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News
in the Hybrid
Media System

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Media logics on the Internet: Actors, spaces and newsmaking

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Legacy media are having to adapt to the new forms of consumption of their audiences. In the digital context, these audiences are increasingly accessing through "side doors" such as social networks, direct searches or content aggregators instead of direct access to media websites (Newman *et al.*, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020 & 2021). This practice is even more common among younger users: accessing news through social media has become the preferred way of consuming news, especially for those under 35 years of age (Newman *et al.*, 2021). In this new digital environment, legacy media have to compete, not only with other non-news content (Newman *et al.*, 2021), but also with other actors such as alternative media, politicians, activists, celebrities and even anonymous individuals who acquire the ability to fix the informative attention of users. Thus, it has been observed that, while in some social networks, such as Twitter and Facebook, the legacy media maintain the hegemony of information, in others, such as Youtube, Instagram, Snapchat or Tik Tok, they are already being surpassed in terms of their capacity to fix media attention by new media actors such as celebrities (Newman *et al.*, 2021).

In the context of this reduction of media power attention due to the emergence of new media actors, what are the media doing? That is, how are journalistic production and journalistic routines changing in the context of a hybrid media system?

The hybrid media system and the interaction between older and newer media logics

Three decades ago, when traditional media outlets began to move online, the practice of journalism began to be based on "the intensification of social interconnections, which allows apprehending the world as a single place, creating a greater awareness of our own place and its relative location within the range of world experience" (Reese, 2010).

In this way, the media ecosystem is transformed, blurring the distinctions between the professional and the citizen (Reese, 2010). The former audience is becoming increasingly intertwined with all aspects of the news, as sources, content creators and disseminators and users (Anderson *et al.*, 2014), causing the traditional control of news by media organisations has changed (Anderson *et al.*, 2014). Journalists have lost the monopoly of news production (Anderson *et al.*, 2014; Fidalgo, 2009; Eldridge, 2020), due to the emergence of new media actors who adopt non-traditional approaches to gathering, verifying, and communicating information, and succeed in bringing information to public light (Eldridge, 2020).

This coexistence between new and traditional media actors has led to the development of a "hybrid media system based upon conflict and competition between older and newer media logics but it also features important pockets of interdependence among these logics" (Chadwick, 2013). Ward (2010) speaks of a layered journalism, in which coexist professional journalism performed as a full-time, paid, exclusive, specialised job in newsrooms in institutional media companies; professional journalism performed as a full-time, specialised job in new media (online) outlets, such as news sites and blogs; journalism performed as an amateur part-time activity in individual or collective news sites and blogs, as well as in institutional media companies; and journalism performed as a "citizenship practice", on an informal and casual basis, contributing to broaden and expand the sources of information used by old and new media (Ward, 2010). It should be noted that, in the last decade, user-generated content (UGC) has been encouraged by the context of the economic crisis because of the possibility of producing stories at no cost (Nicey, 2016).

Since the beginning of these processes of coexistence and cooperation, several changes are noteworthy (Mitchelstein & Boczkowski, 2009):

— Changes in the workflow mean more work because the professionals have to attend to more tasks and adapt to more media.
— Transformations in information-gathering practices due to ICT, mostly.
— Acceleration of times, because of the need to constantly refresh the websites.
— Convergence between broadcast and print media to get multimedia content.
— Existence of peripheric actors (Chua & Duffy, 2019) who appear as Agents of Media Innovation (MIA).

About these elements, that improve and innovate the practice of journalism, Lewis and Westlund's (2015) work is remarkable: the so-called MIA Theory. They develop the characteristics of four elements; the four

A's: human actors, actants represented by nonhuman technology, audiences, and activities —news production, distribution, and interpretation— through which all of them are interconnected.

Some other scholars have developed the characteristics of journalists linked to the development of new soft skills- mindset, being networked, personal branding —and new hard skills— specialist knowledge, data and statistics, understanding metrics and audiences, coding, storytelling, project management (Anderson *et al.*, 2014).

