybrid journalism should move

beyond both classical objectivity and activist-driven narratives by investing in deep, expert-driven reporting: “This (current) model of (digital free) media will eventually collapse. They will either move towards deeply authored journalism [*media autorskie*] or into sites where readers skim through content without engaging with anything.” She also acknowledges that structural constraints, particularly the fast-paced nature of online journalism, often prevent journalists from thoroughly investigating issues before publication.

Magdalena’s case exemplifies a hybrid model that incorporates elements of both epistemic accountability and standpoint theory – engaging with activist perspectives while resisting pressures to uncritically adopt their framing. Rather than rejecting objectivity, she and her newsroom navigate its evolving meaning, ensuring that marginalized voices are included but not at the cost of editorial scrutiny.

## CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of the editorial positioning of different outlets illustrates the diverse ways in which contemporary Polish journalism navigates and reinterprets objectivity. Rather than adhering to classical neutrality, these cases reveal how newsrooms challenge, refine, and strategically frame the idea of balanced reporting to align with evolving journalistic values, ethical commitments, and professional constraints.

These five cases demonstrate that the shift toward epistemic accountability is not uniform but takes multiple forms, shaped by editorial context, subject matter, and structural limitations. Some approaches (Joanna, Iwona, Marta) emphasize values and ethical commitments, drawing on standpoint-informed practices to correct epistemic blind spots and challenge dominant narratives. Others (Anna, Magdalena) redefine objectivity through expertise and factual discipline, reinforcing journalistic authority while resisting both political and activist pressures. Despite these differences, all cases reflect a departure from outdated neutrality: each newsroom actively negotiates objectivity to correspond with contemporary journalistic challenges, whether through ethical commitments, strategic framing, epistemic filtering, factual rigor, or structural adaptation.

By identifying these distinct variations, this study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of contemporary journalism, demonstrating that objectivity is no longer a fixed principle but a negotiated process: one that continuously evolves to address epistemic, ethical, and institutional demands.

The findings suggest that epistemic accountability is emerging as a defining principle in Polish journalism, influencing editorial practices in response to shifting political, professional, and societal expectations.

#### *Future Research*

Our study highlights shifting approaches to objectivity and epistemic accountability in Polish journalism, but further research is needed to assess whether these changes represent lasting transformations or temporary adaptations. Key questions remain: Is Polish journalism undergoing a fundamental redefinition of objectivity, or is it simply managing a broader crisis of legitimacy? To what extent does the social responsibility doctrine shape newsroom policies in practice, and where does it come into conflict with political and economic pressures? Are diversity initiatives in Polish media driving institutional change, or do they function primarily as symbolic measures?

Comparative studies of other post-communist media systems, such as Hungary and the Czech Republic, could provide additional insight into how media ethics evolve under conditions of polarization and external interference. Understanding whether Polish journalism aligns with global trends or follows a distinct national trajectory will be crucial in evaluating the long-term implications of these epistemic shifts.

#### *Study Limitations*

This study does not claim to be representative of Polish journalism as a whole. While the limited number of interviews is a weakness, the strategic selection of newsrooms ensures coverage of editorial strategies in outlets that actively engage with epistemic accountability through DM in Poland. A further limitation is the lack of focus on tensions between journalists and editors in implementing these strategies. This will be addressed in a forthcoming article on editorial conflicts.

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ZMIENIAJĄCE SIĘ GRANICE  
OBIEKTYWIZMU DZIENNIKARSKIEGO W POLSCE:  
DZIENNIKARSTWO HYBRYDOWE, TEORIA PUNKTU WIDZENIA  
I ETYKA REDAKCYJNA

Streszczenie

W ostatnich latach koncepcja obiektywizmu dziennikarskiego jest poddawana intensywnej analizie. Tradycyjnie uznawana za fundament rzetelności dziennikarskiej, coraz częściej wywołuje krytykę, ponieważ uchodzi za przestarzały standard, który nie oddaje złożoności współczesnych społeczeństw. Debata ta uwidacznia się szczególnie w Polsce, gdzie polaryzacja mediów, ingerencja polityczna i pogarszająca się wolność prasy wzmacniają sceptycyzm wobec neutralności. Równocześnie pojawiające się działania na rzecz promowania inkluzywności kwestionują dominujące narracje medialne, stawiając pytania o granice odpowiedzialności dziennikarskiej. Artykuł analizuje, jak w erze wzrastającej świadomości epistemicznej i w obliczu presji politycznych i ekonomicznych polskie media negocjują obiektywizm. Na podstawie wywiadów z redaktorkami naczelnymi

i wydawczyniami studium ukazuje, w jaki sposób w wybranych redakcjach redefiniuje się obiektywizm, jakie odstępstwa od neutralności są uznawane za dopuszczalne oraz jak negocjuje się zobowiązania etyczne, odpowiedzialność społeczną i niezależność redakcyjną. W oparciu o teorię punktu widzenia i dziennikarstwo hybrydowe identyfikujemy pięć strategii redakcyjnych: *values-driven objectivity*, *strategic framing*, *selective pluralism*, *fact-based editorial discipline* oraz *critical engagement*. W przeciwieństwie do wcześniejszych badań nad podziałami ideologicznymi niniejsza praca koncentruje się na tym, jak sami dziennikarze równoważą obiektywizm z odpowiedzialnością społeczną, niezależnością redakcyjną i różnorodnością.

**Słowa kluczowe:** obiektywizm; odpowiedzialność epistemiczna; dziennikarstwo hybrydowe; teoria punktu widzenia; strategie redakcyjne