

Media Development

2/2018

WAACC

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In the Next Issue

The theme of the 3/2018 issue of *Media Development* will be “Communication Shapes a Better World”.

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actalliance

At the heart of this issue of *Media Development* lies an opinion piece written by the editor-in-chief of *The Guardian* newspaper and first published on 16 November 2017. The word lies is ironically appropriate – for its singular ambiguity in a world where balance and truth in news coverage often appear to be at a premium and where social media daily peddle fake news and misinformation.

Katharine Viner's long article reiterates standards set by those who established *The Guardian* in the early part of the 19th century, standards that need reinvigorating in a world destabilised by "crises that are global, national, local and personal". As Viner affirms, "In these disorientating times, championing the public interest – which has always been at the heart of the Guardian's mission – has become an urgent necessity."

Media Development was unable to secure permission to republish "A mission for journalism in a time of crisis". However, the following quote from the article gives a sense of the direction this leading newspaper will be taking over the next few years:

"[The Guardian] will give people the facts, because they want and need information they can trust, and we will stick to the facts. We will find things out, reveal new information and challenge the powerful. This is the foundation of what we do. As trust in the media declines in a combustible political moment, people around the world come to the Guardian in greater numbers than ever before, because they know us to be rigorous and fair. If we once emphasised the revolutionary idea that 'comment is free', today our priority is to ensure that 'facts are sacred'. Our ownership structure means we are entirely independent and free from political and commercial influence. Only our values will determine the stories we choose to cover – relentlessly and courageously."

The article continues:

"We will ask the questions that people are asking, and the questions that no one is asking. Honest reporters approach every situation with humility: they find the people who don't get listened to and really listen to them. They get to know a place. We will get out of the big cities and the big institutions, and stay with stories for the long-term. Our commentary must also be based in facts, but we will keep a clear distinction between news and opinion."

The concept of public service endorsed here has a distinguished pedigree. Public service broadcasting was long championed by professional entities in Europe and North America that sought to provide balanced news coverage which was politically and financially independent. In the words of the BBC's international development charity, BBC Media Action:

"Public service broadcasting can play an important role in shaping identity and a sense of inclusive 'nationhood'. Where political and media environments are becoming more polarised, the role of public service broadcasting as a provider of trusted information and platforms for public debate for all sections of society is becoming increasingly important."

The same can be said of public service media generally – if by "public service" independence, reliability, balance, diversity, and plurality are meant. Therefore, it comes as something of a shock when digital media – lauded as a global commons providing unmediated access to a shared social good that all can enjoy – fail those very same tests.

Of course, because they are market-driven, digital technologies play by different rules. Google's claim "to organize the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful" and Facebook's "to give people the power to build community and bring the world

closer together” come at considerable cost – socially, culturally, economically, and politically.

As Jack Schenker noted in “Democratising the digital” (*Aeon*, 29 November 2017):

“The billions of lines of code that increasingly colonise our private worlds and public spaces are wrapped in a veneer of neutrality, but they are neutral only in the sense that they lead us doubly down whichever roads will generate income for their owners. That drive for income places digital technologies within an ideological framework which is itself deeply biased.”

Public service media are well placed to tackle the twin scourges of contemporary journalism: fake news and misinformation. Yet they are not the same and need different remedies. As the European Commission’s Report of the independent High level Group on fake news and online disinformation “A multi-dimensional approach to disinformation” (March 2018), makes clear, the term fake news is inadequate to capture the complex problem of disinformation, and it is also misleading:

“Because it has been appropriated by some politicians and their supporters, who use the term to dismiss coverage that they find disagreeable, and has thus become a weapon with which powerful actors can interfere in circulation of information and attack and undermine independent news media.”

So where should people turn to for reliable and balanced news, and opinion? In whatever form they take, it has to be to public service media that are editorially independent and free from political and commercial constraints.

However, in a world of global corporate ownerships, supranational telecommunications entities, and unregulated social media – not to mention government interference and Twittering politicians – public service media are looking increasingly fragile. ■

What is the role of public service journalism today?

Matthew Powers

Public service journalism typically refers to reporting that contributes to or frames debate about issues of common concern. Journalists hold this type of reporting in high regard and contrast it with less distinctive forms of news coverage.

Where partisan spin aims for political efficacy and consumer news for optimization of decisions taken in the marketplace, public service journalism claims to provide citizens with the information needed to form reasoned opinions about matters of shared interest. By reporting “without fear or favour” on issues of public importance, this form of reporting is viewed by journalists as a crucial pillar of democratic self-governance.

In Western Europe and North America – the regions that serve as the primary reference points in this essay – the ideal of public service reporting arose amidst the professionalization of journalism in the 20th century. While this assumed different forms in different places, across all of them journalism became a paid occupation with distinctive routines and norms. One key norm was the idea that journalists ought to contribute to “the public” rather than some narrower segment of it.

This norm aimed to differentiate journalism from other emergent occupations at the time. Public relations, for instance, was viewed as working on behalf of specific interests, not that of the general public. Historically, this norm also differentiated professional journalism from its 19th century predecessor, when journalists existed primarily to serve the interests of political parties or general political tendencies. In that era, contributors to mass media tended to be lawyers, politicians, and other social elites who did not rely on journalism



Police Commissioner Suleiman Kova answers and addresses the media near the 2013 Dar es Salaam building collapse. Photo: Muhammad Mahdi Karim/www.micro2macro.net

to make their livings.

From the outset, the ideal of public service reporting was accompanied by questions about what counts as an issue of common concern. Exclusion on the basis of gender, class, race, ethnicity, and other forms of social difference was recurrent. In the United States, for example, the top prize for public service reporting – the “Public Service” Reporting Prize given annually by the Pulitzer Committee – went to gender-related reporting for the first time in just 1991.

Similar historical anecdotes can be drawn from other countries. All highlight that definitions of common concern that public service reporting aims to inform are neither free floating nor timeless. Instead, they reflect and refract relations of power within a given society at a particular point in time.

Nonetheless, the ideal of public service reporting underscores an important civic aim: that democratic decision-making can be informed by

reporting that helps citizens consider public action in ways that are not reducible to economic power or social status, and that therefore communicate across various forms of social difference. It is an ideal from another era, and a contested one at that. Yet it is also holds continuing importance as a forum for social integration and decision-making. How should we think about the role of public service journalism today?

Public service journalism today

Journalism today exists in a context where the very notion of common concern is called into question. In many countries, well-funded efforts by conservative activists provide segments of the public with alternative news sources that cultivate distrust in the mainstream media, as well as public institutions and experts on whom they rely to produce public service news. More generally, polarization leads groups on both the left and right with different value orientations to pay heed only to news

that confirms extant assumptions.

Digital technologies exacerbate these divisions by fostering reinforcing echo chambers while also circulating disinformation and sensationalist news. Such news runs counter to norms of public service, and circulates in part due to digital advertising models that reward volumes of traffic rather than quality. In this context, the idea of reporting about issues of common concern, so that they can be subject to rational-critical opinion formation, seems to falter in a world composed of separate issue arenas, each seeking its own critical mass.

Compounding this problem is the precarious economic situation in which many news organizations find themselves. This is especially an issue in North America and Western Europe. While the problem varies from one country to the next, the basic issues seem to be: 1) that the expansion of news options – including the option of simply tuning out from news altogether – leaves many news organizations with dwindling audiences; and 2) even those who experience audience growth struggle to convert those audiences into economic revenues. For commercial media, these revenues are primarily captured by large internet companies like Google and Facebook. Meanwhile, many public service broadcasters are seeing their operating budgets slashed amidst government spending cutbacks.

Unsurprisingly, newsroom layoffs have been a widespread result of these conditions. Over the past decade, the number of paid journalism jobs in the United States has been cut by more than a third. The figures are less drastic in Western Europe, where regulations to varying degrees buffer news organizations in difficult economic circumstances. For example, paid employment in France has dropped far less sharply in the same time period, due in part to the French government doubling the amount of direct aid it gives to news organizations, and in part due to labour regulations that make layoffs difficult for news organizations to make. Yet these measures also make it difficult for young journalists to enter the field, thus creating questions about who will provide public service reporting in the future.

All these changes obviously shape the capacity of news organizations to produce public service journalism. Fewer resources limit the ability of journalists to spend the time and energy needed to do this type of reporting. They also limit these abilities unevenly, by clustering a growing proportion of journalism jobs in media capitals (e.g. London, Paris, New York) while leaving vast swaths of the country underserved. This in turn reshapes the very idea of what is understood as public service. The economist James Hamilton, for example, has shown that journalism prizes in the United States are increasingly concentrated in a few elite news outlets. In the 1990s, five news outlets accounted for 30% of all major journalism awards. Today, that figure has risen to nearly 50%. These changes make it less likely that reporting about issues outside the purview of national news media will appear on the public radar.

One possible answer to the question of public service reporting's future, therefore, is that the very meaning of the term "public" that it serves will change. It will focus increasingly on news that will interest an audience that is more educated and wealthy than the general population. These audiences – themselves divided between differing political camps – may subdivide around politically partisan news sites. Or public service journalism could form a background cultural reference for professional elites (e.g. "Did you read that article in the Financial Times?").

In these senses, public service reporting will look a good deal like the 19th century journalism that professional journalism sought to displace: produced by and for social elites in the service of various political and class tendencies. The rest of the public will get either blatantly partisan spin, profit-driven infotainment, or no news at all.

Inclusion and exclusion

This type of development is typically framed in terms of exclusion. Individuals and groups – namely, those with fewer educational and economic resources – will cease to be included in public service reporting. This is an important discussion, and one that often revolves around economic measures that can be taken to bolster public ser-

vice journalism. Indeed, there are measures that can be taken to ameliorate aspects of this problem. Various forms of government support – when coupled with measures to ensure journalistic autonomy – can and sometimes do provide a source of money that enables journalists to pursue public service coverage.

But a more fundamental issue lurks beneath such discussions. The ideal of public service journalism arose in an era when journalists could reasonably claim to speak to and on behalf of “the public”. Despite all the exclusions that such claims entailed, such statements were possible in part because of a tacit consensus on the existing social order about which journalism reported.

Among other things, this social order promised citizens that hard work would result in meritocratic mobility and that communities at varying scales (local, national) would provide for them. Classic forms of public service reporting garner prestige precisely because they highlighted the failure to live up to such norms (e.g. reporting about corruption imagines itself as exposing a failure of meritocracy; reporting about poverty calls attention to failures to care for community members).

One need not look far to see that such a social order – or, to be more precise, the perception of its efficacy – has broken down. Deindustrialization has led to the loss of many jobs, and their replacement with low paying and precarious forms of work. Government cutbacks mean fewer social services in many countries, and their substitution with market-based counterparts (e.g. private retirement accounts). Public service reporting can and sometimes does chronicle these developments, but audiences are hardly shocked to learn of them.

Better funding for public service journalism will not solve this deeper issue. It is not merely that some citizens are excluded from public service reporting, but that they cease to believe in the social order on which it is based. Very low levels of trust in journalism – in many countries, the lowest since public opinion researchers began asking the question – are simply one indicator of this larger loss of faith. Under such conditions, journalists cannot simply revert to the facts or public interest

to defend their claims, because it is precisely the validity of the social order on which they are based that is questioned.

There is not an immediate or obvious answer to this deeper problem. In fact, for the most part, it is ignored by journalists and commentators who focus simply on the loss of fact-based reporting, or the exclusion of various communities in news coverage. To be sure, these are important issues. But they do not touch upon the deeper sources of doubt that many citizens feel about their social worlds. Journalists are not directly responsible for creating these conditions. However, the possibility of a more expansive, critical form of public service reporting in the future requires finding ways of dealing with it. ■

Matthew Powers is Assistant Professor in the Department of Communication at the University of Washington in Seattle, USA. His first book, *NGOs as Newsmakers: The Changing Landscape of International News*, will be published by Columbia University Press in May 2018.

Recent issues of *Media Development*

1/2018 Gender and Media
- A holistic agenda

4/2017 Digital Media and Social Memory

3/2017 Changing Media, Changing
Perceptions

2/2017 Reforming the World

1/2017 Digital Futures

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Ensuring the survival of professional journalism

Debra L. Mason

The founder of Time magazine, Henry R. Luce, would likely be stunned at the state of the magazine industry today.

Luce, the son of a Presbyterian missionary couple working in China, broke new ground when he included a religion section when his news magazine was founded 95 years ago. “I became a journalist to come as close as possible to the heart of the world,” Luce once said.

Today, the hearts of the world still beat, but the profession of journalism is failing to figure out what audiences crave, failing to figure out how to engender trust, failing at how to be democracy’s watchdog and failing at survival. If, as Luce says, journalism tends the heart of the world, who then is tending journalism?

I believe nothing in the world holds more potential to stifle democracy, fuel autocrats, silence diversity, restrict social justice or stymie religious freedom as the decline of a robust, independent and professional press.¹ Perhaps most disturbing of all, research shows audiences can’t easily discern the difference between authentic, professional journalism and those photos, text or videos manipulated to present a distorted view of reality – so-called fake news.

Here, after situating religion news within these trends, I recommend several “commandments” of sorts, for communication professionals and the public, if we are to preserve journalism as a pillar of global freedoms and human rights.

Of course, where we find ourselves today did not happen overnight, but even for an industry that has had to iterate ever since the first modern-style newspapers were printed in the early

1600s, technology and automation are moving too fast for the human-heavy business of journalistic reporting to keep up.

New agenda-setters and gatekeepers

I grew up in the 1960s and 70s. Most nights, we ate dinner silently at our kitchen table, while Walter Cronkite delivered the news on CBS, one of the only two television networks we received in our rural southwest Michigan home. If my grandmother in Indiana or my aunt in Arizona turned on CBS, they would see the exact same news, in the exact same order with the exact same script and images.

Likewise, in the 1980s when studying journalism at Northwestern University and reading The New York Times’ national edition, I saw the same stories as a cousin in Ann Arbor and friend in Texas. Agendas for citizens were set; gates to news were kept firmly in control by elite news outlets.

