Peripheral Actors in Journalism: Agents of Change in Journalism, Culture and Practice

Editors

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Editorial

Space for the Liminal

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Abstract
This essay considers how social actors in news have come to shape the contours of news and journalism and what these changes may suggest for other industries. It looks more specifically at the question of who does journalism and news and what that may signal for power dependencies, status, and norms formation. It examines how authors who contributed to this thematic issue define who gets to decide what is news and journalism, what forms of power are exerted amongst groups, who gets to claim status, and how norms and epistemologies are formed. Ultimately, this essay illustrates how conformity to groups and organizations varies with the investments that these social actors have to core and more peripheral journalism and media groups.

Issue
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1. Introduction

Twenty-first century capitalism and globalization involve a proliferation of emerging social actors across a broad swath of industries and professions. These social actors are transforming contemporary work and professions, including news and journalism. While the news media help the public make sense of these changes; they also are undergoing the very shifts they are helping to contextualize (Couldry, in press; Zelizer, 2019).

News and journalism offer a lens into the growing importance of these social actors as well as the perspectives and digital innovations they may help foster in an evolving professional landscape. In the case of news production, sharing, and distribution, there are a number of social actors who occupy a liminal existence adjacent to more established, organizational, and institutional ones. These are often specialty actors who exist in close orbit to larger, often more-established ones, creating a kaleidoscopic structure of work that enables a variety of core and peripheral actors. This occurs at a time also marked by the continued rise of powerful and global platform companies in spaces previously dominated by mass media and news publishers (see Ananny, 2019; Myllylahti, 2019).

Along these same lines, journalism scholars have engaged in continued debates of what journalism is and who journalists are (Tandoc, 2019). A number of scholars

have questioned the authoritative professional boundaries of journalism, the shrinking autonomy of news organizations, and the changing culture of news production to one that now includes, perhaps less begrudgingly than in the past, emerging social actors (see Carlson, 2017; Tong, 2015; Wahl-Jorgensen, 2019). These are significant questions to consider for journalism as an industry that is seeking ways to improve its financial footing, which is associated with changing professional conditions for news work and, in some cases, conditional autonomy (see Myllylahti, 2019; Nel & Milburn-Curtis, 2019; Waldenström, Wiik, & Andersson, 2019). This happens at a time when journalists are also wrestling with a plurality of epistemologies and platforms, authoritative boundaries, and news processes that are becoming more publicly porous (see McIntyre & Sobel, 2019). These questions may be applied to the examination and positioning of social actors in global industries, which themselves are experiencing an influx of such workers.

In focusing on news and journalism, and digital journalism more specifically, as a "networked production, distribution, and consumption of news and information about public affairs" (Waisbord, 2019), Waisbord argues that changes brought by digital journalism have resulted in a broadening of what journalism and news are as process and product and who is involved in producing and sharing news. He argues that "virtually anyone with access to the internet can take part in digital journalism" (Waisbord, 2019, p. 352), while acknowledging that there are others questioning such a view. They argue that such social actors are rarely, if ever, journalistic actors because they do not adhere more preeminently to professional journalistic practices, may not chiefly receive income from news organizations, and primarily work outside the professional norms, values, and practices that guide journalism as practice. Yet, the contributions of these social actors, who have been labeled as interlopers and peripheral contributors among other titles, are increasingly more visible in the production and dissemination of news and in audience engagement (see Eldridge, 2017; Holton & Belair-Gagnon, 2018). Eldridge (2017), for example, argues that payment from news organizations and adherence to journalistic norms are no longer the only qualifications for journalists. Indeed, the label of journalist may be assumed with caution or even rejected by the very individuals who are creating, sharing, or otherwise engaging in acts of news (Holton & Belair-Gagnon, 2018).

Today's news may be represented by a blend of traditional journalists, editors, and producers working alongside or concurrently with bloggers, microbloggers, coders, hackers, brand influencers, web metrics developers, civic technologists, and diverse digital innovators (see for example Baack, 2018). To understand the full breadth of social actors involved in the practice of contemporary journalism and different epistemologies of journalism (see Ekström & Westlund, 2019), as well as other forms of news by alternative news media (Holt,

Figenschou, & Frischlich, 2019; Keith, 2019), we must look beyond the confining definitions traditionally associated with journalists or journalistic actors.

This thematic issue broadens perspectives and understandings of diverse social actors, organizations, and institutions now involved in news and journalism. This is done at the peril of angels dancing on pinheads, so to speak, because a number of studies have recently taken up considerations of the varying forms of actors, parsing from labels such as outside and peripheral actors to media interlopers to explicit and implicit interlopers and intralopers (see Eldridge, 2017; Holton & Belair-Gagnon, 2018). This layering of labels and definitions, though, suggests a need for contextualizing a complex set of actors and factors contributing to changes in the processes and power of journalism and related industries that considers, rather than rejects, the importance of nuancing (see Ryfe, 2019).

This thematic issue offers peer-reviewed articles and invited commentaries that help advance and nuance the question of who carries out journalism, or more broadly who participates in journalism. While there has been much debate about this in journalism studies over the years, this is not simply an intra-academic and intellectual exercise. There have also been discourses in the news industry about who journalists are, when an outsider becomes an insider, and what influences such actors might have on news organizations, news audiences, and the institution of journalism (see for example OpenNews, which connects developers, designers, journalists, and editors who, within the organization's settings, can collaborate on open technologies and journalistic processes). While journalists and the news media may continue their attempts to maintain professional boundaries through meta-journalistic discourse (Carlson, 2017), there are also critical discussions about how the registration of journalists as a form of accreditation in some countries calls for criticism from a freedom of expression perspective since this may well lead to control and exclusion (see Posetti, 2017).

2. Questions of Who

Just as questions of what journalism is are important exploration areas for journalists, news organizations, and journalism scholars (Eldridge, Hess, Tandoc, & Westlund, 2019), the question of who does journalism, or the broader question of who does news, is of critical importance for a wide array of stakeholders in journalism. Besides a number of countries in Asia, in most continents the majority of countries experience continue to experience a dated business model of commercial news media that has been broken for some time. Large numbers of news publishers have substantially downsized their operations. Many have filed for bankruptcy or been dissolved into existing companies. News publishers have also been shut down by governments, including authoritarian regimes, essentially censoring the press and strip-

ping away its democratic voice. UNESCO continuously reports on governmental and other threats, the imprisonment of journalists, and, in some cases, the murder of those who devote their lives to the profession.

Financial and political conditions can raise insurmountable challenges for news and journalism. There are so-called news deserts in many parts of the world, where local and regional news media are absent, as well as self-censored and terrified journalists painfully aware that authorities are surveilling their every step. The latter is made all the worse by the existence of internet trolls who target and manipulate the news media as well as human and automated bots helping create and distribute misinformation and disinformation with the purpose of distracting and discrediting news and journalists (see Ferrier & Garud-Patkar, 2018; Quandt, 2018).

The broader question of who does news is important to policy makers in different countries: Some countries (most notably in Scandinavia) have subsidies for news publishers and need to have criteria that define who is eligible for support or not. Moreover, many countries have discussed and also set in motion laws that prohibit misinformation and disinformation, or in many cases information that does not align with a government's agenda, giving authorities the right to censor and punish organizational or individual actors who produce or share news they deem inappropriate. Countries such as Indonesia and Germany have enforced regulations with regards to "fake news sites" or platform companies. In Belarus, Malaysia, and Kenya authorities have passed laws forbidding citizens to produce and/or spread misinformation or disinformation. By defining that these are not journalistic actors and associating non-authorized news work with criminality, the challenges of defining who does journalism is critical. This is especially important when it comes to ideals of, and limitations to, free speech.

When political actors or institutional news actors have the power to define who is and is not a journalist, they set conditions for who can exercise journalism. In some countries in Asia, the Middle East, and beyond, the authorities delegate power to an industry association to be in charge of who gets the formal recognition to work as a journalist. Their board of directors receive application letters, where support from institutional news media is necessary, and interview and assess applicants. The authorities and the association can this way make sure that the journalists fall in line and do not create problems by criticizing those in power. Ultimately, this means that journalists directly or indirectly can be forced to change their coverage to align with the views of their oppressors.

Institutional belonging to news media is seminal for journalists in many countries, as the press pass is a necessary symbol of journalistic authority, enabling them to gain access into reporting spaces. Indeed, in some countries, governments are actively involved in defining who is recognized as a journalist and receives a press pass, which may well be necessary to get access to cer-

tain spaces, such as events and sources (Carlson, 2017; Hermes, Wihbey, Junco, & Aricak, 2014). Different conditions clearly apply in different countries. There are several countries, such as Brazil, Nicaragua, and the United States, where national political leaders repeatedly communicate via social media that the journalists and the news media are enemies of the people, produce misinformation and disinformation, and should not be trusted. They then engage in "fake news labeling," which means that they use the term "fake news" to delegitimize news media and journalists (Egelhofer & Lecheler, 2019).

The question of defining journalists also connects with issues of resources and support: having peers to coordinate with to validate information and coverage, having technical infrastructures and tools, having insurances, and so forth. In many countries, this goes hand in hand with working for news institutions that have editors-in-chiefs who can be held accountable either by outside institutions or government agencies. In Sweden, for example, the news media must have a certified editor-in-chief in their established news organizations, and their journalists, are to offer legal protection for their sources in line with Swedish laws. However, there are no higher education degrees or other professional qualifications that the Swedish state requires of journalists in order for them to perform work as journalists. Ultimately, news organizations can recruit people with formal journalism education and others without, such as computer scientists with relevant tacit knowledge or a political scientist with worthwhile explicit knowledge of the field. There is much heterogeneity across the world when it comes to legal conditions governing who is a journalist, having the permission and resources to carry out journalism and publish news, and who is restricted from the practice. More precisely, authorities in some countries give bloggers the same status as journalists and outright forbid blogging or microblogging that orients toward journalism in others. This extends to acts associated with journalism such as whether to permit live communications (blogging or micro-blogging) from courtrooms or not (Johnston & Wallace, 2017).

Defining who is a journalist is also relevant to ordinary citizens who develop their news literacy about what journalists and what news publishers they feel they can trust to deliver and contextualize information about the world around them. Defining who is a journalist, or what is news, is also important in relation to sponsored editorial content such as native advertising. Such blending of news-oriented and advertising information extends to platform companies such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube, which implement criteria as to who and what gets more exposure. Their choices and algorithms influence many stakeholders, including the very audiences they initially set out to serve and to connect with reliable content. As news organizations continue to search for ways to maintain or relinquish authority in these and other digital spaces, issues of power, status, and the formation of new norms arise.

3. Power Dependencies, Status, and Norms Formation

Once observed and defined, the question of who is a journalist or part of the constellation of journalistic actors raises questions of who gets to define what is news and journalism, what forms of power dependencies are exerted amongst groups, who gets to claim status, and how are norms and epistemologies formed. In an early sociological account of power, institutions, and legitimacy of small and more complex community group organizations, Emerson (1962, p. 32) contended that "social relations commonly entail *ties of mutual dependence* between the parties." Power through this perspective can be understood in terms of relationships between two or more actors: to what extent A depends on B to do what needs to be done. Its applicability is wide-ranging as it encompasses in what ways individual journalists are dependent on social actors such as other journalists, editors, technologists, or automated algorithms both inside and outside newsrooms. This approach also involves institutional levels of dependence, such as how news publishers depend on platform companies for eye balls, metrics, and revenue streams (see Nel & Milburn-Curtis, 2019). Moreover, power dependencies as an analytical category also applies to the overall relationship between journalism and technology or journalism and politics, among others.

Power dependencies work hand in hand with resistance among a set of actors, which define the norms and practices of a stated organization. Resistance, Emerson (1962) argued, emerged from the dependencies among the set of different actors. For example, in this issue, in focusing on interlopers' reactions to traditional journalism, Eldridge's essay (2019) proposes that scholars and practitioners continue to see the journalistic field as complex and interwoven in core-periphery differentiation processes. As Eldridge (2019) suggests, societal distinction matters both for interlopers and traditional journalists, sometimes for interlopers the criticism is being conceived as a way to enhance the broader field of journalism. Relatedly, Schapals, Maares, and Hanusch (2019) show how certain groups of actors that may not have originally defined themselves as journalists while "working on the margins" discursively differentiate their work from others. Though, the authors warn us, these social actors claim to engage in journalism from an altruistic perspective that is deeply rooted in an ideology of journalism pre-crisis era, "one which sees journalism as serving a public good by providing an interpretative, sense-making role" (Schapals, Maares, & Hanusch, 2019, p. 19).

Importantly, the notion of reciprocity in these power dependencies relations "raises the question of equality or inequality of power in the relation" (Emerson, 1962, p. 33). There is a well-documented tension between professional journalists on the one hand, and citizen journalists and/or audiences that potentially can be approached as active participants and contributors in the making of news on the other hand (e.g., Akinfemisoye, 2014). Indeed, in deploying a systematic literature review of on-line participatory journalism, while noting continuity and change in research, Engelke (2019) shows how "power structures differ depending on the examined world region, production stage, and actor perspective" (p. 31). Similarly, Ferrucci and Nelson (2019) qualify the philanthropic foundations who seek helping journalism to find economic stability as "new advertisers." In forming these coalitions, the two authors note that these philanthropic foundations have an influence on editorial decisions similar to those that advertisers have had. Such power dependencies relations may lead to more "skewed power dynamic…, one where journalists cede agency to elite foundations situated outside the boundaries of journalism" (Ferrucci & Nelson, 2019, p. 46).

Hepp and Loosen (2019) also present the development and conceptualization of molo.news. They demonstrate the relationality of the stakeholders' figurations involved in the development of a prototype as relational boundary object and the relational concept of the platform, chiefly as a "space of possibility" (Hepp & Loosen, 2019) and emerging local news forms. Braun, Coakley, and West (2019) additionally examine an international activist movement and contend that the trajectory of these digital activists evolved into value statements that became boundary objects. They argue that journalists working for the digital activist organization increasingly borrow from advertising practices in the local and cultural context of the web in which they emerged.

Taken into account in power dependencies, there are cost reduction and coalition formation dynamics that need to be nuanced. For example, Haim and Zamith (2019) evaluate a set of active accounts and their repositories on a code-sharing platform. They argue that the code-sharing platform provides a space for actors associated with the periphery of journalism through a platform that restrict the ability of these "outsiders" to move their ideas from the periphery to the center. In other words, Haim and Zamith (2019) see these power dependencies as "a missed opportunity for traditional journalistic actors to use code-sharing platforms to work with motivated technological actors in order to develop more innovative actants or more transformative reconfigurations of the field" (p. 81).

Using a case study of a North American not-for-profit digital-born news organization, Hermida and Young (2019) explore a complex journalism actor that operates across individual, organizational, and network levels. They show how such social actors can benefit from the crisis of journalism. In doing so, Hermida and Young (2019) allude that these social actors may foster an emerging set of group norms (i.e., 'specifications of behavior which all group members expect of all group members') and role-prescriptions (i.e., 'specifications of behavior which all group members expect—or demand—of one or more but not all members') to news and journalism across multiple domains of the journalistic process, including production, publication, and dissemination. Indeed, for Hermida and Young (2019), to facili-

tate the function of journalism and news, not all actors may perform the same actions. In other words, together, these actors may foster a division of labor in a role structure and these roles may be defined and enforced through the amalgamation of power in coalition formation (Hermida & Young, 2019).

The assumed levels of dependencies between these social actors may contribute to the rise in status of these actors in the complex networks in which they inhabit and what ultimately constitutes the information ecosystem by which society defines and redefines itself. In a commentary, Ahva (2019) proposes to look at journalism as a community of practice and unpacks the relevance of practice theory. By studying concrete practices, Ahva (2019) argues that scholars and practitioners can identify the social actors involved and how they depend on each other. In a call to bring the Global South into conversations with peripheral journalism studies, and particularly journalism in African countries, Wahutu's commentary (2019) explores how actors may still exist in liminal spaces and causes challenges in their emergence in status. Wahutu (2019) suggests that the negotiations of class, race, and gender allow/facilitate interaction amongst actors. These negotiations of their liminality may subject these actors have a lack of status and may be denied access in status hierarchy to achieve their goals or simply to gain legitimacy to the core or from the periphery.

Conversely, and in drawing from a practice theory inspired ethnographic study with three newsrooms, Konow-Lund (2019) proposes that networks of social actors involved in global investigative stories are creating emerging epistemologies, norms, values, and practices unique to their act of coordination. Likewise, Chua and Duffy (2019) show that there is a growing salience of hybrid roles in Singaporean legacy news media that serve as "linchpins to connect divergent professional fields" and "bridges between tradition and innovation" (p. 112). For the two scholars, four forms of proximity (i.e., physical, temporal, professional, and control) help develop understandings of the impact that peripheral players may have on innovation in news organizations.

4. Conclusion

In each of these articles and commentaries, the who these actors are becomes a question of how they are intertwined in journalism and for what purposes and effects. The original articles and invited commentaries in this thematic issue points to ties that bind together these emerging social actors who have become and continue to become part of the news and journalism social ecosystem. Individually and collectively, these social actors bring hybrid and new meanings as well as normative expectations to truth, facts, newsgathering, journalistic epistemologies, norms, values and practices that have shaped and are shaping contemporary news and journalism (Singer, 2019).

Yet, as this issue complexly suggests, conformity to groups and organizations varies with the investments that these social actors have to the core and more peripheral journalism and media groups. History has shown that those who are more valued in such groups tend to adhere more closely to core epistemologies, norms, values, and practices (see Emerson, 1962). That may be changing, though, as the liminal become more visible and more significant across a multitude of industries. Journalism is but one professional landscape to examine how the traditional who of the industry is changing and how those shifts impact the very foundations of its institution.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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Article

Where Do We Draw the Line? Interlopers, (Ant)agonists, and an Unbounded Journalistic Field

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Abstract

Journalism's once-neglected periphery has been a focus of academic research in recent years and the urge to make sense of interlopers from the periphery has brought about many approaches to understanding these changes. In this essay I reflect on an ongoing research agenda examining one particular category of interlopers: provocative media actors who have openly challenged the boundaries of the journalistic field. These actors raise questions as to how to account for interlopers at the edges of the journalistic field, including whether we should extend the field to include them. In this essay I argue we should continue to see the field as complex, and maybe now a bit more so. Reflecting on field and practice theories and understandings of boundaries, I reengage the complexity that is a core demand of conceptualizing the journalistic field, while offering ways to consider interlopers' journalistic identities within its boundaries. Emphasizing similarities over differences, I argue we can move beyond binary distinctions between a field's core members and interlopers on the periphery by focusing on the nature of interloper work.

Keywords

agonism; antagonism; boundaries; core/periphery; interlopers; journalism; media

1. Introduction

On blogs and websites, and in a variety of digital spaces, the work of digital-peripheral media actors who have come into contact with the journalistic field has been the object of both curiosity and anxiety. Curiosity as these actors have shown countless new ways of bringing news to the public in a digital age, and anxiety as they have challenged previous notions of the journalistic field while doing so. As individuals motivated to do journalistic work online, this essay focuses on interlopers who enact those motivations in outspoken, critical, and aggressive ways. To the degree these interlopers have been successful in capturing public and journalistic attention they have signaled both to journalists and society more widely that a disruption of a previously consolidated profession of

journalism might be under way. In this essay, I pose an argument for engaging with the work of interlopers as a way to reengage with the complexities of the journalistic field, and in doing so I build towards offering a way to differentiate between interlopers as critical journalistic friends while cautioning against opening up the field's boundaries entirely.

In referring to a category of interloper media in this essay, I focus on those media actors who claim to belong to the journalistic field while also openly criticizing traditional media and journalists they associate with institutions of power. This essay reflects on work addressed substantially in Eldridge (2018), and on recent interviews with interloping journalists carried out in 2018, in a study called *Interrogating Antagonists* (cf. Eldridge, 2019a; Eldridge, 2019b). This study examined the way

interlopers reflect on their place in the journalistic field and how audiences make sense of interloper content.

The categorization of interloper media was initially developed in research examining WikiLeaks' claims of journalistic belonging, through which they argued they were more independent, more critical, and more able to hold power to account than mainstream journalistic peers (Eldridge, 2014). These dynamics have continued to emerge across research examining politically-oriented blogs like *Eschaton* in the US and *Order-Order* in the UK, and independent websites with the *Gawker* and *Gizmodo* media groups and others (Eldridge, 2018). These studies show interloping journalists and media first seen outside the journalistic field challenging being described as outsiders by emphasizing their capacity to gather and report news, to hold political and corporate powers to account, and to report to and for their publics. They do so while repeatedly describing themselves as journalists and journalistic media, and succeeding at breaking news and in establishing a foothold in the news media environment. Nevertheless, interlopers have been widely rebuffed as not sufficiently journalistic, particularly for their provocative tone and when aiming their criticism towards other news media. However, reflecting on the nature of these interlopers, and the ways in which sharp-elbowed media work aligns with dynamics of the field, rather than merely where it signals difference, helps us account for those peripheral actors who are not only claiming but demonstrating journalistic capabilities. It also offers a way for understanding their boundary-crossing nature, and where this needs to be taken into consideration in this larger theoretical space.

While the categorization of 'interloper media' was first developed to capture how provocative new journalistic actors confronted the boundaries of the field, interloping dynamics predate this terminology. We can see interloping in the emergence of journalistic bloggers at the turn of the century, and in the rise of new actors claiming journalistic identities since (cf. Lowrey & Gade, 2011; Robinson, 2015; Schudson & Anderson, 2009). At first, new actors were met with curiosity, and downplayed as amateur; journalists responded to newcomers' novelty and brazenness with the quizzical response, "who are these guys?" (Singer, 2003). However, these digital newcomers have stuck around, and reactions to interlopers have turned from curiosity towards resistance. More recently, scholars have documented the building up of boundaries between a traditional journalistic field and interloping digital newcomers, as a rhetorical pushback (Carlson, 2015), in discourses casting them as outsiders who do not reflect the institutional norms of the rest of the field (Coddington, 2012), and in contradictory remarks which dismiss these new actors despite their reflecting "core journalistic values in which the profession remains heavily invested, and willing to fight for" (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2014, p. 2588). This work shows digital newcomers seeking to have their media work recognized as

journalism instead being portrayed as outsiders crossing a boundary.

In the dynamics of interloping, I see an opportunity to revisit how we make sense of a field facing uncertainty. As Ryfe (2019, p. 845) notes, the genuine changes the field has experienced in recent years warrant such reflections, as while journalism was once shaped by "cultural threads" which were at their "densest and most cohesive" in the 20th century, those "longstanding webs of significance are unraveling." This can be attributed to a variety of developments, including the technological potential for a diverse set of actors in society to take up journalistic opportunities. As a result, journalism can no longer be assumed to be a consolidated profession able to go about its work unencumbered by external actors claiming to be journalists (Waisbord, 2013, p. 11). Ryfe (2019, p. 845) argues further that in the 20th century, "[j]ournalists knew who they were; they knew what counted as journalism; and they had the clearest sense they had ever had of how they were distinct from actors in other social fields," now in the 21st: "That moment has passed." It seems to me we need to understand this moment we are now in, and the nature of the journalistic field we encounter in it.

In the following sections, I outline a conceptual argument for focusing on the relationship between interlopers and the rest of the field that builds from field theory to account for interlopers and the nature of their journalistic identities. By focusing on relationships and identities, I prioritize the similarities in the way individuals understand their own journalistic identities and those of others in shaping the field. Further, I explore whether or not it continues to be useful to focus on binaries of 'cores' and 'peripheries' for our understanding of what I argue is an increasingly diverse journalistic field, one in which both traditional observant and interloping heretical actors embrace journalistic ideals (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 169; Eldridge, 2018, p. 114). In doing so, I hope to make clear where the complexity of the relationships which have traditionally shaped the journalistic field can be embraced to account for interlopers in a meaningful way.

2. Notes on a Journalistic Field

To set the foundation for the discussion that follows, I will focus my attention primarily on approaches from field theory. These allow us to capture the ways a group of social actors establish a distinct place in society, the social forces within and without the field that shape this distinction, and how this is promoted to a public and comes to be recognized more broadly (Benson & Neveu, 2005; Bourdieu, 1977, 2005). In its simplest rendering, a field is a space of societal belonging, shaped first by the ways a group of social actors (in our case journalists) agree they are involved in a shared endeavor (journalism), and second in the way they promote their efficacy in performing their societal roles over and over towards society at large. In return, the field's distinction is reinforced by a public

which agrees to see their work as valuable and different from the work of others.

For how it captures journalism's distinct societal status, the concept of the field looms large in journalism studies. It has helped scholars conceptualize how a group of social actors working across institutions, nations, genres, and media formats coalesce; a useful primer is the edited collection by Benson and Neveu (2005). Field approaches allow us to capture the relative consistency with which journalists express a "dominant vision" of the field (Bourdieu, 2005, p. 36), while also acknowledging this is the product of "invisible structures" shaping the field (Bourdieu, 2005, p. 30; cf. Schultz, 2007). Further, these approaches allow us to reflect on the way social actors, through their practices—"the sayings and doings" of their work (Schatzki, 2003; see also Ryfe, 2019)—distinguish themselves from other social actors, as "[t]o exist in a field is to differentiate oneself" (Bourdieu, 2005, p. 39).

I argue that this difference-making occurs at two levels. The first is at the overall level of the field, where a field of journalism separates itself out from other fields in society by emphasizing its strength at conveying "the legitimate vision of the social world" (Bourdieu, 2005, p. 40). At this level, 'journalism' is something "held together by shared practices and values" (Ryfe & Mensing, 2009, p. 42) which are drawn upon by journalists in serving a public interest through the provision of news. This brings us to the second level of differentiation, at the level of individual journalists. Journalists individually separate themselves from other actors in society by amplifying their specific embodiment of shared practices and values, in contrast to those outside the field. This includes ways in which this is done subtly through assumed but unspoken criteria of belonging (Schultz, 2007), and through narratives of identity and newswork (Eldridge, 2017a), but it is also done overtly in ways meant to be seen, through discursive boundary work (Bishop, 1999; Carlson, 2015; Eldridge, 2014).

At either level, processes of differentiation (following Bourdieu) are not uninvested. They are exercises in power exerted primarily by those who already have it—in our case, traditional journalistic actors who have been recognized as journalists, and their institutions which have been recognized as reflective of the journalistic field. In the interest of preserving dominant visions of the field, and minimizing contravening visions presented by interlopers, traditional actors aim to maintain the parameters of the field as best suits them. They are also more able to (in part), as they are simply more recognizable as journalists in the spaces in which they operate, giving them a greater specific weight in dictating the shape of the field; this dynamic tends to favor those with greater economic heft, rather than other indicators of quality (Benson, 2006, p. 190). This weight is thrown about in particular in response to newcomers, where the legacy of traditional actors is used as a specific distinguishing characteristic to push back against digital upstarts. This

is never the more apparent than in response to interlopers seen as posing a threat to the cultural and symbolic (if not economic) capital that the traditional core of the field has amassed.

In shifting towards a more detailed discussion, there is an advantage to using field approaches to make sense of journalism undergoing change. They allow us the opportunity to extend our discussion from one of thinking of new actors in terms of their placement inside or outside the field towards one of dynamism, focusing on how the field's dimensions are shaped by relationships and interactive forces. As Bourdieu (2005) writes, the journalistic field is shaped through individual actors relating more or less to a sense of belonging to the field, as well as how they see others relating more or less to that sense of what it is to belong. Ryfe (2019) reinforces this:

> If we think of journalism in this way, as a social field defined by such relationships, then it is possible to see that the cultural threads that bring it together may be more and less dense, more and less cohesive, more and less bounded, and for the field of journalism to be more and less autonomous from other social fields. (p. 845)

It's in the "more and less" where things get particularly complicated, and where notions of boundaries come into our discussion of fields, interlopers, and a journalistic core and digital periphery.

3. The Erstwhile Core and Periphery of Journalism

I now turn towards moving beyond research which understands the field, and changes to it, by differentiating between a traditional journalistic 'core' and a digital 'periphery.' On the one hand, distinguishing between a field's center and its edges offers a useful spatial metaphor for newcomers, designating them as something alternative, something new, and something yet to be made sense of within the bounds of journalism. On the other hand, often less productively, it suggests the field is an established space with clear dimensions (it is not). Drawing on field and practice approaches, I argue we can still focus on the construction of journalistic identities through the 'sayings' of *both* interlopers and traditional journalists, and how this is reflected in the work they do in order to unpack the metaphor of a journalistic core and periphery. Doing so shows where this confronts particular conceptual challenges.

To begin, I agree with Deuze and Witschge (2018), who argue a core/periphery metaphor suggests some sort of uniformity which falls apart on further inspection. As they write "the supposed core of journalism and the assumed consistency of the inner workings of news organizations are problematic starting points for journalism studies" (Deuze & Witschge, 2018, p. 165), adding "the core is no more homogeneous than the so-called periphery" (Deuze & Witschge, 2018, p. 168).

They go on to advocate an abandonment of this dichotomy, in particular when trying to account for entrepreneurial and post-industrial ways of working journalistically. This seems a useful ambition, though abandoning this metaphor faces its own set of challenges, including our own tendencies as social actors to try and impose order in the face of change. I see challenges to abandoning the core/periphery metaphor as threefold.

First, as a marker for what is being referred to when discussing digital change, a core/periphery metaphor comes quite naturally to us. It offers a pivot point when addressing the questions 'change to what?' or 'to whom?' It also captures the way many digital actors see something in the 'core' of journalism which they are responding to, often by aspiring to be recognized in the same light. This is what is embodied in Donsbach's (2010, p. 38) discussion of journalism that is widely understood as societally important, but loosely defined, a journalism of 'we know it when we see it.'

The journalists interviewed in the *Interrogating Antagonists* study (Eldridge, 2019a, 2019b) invoke this same meaningfulness, seeing themselves alongside traditional news media as necessary complements in achieving journalism's important civic goals. As one said, reflecting on reporting on right-wing politics in the US and Europe, the outspokenness of their work complements "straightforward" traditional news. Across blogs, web sites, more activist and more antagonistic media, this ambition to be "part of that media" is a recurring feature in studies of interlopers (Eldridge, 2018, p. 4).

Second, this metaphor continues to emerge in scholarly work which has yet to find an alternative resolution to accounting for certain hard-to-accommodate newcomers. Where the core/periphery metaphor has been revised in scholarly work, it has primarily been in reconfiguring the relationship between the field and *some* outsiders. For instance, in breaking dichotomies which treat foreign correspondence (Archetti, 2014), lifestyle journalism (Hanusch, Banjac, & Maares, 2019, p. 5), and other news genres as more-or-less journalistic (Loosen, 2015). In these cases, abandoning this metaphor has been empowering, bringing overlooked aspects of journalism into fuller appreciation. Yet, problematic others (and disruptive interlopers in particular) have tended to remain outside these efforts at reconfiguration.

A third challenge to abandoning this metaphor: It remains useful for capturing the sometimes-significant tensions which have come into play as journalists are confronted by change, and their tendency to instead embrace constancy. Ryfe (2019) found one such example when interviewing a journalist who threatened to punch him (in jest, presumably) were he to ever call them a 'blogger.' I have found similar reactions when bloggers, are dismissed as "not quite one of us" when compared to newspaper reporters (Sullivan, 2013, discussed in Eldridge, 2018, pp. 112–113). In these reactions, journalists minimize the disruption that change brings about by dismissing and expelling the newcomer, and a 'core'

of journalism offers a comforting home. For traditional actors, coalescing around a journalistic core reinforces an understanding that they are the norm, and the 'other' is the alternative, on the periphery.

I see these three challenges as part of a rather significant set of struggles for moving away from a core/periphery understanding of the field. They signal a challenge to journalistic identity, and the sense of propriety which leads some actors to feel able to both call themselves journalists while withholding the same recognition from others. They also reflect the disruption of social status which some journalists genuinely feel, including in a challenge to their journalistic authority as new actors demonstrate their ability to *also* perform informative journalistic roles (Carlson, 2017). This manifests in a clash between the field's 'dominants' and upstart 'pretenders' (to use Bourdieu's terminology), which further contributes to journalists' inclination to dictate the boundaries of the field through a preservative discourse that reinforces their distinction. Such is to be expected among members of fields, where any loss of distinction is equated with demise; as Bourdieu writes: "Falling into undifferentiatedness…means losing existence, and so nothing is more threatening than the lookalike who dissolves your identity" (Bourdieu, 2005, p. 40).

When put in terms of the risk of "losing existence," the perceived threat posed by interlopers becomes existential, raising the stakes of removing the distinction between a core and a periphery. But does it mean that distinction remains terribly useful? Does it justify the boundaries which are drawn between journalists at the so-called core, and interlopers emerging from the periphery? In the next sections I will explore how the concept of interlopers has both exposed and challenged the nature of such boundaries, and how we may be able to work our way out of such distinctions without abandoning the value of the field altogether.

4. Interlopers and Boundaries

To capture the confrontation posed by those who now encounter the field, the concept of 'interloper media' has proven to be a simple, yet effective, conceptualization for exploring journalistic boundaries drawn in response to their emergence. It captures the socially-constructed discursive boundaries which journalists use to define their space in society, and the ways in which new actors persist to see themselves as journalists in the face of such boundary work.

To begin, journalistic boundary work is not in and of itself a problematic dynamic. Not everything mediated is journalism, not everything new which claims to be journalism needs to be recognized as such, and so boundaries can meaningfully separate different media types and different media practices in a complex digital ecosystem. Or, as Ryfe (2019, p. 850) outlines, with the rise of digital media, journalists are no longer the primary providers of news, and more actors have become

involved in bringing news to audiences in discrete and more dynamic ways, not all of whom follow the logics of journalism, and we should not see them all as journalists. We see such boundaries when normative and traditional understandings of journalistic roles are referenced in Ryfe's (2019) interviews with veteran journalists working online who cite routines and practices as undergirding their journalistic identity, but also by bloggers who see themselves as nonjournalists precisely because they do not engage in these same routines and practices. A similar boundary is often drawn by comedians and satirists (e.g., *Last Week Tonight*'s John Oliver or *The Daily Show*'s former host, Jon Stewart) who point to the fact that they don't follow journalistic routines or practices to underscore why they should not be seen as journalists, even though they do present information to publics (Eldridge, 2018, p. 156).

However, the nature of boundaries found in reactive discourses towards new actors and particularly interlopers are often of a different nature. These boundaries are often more assertive, seeking to expel interlopers from the field despite their success at making, breaking, and advancing news stories which inform society. In such instances, boundaries emerge as reactions to competition over journalistic identities, first and foremost, and not as negotiations of belonging between interlopers and traditional journalists, but as one-way pronouncements dictating interlopers' non-belonging (see also Carlson & Lewis, 2020, pp. 126–127). These discourses construct boundaries in response to interlopers by playing up difference rather than similarity. They emphasize interlopers' digital novelty, their use of biting language, slapdash presentation, niche interests, alternative storytelling approaches, etc., and downplay acknowledgement of any journalistic similarities (Eldridge, 2018, p. 92). Such boundaries are drawn in reactions to disruptive interlopers in particular, and have been found in reactions to other digital actors, including journalistic bloggers, entrepreneurs, and startups (Duffy, 2019; Hepp & Loosen, 2019; Witschge & Harbers, 2019). They emerge despite interlopers' material contributions to wider news agendas, made when they report and produce news which is then followed up on by other journalists (Eldridge, 2019c).

We can understand these boundaries as preservative discourses, where confronted by the novel approaches to newcomers' work and the compositions of their organizations, journalists respond by trying to preserve the "collectively shared and taken-for-granted assumptions underlying the belief that journalists, acting in their normative roles, ought to wield gatekeeping control over news content on behalf of society" (Lewis, 2012, p. 845). This occurs even when we have many examples where the very same normative roles, and the same routines and practices invoked by traditional journalists, are also employed in the way interlopers identify their work as journalism. Indeed, where Ryfe (2019) describes 'nonjournalists' pointing to traditional practices of journal-

ists as reasons for excluding themselves from the field, in my own work and others' (cf. Hepp & Loosen, 2019; Witschge & Harbers, 2019), digital newcomers point to the way they take up the same "sayings and doings" of journalistic practice as reasons for including themselves in the field. These actors identify in their work a sense of continuity with the journalistic field, and see these shared ambitions as a lodestar which they use to attune their work towards the journalistic field, aligning themselves and their media work in terms of serving society as journalistic peers.

Interlopers tend to see their work as journalism despite specific differences and because of overall similarities, including similarities with traditional practices. These provide the foundation for their journalistic identities, and they express this in seeking positive recognition of their newswork. This includes similarities of reporting and content ("the manner in which I do my job is different than other journalists, but I think that the end result is the same," said one interviewee in the *Interrogating Antagonists* study (Eldridge, 2019a); another, describing the "drip drip" nature of publishing short snippets of reports over time, said: "What tends to happen after we do it half a dozen times, the newspapers will say 'well this is a real issue' and some people pick it up and it becomes a story").

At the same time, these identities and the construction of journalistic belonging and non-belonging are not always static, and quite often they are nonpermanent dispositions. In line with the complexity of the field, these also need to be considered in terms of relations and forces which are context-based. For instance, one interviewee in the *Interrogating Antagonists* study (cf. Eldridge 2019a) said she considered herself less of a journalist when blogging for some news sites and more so when writing for others, pointing specifically to reporting practices as the distinguishing criteria. Another said she saw herself as having similar ambitions as journalists, but her role was facilitating their practices through design work. Externally, we may also see certain interlopers as more journalistic sometimes, and less-so at other times.

In this light, however, we might better understand those journalistic boundaries we do find narrated by traditional actors as reactions to the risk of "undifferentiatedness" which new actors seem to pose, and which Bourdieu (2005, p. 40) emphasizes as an existential threat to the field. From that viewpoint, it certainly makes sense that traditional journalists might be hesitant to accept interlopers as fellow journalists, as this would diffuse the strength of their own journalistic identity. Further, from this angle, we can recognize that those who have traditionally been at the core of the field, embedded in its institutions and traditional outlets, have little interest and much at stake in acknowledging interlopers as peers.

But these dynamics should not require scholars to reinforce this apprehension in work which tries to make

sense of interlopers, or any new actors who might confront the boundaries of the field. Rather, work should try to recognize the anxiety faced by those in traditional roles, while pushing past this point to also understand where such boundaries fail us in developing full understanding of a dynamic field undergoing change. To return to Ryfe's (2019) point referenced above, in a complex digital ecosystem not all news comes from journalists, and so not all new actors need to be seen as journalists. I would agree, but argue further that there are many among this new group of actors making news public who do in fact see themselves as journalists, regardless of their different approaches to delivering news to publics. For that we should take into consideration whether or not we too, as scholars, can see them as journalists.

This discussion has highlighted a point I have argued previously as to the limit of what a focus on boundaries can offer us in accounting for the emergence of new actors. The reaction is interesting, but can be predictable, and locating boundaries should not be an endpoint to examining change (Eldridge, 2018, p. xi). For one, attention placed on boundaries alone can inaccurately suggest an impregnable wall between a field of journalism and non-journalistic outsiders. On one hand, if boundaries indeed operated in this way, we would expect to see those at the core of the field avoiding any reference to work from the periphery. Yet, we regularly find references to interlopers' work, particularly when interloper content holds those in power to account or exposes otherwise neglected news stories, and when their work provides jumping off points which traditional actors build from, perhaps saying things in ways other journalists wish they could (Eldridge, 2019c). On the other hand, if these boundaries reflected the field's dimensions fittingly, we wouldn't expect to see those on periphery trying to associate themselves with the more traditional core, describing their journalistic identities in normative ways. Yet we see this as well, and often in ways that resonate traditional ideals of journalism (Eldridge, 2018, p. 125).

There is an opportunity in these points of coming together, however, as it allows us to see where the construction of boundaries highlights how a changing field embraces a measure of continuity amid a raft of digital change (Eldridge, Hess, Tandoc, & Westlund, 2019, p. 388). Taking this up allows us to see the field as facing challenges both internal—as cohesion over long-held imaginations of the field's boundaries slips—and external, as new actors broach the field's boundaries. And we have good cause to push forward such an agenda revisiting the nature of the field and the complexity of journalism's boundaries at the points where they are constructed. Vos and Singer (2016, p. 144) make this case, describing the field's boundaries as "continually subject to disruption by both exogenous and endogenous forces." We are buoyed further by work which has focused on disruptive interlopers, but also work developing alternative understandings of interlopers, intralopers (Belair-Gagnon & Holton, 2018), strangers (Holton &

Belair-Gagnon, 2018), and in-betweeners (Ahva, 2017). These remind us of the significant complexities in understanding journalism's dynamism around its edges.

In both the reticence of some newcomers to be described as journalists, and the eagerness of other newcomers to be recognized as journalists, we can find a fruitful place to locate such a revised agenda. While interlopers confront the nature of boundaries, they have also signaled the resilience of dominant ideas of journalism. Or, put differently, research shows that in focusing on the differences made evident by boundary work, and not similarities found with those pushing to cross over such lines, we certainly find boundaries, but also risk leaving something out. This raises the question as to whether, as scholars, we would be better served by focusing not on differentiation, but on the degree to which the differences drawn between a dominant journalistic core and an emergent digital periphery are faithful reflections of the abilities of those occupying either space, and whether such differentiation accounts for the full breadth of actors who avail themselves of the shared practices and values which unite the field in the first place.

This is particularly important for understanding a field undergoing change as boundaries focused on difference will naturally highlight distinctions between those who have been traditionally been recognized as journalists and afforded the cultural and symbolic capital which benefits from that legacy, disadvantaging interloping newcomers who do not yet have this capital at hand. Boundaries on their own reinforce a hegemonic and path-dependent understanding of the field, and can obscure a more complex understanding of the nature of interlopers' journalistic work.

5. The Field of Relations

One way forward from this is to reengage with seeing journalism as a field being forged amid these forces and in the meeting up of those pushing out from the core of the field and those pushing in from the periphery. Focusing on these forces may help conceptualize the field more fully. The field, in this exercise, is not conceived by its boundaries as a space of entry or expulsion, so much as it is a space of social relations. In that sense it can be seen as something constructed by those who identify themselves as belonging to the field, and those who embrace its contributions. This allows us to maintain a tether of continuity to the traditional understanding of the journalistic field, including how its ideals are shared by many, while also accounting for the change posed by interlopers. Further, this allows us to acknowledge the existential risk of undifferentiatedness which prompts some journalists to highlight difference, alongside the importance of a shared sense of belonging shaping the journalistic field—e.g., what guides journalists to say 'we are journalists,' and how does that inform their feeling that 'we do journalism.'

The impetus for these expressions is located in the *doxa* and the *habitus*, or the inherent sense of belonging (*doxa*) and the specific socialized dispositions guiding practice (*habitus*). The *doxa* is a rather unspoken sense of belonging (Schultz, 2007), and something "which is beyond question and which each agent tacitly accords" (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 169). The dispositions of the *habitus* are shaped by the "invisible structures" which shape their social positioning, and the dominant vision central to the field involves field members agreeing to look past differences amongst themselves in the interest of coalescing (Bourdieu, 2005, p. 30; Eldridge, 2017b). These two aspects join a third (*nomos*) in the field's sense of vision and division (belonging and distinction) which guide practices.

While differentiation is key to individuals associating themselves with one field over another, similarity also plays a role. For the vision of the field to be coherent:

> Even the most irreducible adversaries have in common that they accept a certain number of presuppositions that are constitutive of the very functioning of the field. In order to fight one another, people have to agree on the areas of disagreement. (Bourdieu, 2005, p. 36)

With the journalistic field, these dynamics enable journalists (both traditional and interloping, I argue) to orient their belonging. Yet as invisible structures shaping the field, their ability to express such belonging differs. For instance, the socialized disposition of the *habitus* and the inherent criteria of belonging reflected in the *doxa* may be expressed by both interlopers and traditional journalists, but it may be more quickly recognized in the work of traditional actors who have the benefit of legacy and prominence in expressing their belonging (see the points raised by Benson, 1999, 2006, above, and below).

However, the invisibility of these forces also provides an opportunity. If the *doxa* is somehow both inherent and unspoken, and the *habitus* shaped by exogenous and endogenous social forces we can't always see (Vos & Singer, 2016, p. 144), and the vision shaped in part by smoothing over differences (Bourdieu, 2005, p. 36), we can draw on this thread further to ask: If socialized belonging (*doxa*) rests on assumed senses of belonging among journalistic actors, surely as the universe of possible journalistic actors has expanded, we can argue for a revisiting of these assumptions? Further, if the socialized structures of the journalistic field (*habitus*) and its guiding sense of vision and division (*nomos*) were already being perceived differently by different journalists in the 20th century who simply agreed to overlook these differences, with the scale of digital change surely all these differences and invisibilities can no longer be plastered over?

Benson offers a useful prelude to this discussion, posed before the breadth of digital journalism we now observe came into being. He noted how the "field of jour-

nalism (as with all other fields) is structured around the opposition between the 'old' and the 'new'" (Benson, 1999, p. 467). So, one need not see different interpretations of the field's structures, dispositions, and visions as a roadblock. Instead, through "analysis of new entrants into a field, media field researchers also add an important dynamic element to the model, showing how the 'objective' structure is related to the 'subjective' perspectives of individual agents" (Benson, 1999, p. 167). In other words, one can consider the nature of digital change at the material level—objective structures—alongside the ways these changes shape individuals' subjective perspectives—the journalistic *doxa*, informed by the *habitus*. This approach allows scholars to examine how agents, both new and old, position themselves as working in the furtherance of society. It enables seeing these dynamics as forces with greater fluidity, embraced and acted upon differently by different societal actors.

Now to be clear, for some journalists, traditional vision of the journalistic field, even accepting this reorientation, will still resonate. These journalists would defend the *doxa* in terms of a journalistic orthodoxy, or what Bourdieu describes as a natural way of being reinforced through "a system of euphemisms, of acceptable ways of thinking and speaking" (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 169). They may rely on a highly-traditional dominant vision built on journalism's history and its institutions in shaping their *habitus*. Such journalists are not rare, rather they are the products of the socialization processes of journalism which led towards institutionalized coherence in the 20th century (Ryfe, 2006), embracing grand narratives (Peters & Witschge, 2015), and the normative expectations of the field (Eldridge & Steel, 2016). If there were to be a journalistic core, these journalists would be at the middle of it.

But these journalists are no longer alone in the news environment, and it can no longer be assumed that their vision is universally agreed-to. Instead, interlopers who also express a journalistic *doxa* and *habitus* have intensified both the nature and the visibility of struggles between the field's most observant, orthodox, members and those seen-as-blasphemous, heretical challengers (Benson, 1999, p. 472). Simultaneously, because these struggles are now more visible, there is an opportunity for reengaging field theory to account for an expanded set of actors, both newer and older.

I argue we should do so with a greater emphasis on similarity, rather than difference, and the threads for such an approach have already been found. For instance, we can locate how interlopers express similar *doxic* ideals of informing the public in its interest, and holding power to account (an ideal of "punching up," as one interviewee described it [Eldridge, 2019a]), they just go about this differently in practice, and do so enabled by the affordances of digital media and their independence from larger institutional constraints ("once you have resigned yourself to the fact that you will never have the access to certain people or certain places, then you can be a lot

more honest in what you are doing" she added [Eldridge, 2019a]). We can further find similarity with the vision of the field when this work is then embraced both by members of the public and by journalists who build upon their work. This was made visible in 2003 with revelations from j-bloggers like Axios at *Eschaton*, and more recently with Tim Burke reporting for *Deadspin*; both showed how interlopers gather and publish news, which is then reported on further by 'mainstream' outlets who share in the same news agenda (Eldridge, 2018, 2019c).

Rather than attend to difference, which might otherwise define the field narrowly, choosing to focus on similarities among a diverse set of actors helps to find points of agreement between interlopers and those who see them as interloping. But, as with any effort revising our approaches to understanding society, we must remain mindful of limits to reconfiguring something as socially embedded as journalism, and consider where to maintain a certain degree of 'differentiatedness' in order to continue seeing journalism as a field, just a more diverse and dynamic one. Therefore, if we want to understand journalism more complexly by expanding its boundaries, we must ask to what extent this is feasible, and how we can be inclusive without conceptualizing our ideas of journalism so vastly they become meaningless. We must revisit where and how we draw such lines.

6. Considering Antagonism and Agonism

To build on this, I suggest a useful distinction can be found in the nature of relating, both between interlopers and traditional journalists but also their relationships with publics, including in how their work conveys these relationships. This focuses not on the discrete practices of actors, as these are varied and constantly changing with new forms of content and ways of enacting journalistic routines, but on the expressed or apparent intentionality of these activities, and how they correspond with a journalistic vision. This requires approaching provocative, sharp-tongued, and critical interlopers not as 'antagonistic' outsiders to be rebuffed by boundaries of expulsion (as they have often been seen), but as operating on a spectrum between 'agonism' and 'antagonism.'

In this suggestion, I adopt Mouffe's (2000, p. 7) differentiation between 'agonism' as a description of constructive disagreement (the actions of an adversarial friend) and 'antagonism' as destructive opposition (the outsider enemy). Agonism can be found in the work of *Deadspin*'s Burke, mentioned above, who highlighted the way a conservative media owner close to the U.S. president was pressuring local news stations to read a specific political script (Eldridge, 2019c). It can also be found in reporting on *Eschaton* or *Gawker* which critiqued mainstream news media for missing prominent political news stories (e.g., a Senator's endorsement of a segregationist politician on *Eschaton*, or the closeness of the US State Department and Washington DC journalists on *Gawker*). They further urged traditional media to follow up on

that reporting (Eldridge, 2018, pp. 142–143, 161–162). In these instances, agonism is located in a critical metadiscourse. Focusing on the constructive adversarial nature of interlopers posing such critiques allows scholars to look at the critical voice of interlopers as positive when they push against journalistic complacency, as long as it is aligned with journalistic ideals of revealing truths, and holding power to account, among others.

Antagonism can be found in work from *Breitbart* or *WikiLeaks* as two media outlets which, at times, perform traditional informative journalistic routines, while at other times—particularly in 2016—they use the guise of journalism to disguise more antagonistic ambitions, serving political agendas rather than public ones. I have elsewhere referred to this as the 'malappropriation' of a journalistic identity (Eldridge, 2018, pp. 166–167), and when it masks hidden agendas, this malappropriation is antagonistic towards the field of journalism writ large. In these cases, claims of journalistic identity and criticism of 'complacent' media are outweighed by the nature of content which serves specific political mechanisms which does not carry journalistic ideals or values.

Making this distinction between an aggressive agonist and a destructive antagonist is not always straightforward. It first requires distinguishing between an antagonistic voice and an antagonistic relationship. We find (and can countenance) agonism in a complex field even when it adopts an antagonistic voice of critical "punching up" in interlopers' work—really, in all journalistic work—where it is directed at those who have power in society (the state, for instance). We can also see agonism as fitting within the field when critical metadiscourses are honestly directed at powerful journalistic actors. This was seen in the antagonistic voice adopted by WikiLeaks in 2010 and 2011, when its revelations drove journalistic work even as it criticized mainstream media (Eldridge, 2014). An antagonistic voice has also been regularly expressed by *Eschaton* and sites once affiliated with *Gawker* which criticized journalists' hob-knobbing with politicians (Eldridge, 2018, pp. 132–133).

This antagonistic voice is a characteristic of the interloper-as-agonist; as a critical friend working towards the same socio-informative role as other journalists. When we see this, we may be minded to bring such activities within the boundaries of the field. We should perhaps embrace this opportunity even more so when criticism is directed towards both ideological allies and obvious enemies. Interlopers, in this dynamic, are embracing journalistic ideals, just with sharp elbows and sharper tongues.

At the same time, scholars should continue to decry those who adopt an antagonistic relationship towards the field, particularly when embedding anti-civic or anti-journalistic intentions. This includes manipulating information, sharing disinformation, or serving politicians rather than publics, as with WikiLeaks' leaks in 2016 of Hillary Clinton's emails, working, seemingly, as a Russian cutout. It also includes *Gawker's* invasion of the wrestler

Hulk Hogan's privacy under the guise of journalism (Eldridge, 2018). Antagonism in these cases is fundamentally destructive, as it hides political agendas and misuses public trust, undermining the nature of journalism by disguising such agendas as public-interested news.

Antagonistic relationships are important reminders that an agenda to reengage with the complexity of the field is not an invitation to upend it entirely. From Bourdieu (2005), seeing the field as a group of social actors sees these actors agreeing they are "playing the same game" (p. 30). When interlopers embrace similar practices or identify with journalistic values, but do so in new ways, we can see them as sitting within a pluralist field of journalism. In this pluralist field, they may be agonists, but they nevertheless play the same game.

In such an orientation, interlopers are highly visible reminders of the complexity which shapes the journalistic field, and draw our attention to the struggles which define it. While interlopers would be rougher-fitting members of the journalistic field if defining it by the distinctions favored by the traditional core, when turning to focus on the nature of their relationship with that field, and the journalistic appeal at the heart of much of their work, as agonists they seem within its boundaries.

7. Limitations

In nuancing the relationship between interlopers and other journalists as one of agonism or antagonism, I aim to move our discussions beyond seeing boundaries as hard distinctions drawn between actors, and rather as a space of forces surrounding the field. However, there are limits to consider. The first is a consideration of our objects of study, the second is how we study them.

First, while a dynamic understanding of the journalistic field has been a consideration among many scholars, it has not always been reflected in the reactions of journalists who continue to be (understandably) inclined towards harder boundaries. Their perspectives still need to be weighed in considering how much of our scholarly reflections on fields are also reflected in practice. However, to the degree journalists' perspectives matter for shaping the field (and they do), I would caution against a reliance on journalists' perspectives alone as a definer of the field, as this elides the more complex reality (so too would I caution against relying on the perspectives of interlopers to see the extent to which they fit, as surely they too benefit from a boundary drawn which places them within the field's dimensions).

Second, this essay has highlighted where scholars focusing on similar phenomena from different perspectives reach different conclusion about fields. One builds a sense of the field as united by the routines and practices (this is reflected in Ryfe's, 2019, argument), another in a shared dominant vision of journalism's function, as I have argued. Both are developed in an attempt to understand the field more complexly, and draw on similar developments of disruption and change in a digital age.

In focusing on practices, Ryfe finds that difference reinforces distinction and, as a result, locates a "curious resilience of some aspects of traditional journalism within a generally disruptive environment" (Ryfe, 2019, p. 844). To his point about resilience, I would agree. In research examining interlopers and reactions to them, I have also found a persistent idea of what journalism should be embraced by interlopers, though they often locate it in identities rather than practices.

Both approaches emphasize how actors adhere to journalism's importance to society, holding power to account, and providing fact-based news to their publics, among other shared attributes. However, where I depart from Ryfe's findings is in the way my own work has shown the resilience of this idea inspiring not separation but journalistic belonging among interlopers. This does not mean one of these findings is more correct than the other, rather it is a matter of conceptual lenses and where attention is paid. Based on practices, digital newcomers may identify difference in that they do not also perform the practices of traditional journalism such as reporting a beat, or other similar institutional routines (Ryfe, 2019). It's a distinction others have drawn as well (Peters, 2011). In these cases, practice provides a point of difference between newcomers and traditional actors. Though closely aligned, other conceptual lenses from field theory allow us to take a different tack, seeing where a dominant central vision or an interpretation of a journalistic *doxa* of what it means to belong to the field of journalism gives an aspirational center point around which interlopers and journalists both coalesce, despite differences in practice (Benkler, 2011; Eldridge, 2018). From this perspective, similarities—sharing a sense of a journalistic *doxa*, *habitus*, and dominant vision—allow us to locate belonging, drawing interlopers into the field, even if traditional journalists might rather push them away.

