



Deliverable 2.4

Catalogue of Best Practices in Citizen Journalism

From citizen journalism to the platformization of news



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101004488

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Document information

Grant Agreement #:	101004488
Project Title:	EUROPEAN MEDIA PLATFORMS: ASSESSING POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE EXTERNALITIES FOR EUROPEAN CULTURE
Project Acronym:	EUMEPLAT
Project Start Date:	01/03/2021
Related work package:	WP2 – Fake news: Platformization of Journalism
Related task(s):	T2.2 – Citizen Journalism in Ten Countries
Lead Organisation:	P9 – ISCTE-IUL
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Status	Final
Submission date:	04/11/2022
Dissemination Level:	Public

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1 Introduction

The goals of this report are threefold: to try to understand how citizens interact with journalism in Europe, to try to categorize those interactions and to present a list of cases from different countries which can be considered as examples of best practices. To do so, we present a brief contextualization of journalism and citizen journalism, and a conceptual approach to three major categories of interaction, practices, and the use/reuse of journalistic content by citizens.

We have taken as our starting point citizens' engagement with journalism as both product and content: citizens collaborate with journalists in content production, citizens emulate journalistic practices, and citizens use/reuse journalism to contribute to public discourse and democracy.

The report further develops a synoptic analysis of professional and user-generated news contents, so as to provide us with a better understanding of the potentialities, limits, and reliability of so-called citizen journalism. A selection of positive cases is expounded on, aiming to be brought to the attention of policymakers.

1.1 The challenge

1.1.1 What is journalism?

Journalism is a professional practice framed by ethical and deontological commitments of honor, legal regulations (like other liberal professions), and peer recognition/ approval/ validation. Generally consisting in the application of certain techniques and knowledge, professional journalism takes various forms, including the organization into associations, the formation of press councils and the drawing up of principles of good practice in the form of codes of practice and ethics. In short, professional journalism ultimately reveals the values that journalists publicly proclaim as guidelines for their work (McQuail & Deuze, 2020).

Journalism practice across Europe, in general terms (even if different from country to country), is obliged to fit into a very detailed and strict legal framework, involving several evolutionary steps: some kind of compulsory education, peer evaluation in a newsroom (as a trainee for up to two years), and production of news stories published in recognized media outlets; in some

cases, there is mandatory registration and supervision by a regulatory agency (governmental, independent or professional order), or even the compulsory presentation of proof that journalism is the candidate's main source of income. Finally, providing that all the necessary requirements have been met, a press card is issued, constituting a prerequisite to work as a journalist (Álvares et al., 2021).

Laitila (1995) developed a comparative study of journalistic codes in 31 European countries, which shows that despite the wide-span of different principles, all can be classified under the following six types of accountabilities: to the public; to the sources and referents; to the State; to the employer; for professional integrity; for protection of the status and unity of the profession. Laitila found a high level of agreement on certain general principles and summarized them as follows: truthfulness of information; clarity of information; defense of the public's rights; responsibilities in forming public opinion; standards of gathering and presenting information; and respecting the integrity of the source.

As such, journalists, namely those associated with gatekeeping and advocacy, tend to privilege their gate-keeping function so as to preserve their closeness with the realm of officialdom, or value their role as advocate to embrace a 'watchdog' mission of scrutiny of power structures (Álvares et al., 2021).

Hafez (2002) concludes that "there is a broad international consensus that standards of truth and objectivity should be central values of journalism". It does look as if there is quite a lot of common ground on what journalists in different countries formally accept as the appropriate standards (Hafez, 2002). In that sense, there is something like a shared body of normative theory to apply to daily practice, with predominant emphasis nearly everywhere on the standards of objective (neutral), independent and informative (factually correct) journalism (McQuail & Deuze, 2020).

In a technology-driven networked communication society of accelerated change, journalism is being transformed in the ways that it is produced, distributed, and used. We witness the emergence of new tools and practices, "phenomena that are yielding both a flurry of new ways to produce information and a redefinition of the place of professional journalism in this new information system" (Haak, Parks, & Castells, 2012).

A journalistic code of ethics refers to a set of principles of professional conduct, adopted and controlled by journalists themselves, reflecting the general process of professionalization of journalism (McQuail & Deuze, 2020).

Before delving further into the subject, we point to the following two presuppositions that will condition this report:

- **A citizen is not a journalist** just because he says he is
- Nowhere in the world is journalism a practice for “amateur” citizens

Nevertheless, it is important to try to understand why:

- citizens **participate** in citizen journalism
- how citizens **perform journalistic roles**
- and what citizen journalism practice **contributes to democracy**.

Citizen, participative, or collaborative journalism is one in which audiences act in the production and publication of news. The modality gains more users and relevance with the advent of the Internet and the new technologies for capturing, producing, and disseminating information, which have made it possible for each person to cover a news fact. This model expands the sources of information beyond what is in the traditional media (Sousa & Silva, 2010). These factors fuelled the development of this type of journalism and the contributions it brings to both democracy and citizenship.

Nip (2006) classifies journalism ranging from traditional forms to public, interactive, and participatory journalism, culminating in citizen journalism, depending on the degrees to which citizens become news sources and have control over news content. In effect, thinking about participatory journalism and mediatized audience engagement can be fruitfully applied to various novel approaches regarding research on the fundamental transformation of journalism in the digital age (Westlund & Murschetz, 2019).

1.1.2 What is citizen journalism?

The internet created media space without mediation, so citizens started to publish all kinds of information without previous validation/ approval. Initially there were technical barriers (i.e. the need to know to code). However, in the early 2000's, the blogs took this citizen-generated content further, allowing anyone to publish/ republish without tech skills, giving the people a voice and, therefore, power (Gillmor, 2005).

