

Media Development

1/2013

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IN THE NEXT ISSUE

The current issue of *Media Development* is the first to be exclusively digital. The journal will no longer be available in print, although it is possible for Members and Subscribers to download and print a PDF or individual articles.

The theme of the 2/2013 issue will be “The future of community radio”. It will explore the convergence of digital technologies with broadcasting and narrowcasting and the role that community radio plays in governance and citizenship.



“It’s difficult to imagine two words that have raised more anxiety among news media professionals than ‘citizen journalism’... Simple words but a complex concept variously seen as either the end of the literate media world or the salvation of disconnected civilization,” wrote Clyde H. Bentley in 2008 in “Citizen Journalism: Back to the Future?”, a discussion paper prepared for the Carnegie Knight Conference on the Future of Journalism.

Surveying the relatively brief history of citizen journalism in contrast with more than 300 years of professional journalism, Bentley made the following crucial distinction:

“A professional journalist assigned to a story will research the issues, talk to the people involved, check the facts and craft the results into a story. Then move on. The job of a journalist is to taste the world, one news bite at a time.

A citizen journalist or blogger, however, lives the story. It is neither a passing interest nor something he or she was assigned to investigate. Rather than taking that quick bite of the world, citizen journalists share a bit of their own lives.”¹

In 2009 The Open Newsroom produced “Citizen Journalism:

A primer on the definition, risks and benefits and main debates in media communications research”. It argued that:

- “The risks and dangers of using copy from citizen journalists are real; the interconnectedness of the Internet means that unchecked false reports can be fed into the media, on a blog for instance, and be picked up by many more websites and within minutes circulated throughout the world.
- The overall benefit however is that citizen journalism can help keep news current by publishing news as it happens. This can enrich mainstream media. With time, most citizen journalism will be clued on the do’s and don’ts of journalism and this can reduce the potential risk of citizen journalism to both the citizen journalist and the publisher.
- Some of those who dismiss citizen journalism as irrelevant seem to ignore the fact that citizen journalism is a developing phenomenon that only started way after the Internet started commercially in the 1990s. Web 2.0, the interactive features that enable blogs and social networking has been in existence for less than 10 years. Mainstream journalism on the other hand has existed for more than 500 years.
- As such, it’s fair to say any conclusions dismissing citizen journalism or audience participation in the media are still too early. At the same

time, glorifying citizen journalism as a replacement of traditional journalism is premature. Predicting the future of the media is impossible.”²

Hanna Nikkanen, writing for the web site of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) towards the end of 2012, is also optimistic. She does, however, sound important notes of caution:

- “Seemingly pluralistic reports become, in fact, more monotonous, as journalists use online sources to cherry-pick the views that correspond with their own (often subconscious) agenda. Filter bubbles – situations where a member of the audience only receives information that corresponds with their pre-existing views and values – become increasingly impermeable.
- Lack of financial resources for in-depth reporting increases the amount of citizen media quotations in news reports, but decreases the amount of time spent fact-checking said quotations. Successful hoaxes and instances of astroturfing [posing as a citizen journalist, a social media user or an internet commenter to promote a view or a product] are common. Audiences lose faith in professional journalism and the crisis of the traditional media deepens.
- More and more citizen journalists and whistleblowers are killed or imprisoned be-

cause of their work. Sometimes their security has been compromised because of their uncompensated collaboration with professional journalists. Censorship, both government-mandated and private, threatens citizen journalism. The erosion of the principle of net neutrality benefits large companies, but complicates things for everyone else.”³

In less than a decade, and hardly surprisingly given the rapid proliferation of digital media platforms, citizen journalism has upset the applecart of traditional journalism. Yet, for all kinds of reasons, professional journalists are increasingly viewing citizen journalism as a means of supplementing sources, of getting closer to the ground, and of gaining crucial insights into complicated local situations.

Citizen journalism is here to stay. How credible and reliable can it be as a source of information and news? Is it appropriate to devise a code of practice for citizen journalism?

And while new digital platforms have created exciting new opportunities for socializing and information sharing, how reliable can they be when it comes to professional journalism? ■

Notes

1. http://citizenjournalism.missouri.edu/researchpapers/bentley_cj_carnegie.pdf
2. http://www.theopennewsroom.com/documents/Citizen_%20journalism_phenomenon.pdf
3. “They shoot citizen journalists, don’t they? Curating or outsourcing? Opportunities and threats in post-gatekeeper journalism.” <http://www.ifla.org/publications/they-shoot-citizen-journalists-dont-they-curating-or-outsourcing-opportunities-and-thre>

Enhancing citizen journalism with professional journalism education

Kevin Kawamoto

Conceiving the citizen journalist as a counterpart or even an antidote to the traditional journalist may have been alluring at one time, but these two public communicators have more in common than not in today’s media environment and clearly benefit from each other’s existence. This article will begin by briefly describing what separates the citizen journalist from the traditional journalist – at least in popular perception. In reality, these descriptions are at best generalizations and the characteristics used to describe one or the other type of journalist are likely to overlap at times.