8. Conclusion

What emerges from the discussion here is a more complex engagement with the journalistic field which brings forward a nuanced view of interlopers. I hope to have offered an understanding of their position within the field that would be missed out upon if we focused primarily on reactions to interlopers from traditional actors who are predisposed towards differentiating between a core and a periphery. The preservative impetus embraced by members of the field who "risk falling into undifferentiatedness" should also not be dismissed lightly (Bourdieu, 2005, p. 40). Even for interlopers the societal distinction of journalism matters. This is reflected in the way interlopers draw inspiration from traditional ideals while also embracing an opportunity to do things differently. That they do so while using sharp, critical, voices towards those they see as letting down the shared ideals of the field reflects this as even when critical of their peers' work, interlopers see this criticism as serving to improve

the broader field of journalism. This reminds scholars that both difference and similarity are woven together in the identities of interlopers who see themselves as enacting new imaginations of journalistic ideals. As research into interlopers has shown, for traditional journalists and interlopers alike a powerful idea of what journalism means for society still matters. It may matter differently and it may be understood differently by each, but it certainly matters.

Working this complexity into our discussions of the field allows us to review our approach towards boundaries as well, seeing these as increasingly blurred and porous, and arrived at through the meeting up of societal forces which ebb and flow in strength. When we step away from the preservative boundaries which are drawn by journalists heavily invested in their own status being confirmed, we may see these boundaries not as lines but as something of a graduated spectrum, with antagonistic outsiders on one end, and agonistic critical friends on the other. This enables seeing interlopers as journalists when they align with the field's shared ambitions, just doing so differently, with sharper elbows, ready to punch up a bit when it is called for.

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Conflict of Interests

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Article

Working on the Margins: Comparative Perspectives on the Roles and Motivations of Peripheral Actors in Journalism

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Abstract
As a consequence of digitization and other environmental trends, journalism is changing its forms and arguably also its functions—both in fundamental ways. While 'legacy' news media continue to be easily distinguishable by set characteristics, new content providers operating in an increasingly dense, chaotic, interactive, and participatory information environment still remain somewhat understudied. However, at a time when non-traditional formats account for an ever-growing portion of journalistic or para-journalistic work, there is an urgent need to better understand these new peripheral actors and the ways they may be transforming the journalistic field. While journalism scholarship has begun to examine peripheral actors' motivations and conceptualizations of their roles, our understanding is still fairly limited. This relates particularly to comparative studies of peripheral actors, of which there have been very few, despite peripheral journalism being a global phenomenon. This study aims to address this gap by presenting evidence from 18 in-depth interviews with journalists in Australia, Germany, and the UK. In particular, it examines how novel journalistic actors working for a range of organisations discursively contrast their work from that of others. The findings indicate that journalists' motivations to engage in journalism in spite of the rise of precarious labour were profoundly altruistic: Indeed, journalists pledged allegiance to an ideology of journalism still rooted in a pre-crisis era—one which sees journalism as serving a public good by providing an interpretative, sense-making role.

Issue
This article is part of the issue "Peripheral Actors in Journalism: Agents of Change in Journalism Culture and Practice" edited by Avery E. Holton (University of Utah, USA), Valerie Belair-Gagnon (University of Minnesota-Twin Cities, USA), and Oscar Westlund (Oslo Metropolitan University, Norway / Volda University College, Norway / University of Gothenburg, Sweden).

1. Introduction

While journalism as a profession and a practice has undergone periods of transformation throughout its history, recent technological, economic, and societal developments have changed its forms and arguably also its functions in fundamental ways. Technological affordances in particular have led to an influx of new social actors into the journalistic field. These actors produce and distribute content that resembles journalism very closely, challenging but also contributing to journalistic practice as well as professional ideology.

For more than a decade, scholarship has examined how actors like bloggers, entrepreneurial journalists, citizen journalists, or civic hackers are impacting on and increasingly changing the journalistic field (Belair-Gagnon & Holton, 2018; Singer, 2015; Wall, 2015). While these have been immensely valuable in allowing for a better un-

derstanding of these actors' impact, the vast majority of such scholarship tends to be based on single-nation case studies, with a particular focus on the US. This emphasis has so far made it difficult to better understand the extent to which political, economic, technological, historical, or cultural contexts may influence the emergence and motivations of these peripheral actors.

Heeding the call for comparative scholarship to allow a better understanding of communication phenomena (Esser & Hanitzsch, 2012), this article explores the professional views of peripheral journalistic actors in three Western media systems: Australia, Germany, and the UK. Through interviews with 18 peripheral journalists from a diverse range of media, we explore how they position their work vis-à-vis legacy journalism and other peripheral actors. They differ in their motivations and role perceptions, as well as how legacy journalists perceive and accept them. This allows us to offer crucial insights into the ways in which traditional journalists' authority is challenged, based on the significant cultural impact such transgressive actors are having on journalistic practice.

2. Dissolving Boundaries of Journalism

For centuries, journalism has defined itself as an essential institution in democratic societies, even though it arguably has never been the only societal actor in the construction of knowledge. Through digitization, however, the journalistic field turned into an "increasingly messy definitional space" (Eldridge, 2016) with more and more fuzzy boundaries (Maares & Hanusch, 2018). The emergence of (micro-)bloggers, entrepreneurial journalists, and deviant actors such as WikiLeaks, has re-energized discussions about what actually constitutes journalism as a profession and a practice, both in academic and journalistic discourse (Carlson & Lewis, 2015; Eldridge, 2017; Loosen, 2015; Vos, Craft, & Ashley, 2012; Vos & Singer, 2016). Following Gieryn (1983), the boundaries of the field are here understood as sites of struggle, where the hegemonic ideal of journalism is defended or contested, by individuals and institutions alike. Since these discourses are "claims to authority or resources" (Gieryn, 1983, p. 781), established members of a field try to limit access to it. This struggle is even more pronounced in journalism, as the journalistic field's boundaries are more permeable because degrees or certified knowledge are not prerequisites for entry (Lewis, 2015). On the other hand, journalists enjoy benefits such as access to information via press passes and a broader legal protection for publishing leaked material, one reason why new and peripheral actors demand to be treated equally when they offer functionally equivalent content (Eldridge, 2019).

For nearly a century, journalists have relied on professional norms as the basis for boundary work (Singer, 2015). These norms over time became an ideology that could be seen as almost universal, given many journalists around the globe subscribe to central tenets such as the need for objectivity, autonomy, or ethical conduct (Deuze, 2005). In trying to exclude others from the journalistic field, traditional journalists have tended to dismiss peripheral actors as too emotional, too opinionated, too activist, or as relying too much on hearsay (Eldridge, 2016). This makes boundary work also extremely relational; depending on the characteristics of the 'other,' journalists focus on different aspects of their identity and accentuate different norms or professional practices that distinguish them from the deviant group (Ferrucci & Vos, 2017). At the same time, boundaries have also always been drawn within the field, rather than merely around it. For instance, metajournalistic discourse that portrays highly professionalized political legacy journalism as 'real' journalism creates an idea of a core of journalistic culture. At the same time, it dismisses other journalistic work and actors, such as more entertaining formats, lifestyle journalists, or freelancers (Hanusch, 2012; Sjøvaag, 2015; Wiik, 2015). Much of this discourse has been essential for the creation of professional standards, including the strict separation of editorial and advertorial content (Coddington, 2015). Similarly, internal discourse scorning tabloid journalism as 'bad' has created a hierarchy within journalism, in order to strengthen journalistic norms and ethical guidelines (Eldridge, 2016). Yet, these widely shared values remain open to debate and are continuously shaped through stories and discourse within the journalistic community to adapt to non-institutionalised practices (Zelizer, 1993). In that sense, boundary work does not only defend journalism's autonomy and expels deviant actors or practices, but also enables the inclusion of new participants, practices, or professionalism to its repertoire (Carlson, 2015).

Given journalism is typically not a protected profession in terms of access to the field, talking about the boundaries of journalism is "primarily a discussion of identity markers" (Tandoc & Jenkins, 2018, p. 584). Actors aim to discursively define and legitimate a specific vision of the journalistic profession and journalistic practice within the field, as well as in broader society (Carlson, 2016; Gieryn, 1983). A central concern in this regard relates to how journalists view their role in society. Hanitzsch and Vos (2017, p. 120) have suggested that we need to understand journalistic roles as the "discursive articulation and enactment of journalism's identity as a social institution." Thus, examining journalists' role perceptions contributes to a further understanding of where and how the boundaries of the journalistic field are drawn. The study of journalistic roles has a long history in scholarship, dating back to Bernard Cohen's (1963) influential study of the relationship between the press and foreign relations. A large number of studies followed, including a range of comparative examinations of journalists' role perceptions (see, for example, Hanitzsch, Hanusch, Ramaprasad, & De Beer, 2019; Weaver, 1998; Weaver & Willnat, 2012). One influential theoretical framework that considers journalists' role was offered by Hanitzsch (2007), who located it within

his operationalization of journalistic culture. In relation to journalism's institutional role, Hanitzsch (2007) identified three dimensions: First, the extent to which journalists are 'interventionist' in pursuing certain missions; second, the degree with which they challenge 'powerful individuals' in society; third, the degree of 'market orientation' journalists have in their work (the audience as consumers vs. citizens). Mellado (2014), in her study of journalists' role performance, identified very similar roles, which she referred to as interventionist, watchdog, supporters, service providers, infotainment, and civic roles. Even more recently, Hanitzsch and Vos (2018) have offered an elaborate framework that aims to combine both journalism's roles in political and everyday life. Still, such roles have mostly been studied in the context of mainstream journalism, making it necessary to also study how peripheral actors conceive of their role in society.

With digitization, new peripheral actors take part in these discursive processes more easily all over the world. A number of studies have tried to explore the boundaries of the journalistic field by focusing on specific new actors, such as citizen journalists, (micro-)bloggers, activists, programmers, or entrepreneurial journalists (Carlson & Lewis, 2015). If we view these as singular cases, we do not fully understand how they might be affecting the journalistic field as a whole, but if we collapse them to one group of peripheral actors, we might be unable to differentiate them accordingly. While these new actors are all "strangers to the game" (Belair-Gagnon & Holton, 2018), their claims to legitimacy and authority differ, and so does their reception by the journalistic field. To further understand them and the ways they may be transforming the journalistic field, a more differentiated approach than the simple dichotomy of 'insiders' vs. 'outsiders' is needed.

3. Peripheral Actors: Contesters, Maintainers, or Innovators?

Eldridge (2014) has referred to peripheral actors who overtly claim membership to the journalistic field as "interlopers": They strongly embrace journalistic ideals such as an adversarial role, and criticise legacy journalists for failing to adhere to this role, or believe they are offering something that is functionally equivalent to journalism. As their practices are sometimes deviant from journalistic ethical norms, traditional journalists mostly reject their claims to legitimacy and membership in the journalistic field. But not all peripheral actors are perceived as divergent, and some of them, or their practices, are embraced by the journalistic field (Carlson, 2015). Belair-Gagnon and Holton (2018) propose a typology of peripheral actors based on Eldridge's term of interloper. They distinguish between *explicit interlopers*, *implicit interlopers*, and *intralopers*. While these categories are relational, as the one essential aspect of differentiation is how journalists perceive these actors, these terms can be useful as an analytical tool.

Explicit interlopers comprise a group of non-traditional actors who challenge journalistic authority and compete with news organizations for the audience's attention. They contribute to the transformation of the journalistic field when legacy media shift their practices and norms based on these interlopers' successes and failures. The motivations of explicit interlopers are manifold. Some want to transform the journalistic field, or re-energize its 'original' ideals; for others, the primary goal is financial or political. For example, bloggers aim to hold journalists accountable to a normative journalistic ideology (Vos et al., 2012), while platforms that leak government information, such as WikiLeaks, claim to perform journalism's watchdog and investigative role (Eldridge, 2014). Entrepreneurial actors such as news aggregators or digital-only platforms for pop cultural news and listicles often pursue a for-profit agenda. They challenge the field by collapsing long-established editorial and business roles in journalism and are therefore considered deviant (Coddington, 2015; Singer, 2015). Moreover, socialized by start-up culture, they want to distinguish themselves from legacy media and disrupt journalistic practices to "make journalism better" (Usher, 2017, p. 9). However, as the case of Buzzfeed shows, deviant actors may be accepted into the journalistic field when they adapt to its dominant norms and include investigative news (Tandoc, 2018; Tandoc & Jenkins, 2017).

While some for-profit projects are criticized on ethical grounds, much of journalistic discourse has high hopes for entrepreneurial journalism to help journalism as a profession to survive (Vos & Singer, 2016). As such, some entrepreneurial journalists could be considered implicit interlopers. They do not overtly challenge journalistic practices and some are more closely dependent on legacy media (Belair-Gagnon & Holton, 2018). They are also more accepted by the journalistic field as they possess valued knowledge such as programming skills and offer innovative funding ideas or technological applications, or contribute to news production, for instance through free content (Nicey, 2016; Wall, 2015), as civic hackers (Baack, 2018), or entrepreneurial fact-checkers (Singer, 2018). They often do not consider themselves as journalistic actors (Baack, 2018; Belair-Gagnon & Holton, 2018) and their motivations could be considered to improve civic discourse and aid the journalistic profession. For instance, entrepreneurial projects such as *Mediapart*, *De Correspondent* or *Krautreporter* are not interested in profit maximization and draw on normative journalistic ideology to provide 'good old' journalism (Wagemans, Witschge, & Deuze, 2016; Witschge & Harbers, 2018). As such, their motivations differ to some degree from journalists in general. As research on journalism students has shown, motivations for pursuing the profession lie in following their creative passions and seeking a varied career, as well as to provide a public service (Carpenter, Grant, & Hoag, 2016; Hanusch et al., 2015; Sparks & Splichal, 1994).

While much of the research on boundaries focuses on the purposely disruptive agents, implicit interlopers

have been more researched through the lens of innovation and opportunities to reinvigorate journalism and less through their discursive position-taking or position-claiming within the journalistic field. Research, however, has shown that new entrants to the field that have been granted membership try to distinguish themselves from other peripheral actors (cf. Ferrucci & Vos, 2017), and thus preserve its dominant vision (Tandoc, 2018). Thus, we still have an incomplete understanding of how this plays out across different kinds of work of implicit interlopers, as most studies rely on particular case studies. Based on the literature reviewed here, we therefore developed the following three main research questions:

RQ1: What are implicit interlopers' motivations to engage in journalistic work in a "profoundly precarious context" (Deuze & Witschge, 2018) characterised by "a culture of job insecurity" (Ekdale, Tully, Harmsen, & Singer, 2015)?

RQ2: How do implicit interlopers discursively construct their work—and potentially contrast it from that of others?

RQ3: What, if any, are the differences between implicit interlopers' motivations and discursive construction of their work across national contexts?

4. Method

To answer the research questions and uncover the discursive construction of implicit interlopers' work, we took a comparative approach in an attempt to better understand the extent to which a range of political, economic, technological, or cultural contexts may influence differences across countries. While a few studies exist of peripheral actors' motivations and conceptualizations of their roles in this regard, these have mostly focused on single-nation contexts. Yet, peripheral actors in journalism are a global phenomenon, and studying journalism in single-national contexts can blind us to experience elsewhere that may challenge existing theories and understandings. Our study thus seeks to elicit such responses across three Western media systems: Australia, Germany, and the UK. Moreover, journalistic work can be conceptualised as a stratified space along three dimensions: material security, possession of journalistic capital—that is status and recognition from other journalists—and access to resources (Örnebring, Karlsson, Fast, & Lindell, 2018). We thus aimed at including outlets and actors with varying possession of these resources. For instance, we examined both outlets with a high level of audience reach (in terms of monthly page views, both desktop and mobile), as well as particularly innovative outlets known to the researchers for other reasons (e.g., those having received a significant amount of media coverage, i.e., journalistic capital). For the UK, we relied on data gathered by digital marketing intel-

ligence company *SimilarWeb*, which provides monthly market updates on the most popular websites by audience reach. In Australia, we relied on data gathered by *Hitwise*, a US-based marketing company measuring audience behaviour across platforms. For Germany, we used data gathered by the governmental organisation IVW (German Audit Bureau of Circulation), as well as the Arbeitsgemeinschaft Online-Forschung and their 'Daily Facts' database, the latter of which provides cross-media digital media reach across German audiences. Despite the evidence-based approach taken in identifying relevant outlets, it is worth noting that the process of determining these was heuristic. While the aforementioned platforms do indeed use page views as an indicator for audience reach, they do not provide conclusive evidence in terms of the size of the audience reached, nor are these figures adjusted for potentially automated bot traffic. For the purpose of this study, however, they did provide the most comprehensive and commercially available dataset to advance our shortlist.

This study is part of a larger research project which seeks to evaluate the emerging assemblage of journalistic forms, practices, and uses in a comparative study in the three countries. To cater for the transnational nature of the project, the researchers subscribed to the *Cision Media Database*, a platform which hosts contact details of media professionals working across all three different countries. Editors and reporters who covered only one particular journalistic beat (e.g., sports), or those exclusively engaged in overly specialised reporting, were excluded. These potential participants were first approached via email, and, later, if applicable, followed up on with a further email reminding them of the research project.

For the purpose of the present article, the researchers extracted a total of 18 interviews with implicit interlopers from the existing dataset: seven in Australia, six in the UK, and five in Germany. The Australian respondents worked at the following outlets: *Techly*, *Mamamia*, *Buzzfeed Australia*, *New Matilda*, *Junkee*, *VICE Australia*, and *The Saturday Paper*. In the UK, they include: *Huffington Post UK*, *The New European* (2), *Open Democracy*, and *Buzzfeed UK* (2); while in Germany, respondents worked at *Huffington Post Germany*, *jetzt.de*, *Correctiv* (2), as well as one journalist working for several digital-born outlets on a freelance basis. Despite the fact that these are vastly different outlets pursuing diverging editorial styles, what unites them is that they are digital-born platforms known for a level of innovation that deviates from long-established practices by established, 'legacy' media, including opportunities to reinvigorate journalism, e.g., through successful content and audience engagement (Belair-Gagnon & Holton, 2018). All interviews were conducted between January 2017 and May 2019. Of the 18 interviewees, thirteen were male and five were female. Thirteen worked in senior roles, while five were in the lower ranks of the editorial hierarchy (though it is worth noting that the nature of

these 'peripheral actors' deviating from the norms of traditional journalism dictates a less-rigid, less-formalized hierarchical structure to begin with; at times, the journalists' narratives suggested they had a rather high degree of editorial oversight despite their more 'junior' job titles). The youngest journalist was 27 years old and the oldest was 65 years old. The average age was 40 years. Half of the interviewees had prior experience working for mainstream media, while the other half had worked solely for digital-born journalism start-ups. Their total work experience in journalism averages 15 years.

The interviews were semi-structured, allowing participants to elaborate freely upon their motivations to engage in a profession characterised by significant levels of precarity, as well as their conceptualisations of what journalism *is* or *should be* at a time when normative definitions of journalism as traditionally understood are poorly placed to encapsulate the various forms and formats of journalism that not just *coexist*, but crucially, also *compete* with each other. Of the 18 interviews, 11 were conducted face-to-face and seven via telephone or Skype. Interviewees were assured anonymity. The interview data was transcribed verbatim and eventually clustered and analysed using the qualitative content analysis software *MaxQDA*.

5. Findings

Our findings are separated into two parts: First, we explore our respondents' *motivations* to engage in journalistic work; second, we examine their *definitions* of journalism in the digital age. Throughout, we discuss comparative differences across national contexts where they emerged.

5.1. Journalistic Motivations

When it comes to the ways in which journalists articulated their motivations for engaging in journalistic work, this study identifies two dimensions present in our respondents' narratives. These refer to motivations to work in journalism in general, as well as specific motivations for peripheral, journalistic work. While we need to bear in mind that of course these motivations are discursively constructed by our respondents in the process of the interviews, our findings suggest that the motivations these peripheral actors have for engaging in journalistic work are broadly in line with established, professional journalists' frequently-voiced motivations (Carpenter et al., 2016; Hanusch et al., 2015; Sparks & Splichal, 1994). Many expressed a general sense of curiosity to understand peoples' lives and experiences, and, crucially, the urge to give those not usually granted a voice the ability to speak out. A *Buzzfeed Australia* journalist remembered volunteering for a radio station during her student years, an experience she described as taking her "over the edge":

The rigor in doing that was something I really enjoyed: being able to tell stories, and being able to have a voice. Or at least to provide an outlet for other people who could really use that outlet to get their message heard was really cool; it was a really humbling and yet empowering thing to be a part of. (personal communication, June 17, 2017)

Following her student years, she now regards her role as one of an intermediator between her audience and parts of the public she described as "voiceless." Giving others a voice has been a relatively common role conception in studies of journalistic roles around the globe, even if it has not always ranked at the top of the list (Hanitzsch et al., 2019).

Moreover, other than a general 'passion' for writing—something that was referred to as a "craft" by a *Huffington Post* UK journalist—pursuing a career in journalism was an idea that for many of our interviewees manifested itself as early as their formative years. Many referenced their humble beginnings working for a student newspaper: working on their first story, and seeing it published, was a "lightbulb moment" for the *Junkee* journalist. In the words of one freelance journalist working for several digital-born outlets in Germany: "It was a childhood dream, combined with that very first initial professional experience that really made it feasible for me to see myself in a career in journalism" (personal communication, July 15, 2017). Studies have shown for some time that a passion for the profession, in particular a passion for writing, are key factors in people deciding to become journalists (Sparks & Splichal, 1994).

In terms of their motivations, our interviewees were clear that they did not enter the profession in order to be financially secure. Quite the opposite, respondents were acutely aware of the levels of precarity inherent to much of contemporary journalism. A journalist interviewed at German NGO *Correctiv* said:

It's not like I'll be a millionaire as a journalist. I would really have to go for another job if that was my goal. But there are reasons why I've decided to become a journalist: it is simply my own *conviction*. (personal communication, July 5, 2018)

Again, the amount of money journalists can earn have never played much of a role in journalists' decisions to pursue their craft. Studies of journalism students have repeatedly shown that pay is not an important consideration, particularly in Western countries (Hanusch et al., 2015).

5.2. Specific Motivations for Peripheral Work

While their general motivations broadly align with views held by 'traditional' journalists, our respondents also expressed reasons why they decided to work in peripheral or non-traditional outlets. Certainly, the technological af-

fordances motivate many to engage in journalistic work as they dissolve institutional boundaries—or hurdles—to have themselves 'heard' and to 'cut through the noise' in a field formerly dominated by long-established, 'traditional' media. In the words of a journalist working for the tech journalism start-up *Techly* in Sydney:

> I think this speaks to how the digital landscape has evolved: You don't have to have 20 years of experience to be considered good enough. I don't personally have that experience, but I know a lot of people who kind of make their own media. (personal communication, June 1, 2017)

As such, they exploit the available resources to show their work, a motivation especially common among aspiring or semi-professional actors (Nicey, 2016). This is also echoed by respondents who perceive emerging forms of digital journalism as outlets where they can express themselves and their views; in contrast to informational-instructive role perceptions they embrace more analytical-deliberative roles such as the mobilizer role (Hanitzsch & Vos, 2018). For one respondent, this enabled her to communicate the views of the voiceless, which were already noted earlier, as well:

> I can truly express myself in a very meaningful way, and allow my ability to really express myself to also express the views of others that don't have the chance to be expressed, so [my motivation] was a combination of being a storyteller—but also a vehicle by which opinions can be shared. (personal communication, June 17, 2017)

Moreover, emerging forms of journalism provide the opportunity to report on niche topics or stories that might be ignored or missed in legacy media. A journalist working for the Australian female-only journalism start-up *Mamamia* was motivated by the need not just to have those marginalised—and often female—voices featured more prominently in her output, but to diversify journalism offerings targeted at female readers in order to add "something different." In her words:

> I realised that as a consumer, one of my big frustrations when I was in magazines was that they're not seeing the shift in consumer behaviour—particularly among young women, and especially towards digital. So I really wanted to be where the action was—and I really also saw a tsunami coming that was really going to decimate traditional media. So I took the decision to walk away from traditional journalism. (personal communication, June 2, 2017)

Mass redundancies have been particularly acute in Australia in recent years, where one-quarter of the mainstream journalistic workforce is estimated to have lost their jobs, with the major media companies faced with significant losses due to digital challenges (Ricketson, Dodd, Zion, & Winarnita, 2019).

Walking away from mainstream media, however, had its trade-offs: Not only did this respondent describe the many boundaries she faced coming up towards the 'behemoths' of established, 'legacy' media targeted at a female audience, but the act of combining "both high-brow and low-brow content" was seen as a novel offering in her field, underlining the need to strongly position her "brand" in what already was a "crowded field." This points to an important aspect of boundary work raised earlier: Journalists do not only try to draw boundaries between the journalistic field and outsiders, but also clearly demarcate within the field what is considered 'good' journalism, and what isn't (Eldridge, 2016). According to this narrative, journalists ought to focus on what this respondent referred to as high-brow content, but avoid 'low-brow content.' Worse still, one ought not to mix the two.

Given its initial success in the US, one *Buzzfeed* respondent joined its UK bureau in the hope that its potential would replicate itself elsewhere, too; as of 2019, however, the company announced 17 redundancies to its UK operation (Walker, 2019). Likewise, one of our German respondents was inspired by the diversified journalism 'genres' conceived in the US—distinct to his motivation was the practice of investigative, non-profit journalism. Indeed, one of the journalists working at *Correctiv* was so motivated by the genre that he proclaimed: "This has been following me throughout my professional career" (personal communication, July 5, 2018).

Finally, emerging forms of journalism may take higher risks, as sites like *VICE* dare to follow unusual investigations in what are often dangerous territories for journalists. A journalist at *VICE* Australia explained this with the need to convey the—at times extreme—experiences of people living in such areas. He said: "For me, it's always just been about storytelling: understanding other people's lives. Talking to people whose experiences I've never had….So, exploring the far ends of what it's like to be human" (personal communication, January 15, 2019). As such, these new formats are broadening the conventional journalistic genres as well as challenging norms such as objectivity (Deuze, 2005).

5.3. Defining Journalism

In relation to the interviewees' definitions of what constitutes journalism—or what it *should* constitute—we find some boundary markers across all nations, but also differences due to geographic and historic peculiarities. Indeed, our respondents continued to adhere to existing—and widely discussed—notions of professional journalistic ideology (Deuze, 2005). Once again, our findings indicate that the long-held, frequently idealistic and often almost noble definitions of journalism as a 'social good' still apply in the minds of peripheral actors, too. At the same time, there was a growing sense that while change of journalism's forms and particularly its

distribution modes seemed inevitable, its core functions of informing and educating the public remained intact. In fact, it was striking how frequently "the need to inform" was voiced amongst our interviewees, irrespective of sociodemographic backgrounds or their level of seniority: The role of journalism as a provider of information was expressed by journalists at *Techly*, *New Matilda*, *Junkee*, *The Saturday Paper*, *Buzzfeed UK*, and *Correctiv*. Considering that informing audiences is widely reported as a universal role of journalism in global surveys of journalists (Hanitzsch et al., 2019; Weaver & Willnat, 2012), this is interesting, as it suggests that even these implicit interlopers do not deviate from this ideology, displaying a relatively conservative stance.

The UK journalists in our sample frequently referenced a political climate they described as "divisive," which they believed made it ever more urgent to uphold the role of journalism—to inform and to educate—even more strongly (journalist at *Open Democracy*, personal communication, June 14, 2018). However, technological and economic transformations affected our respondents' often traditional definitions of journalism. For instance, respondents highlighted journalism's societal role to inform and educate, as well as to mediate (Hanitzsch & Vos, 2018), whilst simultaneously being aware of economic limitations. A journalist working for *Techly*, for example, said:

> Its [role is] primarily to inform and to question someone broader on the landscape, whether that'd be cultural or political—or whatever it is. The media, for all the public relations bullshit that goes on behind the scenes, should be like a beacon of truth, and people should respect it; perhaps in some ways that's maybe a little bit earned. (personal communication, June 1, 2017)

For the journalist working at *New Matilda*—an Australian outlet similar to the widely-referenced *The Conversation*, but with a somewhat stronger focus on public policy—journalism's role as an intermediator or enabler of dialogue had not really changed, but that there were transformations both in terms of business models and distribution channels. Similarly, a respondent from *Junkee*—a digital-born outlet focussed primarily on popular culture—explained:

> The core function of journalism is telling people what they need to know. That's as true now as it's ever been….We are quite light-hearted and we try to be quite entertaining [and] we try to make news digestible. That's not the way it's always been done—but that's the way we need to do it in order to reach our audience….I think it's better to reach them at all than not to reach them—but…you can write this beautiful, long, eloquent article that goes deep and is very dry. But if no one reads it, it doesn't matter. (personal communication, December 20, 2018)

This respondent's statement points to an interesting development that shows journalism can also approach stories in entertaining ways, combining its entertainment role with the function of educating and informing its audience (Hanitzsch & Vos, 2018). In the Australian context, this appears to be an increasingly frequent occurrence, as a representative survey of Australian journalists showed some years ago (Hanusch, 2013).

With a political divisive climate and economic constraints limiting journalists' ability to act as fourth estate, it is not surprising that some respondents also defined journalism and its role normatively. A journalist at *Buzzfeed Australia* said they thought journalists' role was to "be the beacon of truth in society like never before—to really, really question *everything*" (personal communication, June 17, 2017). This may be a reaction to slander by reinforcing long-held journalistic norms and ideals (Witschge & Harbers, 2018), as well as discursively laying claim to belong to the journalistic core by distinguishing themselves from actors who do not adhere to 'real' journalistic norms (Ferrucci & Vos, 2017).

5.4. Contextual Definitions

As definitions of journalism are somewhat dependent on contextual factors related to different media systems, we unsurprisingly found nuances across our sample. Several of our UK and German respondents referenced a struggle between the ideal of journalism and the reality of everyday work, however, with different reasons and effects.

Crucially, within our UK sample, journalists identified a gap between what journalism *is* in its ideal form, and the extent to which the current status quo struggled to deliver on that idealism. In the words of one entertainment journalist at the *Huffington Post UK*:

> In an ideal world, you will perhaps hold somebody to account who sits on a platform of power, and you would champion somebody who's at the bottom and who needs to be higher up in life. I mean, that's the ideal world….[But] in my case, you deal with huge film studios, huge television distributors who have a huge amount of power, so they get to decide [who gets access]. (personal communication, January 17, 2017)

This power imbalance and the economic constraints on everyday work are echoed by a journalist at *The New European*—a printed magazine set up in the aftermath of the UK's vote to leave the European Union to cater for the 48% of the population who voted to 'remain'—who explained:

> [Journalism] is the pursuit of holding those in power to account, especially with journalists right now in the UK. And I think there still is a place for this; I think it will get better….[But] it pains me that there are some people that are getting away with murder. (personal communication, October 1, 2018)

The role of journalism in acting as a safeguard to accountability was also referenced among several Australian interviewees, notwithstanding the challenges in terms of effectively catering to that role. For example, the journalist working at *New Matilda* said that journalism:

> Is super powerful, and it is amazing how much and how quickly things change when you start asking uncomfortable questions of people in power. But I'm pretty much worried where things are going and how the media [operate] in 2018. I don't think the role of journalism has changed. What has changed are business models….We've lost so much diversity in the media landscape. (personal communication, December 20, 2018)

One such example is the merger between Nine Entertainment and Fairfax Media, leading to concerns on the erosion of 'quality' media (Muller, 2018).

A similar sentiment but with different reasoning was expressed by the German freelance journalist when he explained what journalism *is*—to his mind, "to synthesize complex information for a lay audience"—but made clear that whether it was actually able to achieve this was a different question altogether. The need—but also the difficulty—in fostering greater public understanding for such frequently complex matters was featured prominently amongst our German respondents. Many referred to the mediating, 'sense-making' role of a journalist to help navigate their readers at times when distrust in the media continues to be high (Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, 2019). One journalist working for the *Huffington Post* Germany stressed that:

> Journalism is taking on more and more of an explanatory, sorting role….Back in the day, it was a journalist's role to gather information. To research, to investigate—all that will continue to play an important role in the future, too. But I do believe that this explanatory, sorting role is ever more important in light of the explosion of information that's out there. (personal communication, September 4, 2018)

Another German journalist at the digital-born outlet *Correctiv* agreed with the need to guide readers through an environment he described as an "information tsunami." As such, his understanding of journalism went beyond merely reporting on events as they happen, but to contextualise and interpret them. To his mind:

> Every democracy needs a functioning, independent press that watches over society. Nothing has changed about this. It's just the way we go about it that has changed….It's not exactly difficult to get information in the digital age….But that makes it even more important to separate what's important from what is less so, and that requires the ability to prioritise and evaluate the information at hand. (personal communication, July 5, 2018)

While it is important to be cautious about extrapolating from the small samples examined here, one may still hypothesise that the nuances we identify may be related to the different media systems (Hallin & Mancini, 2004) and, thus, the varying journalistic cultures and traditions inherent to them. While such a hypothesis would need to be scrutinized using representative samples, the UK has a long tradition in watchdog journalism, the intellectual and interpretative role of journalism has traditionally been more pronounced in Germany (Köcher, 1986). Yet, both media systems are affected by changes. Traditionally, the UK, as a liberal media system characterised by high levels of competition and partisanship, has been more prone to commercialisation (Esser, 1999). Economic constraints on British journalism as a whole are particularly distinct (Örnebring, 2016); hence, it may be more difficult to establish a viable business, especially for 'new' media. The German journalists in our sample, in turn, focus more on the increasing availability of information as a result of digitization—and less on economic constraints, perhaps partly because economic uncertainty has been somewhat less pronounced comparatively. However, this abundance of information may affect journalists' ideal of thorough, interpretive reporting. By drawing on long-held roles of their respective journalism cultures as journalistic ideals, our respondents reinforce and sustain the boundaries of the field, maintaining "journalism as a distinct and valued occupation" (Örnebring, 2016, p. 173), regardless of their status as peripheral journalistic workers. It would therefore be important for future research to test these assumptions in more comprehensive studies.

Despite such challenges, however, our findings suggest that the idealistic and often noble notions of journalism as a profession still held water for many of the actors lying at the periphery of journalism, too. Journalism was linked to "bravery" and "idealism": although journalists were not always able to "control that outcome" (journalist at German journalism start-up *Correctiv*, personal communication, October 2, 2018), crucially, respondents did identify examples in recent times when journalism was indeed in a position to effect (policy) change: in the UK, for example, they referenced the 'Windrush' scandal leading to the resignation of former Home Secretary Amber Rudd; in Germany, they referenced the Cambridge Analytica revelations leading to a drop in the share price of Facebook. This suggests that, although crucial parts of the journalism ecosystem are subject to change (the difficulty in securing a long-term viable business model was referenced particularly frequently across the board), the journalists interviewed still subscribed to the long-held notion of their respective journalism cultures: Journalism as a 'watchdog' and a 'Fourth Estate' in holding power to scrutiny, as well as by interpreting social reality and educating audiences to "give the public the tools to control the powerful themselves" (Witschge & Harbers, 2018, p. 71).

6. Conclusion

This study sought to better understand implicit interlopers in journalism from a comparative perspective, particularly through these actors' discursive position-taking and position-claiming within the journalistic field—rather than to replicate existing research looking at the ways through which peripheral actors more generally may be able to innovate or even to reinvigorate journalism as a profession. How do implicit interlopers discursively construct their work from that of other actors in a growingly crowded journalistic field operating in an "increasingly messy definitional space" (Eldridge, 2016)? And how can we better comprehend these actors' genuine motivations at times in which their work finds itself in a "profoundly precarious context" (Deuze & Witschge, 2018)?

Irrespective of cross-national perspectives, the way journalists' discursively (re-)constructed their motivations to engage in journalism in spite of the rise of precarious labour were profoundly altruistic: Indeed, journalists pledged allegiance to an ideology of journalism still rooted in a pre-crisis era—one which sees journalism as serving a public good by providing an interpretative, sense-making role. Journalists took pride in a profession that was described as one of craftsmanship, suggesting a striking level of ideological *continuation* in the face of industrial *disruption*. Regardless, journalists also voiced specific motivations to engage in peripheral work, thus highlighting the limitations of the varying practices, hierarchies, as well as foci of interest inherent to much of contemporary, legacy media. As such, our respondents were seemingly motivated to explore innovative means to engage in journalism—while their definitions of what journalism *is* continued to adhere to existing ideals.

Despite the significant challenges, evolutions and transformations journalism as an industry is subjected to, our findings suggest that long-held ideals of journalism as a 'public good' appear to remain intact: among these were journalism as a provider of information (serving an audience with relevant news), as well as a custodian of accountability (acting as a 'watchdog' over society). Even though the sample is not representative of a wider cross-section of journalists in the three countries investigated in our study, the findings confirm that even peripheral journalists seem to exhibit many of the roles that journalism scholarship has previously identified among mainstream journalists (Hanitzsch, 2007; Hanitzsch et al., 2019; Hanitzsch & Vos, 2018; Weaver & Willnat, 2012). Specifically, we found that respondents valued journalism's role in providing a market-oriented service, as well as its adversarial role in challenging existing power structures, and roles relating to everyday life such as providing entertainment. This points to a striking level of continuation notwithstanding the aforementioned industry disruptions: Journalists expressed loyalty towards journalism as an ideal, thus upholding its long-held reputation of being "the noblest of professions" (Deuze, 2019). By reinforcing idealistic and normative standards of journalism, our respondents discursively located themselves within a long journalistic tradition, regardless of their innovative approaches. As such, they do not, in fact, *disrupt* the field, but rather *preserve* the essential functions of journalism. This is even more striking as they encounter similar constraints as legacy journalists—and struggle to keep a balance between journalistic ideals and the realities of 'the daily grind.' Yet, their responses to such a differentiation between the status quo and an ideal scenario draw on the traditions of their respective journalism cultures—instead of focusing on less established and thus disruptive functions. Overall, our findings also detail the challenges posed to the authority of traditional journalists based on the significant cultural impact such transgressive actors are having on journalistic practice, which helps further our understanding of journalism in its existing and emerging forms and functions from a comparative point of view.

Of course, this study also has some limitations. To some degree, the ongoing adherence to such long-held notions may be a consequence of the interviewees' professional backgrounds: Nine of the 18 interviewees had previously worked for a mainstream media organisation. Thus, our respondents' motivations and discourses about journalism need to be interpreted in light of this. Crucially, however, given the expressed similarities amongst respondents in pledging allegiance to long-held ideals and notions of journalism—irrespective of previous work experience—this limitation may in fact be mitigated and, thus, be far less pronounced as a result of it.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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Review

Online Participatory Journalism: A Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract

This article presents a systematic literature review of 378 studies (1997–2017) on online participatory journalism, i.e., audience participation in the professional news production process. Participation can challenge established understandings of journalism and affect the relationship between journalists and audience members as peripheral actors due to the increasingly blurred boundaries between these actors and the renegotiation of authority and power. The review captures research practices regarding the theoretical, conceptual and empirical approach as well as results pertaining to the impact participation has on the journalist–audience relationship and is both interdisciplinary and global in nature. The results show that research mostly focuses on journalism in Europe and North America and examines participation in the interpretation stage rather than in the formation or dissemination stage of the news production process. Longitudinal and comparative studies, examinations of regional and local participation, in-depth audience studies as well as analyses of participation in all three production stages are rare. 121 studies explicitly deal with participation's impact on the journalist–audience relationship and produce conflicting results: 51% see journalists retaining control over news production process; 42% see shared power; and 7% see mixed results. Notably, power structures differ depending on the examined world region, production stage, and actor perspective. The review illustrates the status quo of research practices as well as the role the audience as peripheral actors play in the news production process and concludes with five observations about the field as well as future avenues to close identified research gaps.

Keywords

audience; boundary work; digitalization; journalism; participatory journalism; online; news

1. Introduction

This article focuses on online participatory journalism as a particular way in which audience members as peripheral actors contribute to journalism and presents a systematic literature review of research in this field. Participatory journalism is understood here as audience participation in the news production process within professional journalistic contexts (Abbott, 2017; Borger, 2016; Borger, van Hoof, Costera Meijer, & Sanders, 2013; Nip, 2006; Singer et al., 2011; Westlund & Ekström, 2018). Treating journalism as a profession is not unproblematic or even uncontested and conceptualizations thereof differ (Carlson, 2017). We follow Borger's (2016) elaborations on the professional model and its parameters: Professional journal-

istic contexts are those in which journalists work abiding by journalistic norms and values, with journalistic degrees or training, for a professional news organization and with payment for their work. While audience participation in professional journalism far predates the digital age (Lee & Tandoc, 2017), it has become faster, cheaper, more automatized, more inclusive, and more multifaceted due to digitalization (Hermida, 2012; Lee & Tandoc, 2017; Lewis, 2012), which is why the focus of this article lies specifically on online participation.

The audience's involvement can challenge established understandings of journalism and its producers. While participating members of the audience can still be understood as (one of various groups of) strangers and thus peripheral actors to journalism (Holton & Belair-

Gagnon, 2018), they play a role in the professional news production process. This affects boundaries in the relationship between journalists and their audience, which are becoming increasingly blurred as journalistic authority as well as control and power in the news production process are being renegotiated (Carlson, 2017; Deuze, Bruns, & Neuberger, 2007; Domingo et al., 2008; Lewis & Molyneux, 2018).

In examining participatory journalism (hereafter, the term is used to describe online participation), scholars have brought forth a plethora of studies that have come to conflicting findings regarding the relationship between journalists and the audience, with some indicating continuity in journalistic power and others indicating a change towards shared power. By synthesizing pertinent studies, this literature review strives to provide clarity regarding and possible explanations for these conflicting findings. More fundamentally, it further aims to generate a comprehensive overview of the theoretical, conceptual, and empirical approaches used to examine participatory journalism. Knowledge about how, in which contexts and with which results regarding its impact on the journalist–audience relationship research on participatory journalism is conducted can contribute insights on and a better understanding of the (more or less powerful) role peripheral actors play in the news production process. At the same time, the analysis can establish a broader basis for future research on participatory journalism and map out new directions for future studies based on disclosed research gaps.

2. Audience Participation in the Professional News Production Process

The term "participatory journalism" is used inconsistently and interchangeably with other terms within the literature (Abbott, 2017; Hermida, 2011; Nip, 2006; Singer et al., 2011). This article's understanding of participatory journalism therefore needs to be elaborated on more closely in order to identify specific forms and the corresponding terminology used for them (see Section 2.1). However, we first differentiate participatory journalism from the related but nevertheless distinct concept with which it most often is conflated: citizen journalism. While the term participatory journalism—as understood here—delineates audience participation in the professional news production process, the term citizen journalism is most often understood to describe autonomous audience production of news without professional involvement (Abbott, 2017; Nip, 2006). Interchangeable use continues despite this differentiation, which has consequences for the methodological approach to the systematic review and is therefore discussed again below.

2.1. Developing a Taxonomy of Audience Participation

Scholars have used different stages of the news production process to categorize, describe and analyze forms of participation. For example, Domingo et al. (2008) and—in later work developed from Domingo et al. (2008)—Hermida (2011) conceptualize the following stages: access/observation; selection/filtering; processing/editing; distribution; and interpretation. Based on this previous conceptualization, we distinguish three stages of the professional news production process: (1) formation; (2) dissemination; and (3) interpretation of news. Online audience participation can be a part of the news production process in each stage and take on various forms (Table 1).

2.1.1. Stage 1: Formation

In the first stage, audience participation can take on six forms. First, the audience can finance journalistic platforms, projects, start-ups, or the journalistic coverage of certain issues via crowdfunding (Jian & Usher, 2014; Malik & Shapiro, 2017). The audience can furthermore influence the journalists' content selection: On the one hand, ideas and topics for news are taken directly from qualitative audience contributions found in user-generated content (UGC), which journalists can scrape from the internet, receive without solicitation or attain by inviting users to contribute ideas (Ahva, 2017; Domingo et al., 2008; Santana, 2011). On the other hand, journalists' content selection is guided by quantitative insights from audience metrics and web analytics (Anderson, 2011; Lee & Tandoc, 2017) or audience polls (Lawrence, Radcliffe, & Schmidt, 2018; Netzer, Tenenboim-Weinblatt, & Shifman, 2014), which indicate the popularity of certain news stories and topics. Moreover, the audience can contribute actual content: In order to supplement their professional reporting, journalists draw from UGC, for example in the form of pictures and videos (Deuze et al., 2007; Hellmueller & Li, 2015; Hermida, 2012; Karlsson, 2011; Paulussen & Ugille, 2008). Sometimes, journalists use content gained via crowdsourcing, such as information gathered or even analyzed by the audience (Aitamurto, 2016; Hermida, 2011; Malik & Shapiro, 2017). Finally, members of the audience can be involved in the writing, editing and revision process (Ahva, 2017; Deuze et al., 2007; Hellmueller & Li, 2015; Netzer et al., 2014) or even write entire news pieces themselves that are then published in professional contexts (Ahva, 2017; Deuze et al., 2007; Hermida, 2011; Karlsson, 2010; Netzer et al., 2014).

2.1.2. Stage 2: Dissemination

In the second stage, the audience can participate in two forms. First, the audience can enhance a news piece's prominence by clicking, reading, liking, rating, recommending, sharing and/or commenting on it on the news site itself. The thus aggregated data can cause these news pieces to "go up" on the website or appear as "trending," "most liked," "most viewed," "most commented," "most shared," "highly rated," or similarly labeled (Domingo et al., 2008; Hermida, 2011; Lee &

Tandoc, 2017; Netzer et al., 2014). Second and likewise, the audience can also enhance a news piece's prominence by clicking, reading, liking, rating, recommending, sharing and/or commenting on it on external platforms (e.g., in social media and e-mail) and thus draw attention to the news piece (Almgren & Olsson, 2016; Hermida, 2012; Larsson, 2018).

2.1.3. Stage 3: Interpretation

In the third stage, there are four forms of audience participation. Audience members can partake in polls and quizzes about specific news pieces or general public affairs information covered in the news and thus check their comprehension of the news piece or their public affairs knowledge via interaction (Scacco, Muddimann, & Stroud, 2016). The audience can provide journalists with qualitative feedback on their work (e.g., in comments, blogs or via e-mail) by pointing out mistakes, making corrections, and voicing general criticism or by expressing praise (Heise, Loosen, Reimer, & Schmidt, 2014; Karlsson, 2010, 2011; Lawrence et al., 2018; Lee & Tandoc, 2017). Audience metrics and web analytics can constitute a form of quantitative feedback (Duffy, Ling, & Tandoc, 2018). Finally, this stage encompasses discussing the news in the form of discourse, debates, and interactivity between the audience and the journalistic content, between the audience and journalists, or between various audience members themselves (Deuze et al., 2007; Domingo et al., 2008; Heise et al., 2014; Hille & Bakker, 2014; Karlsson, 2010, 2011; Santana, 2011; Swart, Peters, & Broersma, 2019). Just like participation in the dissemination stage, participation in the interpretation stage takes place both within professional news sites, namely in comment fields, discussion forums, chats, blogs, or polls (e.g., Domingo et al., 2008) and outside of professional news sites, namely via e-mail as well as in comments, groups, or thought pieces in social media (e.g., Swart et al., 2019).

While this study's understanding of participatory journalism is narrow regarding the professional context of audience participation—and thus distinct from the concept of citizen journalism—in two other ways, it is broad: First, regarding the degree of involvement (see also, e.g., Netzer et al., 2014), since both more passive, low-involvement types such as reading news comments and more active, high-involvement types such as writing entire news pieces are of interest, and second, with regard to the platform on which participation takes place, with both the news media's own platforms and external platforms such as social media being included (see also Westlund & Ekström, 2018).

Furthermore, the focus on online participation does not exclude an offline component. Malik and Shapiro (2017, p. 15) describe the border between digital and analogue journalism as "porous," which also applies to participatory journalism, where offline and online participation are not mutually exclusive. Thus, studies that examine participation in both online and offline environments are relevant to the literature review, while studies focusing exclusively on offline participation (e.g., letters to the editor) are excluded.

2.2. Impact of Audience Participation on the Journalist–Audience Relationship

Participation's impact on the journalist-audience relationship is often examined within the larger context of journalistic boundaries (Lewis, 2012). As Table 1 illustrates, there has been a shift in the understanding of journalism and its producers in that the formerly established boundaries between journalists as producers and the audience as consumers of journalism have become blurred in all three stages of the news production process. This, in turn, pertains directly to questions of power and control (Lewis & Molyneux, 2018) and to questions regarding journalistic authority as "a contingent relationship in which certain actors come to pos-

Table 1. Taxonomy of forms of audience participation in the news production process.

Stages	Forms of participation
Formation	• Audience finances news via crowdfunding • Audience influences content selection qualitatively • Audience influences content selection quantitatively • Audience content supplements professional reporting • Audience involved in writing, editing, and revision • Audience produces entire news pieces
Dissemination	• Audience enhances prominence of news on journalistic sites • Audience enhances prominence of news on external platforms
Interpretation	• Audience checks comprehension via interaction • Audience gives journalists qualitative feedback • Audience gives journalists quantitative feedback • Audience involved in discussion of news

Note: The distinction of the three stages is based on the stages of the news production process by Domingo et al. (2008) and Hermida (2011).

sess a right to create legitimate discursive knowledge about events in the world for others" (Carlson, 2017, p. 13). Focusing on the journalist-audience relationship, the audience may be transitioning from solely being "others" to also joining journalists as "certain actors" (Carlson, 2017, p. 13).

Strangers or peripheral actors to journalism are particular drivers of journalistic change (Holton & Belair-Gagnon, 2018) and the participating audience is no exception. But despite the general consensus that participation has led to changes, the specific extent of participatory journalism's impact on the boundaries of journalism is disputed. Broadly speaking, two stances seem to have emerged on this issue, one more reflective of change, the other more reflective of continuity in journalism (see also Carlson & Lewis, 2019).

The first stance is that audience participation causes a fundamental "shift from a top-down lecture to an open conversation" (Paulussen & Ugille, 2008, p. 25) in the journalist–audience relationship. This stance therefore describes a situation of shared power, in which the audience and journalists act as peer-level collaborators (e.g., Aitamurto, 2016; Anderson, 2011; Jian & Usher, 2014). The second stance is that audience participation has a less fundamental impact: Journalists allow audience participation to a limited extent, but retain both power and their traditional gatekeeping roles (e.g., Domingo et al., 2008; Heise et al., 2014; Lawrence et al., 2018). This continuous imbalance of power has also been ascribed to journalists' wanting to avoid problematic contributions in the form of so-called "dark participation," which seem to be particularly prevalent on external platforms (Quandt, 2018), or the audience simply not making use of the possible forms of participation (Larsson, 2011).

2.3. Research Questions

In order to provide a comprehensive and systematic analysis of how, in which contexts, and with which results regarding its impact on the journalist–audience relationship research on participatory journalism is conducted, two main research questions are posed:

- RQ1: Which research practices can be identified regarding the theoretical, conceptual, and empirical approach?
- RQ2: What results regarding the impact of participatory journalism on the relationship between journalists and the audience can be discerned?

3. Methodological Approach

Systematic reviews synthesize primary scholarship on a specific subject in order to both disclose the status quo and identify research gaps regarding this subject. The systematic strategies for identifying and analyzing relevant studies were developed following established and proven guidelines (Cooper, 1998).

The goal of this study is to conduct an exhaustive analysis of all English-language empirical studies published in peer-reviewed journals that deal specifically and solely with online participatory journalism. Relevant studies were located via a database search in Scopus. A database search was chosen in contrast to focusing on specific journals because the boundaries of journalism research are not always clear-cut (Wahl-Jorgensen & Hanitzsch, 2009). Concentrating on selected communication or journalism journals would limit the review's comprehensiveness. Besides achieving an interdisciplinary scope, a database search includes minor journals with a low impact factor. Thus, its scope is more global than focusing on North American- and European-dominated (Wahl-Jorgensen & Hanitzsch, 2009) major and high-ranking journals.

As previously mentioned, research on participatory journalism is often conducted under other terms such as "citizen journalism" or "UGC" and research conducted under the term "participatory journalism" may deal with other concepts (Abbott, 2017; Hermida, 2011; Nip, 2006; Singer et al., 2011). Simply using the term "participatory journalism" to uncover relevant literature would therefore be insufficient. Hence, a scoping study was conducted in order to develop appropriate search terms from previous literature and to achieve content validity. For this, we drew upon 42 publications (see Appendix) that fulfill the defined inclusion criteria—(1) English-language, (2) published in a peer-reviewed journal, (3) features an empirical study, (4) deals specifically and solely with online participatory journalism—and derived search terms from their keywords. We deliberately included publications without the terms "participation/participatory" in their title, abstract or keywords, publications featuring both low- and high-involvement forms of participation, publications from all three stages of the news production process and both older and more recent publications. The 42 publications comprise 152 unique keywords, which were grouped into the three areas of: (1) news/journalism; (2) forms of audience participation; and (3) digitalization. Based on the most important terms per area, the following search string was applied: "(journalis* OR news OR newsroom* OR newspaper*) AND (analytics OR audience* OR blog* OR citizen* OR comment* OR crowd* OR engagement OR interactivity OR metrics OR reader OR sharing OR participat* OR reciproc* OR user) AND (digital* OR online OR web*)".

The search was conducted in the titles, abstracts, and keywords of all Scopus publications up to and including 2017 and limited to English-language journal articles (including in press), leading to 4259 potentially relevant publications. Two coders examined the titles and abstracts of these publications as to whether they fulfilled the inclusion criteria, resulting in 766 potentially relevant publications. Full articles could be obtained for 760 publications. The author then examined all full articles, resulting in 372 relevant publications. In this step, publications were most often excluded because they dealt with citizen

journalism or with broader aspects of digital journalism such as journalists' general social media use. Six publications included two studies on participatory journalism, bringing the total to 378 reviewed studies.

The deductively developed codebook contained both quantitative and openly coded qualitative variables related to information on: (1) the publication and its author(s); (2) the study and the examined stage(s) of participation; (3) the theoretical approach; (4) the conceptual approach, including forms and types of participation; (5) the empirical approach, comprising both research designs and settings; and (6) the results regarding the journalist–audience relationship. Following a pretest, some minor adjustments were made. Two researchers (Holsti = .94) performed the coding. Regarding the content variables, agreement was highest for the research design variables (Holsti = .97) and lowest for the results (Holsti = .75).

4. Results

The number of publications on participatory journalism (N = 372) has increased significantly: 1% of publications stem from 1997–2002; 2% from 2003–2007; 23% from 2008–2012; and 74% from 2013–2017, with a peak of 67 publications in 2015. For all publications, the year of the initial publication was coded, even if the year of an advance online publication differs from the year of the subsequent issue publication. The publications are published in 148 different journals. For each journal, the subject areas listed in SCImago (2019) were used to determine the served disciplines, while self-descriptions on the journals' websites were drawn upon for those not listed in SCImago (Table 2).

