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EDITORIAL

Rasmus Kleis Nielsen, Director of Research at the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, writes:

"For more than a century, most people in the Western world have taken local journalism for granted. From small rural communities covered by weeklies to larger towns covered by their own daily, newspapers have been an integral part of local life, and their journalists have chronicled events from the mundane to the monumental, publicised local debates, and kept a more or less watchful eye on those in positions of power. Local media have represented their area and helped people imagine themselves as part of a community, connected in part through their shared local news medium, bound together by more than geographic proximity or politically defined administrative boundaries."[1]

Today, profound changes in the newspaper and journalism industries together with technological convergence risk "seeing much weaker local news media that do less in terms of holding power to account and keeping people informed, less to encourage civic and political engagement, and less to foster community integration than they have in the past."

With the availability of news 24/7 and limitless sources of information via the Internet, local media have more or less lost the battle for audience attention as well as the market sway they once had in terms of local advertising. This reversal of fortune is in marked contrast to media at the national level where so-called "legacy media" (those traditional means of communication and expression that have existed since before the digital era) have lost audiences for their analogue outlets but increased them for their digital platforms.

In 1980, when UNESCO published the report of the MacBride Commission – Many Voices, One World, subtitled "Towards a new, more just and more efficient world information and communication order" – it stressed the importance of local communication:

"More emphasis should be placed on these media and local activities for four main reasons: one, because they may be overshadowed and pushed into the background by the big media; two, because mass media have been expected to accomplish tasks and goals for which they are not fitted; three, because in many countries the neglect of a certain balance between big and small led to unnecessary wastage of scarce resources, by using inappropriate means for diverse audiences; four, because by establishing links between them broader horizontal communication could be developed" (pp. 55-56).

The MacBride Report also drew attention to the alarming concentration of media ownership in fewer and fewer hands in the form of horizontal and vertical integration of enterprises connected with the information and entertainment industries; the infiltration into media of enterprises operating in totally different spheres; and the merger of various information outlets into multi-media conglomerates.

However, what the MacBride Report could not have anticipated was the exponential growth of digital technologies; their global accessibility via the Internet and, consequently, their enormous networking potential; and their relatively low cost. In theory, the revolution offered by digital platforms and social media was the ideal answer to the communication problems identified by the MacBride Commission. In practice, governments and mass media oligopolies have not been willing to give up ownership and control without a prolonged struggle.

The importance of digital communications in the contemporary landscape was recognized by the European Court of Human Rights in 2012. It noted:

"The Internet has become one of the principal means for individuals to exercise their right to

Local media support young sports talent. Photo courtesy of American Junior Gold Association.

freedom of expression today: it offers essential tools for participation in activities and debates relating to questions of politics or public interest."[2]

In this respect, the concept of open journalism or user generated content (typically created and circulated in an online environment by a range of different actors) or networked journalism seems to have great potential when it comes to addressing the needs of local communities. As Linda Steiner remarks in her article in this issue of *Media Development*:

> "Digital tools enable all kinds of people to participate in information production and distribution. And many people who never went to journalism school and have no interest in being paid reporters are not only technically and technologically savvy but also have experiences and knowledge that are highly relevant to investigating newsworthy community problems."

True, but that is not the whole picture. Editorial responsibility and liability for published content come into play as well as a range of

contested values touching directly on news-making: objectivity, impartiality, truthfulness, transparency, reliability, and ethics. While the genie is out of the bottle, there are still tensions between journalism professionals and those seeking to exercise their communication rights by using digital technologies.

Yet, barring a global technical catastrophe, digital is here to stay and the local will continue to reinvent itself in whatever digital spaces open up. However, as Rasmus Kleis Nielsen concludes, these developments portend a future in which:

> "We risk seeing much weaker local news media that do less in terms of holding power to account and keeping people informed, less to encourage civic and political engagement, and less to foster community integration than they have in the past (even as digital media offer both individual citizens and local communities many other benefits in other areas beyond news and journalism." ∎

Notes

1. *Introduction to Local Journalism: The Decline of Newspapers and the Rise of Digital Media.* Reuters/IB Tauris (2015).
2. Ahmet Yildirim v. Turkey. Judgement of the European Court of Human Rights, 18 December 2012, para 54.

Networking for a stronger journalism

Linda Steiner

James Carey, a communication and journalism scholar who taught at the University of Illinois and then Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism, often highlighted how communication (and for that matter transportation) policies that privileged speed, efficiency, quantity, low cost, and conquering space did so at the expense of the local. This was a significant loss for a history-minded Irish story teller such as Carey, who was literally home-schooled in local taverns because doctors said he was too medically fragile to attend public school.

Carey's contrast between space-jumping and time-binding technologies explains why we cannot walk across a highway to reach a post office two miles away on the other side, although we can easily drive up the highway ramp and drive 50 miles. We can log on to Facebook to wish happy birthday to friends half-way around the world, but we cannot easily find out from the chain-owned weekly, if it exists at all, who won yesterday's school board election or whether our town post office is going to be eliminated. And if we send a snail-mail birthday card (which is unlikely), it can reach an address in a big city several states away as quickly as someone in the next town.

We haven't lost altogether our ability to communicate with people close by; occasionally micro-level local techniques are reinvented. During Occupy Wall Street, political activists communicated orally and with hand signals to the rows in back of them, who in turn turned around and shared the message with the rows in back of them. During weather-related emergencies and crises, when driving is impossible and electricity may be out, people revert to ancient ways of communicating with one another and sharing news – that is, conversation with neighbours. Notably, restoration of normalcy and power brings back the usual communication and transportation patterns, often ending the communication with the people next door, at least until the next crisis.

So, nothing is new about a dynamic that generally prefers communication technologies that move more messages faster, more cheaply and across greater spaces, even if it works against richer, albeit slow-moving communication that is locally specific and that, as such cumulatively produces more diversity.

For a long time, newspapers have survived by using syndicated material if not by forming chains. And if we take the notion of "media" literally (i.e., not referring to journalism/news outlets), then we must acknowledge that outside major metropolitan areas, magazines, movies, books are almost never local. Their content, their audience, and their professional staffs are not embedded in the local. Much of what passes for and is labelled as local broadcast news, even in large markets, is pooled: IP-based so-called "store and forward technologies" and IP based news services allow large scale distribution of canned news packages, with a local anchor inserted literally only for show. No wonder, then, that local news reported by full-time professionals is decreasingly available and increasingly weak.

Carey's point was that both citizens and policy makers should at least understand that we cannot have our cake and eat it too, i.e., that increasingly moving to even faster cheaper communications that moves across vast spaces in an instant required a sacrifice of the ability to communicate deeply and intimately in ways particularly tailored to those close by. If each place was different, it required specificity. So one possibility is that we never learned this lesson and now assume we can have both.

Alternatively perhaps we simply have attached ourselves to the cosmopolitan or to affective communities defined not by geographical proximity but by identification and loyalty to some

identity group politics. We don't necessarily commit to a transnational or global outlook, but the identification is not precisely local, either. Let's just call it "non-local." (In the interests of transparency, I should note three things. First, in New Jersey, where I live, people really do identify where they live by the turnpike exit number. Second, I work during the week 225 miles away from where I live on the weekends. Third, and perhaps as a result, I wouldn't recognize the man across the street from me if I saw him in the grocery store; the only time I see him is when on a weekend during the winter we are both shovelling snow, bundled up in hat and parka)

The paradigmatic case is not me but that someone in Generation Y or Z who never had a landline, and whose mobile telephone number gives no clue as to geographic location, nor does the Gmail address. Whether from innocence or cynicism, as members of that generation jump from one (part-time, free-lance) job to another, they don't care who the mayor is and don't subscribe to the local newspaper, although they are willing to volunteer for charities in the places where they live.

The local/non-local binary has broken down

The people we get news about are the people that we identify with, and vice versa. In the past, we got news about local people and thus we became loyal to that local community, with a sense that both our histories and futures were linked. The local weekly or daily newspaper – sometimes a local radio station – helped bind a community together.

In the current moment, this local commitment is far less reliable and robust. Community boundaries are more porous. Our interests and tastes may have much more in common with people of a similar generation who are far away, than close-by people across generation. By getting, streaming, reading, and watching news online, by producing and sharing news online, we can participate in a feminist community, a black counterpublic, a gay and lesbian subaltern sphere, a religious counterculture, a political underground. That is, the local/non-local binary has broken

down. That is not necessarily a bad thing.

Much of the cynicism about "the media" is unfair and unwarranted; many of the accusations about journalists' packaging of news to sell audiences to advertisers, about partisan bias and carelessness and cowardice are unfair. Nonetheless, the recent example of the Tribune Company – owner of the Chicago Tribune, Los Angeles Times, Baltimore Sun and several others – does not bode well for local journalism, as indicated by its widely ridiculed "Corporate Rebranding."

Apparently part of its efforts to fend off a takeover bid from Gannett, owner of more than 100 newspapers across the country, the Tribune management announced a new name tronc (sic) (apparently tribune online content), effective on June 20, 2016. The company's press release asserted that tronc "captures the essence of the Company's mission" as "a content curation and monetization company focused on creating and distributing premium, verified content across all channels. tronc pools the Company's leading media brands and leverages innovative technology to deliver personalized and interactive experiences."

Tribune Chairman Michael Ferro said the company will strive to "accelerate the transformation from a legacy news company to a technology and content company, including gaining access to over 100 machine vision and artificial intelligence technology patents for news media applications." This would not seem to be a plausible solution for the crisis in credibility, status, and economic viability facing local news outlets.

One alternative is to consider the possibility is that professionals are not the only ones who can hold power to account, or at least that they need not do it alone. So far, efforts to use – in the best sense of the word – the efforts of citizens who are eager to be involved have been uneven at best. Although journalists claim they want to encourage civic and political engagement, they rarely use reader efforts in any genuine way. Their efforts appear to be more about branding and spin – or exploitation – than sincere attempts to take community integration and participation seriously and respectfully.

Networked journalism

But tendencies to create hybrid forms, to blur distinctions between local and cosmopolitan and global, to understand a range of problems in terms of intersecting and interrelated issues and especially the popularity of participatory interactive technologies that allow for collaboration may explain why at least a few journalism experts advocate "networked journalism." Among those suggesting networked journalism are as far-flung as Charlie Beckett, the broadcast journalist now at the London School of Economics; Jeff Jarvis, who has worked across many news platforms and teaches at the City University of New York; and Manuel Castells, the Spanish sociologist now at the University of Southern California and whose Information Age trilogy includes *The Rise of the Network Society.*

The concept of networked journalism encourages members of the public to be involved in news production alongside professional journal-

ists. The approach leverages new forms of participatory media (including cell phones, websites, blogs, micro-blogging, and social networks) for crowd-sourcing and other user-generated structures. Experiments with this approach, to various extents and in various formats, can be found around the world. For example, CGNet Swara, a project in a tribal region in central India, enables people, even those who cannot read or write, to use mobile phones to both report and access news of local interest, including by sharing news with local and national professional journalists, who also access it by phone.

Clearly networked journalism has its ethical challenges. Not all of it will be good. Nor is it appropriate for every form of news (war reporting being a notable exception). But digital tools enable all kinds of people to participate in information production and distribution. And many people who never went to journalism school and have no interest in being paid reporters are not

A village woman in a rural community in Poona, India, using a mobile phone. (Photo: Business Wire)

only technically and technologically savvy but also have experiences and knowledge that are highly relevant to investigating newsworthy community problems.

Clearly not everyone wants to participate in networked journalism. But the evidence suggests that the people most likely to be enthusiastic about involvement in news production are also likely to be interested in politics, including, possibly, local politics. To alienate them by ignoring their enthusiasm would be a shame. To refuse their talents, their knowledge, their experiences, perspectives, their concerns and suggestions for stories and sources (or, later, their corrections and additions) only further injures journalism.

This is decidedly not a claim that journalists are "mere" curators or moderators. It's no brief for journalists abdicating their ethical and professional responsibilities as such. It is, however, a plea for journalists to be less arrogant and more humble about their work, less insular and more willing to collaborate. That is, networked journalism requires breaking down the silos between professionals and citizen partners. But those partnerships, collaborations, hybridizations, networking are what revive and strengthen journalism of every kind. ▪

Linda Steiner teaches at the Philip Merrill College of Journalism at the University of Maryland. She is editor of Journalism & Communication Monographs and a former president of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication. Her most recent book is the co-edited Handbook of Gender and War.

Local journalism in Canada needs a boost

Bob Cox

Local media are the active watchdogs that democratic communities need to stay healthy.

It's 9:30 in the morning, and Mike McIntyre is going full speed. The voluble *Winnipeg Free Press* reporter is scanning dockets, talking to lawyers, police and court clerks, dashing between courtrooms and generally getting immersed in what is happening at the Law Courts complex in Winnipeg.

By 10 a.m. he's tweeting out testimony from a murder trial. By 11 a.m. he has filed a story for the *Free Press* website. Then he takes advantage of a break to listen to an audiotape of a sentencing in a sexual assault case that was happening at the same time as the murder trial.

Quick Tweet. Quick web story. Back to the murder trial. At noon he catches a relative of the murder victim outside court and uses his smartphone to stream a video via Periscope.

By the end of the day he will have written multiple versions of up to eight stories for the *Free Press*, posted to various digital and print platforms. No one else covers 75% of the stories he does. TV and radio reporters show up only after they learn Mike is covering a juicy case.