In U.S. journalism classes today, we’re training the first generation of digital natives. These 18-year-olds have no memory of life without cell phones as teens. They had smart boards in middle school classrooms and personal iPads in high school. My youngest daughter, 18, has sent nearly 91,000 snaps on Snapchat, an app that displays photos or short videos for only 24 hours.

These digital natives “trade” in a different type of currency than in the past. Their “social capital” is built upon likes, retweets, snaps and comments. Their content is visual, personal and popular. And now, every person becomes a broadcaster of news. This makes more people and more stories available than at any time in the past. It’s a wild cacophony of content full of endless digital distractions.

The problem is that often this content is not created by professional journalists. The effort required to share and spread social media content is so low, that news both fake and true reside in the same feeds. News organizations are frantically trying to keep up, using “bots” – programs that use artificial intelligence to post and mimic human conversations – to fill in the gaps.

But In the absence of large-scale news lit-

eracy programs, audiences remain ill-equipped to tell the difference between real and “fake” news. While news by professional journalists is difficult to discern from content intended to deceive, watchdog journalism, a hallmark of professional reporting, is underfunded and often underappreciated, especially among people of faith.

“It is sometimes said that the people are ahead of the politicians; it can also be said that journalism ought to be ahead of the people. Otherwise, the people are ill-served.” – Henry R. Luce

Although fake news in and of itself is problematic, its prevalence creates a more significant problem: It leads the public to lack trust in news published by professional, mainstream outlets that subscribe to shared ethical values and journalistic norms. Journalism is rarely the most respected profession in the world, but it’s clear that trust in news may be at a new low. As Melissa Bell wrote in last year’s *Digital News Report* by The Reuter’s Institute and Oxford University:

“The media industry is stretched thin, anxious, and walking a razor’s edge. And perhaps the biggest threat to our business is not an external pressure: we have broken media industry because we have broken the confidence of our audience. ... Instead of enriching their lives, our work depresses them. And underlying this loss of trust is a perception of media bias driven by polarization. People cluster to media organizations that fit their belief, and dismiss other outlets. The internet, once thought to open the world up to all the information possible and bring people together, has instead drawn people into their own corners.”

The sea-serpent season upon us again / F. Op- per. The print shows a “Sensation Press” reporter standing on the shore near “Gray Gables”, Grover Cleveland’s summer home at Cape Cod, pointing to a sea serpent labeled “3d Term Twaddle”. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C. 20540 USA.

Trust, the report found, varies across countries. Finland residents have the highest trust in news outlets, with 62% of those surveyed viewing news as accurate. Surprisingly, trust was not the least in countries in which the government has strong influence – although one might wonder if those surveyed felt free to respond honestly.

In countries in which a high percentage of people distrust the news, there also tends to be high political polarization. So, only about 23% of those surveyed trust the news in South Korea and Greece. Out of 36 countries and 70,000 online surveys, the U.S. ranked no. 28 in trust, close to Croatia, Czech Republic and Hungary. Only 38% of the U.S. public trusts the news media.

The elusive search for truth

An awkward silence ensued last fall when I asked a group of professional journalists from 15 sub-Saharan African countries if the phrase “homosex-



uality is a sin” is fact or opinion. A reporter from Zimbabwe finally answered, “It’s a fact, because it’s in the Bible.”

His answer was a perfect segue into my lecture on the differences between “Truth” – beliefs accepted on faith as ultimate reality vs. “truth,” which is the goal of real journalistic storytelling, comprised of verifiable facts. For professional journalism, truth-telling is the gold standard.

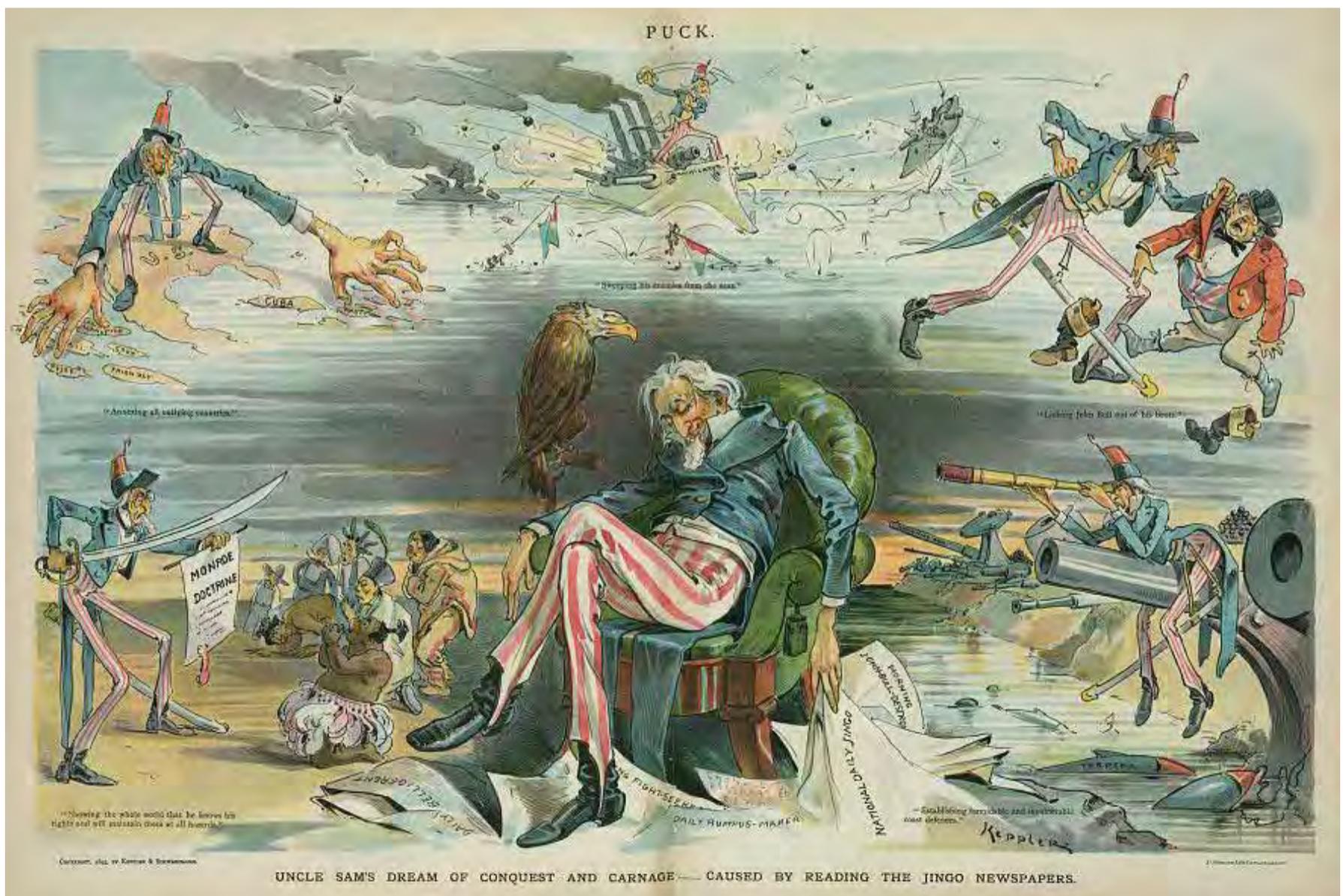
The Guardian’s Editor Katharine Viner says public journalists have a mission to be truth-tellers, to “get out of the big cities and the big institutions and stay with the stories for the long-term.” Truth-telling, however, is not just a mission of journalism; it’s the essence of what separates professional journalism from all other media content. Professional journalists train and practice, practice, practice in order to accurately discern the difference between “Truths”, falsehoods, and the “truths” journalists communicate to engaged audiences. Professional journalism, like other professions, is a discipline informed by scholarship, best practices, public service and the ethical codes that

distinguish a professional from a hack.

The business of news was a side perk of colonial publishers who made most of their money from government and religious printing. Professional education for journalism and public relations did not begin until the 20th century. The first doctor of philosophy degree in journalism was awarded about 85 years ago – 1934.

Throughout the next eight decades, professional associations for specialty journalists blossomed. Groups like the Religious Communicators Counsel, SIGNIS, Evangelical Press Association,

Uncle Sam’s dream of conquest and carnage - caused by reading the Jingo newspapers / Keppler. The print shows Uncle Sam asleep in a chair with a large eagle perched on a stand next to him; he is dreaming of conquests and annexations, asserting his “Monroe Doctrine” rights, becoming master of the seas, putting John Bull in his place, and building “formidable and invulnerable coast defenses”; on the floor by the chair are jingoistic and yellow journalism newspapers. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C. 20540 USA.



Jewish Press Association, Catholic Press Association, the Religion Newswriters Association, Associated Church Press and WACC emerged just for religion and religious communication.

These groups, along with the growing body of scholars and professors in journalism rewarded excellence through contests and solidified ethical standards. Even the norm of “objectivity” – a debated standard that has fallen out of favor in lieu of “transparency” – remains nonetheless an ideal for most professional journalists.

The social equation

The notion of “fake news” didn’t emerge with Donald Trump’s candidacy, although the phrase certainly grew to become common parlance because of this phrase’s most prominent individual to invoke it.² Fake news exists across the globe. It varies from the kind of satire that’s found in *The Onion* – or the delicious *Babylon Bee* (“Your trusted source for Christian news satire.) – to entirely fabricated content and everything in-between.

Although 15th century printing presses made mass distribution of news quicker, the academic system of footnoting, verification and ethics of news did not yet exist. It would be centuries before it was *de rigueur* for publishers to develop any sort of standards for verifiable and truthful news. Still, ever since the 1800s, notations to verify made accuracy more easily measured, building trust.

The difference, of course, is the ability for social media to spread false stories at a speed previously unknown. The known role of “influencers” – those who have large social media followings – makes a distribution strategy possible (and successful). Trump himself is one such influencer, with 47.8 million twitter followers. If you wish intentionally to deceive the public, a few strategic hashtags and the sharing by a celebrity or sports star can easily get the job done.

Regardless of its pedigree, fake news is not going away. Writer Jacob Soll painted this dire vision in his December 18, 2016 Politico report on fake news:

“Real news is not coming back in any tangible

way on a competitive local level, or as a driver of opinion in a world where the majority of the population does not rely on professionally reported news sources and so much news is filtered via social media, and by governments. And as real news recedes, fake news will grow. We’ve seen the terrifying results this has had in the past—and our biggest challenge will be to find a new way to combat the rising tide.³”

Revolutions and revolutionaries

“I suggest that what we want to do is not to leave to posterity a great institution, but to leave behind a great tradition of journalism ably practiced in our time.” – Henry R. Luce

We are only at the start of digital transformation. Today’s revolutionaries include Jeff Bezos, Elon Musk, Steve Jobs and Jeff Zuckerberg. The questions this revolution raises are profound. As artificial intelligence evolves and better mimics humanity, how will we assure that A/I doesn’t also mimic the bigotry and biases that are among humanity’s most egregious flaws? If you think that can’t possible happen, it already has.⁴

As a journalism professor and specialist in religion news, these are my “Five Commandments”, intended to add precision and depth to the discussion of “fake news”:

- * Do not use the word “media” when you really mean just “news”. It confuses social “media” as being equivalent to journalistic “news”.
- * Pay for your news. Whether it’s a magazine, newspaper, or a born digital site, pay a small fraction toward the human price of finding and reporting the truth.
- * Seek “truth” from your news, not “Truth”. Indeed, there is a place for “religious” news that seeks to communicate a particular faith. But we need religiously neutral news professionals who have no sacred cows, so to speak, who help communities of faith be honest to their public.
- * Embrace news literacy and support press freedom initiatives, so that stories to uphold other freedoms – such as freedom of religion – are held dear.
- * Value the “professional” journalist who seeks

“truth.” Professional journalists are the ones most likely to remind us in pictures, videos and words, of humanity’s past foibles. When well-done, it provides context and proportion. Seek these truth-tellers out.

As this transformational era keeps moving ahead, it’s everyone’s job to make sure the treasure of free professional journalism survives. Only when we embrace the importance of its role in ensuring humanity’s core freedoms will we get, as Luce put it, “as close as possible to the heart of the world.” ■

Notes

1. Although I use the term “press” here as shorthand, I actually mean something more broadly than that old-fashioned term. “Press” here really means any news media, be it online, print or broadcast.
2. A timeline of news “hoaxes” — fake news — can be found at <http://hoaxes.org>.
3. Soll, Jacob. “The Long and Brutal History of Fake News”. Politico. Dec. 18, 2016. Accessed Jan. 28, 2018.
4. One example of artificial intelligence picking up the biases that people have used is in the language used in auto-completion of Google searches. Such auto-completes used to include phrases such as “Jews are evil” and other anti-Semitic phrases. CBS News Dec. 05, 2016.

Dr Debra L. Mason is among the leading scholars and trainers of how religion is portrayed in the news. She brings more than 30 years of professional and scholarly experience to her position as director of the Center on Religion and the Professions, an interdisciplinary center at the world-renown Missouri School of Journalism working to improve the religious literacy of professionals so they can better serve a multi-faith public.



The survivors, mostly from immigrant families on low incomes, were used to being ignored. Gradually they opened up in interviews, gaining the confidence to demand decent housing, a full inquiry, answers from politicians... The journalists then discovered that short-cuts in construction had left many more blocks like Grenfell at high risk of fire all over the country – a national scandal.

Grenfell Tower burns. Picture: @Lisa_Oxford (Creative Commons).

Too much razzmatazz – too few values?

Kathy Lowe

In the clamour and razzmatazz of our high-tech media, form tends to dominate content and everything has to turn in a quick profit. So can the spirit and values of public service journalism survive?

The approach of Britain’s TV programme Channel 4 News in covering the horrendous Grenfell Tower fire (photo below) in London in June 2017 gives cause for optimism. All the UK media reported this avoidable tragedy that cost the lives of 80 people in the high-rise public housing block. But weeks after the fire Channel 4 News reporters were still on the story, standing by the blackened skeleton of Grenfell Tower with grieving residents, neighbourhood groups, police and fire-fighters, probing officials accused of failing those who had died.