A new source of concern has in the meantime been opened by the rapid and widespread growth of weblog journalism (blogging) by individuals, both within and also outside the walls of existing media. There is indeed a good deal of uncertainty concerning the boundaries between old and new journalistic forms (Matheson, 2004; Singer, 2005), with the normative standards that can be expected from news blogging activity posing a particular problem from the very beginning, due to the latter not being subject to any form of accountability.

It did not take much time for a new code of ethics for blogging to be proposed to supplement traditional commitments towards objectivity with norms of transparency, freedom and interactivity (Kuhn, 2007). However, some institutional structure is usually required to back up codes and most bloggers rejected control of this kind (McQuail & Deuze, 2020).

Since the early 2000s, social media created networks for non-mediated user-generated content to flourish and compete with professional content providing the ideal platform for citizen journalists to quickly spread content that is based on rumor and eye-witness accounts (Mutsvairo, 2016b).

With the advent of editing and publishing tools coupled with the Internet, where it is increasingly easy to publish an idea, an opinion or a piece of content and distribute it on a global scale, ordinary citizens are gaining voice, and the way news is produced, distributed, and consumed has changed dramatically (Sousa, 2016).

Having examined new forms of audience participation in journalism with regard to the possibility of their achieving the goals of public journalism, Nip (2006) proposes a typology of five models of audience connections: (1) traditional journalism (2) public journalism (3) interactive journalism (4) participatory journalism and (5) citizen journalism (Nip, 2006). By identifying the higher goal of public journalism as engaging the people as citizens and

promoting public deliberation, Nip argues that new forms of audience participation could further these goals only by being infused with the values of public journalism, standing to gain from learning its techniques.

With all the technologies available today, citizens are often the first on the scene and are able to report on an event faster than traditional media outlets. People's participation itself and what they produce are thus regarded as possibly contributing towards informed citizenry (Bowman & Willis, 2003; Gillmor, 2005) and democracy (Bowman & Willis, 2003).

“Citizen journalism” around the world today assumes diverse forms and gives expression to different, often interconnected, world realities. It is practiced and performed in different political contexts and through different traditions, cultures and configurations of civil society, but it is essentially alive — experientially, humanistically, often politically, and on the move.” (Thorsen & Allan, 2014)

Citizen journalism is a practice of resistance, one that brings together social movements, activists, and other social justice collectives in a shared refusal to accept that only professional news organizations can practice journalism (Rodríguez, 2014). The new forms of journalism that involve the audience simultaneously seem to partly replace journalism and its role in democracy. However, the idea of public journalism achieving the goal of helping public life on its own was questioned in the early days of the internet (Nip, 2006), even if today's different forms of citizen journalism increasingly enter into the mainstream news arena (Thorsen & Allan, 2014).

The increasing participation of citizens in the news construction process has changed the way newsrooms work, and many media outlets have even started to invite the submission of photos, videos, and texts authored by readers or viewers, which are then used. But even if journalists decide to listen systematically to the stories and ideas of citizens, they try to protect their professional freedom to choose what to cover.

In effect the relation of journalists with their audiences is closer to a consultation of information sources than an act of "collaboration", since the subsequent work of selection and editing falls under the responsibility of the journalist. If participation does not follow deontological codes and rules, it does not make sense to consider participating viewers as "citizen journalists", or to equate the work performed by the two sides (Sousa, 2016).

Even so, there are many pluralizing or mobilizing forms of communications that coalesce under the umbrella term of “citizen journalism” (Thorsen & Allan, 2014). Nowadays, “any citizen” can take the risk, armed with all the necessary material, to be the first to collect information, a photo, a statement or even a video of a certain event that occurred at a certain place, time and date. “But will all this turn ‘any citizen’ into a journalist?”, asks Correia (2008).

1.1.3 From citizen journalism to crowdsourcing journalism

The projects recognised as “citizen journalism” – one of the great challenges for journalism (Gillmor, 2005; Rosen, 2008) is a concept subject to open practical and academic discussion in the first decade of the 21st century – were characterised by some common denominators:

- They were projects of journalists, edited by journalists, which had as their informative basis the reporting by citizens (Hermida & Thurman, 2008; López García, 2009; Singer et al., 2011; Thorsen & Allan, 2014), i.e. **the citizen tells a story to the journalist**, who transforms it into a journalistic piece.
- Citizen journalism was something that today would be **better defined as crowdsourcing journalism** (Peters & Witschge, 2015; Westlund & Murschetz, 2019; Aitamurto, 2019).

Nevertheless, despite such qualms, we maintain that citizen journalism is journalism because

- **it is edited by journalists**
- **citizens are sources for journalists**, rather than being journalists themselves

We should here remember that none of this is new – informants have always been part of journalism (e.g. local collaborators who report an event to a journalist/ newspaper, and who may even be paid for it). Nevertheless, assuming that citizen journalism is one of the great challenges to traditional journalism, it appears far from fulfilling its initial promises. Regardless of their location and size, many of the most promising citizen-driven or citizen-created projects in online media have lost their initial momentum or have closed down (Canavilhas & Rodrigues, 2012). In many countries, the online versions of major dailies and broadcast media have also

created sections for citizen collaboration, some of which use the words "journalism" or "reporter" in their names. But can we call the texts published in these spaces "journalism"?

