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From Crowdsourcing Journalism to the Platformization of News: A Framework for the Analysis of Citizens' Collaboration, Emulation and Remix Practices in Social Media

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ISCTE

From citizen journalism to the platformization of news

From the concept of **citizen journalism**,
we move to **crowdsourcing journalism** and,
in a third stage, to **the platformization of news**.

- We question if **citizens are relevant to journalism, by interacting in the platforms.**

- So, the main goal is to try to better **define the citizen collaboration and interaction** with journalism and journalists.

From citizen journalism to the platformization of news

The goal:

- To study how citizens produce, share and remix content (**interactions with journalism**)

Three paths:

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

In each path we frame **relevant examples** to help to understand the relation between citizens and journalism in Europe.

From citizen journalism to the platformization of news

The research structure – part 1 (**literature review and conceptualization**):

- 1.1   The challenge to define…
- 1.1.1   What is journalism?
- 1.1.2   So, what is citizen journalism?
- 1.1.3   From citizen journalism to crowdsourcing journalism

From citizen journalism to the platformization of news

The research structure – part 2 (**framing the practices**):

- 2   From crowdsourcing journalism to the platformization of news
- 2.1   How citizens **collaborate** in journalistic production
- 2.2   How citizens **emulate** journalistic practices
- 2.3   How citizens **use/ reuse** journalism in the platforms

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- The research structure – part 3 (**examples analysis**):

- 3   Analysis of 29 cases from 10 European countries (8 from the EU)
- 3.1   Citizen collaboration in journalistic production
- 3.2   How citizens emulate journalistic practices
- 3.3   How citizens use/ reuse journalism in the platforms
- 3.4   Final remarks and recommendations

From citizen journalism to the platformization of news

The goal is to try to:

- **understand** how citizens interact with journalism in Europe,

- **categorize** those interactions into 3 different framing categories,

- **present** case studies from 10 different countries which can be considered as examples of best practices.

To do so, we made a brief contextualization of journalism and citizen journalism, and a conceptual approach **to three major categories** of **interaction**, **practices**, and **use/reuse** of journalistic content by citizens.

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Looking **at journalism as a product and a content**:

- citizens collaborate with journalists in the content production,

- citizens emulate journalistic practices,

- citizens use/reuse journalism to contribute to the public discourse and the democracy.

We try to develop a synoptic analysis of professional and user-generated news contents, to provide us with a better understanding of potentialities, limits, and reliability of the so-called citizen journalism.

The selection of positive cases is developed aiming to be brought to the attention of policymakers.

From citizen journalism to the platformization of news

The data collection:

- To gather **the examples** from 10 countries, it was asked to researchers from each country to look for **best practices examples** of collaboration, emulation and use/reuse.
- **A form** was created so each participant could directly enter the data into a database.
- The main fields in the DB where: factual data (country, name, language, weblink and platforms, etc.), a description of the project, main themes/ subject matter, geographical scope, main audience, and an **analysis and contextualization** to explain why it can be framed in one of the three categories.

From citizen journalism to the platformization of news

Journalism is a professional practice framed by ethical and deontological commitments of honor, by legal regulations (like other liberal professions), by peer recognition/ approval/ validation, and which consists in the application of certain techniques and knowledge.

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

From citizen journalism to the platformization of news

Nip (2006) classifies journalism from traditional journalism through public, interactive, and participatory journalism to citizen journalism, depending on the degrees to which citizens become news sources and have control over news content. He proposed a typology of **five models of audience connections**: (1) traditional journalism, (2) public journalism, (3) interactive journalism, (4) participatory journalism, and (5) citizen journalism

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)

From citizen journalism to the platformization of news

So, what is citizen journalism?

The **internet** created a media space without mediation, so citizens start to be able to publish all kinds of information without previous validation/ approval, but there were technical barriers (i.e. the need to know to code)

The **blogs** took this citizen-generated content further, allowing anyone to publish/ republish without tech skills

Then **social media** created the networks for non-mediated user-generated content to flourish and compete with professional content.

From citizen journalism to the platformization of news

So, what is citizen journalism?

The projects recognised as "citizen journalism" - **one of the great challenges for journalism** (Gilmor, 2005; Rosen, 2008) is a concept that was the subject of open practical and academic discussion in the first decade of the century - were characterised by one common denominator:

- 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**.

From citizen journalism to the platformization of news

So, what is citizen journalism?

It was something that today would be better defined as **crowdsourcing journalism** (Peters & Witschge, 2015; Westlund & Murschetz, 2019; Aitamurto, 2019).

But, due to social media… citizens can **collaborate**, act as information gatherers (**sources**), and/or **use/ reuse** and reproduce journalism.

Conclusions
Citizen collaboration in journalistic production

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

- As stated in many Journalists' Legal Codes, are considered journalists 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 as journalists all those who collaborate** and, given that the expression "Citizen Journalism" presuposes the existence of journalists and the classification of those contents as "journalistic", it is valid to state that this term is not applicable.

- If the participation does not follow the deontological codes and rules, it does not make sense to consider the collaborating citizens as journalists.

Conclusions
Citizen collaboration in journalistic production

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.

Citizen's collaboration help journalists to develop their stories, help to build better journalism, **but citizens act more as news sources than journalists.**

Conclusions
How citizens emulate journalistic practices

These are the ones where citizens emulate journalistic practices (without journalists' collaboration), to produce information that can:

- 1) **look like news** stories,

- 2) **uses** some journalistic **reporting techniques**, or

- 3) even **try to fit into the ethical framework** of journalism.

Conclusions
How citizens emulate journalistic practices

- This is important because what makes the so called 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 the audiences or other citizens without any constraints.

- **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.

Conclusions
How citizens emulate journalistic practices

- Participants hardly distinguish the credibility between the professional, or mainstream, news media and the citizen, or alternative news media.

- 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.

Conclusions
How citizens use/ reuse journalism in the platforms

Here we frame the projects where citizens reuse/ remix and reproduce journalism content (without journalists' collaboration).

- These can go from **clipping and reproducing** traditional media news in other platforms, like blogs or social media…

- …but also **reuse** journalistic content as a source for information **for communities with specific interests** (local or thematic, i.e.), many times **with comments, remarks or highlights** relevant to the community.

- In some cases, citizens remix the journalistic content, **mixing different sources to create something partially new** or with new contextual significance.

Conclusions
How citizens use/ reuse journalism in the platforms

- So, especially in the platforms, **citizen journalism is embedded** in the lifeworld where 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.

Conclusions
How citizens use/ reuse journalism in the platforms

- **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.

- **Citizens engage** in citizen journalism activities and how citizen journalism practice **contributes to civic outcomes**, such as civic participation, neighborhood belonging, and collective efficacy.
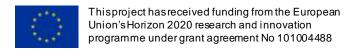
Conclusions
Final remarks

Regardless of the term used - citizen journalism, participatory journalism or open-source journalism -, there is a major consensus:

- 1) there is **a will** of citizens to collaborate with journalists,

- 2) citizens want to **learn and put to practice** the journalism principles and techniques,

- 3) citizens wish to **add context to journalism**, and the collaboration is always positive for the public discussion in democratic societies.

Thank you

Get in touch

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