Moreover, these changes not only provoke changes in the news cycles (Chadwick, 2013), but also in the self-perception of journalists who, under a practice of journalism that is more open to citizen expression (Reese, 2010), place the highest value on their role of citizens' spokesperson as opposed to other classic roles such as disseminator of objective information, the watchdog of governmental activities or the "citizen oriented" role, based on the journalist who provides the necessary information to understand reality or to make political decisions (Berganza *et al.*, 2017).

New media actors: strangers in journalism, interlopers and peripheral players

As we have mentioned before, according to MIA Theory, human actors (journalists, technology specialists, and business people), technological actants (algorithms, networks, and content management systems), journalistic activities and different kinds of (segmented) audiences have interrelated in ways that blur the boundaries between production and consumption, between the professional and the non-professional, and between intra- and extra- organisational spheres (Lewis & Westlund, 2015).

This competition is not entirely new for journalists in mainstream media as, historically, these journalists have coexisted with other professionals who differentiated themselves by publishing alternative accounts and interpretations of political and social events according to a perceived underrepresented agenda in the mainstream media, relying on alternative publishing routines via alternative media organisations or through channels outside and unsupported by the major networks and newspapers (Holt *et al.*, 2019).

However, the type of media actors is diversifying in the hybrid media system, particularly since Web 2.0, with the development of a new role of the user as a content producer that "allows a change in the relative position of journalists and audiences, from a one-way, asymmetric model of communication to a dialogical kind of journalism, through which news production becomes a collective endeavour" (Mitchelstein & Boczkowski, 2009).

Several "outsiders in journalism" or "peripheral actors" emerge, such as bloggers, activists, programmers, hackers, web analytics managers, designers... who, by adopting technologies, have opened up new [and challenging] ways of contributing to news production and distribution (Chua & Duffy, 2019; Holton & Belair-Gagnon, 2018).

Among these strangers, special mention should be made of the interlopers a category of new media outsiders who identify their work as journalism and themselves as journalists, challenging the status quo of traditional journalism, and speaking directly to the specific public they recognize as their own through digital media like blogs and independent websites (Eldridge, 2020, p. 15). The work of interlopers challenges the boundaries and traditional approaches of the journalistic field by gathering, verifying and publishing information in a way that differs from the traditional production process of legacy media (Eldridge, 2020). These changes lead to a lack of social recognition, despite their self-identification as journalists (Eldridge, 2020). In any case, in their relationship with journalists and traditional media, the proximity —physical, temporal, professional or control— of these new actors is a key factor in the recognition of their work and in the appropriation of innovation derived from their actions (Chua & Duffy, 2019), causing a gradual transformation in journalists and legacy media as they interact with the new actors (AlSayyad & Guvenc, 2015).

How do the legacy media assimilate the new logics of production?

The relationship between journalists and new media actors began to develop with the arrival of the figure of the blogger, and immediately, differences in content, work processes, tone, values and format were observed (Lowrey, 2006), creating a tension between tradition and change in the journalists' everydays practices (Mitchelstein & Boczkowski, 2009). It is clear that just as journalists are seeing some of their routines changed, new media actors "may at times open the door to the field by introducing new ways of doing journalism, and at others, they may sit just outside the field's boundaries for going against its norms and ideals" (Eldridge, 2020).

These early interactions between professional journalists and bloggers highlighted how efforts to normalise or redefine blogs could change the nature of traditional journalism (Mitchelstein & Boczkowski, 2009). This is just one example of how journalists routinely appropriate the genres of social media sites and hybridise them with their pre-existing routine professional practice (Chadwick, 2013), displaying their strength in gathering information, framing original stories, interacting with sources and audiences, and applying ethical principles intrinsically associated with the pro-

fession (Anderson *et al.*, 2014). However, it is necessary to keep in mind that in this new hybrid media system based on the combination of old and new logics, hybridisation has an asymmetrical character as the logics of older media continues to powerfully shape journalistic practice, although it is important to underline that this domain is again contingent and prone to fracture (Chadwick, 2013).

In short, the emergence of these new media actors has not only led to the loss of journalists' monopoly on the processes of journalistic production, but the new actors' novel ways of developing the process of gathering, verifying and disseminating information in order to bring information to the public are studied by journalists, some of which are incorporated into their professional practice (Eldridge, 2020).