Of the 148 journals, 69 are communication journals and contain 71% of all publications. Communication journals were identified by their being listed in the subject category "Communication" in SCImago (2019). We follow Carlson, Robinson, Lewis, and Berkowitz's (2018) classification of journalism studies as a subdiscipline of communication and therefore searched for journalism journals within the communication journals. Ten journalism journals were identified manually by their titles including the keyword "journalism," "press" or "newspaper." They contain 34% of all publications. The dominant journals are *Journalism Practice* (31 publications), *Digital Journalism* (28), *New Media & Society* (19), *Journalism* (17) and *Journalism Studies* (16). For the 111 publications in these top five journals, we checked the relevance of special issues and found that 30 publications stem from 17 such issues, although *New Media & Society* contains none. Notably, nine of these special issues—containing twelve publications—emerged from the biennial "Future of Journalism Conference" in Cardiff. Besides this, three special issues—containing ten publications—deal specifically with participatory journalism and/or the related concept of citizen journalism. Returning to the entire corpus of 372 publications, we find that most (teams of) authors are North American (42%) or European (41%). Most first authors are from the US (39%), with the UK (13%) and Germany (5%) ranking a distant second and third. Over time, there is an increase of publications from non-communication journals, a decline of (teams of) authors from North America, an increase of (teams of) authors from Europe, and a small increase of author teams from multiple regions. Only 8% of publications empirically focus on offline in addition to online participation.

RQ1 deals with the research practices of the reviewed studies (N = 378). Changes over time are pointed out when present. 94% of the studies have one or more theoretical contexts. The considerable number of more than 400 openly coded contexts corresponds to an analy-

Table 2. Disciplines of the journals.

Discipline	n	%
Social Sciences	122	82
Arts and Humanities	32	22
Computer Science	28	19
Psychology	15	10
Medicine	12	8
Business, Management and Accounting	9	6
Engineering	8	5
Environmental Science	5	3
Biochemistry, Genetics and Molecular Biology	2	1
Decision Sciences	2	1
Economics, Econometrics and Finance	2	1
Agriculture and Biological Sciences	1	1
Earth and Planetary Sciences	1	1
Mathematics	1	1
Multidisciplinary	1	1

Notes: N = 148. Coding of multiple disciplines per journal was possible. Disciplines were determined using the subject areas listed in SCImago (2019).

sis of disciplinary perspectives and theories in *Journalism* and *Journalism Studies* by Steensen and Ahva (2015), who found theoretical approaches in journalism studies to be "characterized by the 'long tail'" (p. 12) with a few popular and a plethora of more seldom-referred to theories. Only seven contexts are used in more than 5% of all studies: public sphere (13%), gatekeeping (9%), interactivity (8%), deliberation (7%), framing (6%), citizen journalism (6%), and participatory journalism (6%).

Regarding the conceptual approach, only 31% of all studies explicitly address participatory journalism in their title, keywords and/or abstracts. The three stages of the news production process are not focused on equally: 30% of the studies deal with the formation, 23% with the dissemination, and 77% with the interpretation of news. The majority of studies focus on just one stage (77%) as opposed to two (16%) or all three stages (7%). The examined stages are reflected in the examined forms (Table 3), with audience involvement in the discussion of news (74%) as the by far most often examined form. Over time, the number of examined forms has increased: While period one (1997–2002) features only two forms, period two (2003–2007) already features seven forms and the last two periods feature all twelve forms. The distribution in Table 3 is reflective of user comments being the most prevalent and one of the oldest participation

types (Ziegele, 2019) as well as of the emergence of new participatory forms over time.

Turning to the empirical approach and specifically the research design, multi-method studies (25%) are less common than single-method studies (75%). Most studies are quantitative (50%), followed by qualitative (37%) and mixed methods (13%). Content analyses are employed more often (66%) than interviews (44%)—comprising both surveys and in-depth interviews—and observations (6%). Only 11% of all studies employ longitudinal and only 12% employ experimental designs in at least one of the applied methods. The dominance of content analyses and interviews—especially surveys—and quantitative approaches in general reflects the results of previous reviews on issues that are aspects of or related to participatory journalism (e.g., Kümpel, Karnowski, & Keyling, 2015; Naab & Sehl, 2017).

Regarding the settings, a clear focus on European (39%) and North American (38%) journalism emerges (Table 4). Notably, the North American focus decreases while the European focus increases from period three (2008–2012) to four (2013–2017). Due to the earlier onset of an economic crisis in legacy media in the US (Nielsen, 2016), participation may have played a larger role for economic-strategic reasons—i.e., to acquire free content, build audience loyalty, optimize con-

Table 3. Forms of participation examined in the studies.

Form	Stage	n	%
Audience involved in discussion of news	Interpretation	278	74
Audience enhances prominence of news on external platforms	Dissemination	64	17
Audience content supplements professional reporting	Formation	63	17
Audience gives journalists qualitative feedback	Interpretation	47	12
Audience enhances prominence of news on journalistic sites	Dissemination	41	11
Audience produces entire news pieces	Formation	39	10
Audience influences content selection qualitatively	Formation	33	9
Audience influences content selection quantitatively	Formation	21	6
Audience gives journalists quantitative feedback	Interpretation	12	3
Audience checks comprehension via interaction	Interpretation	11	3
Audience finances news via crowdfunding	Formation	11	3
Audience involved in writing, editing and revision	Formation	7	2

Notes: N = 378. Coding of multiple forms per study was possible. The distinction of the three stages is based on the stages of the news production process by Domingo et al. (2008) and Hermida (2011).

Table 4. Regional focus of studies.

Region	n	%
Europe	146	39
North America	145	38
Asia	31	8
Multiple regions	23	6
Africa	12	3
Oceania	9	2
South America	6	2
No information provided/unclear	6	2

Note: N = 378.

tent selection, and generate traffic (Anderson & Revers, 2018; Batsell, 2015; Borger et al., 2013; Holton & Belair-Gagnon, 2018)—in North American before it did in European journalism. The shift in focus—and the earlier presented shift in authorship—could also be a reflection of the more general trend Hanusch and Vos (2019) find in their longitudinal review of comparative studies of journalism: "The pole of power is shifting from the US to Europe" (p. 19). 12% of all studies are comparative, but only 6% examine countries from multiple world regions, which reflects the practical challenges of comparative research. Participation is researched most often in the US (41%), the UK (16%), and Germany (8%). This Western dominance—especially the Anglo-American dominance—also emerges in other reviews in this area (e.g., Kümpel et al., 2015) and in (comparative) journalism studies in general (Hanusch & Vos, 2019; Wahl-Jorgensen & Hanitzsch, 2009). Studies of participatory journalism mostly focus on the national level (63%), followed by multiple levels (11%), the local level (8%), and the regional level (4%), which mirrors journalism studies' institutionalized focus on "prestigious, elite, and well resourced newsrooms" (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2019, p. 165).

Looking at the perspective from which participatory journalism is examined, the audience perspective (33%) outweighs the journalist perspective (19%) and both perspectives (7%), although 42% of all studies feature no perspective. While this seems to indicate that much more is known about audience views than journalists' views, a closer look at the employed methods tells a different story. Of the 70 studies from the journalist perspective, 52 (14% overall) conduct qualitative interviews and thus provide in-depth insights into journalists' views on participation. Of the 124 studies from the audience perspective, only twelve (3% overall) conduct qualitative interviews with audience members. The majority of these twelve studies interview highly involved audience members—most often active contributors of news pieces but also members active as commenters or in

crowdsourcing—while only two studies focus on lowly involved audience members. Furthermore, 42 of the 46 experimental studies are from the audience perspective. Notably, only 6% of the studies focus on a specific relationship, i.e., examine participation from the view of both journalists and their specific (connected) audience.

RQ2 focuses on the results regarding the impact of participatory journalism on the journalist–audience relationship. The impact is only dealt with in 32% of all examined studies. In these studies (N = 121), power over the news production process is most often seen to remain with the journalists (51%). Less often, power is seen as shared (42%). 7% of the studies come to mixed results. This Janus-faced and fairly balanced picture mirrors the two stances on power described above, although notable differences and stronger imbalances emerge depending on the context (Table 5): Power is predominantly seen as shared in North America but as remaining with the journalists in Europe. Journalists are perceived mostly as remaining in power in the formation and interpretation stages, while studies in the dissemination stage predominantly see shared power. Finally, studies from the journalist and audience perspective mostly see shared power, albeit with journalists to a lesser extent than the audience.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

Based on the results, five observations can be made about the field of participatory journalism in general and the results regarding the journalist–audience relationship in particular.

5.1. Participatory Journalism Is an Interdisciplinary Field

While clearly dominated by communication and journalism studies, the large and growing number of publications in non-communication journals indicates an increasing research interest in audience participation outside of journalism and even communication studies. This

Table 5. Differences in the impact of audience participation on the journalist–audience relationship by context.

	Context	Impact on the journalist–audience relationship		
		Shared power (in %)	Power remains with journalists (in %)	Mixed results (in %)
Regional focus	North America (n = 45)	56	40	4
	Europe (n = 53)	28	66	6
Stage	Formation (n = 81)	40	54	6
	Dissemination (n = 38)	55	42	3
	Interpretation (n = 78)	39	55	6
Perspective	Journalist (n = 49)	49	43	8
	Audience (n = 20)	60	30	10
	Overall	42	51	7

Notes: N = 121. Percentages are given for easier comparability despite the context subsets' small sizes. The distinction of the three stages is based on the stages of the news production process by Domingo et al. (2008) and Hermida (2011).

is underlined by the fact that journals publishing research on participatory journalism serve a wide variety of disciplines despite being strongly rooted in social sciences (Table 2), just like (digital) journalism studies in general (Steensen & Ahva, 2015; Steensen, Larsen, Hågvar, & Fonn, 2019).

5.2. Participatory Journalism Is a Growing Field

Participatory journalism's growth is not only illustrated by the increase in publications, but becomes especially apparent in comparison to the overall output in journalism studies: While Steensen and Ahva (2015) saw a significant increase of articles published in *Journalism Studies* and *Journalism* from 378 in 2000–2006 to 652 in 2007–2013, the number of publications on participatory journalism found in this study increased from 8 in 1997–2006 to 138 in 2007–2013. Besides increasing non-communication interest, possible explanations for this growth are the emergence of relevant journals (*Journalism Practice*, *Digital Journalism*) as well as the documented increase in forms and types of participation over time. The research interest in capturing and understanding such new objects (see also Carlson & Lewis, 2019) may be a reason why longitudinal studies are rare. Furthermore, results for the top five journals indicate that while special issues certainly are an important driver of research on participatory journalism, most studies are published independently from such calls. This shows that there is a wide scholarly interest in the topic that goes beyond special issues—often resulting from themed conferences and workshops or specific events—and that may explain its increasing prominence.

5.3. Participatory Journalism Is a Fragmented Field

The increase in examined forms of participation indicates more and more specific research interests, while the multitude of non-communication journals and theoretical contexts mirrors the diverse backgrounds against which research is being conducted. Considering the most common theoretical contexts, for example, some scholars are interested in participation's democratic potential or lack thereof (e.g., public sphere, interactivity, deliberation) and others focus on questions of selection (e.g., gatekeeping, framing). Even within contexts, different stances may be driving research (regarding research in democratic contexts, see, e.g., Anderson & Revers, 2018, for a reconstruction of the evolution of both optimistic and pessimistic views on participation). It seems that participatory journalism is predominantly explored in light of these specific interests that even range into the natural sciences (Table 2). This could be an explanation for why so few studies explicitly address participatory journalism, why research seldom considers more than one stage of participation, and why so few studies focus on overarching questions of power in the journalist-audience relationship.

5.4. Research on Participatory Journalism Focuses on Journalists' Views and Audiences' (Re)Actions

The results pertaining to the actor perspective indicate that there may be differently nuanced research aims on the part of scholars when it comes to the actors involved in participatory journalism: While scholars seem to be interested in journalists' views on participation, their interest in the audience appears to focus more on their actions in participatory formats (e.g., the amount and content of user comments) or on their reactions to participation (e.g., influence of certain kinds of comments on the audience). Another reason for the dominance of in-depth views from journalists may be easier accessibility of journalists for interviews due to existing contacts and quick identification of relevant interview partners. The fact that most interviewed audience members are highly involved indicates that easy identification and accessibility could also play a role here. The lack of research on specific relationships from both perspectives may involve both accessibility and feasibility issues, since gaining access to and examining one actor group alone is less laborious and costly than doing so with two connected groups. While the field has therefore generated in-depth knowledge on journalists' views, in-depth insights into (connected) audience views are scarce despite the extensive focus on their perspective.

5.5. The Impact of Audience Participation on the Journalist–Audience Relationship Is Nuanced

While the Janus-faced picture regarding power over the news production process is unsurprising, the review reveals interesting insights regarding the context. This shows that while participatory journalism is a global and pervasive phenomenon, its impact on the boundaries of journalism is nuanced: Table 5 illustrates that the fairly balanced overall impact disappears and notable differences as well as stronger imbalances (apart from the journalistic perspective) emerge when specific contexts are considered. What are possible explanations for the differences? The audience may be seen as more powerful in North America than in Europe due to the early onset of an economic crisis in US legacy media (Nielsen, 2016) and the consequent need for participation for economic-strategic reasons (Anderson & Revers, 2018; Batsell, 2015; Borger et al., 2013; Holton & Belair-Gagnon, 2018). While Borger et al. (2013) note that participation is nevertheless "kept at bay in terms of participants being co-decision makers or co-storytellers, positions that challenge journalists' authority" (p. 129), the North American audience's more powerful position could be due to its involvement dating back further than in Europe, possibly allowing it to acquire a more sustained role in the news production process over time. This may be driven especially by participation in the dissemination stage. That power is predominantly seen as shared here in contrast to the formation and interpretation stages indicates that

journalists may value help in having their work spread and in increasing its prominence and thus traffic (see Borger et al., 2013) but want to retain control over the selection and understanding of their work. Journalists have long been hesitant to allow participation in the formation stage (e.g., Domingo et al., 2008; Lawrence et al., 2018), but the findings regarding the interpretation stage may be more nuanced. Two possible reasons for hesitance on the part of journalists to share power in this stage may be the costs of comment moderation for newsrooms (e.g., Hille & Bakker, 2014) and, as already discussed briefly above, fears of "dark participation" (Quandt, 2018). Recent trends of restricting comment opportunities for audiences after years of expanding comment sections (Ziegele, 2019) illustrate journalists' retention of power. That studies from the audience perspective see shared power much more often than studies from the journalist perspective could be explained by the fact that the audience may have only little understanding of the professional news production process and therefore be unaware of all the places journalists (can and do) limit the impact of audience participation. Journalists are certainly more aware of this process and may thus see the power of the audience as less pronounced. Furthermore, the strong influence of the context could be seen as a reflection of the fragmentation of the field: The differences mirror the diverse theoretical contexts and research interests scholars bring to the table, the manifold different forms that are examined and the various empirical approaches and settings that are employed. Overall, the results regarding RQ2 indicate that generalized statements on participatory journalism's impact on the journalistic-audience relationship should only be made with caution. But maybe the takeaway of RQ2 should not only be that context is vital, but—more fundamentally—that the audience plays a (more or less powerful) role in the news production process across various contexts, while appearing particularly powerful in North America, in the dissemination stage and from the audience perspective. In order to better understand where journalistic authority is changing and peripheral actors are becoming central, more research on the contexts of participation is needed—as well as comprehensive overviews and comparisons of the influence of these different contexts. Overall, the results indicate that while participation certainly influences the power dynamics, it does not necessitate a radical reconceptualization of journalism and its producers, but rather a broader and more nuanced understanding thereof which reflects both the continuity and change within the boundaries of journalism.

Based on the results and identified research gaps, we list four important aspects for future research. While the list is certainly not comprehensive, it serves as a starting point for further inquiries into participatory journalism.

- The field needs more longitudinal studies (e.g., Nelson & Tandoc, 2019). While longitudinal stud-

ies face both methodological and organizational challenges, they are crucial in illustrating both continuity and change (Carlson & Lewis, 2019) over time. Furthermore, longitudinal comparative research allows researchers to capture similarities and differences over time as well as the influence of greater transformation processes (Esser & Hanitzsch, 2012). In light of the field's growth—driven partially by an increasing number of participation forms—a reflection and differentiation of both sustained and fleeting trends as well as of their causes seems to hold rich potential and may help put the manifold cross-sectional results into better perspective.

- The results identify a need for (cross-regionally) comparative (e.g., Netzer et al., 2014) and holistic research—with regard to the three production stages (e.g., Domingo et al., 2008) and the actor perspectives (e.g., Heise et al., 2014)—that captures both opportunities for participation and its impact on the journalist–audience relationship. While the inclusion of further context factors would be welcome, the review shows the regional focus, stage, and perspective to be three of the most important factors when it comes to differences. The study's results (Table 3, Table 4) indicate which forms of participation and which world regions have been somewhat neglected so far and the research of which may therefore contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of participatory journalism and its impact. The uncovered differences (Table 5) illustrate the importance not only of a holistic but also of a nuanced approach: Researches should bear in mind the differences and take possible explanations—as discussed: economic developments, journalists' reluctance to share power, and the audience's understanding of the news production process—into account when designing their research instruments.

- Research should move away from the focus on elites (e.g., Canter, 2013; Mitchelstein, 2011): World regions besides North America and Europe (Table 4) as well as the local and regional level have been particularly neglected. Not only do local and regional media appear to be more open to participation (Lewis, Holton, & Coddington, 2014), these levels have also been hit harder by declines (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2019) and thus may more likely turn to participatory journalism to counteract economic challenges. Research in this area may therefore lead to interesting insights that differ from national media.

- Studies focusing on both actor perspectives in specific relationships (e.g., Wenzel, 2019) could provide a more complete and accurate picture of participation's impact on the relationship than just capturing one perspective. Specifically, the results show that more qualitative audience re-

search (e.g., Ahva, 2017) is needed in order to better understand its views on participatory journalism and to provide more insights on the characteristics and motivations of those peripheral actors that are participating in the news production process. Importantly, qualitative efforts should not only focus on active, highly involved actors, but also on previously less examined passive, lowly involved or even non-participating actors, since research has shown that this reflects a large portion of the audience (e.g., Borger et al., 2013).

The review's results and discussion must be seen in light of several limitations. First, the review is only exhaustive for the inclusion criteria outlined in Section 3 and the journals included in Scopus. Second, the body of literature reviewed depends strongly on our understanding of participatory journalism. A different definition—e.g., one including citizen journalism—would most likely lead to a different picture than the one painted here (see Abbott, 2017, for differences in scholarship on participatory and citizen journalism). Third, scoping studies are not infallible and relevant publications may have been missed despite our best efforts to develop a comprehensive search string. Fourth, including non-English publications as well as further source types besides journals—e.g., such seminal publications as Singer et al. (2011), which is the most cited book in work published in *Digital Journalism* (Steensen et al., 2019)—may lead to different results. Fifth, online participatory journalism is a moving target. Thus, the results of and insights based on this review are somewhat preliminary in nature. Finally, it is important to stress that while the review reveals how participatory journalism is examined, this only allows limited conclusions to be drawn on the actual practice of participatory journalism. At the very least, we hope the transparent description of our approach allows potential optimizations or extensions of the review to build upon our work—both the taxonomy (Table 1) and the empirical results—without problem.

In conclusion, this article provides a systematic review of 378 studies on online participatory journalism, revealing the predominant research practices in the field as well as results pertaining to participation's impact on the journalist-audience relationship. It thus advances research on peripheral actors in the form of the participating audience members and their impact on journalism. At the same time, it highlights remaining research gaps and proposes future avenues that aim to further deepen our understanding of who these audience members are, what drives them to participate, and how this participation changes their relationship with professional journalists and power structures in journalism.

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Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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Appendix

Table A1. 42 publications drawn upon for scoping study.

No.	Publication
1	Ahva, L. (2017). How is participation practiced by "in-betweeners" of journalism? *Journalism Practice*, *11*(2/3), 142–159.
2	Aitamurto, T. (2011). The impact of crowdfunding on journalism. *Journalism Practice*, *5*(4), 429–445.
3	Aitamurto, T. (2016). Crowdsourcing as a knowledge-search method in digital journalism. *Digital Journalism*, *4*(2), 280–297.
4	Almgren, S. (2017). Undoing churnalism? *Digital Journalism*, *5*(8), 1060–1079.
5	Almgren, S., & Olsson, T. (2016). Commenting, sharing and tweeting news. *Nordicom Review*, *37*(2), 67–81.
6	Anderson, C. W. (2011). Between creative and quantified audiences: Web metrics and changing patterns of newswork in local US newsrooms. *Journalism*, *12*(5), 550–566.
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16	Heise, N., Loosen, W., Reimer, J., & Schmidt, J.-H. (2014). Including the audience. *Journalism Studies*, *15*(4), 411–430.
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18	Hermida, A., Fletcher, F., Korell, D., & Logan, D. (2012). Share, like, recommend. *Journalism Studies*, *13*(5/6), 815–824.
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29	Lawrence, R. G., Radcliffe, D., & Schmidt, T. R. (2018). Practicing engagement. *Journalism Practice*, *12*(10), 1220–1240.
30	Loosen, W., Häring, M., Kurtanović, Z., Merten, L., Reimer, J., van Roessel, L., & Maalej, W. (2017). Making sense of user comments. *Studies in Communication and Media*, *6*(4), 333–364.
31	McElroy, K. (2013). Where old (gatekeepers) meets new (media): Herding reader comments into print. *Journalism Practice*, *7*(6), 755–771.

Table A1. (Cont.) 42 publications drawn upon for scoping study.

No.	Publication
32	Netzer, Y., Tenenboim-Weinblatt, K., & Shifman, L. (2014). The construction of participation in news websites. *Journalism Studies*, *15*(5), 619–631.
33	Paulussen, S., & Ugille, P. (2008). User generated content in the newsroom: Professional and organisational constraints on participatory journalism. *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture*, *5*(2), 24–41.
34	Porlezza, C., & Splendore, S. (2016). Accountability and transparency of entrepreneurial journalism. *Journalism Practice*, *10*(2), 196–216.
35	Scott, J., Millard, D., & Leonard, P. (2015). Citizen participation in news. *Digital Journalism*, *3*(5), 737–758.
36	Singer, J. B. (2009). Discourse about the 2007 Scottish elections on a national newspaper web site. *International Journal of Press/Politics*, *14*(4), 477–496.
37	Springer, N., Engelmann, I., & Pfaffinger, C. (2015). User comments: Motives and inhibitors to write and read. *Information, Communication & Society*, *18*(7), 798–815.
38	Swart, J., Peters, C., & Broersma, M. (2019). Sharing and discussing news in private social media groups. *Digital Journalism*, *7*(2), 187–205.
39	Tandoc, E. C. (2014). Journalism is twerking? How web analytics is changing the process of gatekeeping. *New Media & Society*, *16*(4), 559–575.
40	Thurman, N. (2008). Forums for citizen journalists? Adoption of user generated content initiatives by online news media. *New Media & Society*, *10*(1), 139–157.
41	Vu, H. T. (2014). The online audience as gatekeeper: The influence of reader metrics on news editorial selection. *Journalism*, *15*(8), 1094–1110.
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Article

The New Advertisers: How Foundation Funding Impacts Journalism

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Abstract

Many journalism stakeholders have begun looking to philanthropic foundations to help newsrooms find economic sustainability. The rapidly expanding role of foundations as a revenue source for news publishers raises an important question: How do foundations exercise their influence over the newsrooms they fund? Using the hierarchy of influence model, this study utilizes more than 40 interviews with journalists at digitally native nonprofit news organizations and employees from foundations that fund nonprofit journalism to better understand the impact of foundation funding on journalistic practice. Drawing on previous scholarship exploring extra-media influence on the news industry, we argue that the impact of foundations on journalism parallels that of advertisers throughout the 20th century—with one important distinction: Journalism practitioners and researchers have long forbidden the influence from advertisers on editorial decisions, seeing the blurring of the two as inherently unethical. Outside funding from foundations, on the other hand, is often premised on editorial influence, complicating efforts by journalists to maintain the firewall between news revenue and production.

Issue

This commentary is part of the issue "Peripheral Actors in Journalism: Agents of Change in Journalism Culture and Practice" edited by Avery E. Holton (University of Utah, USA), Valerie Belair-Gagnon (University of Minnesota-Twin Cities, USA), and Oscar Westlund (Oslo Metropolitan University, Norway / Volda University College, Norway / University of Gothenburg, Sweden).

1. Introduction

Nearly three decades since newspaper circulation first began dropping, the economic outlook for journalism remains dark. The news industry's once-dependable revenue model, based on selling advertising and subscriptions, increasingly seems like an artifact from a different era (Konieczna, 2018). Despite the hopes of many news publishers, digital advertising (hereafter digital ad) revenue has not replaced print revenue losses, and while a number of news organizations have seen subscriptions climb since 2016, these tend to be the exception rather than the rule. Furthermore, the increased funding from

circulation has not made up for decreases from advertising (Williams, 2019). It is against this backdrop that many journalism stakeholders have begun looking to alternative or diversified funding models for news. One model seen as a viable and exciting option is foundation-funded journalism (Benson, 2018; Scott, Bunce, & Wright, 2019).

The rapidly expanding role of foundations in news production raises an important question: As they grow more powerful within the world of journalism, how might foundations use their influence to affect journalistic practice? Will journalists treat foundations the way they previously treated advertisers, as an important source of revenue that must be kept away from editorial

decisions? Or will the differences in the motivations and approaches between advertisers and foundations lead to a different dynamic between foundations and the journalists they choose to fund? This study explores these issues. We draw on 40 interviews with journalists at digitally native nonprofit news organizations and employees from foundations that fund nonprofit journalism within the U.S. to better understand the influence of foundation funding on journalistic practice. We focus primarily on nonprofits because one of the biggest recipients of foundation funding over the past decade is nonprofit journalism (Ferrucci, 2019; Konieczna, 2018).

Using the lens of the hierarchy of influence model, we explore this funding as an extra-media influence on the U.S.-based nonprofit news industry (Shoemaker & Reese, 2013; Shoemaker & Vos, 2009). In doing so, we find that the influence of foundations on journalism parallels that of advertisers throughout the 20th century—with one important distinction. Journalism practitioners and researchers have long opposed the influence of advertisers on editorial decisions, seeing the blurring of the two as inherently unethical (Christians, Glasser, McQuail, Nordenstreng, & White, 2009). Yet, our interviews reveal that outside funding from foundations is often predicated on editorial influence, which complicates journalists' desire to maintain the firewall between news revenue and production. We find evidence of this influence not in the journalism that these foundation-funded newsrooms publish so much as in a variety of behind-the-scenes decisions that we argue are equally significant in the news production process.

These findings build off of previous analyses of foundation-funded journalism—which have concluded that journalism publishers and funders tend to have distinct (and sometimes competing) goals (e.g., Benson, 2018; Scott et al., 2019)—by exploring the ways in which the influence of these foundations may inevitably put their desires above those of the very newsrooms they are funding. We argue that, regardless of where editorial influence comes from—advertisers, foundations, or other organizational level factors—it impacts journalists' perceived autonomy, one of the most important aspects of journalistic identity and satisfaction (McDevitt, 2003; Reich & Hanitzsch, 2013). We conclude that collaborative efforts between journalism funders and organizations could lead to an even more skewed power dynamic than existed within the previous funding model, one where journalists cede agency to elite foundations situated outside the boundaries of journalism.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Nonprofit Journalism

Nonprofit journalism arrived in the U.S. with the opening of the Associated Press in 1846, followed by the first standalone nonprofit newsroom, the *Christian Science Monitor*, which began in 1908 (Groves & Brown, 2011).

For more than a century, this model of news production comprised a small part of the news media environment (Ferrucci, 2019; Konieczna, 2018; Nee, 2013). Historically, there have not been many news nonprofits operating across the U.S. That number has skyrocketed recently: As recently as 2004, the number of nonprofit news organizations that were members of the Institute for Nonprofit News could be counted on two hands. Today, there are more than 200 (Institute for Nonprofit News, 2019). For the most part, these outlets reject legacy media's reliance on advertising. Instead, they rely on donations from individuals, foundations, and wealthy benefactors (Birnbauer, 2018).

The most established news nonprofits include the *Center for Investigative Reporting*, *Mother Jones* and *ProPublica*. News nonprofits are often lean operations in both staffing and focus. Some, like *The Marshall Project*, focus exclusively on one subject (e.g., the U.S. criminal justice system). To expand the impact of their efforts, they often partner with larger publications so their work can reach a wider audience (Konieczna, 2018). In 2018, for example, *ProPublica* partnered with *New York* magazine, *Newsday* and *The New York Times Magazine* for Pulitzer Prize-winning reporting on the Central American gang MS-13.

The growing number of news nonprofits has been accompanied by a growing number of academic studies focused on their role within and impact on the news media environment. Many of these studies focus on how audience-centric news nonprofits are compared to more traditional newsrooms (i.e., Ferrucci, 2017b; Konieczna, 2014). News nonprofits often explicitly attempt to provide citizens with agency in agenda-setting and agenda-building activities in a way that traditional for-profit news publishers have not (Konieczna, 2018). These attempts typically include "audience engagement" initiatives, such as "public newsrooms" and "listening sessions," where nonprofit journalists offer citizens opportunities to contribute to the news production process by sharing their preferences, questions, or insights (i.e., Belair-Gagnon, Nelson, & Lewis, 2019; Ferrucci, 2015d, 2019).

One aspect of news nonprofits that remain understudied, however, is the impact of their funding model on the news they ultimately produce. In the past, scholars have examined how nonprofit status can impact content produced by a newsroom, but these studies rely solely on manifest content and do not attempt to illustrate how funding directly impacts journalistic practice (i.e., Ferrucci, 2015b, 2015c; Ferrucci, Painter, & Kalika, 2019). Nonprofits tend to rely on diverse revenue streams to fund news operations, and recent research has begun to identify the different ways these funders impact news construction processes (Ferrucci, Russell, Choi, Duffy, & Thorson, 2017). The revenue source that has quickly become among the most significant for news nonprofits is also one in need of more rigorous academic analysis: foundations.

2.2. The Rise of Foundation Funding

As journalism organizations seek new sources of revenue to offset losses in advertising and circulation, philanthropic foundations are increasingly answering the call (Benson, 2018). Between 2009 and mid-2016, foundations gave $1.1 billion to journalism projects within the U.S. (Konieczna, 2018). One of the biggest recipients of foundation funding over the past decade has been to nonprofit journalism (Ferrucci, 2017a). This raises an important question: How are news nonprofits that receive these funds influenced by the very foundations granting them (Benson, 2018)? In other words, how is this increasingly significant source of revenue reshaping journalistic practice?

There is reason to be wary. Journalists who once worked within traditional newsrooms perceived strict separation between advertising and editorial, which resulted in a perceived sense of autonomy over editorial content. Yet journalists within nonprofit newsrooms that receive foundation funding now find themselves in a situation where this symbolic separation between business and reporting (i.e., Coddington, 2015) no longer exists. Furthermore, because these newsrooms face a limited pool of alternative options for funding, "this power imbalance has the potential to make nonprofits susceptible to the whims of their funders," (Birnbauer, 2018, p. 177). The potential for foundations to seriously influence news nonprofits is important, especially at a moment when there is already so little public trust in journalism. In short, foundations might solve the profession's immediate financial crisis while exacerbating its long-term credibility crisis.

Conversely, the partnerships that news nonprofits pursue with other, more traditional outlets might diminish the likelihood of foundations skewing coverage in one way or another (Benson, 2018). Traditional newsrooms partner with news nonprofits because those news nonprofits demonstrate a willingness to stick to traditional norms of journalistic practice, which "shape and constrict what the nonprofits are able to do, compelling them to be aware of and even mimic mainstream news and affecting everything from their structure to their funding and, especially, their everyday operations" (Konieczna, 2018, pp. 163–164). If foundations attempt to influence news nonprofits, they do so either in tandem or competition with the traditional newsrooms with which they have partnered.

To be sure, foundations do indeed influence the newsrooms they fund. It just appears as though that influence presents itself in less obvious ways than many may have initially suspected. For instance, a recent study that drew on interviews with both foundations that fund international, nonprofit news, as well as the journalists they fund, concluded that the effect of foundation funding was not so much on journalistic autonomy, "but on the boundaries of journalism itself" (Scott et al., 2019, p. 2). The result was a situation in which the founda-

tions were not dictating editorial content so much as they were shifting the ways that journalists perceived their responsibilities and the outcomes of their reporting. This sort of influence, the authors suggest, may be even more significant than were a foundation to simply push for more stories about one topic over another. By encouraging journalists to alter their own approaches to their work, foundation funding subsequently "shapes what we understand journalism to be" (Scott et al., 2019, p. 2).

Partnerships between foundations and news organizations therefore come with some ethical quandaries that researchers are just now beginning to explore (Scott et al., 2019; Wright, Scott, & Bunce, 2018). According to a report from the American Press Institute, "the ethics of taking grants from foundations and gifts from donors to produce news is still evolving" and therefore a set of guidelines would benefit the industry (Rosenstiel, Buzenberg, Connelly, & Loker, 2016). Furthermore, while nonprofits generally go to great lengths—on their own accord and due to legal statutes—to practice transparency in terms of where their funding comes from, this does not mean that the ways in which funding impacts a news outlet's journalism is obvious to its audience. As Konieczna (2018) pointed out, the logic behind advertising in journalism is straightforward: Advertisers pay news publishers to have their ads appear in their publications; "foundation funding, however, can be more easily obscured, and the reason for a foundation to fund a news organizations can be less clear" (p. 86).

In the past, some nonprofits have refused funding from foundations connected to a particular topic or story (i.e., Rosenstiel et al., 2016), while others feature leadership that set up newsroom firewalls to combat influence (i.e., Ferrucci, 2015a). The American Press Institute report also specifies that funders rarely review journalistic content before publication; however, this does not mean they do not significantly impact journalistic practices that result in said content. For instance, the Knight Foundation, an organization that frequently provides funding to newsrooms, typically has more than a few strings attached to its grants in the form of directives on how newsrooms should use technology or engage with audiences (Lewis, 2011). Indeed, foundations often explicitly invite newsrooms to apply for funding for stories about specific topics. Taken together, these previous studies suggest just how important it is for researchers to understand the ways in which foundations that fund journalism organizations or projects intentionally—or incidentally—influence journalistic practice (Benson, 2019).

2.3. Foundation Funding and Engaged Journalism

Furthermore, a foundation's influence over the newsrooms it funds need not be limited solely to editorial decisions, such as what stories the newsroom focuses on how what angle the reporters take on the topic. Some foundations instead focus on non-editorial practices within

newsrooms, including the ways in which reporters "engage" with their audiences. The Lenfest Institute for Journalism, for example, recently began providing grants to newsrooms that agree to use audience engagement tools and services provided by the companies Hearken and GroundSource to solicit audience questions about what they would like to see the journalists cover (Bilton, 2018). Though audience engagement—which broadly refers to the notion that journalists should more explicitly communicate with and listen to the people they hope to reach—has become an appealing concept to a growing subset of the news industry, its value remains difficult to quantify (Nelson, 2018, 2019). The fact that foundations are using their funds to encourage newsrooms to pursue more engagement can therefore be seen as an attempt on their part to help newsrooms overcome the influence of quantifiable metrics, such as unique visitors, most aligned with digital advertising revenue (what Carlson, 2018, refers to as "measurable journalism") by introducing an influence of their own.

The push by foundations for newsrooms to pursue more audience engagement reveals one important way that foundations seek to influence journalistic practice outside of more obvious editorial decisions such as story selection. Others include an emphasis on certain kinds of technologies—for instance, by pushing newsrooms to embrace virtual reality products in order to secure a grant. This influence is important, both because it changes how journalists approach their work, but also because it comes with an opportunity cost. Newsrooms investing in new technologies or approaches to audience engagement are therefore not using those funds for elements of news production, such as salaries for more reporters.

As these examples show, the reason a foundation's motivation for funding journalism matters so much—and why this sort of ambiguity is so distressing—is because of the assumption that those who are providing the monetary support for news—be they advertisers, foundations, or individual donors—are somehow influencing its very production. "Dispensing funds is an exercise in power…and foundations, acting as the economic sector, hold the cards" (Birnbauer, 2018, p. 193).

This project sets out to determine how foundation funding influences news production in the U.S. To better understand how journalists reckon with these distinct influences, and how researchers can isolate and examine them, we turn now to our theoretical framework.

2.4. Hierarchy of Influences and Social Institutions

In his attempt to understand the impediments to a free press aimed solely at solidifying and strengthening democracy, Baker (1994) theorized that journalism—unlike most services—follows a dual-product model. Within this model, news publishers need to (1) sell content to people and then (2) direct those people's attention to advertisers. In other words, journalism's eco-nomic survival has traditionally depended on its ability to serve two markets at once, unlike other kinds of consumer goods. A toaster manufacturer, for example, only needs to serve consumers (Jian & Shin, 2015).

Because advertising revenue played such an integral role in journalism's success, Baker (1994) argued that journalists could not remove advertising's influence from the actual production of news. Of course, journalists often talk about a "wall," or boundary, between their editorial and business departments that is "so fundamental to the self-understanding of professional journalism, it's thoroughly understood as a cultural and occupational assumption" (Coddington, 2015, p. 67). However, while journalists insist that advertising does not influence practice, research suggests otherwise. Indeed, media sociologists have identified several social institutions that affect newsmaking processes, such as public relations (Feldstein, 2010), large corporations (Hackett & Uzelman, 2003), educational systems (McDevitt & Sindorf, 2012) and large technology firms (Ferrucci, 2018; Russell, 2019). Advertising is therefore just one of a number of institutions that impacts journalistic practice in a variety of ways (Carlson & Lewis, 2015; Schauster, Ferrucci, & Neill, 2016; Shoemaker & Vos, 2009).

The hierarchy of influences model examines how forces such as advertising restrict or enable the movement of information through media (Schudson, 2012; Shoemaker & Reese, 2013). Fundamentally, the theory "takes into account the multiple forces that simultaneously impinge on media and suggest how influence on one level may interact with that at another" (Shoemaker & Reese, 2013, p. 1). A nuanced understanding of influences on news production illustrates that many factors impact choices made during news production (Vos & Russell, 2019). The key contribution of the hierarchy of influences is the identification of five levels of analysis.

Within the Shoemaker and Reese (2013) conceptualization, these five distinct levels all work together to influence news. The individual level reveals how specific characteristics of journalists affect news choices. The communication routines level looks at the practices and norms that are prevailing across the journalism industry. The organizational level involves characteristics of specific news organizations such as leadership that impact newswork. The social institution level investigates how peripheral and tangential institutions such as public relations, the audience, advertisers, or government influence the news. And, finally, the social system level examines how "the news media reflects the organizing philosophy of a society" (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009, p. 98).

As the boundaries between journalism and other institutions blur, more peripheral ones have begun directly influencing journalistic work (Belair-Gagnon & Holton, 2018; Carlson & Lewis, 2015). For instance, the rise of sophisticated audience measurement tools has resulted in a news media landscape where journalists now routinely check to see how many people clicked on their

stories, illustrating the power some technology companies exert on practice (Nelson & Webster, 2016). Baker (1994) focused primarily on advertising because, as recently as a decade and a half ago, the vast majority of journalism market models relied solely on advertising as a revenue stream. That is no longer the case (Ferrucci & Nelson, 2019).

The advent of nonprofit journalism has made it increasingly important for researchers to study the people and forces behind the varied revenue sources that this model entails. Doing so will help researchers understand these boundaries and examine institutions that "enter into a collaborative symbiotic relationship" with journalism (Shoemaker & Reese, 2013, p. 95). With new market models diversifying revenue streams and eliminating many old journalistic norms (Ferrucci, 2015d; Konieczna, 2014), the social institutional level of influence on news practice is an increasingly important area of inquiry as it significantly affects journalistic autonomy (Lowrey, Sherrill, & Broussard, 2019; Vos & Russell, 2019).

In short, this study seeks to build off of this previous work that has explored the increasingly important role of foundations in journalism by exploring how this new source of revenue wields its influence within the newsrooms that depend on their funding. Our driving research questions are: How do foundations' influence on the newsrooms they fund differ from advertisers—the previously more common revenue source for journalism? Has journalism simply swapped out one revenue source, and consequently one form of journalistic influence, for another? Or are foundations serving a different role altogether?

3. Method

3.1. In-Depth Interview and Data Analysis

In-depth interviews remain an essential methodological approach for researchers interested in uncovering complicated processes, patterns and behaviors (McCracken, 1988; Miles & Huberman, 1994). The method can prove particularly effective for understanding and uncovering the motivations of participants (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006). In this study, the first author conducted in-depth phone interviews with 37 full-time journalists at 30 different news nonprofits in the U.S. to understand how they perceive the relationship between their organizations and foundations. These data were collected as part of a much-larger study between 2015–2018.

Interviews ranged from 46 to 105 minutes with an average time of roughly 71 minutes. The participants' experience in journalism ranged from 7 months to 37 years. The interview protocol consisted of broad, open-ended questions meant to encourage detailed answers to the questions (McCracken, 1988). All participants were asked the same set of questions, but follow-up questions varied depending on the interviewee. This follows the protocol adhered to by McCracken (1988). The researcher

promised all participants anonymity and confidentiality. Following these interviews, in 2018, the first author conducted in-depth interviews with seven employees from five different funding foundations, decision-makers from journalism donors such as The Knight Foundation or the Democracy Fund. These interviews lasted, on average, 34 minutes. Interviews ended when the first researcher believed a saturation point was reached, something that scholars believe is the time for data collection to conclude since it means no new insight is being produced (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011).

For data analysis purposes, the first author utilized the process described by Emerson et al. (2011), which features a three-step procedure. First, the researcher simply read through the whole of the data and made notes, a stage called writing memos. Second, the researcher returned to the data, conducting a close read while identifying themes and patterns, a stage called open coding. Finally, the researcher read through the data one more time, this time reading it with themes in mind and beginning a rough draft of the findings, a stage called focused coding. After writing this draft of the findings, the two researchers met to discuss changes to the findings and the second author then completed a rough draft of the discussion based on the findings.

It is important to note that these data stem entirely from organizations based within the U.S. Though the result is a dataset admittedly limited in terms of its global scope, it is also one that centers on a nation where much of the discourse surrounding foundation-funded journalism continues to unfold. So, while our findings are not representative of global trends, they remain an important illustration of the dynamic between foundations and news publishers within a country in which these collaborations are occurring more frequently than ever before.

3.2. An Emphasis on Perception

This study analyzes journalists' *perceptions* of influence. It does not purport to reveal anything other than how the journalists interviewed see the world around them. Our findings do not reveal how journalists represent the field at large or how they are discursively constructing definitions or boundaries of said field. Rather, this study simply illustrates how participants perceive the impact of foundation funding. Consequently, it is impossible to definitively state know how much or how little what journalists perceive about foundation influence aligns with reality. However, because the individuals interviewed worked in journalism before and after foundation funding, we believe that they are in a good position to understand how their jobs have changed, and to reflect on the influences responsible for those changes. Furthermore, the majority of the media sociology research canon that examines influence relies on perception, and we believe that this study follows in the same tradition.

Finally, it is important to note that while this study utilizes a relatively large sample for a study of this kind,

these results are, consistent with the majority of inter-view studies, not generalizable.

4. Findings

This study seeks to understand how journalists at digitally native news nonprofits and employees of foundations that often fund these nonprofits perceive the influence of foundation finances impact journalistic practice. After analyzing the data, it became clear that foundation funding often went to news nonprofits pursuing three types of initiatives: specific, technology-driven projects; audience engagement projects; and projects intended to push journalists to expand their daily work beyond traditional routines.

4.1. Tech-Driven Projects

The most common theme to emerge from the data concerned foundation funding that came with an expectation of journalists using specific new technologies. All but one journalist interviewed mentioned this type of funding, and all the participants from foundations did as well. Essentially, participants noted that foundations often distribute funds or grants to organizations willing to implement new practices surrounding new technologies. "For a while," said one journalist, "it was all about [virtual reality]. Some biggies like *The Guardian* made some cool stories using VR and now these places would give anyone money if they promised to use it" (throughout Section 4, all quotes are personal communications). The problem, according to journalists, is that these new technologies are only new for a short amount of time or, often enough, their audiences do not seem willing to adopt these technologies themselves. This leads some journalists to feel they must continuously chase the latest tech trends to receive foundation funding. As one journalist said:

> All [foundations] care about is how cool something sounds right then. Let's be honest, most of these [foundations] are run by journalists who are [around my age of 60]. They read a proposal with something cool sounding on it, and they're all over it. They spread their money around to anything they think is innovative. They're helping a lot of different startups, and that's a good thing, but a lot of that money goes to waste when these startups fail. Those funds could have gone to help support newsrooms they already funded. If I wanted to make sure I kept [foundation funding], I would have to reinvent this place every year or so.

Implicit in this quote is another important finding that consistently came up: Journalists believe they receive funding to utilize a trending technology; unfortunately, this means that when the grant funds run out, these journalists are unlikely to receive more, because the foundation identified the next new other technology, and has thus moved onto the next newsroom attempting to adopt it.

This situation leaves a newsroom with a staff trained in something the organization cannot afford to apply anymore. Even worse, this might be a technology that does not even seem to connect with the public, either. One participant from a foundation agreed with this notion, but also pointed out that newsrooms accept funds understanding that these funds will eventually end. They are not intended to be a constant revenue source. Instead, they are intended to fund newsroom experimentation—to give newsrooms the means by which they can see if a new technological tool will resonate with readers, thus ideally putting them on the path to self-sustainability:

> It sucks. I said it. It sucks when one of the newsrooms we've worked hard to support cannot make it. We provide this infrastructure and guidance, but sometimes it doesn't work and that makes you feel bad. There are people involved. The thing is, we're upfront with our newsrooms. We're not here to support you till the Earth ends. Our job is help find journalism's future. That means seeking out innovation, finding the model that will unlock journalism's potential to work with the public and, yes, finding the model that can become self-sustainable. You know, we may never find that. I don't believe it; I think we will. But our mission isn't to keep newsrooms alive. It's to look toward the future.

The problem with this logic is that journalists believe that these specific technologies typically do not make their stories better. In fact, the participants suggested that the implementation of these technologies are typically done just for public relations purposes. "We get to say, 'Oh, hey, we do this,'" said one journalist. She added, "Who cares that we do this thing? Does it actually make our work better? No. It's basically public relations for the newsroom." Speaking about an audience engagement platform that has grown popular in newsrooms, one person from a foundation that helps nonprofits pay for it, said, "Hell, I have no idea if it works. We hope so." A journalist, referring to the same platform, explained:

> I believe in the mission or the reason behind [the platform]. It's the right thing to do. In this case, to me, it was totally unnecessary though. I felt like [my editors] needed to justify having [the platform], which meant using it more than we needed to. When [one editor] suggested it before I started, I didn't realize I was being forced to use it, not asked. That kind of stuff happened often. I remember the whole thing so well because it opened my eyes, you know? I came to understand that if someone was paying us to do something, we did it no matter what. I've written some great stories that way since, though. We still have it, but I don't think it's a priority since the [funded period] stopped.

In short, both journalists and funders agreed that foundations exercise influence on news production practices. Foundations often fund the adoption of new technologies within newsrooms, which they hope will open the door to journalism's eventual sustainability. Journalists follow suit and proceed to utilize these new technologies, sometimes with no small amount of reluctance.

4.2. Engagement

A majority of the journalists interviewed, and all of the foundation employees, said that foundations currently prioritize audience engagement within newsrooms. As one foundation employee said, "It's *it* right now. We're about focusing our attentions and resources on galvanizing engagement between journalists and the public. That's where it is at for us." Journalists agreed. One noted that, "No matter the story, someone is going to ask me how I worked *with* the community" (emphasis by speaker, italics added by authors). He went on, adding, "It really matters not at all whether engagement or whatever we should call it makes sense for the particular story." Journalists consistently described how they felt foundations influenced the incorporation of routines that at least motioned toward giving the audience agenda-setting power. One journalist said:

> Ever since we took [a foundation's] money, we became an 'audience first' newsroom. Weren't we always that? Isn't journalism all for the public? Somehow, according to my editor and [the foundation], asking [random people] what they care about is the new journalism.

One journalist disparaged the notion that the public should have agenda-setting power, despite the fact that his newsroom has begun prioritizing this very goal after receiving a foundation grant intended to pay for the adoption of an engagement platform. He said:

> The people are not as knowing about a story as I am. They haven't researched the topic. They haven't talked to a lot of people outside of social circles. I read legal briefs or other places' journalism. I don't think people do that. It can become infuriating when my bosses or *Columbia Journalism Review* or Jeff Jarvis tells me I'm missing an opportunity by not letting people tell me what to do. I get the idea, you know, but most people are ignorant or can't be expected to know as much as I do. It's not their job to look into something. They aren't journalists.

Although audience engagement advocates believe that giving the public more power in news production will increase their trust in and loyalty to news, many of this study's participants argued that the opposite is true. "It's basically telling people we don't know what we're doing," one journalist said. Even one foundation employee who funds various engagement efforts noted that, at first, he wondered if the rhetoric surrounding many of today's engagement companies or public intellectuals hurt journalism. "If you read between the lines," the foundation employee said, "all you hear is that journalists aren't professional enough to understand their roles." Another journalist summed it up thusly:

> I've been in this business a long time. What people in academia, no offense, or not actually doing journalism say now about what they currently call engagement isn't very different than others said 30 years ago. Jay Rosen, for example, is still Jay Rosen. And back then, some places jumped on the bandwagon but most stayed off. The difference is now we have these [foundations] waving money at us, money we need, if we just do this thing or that thing that will engage our public. When money is offered, we listen. Don't think for a second, OK, that taking that money and doing this stuff isn't changing journalism.

Over and over again, journalists discussed how foundation funding for engagement influenced how they go about finding and reporting on stories. Those who, at least partially, disagreed with the notion that audience engagement is worthwhile, saw this shift as something of an opportunity cost. "I think people need to know the news. But I can only write so much in a day," one journalist said, "when I have to do all this [engagement] stuff, it takes time and really harms the news product, I think."

4.3. Expanding the Journalists' Role

The final theme that emerged from the data focused on the extra responsibilities that journalists sometime inherit when their organization accepts foundation funds. "The grant we have makes me do certain things when it comes to sources, but I also am forced to write up the 'results' of my work," one journalist said. "Not only do I not understand, but that takes time," in other words, a foundation grant to this journalist's newsroom came with a directive for this journalist to explicitly describe to the public how the organization spent the grant funds. This sharing could come in the form of articles in trade magazines such as *Columbia Journalism Review*, testimonials for the foundation's website or, more commonly, presentations at industry conferences and events. "To stay relevant and important," said one foundation employee, "we need to have our name out there and boast about what we're funding." In short, journalists who accepted foundation funding often found that the foundation expected public-facing missives about what the funds were for, how they ultimately were used, and to what effect.

Again, journalists perceived these added as opportunity costs. "I'm a journalist," one said, "this type of stuff basically makes me [the foundation's] PR man. First, I'm not good at it and, second, I could be doing the work [the foundation] is funding me to do." The idea that this

work was essentially public relations for the funder came up often. The result was a bit of skepticism on the part of the journalists, who suggested that these foundations funded journalism not solely to improve democracy or the mission, but rather to amass more power in the industry. One journalist said:

> Look, I get it. They're giving [my organization] money. There needs to be oversight and we should be very deliberate and transparent when keeping track of what we do with grants. That's obvious and necessary. And I understand them keeping track of this. But [this foundation], they're all about promoting themselves. We have to, especially my editor, travel across the country and talk to these muckety mucks in journalism, many who don't do journalism, and make it sound like we're doing more than we are here. It's all to make [the foundation] seem cutting edge or whatever.

Unsurprisingly, the foundation employees did not see these efforts quite so uncharitably. Instead, they saw these efforts as another necessary part of their mission to help solve journalism's most pressing problems. As one foundation employee said, "Everyone wants to find the thing that saves journalism. We want others to know how we're running it."

5. Discussion

These findings corroborate prior studies that have described how foundation funding within journalism broke down "boundaries of professionalism to invite external critique, contribution, and collaboration" (Lewis, 2012, p. 330). It also builds off a growing body of literature that has explored how—and to what extent—foundations influence the very journalism that they fund (Scott et al., 2019; Wright et al., 2018). The primary contribution of our study is to evaluate the ways in which these foundations' influence on journalistic practice mirrors or differs from that of the advertisers that were once (and, for many newsrooms, continue to be) the primary source of revenue. At a practical level, our findings reveal how, potentially, the influence of foundation funding within journalism actually unfolds. In doing so, they shed light on the two structural obstacles often overlooked in discussions about it: First, that journalism funders have different goals from the newsrooms they are funding; and second, that newsroom managers who apply for and accept foundation grants may feel more passionate about the directives associated with those grants than the journalists ultimately tasked with following them.

Our findings also show how foundations, like advertisers, could indeed have an influential role on how journalists approach their work. Yet, unlike advertisers, foundations do not face a "firewall" that separates their goals from those of the journalists they are funding. In a perfect world, this firewall would be unnecessary, because the goals of the foundations and the journalists would be one and the same—to improve the quality of the news (Ferrucci, 2019). But as these findings illustrate, the ideas that foundations have for how to improve news quality (e.g., more audience engagement, more technologically driven projects) are not necessarily the same ideas as those actually working within the newsrooms. In the previous, advertising-driven era, no journalist at a reputable organization would be asked to write a story to appease a specific advertiser. In the world of foundation-funded journalism, however, journalists are asked to embrace certain tools and approaches to their work because doing will help that newsroom secure or maintain their foundation funding. This finding is consistent with previous work by Scott et al. (2019), which concluded that foundations do not necessarily influence editorial decisions so much as they alter journalistic roles and practices, primarily by putting on premium on what they referred to as "non-editorial activities" (p. 10).

5.1. The Trouble with Competing Goals

Furthermore, because foundations within the U.S. tend to focus more on solving problems facing the news industry as a whole rather than on those facing individual news organizations, they want to both fund journalistic experimentation with uncertain outcomes, and to share those outcomes with the broader news media environment. The result is a situation where news nonprofits and foundations increasingly work together, yet are motivated by distinct, sometimes conflicting goals. The former often want to survive from one year to the next, while the latter often want to figure out what journalistic techniques can help all news organizations reach sustainability. From the point of view of those funding journalism, one news organization failing is an acceptable step in the search for insights about what will work and what will not. For news nonprofits, on the other hand, failure is the end of the line.

This means that journalists sometimes find themselves not only implementing a new digital tool or participatory reporting approach they don't believe in, but then also writing about the results of their efforts for audiences they don't care to interact with in that manner. Compounding this issue is the fact that foundation employees also described an ongoing concern that grant recipients were generally less likely to report failures than successes out of fear that disclosing a failed experiment will diminish the likelihood of continued funding. This makes the increasing role of foundations in journalism even more fraught: If they seek to improve journalism via their own interventions, they may be less than willing to be transparent about when those interventions do not succeed. Taken together, these findings suggest that collaborative efforts between journalism funders and publishers to transform the profession face challenges posed by a potential skewed power dynamic between those in dire need of help and those who hope to provide it.