Central government, while acknowledging the problem, was pushing it back on cash-strapped local councils, refusing to commit funds towards repairs. A public inquiry is now underway and the story continues.

This kind of journalism encourages people to find their voices, promotes inclusion and links those fighting for a kinder world. At the very least, it offers an antidote to the untruths, mind-numbing trivia, sensationalism, sexism and racial hatred that divide communities. At best, it can help to change society.

New media alliances

With dazzling digital advances, the task of public service journalists in reaching their audiences should be easier. Especially exciting is the cross-over between print and on-line journalism and the sheer wealth of information accessible online.

Fruitful new alliances between professional writers and citizen journalists are emerging too. In Syria, at the time of writing, a number of women among the estimated 400,000 people under terrifying bombardment in eastern Ghouta are reportedly linking up with foreign correspondents by making videos and regularly giving eyewitness accounts.

For the mainstream media around the world, investigative reporting – foreign stories in particular – demands hefty resources, as does in-depth analysis and searching out independent voices. Channel 4 News, produced by the big ITN network, has the necessary budget having consistently won awards and boosted ratings. *The Guardian* newspaper on the other hand, internationally respected and committed to a public service approach, is struggling to attract more advertising revenue. Soon it may exist as an online publication only.

In this ultra-commercial environment of ratings wars, targets and the battle for advertising, media mergers are squeezing out diversity and the business ethos prevails. There is little commitment to anything that doesn't draw hoards of readers/viewers/listeners and won't make money in the short term. Frazzled journalists and broadcasters cling to their jobs in a precarious labour

market, many on short-term contracts, their trade unions (if they have them) on the back foot.

In a blow to local democracy in Britain, multi-media giants have been buying out and decimating a once vibrant, independent-minded network of local newspapers and radios, deemed unprofitable. Their voices are badly missed as the government slashes funding for local services in the name of austerity and demoralised communities wonder what can be done about it.

The BBC, once a beacon of public service broadcasting, stands bloodied and bowed. Its public licence fee (modest annual levy on every household with a TV) used to finance a vast choice of quality programmes for all viewers irrespective of whether the programmes commanded a mass audience or not.

Now the BBC is under continual attack by the government and media companies, forced to compete “on a level playing field” with its commercial rivals. Quality output doesn't come cheap so this means cutting staff levels to the bone and farming out much programme-making to outside production companies. In other words, privatisation by the back door.

Business interests of media magnates and the agendas of governments often coincide. For example nearly all the main media outlets in Britain have tried to discredit the country's leader of the opposition Labour Party, Jeremy Corbyn. Fearful of Corbyn's left wing credentials, his stance against austerity and war and his growing popularity they ran a campaign of fake news and personal vilification against him over months.

A recent report by media and communications researchers at the London School of Economics (LSE) found that the British media had “systematically attacked Jeremy Corbyn ever since he came to prominence in the summer of 2015.”

Fortunately for Corbyn, his supporters proved adept at using social media to defend him and explain his policies. This, combined with Corbyn's own determination to travel the country meeting voters in person, actually succeeded in substantially increasing the Labour vote in the 2017 general election. Even though his party did not win, he drew hundreds of young people to



Labour, leaving a lot of red faces in some newsrooms. Corbyn outflanked fake news .

Powerful forces with pots of money are out to dominate social media spaces and suffocate genuine debate. Breitbart News Network, a far-right American news and commentary website formerly edited by one-time Trump aide Steve Bannon, is backed by billionaires and inundated with lucrative advertising. The *Daily Mail's* highly profitable MailOnline website, claiming to be the second most popular after *The New York Times*, is another example.

Both Breitbart and MailOnline wage a relentless ideological offensive, peddling hatred of the impoverished and vulnerable and fuelling division in society. They would have us believe that war and austerity are inevitable, that there is no obscene gap between rich and poor in many countries, that migrants are vermin, the climate crisis a hoax and that all Muslims are terrorists.

The infiltration of social networks with fake news has now reached a whole new level. Some governments and shady organisations are pour-

ing money into automated systems of bots that pretend to be real people and drench social media with their point of view.

So can journalists stand up to all this? “Alternative” progressive media outlets, run outside the mainstream, are perhaps most developed in the United States. The TV news programme *Democracy Now!* airs live each weekday. It is broadcast on the internet and by over 1,400 radio and television stations worldwide. While supporters and critics both deem it “radical”, its executive producer rejects that label, calling the programme a global newscast that has “people speaking for themselves”.

The website AlterNet says it aims to “inspire citizen action and advocacy on the environment, human rights and civil liberties, social justice, media, and health care issues.” It claims 5.9 million visitors monthly, but like other alternative media, it has no advertising and relies on supporters’ donations.

All power to them and many thousands of others who, with or without money, are defending public service values and getting their messages across. ■

Kathy Lowe, a freelance journalist based in the UK, was formerly editor of *WACC Action* and before that, Associate Editor of the World Council of Churches magazine *One World*. Her book *Opening Eyes and Ears* (WCC/WACC/LWF, 1983) examined ventures breaking new ground in public service communication.

In the public interest: Public broadcasting in Germany and Europe under review

Johanna Haberer

If the Public Broadcasting System in Germany did not already exist, it would have to be invented right now. That is the first proposition of a public appeal launched by a group of German media studies scientists in September 2017. The public concept for broadcasting, the scientists argue, is a systematic constituent of how democracy functions.¹

This appeal was directed at the Minister Presidents of the German States and specifically addressed current trends in Germany which question the basic legitimacy of public broadcasting or which – by means of economy drives – essentially aim to limit the media options open to public broadcasting. The two major public broadcasting stations – the ZDF (Second German Television Program) which broadcasts throughout Germany, and the ARD (Association of German Broadcasting Corporations of Germany), which broadcasts programs at state level and is responsible for a joint program – reacted to the de facto aspersions by publishing statements.

The statement underlined the important role public broadcasting played in creating a stable democracy in the aftermath of the Second World War up to the present day, emphasising their function in guaranteeing social cohesion. In them they described the functions and responsibilities of the public stations which, against the background of

digitalised communication in Germany, they also reformulated.²

In the process ZDF and ARD promised to use digitalisation more consistently for cross-media research and production, to optimise work processes and to pay greater attention to the synergies between the various journalistic and technical fields of competence.

What sounds as if it is routine policy within broadcasting is in reality the tip of a long-term process that questions the concept of broadcasting under public control – in effect under the control of the general public and socially relevant groups. This scepticism comes from a variety of directions and stems from different levels of interest. These could be categorised as follows.

The competitive motive

The so-called “dual system”, which permits the licensing of commercial providers, did not come into existence in Germany until 1984. Since then, publicly funded and privately financed broadcasting, whether financed by private licensing or commercials, have co-existed in Germany. They are based on two seriously differing concepts:

Public broadcasting is subject to mandate. That means it is committed to serving the public interest and that its primary mission is to enable the general public to take part in democratic discourse by being exposed to a wide range of viewpoints and levels of opinion. Its mandate is to inform and entertain, and across the whole range of programs offered, it is intended to stand for and pass on social values, reflect the dynamics of debates about them and document the transformation they undergo.

For many decades, the German Constitutional Court has emphasised the role that public broadcasting has played in serving the public welfare and has elaborated a series of seminal constitutional court rulings.³ All these rulings upheld the central role of the public broadcasting system against the cases fought by commercial competitors who broadcast with the aim of generating the greatest possible returns through the highest possible income from commercials offset against the lowest possible costs for program production. The

viewers are divided here for a commercially-based economy into target groups and classified according to their future potential as “customers”.

Public broadcasting is far removed in terms of the public interest from such entrepreneurial competition. Its target audience is the public itself, the “citizen” and the difficult, almost unreachable aim of enabling the public to participate in current debate. The underlying conviction is that with the electronic media and their rapid and strong influence on listeners and viewers, quality and independence must be publicly financed and cannot be subjugated to the rule of quotas.

For many years, this co-existence between the broadcasting systems functioned as complementary and competitive strands until the further development of digital distribution systems and a new global market raised entirely new questions about mandate, costs, and dissemination.

The conceptual motive

In the mid-1990s, and as European countries became more close-knit and expressed the wish for trans-border communal broadcasting, German public broadcasting became increasingly under pressure within European politics. In Germany, broadcasting is part of “public education” in two senses: The public finances their broadcasting so that they can be politically informed and educated. In that respect, broadcasting is perceived as an instrument of and an educational factor in the formation of a national and European community through communication.

Thus broadcasting in Germany is understood as a cultural asset, comparable to science and education. Education in the German Federal Republic is a federal matter under the aegis of the states and is committed to cultural plurality. Since the legacy of experience under the dictatorship of the National Socialist regime with its propaganda broadcasting, never again was broadcasting to be under central state control.

Since then, media plurality as a further guarantee of democratic education has belonged to the conceptual framework of German media policies and constitutional reality. The European Union,

by contrast, mainly defines broadcasting as an “economic asset” and a “(public) service”. This implies that the European economic market should be opened up to global media concerns as a market to invest in. Simultaneously, broadcasting as a conveyor of culture should support the cultural plurality of Europe.⁴

The so-called Amsterdam Treaty Protocol Addendum⁵ of 1996 documents that at their summit meeting the heads of state and government of all the member states of the European Union agreed on a legally binding protocol addendum to the EU contract underlining the special role of the public broadcasting system in individual European countries. The agreement confirms that the German federal states are responsible for the organisation and financing of public broadcasting in Germany and provisionally guarantees the financing of ARD broadcasting bodies and the ZDF (Second German Television Channel) from licensing fees in accordance with European law.

However, the protocol addendum is also a concession to England and Germany with their strong public broadcasting systems. As regards the concept, the political theory they stand for and media law, both see a public broadcasting system as a pre-requisite for, a constituent part of and having a function in a liberal democracy. At the time, both the Protestant and the Catholic churches in Germany and Europe subscribed to this decision, mindful that the stable presence and transparency of churches and religion are part of the mandate of the public broadcasting system and that, as a result, church institutions are an integral part of the program and the broadcasting organisation.

This does not mean that such a special case of authorization should be seen as a provisional arrangement that can be maintained unnoticed and unquestioned for decades. The political test of strength looming on the horizon of media forces such as Facebook and Google, which rule the media market in Europe, has yet to be fought out. And thus the arena has been thrown open to all the political forces in Europe that aim to weaken or liquidate a broadcasting system which rests on a political construction based on community (social polity) and shared public values.

This can be seen by looking at the public broadcasting systems in Poland or Hungary. New media laws there serving to protect party-political access to personnel, program and control are also destroying independence and journalistic freedom and are forcing the program to “step into line” politically.⁶ In contrast, there are also young political forces who are flying the flag of a new Europe with public broadcasting as the journalistic model pinned to their standard.⁷

The public warning issued by Facebook co-founder Sean Parker pointing out the disruptive effects and logic of these digital platforms, harmful to both democracy and social solidarity, is impressive proof of the fact that platforms such as Facebook, despite their guise of grassroots democracy, cannot be a substitute for journalistically professional, independent and multi-faceted reporting in the interest of a democratic culture.⁸

The journalistic motive – infinite means of dissemination

In comparison with the public statutory broadcasting stations, digitalisation has now brought a further sleeping giant onto the stage. Whereas big publishing houses had already introduced local, regional and supra-regional windows into private broadcasting, thus establishing themselves as competitors to public broadcasting within the dual system, digital forms of dissemination have increased the competition exponentially. With their additional and expanding information in broadcast programs, the broadcasting stations, so the publishing houses claimed, entered into competition with the printed press. Newspaper publishers now finally admitted that the broadcasters constituted competition in the world of news reporting. Whereas the other side of the coin was that publishers, for their part, were now able to provide products similar to broadcasts complete with accompanying images and film material as well as streaming-services as a result of the gradual fusion of platforms.

Since then, there has been one lawsuit after another between publishers and broadcasting stations. Forms of dissemination and press, or as the case may be broadcasting content, need to be

re-defined and delimited, and the tone of voice determining the communication between publishing houses and the representatives of public “systems” has acquired a sharp, polemical edge.

The head of the publishers’ association and director of the Springer consortium, Matthias Döpfner, compares journalistic conditions in Germany with “North Korea” and he speaks condemningly of the “system” by referring to the public system as “State Broadcasting”, thus insinuating that political parties and government representatives have direct ways of intervening in broadcasting with a view to intentional manipulation.⁹

But the truth is that the publishers – in particular the supra-regional and regional quality press – could – in the sense of public interest – have numerous common interests. It is indeed in the interest of the general public that the informational sources of credibility should mutually support each other as various research associations are already doing.¹⁰ They have managed to consolidate time-consuming, complex international research¹¹ and in the interest of the general public to inform the populace meticulously on matters such as, for example, mass tax evasion.

Precisely in this age of “alternative truths”, of “social bots” and “fake news”, which attempt to torpedo the level of informed discourse¹² with attempts at manipulation, what will win the day for the public is its ability to support the kind of journalism which is committed to information and the public interest as a whole and which is financed by the general public. In particular this is because, over the last few years, in addition to the competitive, conceptual and journalistic reasons for doubting the validity of public broadcasting, politically motivated strategies attempting to destabilise it have also entered the scene. They defame public broadcasting as the “liar press” and, aided by increasing political means of exerting influence, attempt to undermine it once and for all.

Political motivation – right-wing populism

In March 2018, the Swiss electorate was due to decide in a referendum whether to get rid of or to keep their highly reputed public broadcasting system. The movers behind this referendum are

so-called “free thinkers”, liberals and right-wing populists who aim, at one blow, to dispense with the public funding of broadcasting through the tax-payer. They accuse the public media of producing “bog standard left-wing mainstream bla-bla”. By destroying the system, they hope to establish free competition by means of which the financially strong media groups can win over majority opinion by exerting their influence. The media market would then be freely accessible for globally active media entrepreneurs such as Rupert Murdoch and other media moguls who, in the process of the whole debate over whether Britain should remain in or leave the European Union, launched a successful journalistic attack on the European system of solidarity.