For television networks and online news sites, the use of citizen-produced video imagery for special reports can be a great help to assemble the news story together, even if in visual terms the short clips of footage, provided by citizen witnesses who happened to be near the "fact" at the time, do not meet the technical professional standards. These forms of feature reporting are appropriated as material from current non-journalistic sources.

Many news organisations were acutely aware of the value such first-hand perspectives would bring to their coverage, but struggled to accept the notion that it was professionally irresponsible to incorporate citizens' contributions they could not independently verify (Thorsen & Allan, 2014). The significance of these forms of citizen witnessing which are uploaded on collaborative networks, where the resources of platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram or YouTube are mobilised to considerable journalistic advantage, seldom receive more than passing comment in mainstream press news features.

Jarvis (2006) further argues that "in network journalism, the public can get involved in a story before it is reported, contributing facts, questions, and suggestions. Journalists can rely on the public to help report the story."

Journalists can and should link to other work on the same story, to source material and perhaps to blog posts from sources. After the story is published – online, in print, anywhere – the public can continue to contribute through corrections, questions, facts, and perspectives... not to mention promotion through links: "I expect this will become a self-fulfilling prophecy as journalists realize that they are less the makers of news than the moderators of the conversations that make it into the news" (Jarvis, 2006).

Advances in digital technologies and participatory culture have enabled the efficient use of crowdsourcing in a broad range of contexts, including journalism: "Journalism is increasingly deploying crowdsourcing as a knowledge-search method and a means of engaging readers. Through crowdsourcing, journalists can tap into the collective intelligence of large online crowds" (Aitamurto, 2019).

Using crowdsourcing, journalists can find otherwise inaccessible information that contributes to their investigations. Thus, when speaking about crowdsourcing, we reinforce the different characterization between the citizen journalist and the figure of the "citizen-source" (Corrêa & Madureira, 2010).

Thus, the media companies' nods to the "citizen reporter" inevitably have this mystifying sense of suggesting that "the people" speak, but do not edit. (Moretzsohn, 2006) Besides, they represent an economic alternative to obtain raw material from an informal labor force, which at the same time is moved by the sudden valorization and gives back with its faithful audience.

Crowdsourcing can also unveil a broader range of perspectives about a story topic, leading to more inclusive and objective journalism. As a result, crowdsourcing can support the journalistic norms of accurate, objective, and transparent reporting. Moreover, it engages participants and fosters a stronger relationship between readers and journalists. Finally, in its use of "crowdsourcing journalism can enact more efficiently in its monitorial role in society." (Aitamurto, 2019).

1.2 Some insights on citizen journalism

Something that was (partly) concluded as regards "citizen journalism" (more than a decade ago) is that it only really works in "big" countries, because you need a large critical mass of citizens interested in reporting. The best and most cited example was the Korean Ohmynews¹, launched in 2000, which even had an international version in English (since then discontinued). There were also interesting local/ regional projects in Brazil (Corrêa & Madureira, 2010),

¹ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/OhmyNews>; <http://www.ohmynews.com/>

cultural projects in Canada (especially in Quebec), or activist actions (Carpentier, De Brabander & Cammaerts, 2009).

Using Portugal as an example, only the national daily *Jornal de Notícias* tried to implement citizen journalism in earnest, attempting to create a crowdsourcing journalism system on the basis of its tradition of having access to plenty of local information. However, this attempt was a failure, as the newspaper only had half a dozen news items per month sent by readers. In the meantime, this section, titled *Cidadão Repórter* (Citizen Reporter) (Canavilhas, 2012), has already disappeared from the site. Even so, we have occasional crowdsourcing situations in various Portuguese media, like:

- TVI television network with euvi@tvi.pt (“I saw”), which is used to ask people for photos and videos concerning natural disasters or extreme weather situations, such as storms or snow (Sousa, 2016).
- The *Público* daily newspaper, alongside the National State Budget, asked for feedback from specialists to help to perform in-depth analysis, for example.

The main consensus that has resulted from the research and discussion promoted in several countries and regions, since the early 2000's, is that citizen journalism does not exist... because **it is not enough to have a citizen reporting a situation for this to become journalism.**

But... citizens can **collaborate**, act as **information gatherers** (sources), and/or **reuse and reproduce** journalism.

2 From crowdsourcing journalism to the platformization of news

With the goal of studying **how citizens** produce, share and remix journalistic contents, we devised **three possible paths** to categorize the interaction between citizens and 1) journalism, 2) journalists, and 3) journalistic practices:

- **Citizen collaboration** in journalistic production
- How **citizens emulate** journalistic practices
- How **citizens use/ reuse** journalism in the platforms

In this chapter we gather some best practices examples from different European countries, and in different languages (including non-European), assembled into three categories. **For each case we present a short description**, including main themes/ subject matter, geographical scope, main audience, languages, and why the case study fits the category. As footnotes, we provide access to the main platforms for each case study, namely the website and the most common social media platforms.

The examples were selected and provided by the project partners, each responsible to choose their countries examples, to assure the proximity, language knowledge, understanding of the context and relevance for the report. All national teams had to provide at least 2-3 examples per country (if available) and search for diversity of the examples (especially regarding the three interaction paths stated above). The collection of data was done through a form with specific fields to each of the needed information, connected to a database where all the information was gathered.

2.1 Citizen collaboration in journalistic production

Crowdsourced stories are a way to give the audience what they want. These stories are crafted with people in mind, but what if the latter could be involved in the reporting process from the beginning?

In journalism, there are always stories to report on, topics to investigate and news to be chased, but, ultimately, it's about making the right decision and covering the **stories that will benefit or impact the community**.

So, the big questions and challenge are to understand what happens if journalists were to tap into their audience as a newsgathering source by crowdsourcing stories and **allow people to be a part of the reporting process** from the start.