Mike is the eyes and ears of Winnipeggers on the justice system, almost single-handedly providing experienced and knowledgeable coverage of what happens in the courts, informing the community about matters of great importance. Take away Mike, and there is massive hole in what Winnipeg knows about crime and punishment.

There are two more things you need to know. The first is that Mike is enormously successful. He has written six books, he has 10,000 Twitter followers, he appears on radio shows across Canada

Newspapers continue to provide continuous coverage of key institutions such as provincial legislatures. Here, Winnipeg Free Press staff look over budget documents at the Manitoba Legislature. From left, multimedia producer Kristin Annable, web editor Graeme Bruce, legislative reporter Larry Kusch and Associate Editor Scott Gibbons, seated. (Photo: Mike Deal / Winnipeg Free Press).

and for 11 years he has hosted his own national radio show. He does regular talks for school tours at the Law Courts and often visits classes in high schools, the University of Manitoba, University of Winnipeg and Red River College.

The second is that everything he does flows from his work for the *Free Press.* Despite all his other success, without the newspaper he would not be providing the coverage he does. No one would. That pretty much sums up the role traditional local news media, especially local newspapers, play in their communities.

You can find a flood of information online at any given moment about crime and punishment, but if you want to find out about the woman who was stabbed in a parking lot in your neighbourhood, you are going to have to turn to local news media.

Newspapers like the *Free Press,* founded

144 years ago, have become so much a part of the fabric of their communities that they are taken for granted by many of the people who depend on them. The head of a local arts group recently phoned the *Free Press* editor to complain about fewer reviews of some classical music performances and to stress how important these write-ups are in the development of young musicians. "Are you complaining to any other media?" the editor asked. "No," came the reply. "But we expect the *Free Press* to do reviews."

People expect local coverage
People simply expect local coverage. They do not put that much thought into how it comes to them. And, while drowning in media generally, people do not realize traditional local news media are rapidly disappearing.

I was a court reporter in the 1980s, one of

two assigned full time to the Law Courts by the *Free Press*. We also regularly assigned other *Free Press* reporters to supplement coverage. There was a full-time reporter from another newspaper and regular reporting from radio and TV outlets. On many days in 2016, there is just Mike.

What happened is quite simple. Local people used to spend money on advertising that supported local journalism. For newspapers that meant pages of classified ads from local readers, more pages of display ads from local merchants, all supplemented by major national ad campaigns by the major brands that local people bought at the big chain stores.

But this has all changed. Classifieds have all but disappeared. People go online to post free items about the used bicycle they want to sell or an apartment to rent. Local merchants spend on Google or Facebook, sending money to the coffers of large American firms rather than keeping it in their own communities. Local journalism is left to

fend for itself.

There is no shortage of information about local happenings. The explosion of social media means you can find out all sorts of things about what is going on in your community. If a bad car accident occurs in rush hour, there are likely to be photos on Twitter before police arrive. The Winnipeg Jets are more than happy to send out video of scoring plays from games and team updates.

But a community is not well informed by getting sporadic, random reports about things that happen, or by getting the "official" version of events supplied by a sports team or a government or a corporation.

After tweeting a photo, another motorist simply continues on to work. Only a journalist follows up to look at how the accident happened, how safe the intersection is or whether that particular model of vehicle has faulty brakes. An NHL team does not send out news on a spat between the head coach and a star player. That is uncov-

Newspapers focus on local teams and keep their profile high in their communities, which they depend on for support. Here Sam Katz, owner of the Winnipeg Goldeyes baseball team, is interviewed by Winnipeg Free Press sports writer Melissa Martin at Shaw Park in Winnipeg. (Photo: Mike Deal / Winnipeg Free Press).

ered by a regular hockey beat reporter.

Early in the digital revolution, many believed the new world in which everyone is a publisher would mean there would be an avalanche of citizen journalism – ordinary folks telling others about what is going on in their communities.

To an extent, this has happened, fuelled by ubiquitous social media. But what quickly became apparent is that this sort of information is not like continuing coverage from a media outlet. The person who posts photos from all the high school football games this season is not around next season because his son has graduated. The person who Tweets about a bad experience at a restaurant is likely to be the person who had the experience, and is unlikely to tell the restaurant owner's side of the story.

And this unpaid army is not easily held accountable, unlike paid journalists working for a media outlet. Organized journalism is required for a community to be fully informed with balanced, responsible and continuing coverage.

Accountability at stake

So how does local journalism survive in the digital age? There is a widely held misconception that advertising alone can continue to pay for "free" online news sites. But I know of no independent local news site that is generating its own content, and generating complete community coverage, based only on advertising.

There are sites supported only by advertising, but that is pretty much all they do – advertise. A typical local site like this has no regular reporting staff. Many just post press releases from the police, governments and local businesses. Some are merely community billboards. None are the active watchdogs that democratic communities need to stay healthy.

Big players like Buzzfeed generate revenues with hundreds of millions of users, making tiny amounts on each of billions of page views. That's a worldwide audience. It's not an audience in a typical Canadian city or town for a provider of local journalism.

Instead of advertising-only models, what has emerged in the digital age is a wide array of experiments. Many, like *Winnipeg Free Press* digital platforms, are extensions of traditional media. The "old" medium remains the base and major revenue generator, while the digital platforms engage new audiences.

The main characteristic of these efforts is that they are not self-sufficient. They depend on legacy media for content, sales and other support. They are just as much at risk when the legacy media behind them weaken, as is the case with newspapers, where revenues have been falling, or local TV stations, which lose money in most Canadian markets.

Among the experiments are many that do not depend on legacy media. They have come up with an array of ways of paying the bills, from soliciting donations, to focusing on niche areas with specialized information so that they can sell subscriptions. From this seeming chaos are emerging some models that have the promise of providing quality local journalism on a continuous basis.

The daily *La Presse* newspaper in Montreal has adopted a tablet-based method of sending out its content each day. The service is free and the tablet edition has been so successful at attracting readers and advertisers that *La Presse* has discontinued printing a daily newspaper from Monday to Friday. The *Toronto Star* has introduced the same system and is betting it can have a free digital service that attracts sufficient advertising.

Many newspapers, such as *The Globe and Mail* and the *Winnipeg Free Press*, are focused on building up digital subscription bases of readers who pay monthly to access content online and who may or may not also take the printed paper. There are also some robust local digital news services based on subscriptions. A service in Halifax, allnovascotia.com, has attracted thousands of paying subscribers to an electronic package of news from the region with a strong focus on business and politics.

There should be even more experimentation so that a variety of new digital models can emerge to provide local journalism. There are certainly enough unemployed journalists around to put their minds to this.

However, one problem in many Canadian

markets is the large presence of the CBC, which is increasingly seeing its future in the provision of digital news in local markets. Every Canadian has an opinion on the mandate of the CBC so I will leave that debate aside. But what is undeniable is that the presence of a large, taxpayer-subsidized player in digital news and information has an impact on what else develops in that environment.

Every day I receive criticism of the fact that the *Winnipeg Free Press* website is now closed down to casual readers. Subscribers get full access, and you can buy single articles for 27 cents each. But you cannot use the site regularly unless you are registered, logged in and paying. The common refrain among critics is: "I can get all this stuff for free from other sites."

I can easily make the argument that this is not true because of the breadth and depth of *Free Press* coverage compared with what "free" sites produce. However, it is hard even for me, the publisher of a large Canadian newspaper, to make this argument against what the CBC produces and posts without charge. The CBC is not free, of course, but it is a cost hidden in our taxes so most people are unaware of what they are paying.

Think about how hard it would be for a digital start-up to start a subscription service in the face of what the CBC does. Of course, you could ask: "Why does it matter if the CBC does the job and provides local coverage?"

The answer is that local journalism cannot survive and thrive with only a single provider. Multiple, healthy outlets are needed to provide a variety of versions of events, views and even alternate methods of coverage. For communities to thrive, you need an unruly rabble of news media outlets poking and prodding, asking the mayor questions about public tendering policies or unearthing expense accounts that show a college president billed taxpayers for her golf shoes.

Carrying on the good work

It is hard to raise an alarm about declining local journalism for two reasons.

The first is that it is a slow process and media outlets try to cover it up. They do not want to admit they are doing less. They do not announce when they stop covering the courts or

staffing question period at the Legislature. A local radio station in Winnipeg still publicly bills itself as "Winnipeg's News and Information Leader" despite having virtually no reporting staff.

The second is that people do not notice what is not there. They do not notice missing symphony reviews – but eventually forget there is a symphony at all. They do not notice when a police investigation is botched – and never hear about the criminal who walks free as a result.

But there should be alarm bells ringing. For all the good work people like Mike McIntyre do, its future viability is increasingly in jeopardy. We need to support existing models of local journalism and help develop new ones to ensure communities stay informed and healthy as a result. ∎

Bob Cox is publisher of the Winnipeg Free Press and chair of the Canadian Newspaper Association.

Local media and digital frontiers: The Malaysian conundrum

Zaharom Nain & Gayathry Venkiteswaran

Observers of the Malaysian media environment will notice two distinctive features of the mainstream media (television, radio, print). First, that there is heavy political party involvement and investment in the media and, second, that there has not been a history or tradition of local or regional media, untouched by the state or national-level political parties.

Indeed, since the forced buy-out of the Malay daily, *Utusan Melayu* (UM), by the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) in 1961, after a protracted – but unsuccessful – strike by the UM journalists, the sad tale of the Malaysian mainstream media has been one of political party ownership, predominantly by the ruling coalition, *Barisan Nasional* (BN).

This was intensified during Mahathir Mohamad's long tenure (22 years) as Malaysia's fourth Prime Minister, from 1981 until 2003. His regime's Privatisation Policy saw Malaysia's media undergoing what has been called "regulated deregulation".[1] It was also during these 22 years that the legal controls on the media were intensified. Amendments made in 1987 to the oft-criticised Printing Presses and Publications Act (PPPA) (1984) resulted in the Home Minister (for a long time a post held by Mahathir) having overall powers to grant and remove the yearly printing licences of Malaysian newspapers and other regular publications.

Broadcasting, too, has faced similar restrictions. For years, ever since the first television station was set up in 1963, television and radio in Malaysia was government owned, all operated by, hence being under the control of, the Broadcasting Department of the Ministry of Information. While this has remained the case with television, with there being two state-owned television stations, in 1984, Malaysia's first private television station, TV3, was set up. The numbers may have changed, yet despite the fact that Malaysia now has four free-to-air television stations (TV3, NTV7, 8TV and TV9), all four are owned by one company, the UMNO-linked Media Prima.

Although his has been called a "liberal" (but short) administration (2003-2009), Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, Mahathir's successor, did nothing substantial to "liberalise" and unshackle the media. The government political and economic controls remained until the current PM, Najib Abdul Razak, replaced Abdullah in 2009 and promised reforms, including media reforms.

Suffice it to say, despite these promises by Najib, the very few changes that have been made, are, at best, cosmetic. Worse, there been have numerous U-turns, and blatant replacing of old repressive laws with new, more repressive, ones. Now, there are ongoing assertions by Najib's regime that there will be amendments made to the Communications and Multimedia Act (1998) (http://www.skmm.gov.my/Legal/Acts/Communications-and-Multimedia-Act-1998-Reprint-200.aspx) to further strengthen the regime's grip on new and social media.

The proposed changes include making it mandatory for internet news portals, blogs and social media accounts to be registered with the regime's Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC). These proposed changes indeed run contrary to the Bill of Guarantees that came with the setting up of the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) in 1996.

The Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) and the Bill of Guarantees

Set up in 1996 as "Malaysia's gift to the world", according to the hype that accompanied it, the MSC is considered by many as Mahathir's brainchild to enable Malaysia to "leapfrog" to the future. To at-

tract much-needed foreign investment and expertise into the corridor, the regime designed a Bill of Guarantees allegedly to facilitate MSC's growth. One of these guarantees was – and still is – that the Internet would not be censored. Despite this being easier said than done, with internet news portals like Malaysiakini and the late The Malaysian Insider (TMI) being raided and harassed by the authorities, until very recently, the Internet media and social media have been avenues for wider and more critical discussions and debate.

Indeed, the setting up of the MSC, and the Reformasi period following the economic and political turmoil in Malaysia brought about by the 1997-99 "Asian Financial Crisis" and the sacking and incarceration of Mahathir's deputy, Anwar Ibrahim, saw alternative, web-based news portals emerging, led by Malaysiakini in 1999. Since then, many others have followed suit, the most memorable being The Nutgraph, an analytical web news magazine that, unfortunately, ran out of funds after a couple of good years.

More recently, after constant harassment by the authorities due to their coverage of the 1MDB scandal implicating Najib, the immensely popular the Malaysian Insider (TMI) also met the same fate, after being in operation for eight years (2008-16).

The tide is evidently changing. The Malaysian police force, for example, very recently began openly monitoring Twitter and Facebook messages, with a number of users now having been hauled in and charged, often under the insidious Sedition Act.

Digital (civil) communities

The notion of a local media in the context of digital technologies is an ambiguous one. With tools like social media and applications on mobile phones, the local could be a geographical construct or an ideological one spread across continents. In Malaysia, the Internet boom has provided citizens with the tools needed to circumvent censors and gatekeepers to publish and access information.

