Working Group 2
"Audience Interactivity
and Participation"

**Transforming
Audiences,
Transforming
Societies**

Interview/Essays with/on
journalists and politicians

**Audience
Interactivity
and
Participation**

EDITORS

Ana Milojevic

Lucia Vesnic-Alujevic

ESSAYS

INTERVIEWS ESSAYS

Name
Igor Vobič
Institution
University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Social Sciences
Country
Slovenia

Email Address
igor.vobic@fdv.uni-lj.si
Keywords
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RETHINKING SOCIAL LIFE OF RADIO NEWS: SLOVENIAN PUBLIC RADIO JOURNALISTS' PERCEPTIONS OF AUDIENCE INTERACTIVITY

In his essay *The Radio as an Apparatus of Communication* Bertold Brecht (1932/1994: 15) writes that radio is "one-sided when it should be two" suggesting the need for change from the apparatus of "distribution" to technology of "communication". For most of the eight decades of the evolution of audience interactivity radio institutions have only partly overcome its occasional phone-in programme and its occasional practices to let listeners use their phones to become contributors (Hendy, 2000: 195). In the last few years traditional ways of transmitting radio content are being woven with interactive online environments, particularly news websites and social media, where members of the audience are engaged in the prolonged life of radio news and invited to communicate not only to, but also with radio journalists as well

as among each other (Scanell, 2010: 23). These changes have been followed by the *Second Programme* of the Slovenian public radio, which has recently set up its news website *Val202.si* and implemented their activities on Twitter and Facebook in their daily production in order to develop a cross-media platform, strengthen the relationship with the listeners and reach out to new audiences (RTV Slovenia, 2012). How is journalists' relationship with the audience being reshaped? How these alterations in radio production and delivery change the concept of radio news and its implications for political life? How has social life of radio news transformed in this context? These questions are in primary focus of this essay which is based on in-depth interviews with four radio journalists of *Val 202*, *Second Programme* of public *Radio Slovenia*, conducted in September 2012. Central issues of these conversations are radio audience interactivity and social media as well as social life of news in the contemporary radio environment and its implications for societal role of journalists.

The interconnection of radio stations and their audiences has somewhat changed by facilitation of online interactive modes in the daily accounts of radio news making and delivery (Gazi et al., 2011). It appears that more than technology the social, political and cultural dynamics of what Deuze (2012: 230) calls "self mass-communication" have reshaped contemporary relationship between radio journalists and the "people formerly known as the audience" (Rosen 2012: 13) by being embedded in the management of (belonging to) large social groups as well as of combined properties

of "seeing" and "being seen". The *second Programme* of *Radio Slovenia* has entered this interactive world of social media two years ago and through institutional and *Val 202* journalists' personal *Twitter* and *Facebook* accounts started sharing links to website versions of radio content, short twits with audio clips, blurbs, shout-outs, calls for information and snippets of news (Val 202 Journalist A). Interviewed radio journalists more or less agree that contemporary public radio needs its online presence – for the sake of its public and/or commercial goals, "Contemporary radio cannot function anymore in conventional terms, but needs to adapt to new audiences that do not live with the radio as people in a way that people used to. Radio needs to reach for their hand and address them over different channels." (Val 202 Journalist C) According to Val 202 journalists, the Slovenian public radio uses social media in their daily activities for three main reasons: first, to generate "concrete responses" (Val 202 Journalist B) and "useful critique" (Val 202 Journalist C) from members of the audience as additions to phone-ins; second, to "receive alternative information" that would help the newsroom to follow-up the story (Val 202 Journalist A); third, to archive or "not to lose" radio content and make it reachable for those who miss the programme on air (Val 202 Journalist D). Interviewees also stress that the notion of audience interactivity changed dramatically – for instance, "If we did not have social media we would be limited to phone-ins on the air or phone calls to the newsroom after the programme. Interactions with the listeners are important, because you at least know that somebody is paying attention to your work." (Val 202 Journalist B)

Such changes in radio news production and delivery call for reconsideration of "the social life of information" as defined by Seely Brown and Duguid (2002) who argue that technology can transform only to a certain degree and other factors exert great influence in the utilization and eventual success or failure of new concepts and technology. Despite the fact that the internet does not simply move in and change journalism by itself (Dahlgren 2009), social life of radio news appears to be in the process of reshaping – that is, by responding to the "individualized and peer-based nature of contemporary sociality" which is being built into, as Deuze (2012: 157) writes, "the material infrastructure of networked media". Namely, interviewed Val 202 journalists indicate "new life dynamics" (Val 202 Journalist C) and stress that definition of radio as a medium needs reconsideration. For instance, Val 202 Journalist B argues that radio content has "longer life" due to the multiplying character of social media sharing, "Radio news used to disappear after being on air; it needed to have immediate impact. /.../ Now, radio news have longer lives and journalists follow them online. It even happens that stories made by Val 202 spurred a debate on Twitter and other media used it as a basis of their own stories." Additionally, some interviewees say that radio is overcoming its role as a "background medium" (Val 202 Journalist D) or "secondary medium" as Crisell (1986, 220) calls it, "Radio is often only a background sound scenery, but I do not understand it in this fashion. Radio is becoming interactive. Thus, I like to use the web when I work. It enables me to archive radio content and I enjoy following my stories when they are being spread online." (Val 200 Journalist D)

The debates on radio-internet articulations bring the potentials of people's interconnection in contemporary public life and questions traditional notion of journalism, which sees citizens "as reactive rather than proactive" and implies the "competitive model of democracy" (Strömbäck 2005). Online forms of communicative engagement have in this fashion facilitated the ideas of collaboration and collectivity in contemporary journalism of traditional media organizations, generating participatory possibilities for reshaping of prevailing societal roles of journalists (Singer et al. 2011). Interviewees from the Slovenian public radio are highly critical of prevailing realizations of journalism at Radio Slovenia. Some say that public radio journalists should depart from the norm of objectivity in journalism and take a more analytical approach to societal life – identifying problems and providing solutions to those problems. For instance, "The worst thing we can do is to adhere to these good old rules of objectivity and balance. /.../ If you strive for balance it often happens that you end up promoting something bad." (Val 202 Journalist C) Additionally, Val 202 Journalist A stresses that people "need also alternative sources" other than "mainstream" in order to be able to participate – social media have this "function".

Despite some indications that social life of radio news in terms of the radio-audience relationship and societal roles of journalism needs rethinking, on the basis of one case one cannot synthesize that social media is revolutionizing radio. Additional studies of this case, but also others cases, are needed to profoundly explore principles and practices of interactive modes of journalism, previously identified as both inclusivist and also exclusivist (Singer et al. 2011). Namely, there are examples when different modes of audience participation in journalism have done away with some traditional ideals in journalism, such as objectivity, and have replaced them with alternatives, such as multiperspectivity; yet, at the same time traditional media organizations have tended to develop models of audience engagement that do not involve non-professionals on equal footing as they enable professional journalists to retain control in news making. In any case, rethinking the social life of radio news in the context of social media proliferation in audience interactivity on the path toward the "apparatus of communication" should be understood as "utopian" as Brecht (1932/1994: 17) would put it, "This is innovation, a suggestion that seems utopian and that I myself admit to be utopian. When I say that the radio or the theatre 'could' do so-and-so I am aware that these vast institutions cannot do all they 'could', and not even all they want."

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WHEN THE AUDIENCE CHANGES A JOURNALIST

The subject of this essay is the relationship between television journalists and their audience, focusing on the feedback given by the viewers and their participation in transforming journalistic practices in TV programs' production.