Nip (2006) identifies three goals for journalists and traditional media when they **create tools to welcome citizen collaboration in journalistic production**: 1. to connect to the community; 2. to engage individuals as citizens, and; 3. to help public deliberation in search for solutions (Nip, 2006). These three broad goals are consistent with: 1. giving ordinary people a chance to express their views on public affairs 2. motivating ordinary people to get involved in public discussions of important issues, and 3. pointing people toward possible solutions to society's problems.

Within this collaborative setup, news is being produced by regular people who have something to say and show, and not solely by the “official” news organizations that had traditionally decided on how the first draft of ‘history’ would look: “This time, the first draft of history was being written, in part, by the former audience. It was possible — it was inevitable — because of new publishing tools available on the Internet” (Gillmor, 2005).

With all the technology available today, citizens are often the first on the scene and able to report an event faster than traditional media outlets. The increasing collaboration of citizens in the news construction process has changed the way newsrooms work, and many **media outlets invite the submission** of photos, videos, and texts authored by readers or viewers, which are then used.

All around the world, there are case studies on this, and some clues can be found in the examples of best practices. Citizens collaborate with journalists, or act as information gatherers (sources) to journalists: “Countless citizen journalists contribute with their reports, images, information, and opinions, making it possible for the practice of journalism to broaden the scope and diversity of its sources” (Haak, Parks & Castells, 2012).

By actively engaging citizens as active participants or “producers” (Bruns, 2007) in the communication process, news media organizations may build more solid and sustainable relationships that help them achieve competitive positional advantages in the digital marketplace. Doing so can open a space of fruitful interaction with audiences in news production processes and is not necessarily limited to proprietary news sites and applications (Westlund & Murschetz, 2019).

In the next section, this report lists some examples, selected by each national team, of best practices of citizen collaboration in journalistic production.

2.1.1 Valigia blu

Valigia blu² (literally: blue suitcase) is an Italian project with national scope. Valigia Blu was born out of a Facebook mobilization to demand the rectification of a fake news story on Italian National television (Rai). The more than 200,000 signatures collected in just a few days were transported in a suitcase, by chance blue, inside Rai. This blue suitcase has, since then, become a symbol of the voice of citizens who care about correct information.

Based on crowdfunding, Valigia blu is now a collective space, with no ads, no paywalls, no publishers, made available through a dedicated website, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and YouTube.

² <https://www.valigiablu.it>

The "Valigia Blu Community" Facebook group was initiated about two years ago, open to those who participate in crowdfunding with a donation of at least 20 euros (membership is annual). It was initially conceived as a kind of virtual editorial office where proposals could be made for possible articles or thematic in-depth analysis. Over time and with the use then made of it by the members themselves (now more than 1,300), it has become a virtual *piazza*, a place to meet and discuss current issues and topics, where opinions are shared alongside specific knowledge and expertise.

2.1.2 HUGO Press

HUGO press³ is a Belgian journalism platform which focuses on positive stories on newcomers together with journalists who had to flee their country. By working together with newcomers, the ultimate objective is that of showing how they can rebuild their life from scratch.

With migrants and migrant journalists as keywords, the project is available via website, but also on Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, and Soundcloud.

2.1.3 Eu Vi

Eu Vi⁴ (I saw) is a tool specially created by TVI network in Portugal for receiving audiovisual material produced by viewers.

When it was created, "Eu vi" started by working via letter and e-mail. However, with the emergence of the website and app and, above all, as a result of the knowledge of audiences that these tools allowed, it became possible for "Eu vi" to have its own tab on the website and in the app for content upload.

These videos or photos are integrated into the news reports after verification, and the themes where this is more common concern atypical natural and meteorological phenomena. (Sousa, (2016)

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³ <http://hugopress.org> - <https://www.facebook.com/HUGOpress.official/> - <https://soundcloud.com/user-174079232> - <https://www.instagram.com/hugopress.official/>

⁴ <https://tvi.iol.pt/noticias/euvi>



2.1.4 Migratory Birds

The Migratory Birds⁵ Greek newspaper, supported by the Network for Children's Rights, is the result of the teamwork of Young Journalists, a team consisting of teenage and young migrants, refugees, and Greeks. The newspaper is multilingual and features articles in Arabic, English, Farsi, Greek and Urdu. It is distributed every two months, free of charge, as a supplement to "EfSyn" (Newspaper of the Editors), a Greek daily newspaper.

The newspaper focus is on immigration/ refugees stories and reporting, and it is available via website, social media, radio station, as well as special print issues. Targeted for migrants, refugee, and local population, at a national Greek level, it is, as previously noted, available in several languages: Greek, English, Arab, Farsi, and Urdu.

The idea for this project was born out of the hesitation of people living in refugee camps to talk to journalists, as they believed that their stories would not be presented as they should. For that reason, 15 Afghan teenage girls and a Greek young woman decided to become journalists themselves and be the voices of the refugee population. Supported by the Network for Children's Rights, this group of young journalists is trained in journalistic practises. You can read more about⁶ this successful initiative.

2.1.5 Indymedia

Indymedia⁷ is a German-based network, composed out of a whole series of Independent Media Centers, with local hubs. Self-described as a Global Network of Independent Media Centres, it is a global non-profit network of media activists and journalists on the internet that sees itself as part of grassroots journalism. Indymedia emerged from the globalisation-critical movements and is at home in the spectrum of new social movements.