Digital journalism: The launch of Sarawak Report website in February 2010 changed the media landscape in Malaysia, as it took on pol-

itical heavyweights and corruption scandals that the mainstream media carefully avoided. Using investigative journalism methods, SR claims to be a "group of citizens and onlookers deeply concerned by the situation in Malaysia with a particular focus on Sarawak." Founded by British journalist, Clare Rewcastle Brown, with operations based in London, the website has published exposés on the former Chief Minister of the state of Sarawak, Taib Mahmud, related to properties owned internationally, and in recent years, the 1MDB scandal involving the prime minister, prompting other local and foreign media to focus on the stories.

The MCMC has been diligently monitoring SR and has for a while now blocked the site. But, of course, there are ways of getting around such censorship. Malaysians, by and large, are aware of – and do use – these alternative routes. This is what TMI did when first blocked by MCMC, but, in the end, such strategies evidently frightened off TMI's advertisers and potential investors. It is clear that applying both political and economic pressure can have the effects the regime hopes for.

Advocacy media – examples: Despite these controls, the growth of the Internet has benefitted not just the professional journalism outlets, but also interest based groups that produce niche content, often associated with advocacy or social justice. For example, the Centre for Orang Asal Concerns (COAC) – a non-governmental organisation advancing the cause of the Orang Asal through information and legal advocacy - publishes stories and updates that are sometimes produced by the community members on its Facebook page. The stories are local and have include threats posed by illegal logging or land grabbing as well as information related to the rights of indigenous peoples.

In one of its reports, a community member filed a story[2] about food poisoning in a school that affected more than 40 pupils in Gerik, Perak, on 13 May 2016. In the mainstream media, stories like this would not see the light of day unless there was a bigger outbreak or had affected hundreds of pupils. By being able to use the digital tools, the Orang Asli communities can populate the Internet with information that are important to them. The network of Orang Asal[3] communities in Malaysia,

called the Jaringan Orang Asal SeMalaysia (JOAS) have provided trainings for the community members to produce their own media content, ranging from learning to write news stories to making videos and films. At the regional level, these stories also curated and shared via a portal, Indigenous Voices in Asia (http://iva.aippnet.org/category/news/south-east-asia-region/malaysia/), set up in 2012 to provide a media platform for issues related to indigenous peoples' rights across Asia.

Among the LGBT peoples in Malaysia, organising themselves into societies or associations through face-to-face meetings is almost impossible, especially if they are practicing Muslims. The digital platforms have allowed them to meet online and exercise their rights to participate in public and political activities and give members of the communities the opportunity to introduce their narratives.

An important element is the digital story-telling and solidarity building that happen in these contexts, whether limited to closed groups or through open spaces, which have often been empowering. The I-Am-You campaign to be a trans ally, organised by Justice for Sisters, is a case in point. It exists online and has allowed for crowd-sourced information and consistent dissemination of information and amplification of messages and news, as well as acting as a resource centre for those who want to know more about gender and sexuality.[4]

Local communities in Malaysia also include migrant workers and refugees, mostly from within the region. Since the mid-2000s refugees from Myanmar living in Malaysia, began setting up

their own media, using blogs as the publishing platforms, which remain free and allow for local languages and scripts to be used. The blogs usually carry locally written information on events and incidents as well as updates on security and raids in their areas around Kuala Lumpur, while also sharing news from and about Myanmar and the democracy movement there.

Flipsides to digital technologies: The potential gains from using digital technologies mean that voices that promote or propagate undemocratic values or conservative politics and gender-based discrimination have taken advantage of the platforms. In Malaysia, the wave of anti-Mahathir websites in the late 1990s and early 2000s and the use of social media by opposition parties and activists in the 2007 Bersih rally and 2008 general elections, have been replaced by a BN-dominated cyberspace,[5] in addition to its control over the mainstream media.

Users are also confronted with big businesses that own these platforms, such as Google, Facebook and Twitter, which are quickly taking on information curation and inevitably, censorship. So while Facebook has become a de facto publishing site for many small and interest groups, they are subject to commercial rules and standards as well as profit-making considerations that could have adverse effects. States have been known to request companies like Google and Youtube to take down websites, while Facebook and Twitter have moderation and censorship policies that have also been controversial with regards to feminism and human rights based content.

The national Indigenous Peoples network, Jaringan Orang Asal SeMalaysia, along with SAVE Rivers and the national human rights organization, SUARAM, are helping to strengthen an emerging movement of Indigenous People affected by - and opposing - mega-dams in Sarawak and Peninsular Malaysia and to bring national attention to the ongoing rights violations at dam project resettlement sites. (Photo: International Rivers).

Postscript

In an interview we conducted with *TMI* founder and editor-in-chief, Jahabar Sadiq, about his experience with the news portal that was closed down after much government pressure, Jahabar asserted that in a country where there was little information, the model of free news website or free information was necessary. Yet it had its challenges as professional journalism cost money.

"People want to be informed, and we were supported by advertising. But when you are purely online, you don't have the backing of a newspaper or media company with a lot of money. The Malaysian Insider came under the stable of The Edge Media Group for a little under two years before shutting it down on 14 March 2016'" he said. "We grew too fast and it was not possible to rely only on Google ads, that would only work if we were a small team, not when you are 50-over people. Will readers pay for us?", he added.

In February 2016, the government instructed ISPs to block access to the website following a report on the 1MDB, and this cost the news portal its advertisers. "The government accused us of confusing the public. Within one month, the shareholders said we can't cover the costs and shut us down."

Even in the age of digital media, unfortunately, it would appear that the bottom line is still crucial, if not determinant. As stated in an earlier piece:

"The ICT industry is a mix of neo-liberalism when it comes to the economics, but with a considerable amount of state influence (ownership) and regulation being retained. Using the excuse of protecting public order, ethnic relations and national security, the regime has demonstrated its priorities to impose controls and restrictions online as well as to conduct digital surveillance. The legal environment that impacts on fundamental civil liberties has been systematically undermined while practices of blocking, intimidation, and persecution are aimed at curtailing any criticism of the ruling government and institutions, much like the trends in the region. Civil society continues to attempt challenging the restrictions, through local and international advocacy, while independent media outlets press on with questions regarding surveillance and the persecution of individuals."[6] ∎

Notes

1. Zaharom Nain (1994). "Commercialisation and control in a 'caring society' - Malaysian media 'towards 2020'." *SOJOURN (Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia)* (Singapore). October: Vol. 9, No. 2. 178-199.

2. See COAC Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/notes/center-for-orang-asli-concerns-coac/keracunan-makanan-murid-sk-rps-dala/1115074978536427

3. Orang Asal means "Original People" and refers to all indigenous peoples throughout Malaysia. In Peninsular Malaysia, Orang Asal are collectively known as Orang Asli.

4. Gayathry Venkiteswaran, *Freedom of assembly and association online in India, Malaysia and Pakistan: Trends, challenges and recommendations*, 2016, Association for Progressive Communications, http://www.apc.org/en/system/files/Impact_Digital.pdf

5. Oon Yeoh, "The Cyberwar of 2012," *The Sun Daily*, 29 July 2010, http://www.thesundaily.my/node/140196

6. In the Southeast Asian Press Alliance (SEAPA) 18 May 2016 https://www.seapa.org/a-trend-toward-censorship-and-control/

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Local media and digital frontiers

Swaziland Community Multimedia Network

The continued dominance of traditional journalism practice in the Swazi media landscape is under threat from two recent developments: new media and community media. The two are on the verge of introducing the bottom-up approach, interactivity and activism sought by many Swazis, especially marginalised, voiceless groups. Major hurdles prevent the realization of the opportunities they offer citizens, however, because of several challenges.

Community media, radio in particular, and new media have a history in Swaziland dating back to the 1990s and 2000s. "We were one of the first applicants to the authorities for a community radio licence more than 15 years ago. We are still waiting," said Ambrose Zwane, Lubombo community radio coordinator. Zwane is currently working together with several others to advocate for licensing and seek technical skills, equipment and funding for the community radio sector.

Geographically, there are community radio initiatives in Shiselweni, Mankayane and Mbabane while those that represent "communities of interest" include the University of Swaziland campus radio – an initiative of the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication. Others are Christian faith-based initiatives including the Seventh Day Adventist Church, Council of Swaziland Churches and Trans World Radio's Voice of the Church (VOC) – the latter being the only one that is operational.

Two years ago, they registered an umbrella body, termed the Swaziland Community Multimedia Network. "Our goal is to operate as a third-tier within the Swazi broadcasting industry, alongside public service and commercial radio stations," added Zwane. A commercial online broadcaster, Sikhuphe radio, which was operating online but was forced to cease operating, has joined the advocacy group.

New media are more difficult to quantify because they exist on various platforms, are managed by individuals, non-profits and corporations, but not coordinated or regulated in a systematic way. For example, traditional media institutions such as local newspaper publishers of the Times of Swaziland and Swazi Observer maintain websites through which news content is disseminated. Social media tools, such as Facebook and Whatsapp, are also widely used by individuals, civil society, corporations, and various civil society organisations in the country.

Evidence of their increasing reach and uptake is anecdotal, since it is an area that still requires thorough research. However, the potential of new media in Swaziland is clearly outlined in a 2012 publication by the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA): "In a country where the mainstream media is highly censored, the new media and social media are now considered as an alternative platform for the free flow of information."

Despite international trends, Swaziland is one of a few southern African states that have not freed their airwaves, which limits plurality in the broadcasting sector. MISA (2012) notes unremarkable change in the broadcast media sector in recent times. "The Swaziland Broadcasting and Information Services (SBIS), which controls radio, and Swaziland Television Authority, television, remain the two dominant players – the only two players, really." The major obstacle is a non-conducive legislative and regulatory environment, forcing community and commercial radio to remain illegitimate.

However, the status quo has begun to improve in recent times. A positive sign was the establishment of an independent communications regulator (Swaziland Communications Commission) in 2013. Its goal is to regulate and supervise electronic communications network operations and the provision of related services, including
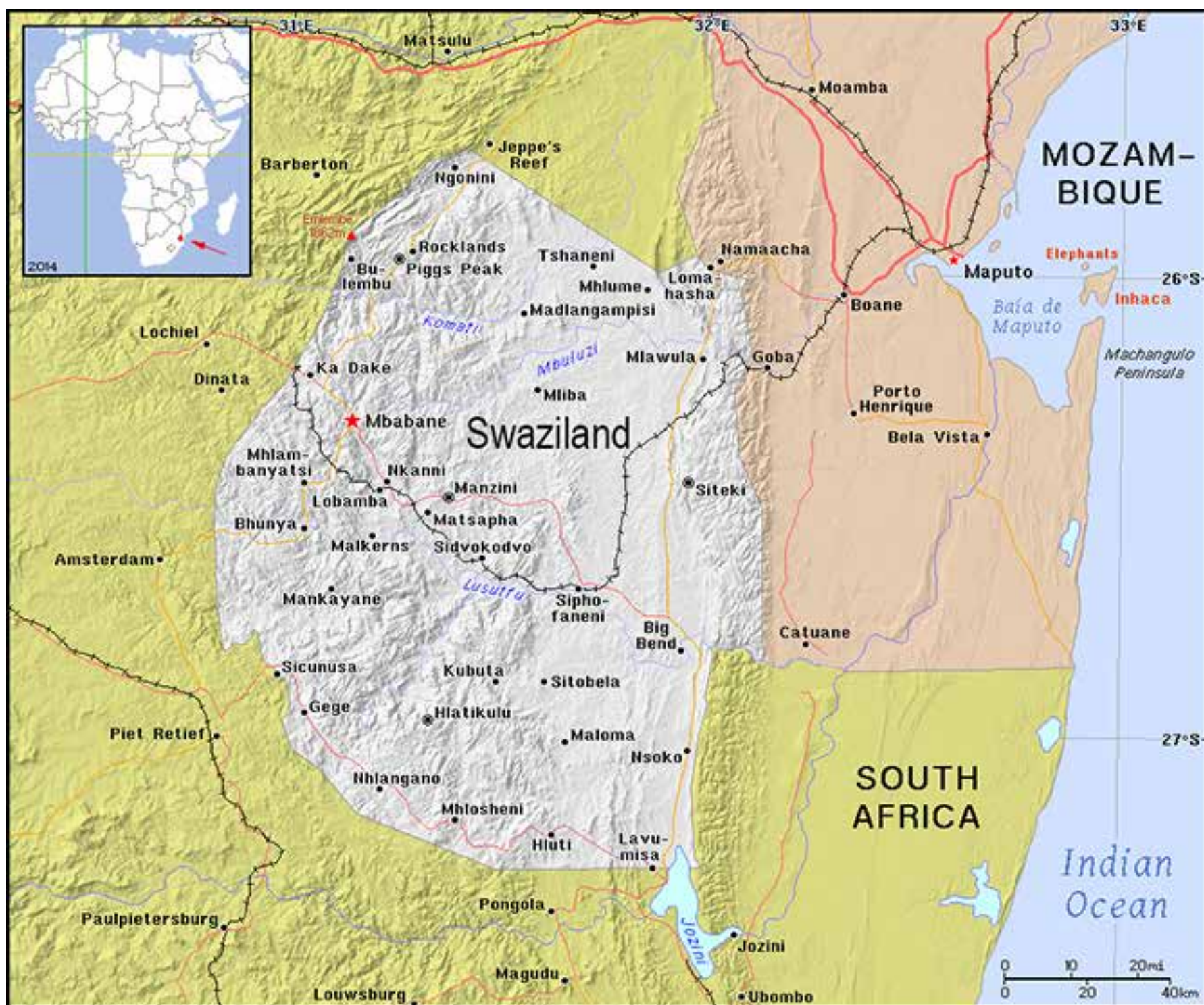
the regulation of data protection in electronic communications. The Ministry of Information, Communication and Technology is also finalising drafting of broadcasting legislation. According to the Director of Information, Phesheya Dube, the passing of these Bills by Parliament will introduce the three-tier system of public service, commercial and community broadcasting promoted by the Ministry. This will provide opportunities for Swazis to access a multiplicity of media content or establish their own radio and television stations.