I have been working as a TV journalist and news editor in a private independent production company for ten years. I have been facing changes in journalism practice since the years when the audience used to write letters, traditionally mailed to our TV production, suggesting the topics journalists should cover. The Internet, new technology and social media changed this practice in recent years, giving the audience numerous opportunities to participate in the production of journalistic stories. Therefore the journalists and news editors were given the opportunity to communicate directly with the audience, to share ideas and experiences and to use the audience as sources of information. The TV production I have been working for, used to maintain such communication through its website and an email address which has been written at the screen of every TV program we produce. Viewers suggest the topics of their interest or comment on what they have been watching. It led us to some very interesting TV stories and gave us the opportunity to seek beyond mainstream news.

In the past three months I have witnessed a true transformation of my own journalistic practice in a TV program production. A new TV program, produced in a form of a studio debate with guests discussing actual economic and social topics, has been structured in a manner to be opened for the audience before the filming process starts. It means the audience has the chance to discuss on Twitter and Facebook pages of our TV program about the topic seven days prior to filming in the studio, to ask questions and provide information on what might be interesting for them to hear and see in a broadcast. A number of questions viewers have asked were directly answered in a studio debate and changed the structure of the TV program: the participation of the audience via social media, website or email address was important for the TV crew to understand the potentials of human interest stories and the audience feedback in the topics they have asked for. This practice changed my own point of view: as a journalist at the beginning of a career ten years ago, I was taught by more experienced editors that, considering the sources of information, among traditional sources as newspapers, news archives and face-to-face contacts, I needed to maintain regular communication with two most important people in a city: a bartender and a taxi driver. I was taught they were up to date with all news a journalist should seek for. Ten years later I gather information from the audience through social media, listening to their suggestions and covering the stories they bring up as interesting or important. In this process, though a journalist is enriched with fresh information gained from the audience and follows a specific story, he or she keeps up with professional standards and therefore acts like a "middleman" between the audience and officials, one and the other side, trying to provide objective approach to a topic.

My journalistic experience was completely changed last month, after the broadcast of two TV studio debates dealing with the situation in Serbian culture and higher education. A teacher from a high-school in the city of Kragujevac, one hundred kilometres distant from the capital, called my editors and said they watched those two episodes in an extra-curriculum class. Therefore he wanted to bring his pupils to the studio and to provide them the opportunity to discuss the topics with the journalistic team, to find out more and to show them what the media literacy actually was. Several days after that, fifty pupils from that high-school came to our studio, along with their professors, and they had a chance to ask questions not only about the process of the filming, but also about the core of the journalistic job: they were interested in the sources of information we use, selection of guests, filming TV reports on the field, my preparation for the interviews, etc. At the other hand, pupils had their own opinion on the media, the sources of information they used and discussed the actual situation in the traditional educational process. Their participation in the structure of our TV debates transformed the given concept of the program: we agreed to film their own school debate in a classroom. The concept of this TV program would present pupils watching two TV debates about culture and education and those programs would be the cause of a latter pupils' debate, which should be developed in a classroom, pointing out pupils' attitudes towards those themes and their interaction with the

Name
Aleksandra Krstic
Institution
Mreza Production Group, Belgrade
Faculty of Political Sciences,
University of Belgrade
Country
Serbia

Email Address
aleksandrass@yahoo.com,
aleksandra.krstic@fpn.bg.ac.rs
Keywords
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media. Having this in mind, we are trying to raise the debate about media literacy, a term which is still being misunderstood among Serbian public. Not only students' interaction with the media brought us to discuss this concept, but also enriched us as journalists to think more about public debates and all possible platforms that could bring the citizens' participation into account when we are doing our job. Media literacy is here connected both to citizens' as media consumers and as media producers, which is of a great significance for performing TV journalism according to professional standards. Therefore, audience participation in the media production and distribution does not mean treating the audience as a public sitting in a studio, applauding and nodding, but causing their participation in a form of a wider public debate which would be also publically presented through media outlets, just as important as they are perceived as sources of information in every professional media. So, those two roles of the audience – as consumers of media products who are inspired to take further action in decision-making processes or in bringing the debate into their local communities, and as producers of information who share the news with the media professionals, enriching the structure of their stories – should be the core of every serious media outlet's strategy. This strategy has not been fully recognized in the Serbian media landscape because the media in Serbia are occupied with financial constraints, shutting down due to the economic crisis and somewhat conservative belief that journalism should only be performed by professional journalists. I believe there is a huge potential "on the other side", among the audience, that will

certainly be recognized as a trigger to start developing the media products that will allow greater participation of the audience, as well as thinking in advance about the effects of every journalistic story. The best of them will bring up wider public debate on current issues in society and it will present the essence of what political theorists call "deliberative democracy" – at the end, the decisions made by the state officials, the government and other public institutions will be more accountable only if there is wider citizens' participation in the decision-making process. And the role of the media here is the most important since they are acting as controllers of the government and as a bridge between the state and the citizens. As much as journalists take the audience into account when making just a simple story, the chances to perform journalism in a democratic manner will be higher. And that is exactly what I have been teaching students of TV journalism at the Faculty of Political Sciences, since they are the journalists of the future who will have to maintain such a practice of communicating with the audience if they want to create stories and programs which will serve as a platform for wider public debates in the democratic society they live and work in.

Name
Marisa Torres da Silva
Institution
New University of Lisbon
Country
Portugal

Email Address
marisatorresilva@hotmail.com
Keywords
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PROFESSIONAL VIEWS' ON LETTERS-TO-THE-EDITOR AS A MEANS OF AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

Due to its historical watchdog and mediator function, journalism provides citizens direct access to the public sphere, in the form of diverse means of participation, ensuring that the voice of the people can be heard in the democratic process (McNair, 2009). In that context, writing letters to the editor is one of the existing vehicles for participation in the printed press, enabling the exchange of information, ideas and opinions between different groups of people, and thus providing a significant forum for public debate. Despite the continuing growth and omnipresence of electronic and digital media, and consequently more diverse forms of audience participation, newspapers — and specifically the letters-to-the-editor page — remain an important site of contemporary public discourse (Gregory and Hutchins, 2004), promoting citizens' involvement in public life and, also, allowing readers to "talk back" to newspapers (Reader, 2001).

In this essay, we retake the findings of a previous research on letters to the editor in the Portuguese press (Silva, 2010, 2012), particularly in respect to the relationship between journalists and letters-writers, as well as the former's views on the correspondence section, trying to gasp the professional's perceptions on this form of audience feedback and participation. We used qualitative methods in order to gain a thorough understanding of the journalists'

perspectives on letters and letters-writers – extensive interaction with four Portuguese national press publications[1] (participant observation, as well as informal contacts with journalists/editors in charge of the section) and in-depth and semi-structured interviews with the editors-in-chief of the selected publications[2].

In terms of perceptions on the letters-to-editor functions/roles in press, the professionals interviewed showed a very similar perspective: the correspondence section constitutes an open forum for participation, dialogue and even criticism towards the publication. "Readers have here the opportunity to express their opinion, and sometimes providing a different point of view on a certain issue" (editor-in-chief, *Expresso*), as well as "to correct a news article, offering feedback to journalists" (editor-in-chief, *Diário de Notícias*). Additionally, the editors-in-chief inquired sustained that letters are a kind of a "barometer" towards issues of collective interest, and also towards the press publication's performance.