Traditional journalists work for an established media organization like a newspaper, magazine, television station, or even a news website. Some may refer to them as being on the payroll of the mainstream media, which today is largely a corporate entity whose public service mission is balanced (their critics might say compromised) by an obligation to profitability. Beyond the structural characteristics of the workplace, many traditional journalists have been professionally trained in journalism programs.

If they formally studied their craft at an accredited journalism program in the United States, they most likely would have learned about the history of their field and current journalistic standards relat-

ing to reporting and writing for the media. They would have studied media law, media ethics, and about the tools and technologies that journalists use to communicate with their publics.

The citizen journalist is often conceived as an engaged member of the public who has something to say but chooses to do so outside of conventional or established media channels. In the mid- to late-1990s, the slogan “anyone can be a publisher” – thanks to relatively affordable and easy-to-use hardware, software, and networking capabilities – captured the imagination of citizens wanting to do what journalists do but on their own terms, not as employees of corporate newsrooms.

Thanks to advances in technology, citizen journalists could set up shop just about anywhere you could fit a personal computer with an Internet connection. This space might have been someone’s bedroom or living room, or in the office of a neighborhood non-profit organization. The citizen journalist did not have to have a journalism education, show up for regular work hours, or meet routine deadlines. What he or she needed was passion, motivation, a desire to communicate, some resources to set up shop, and time.

At some point, these two pillars of public communication emerged: the traditional journalist and the citizen journalist, the latter characterized as a maverick phenomenon free from corporate reins and stylistic rules. More than a few traditional journalists, however, worried that their “wannabee” counterparts lacked an understanding of journalism conventions or attention to the ethical and professional standards that have evolved over past century in the field of mainstream journalism.

Despite their differences, citizen journalists and traditional journalists share many things in common – the most obvious being their desire to communicate about topics that they feel are worthy of the public’s attention. Both care whether their words are being read or heard; otherwise, they would be no different than private diarists. They both benefit from and presumably endorse a culture of free speech, including the right to criticize government and its office holders without fear of punishment or retaliation. And both can influence the way people think, feel, and behave by exposing the public to stories that move or impact them in one way or another.

One definition of “citizen” is someone who is entitled to the rights and privileges of a free person. As such, the term “citizen journalist” is an empowering one and carries a certain political weight since citizens have power and influence in a democratic society. However, since citizen journalists may not have formal journalism training or work for an established media organization, some in society may question their credibility or qualifications to report the news. This may be an elitist point of view, or an honest attempt by news consumers to determine whether information presented to them can be trusted. Who is the source? Where do they come from?

In this article, the term citizen journalist refers mainly to people who have not had any journalism training but identify as a kind of independent reporter with access to a communication medium such as a website, blog or video channel. Two closely related questions will be addressed: 1) How might citizen journalists benefit from traditional journalism training? 2) How should traditional journalism programs use its time-tested curricula and pedagogy to both influence and benefit from the evolving practice of citizen journalism?

Historical context

In some ways (but not others) the history of journalism in the United States is arguably a reflection more of citizen journalism than professional journalism. Editors and journalists in Colonial America and in the early years of nationhood did not go to journalism schools or formal training programs; they were literate men who wanted to have a voice in what was going on around them.

Of course they did not work for newspaper chains or media conglomerates, as many traditional journalists do today. Their operations were not massive and complex, at least not until the twentieth century, and their readership was relatively small due to limited distribution channels and the relatively small size of their cities where most of the literate population was likely to live. Rather, the early journalists set up a small shop and went about the business of finding and reporting news (as well as sharing information beneficial to trade and commerce) for a relatively narrow but influential segment of the population.

Until the emergence of the penny press in the big

cities around the mid-1830s and beyond, one could say these early journalists targeted their newspapers and pamphlets to niche markets, not broad segments of the population. These publications provided their readers with things to think and talk about, drawing them into communities of deliberation. Folkerts and Teeter (2002) write, “During the 1740s and 1750s, newspapers became indispensable tools for public political debate” (p. 34).

Despite journalism’s contribution to democracy-building leading up to the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution, and beyond, the role of a journalist in American society was not well-defined. That was to change in the early twentieth century as formal training in journalism led to an evolving set of standards and conventions meant to inspire professionalism and earn public trust.

Journalism education past and present

Although newspapers have existed in the United States and in the American colonies before that for more than 300 years, the formal training of journalists is a much more recent phenomenon, a product of the twentieth century. Prior to that, journalists learned their trade through apprenticeships and informal channels. Some journalists worked their way up from being errand boys. It wasn’t until 1908 that the first college of journalism was established in the United States, at the University of Missouri at Columbia. Within a few years, Indiana University and Columbia University in New York City established their journalism programs, followed by other institutions of higher learning (Hedges, 2008).