5.2. The Firewall Has Yet to Materialize

Shoemaker and Reese (2013) argued that influence from social institutions affect journalism practice, but professional journalists often work to assuage, eliminate or, at least, control this influence. However, none of those aforementioned social institutions, besides advertising, historically funded journalism, so professionals felt autonomous over those influences (Lowrey et al., 2019). Because advertising served as the main revenue stream for the news industry, journalists felt it imperative to invent a figurative—and sometimes literal—"wall" separating the business and editorial side of an organization (Baker, 1994). As this study's findings illustrate, in some cases, U.S.-based foundations are increasingly funding the country's growing number of news nonprofits, but that firewall has yet to materialize.

Perhaps the growing role of foundation funding will lead to newsrooms and foundations to more openly discuss the establishment of this sort firewall, or some variation that might prove more fitting for this revenue model. Indeed, in the past a firewall between advertising and editorial was an industry-wide normative standard, something that existed ubiquitously across the industry. With foundations, however, each organization seems to have its own philosophy surrounding foundation funds, which means that industry-spanning normative beliefs, including ones concerning ethics, could be devolving into organization-specific beliefs as happens when normative practices become different depending on media organization (Ferrucci & Taylor, 2019).

The absence of that firewall gets at a larger and more unique finding, which is that foundations are in some cases playing the role once held by advertisers, yet are doing so in an environment where the lines between the two are still being drawn. To be sure, although the firewall between advertising and the editorial function of a newsroom remains, for the most part, clear and strong (Coddington, 2015; Schauster et al., 2016), advertisers still influence news in many ways (Baker, 1994). However, in a dramatic departure from this dynamic, foundations often aspire to influence the newsrooms they fund, by, say, disrupting certain editorial and organizational practices. In other words, while these foundations provide essential support for journalism, they also impact the very work that they are funding.

For example, our findings suggest that journalism funding-foundations can seek to provide support for engagement work specifically, which stems from their belief that traditional journalism has done a poor job working with and listening to their audiences, to the detriment of the news and its standing among the public (Nelson, 2019). As our findings show, news organizations sometimes pursue foundation funding even when the employees within those organizations don't agree with those foundation's beliefs about journalistic practice. In other words, journalists working in newsrooms that are recipients of foundation funding may find themselves folding engaged journalism techniques into their news routines—whether they want to or not. The result is a situation where these foundations have arguably more control over news production processes than advertising ever did.

5.3. Limitations

This study faced a few important limitations. First, our data stem from U.S.-based foundations and news organizations. Obviously, however, the news media landscape within the U.S. is not the same as it is in other nations across the globe. The economic problems that news publishers face in one country—and the paths they may choose to overcome those challenges—differ from one country to the next. Indeed, as a report focused on media startups in the Global South recently noted, foundation-support is less in vogue than the pursuit of audience-supported revenue via individual donations and memberships (Schiffrin, 2019). While the question of journalistic sustainability is one that newsrooms across the globe continue to face, and one that philanthropic organizations increasingly seek to answer, we do not mean to suggest that what happens in the U.S. is universal. Furthermore, as with most studies of this methodological nature, these findings only represent the data collected for this study, which features the perceptions of the participants. This study is therefore not generalizable and not representative of the journalism field as a whole.

To summarize, journalists increasingly accept funding from foundations, and with that funding comes a significant amount of influence on journalistic practice. Journalists accept this influence (albeit sometimes begrudgingly) in a way that suggests the firewall that formerly existed between editorial and revenue in the era of advertising has yet to reappear in this emerging era of foundation funding. Furthermore, while both of these groups—journalists and foundations—ultimately aspire to the same goal of strengthening democracy through a strong fourth-estate, their sometimes divergent goals can result in a lack of accomplishment, disappointed local journalists, or both.

While this study focuses on foundation support, future research should examine other social institutions increasingly overlapping and encroaching on journalism boundaries. As market models continue to evolve and revenue streams continue to diversify, more and more outside institutions are bypassing traditional boundaries. These influences need to be further interrogated so that their implications for journalism can be fully understood.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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Article

Molo.news: Experimentally Developing a Relational Platform for Local Journalism

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Abstract

In this article we present a research project that experimentally develops a local news platform based on empirical research (interviews, group discussions, a survey) and a co-creation approach. What is presented here is not a typical empirical social science research study but the culmination of an entire approach that is oriented toward software development. This article's aim is to present the project's conceptual ideas, its interdisciplinary character, its research-based development approach and the concept for a local news platform that grew out of our preliminary work. At each level we focus on the *relationality* which arises in the figurations of the actors involved and their various perspectives. First, we illustrate how relationality already shaped the objective of our project and how this results in its interdisciplinary structure and research design. We then discuss this idea with reference to our empirical findings, that is, the paradox of the local public sphere: While all the actors we interviewed—those who (professionally) produce content and those who use it—have a high appreciation for the idea of a local public sphere, the mediated connection to this sphere is diminishing at the same time. We understand this as the real challenge for local journalism and the local public sphere at large, and not just for individual media organizations. This is also the reason why we argue for a fundamentally relational approach: from a theoretical point of view, it can be used to grasp the crisis of the local public; from a practical point of view, relationality represents the core characteristic of the platform in development. On this basis, we will then show how the concept of the experimental local news platform evolved through the use of a prototype as a relational boundary object. This development lead to the conceptualization of the platform *molo.news* which itself is characterized by a fourfold relationality. Our concluding argument is that approaching relationality in a more rigorous way could be the key to exploring the future of local journalism.

Issue

This article is part of the issue "Peripheral Actors in Journalism: Agents of Change in Journalism Culture and Practice" edited by Avery E. Holton (University of Utah, USA), Valerie Belair-Gagnon (University of Minnesota-Twin Cities, USA), and Oscar Westlund (Oslo Metropolitan University, Norway / Volda University College, Norway / University of Gothenburg, Sweden).

"On our own and without the help of the industry, we are well aware that we can only offer experiments at first. But these experiments can be used to create something enduring."
("Kammermusik oder Filmusik—die Hauptsache ist gute Musik: Ein Gespräch mit Professor Paul Hindemith," 1928)

1. Introduction

The quote above comes from a composer from the German 'New Music' scene during the 1920s. Paul Hindemith experimented with new sounds (rugged rhythms, harsh dissonances, inclusion of jazz elements) and worked closely with an experimental public radio sta-

tion in Frankfurt am Main, Germany. While the quote refers to experimentation in the field of music, it says something about the point we want to make here: We want to introduce the 'experimental' platform for local journalism that we are currently developing—an experiment, that was only made possible exterior to but still in cooperation with media corporations. This platform is called *molo.news*, where 'molo' acts a truncation of the phrase 'moving local': Moving local news for people in motion and those who want to bring movement to the urban public. Thus, 'moving local' represents both aspects: moving in local space and being moved by local news. The most important lesson this project has taught us so far is that we should think of such a platform as relational: Relational in the way it had been developed, relational in how it should work, and relational in regard to what kind of discourses it might support.

The aim of this article is to present the platform's conceptual foundations and to show how it was developed in a combined approach of empirical research and co-creation with various stakeholders and user groups. This remains a rather untypical research and project design in the social sciences and this is also the reason why we want to present the overall design of the project including the platform's framework instead of only focusing on specific components (such as the empirical research, the co-creation approach, or the front-end of the platform). This article is, if you like, a report on experimental research and software development.

The starting point for our attempt to develop a local news platform was a call for proposals from the German Ministry of Education and Research which was aimed at research projects with practical components that address 'social cohesion.' We submitted a proposal for a project called "Tinder the City" which proposed trying out new ways of developing a local news platform. We called the project "Tinder the City" because we were thinking of exploring the possibilities of developing something that could bring about a similar movement in the field of local news platforms as Tinder did in the field of dating apps. The special character of the project results from the fact that it combines empirical social science research with software development. In other words, everything is aligned towards developing a 'real' functional product.

Our overall theoretical framework is characterized by a "figurational approach" (Hepp, 2020), an approach that has made us particularly sensitive to questions of "relationality" (Emirbayer, 1997)—questions that closely relate to the discussion about a 'relational thinking' in sociology, as can be identified in, for example, recent network approaches (Castells, 2009; Fuhse & Mützel, 2010), assemblage (De Landa, 2006; Latour, 2007), and systems theory (Holzer, 2010). The figurational approach that we put forward here goes back to the process sociology of Norbert Elias (1978) who argued that we should not position the individual against society but understand society as being made up of different 'interweavings' of

'interdependent' individuals which he called *figurations*. From this perspective, a family is a figuration, a group or a community is a figuration, as are the relations between journalists and their audiences. These figurations are defined by the shared frames of relevance of the individuals involved, a characterized constellation of actors between them (including particular roles), and are continuously constructed through the practices of those involved which, contemporaneously, are invariably entangled with a particular media ensemble.

Taking this theoretical framework as a point of departure and relating it back to city publics we become sensitive to questions of relationality—that is: the relations of individuals in and across particular figurations. We can describe the city itself as a "figuration of figurations" (Couldry & Hepp, 2017, p. 72), that is, a complex web of figurations of different organizations and communities implicated in an urban cross-media public (see Hepp, Breiter, & Hasebrink, 2017, and especially Hepp, Simon, & Sowinska, 2017). This highlights the importance of asking which relationalities exist within each respective figuration and how a platform can create, or at least reflect, relationality by bringing together the different figurations of a city or city public.

The idea of such a platform refers closely to the changing figuration of journalists' relationship to their audiences. Like any social connections, this one is relational: characterized by more or less congruent mutual expectations about what journalism should deliver and what audiences might expect, and the more or less mutually visible practices that emerge as a result (Lewis, Holton, & Coddington, 2014; Loosen & Schmidt, 2012). Within the culture of journalism, the shifting notions of "the audience factor" are also the expressions of a changing media environment, of new media practices and, finally, of the ways in which journalists engage with audiences in a digitally networked media environment (Loosen, 2019). Just as with the city and its public sphere, we can also understand the relationship between journalism and its audiences as a communicative figuration that transforms with the media ensemble and the communicative practices on which it is based (Kramp & Loosen, 2017). This development is, however, ambiguous: On the one hand, over the past few years news organizations have offered a growing number of participatory spaces and features; on the other, journalists are often reluctant to engage with audiences while users differ to a large extent with respect to participatory practices and motives (Costera Meijer & Groot Kormelink, 2017; Loosen & Schmidt, 2017).

In a project aimed at the development of an experimental platform, a figurational approach can also be switched around in a more self-reflexive way. Then the question turns to which concrete figurations can such a (relational) platform be developed. At this point, our previous experience in software development was important for the project. This includes initial experiences with software development in the field of jour-

nalism (Loosen et al., 2017) and more recently with approaches to "co-creation" in research software development (Berg & Hepp, 2018; Hasebrink & Hepp, 2017). This interest in the development of technologies goes hand in hand with our own empirical research on "pioneer journalism" (Hepp & Loosen, 2019), which is—as with data, robot and sensor journalism—becoming more and more technology-oriented and in which new approaches to software development are increasingly being pursued. The experience gained from these earlier projects demonstrated that the development of software is a social process that happens within certain figurations. It is possible, indeed it is expedient, to 'create' certain figurations situationally—and this is exactly what the 'co-creation' approach stands for: the inclusion of different stakeholder groups in software development from the beginning and across different stages of the process.

To discuss in more detail how important relationality in and across different figurations is for the development as well as for the functionality of a local news platform, this article is not so much about the empirical research we carried out, rather, its principle aim is to discuss the process as well as the concept of the experimental local news platform we have developed—and still are developing—with a particular focus on the significance of relationality. We want to proceed to this end as follows: First, we want to describe in detail the paradox of the local public sphere that our empirical research revealed, a paradox which we see as a problem of shifting relationality. On this basis, we then want to show how the experimental nature of our project has resulted in the prototype emerging as a relational boundary object. This then leads to a presentation of the basic concept of *molo.news* as a relational platform. In conclusion, we will then argue why, in our view, relationality might offer an opportunity to explore the future of local journalism.

2. From the 'Crisis' to the 'Paradox' of the Local Public

In many Western countries, there has been emerging what we can call a 'crisis' of the local public. The reasons for this are manifold and intertwine in complex ways. With the advance of deep mediatization—the increasing saturation of the various domains of society by digital media and their infrastructures—journalism and its production and distribution routines as well as practices of use are comprehensively changing.

There are various concrete examples when it comes to local journalism and its digital transition (Jenkins & Nielsen, 2018; Nielsen, 2015; Van Kerkhoven & Bakker, 2014): Increasingly, in addition to actual reports, local journalists try to reach younger audiences through social media channels and are often now expected to deliver news by means of digital photographs or even video clips; local news is expected to appear without delay on a newspaper's website; and the work process itself has changed fundamentally with the advent of the digital news desk. At the same time, the relationship between

journalism and its audiences has evolved as readers enter into direct communication with journalists via Twitter, Facebook, WhatsApp, forums, and other platforms or services, communicatively challenging journalists in completely new ways (Ekdale, Singer, Tully, & Harmsen, 2015; Loosen, 2019; Wenzel, 2019).

The once comparatively 'protected' position of local and regional newspapers has come under pressure: When national and global media are readily available online, much smaller, local newspapers are forced to compete. Sections on national and global news make less and less sense, since at this level a local newspaper can hardly succeed in competing with the large national and international media houses (Abernathy, 2018). At the same time, this once protected position is being undermined locally when local parties, groups and movements begin to communicate directly with their supporters and critics online, weakening journalism's intermediary role (Neuberger, 2018). In addition, the boundaries between local media become blurred when, for example, radio stations offer local news on their websites for 'free.' Additional financial pressure is applied by the fact that advertising is increasingly shifting towards online platforms and the websites of local newspapers no longer hold the status of a "premium environment" for advertisers (Jenkins & Nielsen, 2018).

There have also been considerable shifts from the users' point of view. Particularly with younger people, their bond with local newspapers is crumbling (Tang & Lai, 2018). If they do read local news they tend to do so online while also receiving a considerable share of their information via platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube (Swart, Peters, & Broersma, 2019; Weichert & Kramp, 2017). In general, their media use takes place across a broad "repertoire" (Hasebrink & Popp, 2006; Kobbernagel & Schrøder, 2016) of media (platforms, services, offers) grouped around digital devices such as smartphones, laptops, or digital television sets. The expectation of at least being able to interact in principle is increasing while interest in traditional local journalism appears to be declining (Barthel, 2018; Ytre-Arne & Moe, 2018).

The consequence of all these dynamics is that local newspapers in many countries are coming under pressure and in some urban centers and regions they have completely disappeared. This poses a problem to the extent that the primary medium through which a local public sphere has been created over many decades—the local newspaper—no longer exists (Jenkins & Nielsen, 2018; Leupold, Klinger, & Jarren, 2018). Here, a local political exchange and dispute has taken place, the outcome of which is not necessarily consensus, but solutions for living together can still be found. Robert E. Park (1967) already pointed out the necessity of local media's mediating role back in 1925 in the context of the increasing social and cultural differentiation occurring within cities. With the loss of local newspapers, the city public seems to be descending into 'crisis.'

At this point, we argue that we can understand these changes and resulting challenges as a shift in the relationality of the figurations of local news production, the figurations of the journalists' relationships with their audiences as well as those of the city as a local space and public: The practices of local news production as well as the roles of local journalists transform as does the figuration of local news production; from the emergence of social media platforms and other kinds of media technologies the relations between journalists and their audiences shift; and the relations of the different figurations that make up a city transform if all communicate with each other in new ways. Therefore, a transforming relationality becomes the broader frame for an understanding of what is called the 'crisis' of the local public sphere.

We have taken this diagnosis as our starting point to investigate the communicative figurations of Bremen in Germany. For this purpose, we have worked with a mixed method design that triangulates various means of data collection and analysis: Qualitative interviews and focus groups as well as a representative survey were conducted which were then analyzed statistically and by means of qualitative coding according to the procedures of Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1999). In total, we have collected the following data:

- Citizens: Seven focus groups on the local public with people from different social backgrounds (aged 15–42); a representative survey on local media use (n = 727);
- Collectives: Eight focus groups with representatives from sports and cultural clubs, citizens' initiatives, etc.;
- Media and information providers: Qualitative interviews with thirteen journalists, seven party representatives, three representatives from district councils and one member of a business association.

This is not the place to present the results of this empirical research in detail. Rather, our aim here is to condense our findings in response to the diagnosis of a local public crisis and its underlying shift in relationality. In the course of doing so, it seems appropriate to not speak simply of a crisis of the local public, but of a 'paradox' of the local public.

Essentially, in referring to the 'paradox of the local public' we mean to say that a high level of interest in the local public and its general esteem are thwarted by a simultaneously decreasing connection to it. Our survey as well as the focus groups and interviews demonstrate that there is interest in local topics and local events which becomes more pronounced the closer they encroach on an individual's everyday life (neighborhood, work life, topics of personal interest, etc.). Local media are considered in high esteem in order to ensure an appropriate information flow and generate discourse surrounding (public) urban life. In this respect, the groups of actors we researched barely differ.

Despite this relative lack of differentiation "public connection through media consumption" (Couldry & Markham, 2006, p. 251) decreases, especially among the young. While older people generally feel well informed by local media, and young people have the impression that these traditional local media do provide good information, the latter hardly use them at all—or if they do only very infrequently. An increasing proportion of people are, therefore, untouched by local media. At the same time, in the case of most users we investigated this gap is not filled by platforms such as Facebook or Twitter as their relevance to local information is negligible. Rather, citizens often become aware of local news through WhatsApp or other messenger apps, but above all from personal conversations with their fellow citizens which are highly focused on particular topics. There exists, therefore, a considerable gap between the desire for local information and exchange on local issues and the available possibilities for local, mediated communication.

In the case of Bremen, we can argue that—in the context of media change—relationality fundamentally transforms within the figurations of news production, in the relationship between journalists and their audiences, and that of the different groups and communities. However, in the city a new integrated communicative relatedness—what we typically refer to as the (local) public—only exists to a minor extent.

This is in part caused by the "path dependency" (Garud & Karnoe, 2012) exhibited by current local news media. In the case of Bremen, local newspapers, television and radio stations, and local media enterprises—especially newspapers—are primarily oriented towards developing digital offerings (websites, apps) that serve to aid the sale of their previously printed and broadcasted content which, in essence, opens up an additional distribution channel. They act and are caught up in the patterns of their own organization. It is this 'path dependency' against which we position our idea of the local news platform *molo.news*: If we plan to overcome the paradox of the local publishing sphere through a platform like *molo*, it must work as a tool for offering a new kind of relationality across figurations instead of reproducing the path dependency of existing media organizations' figurations. The idea is to develop a 'relational platform,' in which collectives (associations, citizens' initiatives, social movements, etc.) can have a say besides journalists and, ideally, in which the content of all local media are available.

3. Experimenting or Prototyping as Co-Creation

Keeping in mind our search for a relational answer to the paradox of the local public sphere, we understand our software development of a local news platform as 'experimental' because our aim is to sound out the 'scope of possibilities' in a way that local newspapers or local news providers are unable to owing to the path depen-

dency of their organizations. We are able to act on the basis of empirical research and without economic pressure in order to develop a platform that comes as close as possible to the idea of relationality. Ideally, this platform would be established in the City of Bremen (with the possibility of expanding to other cities), but first of all we wanted to experimentally demonstrate what form such a platform might take. In pursuit of this goal, we have used an approach from software development called co-creation. This method of development is in itself relational because its underlying idea is to integrate the various figurations of actors that will use the platform into its development from the beginning. For this, situational figurations of co-creation workshops are set up which create the space to 'relate' different expectations and requirements. This is achieved by using a stepwise developed prototype as a 'relational boundary object,' that is, as a shared point of refence to build up the platform's detailed concept of relationality.

The current research discussion on co-creation has two main origins. First, it represents a reorientation in business informatics towards the customer or user and is accordingly expected to support market success (Piller, Ihl, & Vossen, 2010). This kind of user orientation has also become increasingly relevant to public institutions and (local) authorities. It refers to the fulfillment of tasks in their provision of suitable offers for citizens and the enhancement of citizens' participation in the definition and provision of such services (Aichholzer & Strauß, 2015; Nambisan & Nambisan, 2013). References to the challenges of strengthening cohesion in the community are quite clear here—even if the business informatics perspective and approach are different and more directed towards fostering cohesion between users and a product.

Second, and also highly relevant, are approaches that involve users in the design of IT solutions even before the definition of requirements phase. Here, three different "participative design" (Simonsen & Robertson, 2013) approaches can be identified: The ETHICS method developed in Great Britain (Mumford, 1981; Mumford & Henshall, 1979), the Scandinavian approach of the DEMOS and UTOPIA project (Ehn, 1988) and the US "co-operative design" approach (Greenbaum & Kyng, 1991). In these ways of developing co-creation processes, future users and their "collective creativity" (Sanders & Stappers, 2008, p. 6) are ideally included in the entire design process.

These reflections on co-creation in software development are also conducive to our 'experimental' development. Participation in journalism is, to a large extent, still limited to the journalistic post-production phase, that is, offering users the possibility of commenting on and discussing the news (Bergström & Wadbring, 2015). This is not to say that established news organizations and particularly journalistic start-ups are not also experimenting with more sophisticated ways of actively engaging audiences (Hansen & Goligoski, 2018) but we believe our approach goes further in this respect as it is directed toward including both potential users and content providers of a news application before it even exists. In order to achieve this we felt that co-creation—in addition to empirical research—provides the most effective opportunity for the inclusion of a wide variety of stakeholders in the development and design phases of the software at its very initial stage. In addition, this kind of co-creation approach has the advantage that it can be used to sustainably promote acceptance of the platform from the outset against the background of the broad range of services available in the field.

In order to combine co-creation with the expectations of a high level of 'professionalism' for the platform, a degree of professionalism equivalent to the quality of other platforms such as Facebook or Twitter (a user demand which was repeatedly expressed during group discussions with users), we decided on a two-stage development process: In the first stage, we sought to develop a functional prototype of our platform in tight co-creation loops which were then to be implemented in a second stage of actual (re)programming for a platform for everyday operations. This procedure also corresponds with the discussion on the role of prototypes in software development (Turner, 2016). These take the character of "boundary objects" (Jarke & Gerhard, 2018; Star, 2010): A material artefact which is used to negotiate between different groups of actors, in our case, an understanding of the platform and its relationality.

In this way, and based on an analysis of the focus groups and interviews with the various actors under investigation, we developed both the name of the platform and its core rationale: *molo.news*, whereby—as already mentioned in the introduction—'molo' stands for 'moving local': Moving local news for people in motion and those who want to bring the movement of a new relationality to the city public. Relationality here means the following: Through this platform, content from established local media (local newspapers, district magazines, local radio stations, etc.) as well as content from city collectives (associations, citizens' initiatives, social movements, etc.) should be accessible in an easy-to-use app (relationality on the level of sources). All this news should be curated (relationality of curation) and provided on one news feed (relationality of content) through which the different users of the platform can anticipate how they would like or actually relate to each other (relationality of users).

We soon learned that such a solution would require a particular backend (an editorial system that is able to bundle a range of content and provide a uniform keyword system) as well as a frontend (the actual app and its user interface on the device). Apart from this basic structural decision, the concrete implementation and design processes were open and were developed step by step as part of the co-creation workshops. In order to illustrate this procedure, in what follows we will concentrate on the development of the app itself and omit a description

of the editorial system (backend; for a detailed description of our practical approach, see work by Hepp, Loosen, & Breiter, 2019, and Roeske & Heitmann, 2019).

A total of eight co-creation workshops were held between summer 2018 and spring 2019 to develop our prototype. The participants were acquired through direct contact at schools and clubs, via flyers, emails, and social media call-outs as well as invitations to courses at the university. The prototype development workshops focused on potential individual users and not on collectives or journalists (who are of particular interest for the development of the editorial system). We worked with people aged 15 to 39 from a range of social backgrounds and levels of formal education. The group sizes varied between five and ten participants. Our workshops had a fixed timeframe and a structured schedule which were outlined to the participants at the beginning of each workshop. The setting of the workshops varied greatly depending on the group involved and what stage of development we were at (see Table 1). In addition to the co-creation workshops we also conducted four feedback workshops in which we sought advice from experts on each respective stage of development.

In each workshop we applied a combination of methods from the input, interview, and creative phases as well as collaborative elements (Roeske & Heitmann, 2019; Figure 1). For example, we worked with the Think Aloud method which finds its origins in design thinking as well as with A/B tests. While the former describes an active articulation of impressions when testing an application (Van Someren, Barnard, & Sandberg, 1994), the A/B test is a comparative test between two variants of the same system (Fabijan & Olsson, 2015). All the co-creation workshops focused on specific problems and questions related to the app. Consequently, design elements and functionalities were conceived as ways of presenting different kinds of content. Here, we worked out design elements on paper with scissors, pens, and support material. After each co-creation session, the project team translated the results of the workshops into a so-called mockup of the app, i.e., a simple digital model, on the basis of which further in-depth work could be carried out in the next workshop while simultaneously informing the definition of the feature requirements that the software developers needed for their work. Each co-creation workshop was planned and conducted to reflect the results of those that proceeded it. To achieve this aim, we established an iterative process of prototyping.

Through this iterative process we were able to interrelate the different stakeholders in the development process. Basically, we can understand each co-creation workshop as an occasion of building up a situational figuration of joint development. However, it remains a somehow power-related and unbalanced relationality: The use of a co-creation approach in our experimental development does not dissolve the distinction between the roles of

Table 1. Overview of co-creation and feedback workshops.

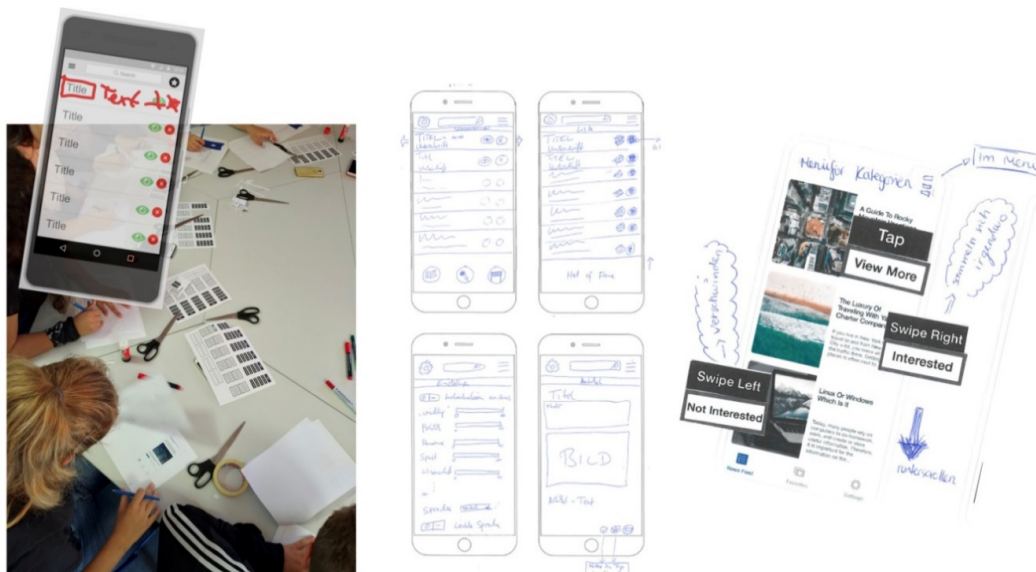|	Date	Location	Participants	Focus
F1	05.02.18	University	Students	Media practices, experience with news apps, generating ideas for apps
F2	13.02.18	Digital Lab	Developers	Discussion of project plans, identification of challenges
F3	31.05.18	Research institute	Experts	Discussion of project plans, general feedback
C1	20.06.18	University	Students	Feedback on our wireframes, name 'molo' etc., app design by participants
C2	17.07.18	University	Students	Refinement of user interface (UI) concept app
C3	22.08.18	School	Pupils	Refinement of UI concept app, development of interaction possibilities (swipe, tap, etc.), logo and name, idea collection
F4	04.09.18	Youth club	Teenagers	Refinement UI concept app, discussion logo
C4	17.11.18	Media pedagogics	Conference participants	Accessibility, user approach, transparency, hashtags, sorting options, content provider view conference
C5	21.11.18	School	Pupils	Features, onboarding, content, relevant content providers, communication
C6	15.01.19	University	Students, professionals	General feedback, possible improvement of app prototype
C7	23.01.19	School	Pupils	Onboarding, configuration, features
C8	25.03.19	University	Professionals, pensioners	Onboarding, possible improvement of app prototype

Notes: C—Co-creation workshop, F—Feedback workshop.

Figure 1. Example of a co-creation workshop.

'developers' and 'users' but it does make it possible to ease the rigid boundary between them. That said, across the workshops the focus on the prototype as a relational boundary object turned out to be central: Its iterative development has connected the sequence of the different workshops in a meaningful way and it also offered the participants in their practical work an orientation within each respective workshop particularly in regard to its position in the development process as a whole. The practical work with paper, pen, and scissors was used to playfully visualize ideas. This provided opportunities to stimulate the "practical consciousness" (Giddens, 1984, pp. 41–45) of the workshop participants: On the practical level of their 'everyday doing' they 'know' how they would (like to) act with such a news platform, while 'discursively,' for example, in an interview or by means

of a questionnaire, this knowledge is not accessible. In concrete terms, we learned a lot about the participants' ideas for a simple, intuitive app, the desire for compatibility with existing applications, and their 'vision' of an open integration of diverse content with simultaneous data security.

4. *Molo.news* as a Relational Platform

So, what forms does the prototype that was developed in this co-creative process take? In essence, the platform we developed is characterized by the fact that it establishes a kind of fourfold relationality. Each distinct aspect of relationality operates at the level of sources (providers of content), of content, of curating, and of users (see Figure 2). We thereby associate a shift from the con-

Figure 2. Molo-news as a relational platform.

cept of social and societal integration through mass media (sources) to that of a *platform relationality*. Here traditional mass media are only one provider of content among many and all actors (in their roles as providers and users of content) and they have, in principal, the opportunity to perceive each other, to position themselves in relation to one another, and to establish relationships.

At the level of the 'relationality of sources,' the *molo.news* platform makes a distinction between established (journalistic) media such as local newspapers or local radio stations and non-professional providers of content. Content from established media complies with accepted journalistic standards and is automatically read into the platform's editorial system via RSS feeds. Non-professional content providers are represented as collectives, by which we understand "collective actors" (Schimank, 2010, p. 327) of all kinds who are involved in the urban public. Such collectives can be associations, social movements, citizens' initiatives, and so on. Collectives feed their content into the platform's editorial system for which an easy-to-use input mask was developed. To have access to these input systems collectives must be 'accredited' by *molo.news*, that is, recognized as reliable sources so that they might be granted permissions to upload content.

Consequently, the relationality of sources means, that in order to involve various local media and collectives in the platform, they must also support the platform through cooperation. Achieving this was first and foremost a social process in which mutual trust had to be established and appropriate cooperation agreements concluded. Currently, all major local media based in the City of Bremen, with the exception of one local newspaper, participate in the experimental platform *molo.news*. This alone has led to a different form of perception among the actors which, while likely still dominated by mutual competition, is also guided by participation in an overarching project.

The 'relationality of content' should also be seen socially as professionally produced content from local media and content from committed collectives are presented on an equal basis through the platform. The content that enters the editorial system in this way can vary wildly. At its core, however, three forms dominate: news on political and social life in the city; announcements of events such as concerts or demonstrations; and reports from the point of view of individual collectives, for example, on their own events or vocations.

The idea of building up a relationality of content corresponds to the findings from the empirical research and co-creation workshops from which we know that that collectives often feel powerless against the overrepresentation of professional media in the news space and that many users are dissatisfied with classic local journalism and are hungry for new forms of presentation and content. However, the development of the prototype quickly opened up a discourse on the character of 'more appropriate' local news that could be established around the *molo.news* platform involving both the local media and the various collectives with their individual perspectives.

The 'relationality of curating' has already been mentioned. With a platform that makes accessible content from different actors, it seems barely possible to let the selection processes run purely automatically or on the basis of the automated clustering of content. As recent research has shown, even on platforms such as Facebook, curating and moderation is far less automated than originally assumed (see Gillespie, 2018). The content must, therefore, be curated according to different dimensions, which in turn leads to the technical task of developing a backend system that makes curation possible at a social dimension, namely, the establishment of a hub editorial office for the selection and indexing of the content.

Within the editorial system at the backend of the *molo.news* platform, all content is reviewed by an editorial team: We call it the 'hub editorial office.' It has a threefold task: Fundamentally, it is tasked with screening contributions to ensure their quality and to avoid publishing defamatory or legally dubious contributions. In addition, the hub editorial staff selects contributions, in that it decides which contributions are to be included in *molo.news* (to avoid duplication of, for example, agency reports) and marks contributions that appear to be particularly relevant for the community with the 'hot' signifier; 'hot' content refers to news that appears in a user's news feed regardless of a selection that a user may have made to personalize his or her own content stream. Finally, the hub editorial team allocates to each piece of content keywords for automatically imported news through which the user can gain access to content across different sources. The main task of the hub editorial staff is, therefore, to "curate" (Thorson & Wells, 2016) the variety of content that users can access via the app on their mobile devices (see Figure 3).

An editorial office like the Hub must be able to assume a neutral position in regard to the various content providers especially if different professional media are to be integrated. This also means that it should be located outside of the editorial offices and workspaces of the various individual providers. Establishing this position and creating the corresponding acceptance for such a meta-editorial office is considered as a social process.

Finally, there is the 'relationality of users' arising from the platform. Users have various options through which they are able to personalize their news feed: They can prioritize content that relates to a defined location and its environs. They can follow certain sources such as certain media whether they be local newspapers or certain collectives such as clubs, associations or initiatives. Finally, the news feed can be personalized according to keywords to select topics of interest. We have taken particular care not to simply reproduce current journalistic departments such as politics, business, and sport. Our considerations were instead guided by analytical considerations and empirical findings about user preferences
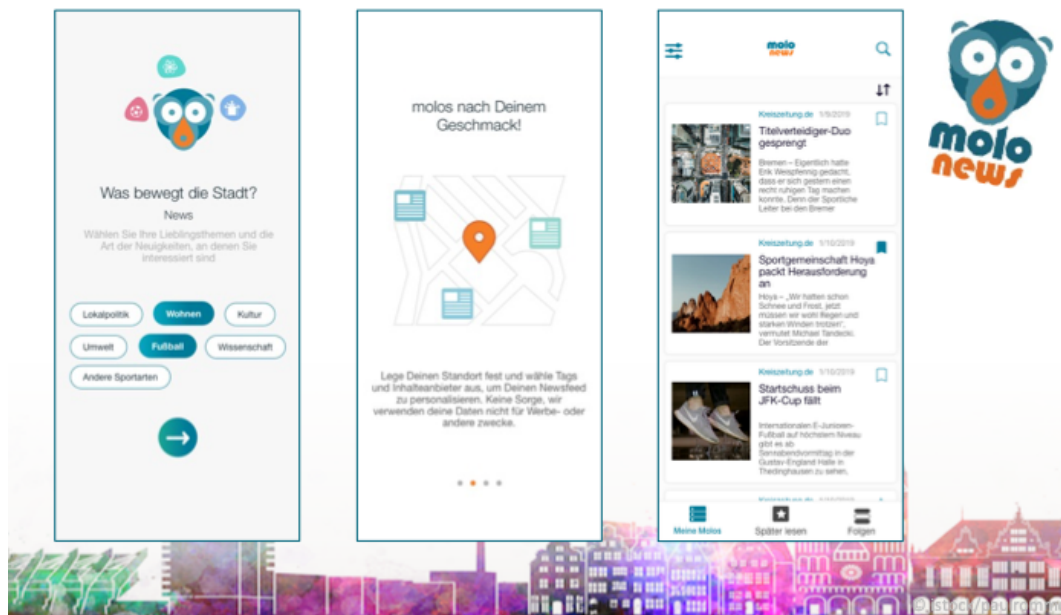
Figure 3. The molo.news app.

as outlined in Section 2 on the crisis and the paradox of the local public which has led to the aim of delivering moving news in a dual sense. All news on *molo.news* is thus grouped along four questions: What moves the city? (moving news from the city); Where can I move to? (events that can be attended); How do I move? (the possibilities of mobility in the city); What can I move? (the possibilities of one's own commitment). However, as already stated: News marked 'hot' will appear in all personalized news feeds regardless of the locations a user prioritizes, as well as the sources and topics they follow. 'Hot' stories ensure that users will receive the information considered most relevant by the community itself.

The relationality of users is, therefore, fundamentally a social phenomenon as *molo.news* aims to bring together various figurations of organizations and communities as mutual audiences in order to foster cohesion in the city. At its current stage, we have made the initial steps towards this orientation through the co-creation workshops in which we have involved various groups of people as future users. The extent to which such a relationality can then also be realized in everyday practices will only become apparent when we go public with the app.

5. Conclusion: Relationality as a Chance for Local Journalism

So far in this article we have presented the development of and the conceptual idea behind *molo.news*. The connective notion across the project has been that of relationality: The relationality of each stakeholder's figurations that were involved in the development process, the role the prototype plays as a relational boundary object, and the relational concept of the platform itself.

For us, this focus on relationality was an important step in the process of developing our experimental local news platform—a step that was certainly carried in part by our theoretical starting point of the figurational approach. Beyond the specific role relationality played for our project, however, the idea of relationality seems to us an important basis from which a wider discussion on the future of local journalism can take place. Local journalism is often thought of as an institution that is supposed to maintain one inclusive public sphere for all actors within a city (politicians, communities, citizens). This idea has strong roots in the world of legacy mass media whose publics were constructed via certain distribution arenas and in which journalists played a prominent role as gatekeepers. This has changed with the progression of deep mediatization and the spread of platform media: Various actors from all walks of life are communicating on multiple platforms in addition to professional journalists such as the collectives outlined in this article (social movements, neighborhood initiatives). These collectives might even raise their voice in opposition to journalists who at the same time are losing sight of their role as gatekeepers and are struggling to reach younger local audiences.

As we have argued in this article, from this perspective we are confronted with the 'paradox of the local public': Various actors have a great interest in local news and information but at the same time notice that current structures of the local public no longer seem to function. At this point, relational thinking opens up a completely different space from which to think about the problem: Perhaps the progression of deep mediatization is about realizing the opportunity of platform media in terms of their relationality, making the most of diverse content from different sources accessible in their curated rela-

tionality to one another and positioning local journalism within this space. This is not to say that a local newspaper article is the same as, for example, the information from a neighborhood initiative about its latest project. But perhaps these spaces of relationality across the different figurations of a city unlock the prospect of journalism repositioning itself in relation to other local voices and not simply equate itself with them.

Surely, then, completely new questions arise: For example, how can such relational platforms be financed in the long-term? What other business models for the production and distribution of quality journalism exist? Whose content is made accessible through these platforms and whose is not? We have not yet found definitive answers to these questions during the development of the *momo.news* project and we, too, are still looking for a sustainable business model for the platform. On the basis of the current academic discussion and research, the model of a cooperative currently seems to us to be the most sensible (see the discussion on "platform coops," in particular, Scholz and Schneider [2017]; similar thoughts are expressed, for example, in studies on the "cooperative regulation" of platforms like Helberger, Pierson, and Poell [2018]). The crucial point here is that a project like ours creates the space for these questions to be raised without adhering to the path dependencies of established local newspapers' and local radio stations' organizational structures. At least, in principle, there exists the possibility that some of these media organizations will disappear while making way for new, innovative organizational forms and business models. In some ways, we see our project as an attempt to experimentally explore spaces of possibility. In this sense, the experiment continues and we very much hope that it is possible for us to "create something enduring" as Paul Hindemith, quoted at the beginning of this article, also intended.

Acknowledgments

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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COGITATIO

Article

Activism, Advertising, and Far-Right Media: The Case of Sleeping Giants

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Abstract

This study examines the international activist movement known as Sleeping Giants, a social-media "campaign to make bigotry and sexism less profitable" (Sleeping Giants, n.d.). The campaign originated in the US with an anonymous Twitter account that enlisted followers in encouraging brands to pull their online advertising from *Breitbart News*. The campaign achieved dramatic success and rapidly spread to regions outside the US, with other anonymously run and loosely allied chapters emerging in 15 different nations (as well as a regional chapter for the EU). Many of these were initially created to take on *Breitbart* advertisers in their home countries, but in a number of cases they subsequently turned their attention to disrupting financial support for other far-right news media in—or impacting—their home countries. Based on interviews with leaders of eight Sleeping Giants chapters, as well as the related UK-based Stop Funding Hate campaign, this study examines the Sleeping Giants campaign with respect to its continuity with media activism of previous eras, while also seeking to understand its potential as one of the first high-profile activist campaigns to grapple with the impacts of programmatic advertising on the news ecosystem. In particular, we consider how the campaign's interventions speak to the larger debate around the normative relationship between advertising and the performance of the news ecosystem.

Keywords

activism; corporate social responsibility; hate speech; hyper-partisan news; online activism; online advertising; programmatic advertising; Sleeping Giants

1. Introduction

Amid the economic collapse of many ad-driven news publications in the US and elsewhere, a conversation has emerged among media critics and journalism scholars about the future, or lack thereof, of ad-supported journalism. Positions within this dialogue are nuanced and it is thus more accurate to speak of a spectrum of viewpoints than sides in a debate. On one end are scholars like Habermas (2007), Pickard (2014), or McChesney and Nichols (2010), who argue the economic crisis in ad-

supported journalism presents an opportunity to finally divorce journalism from the pressures of the market by introducing public funding mechanisms. They draw on the work of Baker (2001) and others, delineating various ways in which reliance on advertising distorts the public mission of journalism. At least some of these scholars see efforts to restore advertising subsidies to news as fundamentally misguided, akin to begging back into a bad relationship.

On the other end of the aforementioned spectrum, scholars like Couldry and Turow (2014) and academic

researchers affiliated with the Global Disinformation Index (Melford & Fagan, 2019)—while not averse to the notion of publicly funded journalism—are more focused on the recent impact of behaviorally targeted advertising on news organizations and their output. They frame many of the harms to which digital advertising has contributed—the revenue crisis at news organizations, the rise of click-driven editorial strategies, new opportunities for ad fraud, and heightened monetary incentives for the spread of disinformation and hate speech—as potentially addressable by reforms that would limit fraud, abuse, and marketing surveillance while returning greater advertising subsidies to professional news organizations.

In other words, this spectrum of opinion ranges from revolution to reform—from those who would like to dismantle news organizations' relationship with advertising to those who see the relationship as reparable. As we discuss in this article, this difference in opinion also turns up in significant ways across activist campaigns targeting the advertising industry.

Sleeping Giants is a novel activist campaign aimed at digital advertising that serves as an important provocation, both in the world of media activism and in the academic policy debates surrounding the appropriate relationship between journalism and advertising in the 21st century. Based on interviews with the activists themselves, this study examines Sleeping Giants with respect to its continuity with media activism of previous eras, while also seeking to understand its potential as one of the first high-profile activist campaigns to grapple with the recent impacts of programmatic advertising on the news ecosystem.
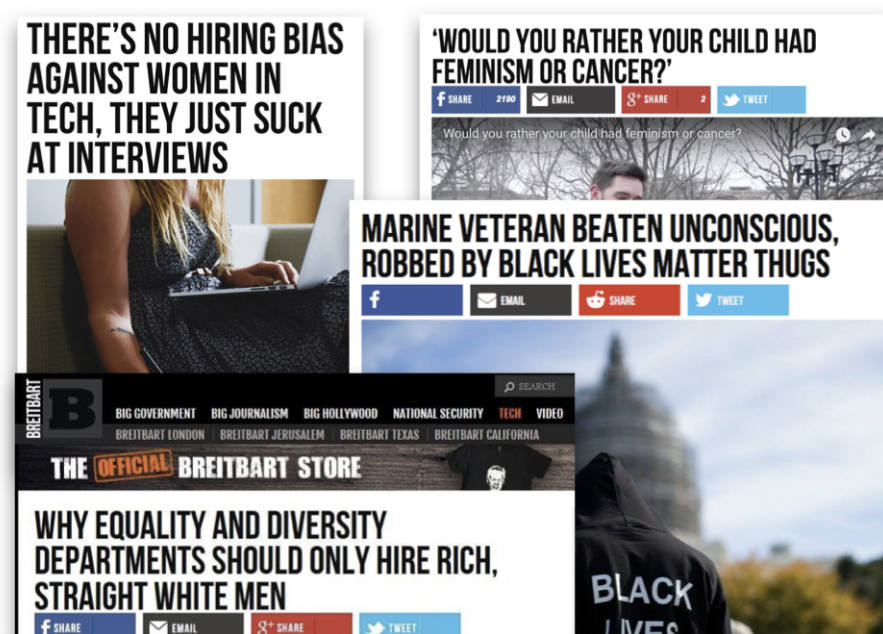
The Sleeping Giants campaign centers around two intertwined issues: 1) The rapid rise in popularity of right-wing "hyper-partisan news" sites, best exemplified by the ascendance of *Breitbart News* over the course of the 2016 US presidential election; and 2) the opportunities and threats created within the news ecosystem by contemporary programmatic advertising. To set the stage, we introduce both here.

1.1. Right-Wing Hyper-Partisan News

A well-known study conducted by Faris et al. (2017) confirmed what many media watchers had already suspected—namely that *Breitbart News*, famously described by its erstwhile executive chairman Steve Bannon as a home for the "alt-right," had dominated the information diet of conservative social media users in the US during the 2016 presidential election. Throughout this time, the site played a substantial role in driving the agenda of partisan conservative outlets across the web, ranging from relatively popular publications to sites at the fringes, the latter of which at times drew on *Breitbart*'s more conspiratorial framings of the news to spin up outright hoaxes. Not only had *Breitbart* and its ilk come to dominate conservative media, they also played an agenda-setting role, drawing mainstream news outlets into covering their favored topics, if only to contest the original, misleading coverage, or the conspiracy theories that evolved from it (Phillips, 2018).

While *Breitbart* stories have often been flagged as selective and misleading in their interpretation of current events, perhaps of greatest concern to critics is that the site's coverage often toes or crosses the line into hate speech, pushing frames and inflammatory headlines that single out women, migrants, and ethnic minorities in troubling ways (see Figure 1). Outside the US, other far-right partisan sites like *Boulevard Voltaire* (*BV*; France)

Figure 1. Examples of inflammatory *Breitbart News* headlines.

and *Nyheter Idag* (Sweden) create similarly problematic content, at times apparently influenced by material from *Breitbart* itself. A common feature among these sites is that they are monetized, in whole or in part, through programmatic advertising.

1.2. Programmatic Advertising

Much of the online advertising ecosystem has come to be dominated by programmatic advertising. While programmatic advertising can take a number of forms, most commonly it consists of an online auction that occurs each time a web page is loaded, in which a publisher puts up ad space for sale along with details on the user about to view it. Advertisers bid on the attention of the user based on their perceived desirability as a customer. Intermediaries known as ad-tech firms handle the details of each transaction. These intermediaries are numerous (though they are often owned by the same tech giants) and it is not uncommon for a single transaction to involve four or more ad-tech companies. The resulting complexity of each transaction, combined with the fact that programmatic advertising tends to focus advertisers' attention on reaching desirable users at the expense of editorial context, has meant that until recently advertisers were often unaware of where on the web their ads were appearing (Braun & Eklund, 2019; McStay, 2017; Melford & Fagan, 2019; Turow, 2011). This opacity in the supply chain has been readily exploited by proprietors of clickbait sites who spin up viral content featuring miracle diets, strange cosmetic trends, and hoax news articles solely for the purpose of generating a profit from programmatic ads (Bell & Owen, 2017; Braun & Eklund, 2019; Fenton & Freedman, 2017; Melford & Fagan, 2019; Wu, 2016).

While much of this content would not have garnered advertiser support in the era when brands still relied on editorial context as a proxy for desirable audiences, Malthouse, Maslowska, and Franks (2018, p. 32) note that programmatic advertising has succeeded in separating "the value of the content product from the audience product." When brands can track desirable users across the web, they not only have less incentive now than they once did to think about editorial context, they may see a benefit in reaching those users in the cheapest possible spaces—spaces that tend not to belong to reputable publishers, but to clickbait artists.

This is the economic logic that incentivized the creation of many profit-driven "fake news" sites during the 2016 election and it simultaneously worked to the benefit of hyper-partisan sites like *Breitbart News*, since they drew traffic with inflammatory headlines that might otherwise have been unpalatable to advertisers. Scholars who study these issues in the advertising ecosystem have not been sanguine about the prospect of self-reform within the ad-tech industry. Braun and Eklund (2019) outlined a variety of ways in which the complexity of the ad-tech ecosystem incentivized firms to act outside the public interest while avoiding responsibility for poor outcomes. Other researchers have similarly argued that some combination of outside forces—political activism, possibly followed by government regulation—are likely to be necessary precursors for reform (e.g., Couldry & Turow, 2014; Pickard, 2014).

It was significant, then, when the public controversies surrounding "fake news" and sites like *Breitbart News* in the wake of the 2016 US presidential election arguably created a new concern for editorial context on the part of advertisers. Braun and Eklund (2019) quote ad-tech executive Charlie Tillinghast on this point:

> As long as [brands] were reaching the person they wanted, then they were less concerned about the context [in which their ad appeared]. But now they're being accused of essentially funding fake news or…hate speech or conspiracies…by virtue of the fact that their ad is running on that site. That's different. (p. 16)

This moment of tension and vulnerability created an opening for creative activism, which was seized most successfully by Sleeping Giants.

2. Methods

Couldry and Turow (2014) and Pickard (2014) have each argued that activism in the digital advertising space is simultaneously essential to reforms in the public interest and significantly complicated by the fact that some of the issues involved are intricate and therefore potentially difficult to mobilize around. Given the notion that activism around programmatic advertising is necessarily complex and therefore challenging, the rapid spread of Sleeping Giants' tactics, which diffused and were adapted across national contexts in the span of a few months, suggests an important intervention in this space. We wanted to investigate the accessibility of the model in its original formation, as well as how it traveled so readily. Here we narrate a significant and recent chapter in media activism across national borders. While not a full cross-comparative analysis of the factors that shaped spin-off campaigns in different national contexts, we look forward to analyzing international differences more fully in future work.

We conducted qualitative semi-structured interviews with the anonymous activists behind as many of the Sleeping Giants chapters as we were able to reach. We began by direct-messaging the original US chapter via one of its social media accounts and obtaining an interview. The interviewee then passed along our call for participation to the other Sleeping Giants chapters. Those interested in participating in the study reached out to us, in some cases referring us to additional chapters. After the culmination of this snowball sample, we reached out directly to the remaining chapters whose direct messages were open on social media. Toward the end of the study we also re-contacted those chapters we had spoken to

previously whose accounts were still active to conduct follow-up interviews regarding their activities since we first spoke.
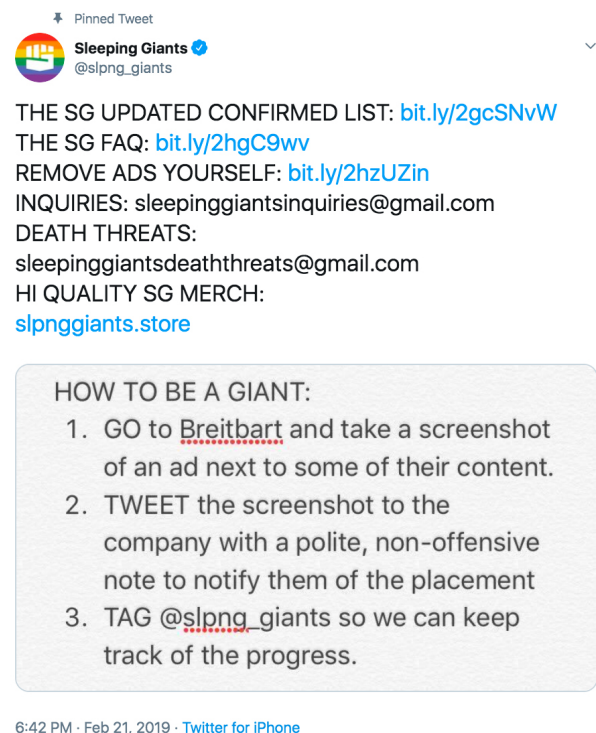
We interviewed activists behind eight (out of a total of sixteen) Sleeping Giants chapters, including the US, France, Sweden, Switzerland, Germany, Australia, Netherlands, and the EU. We conducted follow-up interviews with the American and French chapters. At the suggestion of several participants, we also interviewed Richard Wilson, the co-founder of the UK-based activist campaign, Stop Funding Hate, which is similar to Sleeping Giants in a number of respects and has interacted substantively with various Sleeping Giants chapters in ways participants viewed as being integral to their efforts. Interviews averaged 65 minutes in length and were conducted by phone or voice chat, though one interviewee elected to participate by email and two by direct message over social media. In all, 7.6 hours of interview audio were recorded. While our sample coverage was quite good—the interviews represented participation from 50% of the Sleeping Giants chapters—we took advantage of the fact that our data were of a size that could be reviewed iteratively. The authors listened to, read transcripts of, and made detailed notes on all of the collected interviews. We regularly compared and talked through the notes we had made on the interview data to identify and interrogate emergent themes. Consistent with a "grounded theory" approach (see Glaser & Strauss, 1967), each interview was ultimately coded according to the themes that emerged from this process.

With the exception of Stop Funding Hate co-founder Richard Wilson, who was a public figure at the time of our interview, and Sleeping Giants US founder Matt Rivitz—whose identity was revealed by the *Daily Caller* and subsequently published in the national press between our initial and follow-up interviews—all of the activists we spoke with operated anonymously. Though we were able to establish through existing contacts and secure communications that the people with whom we spoke were the real activists behind the Sleeping Giants chapters they claimed to represent, we do not know their real names. Out of respect for their privacy we will use gender-neutral pronouns below to represent their quotes.

3. How Sleeping Giants Works

Sleeping Giants' central tactic is to invite users to take screenshots of brands' ads appearing on *Breitbart News* or other target sites, and then to post them to Twitter in a tweet that tags both the brand's Twitter account and the Sleeping Giants account. Often the screenshot will be accompanied by images of inflammatory headlines the target site has posted in the past, to convey a sense of why the placement could be problematic for the advertiser's image. The Sleeping Giants account will often, but not always, retweet the user's callout for the sake of amplification. They will also keep track of—and retweet—the brand's response to the user. In cases

where the brand responds by agreeing to remove its ads from *Breitbart*, Sleeping Giants will add the brand to the public list of advertisers—currently over 4,200—that have agreed to block *Breitbart* from their ad buys. Chapters in different countries maintain analogous lists for their regional targets. The campaign's Twitter account keeps a link to the relevant list, along with simple instructions for users and advertisers, in a pinned tweet, always visible at the top of their profile page (see Figure 2). The US and many other Sleeping Giants chapters also run similar campaigns on Facebook, though in interviews they uniformly said that—for their purposes—they consider Facebook a secondary channel, maintained for reaching users and brands without a Twitter presence.

Figure 2. Pinned tweet on the Sleeping Giants US Twitter account, including simple instructions for users.