The Swiss referendum took place under the name “No Billag” (i.e. free of charge or no fees) and it took place on 4 March 2018. The result was a large majority (more than 70%) in favour of retaining the current public broadcasting system. Nevertheless, it can be assumed that the question of the legitimation of this type of broadcasting system will continue to be asked in all the European countries.

What really hurts from a German point of view is this development in many European countries, because it lends journalistic force to anti-European voices and, despite all the sensible, stronger arguments in favour of Europe, serves national interests the dominant public vote on a platter.

Public broadcasting came into being precisely as an alternative to broadcasting as a nationalist instrument of propaganda which, as Hitler’s and Goebbels’ megaphone, drove people in the so-called Third Reich to ruin, destruction, and criminality.

“The aims of this allied broadcasting policy were to create a free democratic and peace-loving Germany as a respectful and self-respecting member of a family of nations, an institution to further the human ideals of truth and tolerance, justice, freedom and respect for the rights of the individual.¹³”

To bring this about, broadcasting was to be independent and never again able to be abused as an instrument by any particular parties, world views, philosophies or religions. The plurality of the socially relevant groups should control broadcasting and ensure it retained close ties with the general public.

Precisely at times in which social cohesion is crumbling, at times of strategic disinformation and provocative attempts at giving national socialism a positive slant, and when national ideologies are being fanned back into life, people in Germany and Europe need this instrument of social cohesion and integration. The contamination of communication agencies poisons a society at its very roots. Modern societies that aim to function in their diversity need a communications structure which is reliable, trustworthy, incorruptible, and resilient to social disruption. ■

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Notes

1. cf. On the future of public statutory Media, 1917.
2. cf. Commission and Optimisation of Structures 2017; cf. ZDF § Declaration of Personal Commitment 2017. In 2016 the two German public broadcasting organisations (ARD and ZDF) jointly shared a viewer quota of 45,2%. Their annual budget is approx. 8 billion Euros. cf. KEK 2017; cf. Tagesspiegel 2016.
3. The German Constitutional Court declared in its verdicts that public broadcasting should guarantee the basic provision of information and be party-politically neutral. In addition, it should guarantee continued program and technical development. cf. BVerfG 1986.
4. cf. Höhns 1997; cf. Bethge/ Weber-Dürler 1998.
5. cf. Prototype of the Amsterdam Treaty 1997, p. 109. See full text in addendum.
6. cf. Simon 2016.
7. cf. Democracy in Motion 2017.
8. cf. Muth 2017.
9. cf. Spiegel 2017.
10. cf. NDR 2017. (North German Broadcasting Station).
11. The Research Association of NDR, WDR and the Süddeutsche Zeitung collaborated with the International Consortium for Investigative Journalism (ICIJ) in evaluating the Panama Papers. Cf. Süddeutsche Zeitung 2016.
12. cf. Habermas 1981.
13. Glässgen 2016, p.14.

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A new wave of public service journalism in Latin America

Antonio Castillo

After several decades under a shroud of neglect, Latin American “public service journalism” is experiencing a much-needed resurgence. It can’t be found however, in the clickbait legacy commercial media. Instead, it can be found in the new breed of digitally native Latin American non-profit journalism. These organisations are profoundly changing the news ecology of the region.

If making a contribution to the fragile Latin American democracies can be considered a “public service” to the region, these new journalistic expressions are indispensable. Defined as journalism that weighs in and fosters a well-informed conversation over public issues concerning citizens, these (relatively) new expressions of Latin America public service journalism are concerned with the shameless and most severe problems the region faces. And there are many: corruption, abuses of power, poverty, crime, impunity and the precipitous destruction of the natural environment.

SembraMedia, a non-profit organization dedicated to supporting new journalistic voices in Latin America, has identified at least 800 new journalistic projects in the region. And this is only in the last five years. Some of them suddenly appear and then disappear. While others consolidate and grow in all senses: financially, structurally and more importantly in their social and political impact – making the powerful very nervous indeed.

Guatemala’s “Plaza Pública” (Public Square) is one of them. “The name comes from Haber-

mas, who believed that the media in a democracy have to operate as public spheres where people can discuss, argue and supervise one another and the powers that be,” said Martín Rodríguez Pellicer, founder and director, to Daniel Perera from the Knight Center for Journalism in the Americas (2011). Driven by a public service news agenda, it is one of the leading journalistic projects of the region. Partially funded by the Jesuit Rafael Landívar University, Plaza Pública was created in 2011 as “a platform for dialogue and debate”.

The same agenda is driving the work of similar journalistic experiences mushrooming across Latin America. In Nicaragua, a country with a population of just six million and with a seriously undermined democracy, “El Faro” and “Confidencial” have become instruments of government accountability and citizens’ empowerment. In 2013, “El Faro” received the Latin American Investigative Award for a story into secret negotiations between the government and the Maras, the criminal gangs largely responsible for an epidemic of street violence plaguing Central America.

In Mexico, “Animal Político” and “Arena Pública” are nowadays two of the most trusted journalism platforms. In a country defined by violence, corruption and impunity, these two journalistic projects are building a “political awareness” news agenda. “Arena Pública” is – as its website says – “a digital platform open to citizen participation to inform, criticize and discuss the facts, without restrictions.” To better understand matters of public interest is at the heart of the public service news agenda of Cuba’s “Catorce y Medio” and Venezuela’s “Efecto Cocuyo”. They have become, in the context of severe government censorship, a breath of freedom for the readers of both countries.

If we consider investigative journalism – as Hugo de Burgh does (2008) – the zenith of “public service journalism”, these new media expressions stand out. Experiences such as “CIPER” in Chile, “Ojo Público” in Peru; Brazil’s “Agência Pública” and “Nexo”; and “La Silla Vacía” in Colombia are exposing major cases of malpractice: be they political, economic, social or environmental. In 2009, “La Silla Vacía” published documents related to the

so-called “false positives scandal”. During Colombia’s civil war, the investigation exposed one of the worst episodes of mass atrocity in the hemisphere – civilians across the country were allegedly murdered by soldiers and presented as guerrilla fighters.

Compelling and well told stories

A distinctive feature of public service journalism is its ability fully to engage its audience. And to better achieve this, the stories must be compelling and well told. This is what Peru’s “Etiqueta Negra” and Argentina’s “Revista Anfibia” are doing. They are exponents of long-form narrative journalism, a genre that places social changes at the heart of their news agenda. They are concerned with themes that matter to civil society, something that mainstream commercial media – largely concerned with the financial and political élite – have neglected.

“Etiqueta Negra” – often called The New Yorker of Latin America – has succeeded in re-engaging audiences with stories that are not only aesthetically alluring but also deeply profound. From stories of displacement to exploitation, from corruption to racial and social discrimination, the journalism of “Etiqueta Negra” is a call for action and resistance.

“El Estornudo” has developed a similar agenda of resistance and public action in Cuba. It was born as a reaction to the official media that – as the editors said – “never narrate life because life is subversive” (Medium, 2016). Like “Etiqueta Negra”, this Cuban publication has resorted to the “crónica” to tell stories that matter to ordinary Cubans. This involves – as the editors said – “delving into the virtues and sins of a society: catch the common time of ordinary people and contrast it with the clock of power” (Medium, 2016).

Well-explained and contextualised stories are two principles guiding this public service journalism agenda. This is precisely what defines the agenda of Brazil’s “Nexo”. As Renata Rizz, co-founder of this publication, told Shan Wang, from the Nieman Foundation, “we do explanatory, contextualized news” (2017). Communicating with its readers is a key feature of Nexo. “We are taking a

lot of suggestions from our readers. They talk to us when there are mistakes. They talk to us when there are compliments,” she told Wang (2017).

Accuracy, fairness and veracity

A 2017 study by SembraMedia showed that this new digitally native non-profit journalism is “deeply transforming the way that journalism is conducted” in Latin America (2017). It is not weighed down by analgesic concepts such as objectivity, impartiality, or neutrality. Frankly, these are principles that don’t have a place in the practice of Latin American public service journalism.

So-called journalistic objectivity – emanating principally from the US journalism industry – is thrown out the window by the new breed of Latin American public service journalism platforms. And they don’t apologise for this. As the editors of Cuba’s “El Estornudo” put it, “We do not promise the impossible objectivity that academies preach” (Medium, 2016). They have replaced the so-called golden rule of journalism – objectivity – with far more suitable concepts: accuracy, fairness and veracity.

Virtually all the journalists interviewed for the SembraMedia study said they created media companies to provide a “public service”. And the majority of these journalism projects came after the devastating economic crisis of 2008. Mirroring the economic collapse in other sectors of the society thousands of journalists lost their jobs. The option ahead was challenging: to develop new models of journalism. One of the strategies to achieve this was to form alliances with organisations that were not necessarily journalistic but that shared the ethos of innovation and public service.

This is the case of Infoamazonia. Launched in 2012 Infoamazonia was created by Gustavo Faleiros, a Brazilian environmental reporter who has assembled a team of investigative journalists and environmental activists. Its public service role is to watchdog and map the activities underway in the Amazon rainforest.

All of these journalistic projects have – within their distinctive differences – common threads. They are concerned about power and the power-

ful. And they are, as Silvia Gómez suggests, “sowing the seeds of a political and intellectual culture” (2017:105). They incite and facilitate citizen’s participation in seeking remedies to wrongdoings.

All of them – and several others not mentioned in this article – are not only enriching the region’s journalistic ecology; but they also are helping Latin Americans actively to re-engage with problems neglected by the legacy commercial media. They are – as Costera Meijer suggests – “informing citizens in a way that enables them to act as citizens” (2001: 13).

The news agenda of these public service journalism expressions emanates from civil society. And in this context they are creating tools that allow audiences to access the information they need or want to have. In 2014, “Peru’s Ojo Público” created an app that allows anybody to know the wealth of the mayors of Lima, the capital.

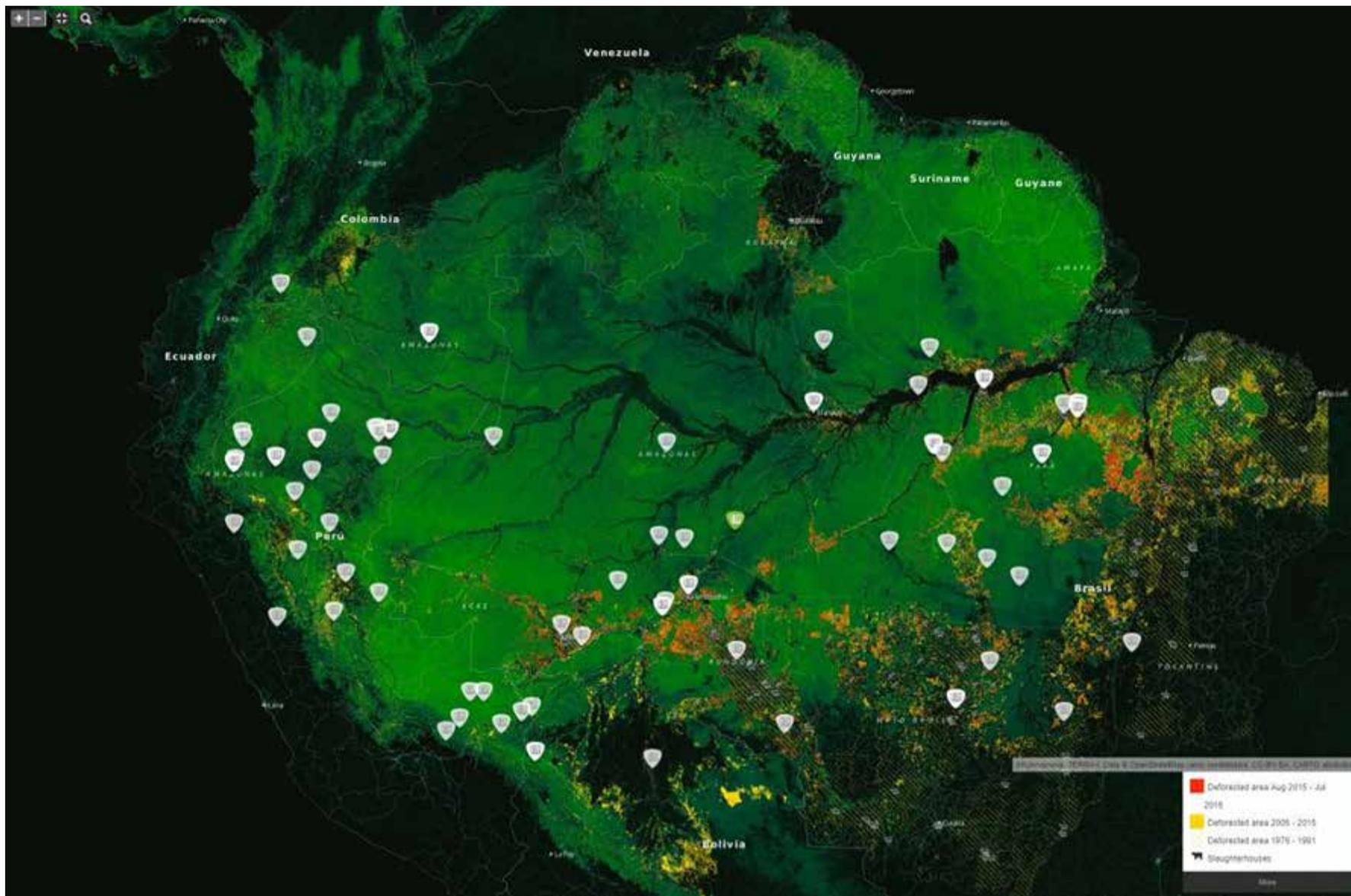
A fundamental feature of the new wave of Latin American public service journalism is the role assigned to the audience. As is the case of CIPER the audience is at the centre of the investigations. “Many of the issues we investigate are based on complaints that come from our readers,” CIPER’s journalist Juan Pablo Figueroa told Belén Dupré (2009).