The letters' section, though constructed by professionals as an exercise in public debate, also enhances credibility in the eyes of the readers and increases circulation. (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2007), like if it were a "public relations" tool (*idem*, 2002). The editors-in-chief underlined this perspective: "If people send letters to us, it's a sign that

we are important in society" (editor-in-chief, *Metro*); "marketing studies show that the letters section is very important to readers" (editor-in-chief, *Visão*), which makes the correspondence section "absolutely structural" in the design of a newspaper and "untouchable to readers", contrary to other sections of the newspapers (editor-in-chief, *Expresso*). "We usually publish letters that criticize our news reporting (…). Is this a benefit, in terms of public image of the newspaper? It certainly is" (editor-in-chief, *Metro*).

Similarly, Karin Wahl-Jorgensen (2002, 2007), from Cardiff University, claims that editors recognize the democratic potential of the letters section, as a public forum, but they also understand it like a "customer service", which makes the readers happy and may increase the newspaper's economic profit. The coexistence of these two visions entails a "normative-economic justification" for public discourse: what is good for democracy is also good, inevitably, for business (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2002). Through the interaction with the newspapers' offices and the in-depth interviews with the editors-in-chief of the selected publications, we may also say that the correspondence section is viewed simultaneously as a forum for public debate but also a strategic feature on the reinforcement of the newspaper's credibility to its reader.

This assertion is reinforced by the sharp contradiction between the normative view on the letters' functions in the press expressed by these professionals and the sceptical view on letter-writers. In fact, scholars have previously shown that journalists have a negative image towards its audience, seeing it as not being capable to express ideas a in a relevant way

(Sorlin, 1992) or unrepresentative of the general population (Gans, 1980).

Moreover, the interviews with the editors-in-chief, as well as the informal contacts with the journalists in charge of the section, showed that these professionals clearly assumed that the letters' section is not valued by journalists, understanding it as something absolutely secondary in the newspaper context. For instance, the journalist in charge of the *Expresso* letters' section claimed that journalists usually looked at readers' correspondence as a sort of second-level opinion, contrary to the op-ed articles, seen as "major" opinion. The editor-in-chief of the same newspaper goes beyond this perception, by saying: "it is very rare that something that interests readers is valued by journalists as well; 80 per cent of what interests journalists doesn't interest readers, and vice-versa".

Although they view the correspondence section as a forum for public debate and as a crucial element of the organizational structure of the newspaper/magazine pages, editors "are sceptical about the value of the letters section as a site for free expression and democratic communication because of what they perceive as the poor quality of public participation, and the non-representativeness of the letters writers" (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2007: 135). Indeed, the editor-in-chief of *Metro* newspaper affirmed that the majority of letters are just "common sense and do not add new perspectives nor information".

We could confirm the devaluation of the letters section and its contributors by the informal contacts and participant

observation that we carried out on the four publications, examining the behaviours, the attitudes and the discourses towards the correspondence page.

We observed that the correspondence section was managed in the context of the professional routines of the journalists in charge of the section; the selection process of readers' texts was thus conducted depending on the time left for it and it was perceived as an activity to perform alongside other activities, that might possibly be seen as more important and interesting (Silva, 2012).

We also verified that the language used by the journalists in charge showed their dissatisfaction with the letters task: for instance, an editor referred ironically to the section as "a nice page" and also suggested that she was in charge of the letters because "someone had to take care of it" (*ibidem*). Although the editor showed her dislike about the task, there were some readers' texts that received a very positive reaction, for the editor considered them to be "very interesting" or "funny".

In terms of language and attitudes towards letters writers, we observed an "idiom of insanity" (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2007) towards some readers, when they refer to them as "crazy". Indeed, we may say that editors generally lack affinity with the letter writers, and sometimes label quite a few of them as insane (Raeymaeckers, 2005: 204), as opposed to the "rational" or "normal" readers.

As observed in the informal contacts with the publications selected, some "regular" letter-writers (the ones that send letters

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1   *Diário de Notícias* (a daily national newspaper), *Expresso* (a weekly national newspaper), *Visão* (a newsmagazine) and *Metro* (a free daily national newspaper).

2   The interaction with the four press publications and the interviews with the editors-in-chief were both carried out between 2007 and 2009.

to newspapers once or more a week) were considered insane because they write (too) many times to the newspaper, or they focused only on a particular issue very close to their hearts. The editors showed, through their daily language, major scepticism and even despise towards these writers, using expressions such as "nuts", "insane" or "crazy" when referring to them. Therefore, their letters were almost automatically rejected for publication. We can say that this "idiom of insanity" somewhat delegitimizes the value of the letters section, even though it was used towards a few letters writers. This type of behaviour was also common in the publications' offices that we observed, although there were rare moments where the journalists/editors seemed to enjoy some letter-writers opinions.

Thus, through this case study of the relationship between journalists and letter writers in the Portuguese press, we can infer that, while maintaining a normative view on the correspondence section, in respect to its democratic functions, the inquired professionals have a general negative perspective on the value of letters to the editor as a forum for public discourse.

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Name
Lucia Vesnic-Alujevic
Institution
Centre for European Studies
Country
Belgium

Email Address
lucy.vessal@gmail.com
Keywords
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ONLINE STRATEGIES OF MEMBERS OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

When the first social media site appeared, its goal was to link the students on a university campus so that they could exchange information. This application soon spread to linking (lost) friends and family, and was later extended to business and politics. Today social media are considered to be the marketing strategy du jour for corporations and organizations in the digitalized world. In a study that investigated the strategies of companies, government institutions and non-profit organizations (Zerfass, 2011), it was revealed that the professional role of social media is increasing, with an average of seven social media sites being utilized by each public relations department.

Social media have quickly been adopted by policymakers as well. To have a presence on social media, politicians need to have celebrity appeal in order to be successful and to be able to form a "friendship" with the wider public. While creating a profile itself is indispensable, being active on the media is crucial to success. Over a short period of several years, social media entered the mainstream of political communication. On the EU level, social media have been used since the campaign for the 2009 European Parliament elections. Through the use of different websites, Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) have tried to connect better with the potential electorate, offer more information about their work and opinion and mobilize supporters. Since then, the use of social media has developed and

is becoming slightly more systematic among the MEPs. This essay is based on semis-structured interviews with Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), their advisors and campaign managers, held in the period January-June 2012.

New communication and information technologies are transforming existing forms of political communication (Lilleker & Jackson, 2011) through the use of social media that permit more interaction and communication between political actors and the audiences (Lilleker & Vedel, 2013). The relatively recent creation of web 2.0, as a new form of interactive Internet, gave new opportunities for politicians to reach out audiences on social media websites, platforms and tools designed to facilitate interpersonal interaction. However, not all countries, internet platforms or politicians use the same amount of interaction with their audiences, which was confirmed by the interviewees. At the same time, although some scholars (e.g. Papacharissi, 2006) argue that online political discussions promote greater citizen participation, it is questionable if the individuals who engage in participation on social media sites (through discussions, likes, forwarding content etc.) become more politically active offline i.e., if it can affect political participation and electoral turnout. That is one of the doubts, expressed both by scholars as well as politicians.

Nevertheless, political leaders on the EU level agree that the penetration of the Internet into people's daily lives has brought about changes to their practices,

in the sense that their communication and information habits and behaviours have changed. This is due to the ability to more rapidly gather, store and share large amounts of information; network with other politicians, party members and supporters; and message citizens and others. The ability to establish personal connections with voters is the vast advantage of social media, but at the same time this makes individuals more responsible for their online presence and activities.