Accordingly, when news is consumed on smartphones, is ubiquitous, spreads faster than ever on the net (social media, platforms, or online media) by new actors, and is shaped over and over again by algorithms and human consumers, which we know as "news" and "news values" is expanding. In fact, these values change constantly because of social, economic, and tech evolution. In this way, in research, we might observe "the persistent challenges and confusions surrounding the concept of news values" (Paulussen & Van Alest, 2021). Regarding that, we could notice that news values fluctuate through the context and the moment. We found numerous studies about this issue beginning with the classic classification of Galtung & Ruge (1965) to Harcup & O'Neill (2001, 2017). The discoveries of Harcup & O'Neill (2017) emphasise that news values change through time. Nowadays, social media impacts the selection of news. This fact entails audiences having a direct and indirect influence on the gatekeeping process. So much so that the public might be considered secondary gatekeepers (Singer, 2014). Audience behaviour is linked to their likes, shares, and comments impacting news content and its visibility (Paulussen & Van Alest, 2021). On the other hand, the audience affects newsmaking through semi-professional amateurs. Especially in soft news, in other words: user-generated content or UGC (Nicey, 2016).

Finally, concerning the audience and its impact on news production, it is worth noting the contribution of Singer *et al.* (2011). They establish five stages for analysing public participation: access, selection, process, distribution, and interpretation. This is the way prosumers (Toffler, 1980) act, so they have to be recognized as primary communication agents in this ubiquity and hybrid society. In the future, they will play an integral role in remediating the Internet (Islas-Carmona, 2008).

All this leads us to wonder how valuable Arianna Huffington's prediction is nowadays: "The future [...] combining the best practices of traditional journalism —fairness, accuracy, storytelling, deep investigations—

with the best tools available to the digital world —speed, transparency, and, above all, engagement" (Huffington, 2013).

Yesterday, today and tomorrow

Like every other sphere in life, journalism is alive. There is no other option since we use it as an instrument in our lives. It is as a necessity to inform, educate, and entertain. Those everlasting values that were BBC's founding principles when John Reith created it in 1922 (Wade, 2021) are still alive. Thus, journalism changes over time, as we explain in this chapter. The characteristics of traditional journalism persist, despite the influence of ICT, new actors, spaces, and routines.

By doing so, yesterday's practices have been modified, improved, they have progressed, but never forgotten. Therefore, they enclose current values. One of them, accuracy, is becoming increasingly important. Since the US 2012 elections, fact-checking has become a prominent aspect of campaign news coverage (Uscinski & Butler, 2013). The number of initiatives has increased extremely in the last ten years. FactCheck.org (founded in 2007) and PolitiFact.com (founded in 2003) are websites that protect candidates and politicians from misinformation. In addition, Poynter's International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN) was established in 2015. Nowadays, it has 102 international verified signatories to its code of principles (IFCN, 2022). Obviously, accuracy has always been an ethical basis in journalism, however, within Internet appearance and misinformation and disinformation phenomena this reality increases[1]. "Accuracy is more than an ethical issue; it serves to define the journalism profession and its societal role" (Currie-Sivek & Bloyd-Peshkin, 2018). So, the commitment goes beyond fact-checking, a practice which has limitations (Walter *et al.*, 2019) and it will be necessary for journalists' work explaining, interpreting, and contextualization against platformisation and polarisation (Pérez-Curiel & Rivas-de Roca, 2022). In other words, as the European Commission points out, disinformation erodes trust in institutions and in digital and traditional media and harms our democracies by hindering citizens' ability to make informed decisions (EC, 2018; CE, 2022), so journalism might fight an *infodemic*, which brings an emergent populism within high levels of fake news (Crilley & Gillespie, 2019).