These new journalistic enterprises are aware of the need to know and engage its audience and not just – as Shoemaker & Vos put it (2009) – “imagine it.” As Ferrucci rightly said, “if a news organisation wants to help sustain democracy and serve its function in a democratic society, it should engage with its audience” (2016: 357).

With their self-assigned public service ideology, these new journalistic experiences have become a kind of virtual “Habermasian public sphere”. They have rekindled the decayed media space characterized by its outré commercialisation, concentration and complicity with the political élite.

Verification journalism

In most parts of Latin America democracy is a pending task. The commercial and mainstream media are key conduits for the pursuit of financial and political power, of creating what can be called



To communicate stories across space and time, the best way to show an audience what’s happening may be to represent it graphically – with satellite imagery, GIS and clear visualizations. For example, interactive maps at InfoAmazonia allow readers to pivot from an overview of Amazon deforestation to individual new stories covering local impacts. Map of deforestation in the Amazon with pins marking geo-tagged news coverage. Credits: InfoAmazonia, TERRA-I, Data © OpenStreetMap and contributors, CC-BY-SA, CARTO.

the “consensus of the elites”. This means the demobilisation of the people and the obliteration of their demands.

Hannah Arendt once said that “truthfulness has never been counted among the political virtues, and lies have always been regarded as justifiable tools in political dealings.” In a region where this statement strongly resonates, a handful of new journalistic projects are probing into official statements and making the sources of them accountable.

It is called “verification journalism” and in Latin America two of the leading journalistic platforms engaged in this are Argentina’s “Chequeando” and Colombia’s “ColombiaCheck”. Their service to the community is manifested in their commitment to verify the public discourse and declarations of public figures on matters that are

relevant to the public debate.

Public service journalism in Latin America is a risky undertaking. Even more so when those behind these new journalistic projects – such as Cristian Alarcón, Director of Argentina’s Revista Anfibia – believe that “the fundamental thing in journalism is still that we bother someone” (Fernández, 2017). The region has fragile democracies and the work of these new journalistic expressions is not easy. The reporting of narco-trafficking – a major problem in the region – has caused the death of dozens of journalists. In Mexico the killing of independent bloggers has terrorised society.

According to the 2017 Sembramedia study, mentioned above, at a regional level almost 50% of digital media in Latin America have been victims of threats or attacks, while 45% were vic-

tims of violence because of their journalistic work (Sembramedia, 2017). They suffered kidnapping, physical threats, lawsuits, and hacking.

Yet, despite these threats, the new breed of Latin American journalism is committed to strengthening its watchdog role, a role that is in essence a major public service to Latin American society. Without them, the construction of a better region, from Mexico down to Argentina, would be unattainable. ■

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AFP Editorial Standards and Best Practices

Agence France-Presse (AFP) is the third largest news agency in the world, after the Associated Press and Reuters.

In the words of AFP's global news director, Michèle Léridon: "At a time when the credibility of the media is under attack as never before, the AFP code of ethics provides a roadmap for best journalistic practices. The code sets out the universally accepted principles that distinguish responsible media from the purveyors of fake news and disinformation." The following is an excerpt.

Ten guiding principles

1. AFP journalists are expected to provide accurate, balanced and impartial news coverage, and to correct errors quickly and transparently.
2. AFP journalists must speak with an independent voice, free of prejudice, bias or external influence. They cannot be obliged to carry out a task that goes against their conscience.
3. AFP journalists must protect the confidentiality of sources and must never knowingly put them in harm's way.
4. AFP journalists must respect the presumption of innocence.
5. AFP journalists have a duty to seek the truth and not passively report information as it is presented to them. They should challenge their sources and question the facts.
6. AFP photo and TV journalists must not doctor images or videos and must not tamper with or alter subject matter. Text journalists must not manipulate quotes.
7. AFP journalists must identify their sources of information transparently and do not plagiarise. They must never submit a story to a source for vetting.
8. AFP journalists must exercise sensitivity when approaching victims or their relatives and

avoid intruding on private grief. They must take particular care when interviewing or taking images of children, and whenever possible obtain parental consent.

9. AFP journalists must identify themselves as such. They must not use subterfuge other than in exceptional circumstances with the approval of the news management.

10. AFP journalists do not use information they have gathered for their personal benefit or use their position for financial gain. They do not pay sources.

Accuracy and truth

As AFP journalists, we must report the facts accurately in a proper context without selective use of material or deliberate omissions. We must separate fact from opinion and not report rumours as fact. We must maintain the highest standards of verification.

The headline and the lead paragraph must be supported by the story and we must ensure that background information is correct.

Every story must be correctly, precisely and transparently sourced. We should only use anonymous sources if we have no alternative or for security reasons and the story is sufficiently important to justify it.

Datelines must be honest, and by-lined writers must be where they say they are. Photos and videos must not be staged, manipulated or edited to give a misleading or false picture of events. Graphics must be scaled correctly to avoid giving a distorted comparison of data. Information used in graphics must come from trustworthy sources and be thoroughly checked.

We must not be influenced by the hype or publicity surrounding an event and should never exaggerate. We treat superlative claims such as first, biggest, best and worst with the scepticism they deserve.

We have a duty to seek the truth and not passively report information as it is presented to us. We must challenge our sources. We can accurately quote a politician, but is he or she giving correct facts or telling the truth? Where did the aid worker learn the casualty toll? Are the numbers

cited in a speech correct?

We have a duty to report the news but should draw attention to any inconsistencies and inaccuracies in a newsmaker's comments. In other words, we must do everything we can to provide as clear and truthful coverage of events as possible.

With the amount of rumour and noise circulating online and on social networks, our role of providing accurate and verified news, via identified and reliable sources, has never been more important.

Balance and fairness

Our coverage must be fair, impartial and balanced. We must try to contact all sides of a story and obtain comment and reaction from those facing criticism or accusations of wrongdoing.

Unless we are dealing with breaking news, we should give a person reasonable time to respond. A single unanswered phone call or email is insufficient. If we cannot reach the person in time, we should say so in the story and keep trying to elicit comment, updating the story if we obtain one.

Producing balanced coverage does not oblige us to give equal space to all sides of an issue. We do not have to repeat hate speech, defamatory comments and incitements to violence or propaganda. Nor are we required to quote views that contradict established facts when giving background information.

We should regularly step back and ask ourselves if our coverage really is balanced and

complete, particularly when it comes to sensitive topics such as conflicts or elections. ■

The complete code of ethics is currently available in English, French, Spanish, Arabic, and Chinese at AFP.

Journalists as democratic communication professionals

Rod Amner and Anthea Garman

Public Journalism was a US-led reform movement that spread to newsrooms in at least 15 countries in the 1990s, which aimed to sustain a public sphere to which all citizens have access and in which all topics of concern to citizens can be articulated and deliberated.

In the new century, some journalists and academic-advocates have battled gamely to keep the ideals of the movement alive through initiatives like Public Journalism 2.0, which aimed to incorporate Citizen Journalism and the tools of the digital age in a reboot to its core mission, and other incarnations, like Solutions Journalism and the Guardian's "Open Journalism". But, the early optimism surrounding public/citizen journalism has largely evaporated in the dustbowl of "fake news" and hollowed-out newsrooms. Certainly, Public Journalism as a recognisable movement is now defunct. But, not in the Eastern Cape province of South Africa.

In recent years, a number of "legacy" and "emerging" community news organizations in this poorest part of the world's most unequal country have attempted ambitious experiments under the banner of Public Journalism. Most notably, they have hosted scores of town hall meetings in a range of formats, all ostensibly aimed at reengineering in some way relationships with and between the people they formerly knew as their audiences.

Mainstream media houses like Nelson Mandela Bay's Eastern Province Herald and Buffalo City's Daily Dispatch, along with community outlets like Grahamstown's Grocott's Mail, Skawara

News in the rural hamlet of Cofimvaba, and radio stations like ZQKM, have for years been convening public platforms for engaging citizens in political and civic discourse.

As far back as 2007, a series of highly successful public lectures and panel discussions, called the Dispatch Dialogues, were initiated in Buffalo City. Held about once a month in the city's Guild Theatre, these dialogues were intended to create a platform for a broader public discussion about public issues and to bring audiences into that discussion. Later, a new, citizen-centric version of the dialogues emerged.

These hyperlocal Community Dialogues attracted large numbers of ordinary citizens, in stark contrast to the poor attendance at other public meetings in these communities. In the midst of a visible breakdown in basic service delivery in these hyperlocal places, the Community Dialogues provided a rare link between those elements in local government still committed to public service and an increasingly exasperated citizenry.

The Dispatch's work did not go unnoticed by other media houses in the province, including its sister newspaper, the Eastern Province Herald, in Nelson Mandela Bay. When Heather Robertson was appointed editor of the Herald she was instructed by Times Media that she would need to work hard to shift the paper from a suburban white audience base into one that served the whole city.

According to Robertson, one of the key reasons for the transformation was the launch of a series of engagements with communities all over Nelson Mandela Bay. In March 2011, Robertson persuaded the Eastern Cape education department head to listen to the concerns of 600 principals, teachers, parents, and community members in a giant community hall.

A recent global survey found that 78% of Grade 4 learners in South Africa could not read for meaning in their home language. One of the most important ongoing dialogues covered by the Herald in response to this dire situation was in partnership with the local university's Centre for the Advancement of Non-Racialism and Democracy (CANRAD). The Herald engineered a unique

format for these dialogues – “fish bowl” dialogues, which had about 80 officials, educators, learners, parents, and ordinary citizens attending each. The fish bowl consists of a small group who have speaking rights in an “inner sanctum”, with the rest of the participants observing in radiating circles. The sanctum is constantly replaced by fresh rings from the outside.

In response to the questions of “what can be done?” practical action on the part of participants included committing to get teachers and parents to work together, presenting a parenting skills program, showing teachers more appreciation, and initiating focus group interventions to get to the nitty gritty of specific failings and teacher grievances at a particular school.

Robertson said the Herald’s fish bowl reporting was different from previous reporting because “it was more solutions oriented”. Also, a number of dialogues have led to follow-up stories and Robertson says the journalists are “out there showing that we are not just highlighting the problems but that we have attempted to be part of finding solutions. It does change the perspective of who we are as a media organization.”

Both the Herald and the Dispatch are commercial entities operating under very difficult economic constraints, but neither can be accused of pandering to the wealthy and powerful segments that are supposedly most attractive to profit-driven news managements. Through these dialogues these news organisations have learnt about public problems and shared their agenda-setting function with the public. But, to the extent that solutions were found to any of these problems, it is illuminating to consider who exactly acted (if acting is defined as either designing or implementing solutions).

More sustained engagement

The mediated town halls described here have often fallen short of the ideal, which sees citizens share a commitment to engage in sustained deliberation that leads to effective public problem solving. To help sustain a public sphere to which all citizens have access, and in which all topics of concern to citizens can be articulated, deliberated, and cri-

tiqued, we at the School of Journalism and Media Studies in the Eastern Cape University currently known as Rhodes Eastern Cape believe that journalists would need to engage citizens in a more sustained way. (This is not to deny the power of what has already been achieved.)

We are convinced that journalists could be doing much more to encourage citizens to continue their deliberations – and act upon their outcomes – within the institutions of the wider civil society. To aid this process, journalists could offer mobilizing information – for example, information on how to join relevant civic organizations. They could also describe what citizens in other localities have done in the past or are doing to address similar problems; create spaces for citizens to deliberate about those problems among themselves; encourage citizens to join existing or create new (local or larger scale) civic organizations; and publicize citizens’ application for resources.

Of course, while some problems are potentially resolvable by citizens themselves, deep wicked problems like dysfunctional schools require more deep-seated, systemic intervention. In these cases, journalists should encourage citizens, in consultation with experts who have particular knowledge about the problems in question, to formulate possible solutions that would include what they might do among themselves, as well as to lobby relevant government officials to enact policy solutions. The Herald’s fish bowl dialogues began this process – but, this work was not sustained, and policy has not shifted.

In our School of Journalism-owned local media organisation, Grocott’s Mail, our (mostly student) journalists are committed to the idea of nurturing a more dynamic and inclusive public sphere in our city of Grahamstown, and are using the Communication for Social Change concept of communicative ecologies to help realise this vision.

We are cognisant that news organisations like the Herald and Dispatch were not very clear about the imagined purpose and ultimate real-world outcomes of their town hall engagements. Were they principally designed and executed for strengthening journalism or



Wandile Fana (right) founder of Skawara News talking with roadside saleswomen. 80% of Skawara News is written in the local language Xhosa.

much of the output of the press, especially at the local level, is simply inaccessible to the majority of citizens. Of course, this does not mean that citizens do not get information/opinion about shared public problems or share this information/opinion with each other. It is just that this communication is complex and multidirectional and happens in ways and in venues that often lie outside mainstream journalism.

for strengthening the work of citizens in communities? In our current “post-truth” political environment many journalists say citizens should be taught “news literacy” as an inoculation against “fake news”, but conversely are journalists in possession of a “civic literacy”? Can journalists recognise the work that citizens do, offer opportunities for deliberation, provide mobilising information, and all the while facilitate meaningful and engaging journalism?

Equally important to ask is how and by whom shared public problems were named and framed in these public dialogues and in the subsequent journalistic and civic/political processes that developed. Did journalists name problems to reflect what people hold valuable? Did citizens see a role for themselves in the way these stories were named and framed – if not, who were the imagined principal actors in these stories and processes, and why? And what was the ultimate democratic value of this work? Did citizens get involved in these processes and build long-term civic capacity?