Digital migration's advent is also accelerating legislative and regulatory processes within the broadcasting sector. In addition, the teaming up of Swazi community radios and civil society to implement an advocacy campaign for the passing of broadcasting legislation is becoming a force to be reckoned with. Themed, "*Licence community radios: realize Vision 2022,*" the network's advocacy activities illustrate the essential role that community radios can play in Swazi society, related to the national development framework.

"We now believe that this is a realizable dream. We may soon hear our own voices, and those of our neighbours, on air, within our communities, speaking in our native SiSwati and discussing solutions to our community's developmental problems," said Simon Ndlovu, a coordinator of Shiselweni community radio, whose station was granted a one-day licence for the first time by the communications regulator to broadcast a national event in April 2016.

Community radio empowers marginalised sectors of society such as youth, children, women,

poor and underprivileged people by giving them a voice. Their silence in the mainstream media is profound, where national issues, events and activities render them voiceless and do little to ensure their representation in society. Radio enhances the self-confidence of the community through the practice of articulating views, and discussing important local issues. Hearing their own voice on air, and that their neighbours' voices, speaking in the native language makes a huge impact.

For example, unlike content offered by newspapers and magazines, which requires literacy, "grassroots radio' encourages people from all walks of life including underprivileged groups to be part of the radio project, whether they are young or old, male or female, literate or illiterate, able or disabled. The youth, in particular, are attracted to community radio's training opportunities where they often work as volunteers.

New media form the basis for illustrating this. A 2014 UNESCO/Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) study on Swazi youth's social media habits confirms how much mobile technology has permeated local culture. Targeting 100 social media users aged 10-24; the study found that 69% preferred social media to mainstream media. It is worthy of note that youth constitute a significant portion of the Swazi population (43%), hence their issues should be featuring in the local newspapers, or on radio or television. In the absence of this platform, however, social media have given them an alternative one.

Local media also enhance participatory development, using creative ways of engaging people. Through drama workshops, listening clubs and role-plays, community radio rallies people together to tackle developmental problems. Community radio works effectively, whether tackling HIV and AIDS prevention, environmental damage or water and other service shortages. It improves problem-solving skills on issues ranging from culture, rural development, education, hygiene and sanitation, agriculture to local governance.

Continuous information exchange highlights issues important to the community to encourage its members to respond to changing circumstances and reduce social risks. For example,

slots for women's programs may be created to increase awareness and educate the public on matters affecting them directly, thus increasing their active participation and contribution to development. "In the long-term, community radio will directly contribute towards fighting the limited access to local relevant content and information that represents the needs and interests of Swazi communities," said Zwane.

Digital technologies offer access and choice
This prioritizing of issues important to the community applies to the new media, which offer a broad range of choices to users for accessing information and news. Through the internet, news sources have become so wide and diverse, for instance, from 15 minute broadcasts of local news to 24-hour news channels featuring international news. This wide range allows citizens to seek and find unbiased opinion of the news, unlike relying on a single source. The advent of citizen journalism and social media tools, such as blogs and Facebook, have also made it easy for citizens to create their own content, including posting their own views on global events or news.

Community radio is also an educational tool, contributing to awareness and knowledge creation that leads to improved livelihoods. For example, it creates market opportunities for local entrepreneurs and improves sales and incomes. Local radio brings opportunities for community members to learn new skills, thus improving prospects for employment at commercial stations. This is the case for campus radios, which provide ample opportunity for college and university journalism and broadcasting students to practice their craft in readiness for future employment.

Thus the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Swaziland is a campus radio licensing applicant, the only one within the network. "Our wish as journalism and mass communication students is to gain day-to-day, consistent practice on how to operate equipment, how to produce programmes and manage a radio station since we would run the campus radio station ourselves as volunteers," said Hlengiwe Dlamini – a third-year broadcast-

ing major within the Department.

Also, community radio is able to engage community members in demanding good governance and accountability. They can directly engage government officials in a bid to seek improvements in service delivery, while involving the broader listening audience in the discussion. Expert advice on issues important to poor communities can also be sourced, with follow-up discussions conducted on air and amongst the community at large. As a result, public policy can be influenced since politicians respond to informed voters who cover issues well even while exercising their right to scrutinize government action.

On the other hand, new media are perceived as an agent for social action. In Swaziland, the youth have bypassed mainstream media, most of which is state-owned and likely to be heavily censored, to focus on social media sites such as Facebook, Whatsapp and Mixit. "The young people have welcomed the emergence of social media because, among others, it affords them an opportunity not only to interact, but also enjoy the fundamental right to freedom of expression provided in Section 24 of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Swaziland adopted in 2005," reflects the UNESCO/MISA report.

For example, Facebook became a popular platform for pro-democracy groups to mobilize themselves towards the failed 12 April 2011 uprising on the 1973 Decree, which banned political parties in the country. Again, MISA (2012) highlights how a teachers' strike in 2012 relied on social media to mobilise members to engage in a three-month long action.

Challenges and limitations

Community radio's key challenge in the Swazi context is the lack of demand for its existence or use of its services by members of the public. There is a perceived acceptance of the status quo by locals regarding the existing players in the broadcasting sector, and the mainstream media, in general. This creates a situation whereby community radio advocacy seems to be driven by the community radio network representatives and their civil society partners, but not the grassroots people themselves who stand to benefit from the exercise of their right to freedom of expression. Therefore, there remains a need for strengthened and more widespread advocacy to enable Swazis to fully realize the benefits it offers at community level.

On the other hand, digital media tools are expensive in the country. Although computers, laptops, tablets and mobile phones enable citizens to access media content in isolated areas where national radio, television and newspapers fail to reach, they are ill-afforded by Swazis, as is Internet usage, whose costs remain high. Costs notwithstanding, challenges arise when trying to access electricity in some parts of the country. For example, although 80% of Swazis subscribe to the mobile service offered by MTN Swaziland, the majority of its users can only afford its basic services, such as airtime for calling or sending messages. For many residing in poor, rural communities where electricity coverage is low, staying connected is a challenge due to limited access to battery recharging facilities.

Another challenge arises from the lack of funding and technical support which affects community radio, in particular. Expert advice on maintaining a fine balance between donor funding, subscriptions from community members and income generation projects, to ensure financial sustainability has been tried and tested in various community media contexts, including southern Africa. However, this often proves difficult to do while ensuring the independence of the station.

In Swaziland, where the economy is in decline and there is a limited number of companies offering corporate social responsibility, the pool of funding accessed by community radio initiatives becomes marginal at best. As a result, its initiatives so far are mainly funded by foreign or international organisations. While this funding forms the lifeblood of the sector's activities currently, it fosters a perception by Swazi authorities that the demand for community radio in the country is a foreign concept and, therefore, imposed.

Lastly, a major challenge is the non-legitimizing of community radios by local authorities. This is often attributed to concerns about in-

creased freedom of expression which may threaten government authority, especially in a context where there are significant restrictions on access to information. To remain active and relevant within the media space, Swazi radio initiatives currently apply for one-day licences to broadcast national events and pre-record programmes for subsequent distribution on CDs.

In conclusion, the passing of legislation that licenses community radios would be the first step towards enabling Swazis to realize the opportunities it offers and be able to realize some of their communication rights. Hence, the on-going advocacy by the sector, which involves engaging and influencing legislators, decision-makers and influential people to pass the Broadcasting Bill of 2013. This is a one-year European-Union funded project, while the latter is funded by the World Association for Christian Communication (WACC) and focuses on capacity building.

WACC support will ensure that Swazi community radios are adequately trained in ICT use, get access to basic computers, establish requisite management and administrative structures and formulate relevant policies in readiness to begin operating as soon as licenses are issued. ∎

"Not your father's local media", o cómo la revolución digital cambió (casi) todas las referencias

Carlos Eduardo Cortés S.

En 1988 una fábrica de autos intentó adelantarse a su mercado con un eslogan que no le funcionó en términos de ventas – la empresa cerró unos años después–, pero marcó la cultura popular estadounidense con todas las variantes imaginables. "This is not your father's Oldsmobile" (este no es el Oldsmobile de tu papá), permanece como una frase pegajosa para describir una disrupción; es decir, una rotura o interrupción brusca.

Para hablar hoy de medios locales, en particular, no podemos olvidar que la industria mediática, en general, actúa como "una bestia descomunal, estúpida y lenta, que sabe muy poco sobre sus amenazas y su entorno", en palabras de Joshua Topolsky, cofundador de The Verge / Vox Media, cuyo periodismo cubre la intersección entre tecnología, ciencia, arte y cultura.

En lo que va del siglo XXI la disrupción digital transformó los usos sociales y los consumos individuales de los medios –cada vez más mediados por la participación en redes sociales–, así como las modalidades del aprendizaje humano. Como advirtió Prieto Castillo: "la comunicación ha estallado en todas direcciones y ocupa un espacio que apenas si era incipiente cuando asomaron las tecnologías analógicas".

Sin embargo, aunque la idea de "medio local", venida del viejo mundo analógico, requiera
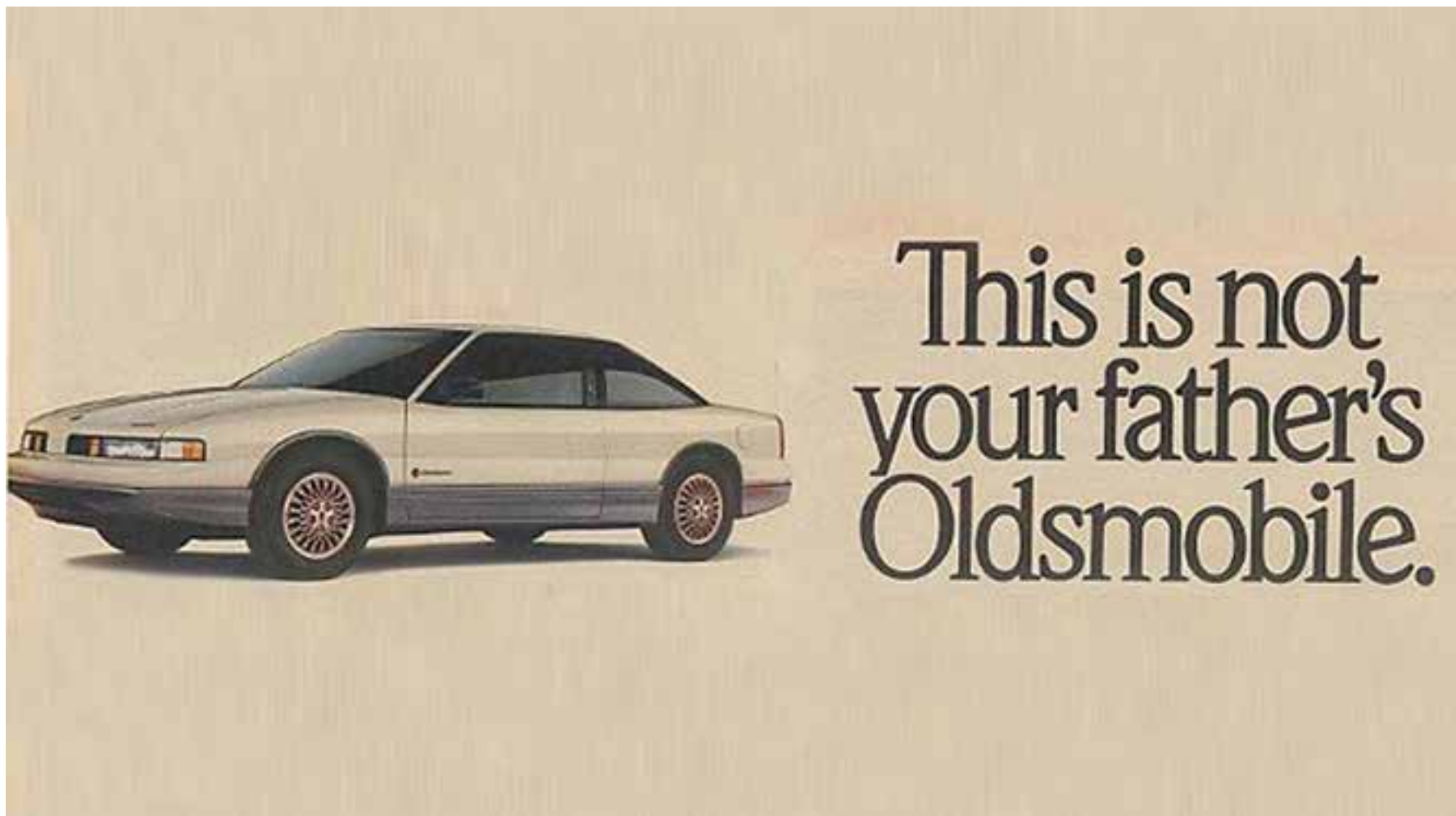
una profunda renovación, numerosas expresiones y acciones de medios, iglesias, partidos políticos, asociaciones profesionales, sindicatos, entidades educativas y grupos civiles, parecen no haberse percatado de que hace más de tres lustros salimos del siglo XX y sus referentes analógicos. En otras palabras, los medios locales de hoy no son los medios locales de tu papá. Y es muy probable que ni siquiera sean los de tu infancia.