Despite this, one of the practices brought out the Internet: speed, occasionally seems to hit with accuracy (Brautovic *et al.*, 2020). However,

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[1] Please, read MIT's research: "The spread of true and false news online" (Vosoughi *et al.* 2018)

Brautovic (2020) highlights the main reason for the lack of precision: the use of secondary instead of primary sources; the mistakes transcended national boundaries and time/speed played only a minor role in their emergence and correction, etc. The Internet contributes significantly to news coverage in terms of speed and immediacy (Suárez-Villegas & Cruz-Alvarez, 2013). This challenging fact faced us with a live account of reality in which the information travels immediately through the network. For this reason, we talk about an accelerated era, as Williams and Srnicek mention in their #Accelerate Manifesto (2013). Leaving behind Politics and Philosophy, immediacy has impacted journalism and citizens are sceptical about the information (Newman *et al.*, 2021). Likewise, bad news which involves the elite —governmental, institutional, and economic elites, plus celebrities (Carlson, 2016)— travels fastest in the digital ecosystem (Buhl *et al.*, 2019). Consequently, journalists may reinvent messages and routines choosing slow journalism as a reaction to information devaluation due to immediacy (Romero-Rodríguez *et al.*, 2021).

In any case, speed is a basic characteristic of the internet and permeates everything. Today we discuss great phenomena based on it. Concepts such as Attention Economy (Davenport & Beck, 2001; Goldhaber, 1997), Platform Capitalism (Srnicek, 2016), Platform Society (van Dijck *et al.*, 2018), and Surveillance Capitalism (Zuboff, 2019) explain our lives in terms of immediacy. So, our approach to speed should not be apocalyptic (Eco *dixit*), since it is an irrefutable fact: the net began a disruption and it is unstoppable. In addition, speed, immediacy, and simultaneity explain actual news consumption and the way the audience uses ICT and communicates themselves (Keightley & Downey, 2018).

Notwithstanding, constant updating crashes with one of the most necessary and traditional traits: investigation. In contrast, we must understand it not as a dichotomy, but as a merger, an opportunity for both practices to live together with. Bradshaw, in 2007, already described in his News Diamond model the convergence between speed and depth. The model represents a process, not a product. In his own words: "the story that is forever unfinished" (Bradshaw, 2007, paragraph 24), or rather iterative journalism.

On the other hand, investigative journalism is rebuilt through collaborative journalism (Coelho & Alves-Rodrigues, 2020; Konow-Lund, 2019). Well-known Panama Papers (2016) and Pandora Papers (2021) are both initiatives of research on cross-border ICT collaboration, which help journalists to share risks or efforts, for example. Thus, dividing up resources, time, and networks fix the opposition between speed and depth investigation, creating a new routine for this practice.

Digging into investigation leads us to another hybrid practice: transparency. Currently, we could find a trend in the media to explain the jour-

nalistic process. Beyond fact-checking and its own steps, which are usually explained, we must enlighten initiatives that place professionals in the middle to describe their work. The media performs interviews, reportages, and documentaries to explain journalistic tasks. Therefore, the process of making news is open to the public as contingent upon perceptions of the news media's importance —PNMI— (Peifer & Meisinger, 2021). Transparency has been embraced by academics, journalists and the public as well. It has been completely established so it has been included in ethical guidelines (Vos and Craft, 2017). Furthermore, Gallup/Knight Foundation (2018) finds evidence from the general public that transparency is considered an important element influencing trust. Despite that, it seems that transparency is not a panacea (Koliska, 2015). There is Swedish research that suggests transparency has very limited reach as a cure for declining trust in, and the trustworthiness of, journalism, possibly since the acts of transparency themselves remain non-transparent (Karlsson, 2020). In this way, looking towards the future, considering the audience's position and its needs and preferences might be the way to enrich, to innovate in those practices and strengthen trust and credibility (Haapanen, 2022).

In addition, transparency improves engagement (Curry & Stroud, 2021; Javidiani, 2018). It is important to point out that we understand this concept as audience engagement which "refers broadly to exchanges between journalists and audiences. Journalism scholars and practitioners often use the term to describe interactions between news producers and the people they attempt to reach with their coverage" (Belair-Gagnon *et al.*, 2018, p. 559). And it seems one of the most important attributes in media journalism currently, however not only through social media and transmedia practices (Nelson, 2018). About the hybridization and the own remediation of social media, it is no longer just about publishing content, but improving the engagement with the audience, prosumers who want to participate and co-create (Moya & Moya, 2018). In this way, World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA) Trends Outlook 2021-2022 shows journalism that puts people at the centre of the topics being covered can contribute to improving conversion rates or news performance, and help increase trust. Thus, it is remarkable how paywalls[2] are improving engagement (Pattabhiramaiah *et al.*, 2021). Media emphasise audience choices and preferences as Reader Center from *New York Times* does (Nafría, 2017). Paid content strategies include newsletters, which are increasing their popularity among audiences and they are springing up as a method to access news (Newman *et al.*, 2021). Newsletters from *Financial Times, Boston Globe or The New Yorker,* represent classic case studies already.