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⁵ <https://migratorybirds.gr/>

⁶ <https://migratorybirds.gr/about/>

⁷ <https://de.indymedia.org/> - https://twitter.com/de_indymedia?lang=de - <https://de-de.facebook.com/indymedianetwork/> - <https://www.instagram.com/indymedia/?hl=de>



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This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101004488

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With a German and global scope, its subject matters are media issues and (mostly leftist oriented) actions of social movements (ex. protest against G7). Thus, they target national and supranational media activists, as well as activists in social movements. The group is available through a website, Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram.

2.1.6 Blog of Boyan Yurukov

The Blog of Boyan Yurukov⁸, from Bulgaria, is a project about politics, law, and open data. With a national scope, it all starts on an online blog, but is also present in Facebook, and is reproduced in print media and radio.

Boyan Yurukov is an influencer and blogger who uses a lot of open data to make visible and more understandable important political, economic, and social topics, and supports journalists in their research.

2.1.7 Diken Newspaper

Diken Newspaper⁹ is an online Turkish news site, edited by Erdal Güven. The site was first launched on 27 January 2014. Its founder, Harun Simavi, is the grandson of Sedat Simavi, a famous Turkish journalist, writer and film director in the first half of the 20th century..

⁸ <https://yurukov.net/blog/2022/lawbrew/>

⁹ <https://www.diken.com.tr> - Twitter @DikenComTr

Anything currently discussed, at both global and national levels, can be a subject matter, always with the goal of making news that reaches the entire Turkish population. Even though they have their own website, most people follow them via Twitter.

Most people prefer this organization to legacy media in Turkey, as it is believed to produce more non-biased, impartial news.

2.1.8 YouReporter

YouReporter¹⁰ is an Italian project about current news and politics, with a national scope, and a focus on local news for a general audience. It can be accessed through a website, Facebook and YouTube. Currently, it has been purchased and is controlled by a major news company, RCS, which controls, among other, the principal Italian newspaper, *Corriere della Sera*.

2.1.9 BILDblog.de Kritisches über deutsche Medien

BILDblog.de Kritisches über deutsche Medien¹¹ (Critical information on German media) is named after the most famous tabloid in Germany: *Bild Zeitung*. This German project is a watchblog for critical issues about media.

National in scope, this project targets a professional audience of media practitioners and anyone who is interested in the media, and is available through a website, Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram.

The interaction with citizens is very intense, with journalists asking readers for relevant information about the behaviour of the media. As examples, you can find questions like: "Have you noticed anything in Bild, Spiegel Online, RTL or other media that seems questionable to you? Because you know it's not true? Because you think it is very, very unlikely? Because other media say something different? Or because journalistic standards are being violated, people are being wronged or the press code is being violated?"

¹⁰ <https://www.youreporter.it>

¹¹ <https://bildblog.de/> - <https://de-de.facebook.com/BILDblog/> - https://twitter.com/BILDblog?ref_src=twsrc%5Egoogle%7Ctwcamp%5Eserp%7Ctwgr%5Eauthor



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This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101004488

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2.1.10 t24

t24¹² is Turkish online newspaper with a national scope. The subject matters are currently discussed topics at global-national levels. Even though they have their own website, most people follow the news via Twitter (they have 1,8 million followers on Twitter) or other different social media platforms.

This online newspaper has a more professional background, as it used to exist as "tempo24". As such, it includes professional journalists but simultaneously accepts news and information from ordinary citizens.

2.1.11 NottinghamshireLive

NottinghamshireLive¹³ is a United Kingdom project which experiments with people-powered journalism through the #AskNottsLive initiative from *The Nottingham Post*. Starting from the Summer of 2021, the local news outlet invited its readers to set the news agenda, then teamed up with four journalism students to tell community stories.

¹² <https://t24.com.tr> - Twitter: @t24comtr

¹³ <https://www.nottinghampost.com/news/local-news/shop-owners-sneinton-road-blighted-5669353>

It is a collaborative project with Nottingham Trent University's (NTU) Centre for Broadcast and Journalism (CBJ) to answer its readers' questions. To get a sense of what the community cares about, the publisher added a widget on its website that allowed readers to suggest a topic and leave their contact details for journalists to get in touch.

The impact of the project has been positive, according to the senior editor, Natalie Fahy: "It was reassuring to see that we are already producing the kind of stories that the readers were asking for," she said, adding that getting the audience involved increased their interest in the articles.

2.2 How citizens emulate journalistic practices

The second group of best practices cases is the one where citizens emulate journalistic practices (without journalists' collaboration), to produce information that: 1) looks like news stories 2) uses some journalistic reporting techniques, or 3) tries to fit into the ethical framework of journalism.

This kind of emulation of journalistic practices, without professional journalists' intervention, must be considered alternative media, as opposite to professional media. But, in a general view of a broaden media landscape - which goes way beyond the traditional concepts of mainstream media (made by professionals) -, these citizens projects have an important role in producing and disseminating relevant information to the communities they serve, as a complement to mainstream media.

In the following section, this report lists some examples, selected by each national team, of best practices projects where citizens emulate journalistic practices.

2.2.1 Rádio Freguesia de Belém

Rádio Freguesia de Belém¹⁴ is a year old, the only community radio station in Lisbon, Portugal, formed by voluntary residents of Belém parish, with programs about and for those who live in this area of the Portuguese capital. It is broadcast on the internet and one of its greatest successes is the program "Olá Vizinho!" (Hi, Neighbour), the only live one.

It has programs with themes ranging from culture, interviews, sports, humor, science, and others, always with Belém as the starting point. The volunteers (around 20) were trained for 7 months, with professionals from Rádio Miúdos (an online radio for kids).