Sleeping Giants has achieved dramatic success, by some estimates cutting the number of advertisers on *Breitbart* by 90% in its first two months of operation (Bhattarai, 2017), though the activists dispute this figure. In addition to the pull-out of advertisers called out by the campaign, one source we spoke with explained they'd heard privately from ad agency executives who saw the impact of Sleeping Giants and more quietly redirected clients' ad buys. The campaign recently won a Webby Award for "Public Service and Activism" and since its inception its model of activism has spread across the globe.

A key to the group's success seems to be the way in which it simplifies involvement by users, both by allowing them to leverage the familiar tools of social media and by breaking potential contributions down into an uncomplicated set of tasks. This lowering of barriers and

granularity of tasks is in line with successful tactics from past online activist campaigns, such as the circulation by Anonymous of simple instructions and easy-to-use software that allowed ordinary people to participate in distributed denial-of-service actions (Beyer, 2014; Sauter, 2014). It includes features of what scholars like Bruns (2008) argue is uniquely effective about contemporary forms of peer production and is an essential element of what Bennett and Segerberg (2012) have dubbed "connective action" on the part of digitally-enabled social movements.

At the same time, the Sleeping Giants campaign calls to mind far more traditional activist techniques, such as the advertiser boycott.

3.1. The Treachery of Boycotts

While Sleeping Giants insists in its public-facing FAQs and other documents that it is not a boycott, it looks an awful lot like one. User replies to callout tweets on the Sleeping Giants Twitter account are replete with threats by users to stop purchasing the brands in question. In thinking through how Sleeping Giants fits into the larger picture of media reform, it is worth puzzling out the similarities and differences between its activities and traditional advertiser boycotts.

During the heyday of network television, Fahey (1991) observed that in many cases consumer boycotts targeting the advertisers on objectionable programming did little to actually harm sales revenues on the part of the affected brands. Rather, the threat of proposed or actual boycotts was primarily reputational. Friedman's (1999) taxonomy of consumer boycotts also underscores this point, drawing a distinction between "marketplace-oriented" and "media-oriented" boycotts. Though the two overlap, they differ in their primary objectives—the former seeks to change companies' behavior by denting sales revenues, while the latter is mostly about the threat of reputational damage to brands.

Many advertiser boycotts, in other words, are primarily undertaken by activists not to impact sales, but to create a news hook that may—if the company does not respond in the desired manner—generate negative coverage and bad publicity that damages public perception of a brand. Thus, while media activism targeting advertisers is sometimes conceptualized as a boycott, it may be more accurate to characterize it as a form of "flak," which Herman and Chomsky (2008) defined as disciplining the media through complaint, or essentially, in the sphere of public relations.

Advertising is conventionally understood to be focused on selling products, but a compelling goal of all advertising (and sometimes the primary goal) is to promote brand awareness, relevance, and positive affect. Therefore, a campaign that puts a brand in a negative light or changes the conversation or meaning of that brand is a significant threat, even if it isn't immediately associated with a decline in sales via an effective boycott.

While scholars have typically associated flak with right-wing activists, who in the 1980s and 1990s became well-known for protesting content on the basis usually of its depictions of sex and sexuality (McAllister, 1996; Rentschler, 2003), it has become a more widely-used tool across the political spectrum. It's also become easier to accomplish outside the structure of a pre-existing organization given the affordances of social media. While flak works especially well if you're well-funded, with lobbyists, lawyers, and connections to journalists, it can also be a tool for less-resourced organizations like Sleeping Giants. When Sleeping Giants wants to critique or praise a brand, it can reach hundreds of thousands of users directly—and even generate news coverage—through its interactions on social media.

If the contemporary internet has reconfigured activists' access to audiences, it has also changed the nature of their access to brands. The shift to digital marketing has led to what Sauter (2014, p. 151) dubs "the avatar nature of online brand presence," in which large, distributed corporations are represented by a single website or social media account. As Sauter notes, this creates a strange, if imperfect, symmetry between individuals and organizations, both of which may be represented online by a single website or profile page.

As Sauter describes it, this concentration of large organizations into single sites and accounts also creates a centralized target for campaigns—a handful of activists might not be able to block the entrance to every store in a large retail chain. But online, where the chain is represented by a single website, a small group of hacktivists, using a distributed denial-of-service attack on the retailer's servers, can shutter a multinational business's online presence for hours.

As with websites, there is greater symmetry between users and brands on social media, where a large corporation and an ordinary user each tweet from accounts that follow roughly the same online physics. Brands follow and are followed, tag and are tagged, comment and reply, retweet and are retweeted, in much the same way as other users—and this "avatar-ization" gives activists leverage. Richard Wilson is the co-founder of the Stop Funding Hate campaign in the UK, which focuses on inflammatory rhetoric in British tabloids using tactics that are, in part, similar to those of Sleeping Giants. Namely, Stop Funding Hate lobbies advertisers—through new and traditional media channels—to pull their ads from publications that print inflammatory anti-immigrant rhetoric. He described this newfound leverage as follows:

> For a lot of these big brands—particularly brands who are targeting people under 40 or people under 50—their primary strategy for reaching their customers and having a conversation with their customers is social media. So, if you're jumping into that conversation on Twitter and going, "Hang on a minute, you're supposed to be brilliantly inclusive on LGBTQ issues,

but here you are with this notoriously homophobic newspaper and I'm really disillusioned," you're not just sending them a message. You're sending them a public message and you're doing it right in the space where they've invested lots of marketing budget to be all, kind of chatty and conversational. And you're saying, "Okay, let's have a conversation. And this is what we want to converse about." I think it's totally transformative. (personal communication)

3.2. Corporate Social Responsibility

In much the same way we have characterized the spectrum of positions taken by journalism scholars on the appropriate relationship between news and advertising, the literature on activism often places activist groups on a spectrum ranging from "reformist" to "radical" (de Bakker, 2015; den Hond & de Bakker, 2007), where reformist groups are amenable to working within a system to change it while more radical groups seek to dismantle or abandon systems they view as irretrievably corrupt.

As Carrie A. Rentschler observes, "Many social movements from the political right to the political left make strategic use of the media without also seeking to change the corporate, profit-oriented structure of the media" (2003, p. 530). For example, campaigns, by Sleeping Giants and others, against Fox News personalities whose actions either on the air or in their personal conduct have been found by progressive media activists to be intolerable—from Bill O'Reilly to Tucker Carlson to Laura Ingraham—have targeted companies who advertise during these shows in order to pursue the goal of removing objectionable people or discourse from a major cable news network. Sometimes they succeed (e.g., O'Reilly). At the same time, though, this activism arguably bolsters the system of advertiser-support, and the legitimacy of corporations censoring media content, that is typically anathema to progressive causes (Soley, 2002).

Where Sleeping Giants self-identifies on the political spectrum is a matter we will return to shortly. Given their campaigns typically target right-wing media, however, they are most often labeled in media coverage as progressives. To the extent the label applies, there is an inescapable irony in progressives, in the 21st century, pressuring corporate sponsors as a way to discipline the media, when in the 20th century the corporate sponsor was viewed by many progressives as one of the central limitations to a free, vibrant, and diverse media system. Herbert Schiller wrote, "what can be expected if the channels of expression and the cultural conduits are clogged with corporate speech and values?" (1991, p. 59). As Matthew P. McAllister (1996) wrote, regarding the history of socially conservative groups using campaigns and boycotts targeted at advertisers to censor the television environment:

The most visible boycotts have been, if anything, destructive to democratic society. This is because many boycotts against advertisers, paradoxically, serve to increase the social influence of advertisers. Conservative media critics—such as Donald Wildmon of the American Family Association—often target advertisers of TV programs that they find objectionable….Essentially they coerce advertisers into asserting their economic control over media content. If the boycott is successful, it has increased the power of advertising over media. To stop the boycott, advertisers may withdraw funding from a program, which may send a message to the media that such programs are not wanted. A successful boycott of this kind teaches the media another lesson about the power of advertising. (p. 256)

Progressive activists must decide if using the "master's tools" to dismantle a particular part of his house is the approach they wish to take, as an effective short-term strategy could have unintended long-term consequences (Rentschler, 2003, p. 530).

In the world of online activism, it's easy to see collectives like those behind Anonymous as existing toward the more radical end of the reformist-radical spectrum, engaging in actions intended to dismantle or severely damage targeted organizations like the Church of Scientology or the cybersecurity firm HBGary (Beyer, 2014; Coleman, 2014). Within the world of advertising activism specifically, approaches like "culture jamming," "subvertising," and "Brandalism" occupy the radical end of the spectrum (Lasn, 1999; Lekakis, 2017). Collectively referred to as "tactical media," these strategies take a participatory, interventionist approach to undermining the cultural authority of the advertising ecosystem (Garcia & Lovink, 1997)—for example, by creating counterfeit advertisements with activist messages that shame targeted brands. Sleeping Giants, meanwhile, represents a much more buttoned-down, reformist approach to digital activism, framing the problem of hate speech as an issue of corporate social responsibility.

When we asked various chapters whether they hoped to get rid of *Breitbart News* and other far-right publications, we were uniformly told that our question missed the point. To begin with, *Breitbart News* is supported by private investors, meaning it can still survive without substantial ad revenue. The distinction, however, went beyond this. The activist behind the Sleeping Giants Sweden account gave a representative quote:

The main point is not completely defunding them, because I'm not sure whether that can be done. The main point, to me, is to make sure that it doesn't get normalized to have your ads on websites like that. Because we're on a dangerous road if mainstream companies advertise on those sites and their clients give no reaction. (personal communication)

This points to a key aspect, both of Sleeping Giants as a campaign, and of corporate social responsibility cam-

paigns more broadly, which is that the ultimate aim is to redefine the bounds of acceptable behavior within a field (de Bakker, 2015; den Hond & de Bakker, 2007). Sleeping Giants is trying to use the specter of brand damage to change (or restore) the perspective—"field frame" (Lounsbury, Ventresca, & Hirsch, 2003)—within the industry to one in which brands have a moral responsibility to both know and be selective about where their ads appear.

Though Sleeping Giants confronts brands with the specter of negative publicity, across the board chapters told us they were "an information campaign, not a shame campaign." The idea was that, because of the opacity of the programmatic advertising ecosystem, many advertisers likely had no idea their ads were appearing on *Breitbart News* or other inflammatory publications. Thus, the activists framed their activities as a service to brands rather than a campaign to shame them into submission.

As Wilson highlights above, however, contacting brands in public rather than over private channels raises the stakes around compliance. And, while Sleeping Giants founder Matt Rivitz told us many brands were appreciative when notified their ads had been appearing on *Breitbart*, this did not typically result in a warm relationship between the campaigns and the brands they had contacted going forward. "No one wants to talk about it when it's all over," he said. "It's a little like you guys just did something together and then everyone's like, 'Okay, that was weird.' You had a pretty intense date and then no one's calling back afterward" (personal communication).

Rivitz also clarified that the campaign *was* willing to shame companies. It reserved shaming, however, for the ad-tech companies and social media platforms it saw as being primarily responsible for enabling the monetization of hate speech. But, much like the activists who used advertiser boycotts against network television programming in past decades after finding the networks themselves unresponsive (Fahey, 1991), Rivitz said advertisers were the parties in the equation who were most willing to listen to consumer complaints.

As with the television networks, platforms offer content to users for free and sell their attention to advertisers, recalling the old adage, "If you're not paying for it, you're not the customer, you're the product." Or, as Rivitz framed it more bluntly, "KFC doesn't ask the chickens what they want to do with the company" (personal communication). Advertisers, meanwhile, spend a great deal on cultivating an image of inclusivity around both their customer base and their hiring practices, and are therefore more sensitive regarding threats to this perception—hence the common industry term, "brand safety," in reference to the ideal that ads should appear only in places unlikely to damage a company's image by association.

A campaign that bills itself as providing a major service to brands is far more reformist than revolutionary. And, as noted above, despite taking aim at far-right media, activism intent on reifying the traditional advertising model might be thought of as inherently conservative

in some ways. From the activists' own perspective there are no paradoxes in this. Rivitz explained that standing against hate and bigotry should fundamentally not be viewed as a partisan stance.

4. An International Movement

Sleeping Giants' success in the US quickly inspired spinoffs in other countries. Some of these approached the founders of the initial accounts to inquire about creating a new national chapter, while others were individuals who contributed actively to the original social media campaign as ordinary users and were subsequently invited by the existing activists to create accounts in their various home countries. The chapters communicate via a backchannel and informally vet the addition of people and chapters, for example determining if anyone in the existing group can vouch for a new individual.

A good number of the non-US chapters joined in response to the announcement by *Breitbart News* that the publication would be expanding its operations in Europe, and for many of these chapters the initial aim was to aid the US campaign by advising the advertisers in their respective countries to pull their ads from *Breitbart*, thus reducing the apparent profit potential of such an expansion.

These chapters operated in the native languages of their home countries and the Sleeping Giants EU account worked, through retweets, to create a centralized record of their various contributions to the list of advertisers blacklisting *Breitbart*, which could be referenced to update the figures maintained by the US campaign.

In Germany and elsewhere, chapters maintained a relatively narrow focus on *Breitbart* as a target. The German activist we spoke with said this was for three reasons: 1) *Breitbart* had announced explicit plans to move into Germany, creating a sense of urgency around halting such an expansion; 2) they assessed most of the local sites that toed or crossed the line into hate speech to be small, and feared targeting them could inadvertently give them publicity; and 3) the existence of a particularly aggressive trolling culture among far-right German social media users raised concerns about doxing and targeted harassment.

As time went on, however, at least some chapters turned their attention to publications closer to home. The Swedish and Dutch activists were especially interested in *Breitbart* because it had a sizable audience in their home countries. But they quickly identified homegrown publications monetizing inflammatory content as well. In the Netherlands, activists took aim at the commercial publication *GeenStijl*.

Sleeping Giants Sweden identified *Samhällsnytt* ("Society News," formerly *Avpixlat* or "Un-Pixelated") and *Nyheter Idag* ("News Today") as particularly problematic. According to the Swedish activists, much of the content of these publications consists of loose rewrites of *Breitbart* material. Both sites, which have ties to

the Sweden Democrats (a far-right party with ethno-nationalist roots) and a more radical splinter party respectively, were identified independently by researchers at the Oxford Internet Institute (Hedman et al., 2018) as leading purveyors of "junk news" in Sweden.

In Switzerland, activists took aim at messages from the Swiss People's Party, which put out anti-migrant materials in the form of inflammatory political advertising (this is the party responsible for the notorious black-sheep billboard image), and a newspaper insert containing misleading statements. They also coordinated with Sleeping Giants France in actions against the French publication *BV*—to be discussed shortly—which enjoyed a sizable readership among Switzerland's Francophone population.

The Australian chapter, one of the last to join in mid-2017, meanwhile focused tightly not on far-right websites, but on the Murdoch news empire in Australia—particularly the Sky News Australia cable channel, which the activists discussed as the primary platform through which hateful ideas and the personalities conveying them were being mainstreamed into the Australian media ecosystem.
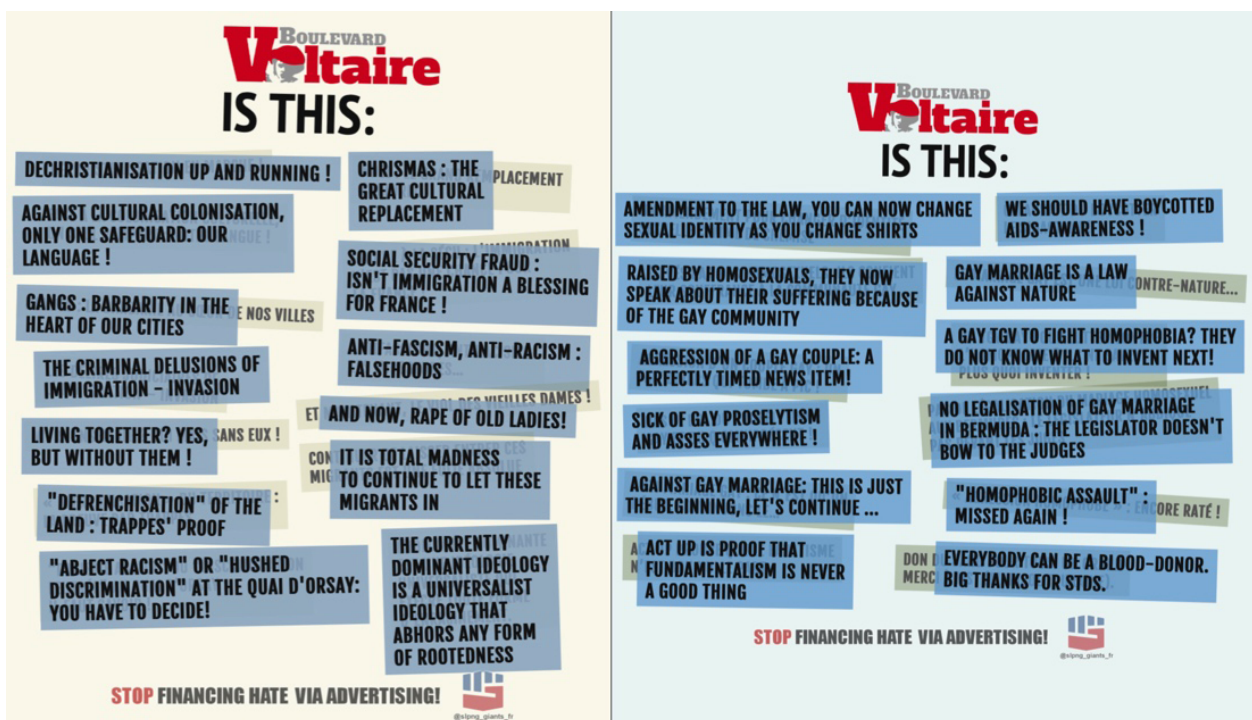
Many of these chapters started in early 2017 and petered out the following year, gradually ceasing to post or retweet. A number of activists noted that European advertisers, who often hadn't thought to blacklist *Breitbart* because they hadn't anticipated it would have a local readership, were very quick to pull their ads. As such, Wilson conjectured that at least some chapters likely shut down out of a sense their mission had been accomplished.

But as Beyer (2014) has noted, this drop-off is fairly typical for online mobilizations, wherein participation tails away after an initial hot period, but leaves behind "sticky" activists—passionate people mobilized by the campaign who remain committed to the issues that most concerned them and continue to mount effective actions into the future. At the time of this writing, active chapters remain in Canada, the Netherlands, France, and the US.

4.1. The French Example

While the limited space of a single article necessarily precludes us from discussing each international Sleeping Giants chapter and the conditions in which it operates in depth, as an example of the campaign's malleability and the ways in which cultural and political contexts have shaped activist actions, here we explore one of these chapters in greater detail. Among the most interesting of the cases is the French chapter of Sleeping Giants, where activists expanded greatly beyond the initial tactics employed by the movement.

To begin with, French law places greater limits on the protection of speech, restricting the ability of activists to label sites as "racist" or "fascist," since they would be asserting criminality and inviting potential legal repercussions. To work around such constraints, the activists created software that sorts inflammatory headlines from *BV*—one of their target sites—based on tags describing the type of inflammatory rhetoric employed. The program creates composite images, like those in Figure 3, which concentrate the site's worst rhetoric into share-

Figure 3. Examples of software-generated graphics from Sleeping Giants France. Notes: New images are generated regularly to leverage the Twitter algorithm's preference for fresh content. Translations courtesy of Sleeping Giants France.

able graphics designed to make an impact on advertisers. Sharing a graphic of a dozen or so headlines demonizing migrants or another showing misogynist language easily gets the point to advertisers.

As the above example suggests, the French activists are among the most tech savvy of the Sleeping Giants collective. They regularly inspect the source code of *BV*— the aforementioned French publication, loosely analogous to *Breitbart*—to identify which ad-tech services are in use on the site (see Figure 4). At one point the campaign had so thoroughly demonetized *BV* that the site stopped selling ads altogether for a time. The activists' source code inspections also revealed at one point that *BV* was attempting to compensate for lost revenue by employing crypto-jacking scripts—JavaScript code that enlisted unwitting users' browsers to mine cryptocurrency. Sleeping Giants France quickly publicized this fact, forcing *BV* to pull the code from its site to avoid angering readers.

Sleeping Giants France has also engaged in actions beyond social media. Perhaps the most illustrative example is the group's response to European white supremacist group Generation Identity's project, "Operation Defend Europe."

Operation Defend Europe was a crowdfunded campaign aimed at launching a boat expedition in the Mediterranean to interfere with migrant rescue efforts. Sleeping Giants France joined other activists in writing to banks in Austria, Italy, Germany, and France to have Generation Identity's accounts closed. They also helped to get the group's accounts on PayPal and various crowdfunding sites blocked.

Generation Identity then turned to WeSearchr to raise funds, an American crowdfunding platform run by white supremacists (and listed by the Southern Poverty Law Center as a hate group). In response, Sleeping Giants France published a public dossier to raise awareness among officials of Generation Identity's plans. Along with other activists, they wrote to port cities, delaying the expedition's launch and later notifying the mayors of port cities where the group might try to land their boat, resulting in these ports being closed to the group by waiting police. Ultimately, Operation Defend Europe ended when the boat, broken down and unable to dock, was rescued and towed into port.

While Sleeping Giants France is quick to point out they collaborated with other activist groups in their actions against Operation Defend Europe, the case serves as an example not only of how a chapter adapted Sleeping Giants' basic tactics to its local context, but how it extended the basic mission statement of the movement—"to make bigotry and sexism less profitable"—to a different domain, intervening in a crowdfunded operation by white supremacists.

5. Anonymity and Collaboration

With two notable exceptions—Matt Rivitz, who was unmasked by the conservative media outlet, the *Daily Caller*, and Nandini Jammi, who partners in the work on the US account and whose identity was revealed in subsequent reporting by the *New York Times*—all of the activists behind the various Sleeping Giants chapters have remained anonymous. The choice to remain anonymous was typically framed as having to do with a combination of concerns.

First, many of the activists in their day jobs had some relationship to marketing, advertising, or media—

Figure 4. *BV* became aware Sleeping Giants France was inspecting their source code and inserted this HTML comment into their pages for the activists to find.

another key reason for the group's reformist stance—and worried their careers or client relationships might be impacted were their identities revealed. Second, as Marwick and Lewis (2017) have documented, critics of the far right and "alt-right" are often subjected to doxing and targeted online harassment. Finally, there was concern that were the activists to identify themselves, their personalities could at best serve as a distraction and at worst invite opponents to attempt to discredit the movement by sullying the reputation of individuals.

It's worth noting, too, Sleeping Giants' approach combines advantages of both identity and anonymity. Advertisers see the accounts of the ordinary, identified users it amplifies through retweets, giving messages the sheen of authenticity. Simultaneously, the absence of identifying information on the activist accounts suggests an imposing collective in the style of Anonymous. Jessica Beyer (personal communication, 2019) notes that whereas in the case of Anonymous, anonymity began as a technical constraint of the 4chan message boards and evolved into one of the group's core values, Sleeping Giants—having learned by example the advantages anonymity provided—adopted it as a strategy on social media platforms where real names are the default.

Sleeping Giants activists communicate through backchannels that also allow them to remain anonymous to one another (if they do not already know one another's identities, which is most often the case). Rivitz described the atmosphere by referencing the film *Reservoir Dogs*, which famously features a group of thieves who know one another only by pseudonyms. Mostly, the group communicated to vet new chapters, seek advice, share domain-specific expertise, or request retweets to amplify their messages when the fate of a major advertiser was on the line. But, as the different directions taken by various chapters suggest, they in many ways operate independently of one another.

Collaborations with outside activist groups were also greatly beneficial. For example, Richard Wilson of Stop Funding Hate was able on occasion to effectively make the group's concerns heard in institutional settings where anonymity would otherwise have been a barrier to participation. Most notably, he discussed Sleeping Giants' work alongside that of his own campaign in front of the United Nations, which subsequently inserted language on ethical advertising into the 2018 Global Compact on Migration, which supports the demonetization of media outlets that systematically promote intolerance toward migrants.

6. Conclusion

As Sleeping Giants chapters have withered in many countries, some of those that remain are looking to create more formal and sustainable structures around their activism. Several chapters expressed a desire to help create a set of standards for ethical advertising—formal guidelines for ad placement to which brands could adhere

to gain a seal of approval, changing the relationship between activists and brands from a stick to a carrot.

In the US, the exposure of Rivitz and Jammi's identities has also opened a new chapter for the movement. While the revelation brought death threats from internet trolls and sabre rattling by *Breitbart*'s lawyers, Rivitz has attempted to leverage the spotlight placed on his identity, writing op-eds, appearing in the national media, and speaking to the industry in formal settings that would've been inaccessible previously. Jammi likewise utilized her newfound prominence to pressure PayPal into dropping the KKK as a customer, among other endeavors.

Though the loose online collective may continue to exist in some form, at least some corners of the Sleeping Giants movement appear poised to make the transition from internet-based to internet-enabled activism (van Laer & van Aelst, 2010) and to a more formal institutional presence.

Beyer (2014), in examining the trajectory of digital activism, suggests online mobilization often involves the emergence within internet spaces of particular value statements that subsequently become boundary objects (Star & Griesemer, 1989). As they circulate through online channels, these statements of values are adapted by adherents to the particulars of the local cultural and legal contexts they inhabit.

Sleeping Giants' mission statement—to make bigotry and sexism less profitable—certainly fits this bill. The values Beyer discusses in relation to Anonymous and The Pirate Bay center around free speech, whereas the Sleeping Giants case is more about shared concern over the appropriate *limits* of speech; this points to distinctions in both the actors involved and the political moment. But her observation that a broad, unifying value can be a precursor to online mobilization across a wide swathe of geographic and cultural contexts holds well in the present case. The examples of different international chapters show how the original activists' concern—the profitability of hate speech—was adapted to different cases, from political advertising that demonizes migrants in Switzerland, to legacy media with intolerant messages in Australia, to crowdfunding by white supremacists in France, and elsewhere.

Much as John Lennon's 1969 motto "give peace a chance," was intentionally contrasted with complex political arguments, the simplicity of Sleeping Giants' mission statement—and its tactics—also stand in effective contrast to claims by digital platforms about the spiraling complexity involved in improving moderation and reforming programmatic advertising. This contrast is one the activists are quick to leverage strategically, pointing to their successes as a group of ragtag volunteers as counterevidence to the platforms' arguments. As a Sleeping Giants France activist put it, "there are companies who make billions out of advertising every year who have all the means, the technology, the staff, the knowledge to do what we're doing. And they don't. So there is a big problem here" (personal communication).

This quote raises a key point. Examined through the lens of the ad-supported journalism debate, Sleeping Giants is clearly reformist. But the campaign is not solely about disciplining media that traffic in hate speech—which they see as having a right to exist, though not to ad dollars—or chastening advertisers, for whom they see themselves as providing a service. To the extent that Sleeping Giants' work is about bludgeoning ad-tech firms and dominant online platforms for business practices that uncritically amplify and monetize hate, the campaign takes on a decidedly less reformist, if not necessarily radical, cast. After all, advocating significant structural changes to address societal harms generated by Google and other tech giants is a position familiar to Pickard (2014) and other media critics who favor more "revolutionary" approaches to media reform.

Acknowledgments

Conflict of Interests

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Article

Open-Source Trading Zones and Boundary Objects: Examining GitHub as a Space for Collaborating on "News"

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Abstract
New actors, actants, and activities have entered journalism's spaces in recent years. While this has raised the potential for the disruption of existing social orders, such heterogeneous assemblages also provide fruitful grounds for substantive innovation within "trading zones". This article explores one such potential zone, the code-sharing platform GitHub, delineating the primary actors oriented around the boundary object of "news", the objectives of their projects, the nature of their collaborations, and their use of software licenses. The analysis examines attributes of 88,776 news-oriented project repositories, with a smaller subsample subjected to a manual content analysis. Findings show that this trading zone consisted primarily of journalistic outsiders; repositories focused on technological solutions to distributional challenges and efforts that made journalism more transparent; that there was limited direct trade via the use of collaborative affordances on the platform; and that only a minority of repositories employed a permissive license favored by open-source advocates. This leads to a broader conclusion that while GitHub may be discursively important within journalism and certainly provides an avenue for actors to enter journalism's periphery, it offers a limited pathway for those peripheral actors to move closer to the center of journalism. That, in turn, impacts the platform's—and its users'—ability to reconfigure if not spur a reimagining of journalism's meanings, conventions, and allocations of different forms of capital.

1. Introduction

Journalism has become a more porous profession than ever before (Lewis & Zamith, 2017). New actors, actants, and activities have entered its spaces in recent years, raising the potential for the disruption of existing social orders and routines (Lewis & Westlund, 2015). Scholars have consequently highlighted the growing centrality of technologists and technology companies (Belair-Gagnon & Holton, 2018; Usher, 2017), the development of algorithms that can perform tasks hitherto restricted to human professionals (Haim & Graefe, 2017; Wu, Tandoc, &

Salmon, 2019), and the adoption of new types of labor once seen as external to journalism (Örnebring & Möller, 2018). Moreover, scholars have sought to explore the interactions among myriad parties interested in journalism, from professional journalists to after-work tinkerers and civic-minded activists (Lewis & Usher, 2014), some of which aim to 'tweak' journalism while others seek to reimagine it altogether (Lewis & Usher, 2013).

Such interactions can be particularly meaningful and consequential when they occur within a trading zone—a space within which individuals coming from different traditions or with distinct expertise can gather, agree on

rules of exchange, and engage in complex, coordinated activity around shared goals (Galison, 1997). Within trading zones, participants often engage around boundary objects—concrete or abstract objects that carry different meanings in different social arenas but are sufficiently recognizable as to permit coordination among the members of those distinct realms (Star & Griesemer, 1989). Such coordination may, in turn, alter meanings, conventions, and the allocation of both symbolic and material resources within specific spaces and a broader field, such as journalism (Lewis & Zamith, 2017). Notably, the notion of 'news' has been examined as an important boundary object by scholars (e.g., Belair-Gagnon & Holton, 2018; Boyles, 2019; Lewis & Usher, 2016).

Drawing on this theoretical lens, the prominent code-sharing platform GitHub may serve as an impactful trading zone within which traditional journalistic actors can interact—if not collaborate—with non-traditional actors around the boundary object of news. GitHub is the world's most popular code-sharing and collaboration platform, not least because it is free of charge as long as a project's contents are made public. Individuals—such as technologically proficient journalists, freelance programmers, and data archivists—can create their own projects or add to existing projects developed by others. They may introduce not only code but also documentation and datasets. In short, GitHub represents an interesting site for study as it offers the opportunity for new actors to enter journalistic spaces, be it through collaboration with existing actors or through the introduction of products that are of interest to those spaces (Usher, 2016; Weber & Kosterich, 2018). However, the existence of technical affordances does not mean they will be leveraged, or leveraged to particular or intended ends (Feldman & Orlikowski, 2011; see also Boyles, 2017; Wahl-Jorgensen, 2017). That is, just because GitHub offers a platform for trade does not mean trade will occur. This is an empirical question, but one that has not yet been examined by journalism scholars.

This study's examination is carried out by way of a multi-step content analysis that first looks broadly at 88,776 GitHub repositories and then closely evaluates 174 particularly active accounts and 100 of their repositories. This permits an empirical evaluation of the actors that have oriented themselves toward the boundary object of news within a prominent digital space, the extent to which they have collaborated with others, and the goals and outcomes of their endeavors. Indeed, while some researchers have examined journalism vis-à-vis the concepts of trading zones and boundary objects (e.g., Carlson & Lewis, 2015; Lewis & Usher, 2016; Smit, de Haan, & Buijs, 2014), empirical work examining collaborative software development in relation to news is sparse. This leaves important questions unanswered about how journalistic spaces are evolving—from the types of actors that seek to influence them to the nature and impacts of their collaboration to the construction and practice of journalism. This article aims to remedy that by empirically examining how journalism is being reconfigured in a particularly heterogenous and quickly evolving collaborative space. It finds that code-sharing platforms like GitHub provide new spaces for, and involve considerable activity from, actors associated with the periphery of journalism. However, limited trade is presently occurring around the boundary object of news, restricting the ability of journalistic outsiders and their ideas to move from the periphery of journalism to its center. This ultimately points to a missed opportunity for traditional journalistic actors to use code-sharing platforms to work with motivated technological actors in order to develop more innovative actants or more transformative reconfigurations of the field.

2. Literature Review

Built upon an ethos of empowerment, today's web allows for extensive collaboration, not least within journalism. A prominent manifestation of those principles is the open-source movement, which leverages code-sharing platforms to promote openness and collaboration on a range of projects (Lewis & Usher, 2013). As Kelty (2008) argues, open-source is not just an attribute of a project but a philosophy comprised of the following elements: sharing source code, defining openness, writing copyright licenses, coordinating collaborations, and forming a movement. The notion of open-source has not only been applied to journalism but has been heralded as a core component for a fundamental rethinking of journalism (Witt, 2006; see also Baack, 2015).

The most prominent platform dedicated to such collaborative activity is GitHub (Usher, 2016; Weber & Kosterich, 2018). Such sites are important to study because actors and actants that were not long ago on the periphery of journalism may now be moving closer to the center (Belair-Gagnon & Holton, 2018), possibly by using collaboration-oriented platforms as their jumping-off points. However, the reconfiguration of journalistic insiders and outsiders (see Eldridge II, 2018) requires participating actors to examine and redefine their own norms and values to suit new orders. A helpful lens for examining whether and the extent to which such potential shifts are taking place may be drawn from the sociological concepts of trading zones and boundary objects, which are synthesized below and applied to the case of GitHub.

2.1. Trading Zones

A trading zone refers to the "intermediate domain in which procedures could be coordinated locally even where broader meanings clashed" (Galison, 1997, p. 48). As such, they are spaces within which diverse communities—heterogenous sets of actors, from activists to programmer-journalists, who have their own logics, values, and expertise—come together around shared interests to hammer out solutions to identified problems. That coordination requires the development of suffi-

cient mutual understanding to permit interdisciplinary productivity. For example, Galison (1997) explored how 20th-century physicists were able to coordinate activities within social spaces and advance the understanding of scientific phenomena despite their distinct cultures, paradigms, and even languages.

As Lewis and Usher (2016, p. 546) argue, trading zones offer "productive possibilities at the intersection of…heterogeneous actors" within the context of journalism. Trading zones allow for the introduction and continuous formation of ideas, perspectives, norms, values, and processes that challenge the status quo (Lewis & Usher, 2014). These may be consciously embraced or simply adopted through osmosis (Lewis & Usher, 2016). Notably, some scholars have argued that innovation is more likely to arise from heterogeneous assemblages of competing ideas than homogeneous cooperation (Stark, 2009). Put differently, it is precisely within trading zones that substantive innovation can be expected to occur. Indeed, such spaces may be considered central to the formation of and enaction by "pioneer communities" (Hepp, 2016, p. 924), or collectives that help drive changes in the logics and practices linked to a particular domain (e.g., media). Trade may be consequential to the formation of norms and processes even if it only occurs among some members of distinct communities, so long as those individuals are viewed as opinion leaders within a domain (Zamith, Belair-Gagnon, & Lewis, 2019).

Scholars have built on the concept of trading zones to highlight the dynamism of such spaces. For example, Collins, Evans, and Gorman (2007) distinguish between different types of trading zones by examining the nature of the collaboration—whether it is cooperative or coerced—and whether the outcome is a heterogeneous or homogeneous culture. They add that a single collaboration can move between different states over time and that a particular trading zone can eventually morph into a new area of expertise. While trading zones may emerge organically, they can also be purposely configured to maximize benefits through the management of constitutional diversity—that is, to limit a priori the kinds of actors who may participate, and the proportion of each form of heterogeneity, in order to reduce unproductive frictions (Sandberg, Holmström, Napier, & Levén, 2015).

2.2. Boundary Objects

Trading zones are typically formed around boundary objects, which refer to "objects which are both plastic enough to adapt to local needs and constraints of the several parties employing them, yet robust enough to maintain a common identity across sites" (Star & Griesemer, 1989, p. 393). Those objects may be real or imaginary and are interpreted and used in different ways by different communities. However, objects must be rigid enough to be recognizable across more than one domain. Boundary objects serve as core entities that can link communities together and permit heterogeneous sets of actors to col-

laborate on a common task within a trading zone. Star and Griesemer's (1989) work, for example, examined how a mix of amateur naturalists, professional scientists, and administrators collaborated to determine which artifacts should be included in the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology at the University of California, Berkeley, and how those objects should then be explained to the museum's visitors.

The notion of 'news' can be one such object (Belair-Gagnon & Holton, 2018; Lewis & Usher, 2016). Although it carries a generally understood outline, it is "clear that journalism is an unstable referent, deployed differently by different actors" (Carlson, 2015, p. 8). As Lewis and Usher (2016) argue, "it may mean certain things to programmers, who have their own occupational and ideological foundations, and something else to journalists" and may thus be considered an object with 'coincident boundaries' under Star and Griesemer's (1989) conceptualization. Such an object is characterized as having common boundaries but different internal contents (Star & Griesemer, 1989). Put differently, the actors oriented around the boundary object of news may be likely to understand its general contours, but may disagree on the guiding logics for how to best enact the collection, distillation, and distribution of news.

Of particular interest to the intersection of journalism and technology is the value of transparency (Lewis & Usher, 2013). According to Allen (2008), transparency involves "making public the traditionally private factors that influence the creation of news" (p. 323) and can serve a dual function of improving accountability among news actors and increasing their legitimacy among news audiences. While transparency has long been viewed as an important ideal in journalism, its translation to a commonly enacted ritual has been limited (Singer, 2007). Karlsson (2010) identifies two types of transparency: disclosure transparency and participatory transparency. Disclosure transparency pertains to the degree of openness about how news is selected and produced. This would include making publicly accessible the datasets used in reporting a news story or the code behind a news algorithm. Participatory transparency pertains to the extent to which audiences are incorporated into the selection and production of news. This would include inviting audiences to contribute to ongoing newswork, such as by adding functionality to a news product or merging new data into existing datasets. Scholars have argued that the affordances of digital journalism provide opportunities for transparency that are not possible with its analog counterparts (Karlsson & Holt, 2016), with some suggesting transparency to now be one of journalism's most important values (Vos & Craft, 2017).

2.3. Sociotechnical Collaboration in Journalism

In the theoretical realm of trading zones and boundary objects, the scope of journalism and its set of relevant actors is fluid, inviting new actors to enter spaces and

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help reshape them (Lewis & Zamith, 2017). However, as scholars have argued, a shared sense of journalistic professionalism—and of belonging to the core spaces of 'journalism'—is central to insiders' claims of authority and legitimacy within the realm of news production, and to the acceptance of such claims by journalistic outsiders (Carlson, 2017). Transparency, both in its disclosure and participatory forms, provides fruitful grounds for engagement among a variety of actors by introducing pathways for collaboration and demystifying boundary objects. Over time, that collaboration strengthens the meanings associated with a boundary object (e.g., news) among the members of a given trading zone and may subsequently discursively reconstitute those objects within a broader domain (e.g., journalism). Put differently, collaboration is important not only because of its material output but because it can simultaneously reify and reshape meanings across spaces (Baack, 2015; Lewis & Usher, 2016).

The availability of collaboration affordances need not mean they will be used, though (Feldman & Orlikowski, 2011). Indeed, journalism is filled with failed sociotechnical experiments designed to invite collaboration among and across journalistic and non-journalistic actors (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2017). It is similarly filled with actants that never gained acceptance or stopped being developed and maintained (Boyles, 2017). The notion of sustainability has thus received attention by scholars of innovation, who have highlighted the importance of active communities and collaboration to a project's long-term success (Lewis & Usher, 2014). Heikka and Carayannis (2019) argue that digital spaces alone are exclusionary of individuals lacking technological ability, and that "collaboration may not cross the boundaries that need to be crossed" (p. 458) to generate substantive and meaningful innovation. Important participation gaps have also been found in open-source and code-sharing spaces, with women and minorities being far less likely to engage or contribute (Ensmenger, 2015; Ford, Smith, Guo, & Parnin, 2016). Instead, Heikka and Carayannis (2019, p. 440) point to the importance of creating offline "holding spaces" where multiple community stakeholders can co-initiate, co-sense, and co-create different innovations. Not all collaboration is useful, though. Indeed, some trading zones may prove unproductive as more time is spent negotiating meanings and frictions than advancing ideas (Smit et al., 2014).

There are myriad motivations for participating in open-source projects, from the desire to work on challenging problems to wanting to participate in something big (Weber, 2004). Few contributors participate primarily to make money (Jordan, 2017), but many do seek symbolic reward in the form of status within an interpretive community (Marlow, Dabbish, & Herbsleb, 2013). Individuals associated with prominent projects or organizations, high quantities of contributed code, and long-standing user profiles are often granted higher status, and that reputational capital can be translated into greater acceptance and impact for their creations as well as an increased likelihood of successfully soliciting contributions from others (Dabbish, Stuart, Tsay, & Herbsleb, 2013). However, it is important to note that while some members may orient themselves toward the space of professional journalism, they may not see themselves as journalists. As Baack (2015) argues, many act as "intermediaries outside the profession" (p. 6), with some aiming to advance journalistic ideas and ideals through the creation of independent, civic technologies, and others seeking to incentivize news organizations to imitate open-source projects. As one interviewee told Baack (2015), "we have discovered software as a lobbying tool" (p. 7) to get institutional actors like news organizations to adopt their ideas, values, and priorities. Within newsrooms, participation in open-source communities is often an attempt to expand and find belonging in a broader interpretive community and to gain status by claiming particular contributions of code (Boyles, 2019). In doing so, newsroom developers help to institutionalize journalistic norms and ideals within open-source spaces while translating those of open-source spaces across the news organization (Usher, 2016).

Despite the theoretical utility of the concepts of trading zones and boundary objects, their empirical application to the study of sociotechnical collaboration within journalism has been limited. Lewis and Usher (2014) used it to find that the lack of sustained and enduring exchanges made it difficult for chapters of Hacks/Hackers—a transnational grassroots organization that bridges journalists and technologists—to generate momentum for more in-depth sharing, especially when there was limited support from local institutions. Lewis and Usher (2016) analyzed participation in a news innovation-oriented 'learning lab' and found that distinct understandings of news and technology converged, diverged, and ultimately blended around the themes of making news more process-oriented, participatory, and socially curated. Smit and colleagues (2014) examined information-visualization production at three different organizations and identified four different types of cooperation that can be adapted to suit different kinds of trading zones. Moreover, throughout the broader stream of work examining the intersection of journalism and technology, scholars have found a growing desire among journalists to collaborate with technologically oriented actors in order to develop technologically infused products and processes that advance journalistic values (see Lindén, 2017). Boyles (2019), for example, found that "newsroom developers uniformly stated that participation within OSS (open-source) environments is a core responsibility of their positions" (p. 10).

2.4. GitHub and Software Licensing

Within the context of software, and the broader intersection of journalism and technology, GitHub is a central site for interdisciplinary activity (Tsay, Dabbish, &

Herbsleb, 2014). GitHub is a web-based hosting service that builds on the popular Git version-control software, allowing incremental updates to digital files to be logged, publicly distributed, and collaboratively worked upon. Projects on GitHub are organized around 'repositories,' which are akin to folders containing source code and raw data made available for others to review, improve, and collaborate around. Projects, which may include software like web scrapers as well as documents like Python Notebooks detailing a data-journalistic analysis, are typically oriented around a single repository, though they may theoretically be broken up into multiple repositories. Each repository is labeled with a title or name and, optionally, a description of the code's purpose. Repository owners can add regular maintainers, merge ad-hoc contributions, and have their repositories 'forked' to be built upon independently by others. GitHub also provides mechanisms for repository-specific bug tracking, feature requests, task management, and wikis, thereby welcoming contributions from non-programmers as well. Users can utilize the aforementioned features, including the creation and accessing of repositories, for free. As of late 2019, GitHub had more than 37 million users and an equivalent number of public repositories, making it the world's largest code repository.

The platform is also used by a range of news organizations (e.g., *The New York Times* and *BuzzFeed News*) to share datasets, data-analysis methods, and newsroom innovations as well as to invite audience participation. Boyles (2019) found that several newsrooms that had received a data-journalism award had organizational GitHub accounts or had newsroom developers who had an account. Although the accounts shared ample contact information and offered affordances for engagement, Boyles observed limited interaction with other users—and little external activity involving project files. This led Boyles to conclude that GitHub primarily served as a signaling platform: It helped to brand the organization's prestige in open-source spaces, conveying a commitment to openness and reciprocity while increasing the visibility and reputation of its own contributions to that space.

GitHub also provides easy-to-use mechanisms for licensing software and promotes their use. When setting up a repository—and at any time during the development process—users can compare different licensing models and easily apply them to their repositories. Applied licenses appear prominently inside the repositories and signal the degrees of permission or prohibition for how others may use, extend, modify, or redistribute project files (Vendome et al., 2015). For example, some licenses permit the unrestricted use (i.e., commercial or personal) of the repository's contents and derivatives, while others require derivatives to use the same license. The selection of a license may have bearing on the amount and kind of trade and collaboration that takes place around a repository as licenses are a legally enforceable expression of a repository owner's in-

tent (Almeida, Murphy, Wilson, & Hoye, 2019). Put differently, permissive licenses may encourage collaboration and promote sustainability while restrictive licenses may promote greater control by the repository owner, which may limit such possibilities.

2.5. Research Questions

The literature shows that journalism has become an increasingly porous field, with nontraditional actors becoming more central to its functioning (Belair-Gagnon & Holton, 2018; Lewis & Zamith, 2017; Örnebring & Möller, 2018). This opens up opportunities for trade around the boundary object of 'news,' which can reshape and reify key material objects, normative processes, and professional discourses (Carlson, 2015; Lewis & Usher, 2016; Weber & Kosterich, 2018). Those efforts are most fruitful when the trade cohort is heterogeneous and active, though there are multiple structural obstacles to the success of trade and the sustainability of its outputs (Lindén, 2017; Smit et al., 2014; Weber & Kosterich, 2018). In light of this work, the following research questions are posed:

> RQ1: Who are the primary actors gathering around the object of news on GitHub?
> RQ2: What are the objectives of news repositories on GitHub?
> RQ3: How much collaboration exists within news repositories on GitHub across different development affordances?
> RQ4: What are the software licenses used by news repositories on GitHub?

3. Method

3.1. Data Collection

The GitHub application programming interface (API) was used to capture a wide range of data for the population of news-related repositories, which effectively serve as folders for storing project files, created on GitHub. This included all repositories in which the terms 'news' or 'journalism' appeared in the name or description fields. Since GitHub's API restricts the number of results per request, several requests were formulated to ensure data were collected for all relevant repositories. Data collection took place on September 11, 2018 and yielded a total of 88,776 repositories (i.e., projects), with the vast majority (98.3%) containing the term 'news.'

3.2. Coding Procedure

The study adopted a three-step procedure to make possible both a broad analysis of all repositories and a close analysis of the most influential actors and repositories. In the first step, the 'amount of collaboration' was evaluated by reviewing API-derived information for all repositories, including the number of forks (direct derivations

of a repository), stars (bookmarks to that repository), and time lapse between the repository creation and its last update, as well as the number of contributors for some of the repositories (manually coded as described below). The 'software licenses' were also evaluated by using that API information as GitHub collects this information based on either an author's self-report or their inclusion of a license file within their repository.

In the second step, all user accounts with more than five associated repositories in the data collection were sampled. This was done to remove noise from the data—that is, less consequential actors whose contributions were likely relatively minor. This step resulted in 174 unique actors, accounting for a total of 2,447 repositories. Those actors were then manually coded in a manner consistent with the approach by Dabbish, Stuart, Tsay, and Herbsleb (2012). Specifically, an inductive category-generation process was used to establish the following categories for 'actor type': digitally native news organization, educational organization, interest group, legacy news organization, private organization, public organization, unaffiliated individual, and not identifiable or other. While 'unaffiliated' and 'not identifiable' actors may seem conceptually similar, they are distinct in that the former choose to divulge identifying information but not leverage a connection to any organization whereas the latter choose or fail to provide minimal information overall. Then, an account's username, optional biography and external link, associated repositories, and any clearly observable suggestions of the owner's identity were evaluated to deductively code each account. All accounts were double-coded by the authors and any disagreements discussed and resolved through a process of expert coding (see also Hermida, Lewis, & Zamith, 2014).

In the third step, a stratified random sample of 100 repositories was drawn from those 2,447 repositories of the most-active users. Each repository was again double-coded using the aforementioned process. First, the following categories for 'project objectives' were generated inductively: news production materials (e.g., supplemental data for published articles), means for news consumption (e.g., offline reader apps), means for news distribution (e.g., website plugin code), means for news production (e.g., newsletter builder program), information

access (e.g., tools for facilitating API access), information literacy (e.g., educational materials), and non-news projects or those not readily identifiable. Then, a deductive coding process evaluated the repository's name, optional description and external link, and any materials available in the repository, such as 'ReadMe' files or raw source code.

All data and analyses are publicly available on the Harvard Dataverse, under https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/LUOZJL.

4. Results

4.1. Primary Actors

The set of actors gathering around the object of news followed a long-tail distribution, as the majority of user accounts in the dataset (89.2%) created just one news-related repository. Just 174 account-holders matched the five-repository sampling criterion—the distribution's head, which is deemed to be of particular importance given their outsized contribution of 2,447 repositories (see Table 1).

Among the sampled accounts, unaffiliated individuals (20.1%, or $n = 35$) accounted for the highest number of accounts, followed by educational organizations (15.5%, $n = 27$), private organizations (15.5%, $n = 27$), interest groups (12.1%, $n = 21$), legacy news organizations (9.8%, $n = 17$), digitally native news organizations (5.2%, $n = 9$), and public organizations (1.7%, $n = 3$). There was a non-negligible number of accounts (20.1%, $n = 35$) that could not be clearly associated with an actor type due to lack of information. This may yield an under-counting of some actor types that are more likely to display less information, including unaffiliated individuals.

Additionally, certain groups were more prolific in producing repositories than others. Accounts associated with interest groups produced an exceptionally large share of repositories (32.8%, or $n = 802$) given its proportion of account-holders. They were followed by unaffiliated individuals (11.0%, $n = 269$), who can be understood as human beings willingly presenting themselves as not being attached to any organization. The remaining groups include private organizations (10.0%, $n = 244$),

Table 1. Actors on GitHub based on an analysis of a subset of news-related accounts and repositories.

Actor Type	Example	n of Actors ($N = 174$)	n of Repositories ($N = 2,447$)
Digital Native News Organization	BuzzFeedNews	9	208
Educational Organization	TowCenter	27	238
Interest Groups	OpenNewsLabs	21	802
Legacy News Organization	SeattleTimes	17	230
Private Organization	IBM	27	244
Public Organization	bcgov	3	54
Unaffiliated Individual	jonathanheilmann	35	269
Not Identifiable	hamsmo	35	402

Note: Only actors (i.e., user accounts) with more than five repositories are included.

educational organizations (9.7%, *n* = 238), legacy news outlets (9.4%, *n* = 230), digitally native news organizations (8.5%, *n* = 208), and public organizations (2.2%, *n* = 54). Accounts that could not be clearly associated with an actor type accounted for 16.4% (*n* = 402) of the repositories.

4.2. Primary Objectives

Of the 100 manually coded repositories (i.e., projects), 28 focused on means for news distribution, such as WordPress plugins for organizing recent headlines. This was followed by news production materials like copies of datasets (*n* = 15), information literacy resources like tutorials (*n* = 12), information access tools like automated web scrapers (*n* = 10), means for news production like newsletter builders (*n* = 6), and means for news consumption like RSS (Really Simple Syndication) readers (*n* = 3). Additionally, three repositories were not directly related to news, and another 23 could not be clearly identified due to language barriers or lack of information.

4.3. Collaboration and Development

The majority (73.6%) of all 88,776 repositories contained multiple 'commits,' or incremental contributions. Additionally, the projects' median lifetime, calculated as the time elapsed between a repository's creation and its latest update, was 17 weeks. As such, news-related repositories did provide opportunities for collaboration and trade since the window for such engagement was open for almost four months on average, at which point the project either reached maturation or was abandoned.

Despite those opportunities, collaboration on GitHub was the exception rather than the norm. The vast majority of repositories (89.7%) among all 88,776 repositories were never 'forked' by other users for further development. Just 6.0% were forked once, 2.8% two to five times, and 1.5% six times or more. Similar results were found for the starring mechanism. The vast majority of repositories (84.5%) were never starred. Only 8.2% received one star, 4.5% were starred two to five times, and 2.8% were starred six or more times.

Those results were generally consistent among the subsampled repositories. Among the 100 manually coded repositories, 83 were never forked, 10 were forked once, 3 were forked two to five times, and 4 were forked more than six times. Similarly, 82 were never starred, 11 were starred once, 6 were starred two to five times, and just one was starred more than six times. Moreover, 82 of the repositories only received contributions from the repository owner, with 12 receiving contributions from two people, and 6 from three or more contributors.

4.4. Licenses Used

While GitHub encourages users to specify a license when they create a repository, there is no requirement to do so. As a result, only 15.2% of the 88,776 repositories included a license. Among the licensed projects, the majority employed a derivative of the MIT License (51.4%), GNU General Public License (17.9%), or Apache License (14.2%). Seventeen other licenses accounted for 16.5% of the repositories.

Turning to the sample of repositories from the manually coded actors (*n* = 2,447), slightly higher rates of license inclusion become apparent. That is, 22.0% of those projects employed a license, with an almost equal distribution across the major license types of MIT (26.2%), GNU (22.6%), and Apache (25.4%) derivatives. This does not come as a surprise as the sampling for the 2,447 repositories emphasized heavy users (i.e., those who had more than five repositories in the sampling frame). Those individuals likely have more experience with open-source software.

Breaking down the licenses used by actor types among that manually coded subset, 57.4% of the repositories from public organizations and 39.8% of the repositories from private organizations employed a license. Interestingly, almost half (49.1%) of legacy news organizations used a license, the majority of which (66.4%) drew on the Apache model, a relatively restrictive license. Similarly, public organizations mainly employed Apache licenses (80.6%). In contrast, private organizations primarily used GNU derivatives (47.4%), a 'strong copyleft' license.

5. Discussion

This study provides empirical evidence for evaluating previously raised assumptions about the growing interplay of actors and actants from both inside and outside journalism around the boundary object of 'news.' The GitHub trading zone consisted primarily of journalistic outsiders who aimed to offer technological solutions to distributional challenges and to make journalism more transparent. However, despite its affordances and intent, the zone exhibited little direct trade among actors and introduced structural barriers to trading.