Many EU parliamentarians started to realize the strength and power of social media as a new medium that could be used for political promotion only after their presumable success in the 2008 US elections' campaign. Parliamentarians and their advisers mostly think that social media can have an impact on the familiarity of European citizens with the EU and their elected representatives. For example, an interviewee noted that, "if it is used in a proper way, Facebook can be an instrument of approach because it allows dialogue with citizens." (MEP, personal communication, 1 March 2012). Many communication managers and advisors are very optimistic regarding its use, even believing that social media "will take over from classical methods" (communication manager, personal communication, 20 March 2012). They are considered to be "absolutely indispensable" (political advisor, personal communication, 1 March 2012) as they represent a very good way of communicating directly with a large audience.

However, among the interviewees, the majority see the Internet mostly as a supplement to traditional media and although admitting the importance of being online, they stick to television, as the main campaign media: "I think traditional media is still the most important, I have no doubt about this […]" (political advisor, personal communication, 16 February 2012).

Yet, European political actors do not completely neglect social media because they agree that online tools can be an important additional component. As one of them explained: "There is a chance for more people to be informed" (MEP, personal communication, 8 May 2012). This is especially true when it comes to young people and the possibility to attract them, taking into consideration that they are predominantly using social media in order to get information and interact with others: "At the end a lot of young people are using it, so it's a chance to winning a great public space for the election" (MEP, personal communication, 8 May 2012).

Through social media, different networks can be created between citizens and politicians, as well as between like-minded politicians themselves. This is a good 'viral' way of building a fan base, because it can help to gather and connect supporters who are politically like-minded, from which a bigger organisation, such as a political party or a political group on the EU level, can later benefit. Many campaign managers agree that personal presence and interaction are important for social media, especially in the long run, because

the interaction makes a politician 'a real person' in the online world: 'If you do Twitter and Facebook, you have to be personable and interactive and present.' (Political advisor, personal communication, 27 February 2012). However many politicians argue that being present on social media is very time-consuming, so if they do decide to get involved, they ask their assistants to do the job for them. As one MEP stated: "I do not normally make statements on social networks" (MEP, personal communication, 16 February 2012). Nevertheless, social media usually require politicians to be more personable than on other media, so this is not considered a good tactic because a personal presence is often needed. As well as establishing closer contact, trust and sympathy through interaction with people, which is strategically important because 'people like politicians with a personal touch' (MEP, personal communication, 20 March 2012). One MEP stated that the relationship can become even closer: "[We] develop more personal relations with those whom we consider more constructive, creative and interesting."(MEP, personal communication, 27 February 2012).

Two major sites that are distinguished in European politics are Facebook and Twitter. While Twitter offers a very short and direct outlet, Facebook is more informal and interactive. Therefore, use of the two sites needs to be complementary. Many campaign managers and politicians agree that Twitter is the most relevant and useful in politics at the EU level. This is due to the fact that people on Twitter know more about the EU than the average EU citizen and they often

have links to politics, either professionally or through personal interest. Also, as they have decided to follow politics and politicians by receiving regular tweets, they are considered to be much more informed. This group of people generally consists of journalists, bloggers, experts and political 'junkies', who are often opinion makers as well. At the same time, as discussed above, European politicians use online tools to inform citizens in the first place; Twitter seems like a logical first choice. Many of them use Facebook as well, but as it is considered to be a more informal surroundings, politicians pay less attention to the comments of citizens. At the European level, a small minority use it for interacting with and engaging audiences.

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Name of the Interviewer
Maximillian Hänska-Ahy
Institution
London School of Economics
Country
United Kingdom
Email Address
M.T.Hanska-Ahy@lse.ac.uk

Names of the Interviewees
Claire Wardle, Director of News Services; and Malachy Browne, News Editor
Institution
Storyful (www.Storyful.com)
Country
Ireland
Email Address
M.T.Hanska-Ahy@lse.ac.uk

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SOCIAL MEDIA & JOURNALISM: REPORTING THE WORLD THROUGH USER GENERATED CONTENT

Nowadays, social media are ubiquitous, offering many opportunities for people to share and access information, to create and distribute content, and to interact with more traditional media. For news organisations the social web has become an important platform for distributing content as well as a space where reporting and newsgathering takes place. This interview, with two news professionals who work exclusively on bringing social media content to broadcast news, explores some of the challenges and opportunities facing journalism as it moves into the digital age.

Max Hänska: Social media has come to play an increasingly important role in newswork, why is that?

Malachy Browne: I think it is starting to dawn on news organisations that there are many valuable conversations out there across the social web that you can listen to. As our political editor explained it to school kids: "it is like being superman, you can hear everyone's voices but you need to know which ones you should listen to." I think this is what news organisations are trying to achieve now. They are trying set up systems that allow them to pick up relevant signals from the noise across social media. More traditional newsrooms struggle to move into the digital age, they struggle with these new sources of information.

Also, I would say that social media is now

the platform on which hard news stories are delivered. Barack Obama famously announced his winning the US elections on Twitter before traditional media did.

Max Hänska: Do these developments mean that journalism's role and values are changing?

Claire Wardle: I think news values are staying the same but there has to be a recognition now that audiences are looking at the same raw content that journalists survey. Audiences can compare what's happening in the social web and what's happening on the BBC in real time, and when there's a discrepancy it might look like censorship to them. Particularly on high profile stories this means that there is no room to hide things anymore. For instance, at one point during the student protests in London the BBC was focused on three boys throwing stones. Quite a few people started tweeting to the news editor, basically asking: why are you focusing on these boys throwing stones when there are whole groups of students sitting peacefully playing guitars? This is not representative of what's happening on Parliament Square. And he tweeted back to them, essentially saying something along the lines of we're a news channel, we need good pictures. This was fascinating to me; here was the editor having a conversation with the audience over news values during the actual reporting. Holding his hand up and saying, my job is not to be representative, my job is to tell a story, and to tell a story that is visually appealing. He was justifying himself, making transparent a process that most people don't even consider because they see it on the news and they think it's the truth. No, these are subjective decisions being made every minute by picture editors about how to tell a story.

Max Hänska: With this immediacy of content streaming across the social web, how is the role of journalism changing?

Claire Wardle: As the raw data is available to everyone, journalists add value by adding context. At Storyful we call this raw data 'atoms of content', which we supply to news organisations and it's up to them to supply the context, to explain why it matters. For me the London riots were a key turning point for news because everything I needed I could get from twitter. By the time the BBC did a two and half minute package or wrote a 600 word piece on their webpage there was nothing in there that I did not already know. But what I did want at the end of the week was the 2000 word piece with the analysis, why did this happen, how did it happen, how can we prevent this from happening? The difference between the long reads and the atoms, that's where we are moving, and the middle ground is struggling. So journalist will have to do more of what journalism was originally about. What we need is on the one side fact-checking and on the other analysis and context. And I think that is what will make journalism stronger. From just following twitter I don't know who to trust, what's the historical context of all this. I'm still going to follow that, but amidst all the noise I want news organisations to tell me which tweet is accurate and what it means.

Max Hänska: Who then decides what becomes a story in the social media age, are journalists still important gatekeepers?

Claire Wardle: When I first joined Storyful I said we have this tension: On the one hand we know that our news clients have particular stories that they want content about. So we have a

responsibility to supply them with content for stories that we already know they are going to cover. But we also have a responsibility as separate type of news organisation to say, hang on, there is something happening in Buenos Aires which isn't on anyone's agenda right now, but we can see across the social web that it's important. So we need to balance our efforts so that we are doing both at the same time. Because if we only said, look here is a really obscure story from the Solomon Islands, then no one will be interested, because our clients want content for stories that are already on their radar.

