Haolam Hazeh as a Constituting Memory of Israeli Journalism

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This paper explores the ways in which the professional identity of Israeli journalists has been constructed, negotiated and articulated through the years. The paper's guiding theoretical framework views mass media communication as a process through which communities share and negotiate information, values and beliefs. The extension of this approach implements its analysis with regards to the journalistic community, arguing that journalists are not only members of a professional group but also members of an interpretive community. While journalists tend to portray their work as objective, individualistic, immediate and informative, the interpretive community frame depicts that work as value-laden, communal, continuous and narrativistic. Hence, the concept of the interpretive community focuses on the existence of an inner-journalistic discourse that is created while and after journalists conduct their work. Through this inner-discourse journalists learn how to do their work, and interpret the meaning of the events they encounter as a collective. This collective shares a common heritage of memories and lessons that are cultivated in ways that constitute journalistic authority and fortify the status of the journalistic community.

This exploration of the Israeli journalism as an interpretive community focuses on stories that were narrated, through the years about the radical and sensational weekly Haolam Hazeh (1937-1993). During Israel's first two decades the weekly offered an alternative to mainstream Israeli journalism in a variety of dimensions such as choices of content and style, the relations between journalists and the political establishment, and especially Haolam Hazeh's revolutionary formulation of its social criticism through professional journalistic tools.

The paper focuses on the current, retrospective construction of Haolam Hazeh as a constituting memory of Israeli journalism, through accounts that address both past and present themes and illuminates the functionality of Haolam Hazeh's narratives. In terms of the ways in which the present shapes the understanding of the past, the current memory of Haolam Hazeh is explored as a derivative of the contemporary professional perceptions of Israeli journalists. My argument here is that the inclusion of Haolam Hazeh in the narratives that Israeli journalists tell about their shared past reinforces the journalists’ status as independent and authoritative narrators. Thus, I argue that the present professional ethos of Israeli journalism reinterprets the Haolam Hazeh phenomenon in ways that shift it from its earlier peripheral location into the center of the story, as the precursor of contemporary critical Israeli journalism.

At the same time, the memory of Haolam Hazeh infiltrates Israeli journalism through a corresponding movement from the past into the present. In this context, this paper probes the ways in which the memory of Haolam Hazeh lingers in current Israeli journalism via agents such as people who embody and convey the memory of Haolam Hazeh in Israel’s public sphere, institutional developments that were ignited through Haolam Hazeh, and the language of Haolam Hazeh that was embraced by later generations of Israeli journalists and the insertion of Haolam Hazeh (or its active memory agents) into current debates over various professional and ethical challenges.
Finally, this paper explores the interrelations between the story of *Haolam Hazeh* as a “private” memory of the Israeli journalistic community and the large-scale narratives of Israeli collective memory. My interest here lies in how the story of *Haolam Hazeh* reflects the differences between generations of Israeli journalists. In this context, the specific case of the memory of *Haolam Hazeh* illuminates the role played by journalists in the ongoing cultural dispute between “old” and “new” interpretations of Israel’s history.