“Increasingly,” one journalism researcher observed, “schools and departments of journalism within American universities and colleges would be the sources of journalism education in the twentieth century” (Winfield, 2008: 317). Today there are more than 400 schools and departments of journalism in the United States, about a quarter of which are accredited by the Accrediting Council on Education on Journalism and Mass Communication (ACEJMC).

Many journalism programs, whether ACEJMC-accredited or not, have similar core offerings: 1) basic and advanced news writing courses; 2) media law; 3) media ethics; 4) and possibly a course on the tools and technologies of journalism. Other courses may be offered as electives. Internships provide the

opportunity for learning in the field.

Journalism programs have existed for more than a century to train future journalists. In the past these journalists would go on to work at newspapers, magazines, television, radio, and other media where a trained journalist’s knowledge and skills were needed. With the advent of online news, the journalist’s domain extended to the Internet and World Wide Web, especially after the mid-1990s.

Connecting the bifurcation

The rise – or some might say return – of citizen journalism is generally a good thing. It suggests that there are people who care enough about a subject or issue that they are willing to put the time, energy, and resources into researching and publicizing it. In an era when many communities are disappointed because of low voter turnout, lack of civic engagement, and decreasing interest in public affairs, the fact that there are those who are bucking this trend provide hope for maintaining a functional democracy.

As with traditional journalism, there are different qualities of citizen journalism. Some of it is outstanding and can provide, for example, frontline reports by citizens at a breaking news event where traditional journalists are not present or not present in sufficient numbers. Some of it provides excellent analysis of hot topics or focuses on stories and perspectives the mainstream media have ignored.

But when citizen journalism fails to incorporate elements of good journalistic practice into its reporting – elements such as accuracy, verification, fairness, evidence-based statements, proper attribution, and so forth – journalism as a whole can be tarnished. Of course the same can be said of traditional journalism when it violates its own professional standards.

The challenge of citizen journalism is that it does not (yet) have a comparable code of ethics that professional journalists and news photographers have and that which, when practiced, help bolster claims of professional integrity and credibility. And perhaps herein lies the opportunity: Journalism programs can enhance the quality of citizen journalism by offering educational opportunities (e.g. classes, workshops, seminars, etc.) to members of the public who are not interested in working for an established news media organization but prefer

to work independently, doing enterprise reporting on subjects of their choosing and establishing and controlling their own channels of distribution (e.g., websites, blogs, YouTube, Twitter, etc.) These citizen journalists could be college students who have no interest in majoring in journalism but would be interested in learning certain aspects that journalism that can enhance their experience and effectiveness as citizen journalists.

Beyond college students, there are members of non-profit organizations, advocacy groups, and other community-based entities that might be interested in citizen journalism education. The benefit to the academic unit would be a broader base of potential students to recruit from as well as bragging rights about service to the university and the community. Fees could also enhance revenues, which the college will likely smile upon.

The benefit to the citizen journalist – assuming this person is not already a professionally trained journalist – is the ability to accumulate more knowledge and skills that can make his or her work a valuable and public service. That might also be accomplished without any formal journalism training, but a hundred years of evolving pedagogy in the field of journalism have certainly resulted in some useful strategies for teaching effective and ethical communication and, on a more practical level, how to reduce the chances of being sued for libel, slander, and invasion of privacy.

As newspaper companies fold and television news programs face increasing competition from the Web as a provider of news content, students may question the viability of a traditional journalism degree. But if traditional journalism schools were to re-invent themselves, or just a part of themselves, as “journalism and convergent communication schools” or something along those lines, their curricula and targeted student population could better reflect the dynamic and innovative ways that the media environment is evolving both nationally and globally. Citizen journalists might see these re-invented programs as their allies and facilitators, as well as contribute diversity to the community of public communication professionals.

That “everyone can be a publisher” is a wonderful concept for democracy and for those in the “right to communicate” movement. Although the slogan is not particularly accurate (since not every-

one in the world has access to or can afford the tools that enable widely distributed communication), the symbolic point is well taken. We live in an era where a teenager can easily set up a blog on WordPress, shoot raw video footage on a smart phone, edit together a video story (along with still photos taken with a digital camera) in iMovie, post that video story on YouTube, and link to that YouTube video from the blog for anyone with an Internet connection see.

It is true that just about anyone with the resources and technical literacy can go out into their communities and do their own reporting and distribution on whatever topic or issue moves them to communicate more broadly about it. However, the ability to do all these things and much more does not necessarily mean being able to do it well – from a technical, aesthetic, ethical, legal, or other standpoint.

The citizen journalists’ “mini-course”

What might a series of classes geared to the prospective citizen journalist look like? It would be similar, in parts, to what traditional journalism students experience, except without the constant inference that the knowledge and skills conveyed are intended for application in traditional news organizations. It would start with a discussion, not a lecture, of the importance of truthful, ethical writing, and proceed with a description of different ways of writing stories – without getting too bogged down with the minute details of the Associated Press Stylebook, as might be the case in a conventional beginning journalism class.