Solíamos tener un sistema mediático analógico relativamente estable, basado en escasez y localización física, en el cual grandes intereses políticos y económicos hegemónicos podían concentrar y controlar inmensas porciones de lo que leíamos, escuchábamos y veíamos, porque era comparativamente sencillo mantener pocos medios masivos cuyos costos de producción impedían la presencia de numerosos actores, aún si existían garantías constitucionales de ejercicio de la libertad de expresión y la posibilidad de fundar medios.

Ante esa barrera, a mediados del siglo XX se iniciaron movimientos sociales y mediáticos que intentaron ir contra la corriente y dieron lugar a una rica diversidad de medios locales, alternativos/alterativos del orden mundial de la comunicación y la información, mientras se aspiraba a la democratización general de los sistemas mediáticos nacionales por vía de políticas de comunicación defensoras del derecho a la comunicación y la expresión como derechos humanos fundamentales.

Para fines del siglo XX estaba claro que la mayoría de prácticas y reglamentos de radiodifusión en el mundo no contaban con un "entorno propicio" para una radiodifusión libre, independiente y pluralista, capaz de dar voz a las personas y reclamar la rendición de cuentas de los gobiernos. Y la razón era (y sigue siendo en muchos sentidos), que un entorno mediático saludable requiere la convivencia equilibrada de sectores de servicio público, comunitario, sin fines de lucro, y comercial privado.

La dimensión más profunda de la revolución digital es, probablemente, haber dado origen a medios realmente interactivos, basados en redes tecno-sociales que dependen de herramientas de software.

Dispositivos móviles inteligentes, redes sociales, correo electrónico, blogs y sitios Web personalizados, entre otros recursos, no existían tan solo hace unos pocos años; pero hoy casi la mitad de la población del planeta tiene al menos acceso a Internet.

Los medios sociales incluyen todos los servicios de comunicación electrónica, incluyendo

cualquier uso de tecnología basada en Internet, para circular mensajes mediante la interacción que ocurre en línea y permite crear comunidades para compartir todo tipo de información y contenidos.

En consecuencia, un medio local apoyado en redes sociales y aplicaciones móviles podría encarnar hoy el ideal democratizador de los "medios alternativos" analógicos, pues las reivindicaciones de la comunicación como derecho humano siguen siendo vigentes y pertinentes.

Reformulaciones digitales y viscosidad mediática

Veamos cómo una docena de nuevas referencias transforma cada día este paisaje en el cual se mueven hoy los medios locales.

1. *La revolución digital resquebrajó la estructura mediática del siglo XX.* Con el advenimiento de la sociedad red, subraya Castells, la Internet y su World Wide Web desbordan todo lo que conocíamos en términos mediáticos porque traslapan de manera permanente la información, la comunicación, la interacción y la organización social. Diarios y revistas se debilitan o desaparecen. Los modelos de negocio cambian demasiado rápido. Las redes de radio y teledifusión se ven forzadas a evolucionar.

2. *Los medios analógicos tradicionales han perdido la exclusividad de producir y distribuir noticias, información y entretenimiento*, pues las tecnologías de información y comunicación (TIC) digitales tienen el potencial de convertir a cualquier individuo con acceso a ellas, en *prosumidor* (productor, editor, distribuidor y consumidor) digital de contenidos (la mayoría de los cuales circulan libremente por las redes).

3. *No presenciamos la muerte de ningún medio en particular, sino su reformulación digital y su consumo en diversas plataformas.* Con la cultura de la convergencia, explica Jenkins, hemos ingresado a una creciente viscosidad mediática en la cual cambian los contenidos, los géneros y las tecnologías de distribución, pero los medios permanecen como capas dentro de un cada vez más complejo sistema de noticias, información y entretenimiento, en el cual conviven la imagen, el sonido y los datos de manera transversal o transmediática.

4. *Hemos hecho la transición de los medios de masa y su modelo de* broadcasting *(radio y teledifusión), a un nuevo modelo de* digicasting basado en un conjunto de servicios de textos digitales (video, audio y datos), sustentados, por un lado, en la digitalización del uso del espectro electromagnético, y, por otro, en el acceso personalizado (webcasting, narrowcasting, podcasting⬚), a redes de banda ancha, computadoras, teléfonos inteligentes y todo tipo de dispositivos móviles con acceso a redes y reproducción multimedial, multipantalla y multiplataforma, basada en aplicaciones o apps (programas relativamente pequeños diseñados para teléfonos celulares y computadoras): "Lo que quiero, cuanto quiero, donde quiero y cuando quiero".

5. *A medida que los individuos han pasado a considerar los servicios de comunicación como gastos no discrecionales, los costos de suscripción a servicios han descendido en todas las plataformas*, con lo cual el número de suscriptores aumenta y se mantiene en crecimiento. En respuesta, los operadores tienden a agrupar servicios de voz, video y datos, cuyos paquetes resultan más atractivos para los usuarios y más rentables para las empresas. Pero la inversión en redes de acceso de nueva generación ocurre principalmente en las ciudades, por lo cual subsiste la preocupación de que se ahonde la brecha digital y las áreas rurales no tengan acceso suficiente a estos servicios.

6. *La conectividad y la inclusión digital ocupan ahora el centro del desarrollo social y económico.* Entendida como la capacidad de una sociedad para comunicarse consigo misma y con su entorno mundial mediante el uso de telecomunicaciones, TIC digitales y productos de sus industrias de contenidos, la conectividad es ahora prioritaria en cualquier consideración de política de comunicación, debido a las profundas repercusiones sociales, culturales, políticas y económicas de la revolución digital. Gobiernos, organismos regionales, subregionales y multinacionales, sociedad civil y sector privado, se sientan ahora en una misma mesa, "cada uno dentro del marco de sus competencias y responsabilidades". Y empresarios como Mark Zuckerberg, creador de Facebook, la consideran un derecho humano.

7.   *Contamos con nuevas formas de participación ciudadana y de empoderamiento individual que, a su vez, influyen en la participación política y sus resultados.* Los medios sociales pueden promover interacción basada en telepresencia. Es decir, podemos comunicarnos y desarrollar formas de interlocución o diálogo aprovechando la configuración tecnológica de las redes tecno-sociales, que permite romper límites geográficos y temporales, propios de los medios analógicos tradicionales.

8.   *La experiencia de usuario y la diversificación temática basada en necesidades informativas identificadas entre los usuarios aparecen como claves para un periodismo local consciente del nuevo paisaje mediático digital:* un ecosistema viscoso y amplio de prosumidores, audiencias, tecnologías, procesos, industrias, gobiernos y patrocinadores que interactúan de manera activa alrededor de diversas modalidades de información que incluyen (y mezclan) entretenimiento, noticias, educación y publicidad.

9.   *Hay innovaciones sociales colaborativas basadas en aplicar los principios del código abierto –en informática–, a campos más allá del software.* Es lo que se conoce como "crowdsourcing": así como el software libre está destinado a mejorar el sistema y devolverle las mejoras a la comunidad de usuarios, el "crowdsourcing" busca actuar como una técnica distribuida de resolución de problemas y de producción, mediante una "lluvia de ideas" colectiva, dedicada a buscar mejoras en todas las esferas de la vida.

10.   *Entre las innovaciones colaborativas más relevantes para el periodismo digital local se encuentra el llamado 'civic hacking'.* Se trata de un enfoque para solucionar problemas cívicos, originado en un movimiento ciudadano de acceso a información pública. En esta tendencia, "hacking" recupera su sentido original –antes de ser sinónimo de piratería informática– para referirse a la creación de apps cuyo propósito original se modifica de manera simple y creativa para resolver problemas –por ejemplo, abuso de fuerza policial o corrupción de funcionarios y políticos– y promover acciones como la protesta y la desobediencia civil.

11.   *El periodismo local de medios cívicos también encuentra en la ciencia de grandes datos (Big Data*

Science) otro ingrediente esencial. Hoy es posible generar, a muy bajo costo, contenido mediático comprensible y entretenido apoyado en aplicaciones de análisis de datos (grandes y no tan grandes) que permiten producir periodismo confiable, basado en comprobación y verificación de hechos (fact-checking and verification).

12.   *Detrás de este reto periodístico se encuentra la nueva lógica del "Con": Con (alguien), no A ni Para (alguien).* Como señala Charles Leadbeater, si tuviéramos que sintetizar la cultura creada por los medios sociales en un solo principio de diseño, sería el principio del "Con". La Web nos invita a pensar y actuar "con" las personas, en vez de hacerlo "por" ellas, a nombre de ellas o incluso haciéndoles cosas "a" ellas.

Un sentido fuerte de participación cívica

Transformar el conocimiento cívico en acción cívica, como una parte esencial de la democracia basada en empoderamiento comunitario, es lo que se propone el Centro para Medios Cívicos del Instituto Tecnológico de Massachusetts (MIT). Más allá del "periodismo ciudadano", los medios cívicos incluyen toda forma de comunicación que fortalezca los lazos sociales dentro de una comunidad o cree un sentido fuerte de participación cívica entre sus residentes.

En ese sentido, van más allá de la creación de contenido noticioso y reportería, e incluyen desde tecnologías para organizar manifestaciones callejeras, hasta sistemas de telefonía y mensajería de textos que permiten llevar a cabo sofisticadas votaciones instantáneas en actividades cotidianas.

Al ayudar a proveer a la gente las habilidades necesarias para procesar, evaluar y actuar a partir de la circulación de información, los medios cívicos garantizan la diversidad de aportes y el respeto mutuo necesarios para la deliberación democrática.

En un mundo digital marcado por la movilidad, un reto adicional para el ejercicio del periodismo es el uso creciente de comunicaciones sincrónicas, principalmente basadas en mensajería y chat (Whatsapp, por ejemplo), o en video (como Snapchat).

El resultado no solo es, como analiza Stowe

Boyd, que seamos móviles en dispositivos móviles, sino que nos volvemos discontinuos: es probable que nuestro trabajo se divida en muchos lapsos cortos, y es menos probable, en consecuencia, que leamos o escribamos formatos largos en dispositivos móviles.

No es coincidencia, entonces, que *The New York Times* haya analizado a fondo los conflictos de valores que ocurren en el nuevo entorno de las noticias digitales. Una reciente etnografía noticiosa de ese diario describe cómo tres valores emergentes están reordenando los procesos fundamentales de la producción de noticias: la inmediatez, la interactividad y la participación ahora juegan un papel protagónico como nunca antes, y crean enfrentamientos entre lo antiguo y lo nuevo, porque provienen de prácticas sociales, presiones y normas ya en juego dentro de las salas de redacción digital.

* La *inmediatez* nos fuerza a los periodistas digitales a trabajar en un entorno permanente de plazo límite (deadline); un mundo de "lo antes posible"; de periodismo para ahora mismo, no para aparecer impreso mañana, que fue inaugurado por el ciclo de 24 horas de CNN.

* La *interactividad*, inspirada por la inmersión permanente de los usuarios en el entorno de la Web, trae nuevos tipos de especialidades a la sala de redacción (medios sociales, analítica web, marketing digital, datos, infografía...), pero también les demanda nuevas capacidades a los ya recargados periodistas tradicionales.

* A su vez, la *participación* (engagement) entre el medio y su audiencia, se modifica y renueva gracias a los medios sociales, de manera que los ejecutivos de ventas aspiran a crear oportunidades de desarrollo de marca e imagen corporativa, mientras los periodistas buscan maneras de conocer mejor e interactuar realmente con sus lectores.

Por supuesto, no es sencillo venir del mundo analógico, adaptarse a los retos digitales y modificar los procesos de trabajo, todo al mismo tiempo. Pero hay cinco lecciones que los medios tradicionales en Estados Unidos están aprendiendo en su transición forzada o ya aplican cuando se trata de medios digitales nativos que han reinventado las salas de redacción:

No intentan ser todo para todo el mundo.

* Se enfocan en las áreas que pueden y deben cubrir mejor.

* Liberan a más personal de las constricciones de la lógica del impreso.

* Piensan más allá de las palabras (más periodismo visual y escritura conversacional).

* Organizan sus equipos alrededor de asuntos, no secciones cerradas (cambio climático, educación, salud).

En el horizonte del nuevo mundo del "Con", otros cambios sociales profundos se perfilan: el conocimiento y el aprendizaje son co-creados en una relación igualitaria de profesionales y prosumidores. Las organizaciones funcionan como redes o asociaciones. La autoridad se distribuye y se obtiene de una relación entre pares. Las soluciones se coproducen y se negocian. La política es nuestra propia voz en conversaciones y argumentaciones. Y el valor del medio se crea a través de la interacción con sus usuarios y se establece a través de ella. ¡Menudo reto tenemos por delante!

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Who loves local news?