Max Hänska: As a news organisation working exclusively with social media, what does your typical workday look like, what are your routines?

Claire Wardle: Just like any newsroom we have a structure and routine. There are some stories that we know we will cover, so we gather UGC on those. But we also have some staff that are just tasked with sitting heads down wearing earphones running searches on places and across locations that we known news might go on, just seeing has anything new happened, searching for new news. So it's a mixture of that and the things that we know are on the news agenda.

Max Hänska: An important part of your workflow has to do with verification. Could you explain how you go about processing social media content to make it suitable for your clients?

Malachy Browne: With new UGC on a story we're investigating there are three primary things we look at: date, location and original source of the content. We often begin with location because it is often easy to verify based

on topographical details that can be matched using google maps, wikimapia, or panoramio (geo-tagged photos). You can match a minaret or a bridge within a video using one of these sources, so you can absolutely establish the location. Then we have a look to see if other videos emerge that support the same story (shelling, bombing, event etc.). Then we look to people who are actually writing on Facebook or twitter, people that we know are based in that same area who are reporting the same thing. We look not only at re-tweets of the same stock phrase being share and re-shared, but for people describing the event slightly differently. So when the population reporting an event is sufficiently large and diverse this suggests wisdom among the crowd - that multiple sources are reporting the event, rather than a single source being quoted.

I'll give you an example. The morning that Marie Colvin and Remi Ochlik were killed in Syria we first got that information over our Twitter list. We use twitter lists as our main signal. As soon as this information emerged we started to investigate it. A video emerged very quickly from an activist based there. So we knew that it was probably legitimate. Then a second activists that we knew was based there uploaded a video of the same building, same angles similar quality. There were also people talking about it in Arabic. By identifying and engaging with the conversations closest to the event we identified an Egyptian who's cousin was an activist working in the same media centre as Colvin and Ochlik, this supported other evidence we had of an attack on the centre, allowing us to establish the veracity of these reports. Social media is not only a good signal for new stories, but also allows us to investigate stories in greater detail.

CONVERSATIONAL STYLE OF JOURNALISM

James Ball is a data journalist working for the Guardian investigations team. He joined the Guardian from Wikileaks, and the Bureau of Investigative Journalism. He is the Washington Post Laurence Stern Fellow for 2012.

Q: How would you describe the journalism transformation due to audience empowerment in the new media environment?

A: I think you've got two factors. One is the where the audience is shifting? They are obviously moving online, which for someone like the Guardian is both the really big treat and a really big opportunity. The Guardian is losing print circulation very fast, it is down to less than 200,000, and that really hurts. The flipside of that is that the Guardian has always been a very small newspaper, but it's a huge website so 200,000 people get a print paper each day, but the 4 million read it online every day, 608 million different people each month look at website, so you have the mix of a massive treat and a massive opportunity. More people are consuming the Guardian news than ever before and it's hard not to like that. So, there is a bigger audience for journalism, I think than ever before. The other thing that changes is actually how they interact and how we interact with them. People are much more able to check into a new story, and just comment on the bottom. In some places the journalist just writes a story while comments are just left a side. In the Guardian you are very strongly

encouraged to read your comment treads and to be in them. If you comment early in the news tread, the tone is usually better and a lot more on the topic, because people know that you are reading what they say, you get less abuse and more conversation. That is built in E-thought of Guardian, which they call an open journalism, trying to recognize that on a lot of areas some of people who read the Guardian will know more about it than journalists do.

Q: You seem to be talking about participatory journalism, because your audience is contributing to the content or you produce the content almost together.

A: Yeah, I think to an extent that has always been done. Let us say you are doing a complex investigation you cannot prove everything. If you hit a dead end, one of the things you can think about is publishing what you've got already. It may not be that strong of a story, it may not be a page one, and you risk ticking someone else to look into it. You publish what you have got and see if anyone responds to that. In fact my second story is not finished yet, but I published the story a few weeks ago and 3 or 4 people got in touch to say: yeah you're right, and there's more and some of them could give me evidence, and give me the stuff I hadn't been able to get the first time around. So the ability to do that kind of stuff is good. I also quite like some of the conversational aspects of journalism now. Twitter can be awful but it can also be really good. It is incredibly easy to find a journalist on there and to communicate with them about story. It's like asking a room full of people their opinion on your story, they are strangers so they are

more likely to be honest. You get feedback in quite interesting ways and you get to see who likes the story and who doesn't and why. People may also link you to similar stuff. Also I have had people who got in touch on Twitter, and I got sense this person knows more about this, you start chatting and ask is there a chance you send me a private message with your phone number, and you got a source for a follow up. This kind of conversational style of journalism I like. There are things that work, and some things don't and especially when you do on projects, like I do investigations, on which I usually can't talk about what my next story it is going be, sometimes I work for three to four months on a story. I still use a lot of traditional methods, but there are a lot of times when you got to go out there.

Q: How would you name it, because we heard expressions like multi task, multimedia, multi skill journalists? Could you phrase it in one phrase?

A: I like the Guardian term for it – I'm doing an open journalism, even conversational journalism. It almost seems like such an obvious way to take advantage of the Internet, I don't even think that it does need a term.

Q: Do you think that the roles of journalists are changing from their traditionally defined roles?

A: People like and trust journalists to prioritize the news for them, and different journalists do in different ways, and that's why we have them. Papers are much more shaped by their audiences then shaping their

Name of the Author
Ana Milojevic (interviewer),
Jelena Kleut (editor)
Institution
University of Belgrade
Country
Serbia
Email Address
ana.milojevic@fpn.bg.ac.rs, kleut@ neobee.net

Name of the Interviewee
James Ball
Institution
The Guardian
Country
United Kingdom

Keywords
Participatory journalism, Audience

audiences. I think the role has changed, but in society, the big picture has changed less. How it is carried out is changed a bit more. I think it is much more conversational. There is a shift towards a little bit more personality. I don't think we are throwing out fairness, objectivity and so on. It is a little bit more ok now for journalists, because your audience wants to talk with you, wants to engage with you on different platforms, at different levels of formality. This sort of anonymous impartial reporter image is fading a bit because obviously the people are engaging with you on Twitter, on other networks, in comment treads and so on. Bits of personalities start to come through. I think that journalists are flashing a bit of personality along with analysis and news. That is a real thing and should be paid attention to. It is often called "journalist as brand", when journalists are a bit of personality.

Q: You are suggesting that the tone of journalism is becoming more personal?

A: I don't think that means that everything should start moving towards a chatty tone "my opinion is". I think I have used the word "I" in journalism maybe 3 times in 5 years, and any time I do I pause and try to get it out. There are very few occasions when you have to. I think that is a good thing if people know a certain journalist, especially if working in analytical field, data or economic analysis, to have a bit of a sense about where they are coming from, or what approaches they take, or they do certain things. I would love it if every journalist said how they voted, or what charities or institutions they support, rather than being quiet about politics and

pretending to be impartial. Keeping a view secret is like pretending that you do not have it. Here is how I vote, judge if I'm biased or not. I feel that's better. A little bit of personality and a bit of engagement, but I do not think we have to throw out anything. I think this is happening on its own, and papers do not need to encourage it, but be aware of it. Because for some journalists, it means that paper might come to rely on them as much as they rely on paper. I think smart news organizations will adjust how they operate.

Q: There was a trend among news organizations to push journalists to run their own blogs. Is it still going on?