"The goal is really to get the people around us, the community, more and more involved. That's been our main job", explains the radio coordinator. "People can listen to things about the place where they live. This radio works very well for the older population, precisely to fight social isolation and to have a sense of greater proximity".

2.2.2 AgoraVox

AgoraVox¹⁵ is the Italian branch of a French enterprise with the same name. With focus on general news, both national and international, for a general audience, it has a website and social media presence on Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter.

In this project, moderators are in charge of editorial decisions. One may become moderator after publishing at least four articles on AgoraVox. According to the rule, there is no official registration as media outlets.

¹⁴ <https://radiobelem.jf-belem.pt>

¹⁵ <https://www.agoravox.it/>

2.2.3 Radio Centraal

Radio Centraal¹⁶, from Belgium, is an Antwerp community radio, with music but also with programs on political and economic themes. It can be accessed via website, but also on Facebook and Instagram. Anyone can work at Radio Centraal. Anyone can start a program. They talk about political, economic and social issues. In short, the people who work there are not journalists.

Even without professional journalists, this self-assumed alternative media project has an important role in producing and disseminating relevant information to the community it serves, as a complement to mainstream media.

2.2.4 Rosa media

Rosa media¹⁷, from Greece, is a community promoting cyberactivism while reporting on a variety of topics from politics to arts and sports. One of its main actions as regards cyberactivism was to map all solidarity organisations and activities during the Covid lockdowns in Greece.

The newsroom consists of marketers and communication professionals (not journalists). Despite operating for less than two years, they have gained significant readership for a niche medium in Greece, with more than 400k visits per month.

Besides cyberactivism, the project also gives space to subject matters such as feminism, LGBTQ, and pluralism. The main audience consists of "progressive" citizens, and most of the traffic comes from Facebook (70%).

¹⁶ <https://www.radiocentraal.be/Realescape/> - <https://www.facebook.com/RadioCentraal1067Fm/> - https://www.instagram.com/radiocentraal_antwerpen/

¹⁷ <https://www.rosa.gr/>



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2.2.5 myheimat

myheimat¹⁸ is a very peculiar project. There is no direct translation for the German word "heimat", but it can be described as "the place where I feel at home". This project from Germany assumes the participants (citizens) can write on any topic. The website asks several questions to guide the collaboration of citizens, like: "How do you see it? What have you experienced? Where were you? What is close to your heart? What did you notice? What do you know about it?"

The audience is very general in scope, and the website tends to satisfy the interests of its participants/citizens. Despite the geographic national scope at the entrance point, the website can subsequently be customized locally via the postal code. Additionally to the website, the project is also available on Facebook.

2.2.6 Radio R

Radio R¹⁹ is a student/community radio affiliated to Masaryk University, in Brno, Czechia. In this project, students emulate and learn journalistic practices with the help of their teachers, who are sometimes journalists. The focus is on local information and community, but larger-scale national issues and audiences can also be found. This radio is available through a website and a dedicated player.

2.2.7 Говори интернет

Говори интернет²⁰ (Internet speaks) is a Bulgarian project with focus on important topics on society and inclusion, not covered in main media outlets in Bulgaria. The audience target is the whole of Bulgaria, and the project is available both through a website and social media (Instagram, Facebook), as well as podcasts. In fact, podcasts are a very important part of the project, and they are produced by people with₂₆ journalistic background.

¹⁸ <https://www.myheimat.de/> - <https://de-de.facebook.com/myheimat/>

¹⁹ <https://www.radio-r.cz/> - Radio R player

²⁰ <https://govori-internet.com/>



2.2.8 Periodisme Ciutadà

Periodisme Ciutadà²¹ (citizen journalism) is a **project from Spain** with a local/ regional scope (Catalonia). The main audience is the Spanish/Catalan public. It is available through a public Facebook group, so anyone can see what the group posts.

Its objective is that citizens make their own news as such. The aim is therefore to cover a noteworthy fact and contribute to showing reality as it is, not as audiences are made to see it.

This project fits the category chosen above because, here, it is the citizens who create and constitute the news for themselves without requiring the collaboration of journalists.

2.2.9 Blasting News

Blasting News²² is the Italian version of the global franchise with the same name. It is a project about general news, but with much space for media-related contents and TV. The subject matters are mostly national and dedicated to a general audience. It can be accessed through a website.

In some cases, there is also a remix of contents. This platform, when compared to the others, has a social dimension, with communities being embedded and part of the service.

²¹ <https://www.facebook.com/groups/112913832086526>

²² <https://it.blastingnews.com>

2.2.10 Anem A Caminar

Anem A Caminar²³ (let's walk) is a Spanish open group in Catalan which aims to publish, share, propose, create, announce events, and suggest activities related to hiking. Everyone can create outings, publish reports of their outings, and share experiences.

It has a local/regional scope (Catalonia) and the main audience consists in people interested in routes and mountain hiking. The group can be accessed through a public Facebook account, so anyone can see what the group posts.

As one reads on the Facebook public account: "citizens are the ones who create all the content, they are news generators and informants, without the collaboration of journalists."

2.2.11 Sant Adrià de Besòs

Sant Adrià de Besòs²⁴ is a project from the homonym neighborhood in Barcelonès, Catalonia, Spain, the aim of which is to facilitate communication between different neighbors, which is difficult. As such, its backbone takes form under a common goal of the set of actions promoted and managed by public and private institutions and the general public.

In this way, the project aims to achieve greater territorial balance and improvement in the quality of life of the neighborhood inhabitants.