Knowing AP style may be an optional side pursuit for a citizen journalist, but if he or she is not writing for the mainstream media and has no intention to do so, such conventions may be irrelevant and just turn a passion for writing into a drudgery of rule-learning. The more important learning outcome is clear, concise, accurate reporting.

Professionally trained journalists are taught to pursue the truth and report it – one of the standards for ethical journalism espoused by the Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ) – and this should be observed by any individual identifying himself or herself as a journalist. The SPJ guidelines are as applicable to the *New York Times* reporter as it is to the maverick journalist covering City Hall and

using her home basement as her “newsroom.”

The other SPJ guidelines for ethical reporting are to minimize harm, act independently, and be accountable. Journalism students learn these standards, one would hope, early on, as part of their initiation into journalism education, as should probably anyone entertaining the notion of writing non-fiction for public consumption.

A relevant overview of media law would also be an essential part of the mini-course for citizen journalists since knowing what newsgathering and reporting activities are legal and illegal can help a citizen journalist avoid unnecessary litigation. Defamation (slander and libel), privacy, and copyright infringement would be covered, as would be access to government information, the use of confidential sources, and the journalist’s newsgathering conduct.

The Accrediting Council on Education on Journalism and Mass Communication (ACEJMC) maintains a list of core values and competencies on its website that it would like accredited journalism programs to have as part of their student learning outcomes. This is a helpful list that can inform the mini-course planning for Citizen Journalism 101 (or whatever it is called), but it is more realistic for a two-year journalism curriculum than a mini-course in citizen journalism. Nevertheless, some of these learning outcomes – which can be found on the ACEJMC website (see references) – would likely be germane to citizen journalism education as well.

Faculty for the mini-course can be recruited from the existing faculty as well as the community, in particular a few individuals practicing the kind of citizen journalism that a traditional journalism program would consider exemplary. Team teaching possibilities – maybe one “old school” and one “new school” – could lead to some dynamic and enlightening classroom discussions.

Enhancing and invigorating democratic principles

Citizen journalism and traditional journalism have co-evolved from the same spirit of journalism that has contributed to the overthrow of tyranny and the institution of democracy in many different parts of the world. Today, each has something to learn from the other; each has the potential to enhance the other’s quality of work. In recent years, citizen journalists, at risk to their own safety or life, have reported what was going on at ground level when

traditional journalists were prevented from doing so. Traditional journalists abroad then publicize these reports, which benefit established media organizations and, by extension, their respective audiences.

Citizen journalists provide traditional news organizations with tips, story ideas, and news content they might not otherwise have access to. As partners or allies to traditional journalists, citizen journalists who are motivated by public service can play a meaningful role in enhancing and invigorating democratic principles. As we know from cases in journalism history, government, big business, and other bastions of social power tend to operate more judiciously under the watchful gaze of vigilant citizens or consumers.

Traditional journalism programs, with some modification to their curriculum and mission, can play a critical role in connecting the bifurcation between these two pillars of democracy. Citizen journalism done well can play an important role in invigorating journalism in general, leading to a future where many voices through many channels help keep the dual principles of free and responsible speech alive and well. ■

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“Small gnat”: Checking in with Kai Nagata

Ali Symons

It's been just over a year and a half since Canadian journalist Kai Nagata quit a prestigious job as CTV's Quebec City bureau chief and told the Internet all about it. In a 3,000-word blog post, the 24-year-old listed the ills of television news – its superficiality, sex obsession, and lack of real debate. Overnight, his post became a lightning rod for hopes and woes around the future of journalism.

One blog comment read, “This is what integrity looks like.” “A typical, dime-a-dozen, lefty rant,” said another. Nagata's post attracted more than 500 comments over three days in July 2011. It also attracted major media attention, including coverage in some of the networks he criticized.

After the flurry, Nagata took some time off and resurfaced in his hometown of Vancouver, British Columbia. Right now he's juggling several projects: youth media education, a news satire video project called Deep Rogue Ram, and freelancing – both videography (his main trade) and feature writing, often for *The Tyee*, an independent online magazine known for its coverage of environmental issues.

Nagata's interests often end up blending journalism with social action. It's a mix that could be called “activist journalism”, “citizen journalism”, or, as he suggests below, “collaborative journalism”.

One recent example of this blend was Nagata's trip to Bella Bella on Canada's central west coast last summer. He reported on local issues for *The Tyee* and also led a week-long video training workshop for Heiltsuk young people.

I caught up with Nagata, now 25, to see what life is like after cutting ties with mainstream media. How is he living out his ideals and paying the bills?

AS: Why do people call you a citizen journalist? Many people envision citizen journalism as the bystander who films a fire with his phone, but you have a degree and real experience.