A: I think to an extent yes. But I think more and more people are trying to make blogs to where there is a point to making a blog. The idea that every journalist should have a blog is a bad one. There are a lot of instances where they are useful. Some journalists don't come well on blogs. That's not their tone. The tone of a blog is different, it's more conversational, less formal and you tend to be catering to a smaller regular audience in a way that you are not with news stories. A general reporter starting a blog does not make much sense. Your health reporter starting a blog and using that to cater to health professionals, using that to cater to the general audience is actually a smart idea. That reporter should have a blog, especially if he or she is showing that they are good in using it in that way. In a lot of instances journalists should be bloggers, but not always.

Name of the Interviewer
Ana Milojevic
Institution
**University of Belgrade,
Faculty of Political Sciences**
Country
Serbia
Email Address
**ana.milojevic@fpn.bg.ac.rs,
anamilojevic@gmail.com**

Name of the Interviewee
Steve Herrmann
Institution
The BBC
Country
United Kingdom

Keywords
**Journalism, Audience, Social media,
Curator, Societal role**

JOURNALISM TAKING UP A CURATOR ROLE

Steve Herrmann is editor of the BBC News website, since 2006. He is in charge of BBC News editorial coverage online and oversees operations across the website and on demand services. Since 2011, he has also been leading on the overall editorial development of BBC News' digital presence. He joined the BBC News website in 1997 just after it launched and has worked in a variety of journalistic roles, including periods in the Balkans and East Africa, since beginning his BBC career in 1985.

Q: How audience empowerment is changing journalism, is it transforming journalism in a way?

A: I think it is transforming journalism and I think that is for a number of reasons. The audience has ways to express themselves far more easily than they could before and they can make their views known. They can put out information on social media networks or blogs. If they see something that a journalist has written on our broadcast which they disagree with, which they like, or which they have a view on, they can talk about it. I think the effect on journalism is that a sort of accountability has arisen as result of people having the ability to speak out instantly on social media platforms. Which I think is a good thing. Because it means that journalism is being scrutinized and people are able to comment on it, to the debate it and to talk back.

Q: If I understand you well, your opinion is that journalism is becoming more accountable to the public or to the audience?

A: Whether is it actually becoming more accountable I couldn't say, but I think there is an opportunity for accountability and transparency that is presented by social media. Also, journalists can see what people are thinking and saying about their work. There is a challenge there as well. The challenge is how you respond to that, how do you engage with that.

Q: Engaging with the audience is becoming more and more a defining feature of journalism. In academic circles the concept of participatory journalism has been introduced. Could you reflect on that concept?

A: It is impossible to operate in a vacuum and to pretend that you know everything and that you will tell people your story and report on what you have to say without paying attention to what other people are saying about it. Journalism is a two-way process now. People are talking about what is happening. People are often aware of it before you are, almost always if it is breaking or a developing story. They will be reporting on it in some shape or form, using their mobile phones or twitter or on social media platforms. Journalists have to be involved in that process and cannot afford any more just to be talking in one direction without listening. The old broadcast model where you were broadcasting to many with no return path is over.

Q: In your working routine or in the working routines that you observe, how are the audience voices integrated into journalism content?

A: One of the most important ways in which audience is integrated is in the process of news gathering which is at the heart of the journalism. An integral part of news gathering now is to look up what people who are close to the story either geographically or cognitively know about it. One of the most effective ways of doing that is trough the social media. Online platforms are very good for asking people: do you know something, have you seen something, can you send us pictures, can you send us a video. On every significant story we are looking to see what the public can tell us about the story. One recent example is story about the hurricane Sandy in the USA. People were taking pictures and videos of things that were happening to them, things that they were seeing, they were witnesses to. One news organization would never be able to get that amount of coverage and to be on that many places at once. Even all the news organizations combined would not be able to be on that many places at once. So, making use of that material, videos, pictures and eye witness reports was an integral part of telling that story. That is one example. Another example would be when you are reporting on a specialist subject like a health story. If you publish the story and ask people: what do you think, do you know anything about it… You will often get people who have some experience about the condition, experts, doctors or others who have an interest in a

story, to add to the story. So a community of interest forms instantaneously around the story, and people come together and discuss about it and debate it and feed in extra information.

Q: Talking about audience participation you have stressed the importance of the audience as the source of information. But once the text gets published, is it really finished? Because, audience can interact with a story in so many different ways, how do you mange audience feedback as an editor in the news organization?

A: Sometimes publishing the stories is just the beginning. Because, then you get reaction, you get people telling you more information, sometimes even contradicting some of the information. The challenge then is to make sure that you have systems in place to monitor what is happening, to listen and to follow up the story. An important question is whether discussions on social media drive the journalism. I think there is a balance. The audience does not necessarily set the agenda. But once we publish the story, we will often look at what people are saying about it, what they're interested in, and then sometimes we will add to a story. We will do a follow-up coverage as a result of feedback that we have had about a story.

Q: Would you say that journalists still have the power to set the agenda for the public discussion?

A: To give you the short answer, I would say yes. Because I think that newspapers, TV channels, radio programs still have audiences

and they have big audiences. The broadcast news still attracts very big audiences. I do not think social media and online media have replaced them, rather they have added to them. But equally I think it is increasingly clear that the agenda can be set by people on social media as well.

Q: Could you reflect on the changing role of journalism in the society, compared to their traditional role?

A: One of the aspects of a journalist's role that is becoming increasingly important is the ability to act as a guide. Nowadays a whole range of sources are available to people. Journalist should find the best and vouch for them. To say this source is worth listening to, this person is worth following, this video is worth watching and to bring together the best things to help to tell the story. So in other words, not necessarily to tell the entire story completely, but also to help audience to find the best of the other things that are around is an increasingly important role of any journalist.

Q: Could we say that it is an orientation role?

A: The word that is used quite often is curation. So choosing, finding and presenting a selection of the most valuable and the most interesting pieces of material, sources and links for your viewers, readers and listeners. It is an important part of what journalists need to be doing now. In some way that is what journalism has always done. Journalists have always had sources that they trust, and they were always looking for new sources. However, the range of sources

and the places that you can go to look for has expanded hugely. Knowing how to navigate that landscape and to find the good sources and the good stories in that landscape is a really important skill.

Q: Would say that the normative predispositions of journalism haven't changed much?

A: I think there are some things that haven't changed. The fundamental purposes of finding out information, reporting it, establishing that it is true and making that appealing to the public, are still very much what journalists are doing. However, the way in which that happens is changed. The tools have changed. With the advent of digital media, the quantity of information and the ease with which we can get hold of it has changed. The speed with which the information comes out has also changed, now information travels much more quickly than they used to. All of those things place new demands on journalists and change the way they do their business. The fundamental aspects of journalism are still there but in order to carry them out, journalists have to adapt to new ways of working.

Name of the Interviewer
Meri Maretić
Institution
County of Split and Dalmatia
Country
Croatia
Email Address
meri.maretic@hi.htnet.hr

Name of the Interviewee
Ante Babić, univ.spec.oec., parliamentary representative
Institution
Croatian Parliament
Country
Croatia

Keywords
politicians, new media, communication channels, Croatian Parliament, local self-government

NEW POLITICAL COMMUNICATION

The role of new media in the process of political decision making and citizens' inclusion in decision making important for development of particular environment is of extreme importance because it represents the platform for communication among politicians, media and citizens. Communication processes of local political leaders definitely differ from communication in the Croatian Parliament. Ante Babić is a politician that communicates on two levels on a daily basis – local and parliamentary. This expert in economy, a Croat born in Germany, was elected four times as mayor of the Municipality of Lovreć in the Split-Dalmatia County, and became representative in the Croatian Parliament after the last elections. He is a member of the Human Rights and National Minorities Committee, the Gender Equality Committee, the Family, Youth and Sport Committee, the Croatian Emigrants' Committee, the Delegation of Croatian Parliament in the Union Parliamentary Assembly for the Mediterranean, the Executive Committee of the Croatian Parliament National Group, and the Interparliamentary Cooperation Committee.