Lee Shaker

In the United States, it's no longer newsworthy to say that there is a crisis in the news industry. From coast to coast, countless newspapers closed, ceased print publication, or slashed their staffs in the past decade. NPR affiliates nationwide are struggling to reach millennials and are clinging desperately to pastiche reruns of Car Talk to keep donations flowing. Even ratings for local television news are sagging. Altogether, while citizens can turn to countless digital sources of national and international news (or entertainment), the quantity and quality of local news in most communities is rapidly diminishing. Yet, the crisis in local news is not one of supply; it is one of demand.

The public's turn away from local news may not always, or even typically, be the result of a conscious choice. That said, now that Americans (and citizens of many other developed nations) no longer receive local news by default, locating it requires active effort. Identifying what drives people's informational decisions in the face of media choice proliferation is critically important from a democratic perspective. In order to be effective citizens and engaged community members, people need to know about events, issues and opportunities specific to where they live. To be knowledgeable, people need a solid information base – and this generally requires a form of local news.

What motivates people to seek and use local news? How do these motivations differ across generations? How can these motivations be better addressed in the digital age? Though these may seem like fundamental questions, surprisingly few people have investigated them. Resources are often perilously limited at news organizations, academics are inclined to focus on national and international matters (which yield greater scholarly visibility) and major journalism non-profits like the Knight Foundation tend to fund proposals aiming to produce services (like a mobile platform for sourcing breaking news) instead of research. As a result, there is little known about the psychology of local news use in the modern choice-rich media environment.

Drawing on research of individuals' orientations towards citizenship and their communities, I outline three discrete motivational foundations that a choice to seek local news may rest upon. Looking forward, appealing to young people is of particular concern – so this article specifically connects these motivations to what we know thus far about millennials. If community information can be positioned such that it resonates with their identities, perhaps it will be more likely to attract their attention. Offline or online, text or video, a surfeit of excellent journalists are available to provide local news. To succeed, they must produce content that the audience needs, wants and seeks.

Self-interest

Perhaps the most intuitive reason to follow local news is self-interest. People who pay taxes, drink municipal water and send their kids to public schools need to understand the policies and practices of their local government. Local news is an invaluable shortcut: it surveils the government, offers a forum for the discussion of community concerns and is a source of institutional knowledge that contextualizes current events. From this perspective, individuals need not be concerned with anybody other than themselves for reason to use local news: it is purely an instrumental decision made by people who seek direct personal benefit.

Study of political socialization suggests that self-interested motivation develops over the arc of the typical lifespan. Young people, who do not own homes or have children that attend public school, are less aware of the impact of municipalities upon their lives. Accordingly, they have less incentive

to engage politically in general or, more specifically, to follow local news. Established community residents feel the bite of property taxes more sharply and care deeply about the opportunities afforded to their children. They have deep-seated reasons to know what is happening in their community and how they might steer policies towards preferred outcomes. Consequently, they are more likely to follow local affairs.

As millennials (who are now reaching their mid-30s) delay settling down, buying a home and having children, they are not developing community roots that make local news use a matter of readily apparent self-interest. In fact, evidence shows that millennials, on the whole, continue to consume little local news. Members of Generation X are more likely to have established themselves in a community and begun a family – but relative to prior generations, they also report low levels of local news use. In other words, usage patterns suggest that one traditional path leading people to local news use may be petering out.

Though it is indisputable that life everywhere is dramatically shaped by local practices and policies, appealing to millennials self-interest on this point may be challenging. As they focus on completing their educations and establishing careers, residential mobility is an advantage for them that discourages investment in local affairs. Though decisions made at the local (or state) level clearly impact access to education, the cost of living and the economic climate, the effects of policy take time to develop. More immediate concerns take precedence for millennials, which diminishes the personal utility of local news.

Civic duty

Aside from self-interest, many scholars assert that the decision to vote or otherwise take part in the political process can be driven by feelings of obligation. From this perspective, citizenship comes with both rights and responsibilities and it is each citizen's duty to perform certain acts. For some people, civic duty may stem from an internalized desire to do what is *right*. For other people, civic duty may be driven by a feeling that they are expected to perform certain actions. Either way,

when behavior is driven by a sense of civic duty, it is reflective of a concern for something – community, social group, democracy – beyond the self.

Extending back to research by political scientists in the mid-20th century, empirical evidence connects civic duty to a host of political and civic actions. Beyond voting, feelings of civic duty may motivate people to volunteer for political campaigns, serve on juries or obey the law. Research does show a correlation between possessing feelings of civic duty and being a news user – but it is not clear which comes first.

Today, many theorists argue that notions of citizenship are changing in nations with post-industrial economies. In short, citizenship for some may increasingly be seen through the lens of the market. If, historically, individuals felt obligated to perform certain key behaviors like voting, people coming of age today may feel that citizenship is sculpted from an array of optional actions inside and outside of the political establishment. People are free to construct their own political identities – just as they are free to create their own sexual and even gender identities. From this point of view, individuals' central political responsibility as a citizen is to be true to themselves.

Indeed, survey research shows that millennials and members of Generation X are much less dutiful than members of previous generations. In general, they acknowledge a responsibility to abide by the law – but they are less likely to see even voting as a condition of citizenship. Further, perhaps only half of millennials believe that paying attention to politics is obligatory. If duty was a foundation for news use in the past, it may not be among rising generations of citizens. Instead, an emphasis on the civic virtue of consuming local news – the leafy green vegetables of the media environment – is likely to be off-putting to people who see citizenship as but one more opportunity for self-actualization.

Community attachment

Rather than being pedantic, an alternative approach to conveying the importance of local information is to attempt to strike an emotional chord with the potential audience. Community

(or place) attachment describes the extent to which people possess cognitive or affective bonds with their hometown. Put another way, people who are said to be "high in community attachment" love the physical place where they reside. Sociologists – beginning perhaps with Ferdinand Tönnies – have studied the formation of ties between residents and their communities since the late 19th-century. In agrarian societies, family ties and a close connection to the land support the development of community attachment. Meanwhile, in modern industrial and post-industrial societies, atomized (even transient) lifestyles are more common and community ties are not a given.

There is substantial motivation to understand the antecedents of community attachment. If people feel connected to their community, it is likely that they will stay in that place. Additionally, evidence suggests that individuals who feel attached to their community are more likely to be politically engaged and that communities which have a high proportion of residents who are attached are more prosperous. Though the development of community attachment is somewhat opaque, survey research shows that it is correlated with the presence of abundant social and cultural opportunities, appealing aesthetic amenities and a tolerant interpersonal climate. Additionally, there is a clear correlation between community attachment and local news media use – but the causal ordering of the relationship is not clear.

As reflected by surging real estate costs near many urban cores, millennials place a premium on living in cities. They are broadly shunning suburbs – but are also weighting lifestyle considerations heavily as they choose specific cities that are amenable to their interests and values. Even if these young people are not settling down according to traditional measures, they are forging strong, identifying bonds with particular communities. In many cases, they are even sacrificing career advancement for the opportunity to live in a place that offers greater personal edification.

If appeals to self-interest or obligation are unlikely to increase local news use among millennials, might targeting affect be a more fruitful approach to motivating them? Young people who very carefully – at times at great expense – choose to live in a place might be driven to protect characteristics which attracted them to that place. Cities are tempestuous and tumultuous: change is constant. At heart, news is the reporting of change: not all change, but the change that is most relevant to a particular audience. An emphasis on this central purpose and dedicated attention to the needs of the audience may be a winning formula even when it comes to attracting millennials to coverage of local affairs.

Thinking ahead
Around the world, the vast majority of elections are held for local or state positions which hold substantial power to shape the lives of citizens. Accordingly, communicating relevant local information to the public is a democratic necessity. From a normative perspective, the process or means of distributing community information is much less important than the outcome: a knowledgeable, engaged public.

The form that local news historically took developed during a period of (relative) information scarcity: people got local news because, to some degree, they did not have alternatives. With such tremendous leverage, journalists and their employers could afford to produce what they thought the audience needed rather than what the audience wanted. This approach is no longer tenable. Looking to the future, greater sensitivity to audience psychology is critical as new sources of community information take shape. ∎

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Dominio o seducción

Carlos A. Valle

La literatura de todos los tiempos nos ha provisto valiosas lecciones para comprender la realidad del mundo en que vivimos. Será conveniente seguir reconociendo que, muchas veces, la ficción es una muy adecuada manera de representar la realidad brindando luces para descubrir los ocultos caminos de las ambiciones humanas, su solidaridad y su miseria y cómo se genera esa comunicación en nuestra sociedad.

Hay dos obras clásicas producidas en la primera mitad del 1900 que, desde distintas miradas, pintan un mundo sometido al dominio de fuerzas que deciden cómo ha de desarrollarse la vida y la relación entre los seres humanos. Mucho se ha hablado y discutido sobre la veracidad de sus puntos de vista pero la riqueza de su aporte sigue siendo valiosa para entender nuestro mundo actual.

Puede ocurrir algo parecido

Comenzamos con el aporte de George Orwell (1903-1950). Había nacido en la India pero se educa en Inglaterra donde las carencias económicas le impiden concluir sus estudios. Por ello se une a La Policía Imperial de la India en Birmania (actualmente llamada Myanmar) a los 22 años y al poco tiempo vuelve a Inglaterra. Su conciencia política va desarrollándose, con sus críticas al imperialismo, fascismo y comunismo. En 1937 se une a la milicia contra el General Franco en la guerra civil española. Esa experiencia termina con un Orwell debilitado y enfermo de tuberculosis, la que fue minando sus fuerzas hasta su muerte. A pesar de lo cual siguió escribiendo obras que han tenido amplia repercusión como "Rebelión en la granja" y *1984* que se publica en 1949. Ambas fuertes
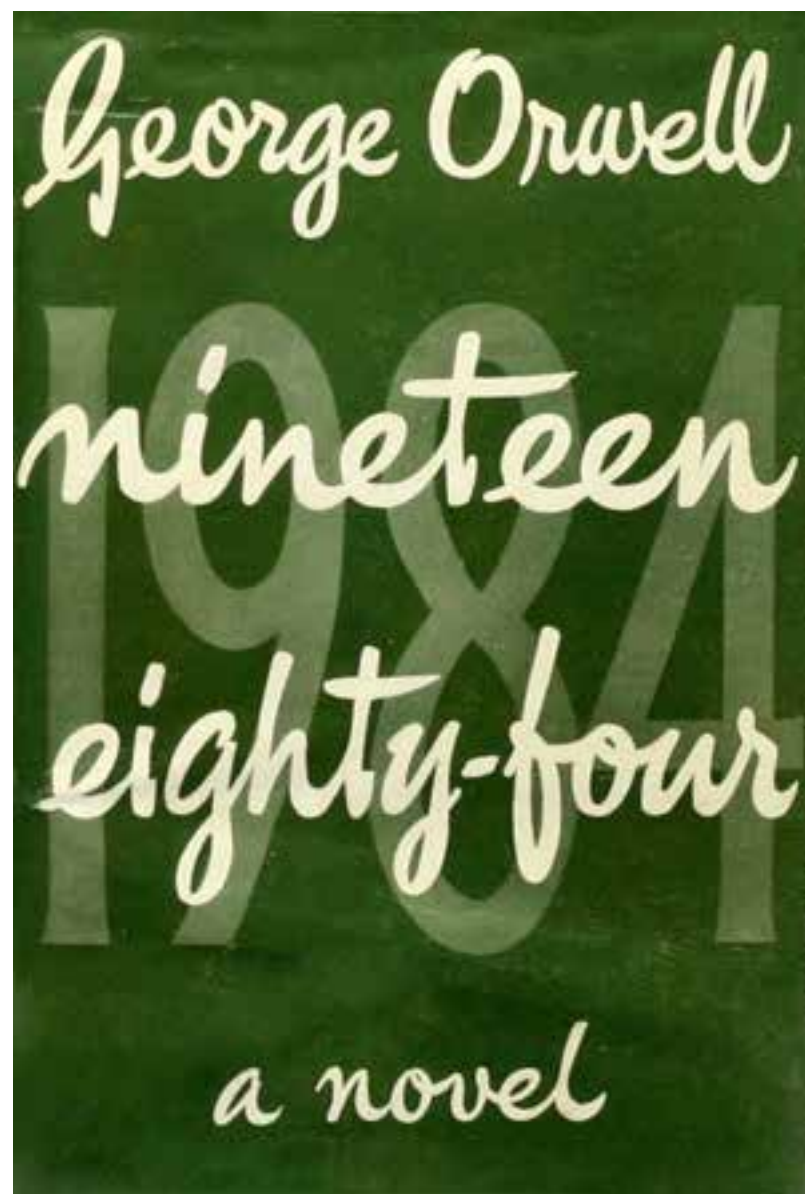
críticas políticas que se resumen en esta frase que se le atribuye: «En tiempos de engaño universal, decir la verdad se convierte en un acto revolucionario». *1984* fue muy bien recibida y se hicieron varias películas con variado acercamiento a sus contenidos.

Una de las presunciones centrales de *1984* es que la coerción es el modo más eficaz para dominar a la sociedad. Por eso, asistimos a la violencia y a la represión, porque la imaginación ha quedado bajo el control de la organización. El personaje del Gran Hermano resume la autoridad política, que centraliza el poder del Partido, único y todopoderoso, que domina y vigila la vida de la gente. Sería posible entender que, en realidad, este Gran Hermano no sea un ser real sino un artificio cuyo objetivo es reforzar el lema del Partido: "Guerra es Paz, Libertad es Esclavitud, Ignorancia es Fuerza". Es una manera de establecer la total despolitización de la gente y la sumisión a un orden que decide por ella.