That the space for journalism on GitHub was made up primarily of different journalistic outsiders introduces opportunities for the clash of distinct logics and meanings (Galison, 1997). It also offers further empirical support for scholars' contentions that actors once seen as being outside of journalism are increasingly entering, or at least trying to enter, its spaces (Belair-Gagnon & Holton, 2018; Eldridge II, 2018). That many of the contributors analyzed were unaffiliated individuals highlights the growing number of 'tinkerers' drawn to journalism (see Lewis & Usher, 2014) and raises important questions about the perceived legitimacy and authority of peripheral actors lacking institutional backing (Carlson, 2017), and how social capital is redistributed within highly dynamic spaces (Lewis & Zamith, 2017). It is plausible that such individuals, lacking the social capital accorded to actors associated with recognizable affiliates

(e.g., *Facebook* or *The New York Times*), may see GitHub as a more merit-oriented platform wherein contributions are evaluated in terms of technological worth (e.g., well-written code) rather than the contributor's attributes—though it should be noted that certain groups face considerable non-merit barriers (Ensmenger, 2015; Ford et al., 2016; Heikka & Carayannis, 2019). From this vantage point, GitHub may be seen as an accessible pathway for entering and influencing journalism by actors outside journalism's immediate orbit, helping to explain the participation by traditionally peripheral actors (see also Baack, 2015). Moreover, the fact that one-fifth of the coded accounts were not identifiable at all could also indicate that these findings might be underestimated. It is important to note, however, that unidentifiable actors simply failed to provide sufficient information to enable other users to evaluate their identity whereas unaffiliated individuals provided a clear sense of identity but chose not to connect themselves with any particular organization. They are, therefore, distinct groups. Furthermore, that the vast majority of actors were not connected to a news organization underscores that news is very much a boundary object (Belair-Gagnon & Holton, 2018; Lewis & Usher, 2016) and that journalism continues to be seen as an interesting context to which technically minded individuals may apply their skills (Usher, 2016). However, the limited involvement by individuals working at news organizations may also be viewed as evidence of those organizations' limited embrace of outsiders and their ideas, at least on code-sharing platforms such as GitHub (cf. Boyles, 2019). It also raises questions about the authoritative control that news organizations have on these platforms. For example, might this more-heterogenous set of actors potentially be coopting the language of journalism and redefining what 'news' and 'journalism' might mean outside of professional journalistic spaces?

Strikingly, the amount of software from journalistic outsiders designed for news distribution underscores the growing emphasis on distribution within and beyond journalism (Ferrer-Conill & Tandoc, 2018; Zamith & Braun, 2019). In combination with the findings suggesting GitHub to be a platform where technological solutions are promoted primarily by technologists, this illustrates a shift noted in the literature toward a more technology-centered view of journalism, where actants are used to make news more accessible (Lindén, 2017; Zamith, 2019).

The findings also point to the use of the platform to advance both disclosure and, to a lesser extent, participatory forms of transparency (Karlsson, 2010). This was evident in the use of the platform to share data used in journalistic endeavors—the primary use case for repositories associated with news organizations. It was also used as a platform to educate those interested in (data-driven and computational) journalism. Such projects support scholars' contention that journalism is increasingly prioritizing transparency (Karlsson & Holt, 2016; Vos & Craft,

2017) and translating it into an enacted ritual (cf. Singer, 2007). This may also be viewed as evidence that the openness aspect of the open-source ethos may be permeating journalism culture as certain outsiders enter its spaces (Baack, 2015; Lewis & Usher, 2013, 2016). Put differently, while disclosure transparency has long been a feature of journalism's ideals (Singer, 2007), the manner in which it is put into practice today leverages technologies typically viewed as being on the periphery of journalistic spaces, such as code-sharing platforms (see also Boyles, 2019).

However, the findings also suggest that limited trade occurs on GitHub when it comes to news-related projects. This was evidenced by presence of multiple commits that, on average, would span nearly four months. However, project repositories rarely had more than a single contributor (the repository owner)—perhaps the most salient marker of direct trade. Moreover, they were rarely 'forked,' which could be viewed as a measure of independent development influenced by a trade partner, or 'starred' by others. Consequently, GitHub may be viewed as a cooperative trading zone in light of its voluntary and ad-hoc nature (see Collins et al., 2007), but for news it is perhaps best described as an inactive trading zone. It may nevertheless remain important as a discursive object, as evidenced by Usher's (2016) finding that GitHub itself served as a discursive nexus around which members of hackathons can be oriented (see also Weber & Kosterich, 2018). It may also serve a valuable signaling function wherein organizations can convey their commitments to certain ideals, and through which individuals—and insiders like newsroom developers in particular—can seek to gain reputational capital (Boyles, 2019). However, even if the amount of trade is limited, it may nevertheless prove influential if the individuals doing the trade are viewed as opinion leaders within their respective domains (see Zamith et al., 2019).

That key finding underscores the challenge of uniting disparate groups around a boundary object (Smit et al., 2014; Star & Griesemer, 1989). For example, Lewis and Usher (2014) found that limited organizational support and a lack of sustained and enduring exchanges made it hard for Hacks/Hackers groups to maintain momentum. Similarly, Heikka and Carayannis (2019) argued that a broader infrastructure comprised of institutional actors and civic-minded individuals was central to creating formal and informal spaces for promoting journalistic innovation. The lack of trade around projects and limited institutional activity might similarly impair their sustainability, further adding to the record of failed sociotechnical interventions (Boyles, 2017; Wahl-Jorgensen, 2017). Importantly, innovation is most likely to arise from heterogeneous assemblages (Stark, 2009) and be most impactful when a community spans disciplines (Galison, 1997). From that perspective, GitHub and the news projects within it may be neither particularly innovative nor especially impactful, thus limiting their ability to re-

shape the boundaries of journalism (see Carlson & Lewis, 2015) and its associated meanings, conventions, and activities (Lewis & Westlund, 2015; Lewis & Zamith, 2017). This also presumably limits its ability to serve as a cornerstone for the formation of news-oriented "pioneer communities" (Hepp, 2016, p. 924) that can be catalysts for deeper changes. Transformative change is thus more likely to succeed if it is rooted in planned social activity that is designed to promote cross-actor dialogue—rather than expecting dialogue to naturally emerge because the technological affordances to support it exist (Heikka & Carayannis, 2018). While such change need not be led by news organizations, their engagement with external actors can inform innovations within newsrooms and help maintain their relevance and legitimacy as civically oriented actors (Baack, 2015; Heikka & Carayannis, 2018). Ultimately, it appears that while GitHub may be perceived by peripheral actors as an accessible pathway to influence journalistic spaces—should that be their objective—the evidence suggests it is unlikely that they are gaining authority and legitimacy among journalistic insiders as a result of those efforts, or significantly influencing insiders' conceptions through the exchange of expertise or products.

The limited collaboration and impact may also be due to very few repositories employing a license. This observation contrasts previous non-news findings indicating that software developers are well-aware of the necessity of license use (Almeida et al., 2019). While the initial act of publicly listing a project on GitHub may serve as an invitation for collaboration, building on non-licensed projects is a legally gray area (see Vendome et al., 2015). Indeed, the overwhelming majority of repositories may not be legally 'forkable' or able to be included as a subcomponent of a larger project. Beyond the legal implications, licenses are signals for inviting and even encouraging collaboration. When used by news repositories, licenses placed relatively few restrictions (e.g., MIT, GPL). While the limited amount of licensing is unlikely to be a primary cause of the low levels of collaboration, it is something that actors can easily resolve.

It is important to recognize that this study did not evaluate reported issues or wikis—affordances on GitHub that permit ideas to be more easily exchanged by non-technical actors. Some trade may be occurring through those mechanisms, even if those ideas have not yet been translated to code. Additionally, the study only evaluated one code-sharing platform; important competitors like GitLab and SourceForge were not evaluated. The close analysis also only looked at a small subset of accounts, and omitted an alternative approach to evaluating impact that might have focused on repositories with a large number of commits and/or forks.

Moreover, this study did not distinguish between 'news' and 'journalism' repositories, but instead treated them as a singular concept. These terms may carry distinct connotations to certain actors and be used intentionally in positioning their projects (see Harcup, 2014).

For example, certain interest groups may seek to develop tools that facilitate the dissemination of 'news' pertaining to their activities, without purporting that information to be 'journalism.' Within the context of this analysis, it was found that the vast majority of repositories were associated with the term 'news' and the authors found evidence of the terms being used interchangeably even by traditional journalism organizations (e.g., *The Guardian* and the *Los Angeles Times*), which one would expect to be most sensitive to the terminology. This suggests that these two terms, which are conceptually distinct in the literature, may not be viewed so distinctly in professional practice (and among non-professionals). A post-hoc analysis to empirically evaluate differences within the collected data indicated that interest groups and private organizations were more likely to produce 'news'-related projects than 'journalism'-related projects, while educational organizations and legacy news outlets were more likely to produce 'journalism'-related projects. However, the small scale of that post-hoc analysis precludes the presentation of generalizable findings, especially with regard to the objectives of projects that used particular terminology. As such, a closer examination of the linguistic patterns of such projects and how they implicate their positioning and objectives would be fruitful to the scholarly understanding of how such terms are conceptualized by a broad, technologically oriented set of actors.

Future work may also opt to focus on forums used to exchange technical knowledge and values, like StackOverflow and Google Groups. Those venues are often helpful starting points for non-technological individuals and frequently patronized by their technologically oriented counterparts. Similarly, interviewing actors who use GitHub might yield insights into their motivations and the barriers they face in trading, allowing scholars to examine how structural barriers found in other domains manifest in the realm of journalism (see Ensmenger, 2015; Ford et al., 2016; Heikka & Carayannis, 2019). Finally, the existing work on Hacks/Hackers (e.g., Lewis & Usher, 2014) can be extended to examine their (non-)use of GitHub. Indeed, purposively sampling those technologically minded individuals already drawn to the idea of collaboration may shed light into why some choose not to participate in news-related projects on code-sharing platforms (see also Boyles, 2019). It would also behoove future research to examine offline and online spaces simultaneously, rather than in isolation (see Heikka & Carayannis, 2018).

In conclusion, code-sharing platforms like GitHub provide spaces for a heterogeneous set of actors to congregate around the boundary object of 'news,' with the analysis offering further empirical evidence that new actors are seeking to break into journalistic spaces. However, the small amount of trade activity suggests the platform has a limited ability to serve as a conduit for transporting journalistic outsiders from the periphery of journalism to its center. It further points to a narrow em-

brace of the open-source ethos, though vestiges may be found in the growing focus on transparency facilitated by GitHub. Ultimately, there appears to be a missed opportunity for newsrooms to use code-sharing platforms to integrate more closely with motivated technological actors—and potentially engage in the development of more innovative actants or more transformative reconfigurations of the field.

Acknowledgments

Conflict of Interests

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Article

From Peripheral to Integral? A Digital-Born Journalism Not for Profit in a Time of Crises

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Abstract

This article explores the role of peripheral actors in the production and circulation of journalism through the case study of a North American not-for-profit digital-born journalism organization, *The Conversation Canada*. Much of the research on peripheral actors has examined individual actors, focusing on questions of identity such as who is a journalist as opposed to emergent and complex institutions with multiple interventions in a time of field transition. Our study explores the role of what we term a 'complex peripheral actor,' a journalism actor that may operate across individual, organizational, and network levels, and is active across multiple domains of the journalistic process, including production, publication, and dissemination. This lens is relevant to the North American journalism landscape as digitalization has seen increasing interest in and growth of complex and contested peripheral actors, such as Google, Facebook, and Apple News. Results of this case study point to increasing recognition of *The Conversation Canada* as a legitimate journalism actor indicated by growing demand for its content from legacy journalism organizations experiencing increasing market pressures in Canada, in addition to demand from a growing number of peripheral journalism actors. We argue that complex peripheral actors are benefitting from changes occurring across the media landscape from economic decline to demand for free journalism content, as well as the proliferation of multiple journalisms.

1. Introduction

This article explores the role of peripheral actors in the production and circulation of journalism through the case study of a North American not-for-profit, digital-born journalism organization. A number of scholars have charted the changing and porous boundaries in journalism given the increasing number of actors afforded by digitalization (Bruns, 2018; Carlson, 2016; Hermida, 2016; Meraz & Papacharissi, 2016). These actors range from technologists to non-human AI bots and novel pro-

fessional identities. This study is focused on what we are calling a 'complex peripheral actor,' an emergent journalism organization that is peripheral on multiple levels, from who creates and produces its content to how it is distributed. Specifically, we follow *The Conversation Canada* and its first few years after launch to explore how it is taken up in a national media system undergoing economic transformation.

Much of the research on peripheral actors (Ahva, 2017; Eldridge, 2017; Holton & Belair-Gagnon, 2018) has examined individual actors, focusing on questions

of identity such as who is a journalist as opposed to emergent complex institutions with multiple interventions in a time of field transition. In this article, we analyze *The Conversation Canada* as a complex peripheral actor that has emerged in a digital journalism ecosystem (Bruns, 2018; Konieczna, 2018; Siles & Boczkowski, 2012). In our definition, a complex peripheral actor is a journalism actor that may operate across individual, organizational, and network levels, and is active across multiple domains of the journalistic process, including production, publication, and dissemination. What distinguishes *The Conversation Canada* as a complex peripheral actor is that it is peripheral at three levels in the journalistic process—the production, publication, and dissemination of journalism.

It produces explanatory journalism written by academics, who have historically participated as sources and op-ed writers, and edited by journalists. The publication level relates to *The Conversation Canada* as a novel editorial actor funded largely by the higher education sector but at arm's length editorially that generates and shares this content free for reuse under Creative Commons. The dissemination level relates to the organizations that republish the articles, which represent a mix of core and peripheral actors in journalism from legacy journalism organizations to universities. *The Conversation* model provides for both on-site and off-site distribution with the aim of maximizing reach, given an increasingly fragmented and distribution media environment, where audiences stumble across news content on a variety of platforms, devices, and publications (Newman, Fletcher, Kalogeropoulos, Levy, & Nielsen, 2017).

We approach this topic as co-founders, board members of *The Conversation Canada*, and as a result, participant observers and "reflective practitioners" (Iacono, Brown, & Holtham, 2009, p. 39). Methodologically, we contend this approach is an appropriate stance for two reasons. First, it supports an examination of fast-changing industries characterized by a largely implicit professional knowledge system such that "little is done to capture and retain the tacit knowledge of practitioners" in a systematic and contemporary manner (Iacono et al., 2009, p. 44). Second, it supports the real-time sharing of the problems, their context, and resolution of professional journalism practice. Professional practice development in general has been described as a process with the "best professionals…able to make sense of these 'messes,' discern patterns, identify deviations from a norm, recognize phenomena and adjust their performance" (Iacono et al., 2009, p. 42). The site is particularly relevant for this kind of intervention and methodological approach as not-for-profit journalism organizations are increasingly being considered a model and antidote to some of the economic challenges facing the news business. We also have unique and timely access to proprietary data (Iacono et al., 2009). In order to mitigate bias, we have drawn from comparative journalism organizational data and external commentary on *The*

Conversation Canada in addition to internal contributor, audience, and republishing data. Our goal is to support knowledge generation in this emergent space. We have not and do not earn any money from our participation in *The Conversation Canada*.

Our study finds that, following an initial lukewarm reception to its launch from within the field of journalism, *The Conversation Canada* is gaining uptake from scholars and republishers despite no paid advertising and limited national knowledge of the brand. As of June 2019, after 24 months in operation, it had published 1,937 articles by 1,558 scholarly contributors, recorded 31 million page views on- and off-site, with articles appearing in 527 republishers globally. That this complex peripheral actor is integrating and growing is interesting for what it suggests about the openness of the field of journalism in commercial market decline. Surprisingly, we also find its content being taken up by a growing number of peripheral journalism actors with the largest and most prominent non-elite republisher, The Weather Network (Canada), which is not conventionally considered journalism along with programs such as The Daily Show, according to contemporary definitions (Zelizer, 2004).

Peripheral actors account for just under half (45%) of the audience reached by the top 50 republishers, with two thirds of the audience outside of Canada. The figures suggest demand for a certain kind of recognizable free Canadian journalism content within the country and globally (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983, p. 148). This evidence is paradoxical given Canada's highly concentrated commercial journalism sector (Winseck, 2018), which has been historically critiqued for its parochial approach to journalism (Gasher, 2007), as well as its reliance on news flows from the US (Davey, 1970; Kent, 1981), suggesting that the field in transition is changing access to and interest in peripheral journalism institutions.

2. Peripheral Actors in Journalism

The notion of peripheral actors is rooted in an understanding of journalism as an organizational field with boundaries that serve to delineate what is journalism and who is a journalist. As Grafström and Windell (2012, p. 66) suggest, "the social sphere of journalistic practice is permeated with a common meaning system that gives field constituents a shared perception of who news producers are, what constitutes news and how it is practiced." The internet and digitalization have impacted the relatively stable field of journalism of the 20th century, with the emergence of actors outside the field of journalism undertaking activities traditionally associated with the profession.

Journalists and news organizations have acknowledged and incorporated the input of mostly individual actors outside the profession, but by and large they have been kept at arm's length and cast as outside the core of journalism (Nielsen, 2012; Singer et al., 2011; Tandoc & Oh, 2017). Such an approach emerges in work on the

professional status of online journalists (Singer, 2003), the occupational challenge from bloggers (Lowrey, 2006) and audience participation in news spaces (Singer et al., 2011), as well as the impact of technologies such as social media (Hermida, 2016) and web analytics (Belair-Gagnon & Holton, 2018). The rise of these peripheral forces, in the words of Lewis (2012, p. 838), "strikes at the heart of a model that was built on an implicit bargain between journalists and the public—an assumption about how society should handle the collection, filtering, and distribution of news information."

Various terms have been used to describe individuals as peripheral actors and their impact on the field of journalism. In her work, Ahva (2017) uses the term 'in-betweeners' to refer to a range of citizens, such as activists, academics, and artists involved in journalism. She defines 'in-betweeners' as "citizens who are not professional journalists, yet play a greater role in the journalistic process than mere receivers; they are not the typical audiences, either" (Ahva, 2017, p. 142). In his 2017 book, Eldridge examines the nature of emerging digital actors in journalism, describing them as interlopers. For him, these interlopers embody "a pushback against an idea that 'journalism' rests solely with the traditional media field" (Eldridge, 2017, p. 184), further arguing that these "bedeviling actors…indicate for scholars and those invested in journalism a need to build a more nuanced and analytically coherent argument to explore these emerging actors when and how they emerge" (Eldridge, 2017, p. 15).

Building on past work, Holton and Belair-Gagnon (2018, p. 70) propose a typology of "journalistic strangers" to describe individuals engaged in journalism. There are explicit interlopers, for example bloggers, who "may not necessarily be welcomed or defined as journalists and work on the periphery of the profession while directly contributing content or products to the creation and distribution of news" (Holton & Belair-Gagnon, 2018, p. 73). There are also implicit interlopers, for example programmers, "whose alignments with journalism are less clear than explicit interlopers" (Holton & Belair-Gagnon, 2018, p. 74) and do not necessarily contest journalistic authority. The third category are intralopers, for example in-house developers, who are "working from within news organizations without journalism-oriented titles, they may be trained in journalism or be well versed in the craft of the profession" (Holton & Belair-Gagnon, 2018, p. 75).

By comparison, Baack (2018) identifies four groups of individual actors in his study of the interlocking practices of data journalists and civic technologists. For him, the interactions between core actors, the journalists, and those on the periphery, the civic technologists, run along "a shared continuum that oscillates between practices of facilitating and gatekeeping" (Baack, 2018, p. 688). What is particularly applicable here to *The Conversation Canada* is Baack's argument that facilitation and gatekeeping practices "mutually reinforce each other," and,

as a result, make "journalism as a professional practice more permeable to outsiders and allowed actors outside the field of journalism to increasingly engage in practices traditionally attributed to journalism" (Baack, 2018, p. 689). *The Conversation* model of journalism fits on the spectrum between facilitation and gatekeeping as it publishes explanatory journalism written by academics and edited by journalists.

Academics have historically worked on the edges of journalism, contributing as sources, experts, and op-ed writers. In *The Conversation* model, researchers take on the role of the journalist and the traditional roles of pitching and writing a story. In the words of the co-founder of *The Conversation* model, Andrew Jaspan, "Why don't I just turn this university into a giant newsroom? Why don't I just get all these incredibly smart people within their various faculties to become journalists and write for the public?" (as cited in Rowe, 2017, p. 232). The model relies on what Rowe calls "a ready supply of donated academic labour" (Rowe, 2017, p. 232) as scholars are not paid for contributions. The paid employees are the journalists who make up the editorial team.

In *The Conversation* model, scholars suggest stories through an online pitch form and write 800- to 1,000-word textual explanatory journalism articles that range from commentary to analysis to educational 'news you can use.' Prominent and popular examples include articles headlined "What is Neoliberalism?" These forms of explanatory journalism would be considered established forms of journalism that builds on their "symbolic efficacy, that is, authority conferred by being recognized, mandated by collective belief" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 251) or as Donsbach (2010, p. 38) suggests that "the identity of journalism as a profession lives on the assumption 'I know it when I see it'."

The scholars work in partnership with professionally trained journalist-editors, who play a dual role. They act as gatekeepers in many decisions of what to publish and as facilitators to support academics in producing content in a journalistic style. The scholar as a peripheral actor is not only at the core of the journalism of *The Conversation*, but some degree of gatekeeping power. Researchers retain final sign-off on publication, a practice that would not have been seen as aligned with journalism in a pre-digital era and that could be seen as challenging the autonomy of the newsroom.

The emerging scholarship on peripheral actors provides a number of approaches that are useful in understanding how powerful the impulse is within journalism studies to narrowly define who are the authoritative journalism actors by using comparison techniques that frame newer players as 'strangers' and 'interlopers' such that while their role identities and contributions are acknowledged they are still located on the far and unwelcome edges of the field. It is also valuable in considering how far entanglements with peripheral actors, particularly at an individual level, tend either towards opening up or limiting the journalistic field (cf. Baack, 2018).

2.1. Impact of Peripheral Actors on the Field

A number of studies of peripheral actors have explored the relationship of peripheral actors and the field. For example, studies have focused on the gatekeeping and framing effects of peripheral actors on journalism coverage and reporting of protest movements such as "Occupy Wall Street" (Bennett, Segerberg, & Yang, 2018) and "Idlenomore" (Callison & Hermida, 2015), finding an increasing role for peripheral actors as grassroots organizations and activists. Research on field transformation points to change through incremental processes or more abrupt breaks (Schneiberg, 2007). An example of incremental change comes in the study of the US radio industry by Leblebici, Salancik, Copay, and King (1991). They tracked how peripheral actors at the fringe of broadcasting slowly gained more prominence within the field, with the central actors taking on practices from the edges.

More contemporary research has examined the interaction between bloggers and the mainstream press in Sweden (Grafström & Windell, 2012). The study found that bloggers did not challenge the dominance of the key actors, in this case Swedish national dailies. Rather, these peripheral actors served to strengthen existing structures, with limited power to affect mainstream journalistic practices. Grafström and Windell conclude that "even though novel actors are given access to and become members of the field, the structures of domination are not altered" (2012, p. 74). Similar research on the sub-field of data journalism surfaces the interplay between peripheral and central actors. In their study of data journalism in Canada, Hermida and Young (2019) suggested that data journalists, particularly in well-resourced newsrooms, are operating as institutional entrepreneurs through their contributions to important discussions about journalism method and pressing epistemological concerns for the field.

There is less work focused on peripheral actors that go beyond individuals. Some of this research explores the impact of technologies, such as the interplay between web analytics and journalism (Belair-Gagnon & Holton, 2018). Work that is relevant to this study is the influence of funders, and funding models, of journalism as peripheral actors. Scott, Bunce, and Wright (2019) examined how foundation funding affected journalistic practices and editorial priorities, leading to journalists extending their role definition and undertaking an increasing range of activities such as administration and marketing, and a greater focus on thematic content. Another study of not-for-profits focused on data journalism operating in the civic tech space in Europe and Africa (Cheruiyot, Baack, & Ferrer-Conill, 2019) found these organizations were promoting and sustaining established journalistic practices, especially in contexts where data journalism was nascent. Still further research is examining the role of not-for-profit journalism organizations and Indigenous journalists on the possibility of field repair, reform, and transformation (Benson, 2017; Callison & Young, in press; Konieczna, 2018).

3. Methods

Our study is an early descriptive analysis of the uptake of a nascent complex peripheral actor in one national context. Theoretically, our study seeks to build on approaches that: 1) explore peripheral actors beyond the individual; and 2) examine the role of peripheral actors in the changing field of journalism. Specifically, our research questions are: 1) How does an emergent complex peripheral journalism actor gain uptake in a national media system?; and 2) How does the media ecology affect the actor's uptake as journalism?

We use a single national site, *The Conversation Canada*, as a case study to explore changes in a media ecology defined by the periphery-core metaphor. We defined peripheral journalism actors, similar to Holton and Belair-Gagnon (2018, p. 70), as "those who have not belonged to traditional journalism practice but have imported their qualities and work into it." *The Conversation Canada* is both an early stage national not-for-profit digital-born organization and part of the global network that includes seven national partners (Australia, Indonesia, France, Spain, UK, US, and South Africa). As one of the group's newest partners, *The Conversation Canada* soft-launched in English in June 2017 with more than $1.5M (Cdn) in funding. The French-language version, *La Conversation Canada*, was launched in December 2018. For this study, we have focused on the English-language site given the more extensive amount of available data.

The study is based on a range of data sources related to publication. Publication data was obtained from *The Conversation*'s proprietary analytics software. Data for on-site traffic is drawn from Google Analytics which provides details of page views, unique users, devices, and other factors. Republishing data comes from an invisible 1×1 tracking pixel posted on third-party sites which tracks the republishing site and the browser user-agent version, which is aimed at excluding traffic from bots. The tracking pixel does not collect user data. The researchers were granted access to data to the analytics software, which allows data to be selected according to readership, article, author, and republisher, and downloaded as an Excel spreadsheet. The data was collected for the period from the launch of *The Conversation Canada* on June 24, 2017, to April 30, 2019.

Overall, *The Conversation* network of sites reports an average monthly audience of 10.7 million users, and a reach of 38.2 million through Creative Commons republication. *The Conversation Canada* was averaging more than 1.4 million monthly page views monthly by April 2019, with a third of page views onsite and two-thirds from republishers. The data on republishers is recorded by *The Conversation*'s tracking software. Republishers are asked to include a tracking pixel when they use

a story, which must be published in its entirety and unedited from the original. The only aspect that can be changed is the headline. The tracking pixel provides data to *The Conversation* on the republisher and page views for each article.

Page views are one measure of reach widely used in the media industry (Groves & Brown, 2011; Usher, 2012), though we acknowledge that they have limitations. Figures may be skewed by a small number of users viewing a high number of pages (Krall, 2009). There are concerns over automated bot traffic to a site, with an industry report suggesting that bots accounted for 37.9% of internet traffic in 2018 (Distil Networks, 2019). Moreover, we acknowledge that our data does not include other significant indicators such as time on site, unique users, or bounce rate. Our sample may also be missing some republishers that strip out the tracking pixel on their websites.

Between September 2017 and April 2019, articles had been published in 490 media outlets worldwide. For this study, we analyzed the top 50 republishers of *The Conversation Canada* from September 2017 to April 2019 in terms of reach using page views as a measure. This study focused on the top 50 republishers as they account for 74.8% of all the offsite page views for articles for the period June 2017–April 2019. The remaining 440 republishers account for the remainder of the 25.2% of page views. Publications ranked at 115 and below account for less than 10,000 page views each, those near the bottom in single digits. The figures point to a long tail for the reach of articles (Anderson, 2006).

The republishing data was coded according to publisher, topic focus on the publication, and geographical location. The top 50 republishers by page views were coded as legacy/professional journalism organizations, peripheral journalistic actors, and non-journalism organizations. The boundaries of the first category were set by considering how far the organizations were staffed by professional journalists who followed established professional norms and practices. Peripheral actors were defined as those that have not traditionally been considered as belonging to journalism practice. The third category included organizations not involved in journalism.

At a global level, the sample included *The Washington Post*, CNN, *The Daily Mail* and Quartz. At a national level, they include the *National Post*, *Maclean's* and Global News, while regional republishers include the *Winnipeg Free Press* and SooToday.com. At the niche level, they vary from sites focused on Canadian policy issues such as National Newswatch, to parenting publications such as Today's Parent, to science outlets such as IFLScience. The outlets were also analyzed by the nature of the publication, by topic, and by geographical location. Republishers were coded by the topic focus of the outlet to distinguish between general news and more specialist publications—general news, business, science, lifestyle, health, politics, arts and culture, weather, urban issues, and explicit point of view. The coding was undertaken

by a research assistant and subsequently reviewed by the authors.

For a further layer of analysis, the data on the articles republished by The Weather Network (Canada) was also downloaded from *The Conversation*'s analytics dashboard for the period June 24, 2017, to April 30, 2019. The data included the headline, author, and page views per article. The top 50 articles were coded for topic focus, such as climate change, natural disasters, policy issues, and animals. These included several related to climate change including pollution, habitat, sustainability, and resource development.

This article also draws on data on the scholarly contributors gathered through a survey of *The Conversation Canada* readers and authors in the spring of 2019. 1,342 registered contributors were emailed, encouraging them to take the survey. The survey was also promoted on the *The Conversation Canada* website, and on social media. Some 191 of the respondents identified themselves as contributors to the publication. The data was filtered by the number of contributors who said they had been contacted by another publication or media outlet (114 respondents) and by the type of media outlet/publication.

Additional data was obtained via *The Conversation*'s proprietary analytics for the number of contributors and author pitches for the two years since launch to provide a further measure of uptake. The data includes the names of contributors, university affiliation, number of stories published, page views, and comments. The data on pitches includes the names of contributors, university affiliation, number of pitches, and topic. It only covers scholar pitches to the editorial team via the website. It does not include pitches by email to individual editors or by universities to editors on behalf of academics. We were particularly interested in examining the number of pitches as pitching a story to an editor is a fundamental journalism skill, requiring "precision in identifying the essential from inessential, the ability to synthesize and to systematize information and the confidence to present it" (de Burgh, 2003, p. 100). With the growth of philanthropic and crowdfunded journalism, there is more of a direct connection between funding and pitches (Aitamurto, 2011). Pitching is also considered an essential skill for PR professionals who will suggest a story idea to a journalist in an attempt to persuade them it is relevant and of interest to their audience, thus shaping what issues are covered (Jackson & Moloney, 2016).

4. Findings

4.1. Production: Scholars as Journalists

As of June 2019, after 24 months in operation, 1,558 scholars and academics had written at least one article on *The Conversation Canada*, with a total of 1,937 articles published over the two years, some with more than one author. The majority of scholar contributors wrote one article, making up 1,150 (73.8%) of the con-

tributors. Another 235 scholars, (15%), contributed two articles over the two-year period. Some 77 (4.9%) contributed three articles and 37 (2.4%) wrote four. A small number, 59 scholars, (3.8%) wrote five or more articles. The top three most prolific contributors were: Michael J. Armstrong, Associate Professor of Operations Research at the Goodman School of Business, Brock University in Ontario, with 36 articles; Sylvain Charlebois, Director of the Agri-Food Analytics Lab and Professor in Food Distribution and Policy at Dalhousie University in Nova Scotia, with 31 articles; and Joel Lexchin, Professor Emeritus of Health Policy and Management, at York University, and Associate Professor of Family and Community Medicine, University of Toronto, with 15 articles. The figures suggest that the majority of scholars take on the role of journalist as a one-off action, rather than as a consistent activity of moving from the periphery to the core of journalistic production, when measured in terms of articles written for *The Conversation Canada*.

In addition, there are some indications of growing acceptance of *The Conversation Canada* from the wider field of journalism as being published is raising the prominence of scholar-journalists through exposure in the broader media. Our survey of authors found that 59.7%—114 out of the 191 respondents who identified as contributors—said they had received requests to write or be interviewed by another publication or media outlet. The results are consistent with data from the longest-running *Conversation* site in Australia, launched in 2011, which found that 66% of Australian authors were contacted by other media after publication (The Conversation Media Group, 2017). In terms of media interest, the largest number of requests came from radio and newspapers (23.2%). Self-reported data from academic contributors suggests a significant interest from the public service broadcaster, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. The next two highest numbers of requests came from online media (18.5%) and from international media (11.4%) such as the BBC (UK), NPR (US) and ABC (Australia). Television, magazines, and podcasts made up the rest.

On top of acceptance from traditional journalism organizations, the first two years of operation of *The Conversation Canada* indicate a steady increase in pitches submitted by academics via the website. There were 1,370 pitches between June 25, 2017, and June 30, 2019. In order to obtain a sense of the pace of pitches, the data was broken down into six-month periods. For just over the first six months of operation, from June 25 to December 31, 2017, there were 171 pitches from scholars. The number increased to 296 in the following six months, from January 1 to June 30, 2018, for a total of 467 in the first year of operations. The number of pitches rose to 399 for the six months of July 1 to December 31, 2018. There was another rise to 571 in the six months January 1 to June 30, 2019, for a total of 970 in the second year of operations. The data shows how the pace of pitches has quickened, with the number more than doubling year on year.

4.2. Publication: Organizational Structure

The Conversation Canada is a registered not-for-profit society funded largely by a university membership model that explicitly states it is editorially independent of the university sector. The model is based on the mediatization of academic knowledge work, with the university sector as the newsroom (Rowe, 2017). It could be considered as a form of what Hepp and Loosen (2019, p. 2) have defined as "a particular group of professionals who incorporate new organizational forms and experimental practice in pursuit of redefining the field and its structural foundations." They use the term 'pioneer journalism' to describe journalism practices that involve "efforts to shift the field's organizational foundations" (Hepp & Loosen, 2019, p. 2). In this sense, *The Conversation* model could be seen as reconfiguring the nature of what is considered a journalism organization. The model has been discussed by Pooley (2017) as the leading example of a new category of media, the impact platform, defined as "researcher-authored, professionally edited, openly licensed, and republication-friendly."

The Conversation model has faced critique and questions by some prominent journalists and journalism educators in Canada over whether it aligns within a traditional definition of journalism. These concerns stem partially from the funding model, with questions over editorial independence and whether the publishing model is different from established university communications. The main federal journalism think tank doing research on digital journalism and policy, the Public Policy Forum, included *The Conversation* in a major report for the federal government on the state of the media in Canada in a section labelled "Citizen Journalism." The report went on to note that "the Internet has thrown up a so-called 'second layer of vibrancy' by giving individuals a public voice on blogs, specialized sites, social media-based community billboards and academic sites such as opencanada.org and *The Conversation*" (Public Policy Forum, 2017, p. 76). That it framed *The Conversation Canada* as citizen journalism and not among an increasing number of digital-born news organizations suggests it was seen in 2017 as one of Ahva's 'inbetweeners,' and part of a growing journalism periphery in Canada. In addition, most of the media coverage of *The Conversation Canada*'s launch in 2017 was in higher education outlets and by university members themselves. One exception was a largely positive article in the *Toronto Star* ahead of launch (Wallace, 2017), published as part of a series on the state of the news and information landscape in Canada.

4.3. Dissemination: Republishers

Our analysis of the top 50 republishers in terms of reach found articles from *The Conversation Canada* were pre-

dominantly republished by what would be considered professional news publications. Of the top 50 republishers, 33 (66%) were categorized as professional journalism, 15 (30%) were peripheral journalistic organizations, and two were non-journalism organizations. The professional journalism organizations include *Maclean's* magazine, *The Daily Mail*, Global News (Canada), and Salon. Peripheral republishers include Sci Fi Generation, Alternet, and The Weather Network (Canada). The two non-journalism actors (4%) were University of Toronto News and the World Economic Forum.

Geographically, the largest number of republishers, 20 out of 50, were from the US. Perhaps this is unsurprising given the population size of 327 million in the US compared to 37 million in Canada. Canadian media accounted for 12 of the sample, with the UK third at nine. The rest were made up by Australia, India, New Zealand, South Africa, Southeast Asia, Spain, and Switzerland. The geographical spread can also be explained by the network with *The Conversation* affiliates in Australia, the UK, and the US.

The most common type of republisher was the general interest journalism publication, which accounted for 42% of the sample. All 21 of them were professional journalism publications. The second-largest contingent included 19 specialist publications (38%), with 11 being peripheral actors. News, commentary, and analysis outlets account for 12%, evenly split between mainstream and peripheral outlets. There was one legacy hyper-local outlet and one international non-journalism organization.

In terms of topic, more than half of the republishers provided general news. Of these, 25 were legacy outlets and two were peripheral actors—the aggregator Flipboard and Qrius, a news and analysis site based in India. The second highest topic was science, accounting for just under 10% of media. More significantly, two thirds of these republishers focused on science were peripheral actors such as Sci Fi Generation, IFLScience, and Phys.org. Among the other results were 8% of publications focused on business, with three legacy actors and one non-journalism. Another 8% were publications with an explicit point of view, made up mostly by peripheral actors such as Alternet and The Raw Story. Health only made up 4% while arts and culture, lifestyle, and weather were each at one publication (2%).

An analysis of the data by the number of page views surfaced the significant reach of peripheral actors even though they only made up a third of the sample. In terms of audience, legacy media accounted for 51% of page views compared to 45% for peripheral actors and 4% for non-journalism outlets. The largest republisher in terms of reach was The Weather Network (Canada), which would not be considered a legacy or elite news organization. It accounted for 9% of all page views. Second was the news aggregator, Flipboard, which accounted for 7.3% of page views. The highest mainstream republisher was *Maclean's* magazine, which made up 4.7% of page views. For comparison, The Weather Network (Canada)

published 133 articles from *The Conversation Canada*. Flipboard published some 1,614 articles and *Maclean's* published 116.

An analysis of the content published by The Weather Network (Canada) shows a focus on substantive issues. There are some articles on popular topics such as bed bugs and crop circles. But almost half of the pieces republished focused on climate change, sustainability, resource development, and pollution. These include articles from the future of the Arctic to the impact of road salt on the environment to the potential benefits of green roofs. The analysis and commentary on environmental issues suggests that, as a peripheral actor, The Weather Network (Canada) could be addressing an information need left by the mainstream media (Schäfer, 2015) on arguably some of the most pressing and important national and global concerns.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

Our research is intended as an exploratory study that contributes to the emerging body of literature on peripheral actors, addressing the call by Grafström and Windell "that future research should continue to explore when and how novel actors are incorporated into organizational fields, and under what circumstances they have less or greater possibilities to alter established structures of domination" (2012, p. 75). Our findings point to early uptake of a complex peripheral actor initially identified as an 'inbetweener' in a field that is undergoing commercial market decline. A 2017 government-initiated and funded report described legacy media in Canada as "once indispensable agencies of information, the 20th-century news media are less and less prominent, except to provide grist for a public conversation they no longer control" (Public Policy Forum, 2017, p. 17). In a sign of the economic headwinds in the news media, the federal government has earmarked more than $600 million to support journalism, largely through tax credits for journalism jobs and news subscriptions. It is also extending the definition of charitable status to include journalism organizations.

Our results point to an increasing uptake in the number of scholars contributing as peripheral actors to *The Conversation Canada*. They also highlight more scholars seeking to write for the site, given the increase in the number of pitches submitted to the newsroom via the web. The findings show demand for content from *The Conversation Canada* from legacy journalism experiencing increasing market pressures in Canada and a growing number of peripheral journalism actors. It is both this institutional recognizability along with decline of legacy journalism actors—the largest legacy republisher has seen multiple layoffs over the past few years (Watson, 2017)—and rising numbers of digital niche peripheral actors that have contributed to its growth. Perhaps one of the most powerful indicators of its shifting status as a journalism producer is the 2018 Public Policy Forum re-

port, which upgraded *The Conversation Canada* from citizen journalism inbetweener to playing a role "in strengthening journalism and local news" (Public Policy Forum, 2018, p. 19) and the entire "media system" (Public Policy Forum, 2018, p. 12) in the course of a year.

The backdrop is a media landscape in Canada that is dominated by a handful of legacy commercial and public broadcasting journalism actors, such as the CBC, *The Globe and Mail*, *The Toronto Star*, Postmedia, CTV News, and Global News, which continue to enjoy significant reach (Newman, Fletcher, Kalogeropoulos, & Nielsen, 2019). Of these, Global News, the Postmedia network, and *The Toronto Star* have taken articles from *The Conversation Canada*. We find this gap worthy of further exploration. Out of the 12 Canadian republishers in terms of reach, 10 were legacy players. The Weather Network (Canada) was the only peripheral journalism player and one was a non-journalism outlet, the University of Toronto. The prominence of The Weather Network (Canada) as the largest single republisher in terms of audience reach signals how the field of journalism is encompassing novel actors. In 2004, Zelizer talked about the Weather Channel in the U.S. as not being considered journalism despite its popularity, and the fact that it has consistently been a feature in news output, particularly in weather forecasts on television and radio (Henson, 2010; Zelizer, 2004). She links it to other peripheral actors at the time:

> Consider a repertoire of candidates that would not currently merit membership under the narrowed definition of journalism: A Current Affair, MTV's The Week in Rock, internet listservs, Jon Stewart, www.nakednews.com, reporters for the Weather Channel…are but a few that come to mind. (Zelizer, 2004, p. 6)

Zelizer's opinion was however contested among contemporary scholarship such that the cable channel prompted observations that it "seemed more like news than 'weather' in the traditional sense" (Seabrook, 2000). Weather reporting has also evolved with the advent of digital media, so that "news stories about the weather have gained a prominence in online media that they never attained in print" (Zion, 2019, p. 3). This prominence is reflected in organizational growth with the Weather Channel in the U.S. expanding its digital newsroom from 10 in 2012 to more than 60 by 2018, becoming "a destination for narrative storytelling and investigative reporting on everything from climate change to toxic algae to immigration" (Willyard, 2018).

The number and reach of peripheral actors such as The Weather Network (Canada) in this case study indicate how novel actors can gain an increasingly central role in stimulating access to evidence-based explanatory journalism at a time of commercial journalism decline. Similar to studies of The Weather Channel, the material republished by The Weather Network (Canada) suggests that audiences are encountering research and analysis on a key policy issue without either intentionally seeking it out or trying to avoid it. They are an inadvertent audience who are exposed to news and information as a by-product of the medium, much as television during the 1960s and 1970s was seen as a way for audiences to "fall into the news" (Robinson, 1976, p. 426).

As a result, we argue that scholars need to take complex peripheral actors seriously as they appear to be growing in prominence and reach. Complex actors operate across multiple stages in the production, publication, and distribution/dissemination of news and information. For example, Google, Facebook, and Apple News could be considered complex peripheral actors given how they act as hosts for, and gateways to, news. Such complex peripheral actors are benefitting from a global platform technological environment, the proliferation of free content and increasingly multiple journalisms (Callison & Young, in press; Papacharissi, 2015). The study contributes to the emerging literature on peripheral actors by going beyond individual and mostly human, actors, adding considerations of the organizational model and distribution/dissemination. Our results suggest a need to consider how different peripheral actors operate at different steps of the journalistic process to acknowledge the complex forces at work.

The case study of *The Conversation Canada* surfaces how it operates as a complex peripheral actor. It provides an analysis of the interactions of peripheral actors within one institution in a national journalism field, in this case a mature Western media system (Fletcher & Nielsen, 2017) characterized largely by commercial media with a respected but comparatively underfunded public broadcaster. In today's high choice media environment with multiple actors—and concerns that "infinite choice equals ultimate fragmentation" (Anderson, 2006, p. 181)—some newer players are benefitting from this environment depending on the nature of their intervention and in this case, their recognition as journalism. Our findings are particularly interesting given that Canadian journalism organizations have traditionally been critiqued for a "pernicious ethnocentrism which fails to recognize, perhaps even denies, the cosmopolitan nature of the news audience and its place in a globalized and networked world" (Gasher, 2007, p. 316).

In closing, Eldridge has suggested that embracing newer journalism actors available via digital and social media risks diluting the "cultural and symbolic capital of being a journalist" (2017, p. 186). This approach however neglects the existence of a global context of multiple journalisms and media systems that are increasingly in relationship to each other in a digital landscape, as well as the fact that definitions of journalism change over time and place. A key area for further research, then, is how to gauge who matters, as this has been traditionally based on circulation and audience numbers. The emergence of novel actors and studies of their contemporary trajectories do not merely prompt an examination of the

changing media landscape. Rather, these new entrants contest an entrenched view among journalism studies scholars that the notion of a single journalism matters, and that it can be understood outside of its historical and systemic context.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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Article

Negotiating Roles and Routines in Collaborative Investigative Journalism

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Abstract

Over the past two decades, the practice of investigative journalism has been reconstructed via the rise of journalistic networks around the world that have layered collaboration atop what had long been an individual pursuit. Among the recent successes of collaborative investigative journalism was the cross-border effort to expose the tax haven leaks that included the Panama Papers (2016). Due to such notable accomplishments, research on cross-border collaboration is increasing, but the ways in which this pooling of resources, time, and networks has impacted practice on a daily basis remain under-investigated. This article looks at how organizations and actors in emerging and legacy newsrooms are negotiating their routines and roles while developing new practices in investigative journalism. It uses three organizations as cases: Bristol Cable, a journalistic co-op operating at the community/local level; the Bureau Local, a local/national data-coordinating news desk; and *The Guardian*, a legacy media company that has long operated at the national/global level. This article finds that, in the transitions of traditional organizations and journalists and the emergence of new innovative organizations and non-journalistic actors, actors involved in collaborative investigative journalism deploy a language of justification regarding rules between the new and the old. It also finds that concepts such as coordination are part of this negotiation, and that knowledge and knowledge generation are taking place within a traditional understanding of journalism, as the "new" is normalized over time.

Issue

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1. Introduction

Studies on investigative journalism range from considering the origins of the practice in the muckraker period at the beginning of the twentieth century to mapping out aspects of the practice itself (Aucoin, 2005; Feldstein, 2006; Protess et al., 1991). Researchers have generally considered investigative journalism to be the most elevated type of reporting and the most esteemed role in the newsroom thanks to its aforementioned pedigree and crusader associations, which peaked with the exposure of the Watergate scandal in the 1970s (Schudson, 1992, pp. 115–116). Recently, academics have noted the retirement of the investigative journalist as a lone ranger in the context of a media ecology focused upon collaboration across borders (Berglez & Gearing, 2018;

Carson & Farhall, 2018). There remains a dearth of academic insight into this recent restructuring of investigative journalism (cf. Carson & Farhall, 2018; Heft, Alfter, & Pfetsch, 2017; Konieczna, 2018; Konow-Lund, Gearing, & Berglez, 2019; Sambrook, 2018). In the aftermath of the Panama Papers story (2016), however, some academic and practitioner contributions to the field of research have emerged (Alfter, 2019; Graves & Shabbir, 2019; Stonbely, 2017). There has also been interest in the digital technology behind journalistic collaboration (Baack, 2016, 2018). Yet, such studies can barely keep up with the field's ever-shifting disposition of a variety of actors and (often extensive) resources.

The present study looks at factors structuring this journalistic practice. Similarly to the recent study by Jenkins and Graves (2019, p. 7), this article finds that

"despite signs that collaboration can yield exponential benefits at the local level, these efforts have received less attention than high-profile national and international collaborations." It proceeds from a general definition of collaboration as sharing toward a common end (see Konow-Lund et al., 2019). Researchers have found it difficult to define investigative journalism, and some scholars insist that there is no single definition at all (Grøndahl Larsen, 2017). Tension exists concerning whether investigative journalism, as suggested by Stetka and Örnebring (2013), is like art, or whether it is a practice consisting of transferable skills. As James Aucoin (2005, p. 5). posits: "[It] progresses through the efforts of practitioners to meet and extend the practice's standards of excellence." Investigative journalism as a social practice evokes the work of the Investigative Reporters and Editors (IRE) in America (Baggi, 2011; Houston, 2009), which not only revitalized investigative journalism as a collaborative effort through its projects but also focused on computer-assisted reporting as initiated by Philip Meyer in the 1960s (Gynnild, 2013; Lewis, 2018). Offering bootcamps, training sessions, collaborative initiatives, and topic-driven projects, IRE came to define investigative journalism as "the reporting, through one's own initiative and work product, of matters of importance to readers, viewers or listeners. In many cases, the subjects of the reporting wish the matters under scrutiny to remain undisclosed" (Houston, 2009). Several scholars (Gearing, 2016; Konieczna, 2018) have also linked investigative journalism to public service journalism as the pillars of the fourth estate.

The three organizations chosen as cases focus on investigative journalism, they are in transitions somehow but more importantly represent cases which reach out to audiences in different but overlapping areas: Bristol Cable, is a journalistic co-op operating at the community/local level; the Bureau Local (BL), is a local/national data-coordinating news desk; and *The Guardian*, is a legacy media company that has long operated at the national/global level. In times of transformation and ongoing moves and adjustments between traditional organizations and innovative new organizations, and among seasoned professionals and actors with no prior experience in investigative journalism, the question becomes how the rules of practice can be negotiated, and in what language and with what terms.

2. Routines and Roles in Organizational Context and Concrete Practices

As journalism moves beyond traditional newsroom roles and practices (Ryfe, 2017) toward more untraditional forms of news production involving interprofessional roles such as hackers (Lewis & Usher, 2014), app designers (Ananny & Crawford, 2014), and suppliers of web analytics (Belair-Gagnon & Holton, 2018), academics are sounding a familiar refrain: How can both scholar and practitioners capture and unpack change and innovation in emerg-

ing and traditional news organizations? Ryfe (2011) notes that "researchers know very little about how some journalists are processing…changes"—that is, "about how the routines and practices of news production are changing [if at all], how journalists understand these changes, and what all of this means for the production of news or the self-conception of journalists" (2011, p. 165). Hence, the way in which routine is defined is central to any conversation about (or practice of) news production. Journalistic routines have been defined as "patterned, repeated practices and forms that media workers use to do their jobs" (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996, p. 100). Ryfe (2017), however, does not think that routines actually guide practice but rather justify actions regardless of practice.

Ryfe (2017), as well as Westlund and Ekström (2019), prioritize a practical understanding of routine, as opposed to the industry-, habit-, or consensus-oriented definitions suggested by Shoemaker and Reese (1996). Ryfe (2017, p. 128) even turns to practice theory by suggesting that routines are "properly understood not as expressions of external pressures on journalists (whether understood as organizational, political, or economic pressures), but as cultural resources that bind journalists to a shared community of understanding." In doing so, Ryfe (2017) links news production to practical knowledge rather than formal knowledge. Routines may thus be connected to patterns of actions and understood "*either* as structured by organizational contexts, managed and reproduced in actions, *or* as shaped and worked out in social practices" (Westlund & Ekström, 2019, p. 74). Westlund and Ekström's (2019) label suggests "that these dimensions refer to levels of social organization with distinct explanatory power." While the prior dimension refers to routines as characteristics of the organization preceding its stakeholders' concrete actions, the latter dimension refers to the way in which routines are the outcome of everyday practices and habitual and repetitive performances (Ryfe, 2017).

From an ethnographic point of view, it is important for fieldworkers to be able to detect when routines are planned and structured, or when they arise as a result of social activity. As Westlund and Ekström (2019, p. 74) point out, "routines both precede and are shaped within social activities." Westlund and Ekström (2019) use the two dimensions of organizational context and concrete practices to explore various aspects of the modernized and digitized production of news. One important aim of the organization is to generate knowledge, hence a need for routines. News actors must handle a lot of work in a systematic manner. Because the implementation of routines has always involved tacit knowledge (Tuchman, 1978), both organizations and actors must develop a language of justification for their routines and practices (Westlund & Ekström, 2019, p. 81). The existence of knowledge construction in investigative journalism exposes inherent differences within this practice (Ettema & Glasser, 1987), and "contexts of justification" indicate that epistemic claims in journalism are not ho-

mogenous but rather depend upon a context (Westlund & Ekström, 2019, p. 32). Practices in investigative journalism, including regular reporting or contacting sources, come with what Ettema and Glasser (1987, p. 344) call "pre-justified facts."

Ultimately, two aspects define the approach of this news ethnography: (1) to understand ongoing change, it is important to closely engage with how routines are invoked and negotiated; and (2) this needs to approach in a synthesis organizational context and concrete practices, where knowledge construction and knowledge coordination are vital resources in this endeavor.

3. Method and Empirical Material

This article draws upon three case studies involving semi-structured qualitative interviews with twenty news workers from three different organizations. These three cases all have alternative working models for investigative journalism. They also all focus on how to link the local with the national. And they all require workers to adjust to new roles and skills. Some scholars state that case studies are useful when the researcher is asking "how" and "why" questions; when the researcher has little control over what happens; and when the focus is on "holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events" (Yin, 2003, p. 2)—in this case, the impact of collaborative practice and changes in digital technology upon journalistic routines and roles at both new and established news organizations. Two of the cases are innovative start-ups focused on interacting with citizens and involving communities (i.e., Bristol Cable and BL). The third case is a legacy organization, *The Guardian*. Journalistic roles at these places include traditional and hybrid functions involving reporting, coordination, and community engagement, as well as more peripheral actors such as citizens, activists, and hackers. The article's analytical approach involves a hermeneutic analytical process often used in traditional news ethnographies (Gans, 1979/2004; Schlesinger, 1978; Tuchman, 1978) that generates data not only through field observations, field interviews, and semi-structured qualitative interviews but also through internal documents and, importantly, repeated observation stints at different times. For example, I revisited both Bristol Cable and the BL some months after my initial visits, and I followed up with various *The Guardian* informants long after my single visit there for semi-structured qualitative interviews conducted outside the newsroom. Knut Helland (1993, p. 95) argues that "fieldwork may be seen as a special kind of hermeneutic activity: different situations and processes are conceived differently during varying stages of the research project through conceptual refinements" (see also Johansen, 1981; Wadel, 1991). That is, the combination of field observation and semi-structured qualitative interviews enables the ongoing elaboration of one's analyses by soliciting objections, clarifications of assumptions and conclusions, and more specific questions.

My research methodology included three weeks of field observation at Bristol Cable, four weeks of field observation (spread over a period of about seven months) at the BL/Bureau for Investigative Journalism (BIJ), and three days of field observation at *The Guardian*, all combined with twenty semi-structured qualitative interviews with anonymized stakeholders. Bristol Cable is a nonprofit co-op with two thousand paying members as of July 2019. It generates both workshops and events such as annual meetings for members and open meetings for the general public, and it produces a quarterly newspaper. It has gained funding from various media—and journalist-supporting organizations, including the Omidiyar Network. BL is a Google and philanthropically funded platform that is part of the BIJ, which supports BL when necessary. The print newspaper *The Guardian* was founded in 1821, and in 2011 it rolled out a "digital first" strategy that led to a significant increase in readers globally. Despite recent financial losses, *The Guardian* remains known for its quality journalism, including exposés such as the Panama Papers, the Paradise Papers, Cambridge Analytica, and the Facebook scandal. *The Guardian* has traditionally been funded by the Scott Trust (1936), which was established to secure its editorial independence, and it is a traditional representative of the liberal British press (Ilan, 2012, p. 39). I selected these case studies in order to compare new entrepreneurial organizations (Bristol Cable, the BL) to a legacy organization with recent experience in adapting to the digital era (*The Guardian*). The following sections first explain the structure of the organization in question, then engage with any change to its routines or roles.