Q: It was interesting to hear the answer to a question about the differences in the ways to communicate with the constituency by using interactive communications strategies.

The Municipality of Lovreć Administration, that has been headed by him for almost 16 years, since 1998, is fully informatized and all interested parties communicate online.

The municipality mayor has been long-time web master of the official web page through which he receives messages from the citizens. Together with direct, face to face communication (characteristic for smaller communities), information about all decisions, but also opinions and ideas of citizens are published on the Municipality web portal.

At the same time, in his role of parliamentary representative, Ante Babić directs his daily communication towards all citizens, particularly towards the constituency of the Split-Dalmatia County in which he was elected. This is the largest Croatian County in the territorial sense with 16 cities and 39 municipalities.

A: I try to place the benefit of the wider community first. Concretely, before each of parliamentary sessions I send a message with the session agenda to the cities and municipalities, and I ask them to express their opinions, suggestions and proposals, as well as criticisms from local communities in relation to important issues.

Q: The importance of such acting is confirmed by many authors, such as Bjornlund: "Responsible governance and provision of services are based on continuous dialogue with the citizens with key role played by the media as communication mediators between local government and the citizens." (Bjornlund, 2006: 21). The use of new media offers the opportunity for a personalized approach to the constituency without intermediation of journalists: "The first form of relations between media and politics expresses various perceptions of

journalists and politicians in relation to the basic purposes of political communication." (Cottle, 2009: 51). The difference when readers are informed by journalists is evident in the need of politicians to convince their constituency about the correctness of opinions and decisions. Exactly this message is sent by Ante Babić when he tries to take into consideration issues of all citizens and in this way tries to help the community he represents by communicating through all available communication channels.

A: Regardless of my political affiliation I feel as representative of all citizens, and not only of those who belong to my political option.

Q: Which level of citizens' participation can be achieved in policy making?

A: I think that it is in everybody's best interest that citizens participate as much as possible in decision making. Civil society has to be strengthened and campaigns carried out with the aim of increasing the level of consciousness in regard to the possibility of influence on the decisions of Parliament. Citizens should participate more actively by using elected representatives. A lot can be changed if we have interested citizens and representatives that advocate in Parliament for solving problems in the best possible way.

Q: "Interactivity between the politicians and citizens strengthens the culture of political dialogue. Interactive communication implies that all participants of communication process are creators of information at the same time and that they can change their initial standpoints in the process of communication, as well

as initial standpoints of their collocutors." (Perinić, 2008: 21). Local self-government can build collaboration bridges with those that elected it and the representative bodies.

A: The public elects the person that it can trust and unrealized promises return to the agenda during elections, whether on local or parliamentary level.

This is confirmed by activities of Transparency International, which provided conclusions by organizing the action "We have the Right to Know": "Although the Freedom of Information Act has been in force in Croatia for a full nine years, less than 50 per cent of population knows about it. (...) Research shows that so far only 10 per cent of the citizens has exploited their right and sent a question to the right place." (Budimir, 2012: 20).

The use of new media in modern communication sometimes asks for active participation of politicians and citizens. Interactive communication gradually opens possibilities for inclusion of citizens in decision making. One of the most important objectives of democratic societies should be the creation of open dialogues between the constituency and political representatives. The Croatian politician Ante Babić has shown with his open communication that if you have the trust of your constituency, you can become a parliamentary representative after being elected mayor of a municipality. Use of modern communication channels definitely plays an important role on this journey with the aim strengthening of the citizens' role and their inclusion in the Croatian Parliament's decision-making.

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TRANSFORMING AUDIENCES, TRANSFORMING AUDIENCE EXPECTATIONS?

This essay results from an interview with Fiona Hyslop, Minister of Culture and External Affairs that was conducted in January 2013. The Scottish Parliament has placed great emphasis on both the Parliament and its members being easily accessible to the public since it was re-established in 1999. As part of this policy, it has developed an active website while many of its ministers make full use of social media such as Facebook and Twitter to communicate with their constituents and stakeholders. Ms Hyslop, Minister, is one member of the Scottish Government who makes extensive use of both Facebook and Twitter in order to keep both her constituents and stakeholders informed of her governmental activities.

Digital communication platforms render spatial and temporal restraints irrelevant, enabling politicians and their audiences to communicate at will. Thompson notes that new communication platforms have led to the creation by users of "new forms of action and interaction which have their own distinctive properties" (2005: 32, emphasis original). These properties may also, however, lead to the development of greater expectations on the part of audiences as they employ social media platforms to communication with their political representatives.

Q: The COST Action is researching the impact on audiences of the new media landscape. The political sphere is one in which digital media have opened up new channels of communication between politicians and their audiences. In what ways do these developments impact upon the relationship between yourself as an MSP and Government Minister, and the electorate?

A: One of the big challenges of social media and Twitter is that someone can contact you instantaneously and they expect an instantaneous response; they demand stimulation. However, I have to also service the needs of people in their 80s who carefully write a letter, put a stamp on it and post it. Why should I deal with an electronic query before the letter? It was the same with email when that developed – it raises expectations. Electronic media were meant to make things easier for us; they actually generate more activity.

Q: Do you find this creates new levels of activity?

A: Yes. It's not displacement, it's another level of communication that creates more work and therefore means that more of my time is spent on communication than in previous years. People want to be dealt with instantly and this can only be managed in certain circumstances. Social media create new routes for expressing opinions, but people are unlikely to use social media if they want to get problems resolved. For important matters, they will email or phone me.

Q: Do you feel social media have improved communication between you and your constituents?

A: Yes, but it's challenging because it is difficult to manage – unlike many other people, I don't sit at my desk at a computer – I am very busy actually meeting people, constituents and my mobile is frequently on silent because of other things I am managing. I therefore have to create spaces and time to manage social media.

Q: Do you respond to these communications via social platforms personally?

A: I frequently have to ask my staff to deal with them. Questions that require a ministerial answer are subject to the same process applicable for questions received through other media forms, such as email. Because the question comes in a different format does not mean the process can be changed. I may respond instantly if possible, but if figures are involved I need to be accurate; people do not want to be misled. People now check the accuracy of what you say and accountability is a significant factor.

Correspondence is a real challenge; I could spend all day answering individual online queries, but I would not be doing my job, serving the public, making decisions, and making things happen. I have to manage expectations and if a query is complex, I encourage people to email and it goes through the official system.

Q: In what other ways do social media impact on politicians?

A: They also enable politicians to challenge things that are inaccurate very quickly. There is quite a lot of [media] activity much earlier in the day; you can see the news cycle and agenda developing much earlier.

Name of the Interviewer
Margot Buchanan
Institution
Stirling University
Country
United Kingdom
Email Address
m.a.buchanan@stir.ac.uk

Name of the Interviewee
Fiona Hyslop,
Minister of Culture and External Affairs
Institution
Scottish Parliament
Country
United Kingdom

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Social media allow politicians to see if a story is running that is inaccurate and issue a rebuttal if necessary. Previously, we would need to issue an official response, distribute a press release and send it to all media before they carried the story.

Another issue is online campaigns. I am very careful; I don't engage much in debates. Apart from time restraints, there is no point – particularly with someone who is opposed to you as they are never going to change their mind. I know people who have stopped using social media after receiving malicious communication. Some people become quite malicious; they become quite different behind the anonymity of a computer screen.