²³ <https://www.facebook.com/groups/355097631216274>

²⁴ <https://www.facebook.com/groups/47611893306>

The project can be accessed through a Facebook group, so anyone can see who is in the group and what they post. The main audience, consisting in the people who live in the area, are also those who publish and create their own news.

2.3 How citizens use/ reuse journalism on platforms

Here we present a list of examples which can be used in the future as case studies of projects where citizens reuse/ remix and reproduce journalistic content (without journalists' collaboration). These can go from clippings and reproducing traditional media news on other platforms, like blogs or social media, but also reusing journalistic content as a source of information for communities with specific interests (i.e. local or thematic), frequently accompanied by comments, remarks or highlights relevant to the community. In some cases, citizens remix journalistic content, mixing different sources to create something partially new or with new contextual significance.

2.3.1 Ekşi Sözlük

Ekşi Sözlük²⁵ (Sour Dictionary) is a Turkish collaborative hypertext platform based on the concept of websites built up on user contribution. They share, remix and comment legacy media journalistic content, but are also open to any citizen publication.

The platform's subject matter is very broad, as it gives space to anything, whether it be a current topic or an idea on something. Mostly national in content, despite also touching upon

²⁵ <https://eksisozluk.com>

global issues, its general target is composed of all Turkish citizens, particularly young people (who are also users).

Because users can inform others, sometimes they share information even before news is broadcast on television or other legacy media. Other than that, people can easily comment on the news, sharing their own opinions. Most of the time, headings are supported with official links, visuals etc. to increase credibility.

2.3.2 Global Voices

Global Voices²⁶ is the Greek operation of an international, Netherlands-based, project. The content has a focus on human rights, culture, and politics, at a global level.

Global Voices is an international, multilingual, primarily volunteer community of writers, translators, academics, and human rights activists operating since 2004. Their aim is to build understanding across communities by reporting on voices rarely seen on mainstream media and by training local underrepresented communities to tell their own stories via participatory media tools. Global voices is constituted by more than 300 bloggers and translators across the globe.

With the moto "Reporting on voices and experiences rarely seen in mainstream media", it is available through a website, but also on Facebook, Twitter, and RSS feed.

²⁶ <https://el.globalvoices.org/>

2.3.3 Vizinhos de Alcântara

Vizinhos de Alcântara²⁷ (“Alcântara neighbours”) is presented as a community service for the Alcântara parish, in Lisbon, Portugal. It has some native content, but much is the reproduction of mainstream media content related to the neighborhood.

The native content is always information on events, past or future, related to the community or dedicated to informing the community on something that might be relevant, such as new public or private services, memories, or relevant dates.

Both native and reused content serve as a trigger for discussion between neighbors. It exists as a Public Facebook group and a Facebook page.

2.3.4 Radio Punctum

Radio Punctum²⁸, from the Czech Republic, is a music radio for the Prague/ Central-Eastern European music community, available through a website, and also on Soundcloud and a specific Radio Punctum player.

In this project, community members/ citizens can run a show about their favorite music (some of the shows are analytical, reproducing classical music journalism).

2.3.5 Antwerpen Lokaal

Antwerpen Lokaal²⁹ (Antwerp local) is a project from the Belgium city of Antwerp. The subject matter is mainly local news from Antwerp, both the city and the region, and it targets the population of Antwerp. It is available through a website and on Facebook

²⁷ <https://www.facebook.com/groups/595070187648891> - <https://www.facebook.com/Vizinhos.de.Alcantara>

²⁸ <https://radiopunctum.cz/> - <https://soundcloud.com/radiopunctum>

²⁹

<https://antwerpenlokaal.wordpress.com/?fbclid=IwAR28gXcnPOZkktV37PN8Gi1B4E7zDoX9bFuboO0rg6OM9Wk%20Antwerp%20dpMbgFUFd2VE> - <https://www.facebook.com/AntwerpenLokaal/>

Antwerp Local reproduces journalistic content from broadcast media, for example, but usually provides comments or rewrites the article, bearing in mind its audience.

2.3.6 pushholder

pushholder³⁰ is a Turkish independent platform, mainly on Twitter, with a focus on Turkish current global/ national issues regarding politics, economics, etc. Established as an independent platform with the aim of informing others, The project's particular advantage is limitation of news to 280 characters and the fact that there is no embedded link, despite the project having its own website. In that way, Twitter users, for example, do not have to leave Twitter to see news on this platform.

2.3.7 Alcântara TV

Alcântara TV³¹ is a WebTV project from Alcântara parish, in Lisbon, Portugal. The managers say it “intends to be the meeting point of several generations, combining tradition and modernity in all aspects of life in our neighborhood.”

The project has a mix of native videos, produced with “professional” quality by a small TV production company, mixed with broadcast TV-embedded contents, with posts on the contents’ relevance for neighbors within the parish, with which it has non-explicit alignment. It is available through Facebook TV.

³⁰ twitter.com/pushholder

³¹ <https://www.facebook.com/Alc%C3%A2ntara-TV-174296263274383/>

3 Conclusions

From the concept of **citizen journalism**, we move to **crowdsourcing journalism** and, in a third stage, to the **platformization of news**. In this report, we try better defining citizen collaboration and interaction with journalism and journalists.

As such, we point to three possible conclusions as regards:

- Citizen **collaboration** in journalistic production
- How citizens **emulate** journalistic practices
- How citizens **use/reuse** journalism in platforms

3.1 Citizen collaboration in journalistic production

Citizen collaboration is closer to a consultation of information sources than an act of "collaboration", since the subsequent work of selection and editing is up to the journalist.