One of the key weaknesses of Public Journalism was that it was always a model of the press, rather than a model of the myriad democratic communications in the wider public sphere. And one of the problems with a press-centric conceptualisation is the deep crisis journalism now faces. In South Africa,

The Kettering Foundation’s David Mathews imagines democratic life itself as analogous with a natural ecology – a system that includes all living organisms in an area as well as its physical environment functioning together as a unit. Seen in these terms, the South African political system can be seen to be in a state of ecological crisis (unsurprising given that it has historically been ruptured, poisoned and disfigured through processes of colonialism, capitalism, apartheid, and, more latterly, by neoliberal economics). The ongoing and acute economic and social inequalities in the democratic era have created communicative imbalances, disconnects and tensions in contemporary South African civic life: vertically, between the state and civil society; horizontally, among citizens themselves; and between the media and the citizenry.

We have thus been exploring the possibilities of “communicative ecology” as an asset-based approach to mapping, “repairing” and enriching citizen access to information flows and communication channels that enhance active and engaged citizenship, and accountable governance. We are interested in building a model for aligning the media’s framework for decision making around shared public problems with a genuinely public framing. This would require a more nuanced

model for journalism's democratic role which is responsive to the specific local civic contexts they might encounter, but also sensitive to the enormous political and economic challenges that journalists now face.

What are the various democratic roles that journalism can and should play? How do these roles relate to each other – are any of them in tension with one another? How can journalists and institutions better align the way they work with each other and with the way that citizens work?

Watchdogs of deliberative democracy

The work of political philosopher, Albert Dzur, is particularly useful in this regard as he has argued for a different and more circumscribed role for journalism in deliberative democracy than that imagined by Public Journalism. He believes that journalists do not necessarily have the expertise or resources to host effective forums for public deliberation and, instead of putting themselves at the centre of the deliberative process, they should think about the specific contributions they could be making in helping public life to go well and partner with others to ensure that the required deliberative work is done. He believes that journalists are particularly well placed to act as “watchdogs of deliberative democracy”, ensuring that deliberative processes in the wider society are rational, accountable, inclusive and fair.

However, this is still a journalist-centric conception of normative roles. We are attempting to “decentre” journalism by arguing that a genuine public framing of problems requires a paradigm shift away from what Michael Schudson refers to as the “trustee model” of journalism in which professional journalists provide news they believe audiences should have to be informed citizens (a perspective that is upheld by professional journalists who “speak truth to power” and view the public as too preoccupied to be sovereign of its own citizenship). We are striving to outline what a genuinely “public model of the press” (where true authority is invested in the public) might look like and what would be required to co-produce public knowledge with citizens.

To do this, we are beginning to understand

that “the press” just one small component part of a much greater “communicative ecology” required by publics if they are to be truly self-governing. For example, we are attempting to align our work as education journalists and the work of professional educational institutions with the way that citizens work on education. One key part of this “alignment” is in playing a watchdog role in relation to the rationality, accountability, inclusivity and fairness of deliberative work around educational issues in Grahamstown.

In turn, this has necessitated an inquiry into the health of the communicative ecology of our community – what barriers are there to participation and are there any unjustifiable inequalities in the opportunity to influence others in this ecology? This might require that we play both an adversarial “watchdog” role, but also a more facilitative role in becoming part of, and contributing to the development of, a holistic and inclusive communicative ecology in the city.

We are motivated by an interest in “repairing” some of the ruptures, disconnects and imbalances in the ecology and consequently have begun to develop participatory projects in partnership with local communities ultimately aimed at generating healthier communicative ecologies.

To maximise the availability of relevant and credible public information and opinion about education to communities, we are developing ways of working that would facilitate both its creation and distribution. The point is not to create a single information destination, but to allow for many and varied touch-points for people who are stepping into and making their way through public life. It is important not to try to “own” the space, control the flow of information, or dictate change, but to help generate and aggregate the multiple information sources of the community. In an ecology, all parts of the system are critical to the functioning of the whole.

For example, some of our third year journalism students are producing education-themed beat journalism for Grocott's Mail, but they are also hosting online forums and building an online repository of educational resources for learners, teachers and parents. In addition, they produce a

regular education newsletter which is distributed to as many learners, teachers, parents, officials, experts and interested parties as they can sign up. They have partnered with community-based organisations for the semester and are seeking out citizen conversations and soliciting citizen contributions to their work, especially from more marginalised groups and communities.

They do this by “embedding” themselves in the activities of their partner organisations, by immersing themselves in related online ecologies, but also by creating more impromptu venues for interaction with citizens – in public libraries, coffee shops, pop-up news cafes, and forums in public spaces. In so doing, the journalists are co-creating knowledge through journalistic platforms around educational problems with citizens.

One strategy we have adopted is to co-create education-related content from a learner perspective through the work of ten learners attached to the Upstart youth development project, who write for Grocott’s Online and for their own website. The Upstarters also produce an education-themed radio programme on two community radio stations every Saturday morning.

Meanwhile, a Masters student will co-produce education-related content – including an audio drama, which will be presented at a national Science Festival – with 8 Grade 10 Ntiska High School science and maths learners. Another Masters student has been co-producing content about the role of parents in the literacy development and education of their children (often with spectacular results) with a group of six service staff workers at the university who are part of the Intsomi family literacy project. This content will also be actively shared on WhatsApp and Facebook groups with 1350 Grade 1-5 workers at the university, as well as with the wider community.

At the same time, group of 13 primary school teachers will produce educational content as part of an ongoing ICT training course offered at a community development centre by local NGO, Awarenet. And two community journalists will staff a community information kiosk outside the same venue. They will sign up community members to the education newsletter and elicit qualita-

tive feedback from them. They will use an outside broadcasting unit to facilitate live debates in this space to discuss education related issues.

Through these initiative, we are imagining ourselves as “democratic communication professionals”, who build boundary-spanning partnerships in an existing communicative ecology in the service of inclusive and effective citizen-led civic deliberation around education problems. We are interested in what possibilities unfold when citizens are given mediated access to information about, and platforms to express the views concerning education, and opportunities to work out solutions.

Emphasis is being placed on how knowledge is generated in a community and on its quality and flow, not solely on counting and increasing sources and volume of information. The key starting point is to place citizens, their aspirations, and how they live their daily lives, at the centre of planning and action. The communicative ecology brings together the community’s discourse about itself together with enhanced social networks and improved technologies to enable people to act on the real, everyday challenges they face, to connect with one another, and to reach for their individual and shared aspirations.

To do all this we will continue to lean heavily on the potential of a developing communicative ecology that exemplifies the undiminished desire of Eastern Cape citizens to have both voice and agency in a hard-won democracy. ■

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Rod Amner is a lecturer in the School of Journalism and Media Studies at Rhodes University. He teaches praxis-oriented courses that explore the theory and practice of a range of alternative approaches to journalism (including public/ civic journalism, citizens’/participatory journalism, development journalism, literary journalism, and radical advocacy journalism), as well as experiential reporting courses based at Grocott’s Mail, a community newspaper owned by the school.

Investigative journalism in a dangerous country

Adela Navarro

Adela Navarro is director of the weekly news magazine Zeta, one of the only outlets in Mexico regularly reporting on drug trafficking, government corruption, and organized crime. Over a 27 year career, Navarro has seen colleagues killed for their reporting, and lives and works under constant threat. On 13 September 2017 Navarro joined PEN and the Ryerson University International Issues Discussion Series to give a lecture entitled “Investigative Journalism in a Dangerous Country”.

Mexico is now near the end of President Enrique Peña Nieto’s administration. A little over a week ago he started his fifth year as head of the federal government, and the balance according to public perception, an overview of the political analysis and a generalized opinion in the media, is not in his favour.

Mexicans, and the world, are witnessing acts of corruption, crime and violence, as we had not seen in the past. However, in spite of how critical the national and foreign media have been regarding the administration of Enrique Peña Nieto, no legal action has been taken and, as a consequence, no legal sanctions have been issued.

Cases such as the purchase the President’s wife and First Lady of Mexico made of a seven million dollar mansion, acquired from the subsidiary of one of the favourite contractors of Peña’s Government, which clearly makes influence-peddling evident both in Mexico and abroad, have remained in impunity. Cases that have been documented by investigative journalists, and well-organized civil-

ian groups, which reveal documents, interviews, analysis, expert reports, are constantly discarded by the authority.

What the government of Enrique Peña Nieto has done in some states is officially and unofficially to enforce pressure against these journalists and these citizens. The methods are diverse, from spying on them, to ordering audits of their businesses, ignoring them, suing them or trying to slander them for their work.

Corruption, according to the Bank of Mexico, costs Mexicans anywhere between eight and nine percent of the gross domestic product, while the Institute of Geography and Statistics points out that in 2016, the cost of corruption for the business sector was 600 thousand million pesos – most of which is what businessmen paid to get through the Government’s endless red tape.

This level of corruption, however, isn’t punished accordingly. The Attorney General, the Ministry of Finance, and the Comptroller’s Office of Mexico are seriously committed to satisfying the interests of the president and the members of the cabinet who belong to his Institutional Revolutionary Party. Influence-peddling and conflict of interest are constant practices in Enrique Peña Nieto’s government, and it seems impossible for citizens to investigate this in depth, while internationally there’s frustration as everyone sees how the country sinks deep into a hole of corruption.

The abuse of public power is an issue that dominated the early years of Enrique Peña Nieto’s government. Cases such as that of Ayotzinapa in September of 2014, when local security forces abducted and disappeared 43 students and killed six more, remain in impunity, due to the involvement of officials of the Attorney General’s office in handling the evidence in an effort to not resolve it. The same thing happened in the case of Toluca in 2015, when in a confrontation with criminals the Federal Police riddled 42 of them with bullets. In both investigations low-level arrests were made, proving, on the one hand, that the federal administration is a repressive authority that uses armed force, and on the other hand exposing the inability of the authorities to investigate, enforce

the rule of law and bring the perpetrators to justice, even when they're a part of their government structure.

Drug trafficking has grown in Mexico in the last five years. By corrupting the police force and with the impunity that judicial and investigative structures provide, whether due to complicity or inefficiency, organized crime and drug trafficking networks have spread out in Mexico far and wide.

Under these conditions we went from being a transit country for drugs heading to the United States to a nation that now freely and heavily consumes and distributes drugs, and this is what led us in the past six year presidential period to the so-called war on drugs.

The arrest of major drug lords in Mexico didn't exterminate organized crime at all, but what it did do was to disperse the drug cartels. We have in the streets of Mexico less crime bosses and more low-key drug distributors who have turned street corners into a war zone because that is where they sell drugs, causing a chaos of delinquency and unleashing a wave of violence that in July 2017 and since the start of this federal government saw over 104 thousand people executed.

In this climate of violence, crime and corruption, how do journalists report the news?

Many times journalists end up doing the work of the criminal investigation authorities, which makes them very vulnerable as they face dishonest public officials that have the full power of the State on their side, or criminals who with impunity control their turf with guns and bloodshed.

Journalists in Mexico are caught in the middle of two very dangerous forces: the bullets of drug traffickers and the pressure of the government.

In recent years, investigative journalism has focused on both corruption and drug trafficking. Teams of investigative journalists in the independent media and social groups have been created to analyse official data. To follow the path of the money and reveal the source of corruption, and to observe the networks of impunity and exhibit how authorities are colluding with criminals.

Regarding corruption, investigative journalism has shown how public officials use the federal budget to meet their personal needs, purchase aircraft, buy houses, overspend, and even use it for their own entertainment.

A few days ago a news portal, in collaboration with a social organization, published a robust piece of research to document how eleven ministries, eight universities and 186 companies had diverted over 7 billion pesos from the federal budget in two years.

The investigation included official documents, proof of the international criminal network and how the money was diverted, all with official test elements, including budgets, appropriations and the use of shell or bogus companies; so this became evident and it was published in the independent media in the country's capital and in the states. However, the Attorney General failed to initiate an investigation, and the heads of the ministries involved or the university presidents didn't do their share to at least clarify where they stand regarding how corruption is at the root of a situation in which over seven billion pesos disappeared from public funds.

Faced with the evidence of corruption that investigative journalists produced, Mexicans have clearly witnessed a network of complicity from the government sphere, and the cover-up of each other's acts of corruption.

Similarly, a journalistic piece that was prepared by a group of communicators, with the elements of a trial in Brazil, unveiled how construction giant Odebrecht bribed the director of Petr leos Mexicanos with over 10 million dollars in exchange for the allocation of public works. The investigation done by journalists didn't just consider official documents obtained from the Brazilian courts, and the analysis of the official information in Mexico related to public works contracts. Brazilian business owners were also interviewed, who stated the way in which they delivered money to public officials, not only revealing amounts and routes, but also providing bank accounts, financial institutions and dates of the transactions.

All the evidence was provided in a clear and timely manner and was documented in an inves-

tigative journalism story that only managed to have the Attorney General's Office issue an order for the public official to distance themselves from these accusations. Mexico is one of twelve countries where bribes of the Brazilian company, Odebrecht, took place and no arrests have been made in connection with this case of international corruption.

When it comes to drug traffickers, journalists constantly prove the impunity they enjoy, while investigating the routes they follow to transport drugs, launder money and gain control of a certain territory. We also investigate the trail of murders they leave behind, their names, and their pictures. All these facts, in the hands of the investigating authority and, in some cases, the judicial authorities as well, remain hidden, sheltered from researchers because of several factors: complicity, corruption, inefficiency in the Public Ministry, and the new system of criminal justice in Mexico.

About the complicity: in our weekly publication, *Zeta*, we have narrated for many years how criminal networks couldn't survive without police protection. Through investigative journalism we have shown how the Federal Police works for some drug cartels while the Local Police does another cartel's dirty work. As a result of this, police officers have been killed, detained and released, because they have favoured a certain drug trafficking structure.

While investigating corruption, we have written stories demonstrating how agents and police officers have stolen drugs, received money in exchange for protection and are on the criminals' payroll. As the first decade of the new millennium began it was explained how the Arellano Felix drug cartel spent a million dollars a month paying corrupt policemen, researchers and officials from the justice department precisely to evade justice.