On social media platforms, anyone in the whole of Scotland can contact me and I have no idea what their motivation is; if they want something they can hold against me, or if they are genuinely interested. There is not just one audience online; there are lots of different audiences with different beliefs and expectations. On Twitter, I sometimes get one line provocations as opposed to genuine queries. If people are going to the trouble to send a query, they are best to send an email than use Twitter. If people are Tweeting just to share, then what is their motivation to share their communication to me?

Q: Does this make you more cautious in regard to communication via social platforms?

A: I need to know if people who contact me are constituents, because of Parliament rules state I can only help my own constituents. If they are not, then it would a waste of

taxpayers' money; they may have contacted other MSPs; I may not have their proper names, their addresses or whereabouts in Scotland. The taxpayer is paying me to do two jobs: to serve my constituents and as Government Minister for Culture. If I am doing anything else I am not being good value for money for the taxpayer.

Managing social media is a challenge. I would not say on Twitter anything that I would not say publicly, that I would not mind being reported or filmed. Communication via social media platforms is easier, but 'social' gives it a false connotation. Social makes it sound soft and cuddly. It is not. If you are operating in the political sphere, it is as political as anything that is an interview or an article and it is naïve to think otherwise.

Q: Do you feel that social media have improved relations between political actors and their constituents?

A: Yes, because it is not all about politics. I post things and respond to things that are not political, and I sometimes receive a vast number of responses to something that people are interested in. If I post messages as Culture Secretary, people are interested in the issue; other posts are personal, that allow me to portray parts of my personality in way that I could never do in a written article or in an interview.

Q: Do you consider that social media enable to project yourself not only as a politician, but as an individual?

A: I do not use my children's names as I respect their privacy, but I talk about them

because I am a mum. I am not much different from anyone else and that is important. I collect my children from school and I go to the supermarket and chat to people – I am not stuck somewhere else. People may think of politicians as 'them', while they and their friends are 'us', but we are not detached as people think. It is important to break down these barriers and I think social media are good for that. They are good for access and participation and challenge feelings of disengagement; if we can and do respond to the public, we narrow the gap and people will feel it is worthwhile getting in touch.

Q: Do you consider that social media encourage people to cross the boundary between simply consuming the media you use to send your message to active participation?

A: I detect a certain level of empowerment. As an example, a young mother in my constituency set up a Facebook page to gather support in her attempt to save a local nursery from closure. It was a very good campaign, and it used the techniques available. Working mums might be able to go online for a few minutes, while they could not go to a public meeting. It is a good way that people can organise campaigns, and it is also good for politicians, because we can see what matters to our constituents.

Q: You said you were not keen to discuss your role as Minister of State for Culture, but if you post things online in connection with Scottish culture, your message must reach people who perhaps were not previously interested in the subject.

A: Yes, there is a great deal of activity on Facebook and Twitter by the cultural community because they tend to work individually since they are artists. And like the young mums in my constituency, it helps people who otherwise might not physically be in the same space at the same time to organise themselves. It offers a new way of organising campaigns etc., and enables politicians to reach people who may not be interested in certain areas.

Q: Do you believe that face-to-face interaction is more important than social media in the drive for a greater level of engagement within the political sphere?

A: Yes, in terms of building relationships; I prefer to see my constituents face-to-face if at all possible; it is important because relationships are built on trust and co-operation. These are not always communicated by electronic and digital media exchanges. I can reach a lot of people very quickly, and they can reTweet and distribute the message. But I still prefer one-to-one interaction. A politician can never have one-to-one interaction with everybody, but if it was to be a purely digital relationship it would like having a cyber MSP. Why would anyone want a cyber MSP?

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FROM PRODUCING INFORMATION TO PRODUCING AND MONITORING COMMUNICATION

This essay is based on the interview with Convadonga Fernandez, conducted in November 2012. She is a communication manager of the Madrid Chamber of Commerce and Industry- a post that involves a considerable responsibility related to communication because the Chamber of commerce in Madrid represents a broad community, with a network of more than 6.000 persons.

El Diario Montañes was the first newspaper where Covadonga Fernández worked. It was a local journal, in Santander, in the North of Spain. When she finished her university studies in Communication (Complutense University, Madrid), she began working as a professional freelance journalist for several national magazines. One year later, she signed on as exclusive journalist for Panorama Magazine. The publication of shocking reportages in 1989 brings her to work for a centennial newspaper: ABC. Until then, we could speak of a successful but traditional career of a professional in the field of communication.

A significant step occurred when Covadonga Fernandez became Communication Manager of the Cámara de Comercio e Industria de Madrid (Madrid Chamber of Commerce and Industry). She arrived to a public corporation that was much bureaucratized. She needed to modernize the corporation and to provide it with more visibility in Spanish society. Her first challenge was to build an organization that realizes how important communication is and to transform its communication culture.

The first task was to build a communication department with professional journalists who had experience working in economic newspapers or magazines. She recruited two senior journalists, as well as two young ones. The young ones had the necessary skills and experience in digital media. In the interview, she outlined the importance of team work to face the changes. In her own terms, she wanted an articulation of the journalist of the 'ancient regime' and the new languages.

Today, the 'old' style journalism deals with press notes and the relations with the media system. This leads to the regular presence of the Cámara de Comercio e Industria de Madrid in the media; and not just on rare occasions only as before. Consequently, the Cámara de Comercio has become a relevant factor in Spanish society due to its everyday presence in it. Everything that Cámara de Comercio does is communicated to a broad and unknown audience through old and new media, including its own website.

Another task she dealt with was to reach an important number of persons affiliated to the Cámara de Comercio. The target group was an audience of entrepreneurs and professionals, a community of more than one hundred thousand people. Until then, most of them had only one communication channel with the organisation: the reception of the magazine. Covadonga Fernandez and her team elaborated a communication plan to transform the audience of distant affiliated entrepreneurs to a digital community with a relevant communication flow and the power of interactivity. The main steps of this plan were: a) to build a new 2.0 web design, b) to inform through the magazine about the organisation of the new communication channel and its benefits, c) to make the website more interactive and to invest resources, as persons and time, in social networks. For the moment, the job is a balance between the traditional and periodical rhythm of the paper newspapers and magazines, and the continued presence in social networks, as Twitter and Facebook.

The last step of the plan has radically changed the professional activity to a routine of being ready 24 hours because the communication flow cannot stop. Always based on teamwork, they have the responsibility for feeding the presence of the Cámara in the flow of news and of answering the questions and the critics from the affiliated and non-affiliated community. In Covadonga Fernandez's words: "We have to be always exposed to commentaries and critics, which is very different from the traditional job in a newspaper that I learned at the University".

What are the steps for the future? First of all, the model of transparency needs to be consolidated and the flow of communication extended to the new technological advances. Then, the next step is to extend it to the phones of the Cámara de Madrid community. This is a structural change in professional practice. It is both a change of professional language and a change of attitude. At the same time, she succeeded to obtain a very active audience in the social networks. And she needs to supervise and manage the work of 6.000 people every day. Finally we can say that Covadonga Fernandez's professional biography has shifted from producing information to producing and monitoring communication.

Name of the Interviewer
Manuel Javier Callejo Gallego
Institution
UNED, National Distance Education Univeristy
Country
Spain
Email Address
mcallejo@poli.uned.es

Name of the Interviewee
Convadonga Fernandez
Institution
Madrid Chamber of Commerce
Country
Spain

Keywords
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**Transforming
Audiences,
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Societies**