4. Roles at the Co-Op: From Criticizing Journalism to Becoming Journalists

The co-op Bristol Cable arose when three college friends wanted to fill a gap in the British local media market (Informant, 22 December 2017; Informant, 26 January 2018) in terms of holding power to account. Their local media was suffering in the recession, and publications were shutting down, so the Bristol Cable founders conceived of an organization that could generate collaborations with citizens and engage the local community. In short, they framed their journalism as a tool for effecting change in their "immediate surroundings" (Informant, 22 December 2017). The goal of Bristol Cable was to demonstrate that holding power to account does not require a hierarchical journalistic organizational structure; instead, shared values and goals alone might sustain an organization that could accommodate the input of the people themselves in the work to be done. Bristol Cable produced a quarterly newspaper and generated events where members were invited to learn about the media industry and make decisions about stories and coverage through a flat structure for production. In keeping with this approach, everyone who was involved in the organization received the same compensation, which at

the beginning was the minimum wage. One informant lamented: "I'm not earning enough money to live off of the Cable. It costs me to work for the Cable, in some ways, not even thinking about lost potential earnings" (Informant, 21 December 2017). This informant circled back to this comment in 2019:

> We're now paid enough to get by, though the salary is far from competitive, and love of the mission and work is the main motivator. But getting paid has been vital both for valuing our work and for allowing us to give time to the Cable rather than needing to work another job or draw on savings. As we grow older, with years of experience behind us and some anticipating having children, we will need to further increase our salaries to remain sustainable or lose the staff who can't afford to stay on a minimum wage. (Informant, 7 August 2019)

Early on, in fact, everyone had to find additional ways to support themselves—two of the founders worked in the catering business, and other staff members lived on their savings (Informant, 21 December 2018). Position titles were deliberately chosen to avoid hierarchical implications, though the journalistic work had certain inherent demands for a structure (Tuchman, 1978), meaning that even when everyone in the room was called a media coordinator, they were doing different things.

My fieldwork at Bristol Cable uncovered other fractures in the ideal of the flat organizational structure, as a positional hierarchy had begun to emerge simply to enable the allocation of tasks to avoid redundancy and maximize efficiency. My informants were at this time claiming to actively seek to restructure the co-op based on this evolution, using daylong meetings to work toward a shared set of values, norms, and practices to inform the organization. The meetings were meant to coordinate communication and articulate shared goals in order to develop routines, practices, and roles that mitigated potential tension and conflict. During these meetings, there was always a demonstration of mutual respect, but there were also honest discussions about how to remain "horizontal" while actually doing the work. One informant pointed to the need to juggle a variety of roles, which was both challenging and constructive:

> I'm a sub-editor and a co-editor and a commissioning editor and a journalist and a sort of production manager, like, just having all the different things....It's very challenging. I wish I had more time to do bigger pieces of journalism, but it makes for an interesting job. If I were in mainstream media as a journalist, I wouldn't have the choice about what I went and covered and investigated and stuff, so that's a massive plus. Having the freedom to choose what you do and how you do it is really different. And not just being told what to do, having a say in what we do, and how, is totally different from any mainstream media. (Informant, 26 January 2018)

Various interviews with Bristol Cable actors, as well as my observations during fieldwork (2017), revealed contradictions and tensions when it came to who should do what at the co-op. One reason for this might be that most informants at Bristol Cable had started there with little journalistic experience. The informant above refers disparagingly to mainstream journalism, but, in fact, knows very little about it. When I asked about this contradiction while conducting my fieldwork, my informants explained that they were learning by doing, and some of them were picking up ideas and suggestions at journalism conferences or from local professional journalists with whom they were collaborating (field observation, 9 November 2017). The perceived hope at Bristol Cable, as mentioned above, was to create a viable journalistic organization through which citizens could hold local power to account, and the process was every bit as important as the product, my informants emphasized. A horizontal newsroom structure, in turn, meant that ideas and topics could come from citizens as well as founders or reporters or colleagues elsewhere. One Bristol Cable initiative turned into a collaboration with the BIJ/BL and *The Guardian* to address the fact that one in five people stopped by immigration enforcement teams in Britain was a UK citizen. In this collaboration, the coordination stayed with Bristol Cable, while BIJ/BL added technological expertise and professionalism; together, they were able to access Home Office data on this situation. One BIJ/BL informant applauded the fact that Bristol Cable sought to deploy a cross-institutional collaboration to extend the impact of the story beyond the local, perhaps lending it national political resonance (and even resolution; informant BIJ/BL, 15 December 2017). This story was published in *The Guardian* (Gayle, Boutaud, & Cantwell-Corn, 2017) but also on a number of local news outlets.

As Bristol Cable followed through on its idealistic organizational project, stakeholders encountered several challenges. One challenge was reconciling their personal ideals to the necessity of producing quality watchdog journalism that was the product of professionalized collaborations with *The Guardian* or the BL. Another was spreading the concept of a citizens' media co-op by developing a media hub for live events, holding open meetings, and knocking on doors. There was also the need to enter into professional arrangements to prompt engagement from local journalists. When I observed discussions at Bristol Cable about how to adjust norms and values, people kept mentioning participation, transparency, and holding power to account. As one informant said at a meeting, "We aim to have an organization where citizens can create their own media" (field observation, Bristol Cable, 10 November 2017). Another informant mentioned that they needed to balance the ideal of participation with the aim of creating a product that the reader would enjoy reading (Ibid). The most important value involved the ability to challenge injustice in society, and the importance of having an impact was emphasized several times (field observation, Bristol Cable,

10 November 2017). It was pointed out that the media organization should be "locally focused but globally and nationally minded" (field observation, Bristol Cable, 10 November 2017).

These discussions made it clear that informants had observed an increase in mutual support and solidarity among journalist organizations, or what was frequently referred to as a "collaborative atmosphere," and that it was motivating the staff at Bristol Cable to work hard to inspire its members to participate. Ultimately, though they started out by being highly critical of the legacy media in general, several informants noted that they had come to respect the work of investigative journalists, and that watchdog journalism was useful at Bristol Cable in terms of its impact. As these amateurs had become professionals, they developed the discernment to make productive choices and explain them to others.

5. The BL: Roles for Connecting People and Preparing Impact Journalism

While Bristol Cable stakeholders had little experience with professional journalism, the BL involved actors with journalistic backgrounds, including education and/or experience, from the start. The BL was the brainchild of the managing editor of the BIJ, who had tracked International Consortium of Investigative Journalists as it managed and coordinated the Panama Papers-related work of nearly 400 journalists from 80 different countries and 107 different media outlets. This editor wondered whether this type of international collaboration, organized around a more proactive data hub, could succeed on the national level as well. Located within the BIJ, an independent nonprofit established in 2010, the BL was surrounded by traditional investigative journalists and their practices. The idea behind the BL was to address what Howells (2015, pp. 1–2) calls journalistic "black holes" following the demise of so many local media organizations in a hypercompetitive and digitally driven national media market.

Proactivity characterized the ways in which news were made and the news desk was structured at the BL. Journalists would arrange events to engage the public in discussions about holding power to account, then establish collaborations in an interdisciplinary manner. My fieldwork took place in 2017 and the spring of 2018, the year in which the platform was established, so it reflects the earliest days at this organization. From the start, the BL focused on building bridges between its stakeholders and local journalists, as well as activists, bloggers, hackers, and journalism students around the country, sharing data and stories via the software platform Slack, a digital collaboration tool to which recent studies attribute "enormous potential" (Bunce, Wright, & Scott, 2018) for establishing and accommodating productive relations across great geographical distances. In the present context, though, the flipside of such virtual newsrooms is the difficulty actors have in distinguishing between the private and professional spheres (Bunce et al., 2018).

At the BL, Slack is just one of many tools used to bridge actors in the local mediascape. Both the director of the BL and the managing editor at the BIJ emphasized a combination of physical media events and an effort to render data journalism as accessible as possible. The BL director emphasized how they worked hard "to talk to people about the idea, to get people to sign up for it, and we took a lot of notes about that. We met with freelancers, we met with local newsrooms, we met with just loads of people" (interview, 26 April 2018). The first real test for the BL came right away, in fact, when then Prime Minister Teresa May suddenly announced an election. Instead of slowly coming together as a new organization, the BL had to jump right in and produce journalism immediately. The urgency, in a sense, came to define the team (and the organization) as it chose tools and instigated collaborations.

While BL aimed to engage a variety of actors within the new media ecology, its larger goal was to create an environment for collaboration. Some informants pointed out that the Panama Papers investigation was not really a collaborative effort but a cooperative one, whereby exclusive content was shared among individuals as well as organizations (Konow-Lund et al., 2019). BL, on the other hand, was about collaboration in a very creative sense:

> Collaborative is when we had that spreadsheet on immigration where all the local reporters who were working on the investigation were inputting all the great quotes from the interviews they did. So, there was the name of the reporter, the people they interviewed, what's the job of the people interviewed, is it a member of Parliament, is it a lawyer, is it a community organizer, is it a person from a campaign organization, an academic? And then these are the questions I asked, and these were the answers. (Informant, 15 December 2017)

Because my observation took place just as BL started up, my informants described its members as primarily local journalists. The organization's ideal was a high standard of journalistic practice and product through interdisciplinary collaboration among different actors, all of whom stood to benefit from the professional assistance of the BL:

> The core work in Bureau Local is done by our team, who are all professional journalists, and many of the journalists they work with are professional, long-standing local reporters. In each story investigation that they have done, there have been a couple of people who are not what you would call traditional journalists, but they benefit from the information, from our data, from our reporting recipes, from support that is available at Bureau Local. (Managing Editor, BIJ, 18 April 2018)

Cross-institutional collaboration is one of several structural changes enabling local and national watchdog journalism. What some interviewees called the "new news ecology" of investigative journalism involves not only reaching a versatile audience with one's journalistic products but also engaging a variety of interprofessional actors in the creation of those products. Both Bristol Cable and the BL have taken giant steps in this regard, and once-peripheral roles have become normalized in the process, either from within the organization or from outside demand (such changes are also behind the development of data journalist positions at *The Guardian*, which was confronted by the same new news ecology as Bristol Cable and the BL).

Some informants admitted that they were careful not to take on any editorial responsibility for the stories produced by their network collaborators:

> That's the kind of interesting thing about the model, the ownership and responsibility element, because we don't own the stories that those local people are putting out and, in a way, we can't be responsible for everyone….I think it should be [the case] that those people are responsible in their own way for what they do, and that they're aware of the consequences of getting it wrong. If we make a mistake and we give them bad information, then absolutely that's our fault. (Informant, 15 December 2017)

This editorial responsibility extends to whomever the Slack correspondent or BL member might be, as well, because any blogger, influencer, local journalist, activist, community figure, or engaged citizen can log into the BL and become a member. At the time of my fieldwork, there were five people at the BL: the director, two journalists, a onetime data editor at *The Sunday Times*, and a data journalist. Soon afterward, another person was hired as a community organizer. This team functioned both as a group of coordinators and as an editorial newsroom to do its own research for certain stories. One informant noted that if collaborators from the BL media ecology called and asked for help, they would receive advice and instructions (Informant, 15 December 2017). Early on in my fieldwork (and in the history of Bristol Cable), the director presented a strategy for analyzing norms and values with her staff, approaching issues in a bottom-up manner. Although she was always open to input, it was clear that she would make the ultimate decisions. In other words, while Bristol Cable aimed for a horizontal newsroom across the organization, it relied on a hierarchy that was more typical of a traditional newsroom.

6. *The Guardian*: Serving the Newsroom and Adding Exclusivity and Impact

Developing relationships between newer roles and legacy roles occupied some of my interviews at *The Guardian*, a legacy media platform that was established in 1821 and has a deeply rooted traditional culture and production history. *The Guardian* distinguishes itself from the other cases by its legacy status. In interviews, that is, senior investigative journalists at *The Guardian* can draw upon firsthand experience to decide whether Julian Assange was a hacker or a proper editor-in-chief of a news outlet (Senior Reporter, 26 July 2018; Senior Reporter/Editor, 26 April 2018). They decided he was a hacker who lacked the skillset of an investigative journalist, including a certain attitude toward watchdog reporting, a certain mindset, an aversion to personal fame, and a level of technical facility. Their experience with WikiLeaks helped them to better distinguish between professional collaboration and other kinds, such as collaborations with activists who are better considered sources than partners (Senior Reporter, 26 July 2018). This reporter also noted that cross-border collaboration thrives when journalists share access to otherwise exclusive or unfamiliar sources.

Current newsroom roles at *The Guardian* derive from the ways in which the organization has had to adapt to accelerated technological developments, and there was a tension between traditional reporters and those more digital-savvy actors (designers, coders, visual designers, data journalists, and so on), especially regarding bylines and acknowledgment of work. One young digital reporter believes it boils down to control of the work process:

> The people who have been here for a long time are not happy to give up a lot of their control. So both when it comes to just having a name on something and when it comes to internal structures, obviously a lot of people would prefer it if they are kept in the driving seat and they can ask us for our help with something when they think they need it. (Interview, Digital Reporter, 7 September 2018)

During large investigations such as the Panama Papers, a number of newsroom workers, including graphic designers and the visuals team, are involved. According to one informant (27 July 2018), there had been a shift from a focus on how roles contribute individually to how they can all work together across the newsroom. Various informants emphasized the importance of being able to come up with breaking news stories and offer exclusive news stories even through data journalism or digital tools. Excel was mentioned as a particularly useful way to find, source, and strengthen stories and analyze data (Interview, Digital Reporter, 6 August 2018).

Some informants also emphasized the challenges of distinguishing oneself in the newsroom, given the ongoing collision of traditional and new practices; one journalist described the media landscape as "difficult" and noted that there was little to no money when one first started out (Informant, 27 July 2018). This informant also found that it became important to shape a role for herself by doing things other journalists would not do

or by developing extra skills that senior journalists did not have, such as an improved competency with spreadsheets. She concluded that while having data skills is important, a successful journalist still needs to tell a good story above all else. The former was easy to teach; the latter, less so. This aspect of success—developing a specialty so as to stand out as a news worker—was stressed by several informants in *The Guardian* newsroom and echoed a view held by staff at the BL and the Bristol Cable as well.

Other informants who worked with data also emphasized that exclusive stories nowadays arose from effective approaches to digital technology, in addition to legwork and traditional skills. To do this work well, data journalists had to collaborate with others in the newsroom and come up with their own ideas as well. The balance between serving the newsroom and distinguishing oneself as a proper journalist came up in several interviews:

> We're not a service desk, we are journalists. We're journalists by training and experience, and when you're a journalist and you get that thirst for finding and publishing, getting your own stories, I don't think it ever leaves you. The thing is, our journalism works in several different ways. People often ask, so are you commissioned by the desk or do you come up with your own stuff? And it's a mixture of everything. People will say, where do you come up with your story ideas, and you say, it's just everywhere, like, any conversation you have, any newspaper article you read, anything you hear potentially has the seed of a story idea. My sister says that on my gravestone I should have "there could be a story in this," which I really like the idea of. (Informant, 6 August 2018)

One informant (7 September 2018) specializing in digital technology revealed great insight into his role at *The Guardian* in terms of the importance of a byline. To him, a byline was evidence of his contribution, both internally and externally, and it specifically recognized the fact that data and visuals had made the story great in the first place (informant, 7 September 2018). He hoped that emerging roles such as his would be normalized and professionalized over time, despite the persistence of "traditional thinking" when it comes to what he does.

7. Discussion and Conclusion

To fill a gap in research that "makes direct observation of journalistic practice and how it is produced and reproduced in performance" (Westlund & Ekström, 2019, p. 84), this study has engaged three types of organizations dedicated to public affairs journalism with a collaborative bent. While other recent studies have focused on how interprofessional actors collaborate in and with today's newsrooms, this study looked at how routines and practices arise both within as well as between organizations dedicated to emerging collaborative investigative news production. This new news ecology is characterized by the participation of actors with little or no prior experience in journalism alongside professional actors and their established practices and routines. Because routines justify actions (Ryfe, 2017), new actors and organizations must develop a language for justifying routines and practices, which are no longer taken for granted in the cultural context of a shared community. This study found that negotiations about this narrative take place internally but also externally, at events, conferences, and seminars and hence influence the collaborative actors in various ways.

While the recent rise in cross-border collaborations has received a lot of attention from journalist scholars (Berglez & Gearing, 2018; Carson & Farhall, 2018; Konow-Lund et al., 2019), the collaborative potential of journalistic practice at the local, national and global levels is yet to be addressed. At the same time, as demonstrated by the emergence of studies on how a journalistic process attracts a variety of both traditional as well as peripheral actors, the question is how such a variety of actors would engage in routines understood as "cultural resources that bind journalists to a shared community of understanding" (Ryfe, 2017, p. 128). This study concludes by stressing the importance of improving and advancing understanding and research concerning: (1) how to position cultural resources such as routines between both traditional and emerging actors; (2) how to interpret such cultural resources as routines in the midst of both traditional and new practices; and (3) how to coordinate the knowledge generated between the old and the new (Westlund & Ekström, 2019).

Ultimately, this study shows that the variety of actors and emerging stakeholders in investigative journalism are aligned (or not aligned) in terms of the field's shared norms, values, and taken-for-granted rules. Ryfe (2017) argues that rules serve as the justification for certain actions over others. The present study responds to the critique raised by Westlund and Ekström (2019, p. 85) that "ethnographic newsroom research has been close to concrete practices but has most often focused on the routines as such rather than how they are invoked and negotiated." By devoting an ethnographic study to an organization with non-journalists, another with both non-journalists and professionals, and finally one with very professional journalists, this study emphasize how routines as cultural resources are being renegotiated more than coordinated.

Bristol Cable, for example, which had no prior experience with journalistic practice, had to justify why their particular routines and practices constituted journalism at all (see Ryfe, 2017). This process generated a sophisticated narrative developed through long discussions about their values and norms among all stakeholders, including owners, staff, and members. Although the BL and *The Guardian* required fewer words to justify their routines and practices, given their longer-standing claims to the profession, they also needed to make their

work and their thinking explicit when newcomers to their newsroom or inter-organizational collaborative ecology would arrive. These different actors then would contribute different narratives to the field. Over time, all three organizations saw their new narratives and professional roles normalized within the larger journalistic organizational and occupational discourse.

The three organizations under scrutiny in this study were tacitly aware of the fact that anything that could function as a neutral intermediary would help to coordinate the new ecology's routines, practices, and roles. Such an intermediary could be a position title such as Bristol Cable's "coordinators," the collaborative software at BL, or *The Guardian's* shared and expressed set of values and professional ideas. "Coordination," then, enables actors to collaborate; it can also become a vehicle for the unspoken convergence of traditional professional identities, to the detriment of those actors and the organizations they represent. It is not always clear whether such neutral intermediaries represent a means of accomplishing a shared aim or a tacit strategy for coping with ongoing differences and tensions in the workplace. The implementation of routines and practices brings about tension, after all. Future research could look at why some actors or organizations do better than others in these negotiations, and whether entities prefer to adapt to the new or settle for existing rules and practices.

To summarize, this study reveals how the negotiations both within and between new and legacy actors can shed light upon how routines and practices change in response to a new ecosystem, as well as how these changes are implemented both online and offline. More research is required to build out our understanding of what takes place when traditional rules and practices come up against new roles and priorities.

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Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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Article

Friend, Foe or Frenemy? Traditional Journalism Actors' Changing Attitudes towards Peripheral Players and Their Innovations

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Abstract

This study synthesises two analytical frameworks—journalistic strangers and agents of media innovation—to examine how perceptions among newsworkers towards new entrants to their field shape the normalisation of innovations in a digital-first legacy news organisation over three years. Based on two rounds of interviews, it finds that peripheral players are gradually recognised for their contributions to journalism by traditional actors. Nonetheless, as barriers between the two groups lower, tensions involving dissonant professional perspectives, practices, and jurisdictions surface and are negotiated. The findings indicate a growing salience of hybrid roles in newsrooms that serve as linchpins to connect divergent professional fields, and more importantly, as bridges between tradition and innovation. Based on the increasing importance of collaboration and hybrid roles, this study makes a theoretical and practical contribution to research and media management by proposing that four forms of proximity—physical, temporal, professional, and control—are crucial in operationalising the impact that peripheral players have on innovation in news organisations.

1. Introduction

Peripheral players in news—actors and organisations that include bloggers, citizen journalists, web programmers, and digital analytics companies who are not commonly associated with journalism (Holton & Belair-Gagnon, 2018; Tandoc & Oh, 2017)—have the potential to simultaneously contribute to the evolution of journalism and to disrupt its boundaries. At a time when news organisations face the challenges of declining revenues and audience figures, coupled with an increasing strain on production and operations (Nielsen, Cornia, &

Kalogeropoulos, 2016), news organisations are increasingly pressured to innovate (Posetti, 2018). Thus, the role of peripheral players in newsroom innovation becomes crucial to assess. Earlier studies have observed that how innovation is accepted into everyday practice depends on whether it comes from traditional or peripheral players, or from inside or outside news organisations (e.g., Eldridge, 2018; Holton & Belair-Gagnon, 2018; Lowrey, 2012; Lowrey & Gade, 2012). Similarly, media scholars have paid attention to the transforming tensions and negotiations surrounding diverse social actors involved in co-shaping innovation activities

(e.g., Baack, 2018; Krumsvik, Milan, Bhroin, & Storsul, 2019; Westlund, 2011; Westlund & Lewis, 2014), including how news organisations increasingly engage in cross-functional collaboration that involves journalists and peripheral players such as technologists and commercial managers (Cornia, Sehl, & Nielsen, 2018; Nielsen, 2012). Yet, to our best knowledge, few journalism studies to date trace over time how traditional journalism actors perceive the role of peripheral players in shaping innovation (exceptions include MacGregor, 2014; Micó, Masip, & Domingo, 2013; Westlund & Krumsvik, 2014).

This article addresses this gap by examining over a three-year period how the perceptions of traditional journalism actors (referred to as 'newsworkers') towards peripheral players shape the appropriation of innovations in a digital-first legacy news organisation in Singapore. In the context of this study, we refer to innovation as change in news organisations pertaining to new media technologies and practices that involve complex social interactions which can shape communication and relationships between actors (Westlund & Lewis, 2014), and appropriation of innovations as the process by which social actors adopt, adapt, and integrate innovations into everyday practices (Carroll, Howard, Peck, & Murphy, 2003). We argue that studying the attitudes of newsworkers towards peripheral players *over time* is theoretically and practically important in order to shed light on how innovations are appropriated and can guide news organisations to better adapt to the changing news ecosystem, which ultimately impacts on the future of journalism and its role in society (Pavlik, 2013). Furthermore, a holistic understanding of innovation appropriation processes in organisations requires long-term approaches as innovations do not remain stagnant but are iteratively transformed throughout the innovation process (Slappendel, 1996). This study includes two rounds of semi-structured in-depth interviews with 20 newsroom staff, comprising mostly journalists but also technologists and commercial managers at a legacy news organisation in Singapore collected at two different points in time—between end-2015 and mid-2016, and again from end-2018 to early-2019.

This article is organised into six sections. The second section discusses the literature in relation to the role of peripheral players in shaping innovations in news organisations. The third section outlines our analytical frameworks which are based on the typology of strangers (Holton & Belair-Gagnon, 2018) and the agents of media innovation (AMI; Westlund & Lewis, 2014). The fourth section explains our methodological considerations for our case study, while the fifth presents our findings that explore how changing perceptions of newsworkers towards peripheral players over time have influenced the appropriation of innovations. The discussion and conclusion section includes a theoretical and practical contribution in the form of proximity of peripheral players as a key factor in understanding innovation appropriation in news organisations.

2. Peripheral Players and Innovation in News Organisations

There has been growing interest in the role of peripheral players inside and outside news organisations in shaping how innovations are appropriated. From an outside-in perspective, researchers have assessed the impact of "exogenous influences" (Krumsvik et al., 2019, p. 198) such as audiences and technology-related advances on innovation in news organisations. For example, Singer (2005) observes that the ubiquity of blogs has influenced their normalisation among newsworkers, noting that traditional journalists are not just gatekeepers of information but also of innovation. This shaping of innovation in news organisations by external forces is also illustrated by Krumsvik (2018) in his longitudinal study of Norwegian newsrooms. He argues that changes in audiences' digital news habits have influenced news companies to alter their approaches towards their users from being co-producers to distributors of news.

Looking inside news organisations, meanwhile, scholars have argued for the importance of understanding the role that interactions, interrelationships, and tensions among traditional and peripheral journalism actors play in shaping innovation (e.g., Steensen, 2009; Westlund, 2011; Westlund & Lewis, 2014). Nielsen (2012) examined collaboration between technologists, journalists, and managers in two newspapers developing blogging capabilities, and posits that the dynamics between members of communities may be analysed as either enablers or disablers of innovation. In a case study assessing the appropriation of emerging technology in legacy news organisations and digital news start-ups, Chua and Westlund (2019) opine that as digital innovation becomes increasingly important to the economic considerations of news publishers, they seek new ways to create environments that foster cross-departmental collaboration and innovation. Yet organisations tend to resist innovation rather than embrace it (Utterback, 2004), and journalists have historically been defensive of their traditions (Mitchelstein & Boczkowski, 2009).

More recently, as the boundaries between traditional and non-traditional journalism blur, researchers have underscored the inadequacy of the insider/outsider distinction, and turned their attention towards how the interplay between traditional actors at the core and non-traditional players at the periphery shapes the manner in which journalists innovate (Eldridge, 2018; Holton & Belair-Gagnon, 2018). For instance, Lewis and Usher (2013) examined boundary negotiations in the case of collaborations between traditional journalists and hackers, and argue that such partnerships possess the potential to "reinvigorate newswork" (Lewis & Usher, 2013, p. 614) and introduce innovations that make journalism more relevant in the digital era. Similarly, Baack (2018, p. 676) studied the "interlocking practices" of data journalists and civic technologists and found that despite having distinct professional backgrounds, the overlap in

their skills and aspirations contributed to the forging of a complementary relationship, giving rise to novel practices in both professions. In a study of web analytics company managers' influence on the adoption of analytics in news production, Belair-Gagnon and Holton (2018) found that managers, as peripheral players, subtly introduce innovations in the news process through the adoption of web analytics by strategically positioning themselves as collaborators who acknowledge that their own companies' success is closely tied with the success of journalism, but who have no intention of driving cultural or institutional change among journalists. Focusing on digital journalists, Vos and Ferrucci (2018) highlight that although online reporters set themselves apart from citizen journalists, bloggers, and professional journalists working in traditional media, their professional identities have been influenced by both traditional and peripheral players.

3. Analytical Framework

Building upon this literature, this study seeks to understand how newsworkers' attitudes towards peripheral players shape the appropriation of innovation in a digital-first legacy news organisation. This study is guided by a synthesis of two analytical frameworks: the typology of strangers in journalism proposed by Holton and Belair-Gagnon (2018) and the AMI developed by Westlund and Lewis (2014).

3.1. Strangers in Journalism

Arguing for a more systematic approach towards examining peripheral players and their roles in challenging boundaries, epistemologies, discourses, and the practice of journalism, Holton and Belair-Gagnon's (2018) typology of journalistic strangers identifies three groups of non-traditional journalism actors. First are the 'explicit interlopers,' who are non-traditional actors operating outside the news organisation and not defined as journalists (physically distant, professionally proximate). They may not be welcomed by mainstream journalists, but they directly contribute content or products related to the production and distribution of news. They tend to be early adopters of innovations, and consistently challenge journalism norms and practices. This group includes bloggers and citizen journalists. Second are 'implicit interlopers,' who are non-traditional actors who work outside the news organisation (physically and professionally distant) and whose technological contributions, such as better tools to advance content production, news dissemination, and audience engagement are valued by traditional journalists. This group includes programmers and web analytics professionals (cf. Tandoc & Thomas, 2015). Third are 'intralopers,' who are non-traditional journalistic actors who offer their expertise from within news organisations and are thus "less strangers by proximity than they are by the work they perform in relation to

news production" (Holton & Belair-Gagnon, 2018, p. 75). They are physically proximate but professionally distant. This group includes all non-editorial workers whose functions supplement and/or complement journalistic work. Applied to our study, this framework guides examination of how newsworkers' attitudes towards these three groups of peripheral players have changed over time.

3.2. Agents of Media Innovation

While the typology of strangers guides our understanding of newsworkers' perceptions towards peripheral players, the AMI framework (Westlund & Lewis, 2014) focuses our analysis on how innovations are appropriated in news organisations in relation to who potentially drives these innovative activities. The AMI theorises that innovation involves complex interactions among, and may be driven by, diverse agents referred to as the three As: (i) 'Actors'—all humans such as journalists, technologists, and businesspeople working in media organisations and who are potentially involved in innovation, although it may entail actors from outside the organisation who can influence processes within the firm; (ii) 'actants'—non-human technologies that are appropriated in media work and offer enabling and disabling affordances in the context of innovation; and (iii) 'audiences'—end-users who receive media products and services, but in the way that actors within news organisations think of audiences as either passive receivers of news, commodities for advertisers, or as active participants in the news production process. Importantly, in examining the drivers of innovation processes in organisations, the AMI's authors stress the value of scrutinising "perceptions and behaviours of, and cooperation among, all of the organisational actors potentially involved in innovation" (Westlund & Lewis, 2014, p. 17). In relation to our study, this framework underscores the importance of a holistic perspective that takes into account not only the interactions between journalists and peripheral players, but also among audiences and technological actants.

3.3. Synthesis and Study Rationale

Media scholars note that journalists do not work in a vacuum, and increasingly examine how peripheral players influence innovation, as this has both theoretical and practical implications (e.g., Paulussen, 2016; Schmitz Weiss & Domingo, 2010; Waldenström, Wiik, & Andersson, 2019). To date, however, few studies have analysed the relationship between the perceptions of traditional journalism actors towards peripheral players and the appropriation of innovation in news organisations. To this end, this study synthesises the typology of strangers and AMI frameworks to analyse how changes in newsworkers' attitudes towards 'outside' players over time shapes innovation appropriation, and asks these research questions:

RQ1: How did newsworkers' attitudes towards peripheral players' and their innovations change between 2015–2016 and 2018–2019?

RQ2: How is innovation driven by peripheral players appropriated in the legacy news organisation?

4. Method and Material

Case study is an optimal method for examining contemporary phenomena in their real-life context (Yin, 2018). This study is based on ethnographic data collected from the *Straits Times* (*ST*), a digital-first legacy news organisation in Singapore, at two different points in time: Between end-2015 and mid-2016, and from end-2018 to early-2019. *ST* represents a theoretically informed case study that typifies the empirical phenomenon the research is interested in (Rule & John, 2015). *ST* was founded in 1845 and employs about 300 staff. It is Singapore's most-read English broadsheet newspaper and had, until 2017, a market capitalisation larger than that of the New York Times Company (Yap, 2017). Both its advertising revenues and circulation have both since fallen, as seen also in many newspapers in other countries. As a counter to this, *ST* has attempted to transform itself from a print-focused newspaper to a digital-first news organisation and has been innovating its digital news since 2013 (Chua & Westlund, 2019).

The 2015–2016 data in this study included newsroom observations and semi-structured, in-depth interviews for two separate studies (Chua & Westlund, 2019; Duffy, Tandoc, & Ling, 2018) that examined emerging technology in *ST*. Subsequently in 2018–2019, both this study's authors again interviewed *ST* staff in their offices, over the phone, and via Skype, asking questions from an interview guide that had been jointly prepared by both researchers. The questions were built on observations from the 2015–2016 research and based on the typology of journalistic strangers and the AMI frameworks. Interviews were semi-structured to allow for thematic clustering of responses and to allow space for an emotional dimension to emerge (Fontana & Frey, 2005). Despite being distinct in focus, both studies in 2015–2016 partly involved examining newsworkers attitudes towards peripheral players vis-à-vis digital innovation, and hence included compatible features. This overlap made portions of the 2015–2016 data from each study suitable for comparison with the data collected in 2018–2019 to examine how newsworkers' perceptions towards peripheral players changed over time and plays into how it shapes innovation. In all, this study comprises interviews with 20 staff, with 10 during each round of data collection. These staff were mostly newsworkers (senior editors, newspaper reporters, video journalists, digital journalists, and sub-editors), but also included selected technologists and business managers who have worked directly with newsworkers to give multiple viewpoints (cf. Lewis & Westlund, 2015; Westlund & Lewis,

2014). Although this study is an extension of earlier research in the same news organisation, it does not claim to be longitudinal because most people interviewed and questions asked differed between 2015–2016 and 2018–2019.

All interviews were done under conditions of anonymity as a "a key principle is to respect the privacy of those you study" (Babbie, 2011, p. 444), so the names have been changed here and the job titles are representative of what they do but do not allow for identification. This was done in order to give interviewees freedom to speak openly about attitudes towards colleagues, whether proximal or peripheral. While interviewees in the 2015–2016 round made passing reference to peripheral players, that phrase had not yet been coined; it emerged in scholarship in 2018 and was employed to drive the second round of interviews and formed the core of the questions.

For data analysis, this study's authors independently reviewed their 2015–2016 ethnographic data, including field notes and interview transcripts, and thematically coded relevant sections to highlight newsworkers' attitudes towards peripheral players. The same was done for the 2018–2019 interview data. Thereafter, both researchers combined their individual analysis from both phases of data collection and iteratively discussed as well as assessed the data for emergent and recurring patterns in relation to newsworkers' shifting attitudes towards peripheral players and their implications on innovation appropriation within *ST*. The data analysis therefore took an inductive approach (Polit & Beck, 2003) of immersion in the interview transcripts to identify themes among answers and the quotes below are instances where both researchers agreed that a theme was evident and the exemplar was representative.

5. Findings

5.1. Newsworkers' Attitudinal Changes over Time

The first research question asked what changes in attitudes by newsworkers towards peripheral players in *ST* could be observed between 2015–2016 and 2018–2019, and we present the findings using Holton and Belair-Gagnon's (2018) typology of strangers. Explicit interlopers are outsiders because of where they stand, but insiders because of what they do (physically distant, professionally proximate). They include bloggers and citizen journalists who are clearly outside the newsroom. The 2015–2016 ethnographies saw few references to explicit interlopers, which may indicate that the boundaries of the newsroom were tightly patrolled and outside voices discouraged. Richard, a social media editor, said in 2015–2016 he read tech blogs to stay well informed; other than that, no one mentioned them. The role of citizen journalism was to be confirmed by traditional journalism, as Richard said: "People share with us photos of fire, accidents, or even send in rumours to

ask if it is legit or not since people still believe in *ST*'s credibility." Gary, a digital editor, meanwhile, grudgingly said: "There is value in citizen journalism but it is over-rated. A lot of people do not understand how journalism works." In 2018–2019, by contrast, explicit interlopers were characterised as a strength by newsworkers. Firstly, they are not constrained by newsroom norms and ideologies. A section editor, Nicholas, said: "They occupy a space we aren't in." Their value lies in this separation: "They bring value in terms of voicing views that either we don't subscribe to, or even if we agree with some of the points, we may not put them in the way they do." Secondly, as they are not constrained by newsroom norms, explicit interlopers can innovate, which makes them a source of inspiration. Aurora, a reporter, saw bloggers as a group to watch closely as these explicit interlopers have a separate skillset from traditional journalists whom she thinks journalists could "learn more from" and that the *ST* newsroom "could do with more of their influence here." Thirdly, content produced by explicit interlopers has value because, as outsiders, they cover events which reporters cannot, but their content is quickly normalised into newsroom processes. Susannah, a reporter, said that eyewitness photographs might be used in early online versions of a story, but are quickly replaced by pictures from in-house photographers sent to the scene.

Implicit interlopers, who include external programmers, web developers and analysts, are also outside the newsroom and what they do is not directly related to newsgathering, making them physically and professionally distant. However, they possess skills and knowledge that may offer contributions that can improve journalism and hence are valued by traditional newsworkers. In 2015–2016, while amateurs from outside the newsroom were disdained, experts were in demand:

> We try to organise lunchtime talks when there are experts in the region who are passing through Singapore, just to talk to the reporters, people in the newsroom, but the broad areas would be things like product, analytics, and innovation. (Gary, digital editor)

By contrast, Richard (social media editor) expressed caution about his meeting with implicit interlopers from beyond the newsroom: "I met some of the Twitter folk. So, one of my responsibilities, sort of, is also a bit on partnership with the tech and social media companies," where the equivocation of "sort of" and "a bit" alongside the diminutive term "folk" suggests caution. In 2018–2019, implicit interlopers were more in evidence than explicit. At one level, traditional newsworkers recognised their necessity in a time of change. Gary (digital editor) said: "We're starting to learn how to use data, but we need quite a bit of hand-holding." Richard (social media editor) added that he frequently consults web analytics companies and external data specialists on improving *ST*'s an-

alytics capabilities. The relationship is characterised as newsroom workers needing guidance from respected implicit interlopers. But at another level, these peripheral players were still characterised as separate, physically and professionally, and engagements with them still warranted caution, as Gary (digital editor) explained: "I think they're [technology and social media companies] are our frenemies….I can cite numerous times when they talk about how they are valuable to us. Yes, to some extent, but in most cases, no!"

Intralopers, meanwhile, are inside the newsroom but the work they do is not directly journalistic (physically proximate but professionally distant). They include people working inside the organisation in non-traditional journalistic roles. In *ST*, coders and web developers are often in-house rather than being outsourced, and the value accorded to these intralopers appeared to be connected to their physical proximity. Gary (digital editor) explained in 2015–2016 he had to convince HR to hire one coder to be seated in the newsroom just so the digital news team did not have to "get the IT department guy to come up….He doesn't understand news—he's a tech guy." Similarly, given a shift towards producing news stories in video format for apps, websites, and smartphones, "when Gary wanted a video unit under *ST*'s digital desk, we came down—we were upstairs before—and joined the *ST* newsroom," said Karen, a video team editor, in 2015–2016. Stephen, a video journalist on her team, added: "We were moved because we need to work closely with the *ST* editors and journalists when producing videos….It's quite clear that they want us to be more integrated into the *ST* ecosystem."

In 2018–2019, intralopers in the form of video and interactive graphics teams were seen as extensions of journalistic practice and were increasingly integrated as the print product moved online. They were characterised in positive terms. Elspeth, a reporter, interacts frequently with the digital interactive graphics team: "I think there's a lot of respect in terms of we know that they know something we don't and likewise we know something they don't, so we try to, I guess, use our skills to complement each other." This led to the observation that intralopers who fit the traditional mould, even if their skills are not print-oriented, were treated as insiders, while coding intralopers were still outside the boundaries: "We still work very closely with video so they are like an extension of the team. But when it comes to web coders…those are very separate, at least for me, they are a separate group of people who manage things behind the scenes," said Aurora (reporter) before adding by way of a counterbalance: "They are really important, I just don't think I have enough interaction with them." Cognitively, she accepts that coders and web developers are crucial contributors, but emotionally and physically they are still at a distance. Similarly, the *ST* digital marketing department whose office was on another floor within the building were often characterised more as an absence than as a presence, as this quote from Nicholas (section editor) in 2018–2019

shows: "I'm sure they're doing stuff, but I don't know what they're doing and how it affects our day-to-day stuff." Broadly, intralopers—particularly those who sit inside the newsroom—were more accepted than internal or external interlopers. This is also pragmatic: Both Lisa and Susannah, reporters interviewed in 2018–2019, said that if a closer relationship with commercial entities would keep valuable news flowing to people, and allow them to continue doing what they loved, then this was a trade worth making. Rather than a betrayal of journalistic principles, it was a "new normal" for the newsroom.

Despite increasing integration of intralopers in *ST*, a hierarchy that puts newsworkers above intralopers was observed. Web developer Wendy explained that "the standard procedure of how things work in the newsroom" often involved newsworkers taking the lead on innovation projects. Gary (digital editor) described it in terms of project ownership: "We are the product owners, whereas the product and tech guys are more the product managers." Nonetheless, he is open to others leading: "If it's editorial-led, yes, editorial will be the product owners; but sometimes if it's circulation-led or marketing-led then it'd be another product owner where editorial plays a supporting role."

Other changes were structural (cf. Lowrey & Gade, 2012). Communication flowed more easily between departments in 2018–2019 than in 2015–2016: "I used to create entire stories and graphics without ever speaking to a journalist who was working in that field…but now we don't do that anymore, which is really good. We work directly with them" (Charissa, interactive digital journalist, 2018–2019). The change is at the level of workplace culture, according to Imelda, a reporter: "Initially when I joined it was very strait-laced; there wasn't a lot of input you could have about how you wanted your story to look on a page, but now it's more of a dialogue." However, pockets of communication chasms remained despite a redesigned newsroom intended to encourage collaboration. Elspeth (reporter) said in 2018–2019: "The team [of coders] here, they kind of keep to themselves….I don't know if it's the nature of their job or they're just introverted by nature, but they're…different from journalists who are very talkative and opinionated."

On learning peripheral skills, both Richard (social media editor) and Nicholas (section editor), in 2015–2016, had noted how several colleagues were reluctant to master digital journalism skills. By contrast, *ST*'s newsworkers in 2018–2019 acknowledged the importance of acquiring skills that the interlopers and intralopers possessed in order to adapt to the digital news environment. Imelda (reporter) added that old-school journalists saw the need to learn those skills—in particular, video skills. The effect, then, is of traditional journalists adopting new skills which make them non-traditional; which in turn alters the boundaries of what is traditional journalism, so that they, over time, become 'traditional' journalists once again. Additionally, reluctance on the part of the newsworkers to change creates the need for interlopers and intralopers to perform the tasks they are unwilling to do. Yet, as Imelda (reporter) said: "I don't think [we] have a choice. If we had stayed in the old ways, we'd be dead now."

Further, implicit interlopers and intralopers were often characterised in terms of a clash of professional cultures. Marketers and coders have different goals from reporters and editors. Looking at the commercial side first, Nicholas (section editor) in 2018–2019 acknowledged that declining advertising revenue may shift professional values and drive collaboration:

> Every newspaper needs to adapt and work with the business side of the house. Ideally it shouldn't affect your editorial decisions, but there should be an understanding of what's going on and then look at how you can monetise your paper.

This sentence merits unpicking: First, Nicholas (section editor) distances himself from this commercial innovation by generalising the decision to "every newspaper"; the phrase "the business side" indicates that it is separate; the word "ideally" shows that such adaptation is a challenge to professional ideals; while the business term "monetise" may be considered at odds with traditional journalistic language. The peripheral player clashes with journalistic values; innovation is distanced from day-to-day practice, although Nicholas (section editor) adds that personally, he feels there should be greater collaboration with non-editorial departments in his daily work and it is important for him to do so.

Yet, when their professional goals converge, the working relationship between newsworkers and intralopers was characterised positively. Elspeth (reporter) in 2018–2019 feels that her relationship with coders "is more respectful because we are working together on a common product. They're not doing it for the money, they're doing it for a good product. But the marketing side has totally different goals." Innovation is thus integrated into newsroom activities when some greater principle is invoked beyond the immediate short-term goal. There is no need for practice to overlap; but peripheral players need to contribute to a core journalistic goal. Laura, a reporter, in 2018–2019 sees the video production team as "part of the gang, maybe because they don't chase stories themselves, but they are still part of the newsroom."

5.2. Appropriation of Innovation

The second research question asked how innovation was appropriated into newsroom activities, seen through the AMI framework of actors, actants, and audiences (Westlund & Lewis, 2014). We start from actors inside the newsroom. First, management and senior editors drive innovation, but their suggestions are not always welcomed nor understood: "Ever since we had this report thing [ChartBeat], I've had a lot more suggestions from

my supervisor on click-baity articles, and once I asked if this was the road we are going down and he said 'yes'" (Laura, reporter, 2018–2019). She went on to say that her supervisors do not "understand" the meaning of digital: "He says 'I want you to go digital' and I say 'so what does that mean?' and it's like 'It's up to you what's digital'." Aurora (reporter) recounted a similar experience in 2018–2019:

> They are asking you to think outside print, even though they don't really say what 'outside of print' they really want....I think that they are just making their way and trying to find something that works, and they expect us to come in and plug it for them.

Second, journalists approach non-traditional actors in the company to collaborate, but encounter a 'language gap.' Reporters said that web developers and coders do not understand what makes a story newsworthy, while coders said that reporters did not appreciate the realities of their working practice as seen in this comment from Wendy (web developer) in 2018–2019:

> When it comes to innovation, the idea is initiated by our team and when we propose these ideas, we already took design thinking in mind, what kind of data structure we need to follow, what kind of content is more appropriate, the user experience. When the idea comes from the other teams...their way of thinking is more of making a piece more related to news angles. So that's a different strategy.

Elspeth (reporter) in 2018–2019 called for a new generation of "bridge" people who can connect these two sides, and is teaching herself coding, with mixed success. Charissa (interactive digital journalist) said in 2018–2019 she performs just such a role: "I'm bridging the gap between print and even your online stories to see how we can present them visually." One mechanism to achieve this is to bring teams together, so that the interactive digital journalists and the coders sit in the same space. Charissa (interactive digital journalist) added: "I think it's super-essential; they [coders] are listening to all the conversations that are going on about the stories."

Looking outside the newsroom, interviewees mentioned marketing and technological colleagues. Marketing is resisted even while interviewees recognise the need for commercial innovation. Nicholas (section editor) said in 2018–2019: "You need to think about marketing, and how the advertisers may react to certain things. It's not that it would change our position, but it's something you need to be sensitive about." As advertising revenue drops, he sees increased pressure while saying: "For me, honestly, I barely, almost never talk to marketing and so on." This extends to technological innovation, too. Like St Augustine praying for chastity—but not yet—Nicholas (section editor) appears reluctant to drive change while agreeing that it is needed: "I think at

some point we need to think about how we can write or present the story and make best use of the online medium...at some point we need to slowly head in that direction." This sense of caution may be interpreted as one reason why innovation is likelier to come from outside the newsroom than from within; there is a strong path-dependency for long-serving newsworkers who acknowledge the need for innovation but do not feel driven to enact it themselves.

One 2018–2019 interviewee, Shereen, a commercial manager, integrated marketing and technology into a new initiative which saw her interacting with editorial who resisted this innovation: "There wasn't that much additional input from the editorial team about maybe creating content specifically for affiliate marketing...it was difficult to get commitment from the journalists...and around the editorial integrity part there is a little bit of hesitance." A changing environment is driving the need for innovation; her question is who should take charge of changes inside the news organisation. Shereen (commercial manager) observes a lack of willingness from the newsroom to take ownership of closer commercial collaboration: "They're, I guess, happy for you to try, but from an ownership point of view, not necessarily."

Analytics is a form of audience incursion into the newsroom as well as a technological interloper which influences journalistic decision-making. Based on the 2018–2019 responses, it has four impacts on the newsroom: Functional—"it helps us keep track of which stories are doing better" (Nicholas, section editor); personal—"it's a validation of what I do" (Laura, reporter); professional—"we are judged by these analytics" (Laura, reporter); and commercial—"you can see with your own eyes how we're making money for the company" (Aurora, reporter) as one metric is the number of conversions which is when a reader subscribes after reading an article. This is a significant innovation, because it draws a direct link between stories and revenue, changing the nature of the relationship between the individual news article and the business side of a newspaper. Analytics were also appropriated into newsgathering practice in innovative ways. Imelda (reporter) used the data from ChartBeat to persuade sources to speak to her; and to motivate public relations executives to give her access to celebrities:

> I wrote a quick online story and it was one of the top trending stories for the past two days and it gave me leverage to go to the promoter and say it's doing so well, can you get me an interview with him [the celebrity] when he comes?

Nonetheless, Laura (reporter) said management seems to view a successful story as one that attracts clicks, but feels that articles which engage readers are "not the click-baity stuff." Here, professional barriers between newsworkers and both the audience and the business side appear to become more porous.

6. Discussion and Conclusion

This article examines what traditional journalism actors' attitudes towards peripheral players indicated about how innovation is appropriated in a digital-first legacy news organisation. It subscribes to the idea that outsiders have the benefit of not being encumbered by "the way we do things here" (Bruns, 2014).

With reference to the first research question, this study observes that over time the traditional newsworkers were gradually more accepting of peripheral players' innovations. Regarding explicit interlopers, the newsworkers' initial disdain towards bloggers and citizen journalists was replaced by acknowledgement of their value in representing alternative perspectives, although the newsworkers were quick to point out that these interlopers occupy a space that they do not. This is congruent with Vos and Ferrucci's (2018) argument that despite appearing to be less insular and more willing to recognise interloping actors, digital-first newsrooms still keep a professional distance from citizen journalists. The newsworkers also gradually recognised a pressing need to engage with external experts, especially those who were knowledgeable in digital news development and analytics, who they thought possessed the know-how to facilitate successful innovations, bringing them into their professional circle.

When discussing analytics as a technological interloper, newsworkers' original ambivalence gave way to largely enthusiastic responses that included novel ways of integrating reader metrics in news production such as using it as leverage to get interviews. In this sense, interlopers symbolise agents of change that simultaneously test and alter the identity of traditional journalism actors and their profession (Belair-Gagnon & Holton, 2018; Eldridge, 2018). Likewise, when discussing intralopers, newsworkers were progressively more cognisant of the importance of collaboration between staff from editorial, business, and technology functions. The findings suggest that this awareness was influenced by the news organisation's efforts at introducing structural changes, such as formalising processes aimed at better inter-departmental cooperation and redesigning physical work-spaces to promote interaction. These synergies contributed to improving newsworkers' perceptions of peripheral players by drawing them closer professionally and physically.

With reference to the second research question, this study finds that in line with a growing body of research observing greater collaboration between editorial, commercial, and technological operations in newsrooms (Cornia et al., 2018; Lewis & Westlund, 2015; Westlund, 2011; Westlund & Krumsvik, 2014), the newsworkers at *ST* reported increased interaction and interdepartmental collaboration. They also demonstrated greater acceptance of innovation driven by peripheral players. However, as the metaphorical walls that demarcate professional boundaries are lowered, three tension points surface. The first is the 'language gap,' seen in divergent realities of working practices between coders and journalists. The second relates to the disparate perspectives between editorial and commercial departments, and among journalists, in reaching a consensus on definitive indicators to measure online story performance. The third point involves the murkiness surrounding 'ownership,' or what Shereen (commercial manager) called "communication alignment," when it comes to innovation that involves interdepartmental collaborations. In all three points, we argue that boundary negotiations which impact interdisciplinary collaboration demanded by the evolving newsroom would benefit from multi-skilled workers, such as those described by Charissa (interactive digital journalist) and Elspeth (reporter) as "bridges." The increasing importance of peripheral players to the field of journalism may on the one hand be seen by traditional actors as a boundary incursion. On the other hand, as evidenced by our study, these incursions have given rise to hybrid roles within news organisations—new agents of change who possess skills to connect divergent professional fields and serve as linchpins for cross-functional arrangements, and possibly pave the path of innovation for the future of journalism (see also Cherubini, 2017).

6.1. Proximity and Peripheral Players

Based on the requirement for collaboration and bridging observed in the interviews as revealed by both its presence and its absence, we argue that proximity of peripheral players is a key factor in the appropriation of innovation. In Bourdelian terms (Vos, Craft, & Ashley, 2012), those making incursions into the field, such as the video team, show a greater understanding of a shared goal than those who are already in the field, such as senior newsworkers. Alternatively, the same group can be viewed in different ways depending on the sense of proximity: For some reporters, coders and developers are unknown, invisible, working in the backroom; while for others they are a welcome addition who can present their stories to advantage.

This article's contribution is to propose four forms of proximity as a means to operationalise the impact of innovation from peripheral players into news organisations. The first is physical proximity. When developers, coders, and analysts were in separate departments, their work was less accepted by journalists; but once they were placed together in teams, their contributions became appropriated into everyday practice—to a greater or lesser extent depending on circumstances related to temporal, professional, and control proximity (discussed below). Physical proximity can build an easier working relationship and was initially seen when the teams were separate and did not feel a sense of collaboration. Wendy (web developer), for example, said that when artists sit alongside her team—a case of two intralopers collaborating—a shared understanding developed.

Explicit interlopers such as bloggers, by contrast, who operate well outside the newsroom, are less welcomed into the conversation; they are characterised as a resource, not a collaborator.

The second is temporal proximity: The more time the newsworkers and peripheral players spent interacting, the likelier they were to understand each other's perspectives and to internalise them into their own work. Elspeth (reporter) said that spending time with the graphics teams gave her respect for them. Further, she and Aurora (reporter), both said that they do not have the time to think of creative ways of presenting their stories online, so the time element is handed over to the peripheral players to fulfil that role.

The third is professional proximity. Here, the goals of the work process are broadly shared, such as the pursuit of reader interests, for example, or of reader-driven income into the company. Professional proximity is most clearly observable when it is absent. Elspeth (reporter) found it "problematic" that journalists are involved with marketing, being paid to work on projects which have commercial benefits at the expense of editorial credibility, while Susannah and Lisa (reporters) accepted it as a necessity. A clash of professional cultures goes both ways, and Wendy (web developer) described how hard it was for journalists to imagine what her work involved. Web developers live in a constant state of innovation while traditional journalists are more concerned with tried and tested norms. They resist innovation because it deviates from their own working practice, and they seem to not have accepted that this is one of their new norms. Technology has innovation at its heart; journalism has consistency at its heart. This is a key barrier to normalisation of innovation into journalism. In some situations, however, innovation is not appropriated when the professional goals of the two groups (incumbent and innovator) are at odds. Elspeth (reporter) was uncomfortable that her colleagues are asked to help the marketing team by creating content for advertisers; yet at the same time she recognises that when such sponsored content adds value for the reader, it conforms to her journalistic norms.

The fourth is control proximity. This can occur when both groups acknowledge the authority of one group, allowing one side to take control; or when both groups recognise the authority of a third, most frequently management. In both cases, control allows for proximity to occur by setting clear lines of engagement. Wendy (web developer) and Shereen (commercial manager) both highlighted that innovation is often driven by editorial departments, while Gary (digital editor) stressed the importance of clarifying project ownership. Evidently, whoever is in control is less important than the fact that some form of authority is established. Moreover, integration of interlopers is not necessarily into the newsroom, but into the bigger picture of the news organisation. Thus, for example, analytics becomes appropriated into editorial business conversations about how editorial can contribute to the bottom line, rather than into pure editorial conversations about how to cover news.

6.2. Limitations and Future Studies

A limitation of this study is the small group of interviewees, who were nevertheless selected to give multiple viewpoints. Different interviewees are likely to give different perspectives, and the data is presented as illustrative rather than definitive. Further, it is worth noting that, while there is a clear impetus to innovate, innovation is not the be-all and end-all. "Where I am right now in my current role, it's still focused on putting out the paper day to day," said Nicholas (section editor). In pursuing what is novel, research runs a risk of allocating it disproportionate significance.

This study takes the theoretical models of AMI and journalistic strangers, fleshes them out with empirical illustrations, and subsequently proposes that they can be profitably examined through the abstract lens of proximity. Future empirical research would operationalise different forms of proximity, studying the appropriation of innovation vis-à-vis the three types of journalistic strangers (Holton & Belair-Gagnon, 2018) and the three groups in the AMI model (Westlund & Lewis, 2014). Besides making a theoretical contribution, the concept of proximity also benefits the practice of journalism. Media managers would consider each form of proximity as they encourage cross-function collaborations; for instance, newsroom integration and formalised processes for organisation-wide cooperation facilitates physical and temporal proximity. However, control proximity which delineates lines of authority and ownership in innovation is equally pertinent. Professional proximity, then, represents a high-hanging fruit for media managers as they attempt to align divergent ideals among diverse social actors with distinct professional backgrounds.