Investigative journalism in Mexico has a great impact on society and presence abroad, thanks to the international media that share news stories from Mexico and sometimes they even unveil them, for example, when recently *The New York Times* ran a front-page story about how Enrique Peña Nieto's Federal Government had spied on journalists and human rights activists. This is

very important to us because investigative journalism in Mexico has no impact on the public sector, their investigations don't lead to official investigations in the Attorney General's Office or in the Comptroller's office.

The Mexican Government has practically given up on its obligation to investigate and rather they have taking the path of complicity and protectionism for corrupt public officials and impunity for criminals, whether they are white-collar criminals, fraudsters who work for the government, or drug traffickers. In Mexico all of this research remains in the reports of independent media, but it never makes it to court.

There are three elements that contribute to the non-exercise of the Rule of Law:

1. The Attorney General's Office is in a stage of transition to become the General Prosecutor's Office, and it lacks the autonomy that would enable it to investigate their own in a corrupt government, as well as to professionalize its Public Ministry by providing scientific and social tools, so that it could handle investigations that would generate arrest warrants.

2. For two years the appointment of a Public Prosecutor to investigate the cases mentioned above and others that occur because the State protects them is still pending. We need an Anti-corruption Prosecutor who can independently and with autonomy judge the unlawful acts of officials, secretaries of state, and even of the President. Mexico is the only country in Latin America where a secretary of state or a President or a former President hasn't been brought to justice. Now, with the renegotiation of the Free Trade Agreement between Mexico, the United States and Canada taking place, fighting corruption is an issue that has reached the public agenda.

3. The new system of criminal justice in Mexico is guarantee-based granting an extreme level of protection to the accused by prohibiting their names or their crimes being made public. Even the list of offenses that require detention was amended, leaving out of prison criminals who, for example, carry weapons in a country where fire arms are still illegal and execution-style murders are a very serious issue.

In this context, journalists who investigate issues of corruption and drug trafficking are vulnerable to threats, attacks, demands, smear campaigns, and espionage. Recently espionage focused on the most critical journalists of Peña Nieto's administration was exposed, but this has also happened to activists who have openly criticized the actions of the Government. Others have had to face audits.

The disdain the Presidency shows when investigative news stories are released has reduced their uptake by other media. This occurs along with the manipulation of official information and a communication strategy on the part of the government to minimize negative news in exchange for multi-million dollar advertising contracts with major news media outlets. This hasn't only affected justice and democracy, but the right of the people to be well-informed.

In June 2016, the New System of Criminal Justice in Mexico was implemented. It's an adversarial, accusatory system, and it also includes a new catalogue of criminal offences that require preventive detention. In fact, nowadays a detainee can only be imprisoned after having committed one of seven crimes: organized crime, murder, rape, kidnapping, human trafficking, crimes committed with weapons and explosives, and offences against national security.

Criminal offences such as violent assaults, and one of the most common in Mexico, carrying weapons that exclusively can only be used by the army and the armed forces, aren't serious according to this new system, and don't deserve prison.

With the modification of the list of offences that warrant preventive detention, in the next few months around 69,000 prisoners could be let out of prison, many of them dangerous members of drug cartels who were arrested while only carrying a gun. In fact, 30% of inmates in Mexican prisons have now regained their freedom, due to the change in the crime catalogue.

In addition, while being an adversarial accusatory system, it always protects the suspect. In order for a detention to happen the police practically must stop the criminal while committing the crime. The research apparatus in Mexico isn't

good, they're not professional, they don't have sufficient scientific tools, and that is why the accused ends up being released.

The same thing has been happening with notorious members of the drug cartels who were arrested in possession of firearms. They recover their freedom almost immediately. They're the same petty criminals who rob, assault, harass the common citizen. In fact, the new system of criminal justice has been wryly considered to be a "revolving door", because as soon as an offender is arrested he or she is released.

Other changes that contribute to criminal impunity in Mexico are restricting information. Now we know the name of the victims, but we can't expose the offender. Judges may prohibit the publication of the names of offenders or their picture. And it doesn't matter if we're dealing with a public enemy.

Here's an example. At the height of this new system, a few months ago the son of one of the leaders of the Sinaloa drug cartel escaped from prison, and when the Attorney General's Office issued an alert for his search that included a reward, they omitted his full name, and his head shot was blurred. Practically the government wanted people to identify a faceless and nameless thug.

The criminals, especially the members of the drug cartels, have learned to circumvent justice with the legal tools that the new system of criminal justice provides, and they have learned this faster than police agents have learned how to implement it and help produce successfully an arrest warrant.

The armed criminals, that today don't deserve to spend time in prison in Mexico, are the authors of more than 104,000 execution style murders in the country in the last five years. They are the ones that have murdered journalists; they are the ones that control the territory with blood and lead. They're the ones that today terrorize Mexico without facing any legal consequence.

Social participation

Not all is lost. With investigative journalism and a self-empowered society reporting what happens in Mexico in terms of corruption, impunity and

drug trafficking, social organizations sponsored by major companies and business leaders have been created to contribute to freedom of expression and the rule of law.

Today, more than ever, there are research organizations that focus on missing persons, victims, corruption, public funds and violence. Hand in hand with independent journalists, these organizations are demonstrating what happens between the government and the criminals, and how federal, state or local funds are managed to the detriment of the population.

These same social groups and independent journalists have promoted the creation of institutions that supervise the actions of the government and access to information, putting in the hands of the citizens some of the spaces that were in the hands of public officials. This way these institutions can obtain a better resolution of the cases. Certainly these steps are small in terms of the transparency of resources and information, but they are steps nonetheless.

Murdered journalists

In five years of Enrique Peña Nieto's government, 37 journalists have been murdered. Their cases have been handled by a specialized Prosecutor's Office that maintains a 4% of effectiveness. Ninety six per cent of the crimes against journalists remain in impunity.

The attacks against journalists come from organized crime and drug trafficking, after drug lords are either exposed or after they show their relationship with government officials in cities and states, they are the ones that have attacked them after being involved in acts of corruption or criminal complicity.

According to Article 19 Mexico, in the last 17 years 109 journalists have been killed, 101 were men, eight were women. This does not count those who have been threatened, journalists who have had to leave their hometown and their jobs while facing the threats of the government or a cartel.

At *Zeta*, the weekly news magazine where I work in Tijuana, Baja California, the climate of violence and crime has touched us all. Being a

weekly publication that uses investigative journalism to focus on issues of government, politics, corruption, impunity, drug trafficking, and the cartels, we have paid the consequences of exercising free speech and contributing to the right people have of being well-informed.

This has included two murders and one attack, while more recently we have faced threats by two drug cartels, defamation on the part of the state government, and the pressure of audits and frequent notices from the Internal Revenue Service.

In 1988 one of our founders, Héctor Félix Miranda, was killed when he was on his way to the offices of *Zeta*. He was shot four times. The men who murdered him were released on May 1st 2015, while the intellectual author of this murder was never tried, and now he has again hired the killers who were released from prison as part of his security team, (which is the same job they had in 1988 when they killed this journalist).

In 1997, our other co-founder, Jesus Blancornelas, suffered an attack. Nine members of the Arellano Félix cartel were identified as the perpetrators, but none of them has been tried and imprisoned for the crime against the journalist. Blancornelas survived nine more years, but his driver and bodyguard died during the shooting.

Francisco Ortiz Franco, Editor of *Zeta*, wrote a story in April 2004 that included photographs and names of the new members of the Arellano Félix cartel. His investigative journalism led him to discover that the criminals had taken those pictures to have State Judicial Police credentials made out for them. Clearly that was the corrupt link between the drug traffickers and the government. Two months after that publication, members of the Arellano Félix cartel killed him.

For those who currently work in *Zeta* it hasn't been easy. After 37 years of journalism, we continue to suffer the threat of criminals who are able to hide under State-sanctioned impunity.

Almost four months ago, in Culiacan, Sinaloa, Javier Valdez, a writer and a journalist, was shot to death. He was shot 12 times, obviously by members of the Sinaloa drug cartel. However, the Attorney General hasn't provided the results of

the criminal investigation. Not a single word.

Javier's murder, as well as my colleague's assassination and the attack on our former director are among 96% of the cases of journalists that remain unsolved. The Government has failed to investigate, the killers enjoy total impunity.

Those are the risks of doing investigative journalism in Mexico. You can end up dead; you will be threatened, spied on, defamed, and at least audited.

But I insist: not all is lost, social awareness has been generated with the publication of in depth news stories and this has led us to take important steps and participate socially with the task of monitoring and denouncing acts of corruption and collusion with the Government.

In this regard, Zeta, as I am sure is the position of all independent media in my country, will not tire, beyond the risks and threats, to do investigative journalism, assert our right to free speech, the right to have access to information, and thus, contribute to social justice in Mexico, a country that anxiously awaits a time of peace and justice for all where corruption and impunity can finally be a part of the past. To sum it up: that's why we do what we do.

Source: ifex

Radio Progreso defends human rights in Honduras

Sean Hawkey

The following interview with Fr Ismael Moreno, Director of Radio Progreso, took place at the end of 2017. Radio Progreso is a Jesuit radio station based in Honduras, Central America.

The station is internationally recognized for its role advancing human rights, promoting peace, supporting community-based communication initiative, and advocating for environmental protection across Honduras. Radio Progreso has been broadcasting since the 1980s and has been involved in numerous community mobilization efforts in support of Indigenous people, Afro-descendants, peasants, women, and youth, both in Honduras and across Central America.

Honduras has been mired in a series of human rights and democratic governance crises since 2009, when then-president Manuel Zelaya was ousted in a widely denounced coup. High profile corruption cases, weakening institutions, and impunity followed.

The country is presently one of the most dangerous places in the world for journalists, human rights defenders, LGBTQ activists, and environmentalists.¹ Latent discontent in the country erupted in late 2017 following a disputed and controversial presidential election that ultimately saw Juan Orlando Hernandez, the incumbent president, elected. The situation sparked mass demonstrations and violent state repression.^{2 3 4}

Radio Progreso has been at the forefront of the post-election movement to call for transparency, accountability, and respect for human rights in Honduras. Fr Ismael Moreno, Director of Radio Progreso, spoke with Sean Hawkey during his most recent visit to the country.



Members of the Honduran Navy charge a barricade raised by protestors against Juan Orlando Hernandez.

told me that she spoke to the President, and [to] the Minister for Security, and asked for my human rights to be respected. That means that my human rights will be respected, but not because human rights per se are respected here, but because the current situation is one where there is arbitrary protection of people's rights because of political pressure.

The situation for us, human rights defenders, while Juan Orlando Hernandez is in power, is [one of] permanent and growing danger.

SH: How do you assess the current human rights situation in Honduras?

Fr Moreno: We need to have a firm understanding of what's behind the current moment, [behind] this situation. There are systemic issues [to be addressed]. The institutions of this government do not guarantee human rights. The rule of law is subject to arbitrary decisions of a small group led by Juan Orlando Hernandez who have control over the three powers of the state (the executive, legislative, and judicial branches). [That means that the protection of] human rights depends on the will of the government team, and not on the institutional [and legal] order that should protect human rights.

The precariousness of human rights here is that it is [ultimately up] to the people in charge of the Honduran regime. The defence of our human rights depends on how much the President's team likes us, or rejects us.

For example, if the Department of State of the United States, warns Juan Orlando Hernández that the human rights of particular people should be protected, their rights [will be] protected, temporarily. However, the human rights situation is still precarious [because there is no system in place to protect people's rights]. It doesn't depend on the rule of law.

I was talking to a representative of the UN High Commission for Human Rights, and she

What is the role of the media in the current crisis?

Fr Moreno: Media in Honduras are intimately linked to the groups who have power. In fact, power in Honduras is ultimately expressed through the capacity to control the media. The well-established national media in the country are associated with the five [most] powerful groups that exist in the country. Those are Grupo FICOHSA, Grupo Atlántida, Grupo Dinant, Grupo Terra and Grupo Karim. These groups bring together the 17 most powerful groups in Honduras, the 17 most powerful surnames in Honduras.

The media - TV, radio and the printed press - normally follow the script [set by these powerful interests] that [says] that they shouldn't [get anywhere near the interests] of those groups. [The media in Honduras] ultimately expresses the interests of these powerful groups.

So, the media in Honduras are extremely conditioned by the owners, who are part of these economic groups, and who have more power than any government. They are the real government, and they have the ability to veto any sort of candidacy that could affect their interests. These

César Silva, reporter for UNE TV, has been attacked by armed forces and prevented from working. Silva is famous for breaking a huge story on a multi-million dollar theft of money from the social security by members of the current government. UNE TV is the last TV station to report from the perspective of the Alliance Against the Dictatorship and is facing daily difficulties including having their cable signal, internet and electricity cut off. The police behind César stopped him from approaching Congress, where he is authorised to work.



are the five groups that were behind the coup of 2009, these are the five groups that are behind the re-election of Juan Orlando Hernandez, and these are the five groups that have the power of veto over any candidate that [even remotely resembles] Manuel Zelaya. Manuel Zelaya represents a threat to these five powerful groups.

These five groups are tightly linked to the embassy of the United States of America. For the government of the United States, Honduras is of geopolitical [importance], though they have no interest for what life is like in the country. They are wary of political instability. They prefer alliances with [established] politicians, even if they are tainted by corruption and are responsible for human rights abuses.

The media here, in many different ways, try to hide the reality that people live, try to hide the extreme differences between wealth and poverty in Honduras, and that the wealth is in so few hands. And they try to hide the repudiation of this [inequality] by the majority. And they try to maintain a situation that favours investments by the five groups and the United States.

The media here, in essence, abuse freedom of expression. They work against the role of the media, which is to inform, generate informed opinion and generate a culture of participation and coexistence and peace.

How do the media and the powerful groups behind them exercise this power?

Fr Moreno: The big media are the property of these sectors of power. So, for media that aren't following the script- the ones that have relationships with human rights defenders and with the opposition, and that are [beyond] the control of the government and these five powerful groups- there is a five step process that is sharply adhered to.