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[2] See chapter Financing the media: In search of reader (and Google) revenue models, and its impact in news consumption (Díaz-Noci & Pérez-Altable).

Then, we focus on an initiative that integrates fairness with this element. We are talking about one of the projects carried on by The Center for Media Engagement. The organisation designed an experiment in collaboration within Trusting News (a Donald W. Reynolds Journalism Institute and American Press Institute activity). In this project, we could find a proposal about coverage of partisan topics. They added a "demonstrating balance" box that directed readers of a partisan political news story to another story that offered an opposing partisan focus. They collaborated with *USA Today* and the *Tennessean* to test its approach. In the end, the results show that this "demonstrating balance" box slightly improved how people perceived the news organisation, although they admit that the findings were not conclusive (Chen *et al.*, 2019).

Regarding fairness, we must remember that it usually gets mixed up as impartiality. This last one has been imposed as the norm of professional journalism, but it is not possible, so we should be positioned on the criteria of consistency and justification of position-taking (Boudana, 2016), which means fairness. In this manner, we point out that polarisation is higher nowadays in online media (Fletcher *et al.*, 2020; Hart *et al.*, 2020; Tewksbury & Riles, 2015), thence initiatives that present partisan news from a more fair perspective —position-taking explain, accuracy mode— could help online media journalism reputation.

Finally, in a context that is *infoxicated* and polarised, we need new narratives, new patterns to reach out audience in an attractive way. For this reason, storytelling appears as a tool for increasing engagement (Zurita-Andión, 2019), narrating investigations (Cabra, 2016), explaining and showing the public how journalism is done (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2007), explaining Politics to young people (Dennis & Sampaio-Dias, 2021) or spreading information on social media (Weber *et al.*, 2018). Going further, we must observe several formats: immersive journalism using storyliving (Bösch *et al.*, 2018; Nugaeva & Mira-Pastor, 2021; Wu *et al.*, 2021), structured journalism, 360° video reports, virtual reality and augmented reality, newsgames, and docugames (Lopezosa *et al.*, 2021) as the future becomes a reality today.

And then?

Contemporary journalism is a complex subject. Journalistic work becomes increasingly difficult to distinguish from other components in the same system in terms of actors, spaces, and routines. We might affirm undoubtedly that the future will be a hybrid one. Thus, future research must go through the associations among different elements. We should link production and consumption (Mitchelstein & Boczkowski, 2009), because of the key role of the audience in a context where they are prosumers.

However, predicting the future is such an impossible task. By definition it is unknown, so we are just trying to contribute with several ideas:

Artificial intelligence (AI) in a scenario of increasing misinformation could be crucial. However, personal critical thinking could not be replaced. Thus, journalism has to explain, contextualise and give meaning to events —which are more unpredictable and complicated than ever. In a crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic or the Russia-Ukraine war, communication emerges as a value in the resolution of conflicts, the well-being of individuals, and the understanding of peoples (Rivera-Betancur, 2022). As well, the Internet of things or 5G technology will determine the newsmaking and journalism studies at the university (Masip *et al.*, 2022).

The ideal-typical core values of journalism will be maintained while new forms of journalism developed in vastly different parts of the world, operating under a variety of material, economic, cultural, and political contexts (Deuze, 2017, p. 17). Thus, future research, when assessing changes in a professional culture, should take into account the influence of aspects such as changes in business models, the relationship of legacy media with public authorities, the regulation of competition in a new hybrid media system, or the regulation of journalists' working conditions (Díaz Noci, 2020, p. 10).

In any case, Journalism —in capital letters— must empower its ethic. Loss of trust is a problem that those new actors, spaces, and newsmaking as a job have to fight and defeat, given that journalism is a public service and, for this reason, uses any practice to reach citizens. Whatever happens in the hybrid context, we should not forget this core idea: journalism serves people and not the other way around.

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