La posible concreción de esta estructura social delinea una realidad posible, Orwell la ve mani-

festarse parcialmente cuando en una carta a un líder sindicalista estadounidense le dice que "No creo que el género de sociedad que describo vaya a suceder forzosamente, pero lo que sí creo (si se tiene en cuenta que el libro es una sátira) es que puede ocurrir algo parecido. También creo que las ideas totalitarias han echado raíces en los cerebros de los intelectuales en todas partes del mundo y he intentado llevar estas ideas hasta sus lógicas consecuencias."

Quizás la síntesis de la tesis central de *1984* sea la expresada en un momento por un carcelero: "El partido busca el poder por el poder, totalmente. No nos interesa el bien de los otros; solamente nos interesa el poder... Nosotros sabemos muy bien que nadie se apodera del poder con intención de entregarlo después, de abandonarlo más tarde. El poder no es un medio, sino un fin... El objeto de la represión es la represión. El objeto de la tortura es la tortura. El objeto del poder es el poder."

Puede ser que la imaginación de Orwell plantee utopías de dominación que nunca podrán darse. Aunque él no imaginaba que su novela proponía delinear el futuro de un mundo posible, hay gruesos trazos de realidad en el presente que llegan a mostrar que sus temores tenían fuertes visos de veracidad. Hasta qué punto el poder que se pueda ejercer en el mundo alcanzará la magnitud que refleja *1984* será siempre un interrogante sobre el que se debe alertar.

Quise cambiar el mundo

Una diferente visión, pero con un fuerte acento sobre la dominación del poder, es la que presenta Aldous Huxley (1894-l963) en su obra "Un mundo feliz". Huxley era miembro de una destacada familia de intelectuales. Siendo muy joven sufre una enfermedad que afecta severamente su visión. Deja sus sueños de estudiar medicina y se gradúa en literatura. En sus muchos ensayos y novelas se señalan críticas a las convenciones y normas sociales. Asimismo, destaca su interés por relacionar sus trabajos con el misticismo y la parapsicología que plasmó en otros libros. Su conocimiento es muy variado, pero como él reconoció: "Quise cambiar el mundo, pero he encontrado que solo se puede estar seguro de cambiarse uno mismo."

En su primera novela, "Los escándalos de Crome" (1921), se dedica a producir una crítica a los intelectuales esnobs de su época, con largos párrafos que describen discusiones literarias y filosóficas que Huxley satiriza. Crítica que extenderá, posteriormente, a la burguesía británica, con frases con cierto acento sarcástico "Un intelectual es una persona que ha descubierto algo más interesante que el sexo."

En 1932 escribe, en pocos meses, "Un mundo feliz" (*Brave New World*) obra que lo haría famoso. El título lo toma de una frase de La Tempestad de William Shakespeare "¡Cuán bella es la humanidad! Oh mundo feliz" ("How beauteous mankind is! O brave new world")

Se trata de la descripción de un mundo que no está dominado por un "gran hermano", sino la sociedad está regida por el control de la psiquis de las personas que siguen sosteniendo un sistema rígido de castas. Hay una aceptación de la situación imperante que se va alimentando para reforzar la situación y evitar cualquier tipo de cuestionamiento.
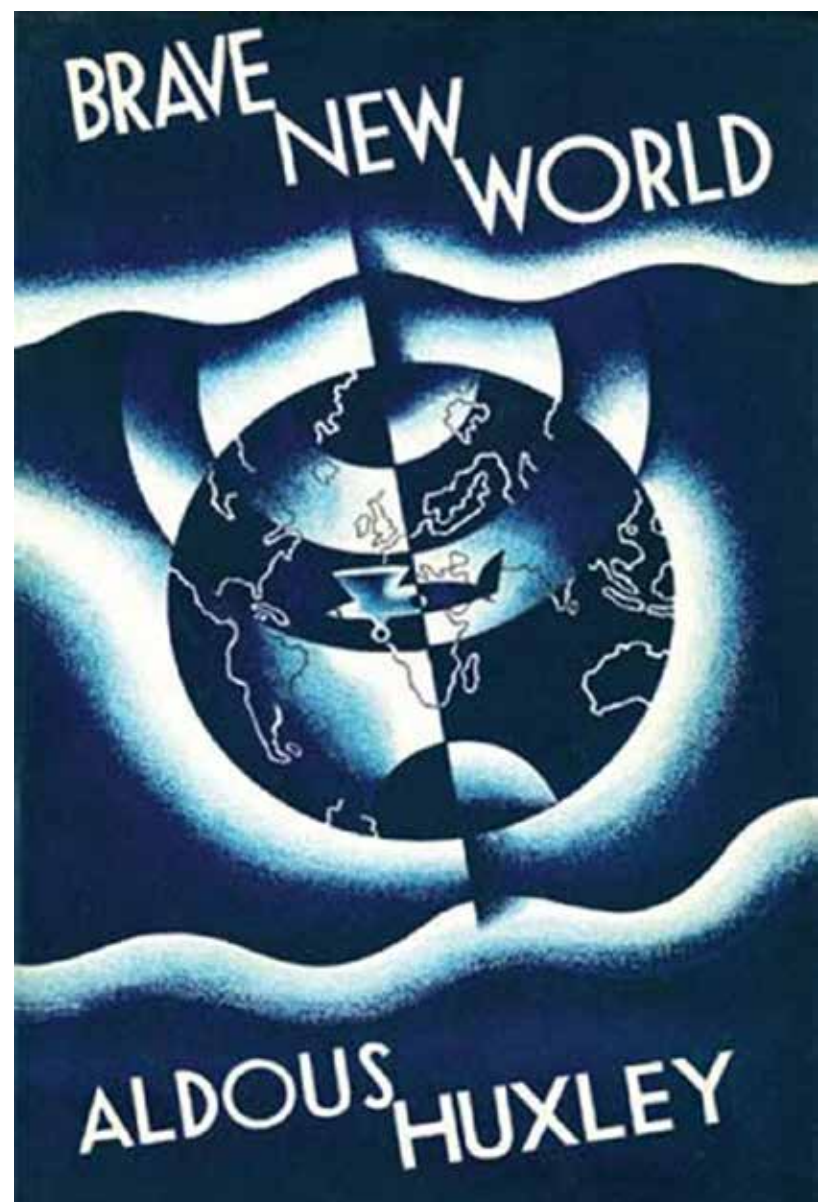
Llama la atención que Huxley, proveniente de una cultura clasista muy marcada y determinante, haya puesto el acento en que esa estructura va a resultar inconmovible y será reforzada en ese mundo feliz.

En esa visión va a dejar ver que "La reales víctimas de enfermedad mental se van a encontrar entre aquellos que parecen los más normales. Muchos de ellos son normales porque se han ajustado tan bien a nuestro modo de existencia, porque su voz humana ha sido silenciada tan tempranamente en sus vidas, que ni siquiera luchan o sufren o desarrollan síntomas como lo hacen los neuróticos. Ellos son normales solo en relación a una sociedad profundamente anormal."

En la novela de Orwell asistimos a la violencia y a la represión, porque la imaginación no ha quedado bajo el control de la organización, por eso es necesario evitarla y aniquilarla. En la novela de Huxley, por el contrario, como lo acentúa Rubem Alves: "El ser humano se ha convertido en un ser enteramente realista. Su mente es ahora incapaz de ir más allá de los límites de la realidad dominante. Su razón es una réplica de las operaciones programadas por la organización."

Un buen ejemplo del camino que han encontrado para acentuar la dominación por la seducción es aquel cuando deciden que: "El amor a la naturaleza no mantiene ocupadas a las fábricas. De modo que se decidió abolir el amor a la naturaleza... pero *no* la tendencia a usar los transportes. Porque, por supuesto, resultaba esencial que siguieran yendo a las zonas rurales, aunque ellos odiaran el campo. El problema consistía en encontrar una razón más convincente para utilizar los transportes, que no la del mero efecto por las flores y el paisaje. Esa razón fue cumplidamente hallada. Condicionamos a las masas a odiar el campo... pero simultáneamente las condicionamos a amar los deportes campestres. Al mismo tiempo, nos preocupamos de que todos estos deportes campestres exijan el uso de mecanismos complejos y elaborados. De modo que los aficionados compren artículos manufacturados tanto como transportes."

El novelista y ensayista Michel Houllebecq, en su obra "Las partículas elementales" dedica un capítulo entero a los hermanos Julian y Aldous Huxley, donde ambos debaten especialmente, la línea de su trabajo literario. El que se ha dado en llamar distopia, o a veces literatura apocalíptica, una ficción especulativa propia de las novelas de ciencia ficción. Para Houllebecq:

> "Aldous Huxley era un optimista, como su hermano... La mutación metafísica que originó el materialismo y la ciencia moderna tuvo dos grandes consecuencias: el racionalismo y el individualismo. El error de Huxley fue evaluar mal la relación de fuerzas entre ambas. Más concretamente, su error fue subestimar el aumento del individualismo producido por la conciencia creciente de la muerte. Del individualismo surgen la libertad, el sentimiento del yo, la necesidad de distinguirse y superar a los demás."

Esta larga y necesaria cita de Houllebecq ilustra con claridad la visión que trasmite "Un mundo feliz", sobre la que no es necesario añadir más comentarios, recordando lo que afirmaba Huxley: "Los hechos no cesan de existir porque sean ignorados."

> "La mutación metafísica operada por la ciencia moderna conlleva la individualización, la vanidad, el odio y el deseo. En sí, el deseo, al contrario que el placer, es fuente de sufrimiento, odio e infelicidad. Esto lo sabían y enseñaban todos los filósofos: no sólo los budistas o los cristianos, sino todos los filósofos dignos de tal nombre. La solución de los utopistas, de Platón a Huxley pasando por Fourier, consiste en extinguir el deseo y el sufrimiento que provoca preconizando su inmediata satisfacción. En el extremo opuesto, la sociedad erótico–publicitaria en la que vivimos se empeña en organizar el deseo, en aumentar el deseo en proporciones inauditas, mientras mantiene la satisfacción en el ámbito de lo privado. Para que la sociedad funcione, para que continúe la competencia, el deseo tiene que crecer, extenderse y devorar la vida de los hombres."

¿1984, un mundo feliz, o ninguno de los dos?

Se puede preguntar por qué recurrir a dos escritores británicos para hablar sobre el mundo actual. Lo cierto es que, desde diferentes ángulos, ambos han sabido compartir su visión y sus temores, y contienen ciertas pistas que no se pueden desechar al tratar de comprender este tiempo de la comunicación mundial.

En años recientes, la expectativa de los enormes beneficios que habrían de sobrevenir a una salvaje privatización de las riquezas nacionales, deslumbraron, por supuesto, al segmento de la población más pudiente y a los que ascendían vertiginosamente en la escala social. Gobiernos corruptos acompañados por empresas nacionales y trasnacionales corruptas fueron sostenidos por medios que se esmeraron en hablar de las maravillas de un ficticio mundo feliz que, en poco tiempo, se desmoronó estrepitosamente, y se niega a reconocer la falacia de sus presupuestos. La gran tentación es dejarse llevar por la seducción de este reiterado canto de sirenas y convencerse de que hay un peligro latente que pretende llevar, indefectiblemente, al mundo de l984. El ave Fénix sabe como revivir de sus cenizas.

Los monstruos que hoy condenamos son también espejo de una realidad que no puede seguir repitiéndose. ¿Estamos a tiempo para enfrentar una realidad que reclama una firme determinación en el que las poderosas armas de los medios podrían jugar un papel integrador de la comunidad toda abriendo espacios a una comunicación mundial que ponga su esfuerzo en el desarrollo de una humanidad solidaria, que denuncie la discriminación y la opresión y deje que los acallados sean oídos? ▪

Building communication policies with a public sense

Andrés Cañizález

As a starting point, we need briefly to address what is understood by public policies and their accompanying processes. Then, we will review specific experiences in the area of public communication policies.

According to Alejandro Oropeza (2008), when the State designs public policies, it seeks one of the following purposes: "a) tackle a public problem; b) satisfy a social need or preference; c) fulfil the purposes of the State; d) abide by a legal mandate, regardless of its hierarchy" (p. 2). The generation of public policies in any area can be caused by one or several of these elements set forth in terms of needs to be addressed, so the State must act.

For this author, there is a combination of factors particular to this process: on the one hand, the fundamentals of political action, summarized in the four items above and the search for social improvement-public utility, which should result in an alternate situation, i.e. change.

The State is not a lone actor in the creation of public policies and its actions do not occur in an empty space. William Dunn considers these policies the result of a process and highlights three components in permanent interaction: a) public policies per se; b) participant actors and/or decision makers, interesting for political results; and c) the political environment (Dunn in Oropeza, 2008: 13.)

As stated by Oropeza (2008), policy systems "are realities with particular characteristics, limits, and dynamics that result from decisionmaking processes with the ability to be recreated in its

components" (p. 13.) In other words, when public policies are placed in the context of a process, they must not be seen as static decisions that remain intact over time.

On the contrary, their nature includes daily review and evaluation with the eventual readjustments that result from such analysis. On the other hand, public problems may have different readings and approaches; hence, the same event may be interpreted differently by different actors due to the multiple conceptions about human nature, government, and social opportunities (Dunn in Curcio, 2007: 64.) In connection therewith, public problems and, thus, public policies created in response to them "must be understood as systems;" hence, "they call for a holistic approach and must be treated as a whole". This leads to planning "a feasible government intervention from the legal, financial, administrative, and political point of view" (Curcio, 2007: 64.)