KN: I'm a citizen journalist when I'm doing citizen journalism. It's a horribly unambitious use of the term to limit it to guys on the side of the road filming fires. There's a difference between user-generated content [UGC] and citizen journalism. UGC is a cheap way for existing networks to fill airtime and pages without paying for content. It's a clever little marketing trick to convince people that you're part of our team and we care about what you have to say so we'll feature your work without training



Kai Nagata (Photo: Evan Crowe.)

you or offering you any money.

The kind of journalism that I'm interested in now is the kind that is collaborative and organic and is pushed horizontally through our networks from one person to the next without coming down to you from a tower or a big brand.

I have this extensive formal education that I've invested in at an accredited journalism school. I came out of it with credentials and qualifications that allowed me to work in mainstream media and now I don't. There is a kind of gift there that most guys by the sides of the road filming fires don't have. It's certainly not a common position to be in.

AS: You mentioned collaborative journalism. How would you like to see citizens involved in shaping the news in this way?

I used to employ a resource extraction paradigm. When something happened, my job was to show up in a small town that had just been shaken by a brutal murder or where a factory closure had left people out of work. Usually it was something terrible that caused the TV trucks to scramble.

I would show up and extract all the good emotional content I could from people standing weeping by the side of the road. I would knock on doors and break terrible news to people about their dead neighbours and relatives so we could get that moment on camera of them crying.

That was kind of a colonial resource model where you just assume that there's unlimited resources out there and you can scrape them from where they lie and you take them back to the city and package them and process them into your product.

I don't think that's sustainable. I don't think you can go back and do that day after day without los-

ing a part of yourself and without losing the trust of the communities that you're going into.

Right now anything would be better than what we've got, which is a centralized, urban media elite and almost no resources in the smaller communities because all we've done is pull out the local resources and reporters. There are these vacuums of coverage in smaller communities and also within neighbourhoods of big cities. These vacuums need to be filled and if they're not filled by people with any kind of training or public interest in journalism then those information vacuums are going to be filled by gossip and by social media.

So collaborative journalism is a fancy way to describe imparting training and tools to people who don't go back to the city at night. They live in their own community and then are able, when the time comes, to shoot that piece of video or conduct an interview so that major lies don't carry the day.

AS: Who do you think is interested in paying for these kinds of collaborative journalism projects?

KN: You have to figure out first of all how you

Kai Nagata on location. (Photo: Candice Vallantin.)





A trip to Rivers Inlet with a team of Tye Solutions Society reporters. For the “Enduring Coast” series. Left to right: Kai Nagata, Stephanie Brown, Chris Wood, and Wuikinuxv carver George Johnson. (Photo: Jude Isabella.)

can reduce the ask as much as possible. One of the things I’ve discovered in my projects is that people are far more willing and able to provide donations in kind of equipment time, facilities, lodging, and you can actually really reduce the cash costs of something like this by integrating into a community or by reaching out to your network.

You know that you’re doing it right when you get invited over for dinner because people want to support the work that you’re doing. And if that basic sort of family-to-family community level support isn’t there then you have to ask yourself what you’re doing and what your goals are.

These things conflict directly with the handbook that I was trained in. You’re not supposed to ac-

cept gifts if you’re a journalist. If you showed up in some bombed-out village in Peshawar, you’re not supposed to take a cup of tea unless it’s a matter of protocol and you’re going to restrict access by not taking it. There’s a whole code of journalistic ethics that’s supposed to keep you aloof and above the fray and totally independent by not making you beholden to anybody for anything – including hospitality or transport.

It only works if you have this massive organization behind you that can afford to put you in hotels and fly you around. That world is drawing to a close, that era in which these journalistic institutions could just forge their own way and everybody could send their own reporting team to cover the

same thing when the hurricane hits.

AS: This sounds like the media training work that some NGOs do. Do you think there are media outlets that would support collaborative journalism like this?

KN: I don't see a lot of examples. I have to believe that it occurs to them. The whole idea is reciprocal as opposed to extractive. The problem is that traditional journalistic institutions work in a different economic paradigm so their behavior is dictated in large part by the economics of how they're structured and how they operate. So to talk about reciprocal relationships and collaboration is a poor fit with their revenue model. It seems that it would be pretty difficult to sell that to shareholders or to the board of whatever telecom network happens to own you unless there's a demonstrated value in return on that investment.

AS: What kind of journalism would you like to be doing in 10 years?

KN: I have this unique opportunity as long as I'm outside of traditional institutions yet still trained by them and have that background. I have this opportunity to play and to experiment. My idea is to take real data and apply it in the public interest. That's the only way you can counter ideologies, spin, and marketing by self-interested companies and political parties.

I see my role in this ecosystem as a very small gnat buzzing around. My job is to continue to try to push those instincts into new shapes that I haven't thought of yet.

AS: Back to money, what about paying the bills?

KN: Right now I make a living as a freelance editor and videographer so sometimes that aligns with my other interests and projects and sometimes it doesn't. It's the skill that I have that I can turn into a few quick bucks but I'd love to be doing all kinds of work. I think that's important.