The first step is to ignore them. For us [at Radio Progreso], who have a different point of view from the government's, or who question the government, we'll never be invited to a TV station to express our views. They'll never run a story on who we are and what we do. We are ignored.

When, for different reasons, we can't be ignored, they will twist information about us, on what we do, they will stigmatise us, they will discredit us. For example, they won't talk about what we do or say, but they will call us rebels, revolutionaries. They'll say that we stand in the way of development, or they'll say that we are linked to organised crime, or that we have old ideas that [are incompatible] with modernity. They stigmatise us, they discredit us.

If that doesn't work, they'll try to co-opt us, to bribe us in many different ways. It can be with money, but not necessarily with money. It might be through recognitions, invitations to participate in bodies or events that deal with human rights, to

go to five-star hotels. All of this is to make journalists [linked] with the opposition feel like they belong there.

When that doesn't work then they try to criminalise us, which is the fourth step. When discrediting us doesn't work, trying to buy us off doesn't work, and we can't be ignored, then they criminalise independent media. That's why the Penal Code has been reformed, to enable accusations of terrorism and treason.

If none of that works, then they go to the fifth step which is assassination.

How has this affected Radio Progreso?

Fr Moreno: We've been ignored, but they can't ignore us completely. They've tried to co-opt us and buy us off. Last year they tried to give me the government prize for human rights, I would have been part of their game if I'd accepted it. That hasn't worked. They've tried to stigmatise us, they've produced posters [with supposed links to organised crime for example]. Attempts have been made to criminalise us. They have sabotaged our transmission tower in Tegucigalpa. And now we are trying to avoid that last step. ■

Images by Sean Hawkey. Text and revisions by Sean Hawkey and WACC staff

Notes

1. Human Rights Watch. 2018. World Report 2018: Honduras.
2. DW. 2018. "Honduras military clashes with protesters over president's re-election".
3. Reuters. 2018. "Honduran president sworn in amid protests after election chaos".
4. Sandra Cuffe. 2018. "US-trained police are hunting down and arresting protesters amid post-election crisis in Honduras". The Intercept.

Sean Hawkey worked in Latin America on post-war reconstruction and indigenous land rights where he used photography and video for political advocacy work. He edited a magazine in London for five years and ran communications for an alliance of aid agencies in Geneva for five years before going freelance. His photographs have been syndicated by newswires and widely published in newspapers and magazines, as well as being used by UN bodies and many non-government organisations. He has had solo exhibitions of his photography and wetplate images in the UK, Ireland, Spain, the Netherlands, Mexico, Colombia and France.

Ethics in education is the key to sustainable development

Obiora Ike

It is an honour and a great responsibility to assist and guide young people, students and researchers as educators. The challenge, however, for those who teach is to undergo a radical rethink about what and how we teach young people to enable them to emerge as thought leaders and responsible citizens of the world, equipped with skills and knowledge to protect the environment, advance cultures, progress history and preserve the human ecology – body, mind and soul.

Such knowledge contains the ingredients of ethics, which is the discipline, process and action of thinking the right thing, of doing the right thing and of living justly. The ethical rationale is the knowledge base of what we learn for life, which has relevance in actions. Here lies a great potential for positive and sustainable change for humanity in the 21st century, confronted by challenges that come from social, environmental, technological, economic, cultural and political upheavals globally.

Part of the many problems institutions of higher education face in ethics education, particularly in developing countries, is not a lack of awareness of the need for ethics, but rather the lack of adequate and required resources, skills and content towards integrating the discipline of ethics in management and in the classroom. In today's world, more and more attention is given to the critical role of higher education institutions in fostering students to not only be well educated

but also to be values-driven, as citizens and as leaders. As such, academic institutions are challenged to ensure that they abide by the highest ethical standards and that they build an ethos on their campus, among teachers, students and administrators, which inspires trust, credibility and hard work. This future starts with a sound interdisciplinary education.

Therefore, a primary concern of society must essentially reflect in what and how we teach young people – the bearers of the future of human civilization! At a time in which we find ourselves in the midst of a complex of issues, rather than offer narrow responses, what is called for requires interdisciplinary approaches. Universities must move from being Ivory Towers of the past to become authentic spaces of balance, inclusivity and access.

Higher education institutions are bearers and catalysts for integral development and social mobility, which provide opportunities for the many, regardless of gender or social standing, to address the complex issues of society with broad values founded on ETHICS – here an acronym for: Empowerment, Transformation, Holistic, Integrity, Competence and Sustainability.

Strategy building

In 2017, the Globethics.net Board of Foundation in Geneva, Switzerland, home to the world's largest digital online library on ethics with millions of resources accessible for free and a network of over 190,000 registered participants from 200 territories, decided to intensify and focus on the integration of Ethics in Higher Education as its key strategic route. This agenda has resulted in consultations and training happening for teachers and stakeholders around the globe.

Starting with some countries in Africa, it is planned to extend to Asia, Latin America and within Europe and North America. We need a space for stakeholders in education – teachers, admin-



istrators, policy makers, researchers and trainers – to share knowledge and dialogue on how Ethics in Higher Education can be integrated into concrete contexts.

Education for the 21st century must assist and lead the student to learn to be human, free and responsible with the ability to think, innovate, create and decide his or her own destiny. The teacher has the duty to guide the student to know how to acquire knowledge that is not mere information but knowledge that is reflected upon, offering essential insights needed for effective living.

The future of humanity rests on some critical key points, one of which is that there can be no sustainable development universally if there are no ethical values integrated across sectors and built within the education industry at all levels. If Facebook were a country, it would be the largest in the world with its 2.2 billion users from every country and generation beyond cultures, religions and ideologies.

What policies, skills and resources are available not only for knowledge acquisition, but also for creating the environment for the development and application of basic ethical values and principles practically in the training of the youth, towards overall transformation? ■

Source: Globethics.net No 2/2018. Obiora Ike is Director of Globethics.net

On the screen

Saarbrücken (Germany) 2018

At the 39th Film Festival Max Ophuels Prize Saarbrücken (22-28 January 2018) the award of the Ecumenical Jury – endowed with € 2500 by Catholic and Protestant Adult Education in the Saarland – went to *Landrauschen* (The Murmur of the Country) directed by Lisa Miller (Germany, 2018).

Motivation: People are different. Adaptation is necessary. “Adapt to you or to me?” A dynamic rhythm and a lot of humour create a loving kaleidoscope of all possible contrasts, city and country, man and woman, old and young, tradition and modernity, locals and strangers, convention and courage, diverse forms of love – and all this in Bubenhausen! “Home is where you find yourself,” says Lisa Miller in “The Murmur of the Country”.

Synopsis: After many years Toni and Rosa meet again in their old home village in southern Germany. But the new start for Toni goes completely wrong. Instead of a job as an editor she gets

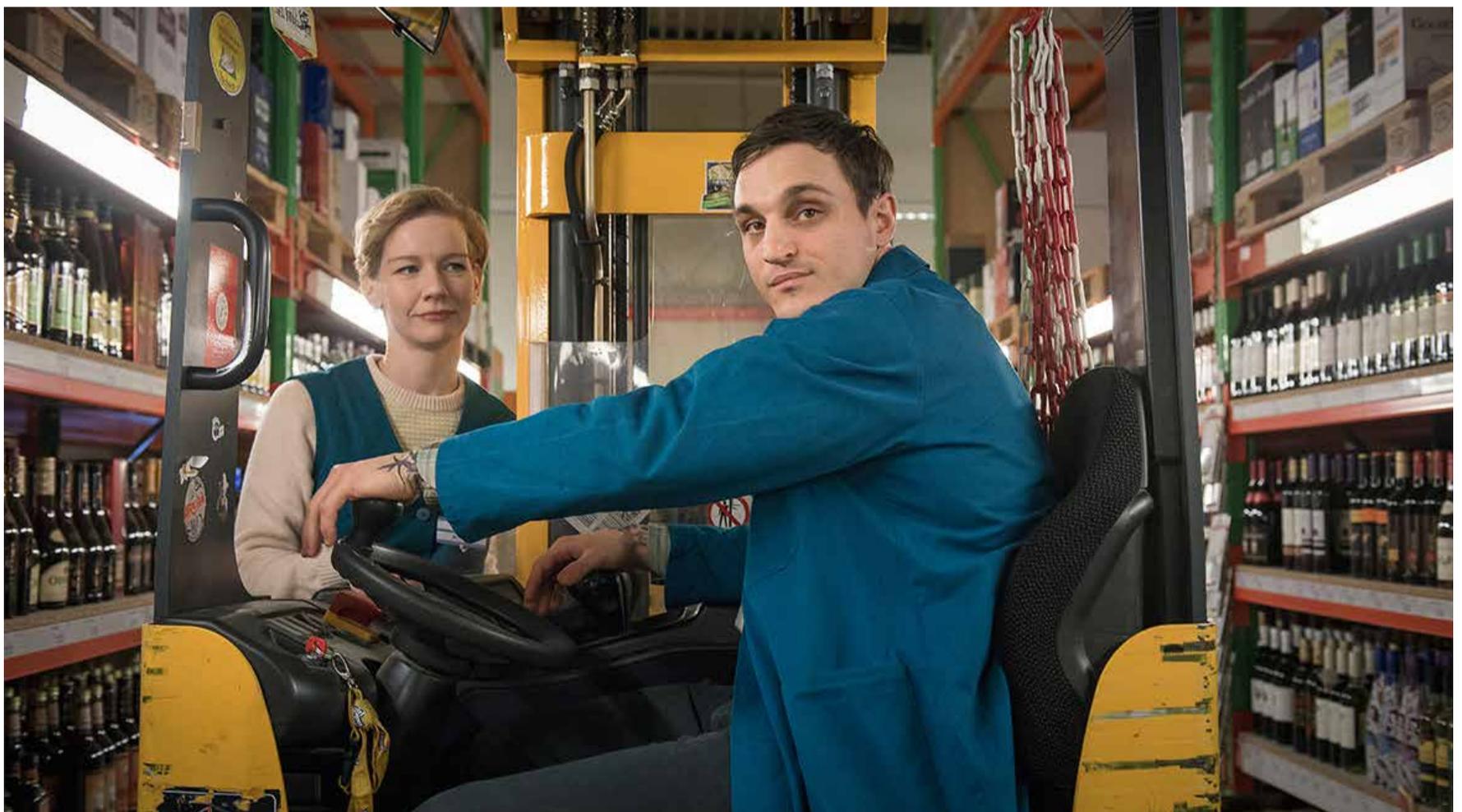
an internship in the local section of the regional newspaper and her old restlessness returns. The rural idyll begins to crumble. Toni and Rosa develop an explosive relationship until they reach a point, where both have to make a decision.

Members of the 2018 Jury: Gerhard Alt (President) Germany; Bernadette Meier, Switzerland; Martin Ostermann, Germany; Waltraud Verlaguet, France.

Berlin (Germany) 2018

At the 68th International Film Festival Berlin (February 5-25, 2018) Prize of the Ecumenical Jury in the International Competition went to *In den Gängen* (In the Aisles) directed by Thomas Stuber (Germany, 2018). *Motivation:* When life is a supermarket what we need is not found on the shelves but in the aisles. The film (still below) shows in an artistically convincing way what is meant by: “Blessed are the pure in heart”.

A Commendation went to *Utoya 22. juli* (U – July 22) directed by Erik Poppe (Norway, 2018). In a single take, with a hand held camera, the filmmaker creates a claustrophobic engagement



with tragedy of the shocking attack that took the 69 lives of young people outside Oslo. The film plunges the audience into the anxiety and despair of the participants, and suggests the possibility of compassion and hope in the face of tragedy.

The Panorama Prize of the Ecumenical Jury, endowed with €2500 by the Catholic German Bishops' Conference, went to *Styx* directed by Wolfgang Fischer (Germany, Austria, 2018). *Styx* caught the attention of the Ecumenical Jury for the way it discovers the biblical story of the Good Samaritan in the challenge the European Union faces with the arrival of desperate immigrants from Africa. It is a film of high artistic quality, which tells a tale of suspense, and confronts us with the ethical dilemma that individuals and nations must face when we are asked, "Who is my neighbour?"

The Forum Prize of the Ecumenical Jury, endowed with € 2500 by the Evangelical Church in Germany, went to *Teatro de guerra* (Theatre of War) directed by Lola Arias (Argentina, Spain, 2018). More than three decades after the conflict has ended, British and Argentinian veterans and young actors explore the stories of the war in a setting that transcends theatre. In this reenactment, the Falklands conflict stands for all wars and their traumatic consequences. War ends lives but here humanity prevails.

The members of the 2018 Ecumenical Jury

in were: Vesna Andonovic, Luxembourg; Freek L. Bakker, The Netherlands; Inge Kirsner, Germany (Jury President); Winifred Loh, Singapore; Jeffrey Mahan, USA; Joachim Opahle, Germany.

Fribourg (Switzerland) 2018

At the 32nd International Film Festival (16-24 March 2018) the Ecumenical Jury awarded its Prize, endowed with 5,000 Francs by the Swiss church aid organisations "Bread For All" and "Lenten Offering", to the film *Foxtrot* directed by Samuel Maoz (Israel, Switzerland, Germany, France 2017).

Motivation: What are we passing on to our children? What are children passing on to us? Our traditions and our hostilities. Our hopes and our loves. In an intense film made up of poignant images and biblical motifs, the director relays both history and personal stories in tragicomic style.

In addition, the jury awarded a Commendation to the film *Black Level* directed by Valentin Vasjanovich (Ukraine 2017).

Motivation: This is a courageous and innovative film with profoundly technical and symbolic dimensions.

Members of the 2018 Jury: Stefanie Arnold, Switzerland (President); Manfred Koch, Germany; Maxime Pouyanne, France; Luzia Sutter Rehm, Philippines. ■



INTERFILM is the international network for dialogue between church and film. It participates in festivals through ecumenical, interreligious or solely Protestant juries which award prizes to outstanding films. WACC partners with both INTERFILM and SIGNIS in the work of the ecumenical juries.