Grindle and Thomas (1991) consider the interaction among the different activities in a public policy creation model to be highly relevant, thus making it dynamic and changing over time. For these authors, this evaluation occurs with particular importance and plays a vital role in the development of the complete process.

On the other hand, recent literature on this subject places public policies in a broad conception of what must be understood as public, thus locating them within a framework of democratic decisionmaking, with consultations, handling dissent, and building social consensus.

This generation of public policies should have the participation of the involved sectors (Meentzen, 2007: 30) and even go further "because they were conceived from the logic of their integration with established social practices and their own cultural traditions" (Segal, 2006: 15.) To close this point, it would be naïve to consider that decisions on public policies only occur in socio-political contexts of broad and free deliberation. On the contrary, Latin American and Venezuelan history show a long record of arbitrary official decisions with broad impact in citizen life. Lindblom (1997) provides several examples on the forced acceptance of Stateissued policies appealing to terror, authoritarianism, and/or imposition of "a government from the majority" (p. 241.)

Public communication policies from Latin America

In the 1970s and 1980s in Latin America, the promotion of National Communication Policies (PNC, for its Spanish initials, which was the name given to public communication policies in the region) became evident. In this period, different regional or national initiatives flourished, aiming to establish regulatory frameworks for the media sector, generate stateowned media, and promote communication for social development both in the urban and rural sectors, among other goals. International organizations, high level government officials, and academia agreed on the need to implement them.

For some years, when governments more oriented towards the market and the decrease of State participation prevailed in Latin America, the subject of public communication policies disappeared from the discussion agenda. In the 21st century, with the rise of highly populistic governments that question the role of the media, the debate on the nature of public communication policies has resurfaced. Therefore, it is critical to refer to the LatinAmerican tradition on the subject and enrich it with the democratic development which, though uneven, has occurred in the region in the last decades.

The idea that the arrival of the globalizing phenomenon and its daytoday insertion in many of the social interaction spaces meant the end of policy and, in consequence, of the State was insistently emphasized particularly in the 1990s. Converted into an ideology, a sole thought, globalization – a historical process – has become globalism, i.e. the imposition of the unification of markets and the reduction to the market of political discrepancies and cultural differences. When these two different scenarios are subordinated to a single vision of the economy, the political aspect distorts and the State seems almost unnecessary (García Canclini, 1999: 50.)

A promotion of the communicational aspect accompanied this process, both in corporate and

global terms. Great corporate mergers took place with implications for different countries' economies, as well as the more common transnational diffusion of symbolic productions and the frequent use of localproduction "franchises", e.g. television, in addition to clear orientations about what countries should or should not do. From our perspective, actions have always remained political throughout this process, as both financial transactions and media diffusion imply political constructions because they are ways to intervene in the public sphere, in society. As stated by Martín-Barbero (2001), communication is not merely an object for a policy, it is a vital scenario for politics to find a space for symbolic development, as the media are vehicles to represent links between citizens.

The media have become vital to the configuration of public space and citizenship per se. It is crucial to point out that this phenomenon is not new, but it is intense and substantial both for the importance the media now have to gravitate towards defining public agendas and to establish the legitimacy of a given debate (León, 2002: 2.)

Given their significance in social life, the lack of fairly designed public policies in a space of relationship that has transformed our way of understanding politics would be incomprehensible from the State and citizen perspective. Meanwhile, in societies like Venezuela, these policies are required in order to build the State due to the significant social gaps also expressed in access to new information technologies.

Additionally, there are deficiencies in the legal framework, which could provide tools to exercise citizenship in cultural and communicational interaction. The building of such a State that facilitates and promotes citizen participation precisely results from politicaldemocratic activities. The idea is to insert the plurality and diversity that coexist at the social and media levels into Stateissued public policies.

In the past, National Communication Policies (PNCs) were harshly criticized by the private companies in the area and, in many cases, evidenced contradictions in the official sector due to a lack of political will and a lack of administrative coordination in the structures of our States. Today, faced again with the need for public policies in the communication arena, it is vital to make a critical analysis of PNCs. As we have been faced with the need for a new point of view to analyse cultural processes from cultural industries, we also need new approaches to avoid repeating past errors and make room for the new realities of the present.

Three decades ago, Peter Schenkel (1981), who was then dedicated to studying this matter, pointed to the difficulty in defining a public policy in the communication field, particularly because communication is present in all areas: "It is equally in agriculture, in industry, as well as in all levels: in the executive, legislative, global, and local spheres, and it is expressed at the collective and individual level." The same author appeals to what is considered the classic definition contributed by Bolivian Luis Ramiro Beltrán, which defines PNCs as "an integrated, explicit, and longlasting set of communication policies harmonized in a coherent body of principles and regulations aimed at leading the behaviour of specialized institutions in handling the general communicative process in a country."

According to this perspective, PNCs are a sort of master guide of public policies, which should give rise to another set of plans, actions, and strategies. Authors in the 1970s prioritized the need to plan in order to "organize the communication system according to society's most important needs" (Schenkel, 1981:16.) The book "Planificación y Comunicación" by Bordenave and Carvalho in 1978 includes a sample of this orientation.

By way of conclusion: Return to Martín-Barbero

From our perspective, it is vital to review critically the LatinAmerican debate about public communication policies in previous decades, particularly because some governments in the region, including Venezuela, are currently appealing to – and in some ways distorting – concepts and proposals presented then without considering the different historical and political contexts. An article pub-

lished by Jesús Martín-Barbero (2001) will be particularly significant in this task, as it will function as our guide for the brief but necessary review of these policies considering current social dynamics.

To a large extent, in the experiences of generating public communication policies in Latin America, governments and specialists (from the official sphere as well as from academia and international networks, such as UNESCO) agreed. Although in a broader sense the proposals were aimed at guaranteeing the rights of the majorities in their relationship with the media, in practice governments identified this dynamic with an increased presence of the government in their communication space. These goals worked simultaneously and evidently weakened the objective of the proposals, as the governments were not able to understand that the goal should have been implementing a citizen space, not necessarily official, in the national mass media universe.

This relates to a second restrictive aspect: public communication policies in the 1970s and 1980s were limited to the State, to the government sphere, thus omitting the fact that State-building, for which we have struggled in the past, must start from an inclusive and plural logic. Upon reviewing those experiences, we can conclude that building public policies involves mixing factors such as State, citizens, market, institutions, political parties, and daytoday life.

When we analyse the context, the following must be highlighted: These matters should not be left to politicians and entrepreneurs because they involve basic human rights as well as communication and understanding among nations. They imply education as to the shapers of perceptions and the cultural policies where some patrimonies are selected and others excluded, discriminations are transmitted, or appreciation of diversity is promoted (García Canclini, 1999: 55.)

The generation of these proposals in the 1970s and the subsequent debate during the 1980s came from above, on many occasions from the highest hierarchy of the State, and it was believed that good intentions (in theory, guaranteeing citizens' rights) would be enough to generate citizen appropriation. This final aspect was crucial to the longterm viability of the proposals (which basically remained on paper), particularly considering that PNCs were harshly criticized by private companies in the communication sector.

Finally, public communication policies from decades ago lacked precisely what they criticized. The conception of the national in these proposals went through seeing the nation as one from a cultural standpoint, thus leaving out what was different: otherness; that which also took part of the national despite being different. This vision repeated the cultural homogenization that was precisely and justifiably criticized due to the dominant presence on our screens of American audio-visual productions.

The review of the PNC proposal remains valid today, but when we discuss public policies, we must consider the possibility of inclusive practices where diverse representation is vital to the construction of national culture. In practice, the latter can be guaranteed by different levels of citizen participation in the process of conceiving, designing, and executing plans in the communication sector.

In the current context, a public policy cannot be reduced to guaranteeing diffusion and broadening reception; even though it were composed of messages conceived from different cultural points of view, they would be equally unilateral. For this reason, we agree with Martín-Barbero in stressing the need to pass through the phases of citizen experimentation, appropriation, and invention in the different social scenarios within a dialogue with the communicative universe, before which they have only been recipients up to this point.

This requires communication to be shifted from the media to social mediation and recognition; therefore, these public policies must consider that society includes the State, citizens, market, and political parties, and social movements and organizations. It is not a matter of merely involving institutions, but also of analysing daytoday life (Martín-Barbero, 2001.) ▪

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Nyon (Switzerland) 2016

An interreligious jury appointed by SIGNIS (World Association for Catholic Communication) and INTERFILM (International Inter-Church Film Organisation) has been present at the Festival

Visions du Réel in Nyon since 2005. The jury includes a member of INTERFILM and SIGNIS, and a member of the Jewish and Muslim faiths.

The jury gives an award to a feature-length film in the international competition and possibly a commendation that sheds light on existential, social or spiritual questions as well as human values. The prize of CHF 5'000 is donated by both the Swiss Catholic Church and Médias-pro, the Media Department of Reformed Churches in the French-speaking part Switzerland (CER), and the Swiss Federation of Jewish Communities.

The Interreligious Jury unanimously awarded its Prize to the film *Liberation, The User's Guide* directed by Alexander Kuznetsov (France, Russia, 2016). In the jury's opinion it is "A film which creates a portrait of two young women, confined within a neuropsychiatric establishment in Siberia but in search of their dignity and independence. The film-maker tackles the subject with remarkable simplicity and narrative rigour. This desire for liberty requires them to call on courage, perseverance and solidarity in order to reach their goal."

The jury awarded a Commendation to the films *Looking Like My Mother* directed by Dominique Margot (Switzerland, 2016) "A courageous work of personal and universal significance, displaying exceptional creativity" and to Still Breathing directed by Anca Hirte (France, 2016) "an avant-garde work which approaches a difficult subject with a delicate and innovative vision."

The members of the Interreligious Jury 2016 were Nasser Bakhti, Carouge (Switzerland/Al-

geria); Alan Foale, Leeds (England) Pierre Marguerat, Lausanne (Switzerland) – President; and Ilaria Piperno, Rome (Italy).

Cannes 2016

The 2016 Ecumenical Jury awarded its Prize to *It's only the end of the world* (still, below) directed by Xavier Dolan (Canada, France).

What cannot be said in words can be communicated by the face, rendered transcendental by Xavier Dolan's filming. In what is not said, the screams and the looks, we find the history of a family where love is unspoken and where people yell not to reveal what is essential. Upon his return Louis, the prodigal son who came to announce his impending death, chooses instead to inspire love and hope to his relatives.

The Jury awarded two Commendations. The first to *American Honey* directed by Andrea Arnold (United Kingdom). "A road-movie that gives a loving glimpse of a forgotten youth, a 'sales crew' travelling from town to town. It shows their ability of inner strength and dignity, while at the same time providing a social seismograph of various segments of society. It is a threefold journey: a journey of the crew, a journey from wealth to poverty and an inner journey of each of the protagonists, Star and Jake haven't lost their ability to dream and to transform themselves."

The second Commendation went to *I, Daniel Blake* directed by Ken Loach (United Kingdom). "Sustained by the great artistic qualities of the director, this movie portrays a man at the end of his life, who puts his own suffering aside to be of service to a family challenged by marginalization and poverty. Like a Good Samaritan, he brings them the attention and affection that are as necessary to human beings as material needs."

The Jury in 2016 consisted of Cindy Mollaret (France, President); Karin Achtelstetter (Canada); Ernest Kouacou (Ivory Coast); Gabriella Lettini (USA); Teresa Tunay) Philippines; Nicole Vercueil (France).

Oberhausen (Germany) 2016

At the 62nd International Short Film Festival 5-10 May 2016, the Ecumenical Jury, appointed by INTERFILM and SIGNIS, awarded its Prize of €1500 donated by the Evangelical Church in Oberhausen and the Catholic Film Work in Germany, to a film in the International Competition to *489 Years* (still, below) directed by Hayoun Kwon (France, 2016).

In his memories a soldier takes us on an excursion in the demilitarized boarder area between South Korea and North Korea. Thrilling computer-animated sequences capture his view of a dangerous journey through a mined paradise. Beauty and horror meet here and make us aware of the ambivalence of outer and inner limits.

In addition, the jury awarded a certificate for a film in the International Competition for Children's and Youth Films, in connection with a recommendation for the church film distribution companies in Germany, Katholisches Filmwerk and Matthias-Film, to *Viaduc* directed by Patrice Laliberté (Canada, 2015).

17 year old Mathieu is out one night to spray a graffiti on a highway bridge. The reason for his action won't be revealed until the end of an exciting film that shows in various ways the lifestyle of young people. Viaduc inspires viewers to question their own prejudices as well as superficial points of view.

Members of the 2016 Jury: Eberhard Streier (Germany, President), Christian Murer (Switzerland), Dagmar Petrick (Germany), Thomas Schüpbach (Switzerland). ∎

Censored Voices, directed by Mor Loushy (Israel, 2015) has received the SIGNIS-WACC Human Rights Award 2015. A feature-length documentary the film revisits an ages-long conflict still reverberating in one of the most troubled regions of the world.

In *Censored Voices*, Israeli writer-director Mor Loushy presents a starkly different, dark side of that story, which began to surface when writer Amos Oz and editor Avraham Shapira interviewed their fellow kibbutznik combatants just returned from the front.