That's how you make yourself independent editorially: you don't depend on journalism to be a job. You do it because it's important and the rest of the time you're a citizen. That means you work and vote and think and read the paper. Then when something pops up that isn't being covered any other way, you have the time and the skills to cover it.

I liken it to volunteer firefighters. That's the model that inspires me. In all these small communities there just isn't enough money to have a full-time, pensioned fire service. [There's the same opportunity here] when you see newspapers pull out of small towns. The work can now be performed by volunteers. They have a certain set of training and professional ethics. They get together and they practice on the weekends and they've all got tanks in their trucks and special license plates.

But other than that they're just normal men and women who happen to have an extra set of skills that when crisis demands it they're able to spring into action. That's something I'd like to emulate with the citizen journalism paradigm. ■

Note: This interview has been edited and condensed.

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Opportunities and limits for journalism and citizenship today

Magali do Nascimento Cunha

The Latin American theological methodology “See, Judge and Act” is the basis for this reflection on journalism in the age of convergence. The first part of the text is about seeing what is before us who live in the so-called “culture of convergence,” the one that makes possible transformations in the way of being and living in all parts of the world, but that brings significant changes for journalism, the subject of this study. “Citizen journalism”, which differs from conventional or traditional journalism, is an expression of the convergence culture. The second part of the text “judges” by reflecting on the society of the spectacle, a direction that leads towards an “act” that seeks pointers towards a coherent relationship between journalism and citizenship in the age of convergence.

The transformations in the human ability to communicate have become possible changes in different aspects of human life: relationships, actions to inform and seek information, education, leisure, consumption. In these changes the receiver becomes the protagonist – a role that until a few decades ago belonged to the “sender”. This was the paradigm that marked so many decades of research on communication in the twentieth century: the notion that the receiver is not passive and is not easily manipulated by messages.¹

In our new times, this characteristic of the receiver has been intensified due to the development

of the information society and the processes of *interactivity*, i.e. the action that marks the reception process has been enhanced by the possibility of *interactivity* or *interaction*. This means that the receiver has come to develop the ability to be the sender and also to relate more intensely to other senders. Therefore, one of the strongest senses of these times is participation.

There are two elements that characterize this socio-cultural and economic process: computers (and more particularly the internet) and mobile phones. The marriage of these two technologies with already existing forms of radio and telecommunications made technological convergence possible. In other words, different functions and communication mechanisms attached to / inserted in (convergent in) a single device, enabled by digital technology: more than voice communication from any phone, the so-called “Smartphone” integrates multimedia, Internet connection with web access and e-mail, and local connection by Wi-Fi and Bluetooth. To complete the possibilities television and radio can also be accessed.

This convergence has made it possible to extend the capacity of the media: there is an encounter between the precursor analogue media and new digital media, producing interconnections and generating new products and means of obtaining information.

It was the researcher Henry Jenkins who, aware of this contemporary context, coined the term “convergence culture” to criticize the concentration of attention on the “media of convergence” and call for what he considers fundamental to this phenomenon, not something that only concerns technologies or industrial changes, but that refers to culture, to how societies live. Convergence is not just about gadgets with multiple functions; it stimulates new media connections as users themselves feel able to go in search of information, and furthermore to send their own.²

These are times in which the Internet has established itself as the available structure for access and dissemination of content. This makes it possible to refer to a culture of participation that responds to contemporary media processes, as Jenkins says: “Instead of talking about media producers and consumers as occupying separate roles, we can now consider them as participants interacting according to a new set of rules, that none of us fully under-

stands.”³ For this participation to become effective, tools are created that facilitate the actions of users-senders: blogs, podcasts, wikis, discussion forums, and social media.

Convergence can then be understood as a state of communication provided for the use of media by people in general, not only as receivers but also as senders. Jenkins uses the term “collective production of meaning”,⁴ capable of changing elements in the life of society such as education, religion, politics, law, the military. This culture of participation promoted by convergent media transforms communication processes with the potential for broader access to different ideas and opinions and for recreating messages.

These new forms of expression give rise to new actors in media processes, the *fansumers*, who in addition to consuming communication products already disseminated, create new products when they add their opinions and ideas by creating their own narratives in their own media and participating in interactive media. Examples are news materials produced by so-called “citizen journalists”. The kind of journalism called “citizen” is related to this phenomenon of participation: receivers, news consumers, become producers, senders of content. It is also called “civic journalism”, or open source journalism, or participatory journalism, or journalism 3.0, or collaborative web, or social web. Therein lies the strength of a process that becomes more democratic.

Henry Jenkins admits that at first the power of the media is underused, mainly entertainment, but learning the process will lead to other purposes:

“None of us can know everything; each of us knows something; we can put the pieces together if we pool our resources and combine our skills.... Collective intelligence can be seen as an alternative source of media power. We are learning how to use that power through our day to day interactions within convergence culture. Right now, we are mostly using collective power through our recreational life, but it has implications at all levels of our culture.”⁵

It is a fact that this statement made in 2006 took concrete form in 2010 and afterwards when various socio-political mobilizations were seen worldwide, such as the so-called Arab Spring, or demonstrations in urban settings, brought about through the use of networks of convergence.