Another concept for future exploration is that of hybridity. Creating a division between traditional and non-traditional journalists; and between those on the periphery and those at the core implies dichotomies. Frequently, assimilation of innovation also demands hybridity. Traditional journalists must learn new skills, whether willingly or unwillingly. Two analogies characterise peripheral players driving innovation in the newsroom: They may be seen as immigrants arriving in a fixed society which will change to accommodate them just as they change to fit in with existing mores; or they may be something closer to *Homo sapiens* encroaching on territory inhabited by *Homo neanderthalensis*—which did not end well for the less innovative species.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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Commentary

About Actor Positioning in Journalism…Slowly

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Abstract
In this commentary, I argue that adopting a practice-theoretical research approach helps us to better understand the dispersed nature of journalism and its large web of actors, both traditional and non-traditional. I take innovation as an example that can be fruitfully examined through the practice lens. I also propose narrative positioning analysis as an additional method for digging more deeply—and slowly—into the positions that these varied actors adopt, are offered or placed into.

1. Introduction

Imagine all the different people who have been involved in the work before we see a news article. This work, the news process, involves a long chain of very diverse actors, and this chain is what we as journalism scholars must understand—even if it sometimes seems an impossible task. We must comprehend such a vast area and understand how distinct fields interact. How to go about it?

I argue that adopting a practice-theoretical research approach (e.g., Ahva, 2017a; Ryfe, 2018; Witschge & Harbers, 2018) may help us to better understand the dispersed nature of journalism and its long chain—or large web—of actors (Domingo & Le Cam, 2014).

We know that the actors in the news process comprise not only journalists in the traditional sense (e.g., reporters or editors) but also, for example, technologists (Lewis & Westlund, 2015), citizens (Ahva, 2017b), hackers (Lewis & Usher, 2014), and data analysts (Belair-Gagnon & Holton, 2018). These non-traditional journalism actors bring with them diverse but significant ingredients that shape what we eventually interpret as news: technical platforms or applications, eyewitness photos or viewpoints from afar, lines of code to gather data on the web, or information about news consumption habits that will influence future publication decisions.

2. Metaphors Matter

For this reason, journalism research—and particularly this thematic issue—focuses on a spectrum of non-traditional journalism actors who play a role in the news process. The notion of *peripheral actor* refers to the metaphorical position that journalists have typically assigned to newcomers to the field, accepting that they may bring innovations or necessary ingredients to renew journalism, but nevertheless positioning them as peripheral to the core of news making (Holton & Belair-Gagnon, 2018, p. 71).

Journalism scholars have self-reflectively noted that the peripheral positioning may also be partly due to the ways that scholars discuss such actors (Holton & Belair-Gagnon, 2018, p. 71; Witschge & Harbers, 2018, p. 108). With chosen terms, concepts and metaphors, we may reproduce distancing or marginalization despite having other intentions. Therefore, additional notions have

been coined to provide a more holistic understanding of journalism, such as *explicit* or *implicit interlopers,* and *intralopers* (Holton & Belair-Gagnon, 2018).

However, metaphors and concepts can also exaggerate the centrality of actors in relation to others. Consider the case of alternative media. Holt, Ustad Figenschou, and Frischlich (2019, p. 861) note that for a long time, the focus was on *alternative* only in the sense of *progressive* or *left-leaning.* Hence, research largely focused on analyzing the leftist alternative media actors. Therefore, we must be careful with the metaphors we use and expose them to critical re-examination if necessary.

I prefer to understand the notion of *actor* as a stand-alone concept and propose answering the important research question regarding positioning based on the empirical research material. In other words, we do get to the question of whether non-traditional actors are positioned as peripheral, central, or something in between (Ahva, 2017b)—but we will get there slowly.

3. Let's Start from Practices

If we rush to study the actors without first identifying the practice of news-making that interests us, we may lose the possibility of examining whether and how peripheral positioning exists. For example, are technologists (such as web developers) actually that peripheral, or have they, in fact, acquired a central and powerful position in journalism? If so, to which aspects of news work does their power extend, and how? It is crucial to examine *in relation to what* their positioning is happening. Therefore, it is important to clarify what is the practice we are focusing on.

I suggest that we start from practices and do this in a theoretical way. The practice-theoretical research approach helps us to go beyond dichotomies and recognize the important bridging roles of particular actors as well as the material, social, or discursive trading zones where the exchange between actors takes place. Practice theoreticians refer to these zones as *arrangements* or *architectures*; they represent the conditions that permit certain practices to survive and cause others to wane (Kemmis et al., 2014).

4. Help from Practice Theory

So, let's say we are interested in learning more about how journalism can renew itself or how innovation influences what eventually becomes news. We would ask: Who are the actors involved in the news chain that have contributed to the creation of new journalistic approaches, products, services, or business models (cf. Pavlik, 2013)?

We can seek help from the manner in which the concept of *practice* itself has been formulated in practice theory (e.g., Schatzki, Knorr Cetina, & von Savigny, 2001). Practice theory is well established in sociology that is interested in bridging the gap between individual agency and structure (Giddens, 1985) and in anthropol-

ogy that zooms into everyday lives and cultural practices (Bourdieu, 1977). Furthermore, the notion of practice has become significant in science and technology studies via actor-network theory by underlining how human and non-human actors reciprocally constitute one another in practices (Latour, 2005).

Practice theory (as a joint family of practices) has also been advanced and applied as a theoretical framework in the study of media and journalism, albeit surprisingly recently (e.g., Ahva, 2017a; Couldry, 2004; Ryfe, 2018; Witschge & Harbers, 2018). Most recently, Ryfe (2019) has proposed that practice theory helps to understand why journalism in the current state of disruption is changing so rapidly, but also in many more ways, remaining much the same: Some practices are durable because they hold the entire "fabric" of journalism in place. Moreover, many studies touch upon practices in journalism even if they do not explicitly adhere to the *concept* of practice.

But for me, the analytical benefit of practice theory lies in the fact that as a concept, practice can be further deconstructed into basic elements. In the complex media environment, it serves as simple enough a concept to guide the collection and analysis of research material. Based on previous theorizations, I have conceptualized practices as *regular social manifestation*s that consist of: (1) *activities*; (2) the *materials* needed for them; and (3) the *meanings* given to those (Ahva, 2017a). To illustrate this, imagine a practice as a triangle representing the consistent relational coming together of specific doings, things, and sayings (cf. Kemmis et al., 2014, p. 34; Shove, Pantzar, & Wattson, 2012).

5. Seeing Innovation as Practice

In examining the practice triangle of innovation in news journalism, we can start by deconstructing innovation into its active, material, and symbolic elements by posing a number of questions: (1) What is being done when innovation is believed to happen, and what tasks relate to the creation of new journalistic products and services? (2) Where and with what tools is renewal and creation happening, and are there any other material requirements for innovation? And (3) How is the creation of new approaches, products, or services verbalized, made sense of, or criticized, and by whom?

This approach offers a way to conceptualize innovation as a practice comprising activities, materials, and meanings that are in a regular relationship with one another. If we recognize these regularities in interrelationships, we can also identify the relevant actors to be studied.

In terms of research methods, the practice-theoretical approach invites us first to engage, for example, in online and offline observation, informal interaction, listening, participation, or (audio)visual documentation (cf. O'Reilly, 2015). Thus, we need (mainly) qualitative and observational methods (Ryfe, 2018) to

map how, where, and why innovation is enacted or performed in journalism.

In this mapping, we learn who are the *actors that seem necessary to enacting the practice of innovation*, and we may end up with actors such as journalists, newsroom managers, data analysts, business consultants, and platform developers. This is a varied bunch, but nevertheless one that represents a significant group of actors (and informants) in relation to the practice of innovation.

Finally, their peripheral or central positioning can be assessed against that practice. For example, business consultants may have a central role in news innovation but may be peripheral in the practice of, say, news selection.

6. So, Finally, about Positioning

We could go further by collecting the personal or collective narratives of the identified actors. This is a methodological direction that interests me but of which I have no experience as yet. However, narrative positioning analysis (Bamberg, 1997) seems promising if we wish to learn more about the durable discursive and relational arrangements of innovation through the medium of language (cf. Kemmis et al., 2014, p. 32). If we are interested in the material-economic arrangements, we might be better off with different methods, such as examining *place* through documenting newsrooms' architectural blueprints or following and making explicit the techno-economic interrelations between newsrooms and external companies via network ethnography (for a broader argument on "place," see Usher, 2019).

Narrative positioning analysis, instead, stresses that people situate themselves through narration, but they are also positioned by others, as well as by structures and ideologies (Hyvärinen, Hatavara, & Rautajoki, 2019). In positioning analysis, the researcher can focus on three levels of analysis (Bamberg, 1997, p. 337). The first is the level of the told story, where the focus is on what had happened in the past: How are the actors positioned in relation to one another within the reported events? The second is the level of current interaction, or what is happening while the story is told: How does the speaker position him- or herself to the audience? The third level pertains to structures as they can be identified in identity-focused normative discourse: How does the speaker make claims beyond the local situation? When we narrate, we continually position ourselves and others in the past, in the present, and in relation to durable normative-structural elements (Bamberg, 1997).

To continue with my example, we could analyze how journalists, analysts, consultants, and developers tell about past innovations and how they position themselves and one another in relation to those occasions. We can also analyze how they position themselves in the research situation (interview or observing) in relation to innovation or how they perform their positions, and, finally, which discursive structures seem to enable

innovation. The role of the researcher is to examine how such discourses achieve their coherence and persuasive power (Bamberg, 1997, p. 341).

7. To Conclude

The combination of the practice-theoretical approach and narrative positioning analysis that are discussed above can be used to guide the analysis of various actors in journalism *in a shared framework*. We can examine journalists and non-journalists side by side; in fact, we can examine all the actors required to enact the practice we have chosen to study.

In this approach, it becomes a matter of empirical analysis to determine who are the relevant actors in specified practices. Furthermore, the notion of practice, as conceptualized here, always carries with it the dimensions of activity, materiality, and meaning, which can shed light on the durable arrangements that enable or restrict the practice.

After all this, we can slowly start making sense of the actors' self-identified, mutual, and structural positionings. We can assess whether they are at the periphery or in the center, and whether they are leading, isolated, trapped, or bridging actors in the examined practice. By linking back to the arrangements, we might even be able to assess why the positions are as they are.

Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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Commentary

Prophets without Honor: Peripheral Actors in Kenyan Journalism

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Abstract
In sub-Sahara Africa, periphery contributors exist in a liminal space. They are at once valorized and treated with suspicion by the local journalism and political fields. Valorization occurs when they engage with, and challenge, journalism from the global north, and the opposite occurs when they do the same for the local fields. Focusing on the former and not the latter is a disservice to the complicated and nuanced relationship these actors have with the journalism field and perpetuates a mythologized and romanticized narrative about the redemptive qualities of online platforms.

1. Introduction

This thematic issue brings together scholars that focus on peripheral actors in journalism fields whose presence has expanded with the advent of social and mobile media platforms. These actors have played a vital role in reshaping the boundaries of the global media field. Yet what often counts as the global media field mainly constitutes the global north and much less often the global south. Concomitantly, the promise and optimism that captured global north scholars led to valorizing these actors as harbingers of change. Such optimism has spread into the scholarly understandings of how these actors operate within Africa, specifically those that are within the social media universe. We keep hearing about networked Kenyans and how they are positively influencing how the global journalism field (meaning fields from the global north) cover their country. Nevertheless, there is little to no research about how these actors interact with their national journalism field. Focusing on the external, and not the internal, is a disservice to the complicated and nuanced relationship that these actors have with

the journalism field, while also perpetuating the mythologized and romanticized narrative about the redemptive qualities of online networks.

We know very little about how the journalism field works in African countries (Brisset-Foucault, 2009; Wahutu, 2017). Scholarship tends to approach Africa with pre-packaged solutions for problems they imagine journalism fields in African countries have. We know a lot about *how* to solve these pre-constructed problems rather than *what* these fields do (McIntyre & Sobel, 2018; Wahutu, 2018). Perhaps as a result of how little we know about African journalism fields, we have seen this same myopia seep into the discourse about 'fake news' in Africa, where theories and arguments developed in the global north are transposed onto African fields (see Wahutu, 2019a). While we are starting to see purposeful attempts to remedy this by conducting studies across multiple countries (see Wasserman & Madrid-Morales, 2019) and across multiple fields (Nothias & Cheruiyot, 2019; Nyabola, 2018a), there is space for more of this kind of work. Furthermore, there are very few scholarly outputs on how peripheral actors interact with na-

tional journalism fields in Africa (Atton & Mabweazara, 2011; Mabweazara, 2011a, 2011b; Mutsvairo, 2016; Nyabola, 2018a).

2. The Virtual Town Square

Building on this literature, this commentary focuses on two understudied types of actors in Kenya: 1) technologists in the news; and 2) networked Kenyans in the "virtual town square." The first are peripheral actors such as web analytics managers, developers, and webmasters who play a marginal role in the news construction process by the national journalism field. This group of actors has been reluctantly accepted into the fold by only one news organization, a radio station—this in a country with more than 100 radio stations. That being said, this radio station is considered, and is happy to label itself, as catering to primarily affluent and affluent-adjacent audience members. Audiences of this radio station are more likely to know what is happening in New York or Miami than in a Kenyan town on the border with Somalia. Presenters speak in a variety of American and British tinged accents, and the focus is on news and information geared to those enmeshed in a conspicuous consumption approach to life. Nonetheless, these peripheral actors find themselves firmly ensconced within the journalism field in Kenya by their explicit connection to this one radio station.

The radio station has been at the forefront in including peripheral actors in the construction of news. However, even within this space, the organization has divided its actual physical space into two distinct zones, each with distinct cultures: One space, referred to as the "newsroom" internally, is staffed by the traditional news actors with traditional roles, while the other, referred to as "digital," is where peripheral actors are located. Actors in the "digital" half refer to the content they produce as "soft news" or "features." It is at this radio that the notion of tracking what readers read using analytics has become semi-embedded into the construction process, becoming part of the encoding structure of the organization (Hall, 1993). The ability for this station to carve out a niche and focus solely on it means that they are keen on not only finding out who their audience is, but also when and how they consume the news. What is perhaps interesting in this radio station is that the webmaster had greater access to the content published by the radio station compared to an editor who has access to stories only in their beat (Wamunyu, 2017).

The inclusion of peripheral actors in the process is less about expanding the field and more about the organization targeting a particular segment of the audience. The radio is not interested in being a "mass medium" in the traditional sense, and it prides itself in eschewing the "mass" approach and targeting those higher up or climbing up the socio-economic ladder. The IT head alluded to this by indicating that their readers often visited their pages during weekday working hours, indicating that their audience was in the office where they had

stable internet connectivity (Wamunyu & Wahutu, 2019). Thus, the acceptance of webmasters and IT heads into the organization is not because online news consumption is typical in Kenya; rather, it is to help in ensuring that this subsection of the population is sufficiently tracked and catered for.

The second group of peripheral actors exists in what some call a virtual town square where members gather around salient issues, as constructed by hashtags, memes, trends, and politics (Kaigwa, 2017; Nyabola, 2018a, 2018b). We can think of this square as Russian nesting dolls, where a one virtual town square is likely to contain several more within it. Thus, the borders of the square can expand and contract while also being cross-cutting. It is in this square that we find actors such as bloggers and micro-bloggers (i.e., social media users). However, it is essential to point out that it is primarily relatively economically stable Kenyans that populate this town square. In the country affectionately referred to as the 'silicon savannah,' entry into the town square is limited to a select few. Ergo social media platforms are relatively niche products (Nyabola, 2018a, p. 101). It is therefore vital to remember that those that engage with the political or media fields, from within the square, represent a small minority in comparison to the population; they are a subsection of a subsection.

Indeed, few Kenyans have the technological knowhow, the right technology, and access to be considered 'contributors' in any meaningful way. This is not to say that Kenyans are not technologically savvy, but rather that we should always be careful not to exaggerate the level of engagement with platforms. To become a denizen of this square requires a level of economic capital. Except for WhatsApp, most other platforms require an exorbitant amount of data to be active, which is not cheap. Thus, despite the much-heralded strength of peripheral actors from the Kenyan virtual town square, Nyabola (2018a) continues to remind us that existence in this square is limited to a chosen few. The minimum requirements for the entry are having a good internet connection, enough disposable income to purchase this internet—whether at home or on your mobile phone—and having the appropriate technology. These requirements, which act as a visa for entry, remain inaccessible to a vast majority of Kenyans.

3. Valorized or Marginalized Peripheral Actors?

Denizens of the square are valorized (quite rightly often) for their contributions to and engagement with fields in the global north, even by the national journalism and political fields. However, we must be cognizant that they can be vilified and marginalized within their own nations. Even as they are hailed as paragons of engagement with the global north, their engagement with the national journalism field invites nothing but suspicion (see Wamunyu, 2017; Wamunyu & Wahutu, 2019). This is in addition to the State clamping down on these ac-

tors by relying on superfluous notions of national security (Gyuracz, 2016; Muraya, 2019; Osée, 2019). The level of cognitive dissonance from the simultaneous valorization and mistreatment by the political and journalism fields is as disconcerting to watch as it is to think through. While hailed as exemplary in their engagement with foreign news organizations, they find themselves not only derided, but their rights are abrogated. This group of actors are essentially prophets without honor in their own home, existing in liminality (see Said, 1989).

One group of actors that captures this bifurcation of treatment is Kenyans on Twitter (#KOT); often hailed by both the State and the national journalism field as 'defenders' of Kenya's image internationally. #KOT entered the world's conscience with the hashtag #SomeoneTellCNN in 2012 in a pushback against CNN's framing of a grenade attack Kenyans viewed as exaggerating the scale of the violence. As Nothias and Cheruiyot (2019) found, David Mckenzie, who was credited with the story, would apologize soon after the hashtag appeared "among global trending topic" (p. 138). #SomeoneTellCNN resurfaced in 2013 when CNN's Nima Elbagir covered a 'militia group' in Rift Valley, boldly, and woefully wrongly, predicting that violence would ensue during that election period. It showed up again in 2015 in a pushback against CNN's framing of Kenya as a 'terror hotbed' two days before the arrival of United States President Barack Obama.

Within Kenya, #KOT is at the confluence of an informational moral panic, and a State that is increasingly intent on holding onto its paternalistic role as the informational gatekeeper. Thus, actors hailed as necessary when engaging with the global north find themselves treated with the suspicion of engaging in dis/misinformation in Kenya (Wamunyu & Wahutu, 2019). Despite such distrust, at least once a week, daily and weekly newspapers have a section for tweets and comments from other platforms (Kaigwa, 2017, p. 193). Television and radio shows routinely solicit tweets from audiences. Indeed, a major television station created a show called The Trend, which promotes itself as a show focused on things that have 'trended' throughout the week and bringing them to the television audiences.

4. Bringing Back the Global South in Peripheral Actors Studies

How do we explain the disjuncture in how the political and journalism fields treat #KOT? One reason may be that when peripheral actors tangle with the global north, they espouse and allow for commercial nationalism (see Nothias & Cheruiyot, 2019; Tuwei & Tully, 2017). When these actors reaffirm the amorphous notion of 'Kenyanness'—driving a narrative of an engaged and modern citizenry that is highly networked and acting as watchdogs against the sullying of Kenya's international image—they are welcomed into the fold. Subsequently, the journalism field views the square as a space that al-

lows them to signal—albeit superficially and clumsily—engagement rather than as actors that contribute to the field's primary aim of knowledge construction. It is when actors turn their gaze inwards towards the cozy relationship between the journalism and political fields, or push for the national journalism field to be more responsible in its coverage, or point to the State's suppression of freedoms, that they are faced with suspicion and derision. It is at this stage that we can see a circling of the wagons by the journalism field. The field relies on journalistic norms as both a shield to deny actors entry but also a sword to push them back.

5. Peripheral Actors and Field Boundaries

Actors are not changing the boundaries of the journalism field. The Kenyan networked society did not necessarily move into "some sort of middle age" (Usher & Carlson, 2018, p. 107), where it is part of the taken for granted communication motif. We have a long way to go in understanding and appreciating the political economy within which these actors are immersed. One factor to consider would be why not more than one radio station—or perhaps even why no newspaper—has actively worked to inculcate peripheral actors in the construction process. A possible reason is that although scholarship keeps on praising Kenya on the accessibility of the internet, the journalism field recognizes that access should not be conflated with actually going online. There is a realization within the journalism field that very few people consume their news online because it is an expensive endeavor. Moreover, assuming online news consumption presupposes not only that the internet connection will be stable enough, but also that the consumer can comfortably read English, a colonial vestige. As a result of internet instability and high price, most Kenyans that consume their news online will do it while they are in their offices. The logic being that if it is expensive to have internet at home, then one is better off using the office internet, a fact not unique to Kenya.

Even taking into account that Kenya is one of the global leaders in internet usage on mobile phones, there is the undeniable statistic that out of a country of 51.58 million people, only 13 million are active internet users (Namunwa, 2019). One of the critical factors in this paltry number is the high costs of data. With this in mind, many organizations within the field may feel that it is not financially feasible to bring in peripheral actors in the news construction process. In an interview conducted for a separate project, a sub-editor of one of Kenya's leading newspapers (one of the largest media conglomerates on the continent outside of South Africa) recounted their exasperation with their organization's unwillingness to not only be at the forefront of trying to make their online face user-friendly but also that they had refused to bring in people with the expertise to use web analytics to understand their papers' audiences better (Personal communication, 2015).

Therefore, while we may be familiar with some facet of how those in the town square interact with organizations from the global north, we know very little of the negotiations of class, race, and gender that allow/facilitate this interaction. This suggests that we know even less about how these very factors play out within the national boundaries. For example, seeing as most of the tweets from Kenya originate from Nairobi, the capital city, how representative is the "K" in #KOT? Especially when we consider the subset of Kenyans that have not only access to electricity, but also disposable income, access to the internet, appropriate technology to access the internet, and have a social media account. This is even more complicated considering Twitter's popularity in Kenya lagging behind WhatsApp, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and LinkedIn, respectively (see Nyabola, 2018a, p. 83).

Furthermore, while social media has grown across the continent, so too has the State's adeptness in manipulating discourse in the town square; not to mention the State's willingness to consider internet shutdowns. From the State's perspective, these actors are only useful when their gaze and ire are trained towards the global north. When they are outward-facing and engaged in performing patriotic citizenship, the State has been more than happy to elevate denizens of the town square. It is these interactions that appear to have so enamored scholarship that focuses on the redemptive qualities brought about by the introduction of various social media platforms. Once denizens focus on issues within the country, the State has tirelessly worked to not only suppress any form of collective action but prosecuted those it deemed too dangerous. The State has been known to deploy an army of bots to drown out any form of critique against it that threatens to go somewhat viral.

Denizens turning the gaze inwards have also seen the invocation of national security and charges of promoting terror by the State. This charge has seen a steady rise in use by States on the continent in the post 9/11 world we are immersed in currently. In Kenya, we have seen the arrests of bloggers like Robert Alai and Cyprian Nyakundi on charges of publishing 'alarming' information. The irony is that Mr. Alai was awarded a State commendation in 2017 but has been arrested severally since. In 2016 alone, the Bloggers Association of Kenya claimed that 60 of its members were arrested for remarks made on social media (Moseti, 2016). What we see is a State bearing no compunction, when not only arresting bloggers and micro-bloggers but also proposing laws that seek to curtail their rights and freedoms specifically. Even in 2019, the State in Kenya is trying to amend an already problematic Information and Communications Act. One of the more controversial amendments is the attempt to institute a licensing fee to "establish a social media platform" where social media platform is defined to include "blogging, social networking, document and data sharing repositories, [and] social media applications" (Parliament of Kenya, 2019). The bill proposes that when one creates a group on a platform, such as

WhatsApp or ostensibly Facebook, they are supposed to inform Facebook that the group was formed. Failure to comply with this provision would lead to the administrator paying a fine of almost $2000 or being jailed for at most a year. Thus, the town square finds itself in a similar position to where the national journalism field was in the mid-aughts, with the State working towards constricting the space for expression while the rest of the world hails the facile strides the community has made internationally.

6. Conclusion

Taking the geographic boundedness of Africa seriously requires us to acknowledge that we know very little about how peripheral actors affect the boundaries of the journalism field within the continent. This is especially poignant when we consider that journalism fields in crucial African markets are bifurcated (Mare, 2013; Wahutu, 2019b); perhaps these peripheral actors have made inroads in both subfields. It is almost as though scholarship in this arena has been so eager to move away from Afro-pessimism discourse (Nothias, 2014) towards a blinding afro-optimist one. The result of this is a fundamental miscarriage of scholarly justice with regards to the nuances of the contributions by African peripheral actors to African journalism fields.

Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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Commentary

Populist Postmodernism: When Cultural Critique of an Enlightenment Occupation Goes Viral

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Abstract
Journalism as an occupation has deep roots in the Enlightenment. The criticisms it faces, in contrast, reflect a populist permutation of Postmodernist critiques. This essay explores the implications for contemporary journalism, ending with suggestions for how practitioners might best respond.

Keywords
Democracy; Enlightenment; journalism; populism; postmodernism; truth

Issue
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1. Introduction

In a fluid and immersive media environment, diverse actors occupy the same space and serve many of the same functions as the journalists who once were information linchpins. Digital and especially social media have blasted away restrictions on distribution, reach, and even impact. Everyone is talking at once, and anyone can join in. It all seems radically, sometimes frighteningly, new. Yet what we are experiencing can be viewed as a contemporary enactment of—and clash between—two inherently incompatible world views, neither of which is new at all.

2. The Enlightenment

The older of these emerged in the period we call the Enlightenment. Extending the ideas of a scientific revolution that gathered steam through the 17th century, Enlightenment philosophers and like-minded writers and thinkers hit their stride in the early 18th century across much of Europe. Hallmarks of what was at the time a seismic shift in social and intellectual conventions seem very familiar 300 years on.

Take the rise of coffeehouses in thriving and rapidly growing cities such as London. As today, these were places for conversation along with caffeine. Upriver in Oxford, such trendy meeting places were known as "penny universities"; that nominal admission charge brought access to news, some of it printed in early newspapers or newsletters and some of it communicated by "runners" who went from coffeehouse to coffeehouse announcing the latest developments. The conversationalists were an eclectic group, from all levels of society—quite unusual in a social world that placed great importance on class and economic status (Boulton, 2011). The result was not only an explosion of news and views (and no doubt of rampant misinformation and disinformation, too) but also a nascent media ecology in which sharing information was integral to its consumption. Indeed, sharing was—then as now—rather the whole point and certainly the key to enjoyable engagement with the news of the day, as those formerly on the periphery of the information whirl became increasingly central to its circulation.

Where London had its coffeehouses, Paris had its salons. A bit more literary in tone and less egalitarian

in composition—though far more welcoming to women, who commonly served as hosts—the salons also were settings to debate the ideas of the day. Those ideas ranged from then-radical formulations of what have become core democratic principles, such as Voltaire's outspoken defence of civil liberties, to emerging ideas about the ability of intelligent but otherwise "ordinary" people to understand the world, epitomised by Denis Diderot's encyclopaedic compendia.

The emphasis in these cacophonous but convivial places was on reasoned argument, rational thought, and an open exchange of ideas in which many citizens might engage. Participants did not represent all social classes. But they did constitute a new cultural phenomenon: An engaged and informed public that blew holes in the old narrowly bounded knowledge circles of monarchy, clergy, and academy. Outsiders had become insiders.

And of course, the conversations in coffeehouses and salons, as well as their cousins around Western Europe and across the ocean in America, encompassed the scientific inventions and discoveries for which the Enlightenment is perhaps best known. Astronomers such as Copernicus, Galileo, and Kepler led Europe out of the Renaissance; inspired by their "scientific method" of close observation and meticulous measurement, others similarly uncomfortable with received wisdom unsupported by demonstrable evidence led her into the Enlightenment. The 17th century produced revolutionary work in mathematics, physics, chemistry, and biology from such giants as Isaac Newton and William Harvey in England, Christiaan Huygens in the Netherlands, and René Descartes in France, among many others. Dozens of seminal thinkers and innovators followed over the next 200 years and more, churning out a steady stream of ideas and inventions that caught the popular imagination. These children of the Enlightenment collectively created a world that had not only new tools but also an entirely new social and political structure.

What does all this have to do with journalism? A lot. The contemporary press in Britain—and America, its colony through most of the 18th century—is a direct descendant of coffeehouse culture, with its emphasis on timely news and gossip conveyed both verbally and through newsletters and other printed tracts. Similarly, the modern French press traces its more literary nature as a purveyor of social commentary to those salons. The story elsewhere was similar. Although printing predates the Enlightenment, this is the era when Western journalism in a form and with a mission we recognise today was born. The form was the newspaper; among others, the first editions of such still-publishing outlets as the *Wiener Zeitung* in Austria, the *Gazzetta di Parma* in Italy, and *The Times* in Britain appeared in the 18th century, as did dozens of other shorter-lived daily and weekly periodicals. And the mission was the timely dissemination of information about current affairs to the citizenry, who in turn added to its formulation through their own interaction and engagement.

Journalism as we know it, practice it, study it, and teach it is a product of the Enlightenment conceptually as well as literally. It rests on the belief that truth can be discovered, observed, and recorded. It also can be communicated to and understood by those citizens, who in turn can freely discuss and act on this information if they choose. Truth, in this view, is dichotomous—something is true or it is not—but it is not immutable; new information, in the form of scientific discoveries or fresh occurrences or simply more reliable reportage, can lead to new truth. Enlightenment thinkers were fine with subjectivity of opinion; indeed, the voices expressing diverse, contrarian, and even—notably in America and France—revolutionary views grew steadily louder throughout the period. But subjectivity of truth was an oxymoron.

That remains the view of most journalists today. However, much they may acknowledge the difficulty of recognising, obtaining, and communicating "true facts," most journalists believe that reality exists—and that it can be observed and transcribed faithfully if not always fully. Journalism as an occupation was and remains a child of the Enlightenment, steeped in its philosophy that knowledge advances through the dogged gathering and careful recording of concrete evidence, and that society advances when such knowledge is clearly and accurately communicated to the public.

3. Postmodernism…and Populism

But needless to say, the world—intellectual no less than political and material—has moved on in 300 years. One major challenge to Enlightenment ideas and ideals, particularly though not exclusively about the nature of truth, has been the 20th century concept of Postmodernism.

Postmodernists emphasise that all human thought and action is relative to, and contingent on, a given individual's social position, power, value system, and more. Each person is socially conditioned, shaped by a vast variety of factors that in turn shape how he or she sees the world—and therefore how he or she arrives at and understands truth. Truth is not singular but rather plural and pluralistic. It is thus inherently subjective, quite the opposite of something that is universally obtainable or knowable if only we are good enough, skilful enough, diligent enough at pursuing it. Postmodern philosophers thus foreground relativism, positing that truth lies within the individual rather than "out there" in the world waiting to be discovered through rational and methodical thought.

But Postmodernism per se is an intellectual movement, a philosophical idea espoused mostly by…well, intellectuals and philosophers. For decades, it seemed relevant to most journalists mainly in the abstract. Ignoring it or perhaps indulging in a bit of eye-rolling was easy.

Far less easy is ignoring the ramifications of Postmodernism's transformation as it has escaped the ivory tower. Because freed of its academic rigour, Postmodernism has taken a decidedly populist turn. It has mutated into "post-truth."

Journalists share the difficulties of living in a post-truth world with virtually all other purveyors of an Enlightenment-style approach to obtaining information and building knowledge. Experts right across the science and social science disciplines, and related occupations, are finding that the presentation of facts derived from observable evidence is being met with distrust if not derision. The Postmodern assertion that everyone has his or her own truth has become twisted into the populist assertion that everyone lies.

Moreover, everyone lies for a reason: to feather his or her nest one way or another. Why would journalists, the example nearest to our hearts, lie when their *raison d'être* ostensibly rests on telling the truth? For commercial reasons, obviously: to sell newspapers or inflate ratings or perhaps, for those a bit more attuned to media economics, simply to save their jobs in a hyper-competitive industry that seems to grow less financially secure by the day. But this is neither a new proposition nor an unfamiliar one (nor, to be fair, an entirely groundless one). Critical media scholars have been proclaiming for decades that journalists are in thrall to commercial interests. We should not be astounded that the point has morphed into a vituperative rationale for discrediting anything and everything that journalists produce.

For many years, scholars and other media critics also have been stressing the urgent need for journalists to encompass diverse perspectives not just in assessing truth but also in understanding what it even is. That view is enormously valuable, not least because a unitary truth renders unseen and unheard those who lack the means to challenge it. Journalists indeed pride themselves in their ability to offset that imbalance by "speaking truth to power," and well they should. After all, a central tenet of the Enlightenment view of truth was that it was open to debate by all, and that such debate would lead first to a more complete and reliable understanding of reality—and ultimately to a better world.

But if every person's ideas deserve a hearing, then how are we to sort among them? We again should not be shocked—shocked!—to find that personal sentiment about a message or its sender has become of greater importance to many people than the actual merits of that message. For instance, do people trust acquaintances (whether actual besties or merely bots) and perceived opinion leaders who share content on social platforms more than they trust the original source (Turcotte, York, Irving, Scholl, & Pingree, 2015)? Of course they do. If, as Postmodern theorists say, truth is a matter of individual assessment, then trust must logically rest on assessment of the individuals who claim to convey the truth. As populism has risen in societies that once nurtured Enlightenment ideas, trust in the media (and other institutions) has fallen—dramatically (Edelman, 2019). Journalism from traditional media outlets is today viewed with disbelief, if it is viewed at all, by large segments of the population.

Put such factors together, and journalists in a post-truth world find that they somehow need to counter charges that they are conveying neither an objective truth (the Enlightenment ideal) nor even a subjective one (the Postmodernist premise), but instead are putting out complete fabrications (the populist permutation of Postmodernism). They are struggling to restore trust not only in the belief that truth can be discovered and communicated, difficult though those tasks may be, but also trust in their own ability to discover and communicate it.

To summarise: Subjectivism and relativism are part of Postmodernist counter-claims to Enlightenment perspectives about what truth is and who is empowered to convey it. Those challenges have considerable merit. Yet when we see the philosophical ideas translated into action by people whom we are unlikely to view as fellow travellers, many of us are appalled. Journalists and academics alike see such radical scepticism from presumptively "peripheral" actors as dangerously ignorant. Yet many of the ideas espoused by contemporary populists on both sides of the Atlantic are essentially a mainstream articulation of points we ourselves have made about the shortcomings, especially relative to power and who gets to hold it, of Enlightenment perspectives on the nature of truth and who gets to tell it.

My point is not that Postmodern critiques of the Enlightenment-era enterprise of journalism are wrong. Often, they are spot-on, as well as useful, important, and indeed necessary. Besides, journalists make far too many mistakes of both fact and judgement to be paragons of Enlightenment virtue—or any other kind. Rather, my point is that what we are seeing in populist movements around the Western world—movements many of us find dismaying at best and horrifying at worst, as well as an existential threat to the free press that we treasure—are translations of the very arguments that elites have been making for decades. They may be simplistic or poorly informed or even ill-intentioned translations, and their enactment is often disturbing. But they are recognisably linked to well-rehearsed critiques of the nature of power in general and media power in particular.

4. Can Journalists Adapt?

We cannot know which of these diametrically opposite views of the nature of truth—and the composition of a good society—will prevail. In the meantime, I think journalists must continue their soul-searching about whether their occupation can change to fit the contemporary zeitgeist, and whether it should. I believe the answer to both questions is yes. But the task must be approached with considerable care because it is essential to identify which is the baby here and which the bathwater.

There are, I would suggest, a great many Enlightenment ideas that should not be allowed to drain away as the media scramble to safeguard their remaining economic capital and to regain their dwindling social capital.

In my view, those include the ideas, or perhaps ideals, of truth as knowable and communicable to the best of our abilities; of discourse as most meaningful when it is open and inclusive; and of knowledge-building as perpetually in progress.

At a less abstract level, journalists have a lot of work to do. Over the quarter-century of the digital age, they have become reasonably good at changing how they gather information, interact with audiences and sources, and present stories, along with associated activities. I call these "habits of practice." They have been far less willing, or able, to change how they think about journalism—their "habits of thought" (Singer, 2019). Some useful and achievable goals might include:

1) *Conveying but not accepting without question other people's truths.* The criticism that journalists give too much prominence to the views of elites—views that, let's just say, do not always serve the public interest as opposed to a personal or political one—is well-founded and readily documented. That practice leaves the media open to blatant and rampant manipulation of what is covered and the shape that coverage takes. Trapped by habits of thought in the form of judgements about what constitutes "news" and how to present it, journalists seem unable to stop snapping at bait that is deliberately dangled in front of them. They must acknowledge that a wider range of perspectives are "newsworthy," and make a more concerted effort to seek, find, and convey them. But they should not convey any of those perspectives uncritically. At the end of the day, the idea of truth as observable, verifiable, and dichotomous still comes closest to the mark. There are always alternative perspectives, and they should be heard. But pronouncements of presidential mouthpieces to the contrary, there are not alternative facts. Too often, journalists present alternative perspectives as facts simply because someone in authority puts them forward. That practice should stop soonest.

2) *Dissociating "objectivity" from "truth."* As Craft (2017) eloquently points out, objectivity is neither a synonym nor a substitute nor a stand-in for truth. Journalists, particularly in America, should stop claiming to be "objective," then digging themselves an even deeper hole to support that claim by presenting opposing views of unequal merit as equivalent. Philosophically, such practice doesn't hold up, and in the real world, journalists routinely are getting pounded for claiming to be objective when they are not. The link between objectivity and truth lies not in the message but rather in the method: how one goes about investigating truth, not about how one conveys it. This is the original concept pursued by Enlightenment scientists, in fact: Truth emerges through a due process of open-minded, honest investigation—which is what journalists should foreground. That brings me to…

3) *Communicating what goes into journalism, not just what comes out.* Transparency is having a bit of a moment, and most journalists claim to like it. Yet most rarely bother with it. Much more could be done to communicate how and especially why news decisions are made. Fact-checkers, many of whom see themselves as offering not just a complement to traditional media formats but also a corrective to traditional media practices, illustrate one of many potential approaches. Fact-checkers excel at showing how they arrived at an adjudication about the veracity of a given statement, for instance through extensive links to supporting documentation. Traditional media could and should do much more of that sort of thing—and crucially, do so by making connections to content they did not create. A gazillion internal links to their own prior coverage can seem little more than an effort to drive traffic to old material that many readers did not believe the first time around. Diverse sources are inherently more credible. See above.

4) *Facilitating the connections that audiences have always craved.* News outlets are warming to this one, but they remain far behind social and search platforms in invoking the old coffeehouse buzz. Publishers moan loudly about Facebook, Google, and other tech giants using their content as a tool to siphon off advertising that attaches to that content. They moan, as well, about "fake news" and other forms of misinformation and disinformation, how widely it circulates, and how harmful it is. Both points have merit. But publishers tend to gloss over the core strength of these platforms, which is connecting people to other people—and doing it not just around personal memories or moments but also, and to a significant extent, around news. Why aren't media outlets doing more of that? Difficult though it can be to deflect the trolls, they are not even serious players in this game. They should be.

5) *Taking advantage of abundance by embracing collaboration.* Finally, another trend for which little green shoots are springing up: the trend toward collaborative work. Much of this now takes the form of working with otherwise competing news organisations on major stories, from international investigations such as the Panama Papers, to election coverage, to local data-driven projects. Working collaboratively with members of the public is harder, but it can be done, and with excellent results. The possibilities are amply demonstrated by newcomers such as Bellingcat, which routinely seeks help in verifying aerial photos or online videos, and by established organisations such as the BBC, which regularly solicits input from users with experience or expertise on a given topic. There are other ways to pursue this goal, as well; Robinson (2011), for instance, has written eloquently about the need to think about journalism as a process involving shared action distributed amongst multiple authors, rather than as a discrete end product. Such approaches help chip away at the distrust with which many regard news media of all stripes.

5. Conclusion: Voices from within the Periphery

Ultimately, citizens of any democracy must decide what they believe truth to be, how much they value it, and

how they go about ensuring they get it. Journalists can and, I think, should do all the things just listed, without a huge amount of difficulty or investment of resources. Such things are not about chasing the pricy technological bells and whistles that Posetti (2018) labels "bright shiny things." Technology can be harnessed to help, but the points above are all about core journalistic goals, principles, and values—and inherently about journalism audiences who, at the end of the day, must make their choices.

It is said that we get the political leaders we deserve. We also get the news providers we deserve. That is the message high-quality outlets such as the *Guardian* are putting out, with some success: If you think what we do is valuable, then you need to support it. You need to support it by reading our content, by sharing it, and yes, by coming up with the dosh to pay for it one way or another.

To return to the loftier plain of philosophical discourse: We each must decide what we believe to be the best criteria for truth; how much we value that truth, whatever form it takes; and what actions we will take to ensure we get it. Turning away is an action, and it will generate a re-action, from the media as well as from others holding social power. If the reaction is not one we want, then it is our action that needs to change.

I have tried here to outline why I think Enlightenment ideas and ideals remain fundamentally valuable in our populist Postmodern times. Yes, those 300-year-old concepts come with dangers and shortcomings that are real and important. The Enlightenment, after all, led us to empire as well as empiricism. But it also led us to modern democracy, by proposing that we, the people, can know what is true; that we all have a right to such knowledge; and that we all need the freedom to act on the knowledge we have rightfully and rationally obtained. Journalists remain a vital link in the democratic chain. The journalist's view of democracy (Gans, 2003)? So be it. The role is worth protecting, and it is worth adapting habits of both practice and thought to safeguard.

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Commentary

Journalism at the Periphery

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Abstract
The increasing influence of actors who might not fit into traditional definitions of a journalist but are taking part in processes that produce journalism has attracted scholarly attention. They have been called interlopers, strangers, new entrants, peripheral, and emergent actors, among others. As journalism scholars grapple with how to refer to these actors, it is important to reflect on the assumptions that underlie emerging labels. These include: 1) what journalistic tasks are involved; 2) how and why these journalistic tasks are performed; 3) who is making the definition; and 4) where and when these actors are located. However, journalism being the centre of our investigation should not automatically assume that it is at the centre of social life. So, it might also be that for the technological field, journalism is at the periphery; that for these technology-oriented actors whose influence across fields is increasing, journalists and what they do are at the periphery. For a field that supposedly plays an important role in public life, this has important implications.

Issue
This commentary is part of the issue "Peripheral Actors in Journalism: Agents of Change in Journalism Culture and Practice" edited by Avery E. Holton (University of Utah, USA), Valerie Belair-Gagnon (University of Minnesota-Twin Cities, USA), and Oscar Westlund (Oslo Metropolitan University, Norway / Volda University College, Norway / University of Gothenburg, Sweden).

1. Introduction

This thematic issue offers a timely and important exploration of the rise of actors who might not fit into traditional definitions of a journalist but are taking part in processes that produce journalism. These actors—such as data scientists making sense of web analytics data (Belair-Gagnon & Holton, 2018), technologists who provide automation services to newsrooms (Wu, Tandoc, & Salmon, 2019), bloggers and blogs that produce a variety of media content that includes journalism (Eldridge, 2018b), as well as those producing user-generated news (Tong, 2015)—have been referred to in different ways.

Eldridge (2018b, p. 858) wrote about "interloper media," which referred to "a subset of digitally native media and journalistic actors who originate from outside the boundaries of the traditional journalistic field, but whose work nevertheless reflects the socio-informative functions, identities, and roles of journalism." Holton and

Belair-Gagnon (2018, p. 72) referred to "strangers" in journalism, or those who "did not belong in journalism from the beginning, and are importing qualities to it that do not originally stem from the journalistic profession." This thematic issue itself focuses on "peripheral actors," defined as "those individuals or organizations not traditionally defined as or aligned with journalism" (Holton & Belair-Gagnon, 2018).

The introduction of these terms into journalism studies lexicon to describe non-traditional actors in journalism is important. First, these terms help facilitate a systematic study of the actors they attempt to label as well as these actors' practices and their impact on journalism. Second, the terms we use to label these actors can shape our understanding and expectations of how these actors should behave, which can affect how we study them and their practices. It is, therefore, also important that we scrutinize and reflect on the assumptions that underlie these different terms.

2. Defining Non-Traditional Actors

The term "stranger" is not a strange word in journalism studies. It has been used to refer to news sources (Gans, 2007) and audiences (Carey, 2007; Venables, 2003), which are both considered to be external to, but influencing, journalism. Nor is the term "peripheral" at the periphery of journalism studies. However, the studies that have used notions of the periphery in the field of journalism referred to less dominant types of journalism, such as free daily newspapers (Lamour, 2019), non-metropolitan news outlets (Hutchison & O'Donnell, 2011), and entertainment journalism (Loosen, 2015), among others.

These terms, along with newer terms such as "interloper" and "emergent" (Eldridge, 2018a), among others, are now used to refer to actors doing journalism but are not (yet) considered as journalists. Embedded within these labels are particular assumptions, referring to: 1) what journalistic tasks are involved; 2) how and why these journalistic tasks are performed; 3) who is making the definition; and 4) where and when these actors are located (see Table 1).

2.1. Journalistic Acts

The proposed definitions of these terms refer to a range of acts supposedly related to journalism. For example, in categorizing interlopers as either explicit or implicit, Holton and Belair-Gagnon (2018, p. 73) referred to actors who "work on the periphery of the profession while directly contributing content or products to the creation and distribution of news." Such delineation of the term based on acts and the outputs of such acts provides, at most, a tentative definition, one that is challenging to operationalize, as the set of processes that directly contribute to news production is also expanding. Social media, for example, brought about new routines, such as promoting one's work. These are tasks that were, in the past, not possible and therefore not required to produce news. These new tasks that many news organizations now consider to directly contribute to news production also require new editorial positions needing new skillsets that were not part of traditional journalistic training, with big news outlets designating social media managers or audience engagement editors to work alongside news editors (Ferrer-Conill & Tandoc, 2018). In classifying these new job designations as editor-level functions, some news outlets seem to clearly recognize the tasks involved as directly related to journalism. Thus, whom journalism scholarship might consider as peripheral actors by virtue of the acts they perform might be occupying central roles in some newsrooms.

2.2. Norms and Roles

These terms and their definitions also refer to norms and roles that guide and motivate the performance of journalism-related acts. Journalistic rules and roles are important. How journalists view their roles is assumed to shape their performance and, consequently, their outputs (Donsbach, 2008; Shoemaker & Reese, 2014). In defining interloper media, Eldridge (2018b, p. 858) referred to a kind of work that "reflects the socio-informative functions, identities, and roles of journalism." But Holton and Belair-Gagnon (2018, p. 73) also said "technology-oriented media interlopers" might bring "new practices and norms in journalism." Therefore, while these definitions refer to adherence to a set of norms and roles, what these norms and roles actually are remain constantly negotiated. On one hand, new actors are expected to play by the rules of journalism. But on the other hand, they also bring with them rules from their previous fields.

Non-traditional actors entering the field of journalism can also be considered as "new entrants" to the field (Bourdieu, 1993). As new entrants, these actors might contribute to either the preservation or the transformation of the field, for while they might play by the prevailing rules in order to gain legitimacy in the field, they also bring with them the norms and roles that originate from their own fields. For example, Wu et al. (2019, p. 15) argued that the influence of the technological field, which focuses heavily on markets, audiences, and data, "is al-

Table 1. Components of key terms.

What	What do these non-traditional actors do in relation to journalism?
How	How are they performing these tasks?
Why	What roles do they seek to (or currently) fulfill?
Who	How does the ongoing negotiation of what it means to be a journalist reflect the changing power dynamics among traditional and non-traditional actors in journalism, and in what ways do journalism researchers normalize, if not perpetuate, such power dynamics in how they design their studies?
Where	What do we really mean when we dichotomize between the centre and the periphery in journalism, when boundaries of the profession are ever changing?
When	How do we shift from considering what is not journalism to *when* does something become journalism?

Note: Scrutinizing the assumptions embedded in how we label non-traditional actors now playing significant roles in journalistic processes will help in drafting a nuanced research agenda, one that interrogates each of the assumptions embedded in these labels.

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ready evident in journalism's shift towards data-centric and short, easy-to-digest content that cater to audience preferences."

2.3. Definitional Control

These terms also interrogate the ones making the definitions. Holton and Belair-Gagnon (2018) referred to non-traditional actors who may or may not be welcomed by journalists, and who may or may not define themselves as journalists. Eldridge (2018b, p. 876) also referred to how non-traditional actors "portray their own journalistic identities and intentions" as well as how they are "perceived by the publics being addressed." These definitions represent an ongoing negotiation between traditional and non-traditional actors in defining and locating the latter's position in journalism. This is consistent with the assumptions of boundary work in journalism (Carlson, 2015). But Eldridge's (2018b) definition also brings into the mix the role of audiences in this ongoing negotiation of journalistic identities, consistent with previous work that investigated how news audiences are taking part in journalistic boundary work (e.g., Jenkins & Tandoc, 2017). The power to define the location of these non-traditional actors is still being contested, but what is rarely highlighted is the role of journalism scholars in this discursive contest.

2.4. Location

Finally, these labels tend to locate this group of actors either outside or at the edges of journalism. Interloper actors are said to originate from "outside the boundaries of the traditional journalistic field" (Eldridge, 2018b, p. 858), while journalism strangers "did not belong in journalism from the beginning" (Holton & Belair-Gagnon, 2018, p. 72). Thus, location is not just spatial but also temporal. Existing outside journalism at the beginning does not preclude being within journalism's boundaries at some point in time.

But what constitutes the boundaries of journalism? Where is journalism's core? A common approach in tackling these questions is considering traditional journalistic standards as forming part of the core, and then using these traditional standards that have dominated journalism to evaluate non-traditional actors. We see new developments from the lens of history; we examine new data using frameworks grounded in dominant theoretical approaches and previous studies. For example, the use of big data in journalism has been examined based on traditional news values and routines (e.g., Dick, 2014; Tandoc & Oh, 2017). And yet, while discourse about boundary work and peripheral actors assumes a journalistic centre, the literature remains unclear on how that centre looks like and what it constitutes. Studies that sought to identify journalism's boundaries, including my own work, relied on journalism studies literature that is heavily skewed toward hard news, arguably at the

expense of other types of journalism, such as lifestyle journalism (Hanusch, 2012). What audiences now consider as news and what they consider as responsible journalism are also changing; documenting and unpacking these might serve journalism studies a better purpose than reifying standards that scholarship has designated to be dominant.

Scrutinizing the assumptions embedded in how journalism studies label non-traditional actors now playing significant roles in journalistic processes will help in drafting a nuanced research agenda, one that interrogates each of the assumptions embedded in these labels. What do these non-traditional actors do in relation to journalism? How are they performing these tasks and what roles do they play (and how does that role compare with the one they originally sought to play)? How does the ongoing negotiation of what it means to be a journalist reflect the changing power dynamics among traditional and non-traditional actors in journalism, and in what ways do journalism researchers normalize, if not perpetuate, such power dynamics in how we design our studies and choose the labels we use? Finally, what do we really mean when we dichotomize between the centre and the periphery in journalism, when boundaries of the profession are ever changing? Who decides where the centre is and where the periphery is?

3. Journalism at the Periphery

A general assumption that underlies many of these agendas and dilemmas is the consideration of journalism as occupying the centre. This is, of course, a logical consequence of our research focus on journalism studies. However, journalism being the centre of our investigation should not automatically assume that it is at the centre of social life. Schudson (1997, 463), for example, argued that "the importance of journalism, relative to other factors in human affairs, is to be demonstrated, not assumed.''

When Bourdieu (1998) applied the framework of field theory to journalism, he focused on television's impact on politics in France. Bourdieu (1998, p. 2) observed that journalism has presented to the public a "particular vision of the political field" that was consistent with what journalism considered as newsworthy more than with the routinized and usually unappealing processes of the political field. During its heyday, journalism extended its influence to the political field and to other fields (Bourdieu, 2005), occupying what others might argue as a "central position" in social life. News organizations became big businesses and amassed political and social capital.

Now, traditional news organizations are losing audiences and, consequently, advertising revenues. News media credibility is decreasing as fake news becomes more convincing and influential (Wahutu, 2019). A few studies have examined how some people intentionally avoid the news (e.g., Song, 2017; van den Bulck, 2006).

Faced with eroding economic and cultural capital, many agents in the journalistic field turn to external actors for help. News outlets welcome, if not seek, non-traditional actors, such as data scientists, into their newsrooms. In doing so, these agents expose the journalistic field to external influence, in this case the influence of the technological field, which operates with a different set of rules. This can be seen as journalism's attempt to regain its once central position in social life, now lost to the technological field, whose agents dominate societies in accumulating both economic and cultural capital, expanding their field's influence along with its set of rules across different facets of social life, from interpersonal communication to healthcare, from community-formation to manufacturing. For example, social media platforms and search engines get the lion's share of audience attention and advertising online as media consumption now increasingly occurs on social media platforms and messaging apps. This has led the news media to play by the rules of the technological field, such as by tweaking headline-writing conventions to suit the purposes of search engine optimization (Dick, 2011) and by producing more native videos when Facebook decided to tweak its newsfeed algorithm to prioritize native videos (Tandoc & Maitra, 2018). Newsworthy content also now routinely flows from companies that began as technology start-ups (Kung, 2015; Prasad, 2019). Those who seek to influence public opinion no longer relies solely on news media coverage—they can now potentially command public and media attention with just one tweet.

Many studies in journalism have focused on examining social media platforms using the lens of traditional journalism, but rarely do scholars interrogate journalism through the lens of the technological field. From January 2013 to November 2019, *Digital Journalism,* one of the top journals in journalism studies, published 499 articles containing the keyword "journalist," while it published 42 articles studying automation in journalism containing the keyword "robot." The *International Journal of Robotics Research* published in the same time period 629 articles containing the keyword "robot," while it published only two articles containing the keyword "journalist." This reflects a clear imbalance between journalism scholars' focus on automation in journalism and automation scholars' focus on journalism in automation. While automation in journalism is attracting attention from an increasing number of journalism scholars, automation scholars rarely investigate how journalism figures in automation.

By operating under the assumption that journalism is at the periphery of social life, we can examine how it attempts to regain its position at the centre by playing by the rules of other fields. This requires a refocusing of our conceptual lenses and an increase in interdisciplinary work. It also means that while it is important to understand the perspective of journalists about journalism, it is equally important to understand how non-journalists perceive journalism. For example, stud-

ies have conducted observations of and interviews with technology professionals and managers at web analytics and automation companies to understand journalism's place in the technological field (e.g., Belair-Gagnon & Holton, 2018; Petre, 2018; Wu et al., 2019). These studies have shown that many non-traditional actors are reluctant in labelling themselves as journalists, even if they acknowledge that the work they do is directly related to journalism. Where is this reluctance, if not resistance, coming from? What does it mean to willingly engage in journalism and not consider oneself as a journalist? These technologies now attracting the attention of journalism practitioners and researchers were not developed specifically for journalism (Moyo, Mare, & Matsilele, 2019). So, it might also be that for the technological field, journalism is at the periphery; that for these technology-oriented actors whose influence across fields is increasing, journalists and what they do are at the periphery. For a field that supposedly plays an important role in public life, this has important implications.

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The author declares no conflict of interests.

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