As stated in many Journalists' Legal Codes, with small variations, journalists are: "those who, as a main occupation, exercise functions of research, collection, selection and processing of facts, news or opinions, through text, image or sound".

Thus, we cannot consider all those who collaborate to be journalists and, given that the expression "Citizen Journalism" presupposes the existence of journalists and the classification of contents as "journalistic", it is valid to state that this term is not applicable to the context of citizen collaboration. Moreover, if participation does not follow deontological codes and rules, it does not make sense to consider collaborating citizens as journalists.

Nonetheless, the collaboration of citizens in journalistic production is relevant, important, and desirable to help inform all citizens on the relevant facts of local, regional, national or global issues and, with this participation, contribute to better informed citizens and communities, and to the consolidation of democratic societies.

3.2 How citizens emulate journalistic practices

What makes citizen journalism unique compared to other types of journalism is the notion of empowering citizens who can control content by writing, publishing, and delivering to audiences or other citizens without any constraints. At the community level, **citizen contribution** to civic community is also noteworthy in strengthening community storytelling networks. Citizen journalism practice has motivated citizens to further express opinions concerning community issues and public affairs. But participants can hardly distinguish the credibility of professional, or mainstream, news media from that of citizen, or alternative, news media.

To counter this situation, professional and citizen news organizations may consider building a collaborative community reporting system where both citizens and professional journalists jointly cover community issues and public affairs together. However, by emulating journalistic practices, searching for facts with objectivity, citizens develop a more informed criticism over potentially manipulative discourses, and, at the same time, make an organized effort to better inform their own communities, from hyperlocal to global audiences.

3.3 How citizens use/reuse journalism on platforms

Especially on platforms, **citizen journalism is embedded** in the lifeworld in which citizens participate in everyday politics and community storytelling networks. **Citizens not only consume but also produce “news”** and information in a wide variety of communication platforms and sources, including news sites, social media, and mobile devices. Community residents also belong to diverse community organizations, such as nonprofit and voluntary groups and social movement organizations.

Citizens are connected to multiple sectors, such as political, market, media, and civil society sectors. In this context, citizen journalism practice is deeply embedded in multiple sectors in society. By sharing and/or commenting on news stories on social media, **citizens engage** in

citizen journalism activities and this practice contributes to civic outcomes, such as civic participation, neighborhood belonging, and collective efficacy.

3.4 Final remarks

With the goal of studying how **citizens produce, share and remix journalistic** contents, we devised **three possible paths** to categorize the interaction between citizens and 1) journalism 2) journalists and 3) journalistic practices.

Regardless of the term used – citizen journalism, participatory journalism, or open-source journalism –, there is a major consensus over the following definitions : 1) the interest of citizens to collaborate with journalists 2) the learning and putting into practice of journalism principles and techniques or 3) adding context to journalism, **which is always positive for public discussion in democratic societies**.

As Nip wrote, the Internet has brought interactive potential for enhancing public life and the capability of destroying the journalists' monopoly over news making. The news media respond by giving news users a role in news making (Nip, 2006). Accepting that citizens may have, and must have, an active presence in platforms, and that journalism standards and content can be an important part of that citizenship presence, is probably the most important outcome of this report. The discussion of positive (but also negative) cases may have some impact on public policies in the area of (new) media (and its regulation).

Social media, podcasts, blogs, open-source software sites, and wikis, have paved the way for an “increasingly individualized civic environment”. (Gerodimos, 2012) But by studying “participatory journalism” within news on proprietary platforms – including how journalists engage with citizens as active participants in news production processes via platforms –, we should not overlook how journalists and citizens engage with the news via social media platforms (Westlund & Murschetz, 2019).

In this light, participatory journalism represents an attempt on the part of the news media to incorporate the change in the relationship between professional journalism and the people, made inevitable by technological change. Bowman and Willis (2003) embed the goal of journalism as that of allowing for connection to the community, and, to a lesser extent, engaging the people as citizens (Nip, 2006).

While legacy news media adopted a cautious position to enabling participation on their own digital platforms, they have nonetheless allowed for non-proprietary social media platforms to act as new engagement tools where users can easily share and interact with news material (Westlund & Murschetz, 2019).

Even so, studies have shown that professional journalists are rather skeptical about interactivity with their users, and that they still like to think about the role of journalism in terms of the top-down model of trustee journalism (Paulussen *et al.*, 2007). That is probably the reason why Aitamurto (2019) explains that crowdsourcing as an open journalistic practice has proved to be useful in professional journalism, but must always be deployed with caution and attention to the ways in which its properties affect normative boundaries within journalism (Aitamurto, 2019).

We also have to frame the platformization of journalism within the concept of produsage as a model for describing the user-led content creation environments (Bruns, 2007). Indeed, produsage offers new ways of understanding the collaborative content creation and development practices found in contemporary informational environments.

The best summary of all the challenges has perhaps been encapsulated by Haak, Parks & Castells (2012) in the following manner: “In the digital environment in which journalists now work, new facts are being unearthed daily; more audience feedback is being integrated; more voices are being heard; more diverse perspectives on the same news stories are being presented; more stories are available, archived and searchable for longer periods of time; more men and women of power are being watched more closely; and more people are engaged more actively with the changes in the world — by taking photos or making videos of key moments, by commenting on blogs, or by sharing the stories that matter to them.”

In a premonitory way, Deuze, Bruns & Neuberger (2007) noted that “in a time of declining public trust in news, loss of advertising revenue, and an increasingly participatory, self-expressive and digital media culture, journalism is in the process of rethinking and reinventing itself.” The relation between journalism and citizens finds itself, likewise, in a similar situation.

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This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101004488