That is the reason for a positive understanding of this form of journalism, whose mark is participation and collaboration by citizens and social groups at the forefront of news production. This process does not privilege the market and reinforces the aim of a journalism directed at citizens in which ideas take precedence over economic and mercantile issues and the press positions itself as a public service in favor of collectives. In other words, this is a mark of the era of convergence: “In place of advertisers, volunteers; in place of businessmen, ordinary people in the management of virtual spaces; in place of

“This culture of participation promoted by convergent media transforms communication processes with the potential for broader access to different ideas and opinions and for recreating messages.”

official discourse, the voice of communities; in place of profit (exorbitant or not), justice.”⁶

How can we understand this new reality in the light of today’s world, which lives the logic of the spectacle as one of the elements that gives it meaning? How can we think about citizen journalism as an element that goes against media journalism’s insistence on the spectacle?

Judge: reporting to capture attention?

The word spectacle comes from the Latin *spetaculum*, which means “what attracts and holds the gaze and attention”, hence the synonyms attributed to it: theatrical performance, exhibition (sporting, artistic), scandal, exceptional event. “To attract and hold the attention” refers to the public nature of the show, namely the capturing of the public, which requires a game of seduction, of response to desires or production of desires and their realization in public spaces. Other related ingredients are the exceptional and extraordinary, which surpass the simple and

ordinary and capture attention and audience.

This conceptual construction explains the spectacle or show as an integral element of social life, set in scenarios, in the rites, rituals, representations, presentations and other expressions, i.e. inherent to organizational instances and social practices. Guy Debord, in his work *The Society of Spectacle*, refers to this when he says: “The spectacle is not a collection of images but a relationship among people, mediated by images”.⁷

Throughout history, producers and promoters have developed knowledge and technology in the production of shows – jugglers, circus, theatre, politics, radio, sports, music, film, television. Arenas, theatres, studios, daises, screens are the production base, with features ranging from costumes to scenery, from light to sound. Everything should be expanded – and even exaggerated – and push the limits of the ordinary to attract and win over audiences (paying or not).

People give life and movement to the spectacle, assuming roles, playing themselves or other characters. All set, predefined, tested, bounded. Spontaneity and improvisation are elements that do not belong to this context and are allowed only in exceptional cases, those fleeing the rule of the show.

In today’s world, as consequence of the historical process, the spectacle is more strongly associated with culture and vice versa, and the association of culture with media quickens and further consolidates it. The mediatization of society and the hegemony of media culture delineate a way of being and living in the social sphere that “lives and in reasonable measure feeds the enormous proliferation of entertainment made possible by the media. They, admittedly nowadays, have become the primary place in the manufacture of spectacular.”⁸

Understanding of this contemporary phenomenon recalls Guy Debord’s study-manifesto, which classified the capitalist society of the 1960s to 1970s as the “society of spectacle”. Debord identifies that this social form moves from “being in order to have” to “having in order to seem”. In this form of capitalism, “all individual reality has become social, directly dependent on social power, shaped by it. Only what is not is what is allowed to appear.”⁹

In this sense, Antonio Canelas Rubim updates the reflection made by Debord, redefining what the “society of the spectacle” becomes in the context of

the present times:

“It is in tune with the current phase of capitalism, in which information and communication become privileged goods and the economy of the spectacle appears as increasingly relevant. But it can also be characterized as the society in which, unlike what happened in the past, when the spectacular was something out of the sphere of the extraordinary and the ephemeral, now the spectacle is potentially (omni)present in time and space, and radically affects all life in society. The spectacle (...) becomes something with pretensions to colonize the whole world of life.”¹⁰

That is why violence, one of the rawest facets of human relationship, enters homes through spectacular-images in news coverage, as well as sexuality or invitations to consume goods and services and spectacular-people (celebrities). To create a spectacle is to provoke, to invite the consumption of content; sometimes scandal is a spectacular way to attract audiences and consumers of content. So news-making that exposes conflicts between people, human misfortunes and tragedy or unusual facts surrounding the life of celebrities attract a significant audience.

All of this around the media logic that passes through the visibility of the senders and intake of receivers and, therefore, consumers. After all, the media are vehicles of the “cultural industry”, a term born in the mid-twentieth century to denote the logic that governs the social place of media. In today’s times, it is more consistent to name the phenomenon as the “cultural market”, since it is not related only to the production and sale of products but also of services and derivatives.

This is because the human being that is communication, who needs the other in order to survive, must “make common” (*comunicare*) ideas, feelings, needs related to their own survival. Yet at the same time human beings exclude the other and compete with them and privatize ideas, feelings, needs in the name of the power projects they are part of. In this sense the actions of taking part in the media, which pass through the culture of convergence, unconsciously or not, reveal these human contradictions.

People communicate through convergent media the trivialisation of leisure and entertainment, social and cultural exclusion, the stimulus to moral and symbolic violence, to sexual abuse and to consumerism.

Thus people will have more access and interaction with information and entertainment, which are, however, composed predominantly of low-level approaches concerning socio-cultural values (with the incentive to cheat, compete and despise the other and trivialization of life); of content that preaches racism, sexism, discrimination against people with disabilities and people living on the outskirts of cities, the country and the world (usually those who have less access to convergent media); of moral abuse (so-called cyber-bullying); of pedophilia and pornography; of exacerbated appeals to consumerism; of suppression of cultures taken to be inferior and that need more space for expression.

At the same time, the need to “be online” is a reflection of the society of the spectacle. This attempt to “be somebody, even if only virtually,” reveals how the perception of digital communication is still very new and lacks discussion: people are still trying to understand these new mechanisms.

This reality affects web journalism, which is participatory journalism but not necessarily “citizen”, as immediacy, in the logic of the spectacle and gaining consumer attraction, sometimes becomes the basic value of information, prevailing over classical and relevant elements of journalism such as accuracy, objectivity, factual accuracy and careful language. Competition and the desire to “break the news first” make for fragile products.

Likewise, there is a strong component of participatory journalism in the kind of denunciation that carries the risk of distorting the facts and publishing untruthful elements in the name of the spectacular. And here we enter the field of ethics that should lend credibility to published content. How can we develop citizen journalism based on this reality?

Acting: for participatory citizen journalism

This is a changing reality, a dynamic, whose movements should be monitored closely with all their nuances. Therefore, Henry Jenkins acknowledges that one should not even understand this process as a “triumph of the user”, or a victory of the receiver, but as a time of searching for meaning on the part

of both consumers and the media industries.

About this search for meaning, it is worth recalling Douglas Kellner’s challenge regarding the mass media that makes a relevant statement about the reality of the media of convergence:

“Media and culture can be transformed into instruments of social change. For that, you need to give more attention to alternative media than has been done up until now, reflecting more on how media technology can be reconfigured and used for the benefit of the people. This task involves the development of an activism capable of intervening on public access television, community radio, the media and other computer-domains that are emerging today. To achieve genuine participation, people need to learn about the production of the media and the creation of news and information. Intensifying activism in the media could significantly expand democracy, with the proliferation of new ideas and the possibility of making public opinions hitherto silenced or marginalized.”¹¹

That is the challenge before us. As Dominique Wolton says, “the individual who learns to better understand and express him/herself is also more critical and willing to question any traditional scheme.”¹²

This raises the question of human relations and the challenge of communication.

Being informed, conveying information and expressing oneself, becoming an active receiver or interactive user of media are not sufficient for doing communication. In this sense journalism and convergence should continue their positive and productive marriage, with the view to create subjects that participate in, interact with and are critical of the world and the realities in which they live. Make use of all available tools, based on these values, since the culture of convergence is not given but is under construction, as Henry Jenkins says:

“The media convergence is more than just a technological change. Convergence alters the relationship between existing technologies, industries, markets, genres and audiences. Convergence alters the logic by which

the media industry operates and by which consumers process news and entertainment. Remember this: convergence refers to a process, not an endpoint.”¹³

Doing journalism in times of a culture of convergence is to work in the shaping of users who can develop deeper relationships, who seek to acquire knowledge that values difference, who recognize plurality as a component of life in society, who are *inter-active* and produce critical and respectful narratives, that are not mere repetitions of what is received.

It means working for the deconcentration of the politico-economic and cultural domination of processes, by facilitating full use of the media by all people everywhere. ■

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Citizen journalism: How to encourage critical reading and viewing?

Gauwain van Kooten Niekerk

We turn inward in the West. Anno 2013 I sometimes ask myself if we can still call human beings a communal species. We turn our back on community, be it church, unions or magazines. We're individuals now! We can do it all ourselves! Sometimes we let Google help us sort out stuff we don't understand, but with the Internet at our finger tips, we have the world at our feet. Or so we think.

Secretly, the need to connect is still there, but it is a paradox that contrasts with our new need to be individuals. In social media we find the ultimate solution: in the solitude of our homes we can connect to the world with a speed and scope that two generations ago people could only dream of.

So, in the West, information is democratizing at a dazzling rate. But what about the news? Journalism changes, but does it democratize in the same way as things we already knew? Should we want it that way?

And if it does, what are the constraints and how can we make sure the quality remains intact? In this article I will attempt to look at social media to answer these questions and find out where citizen journalism came from and where it might go.

Democratization and digitalization

YouTube is a network where you can upload videos for the world to see. It keeps growing. When it hit the mark of one hour of video uploads every second, they launched the website www.onehourpersecond.com which presents a baffling perspective.



Cartoon credit: Anshul Maheshwari at Brainstuck.com

This type of “culture” appears to have come about intuitively and socially.

Traditional journalism

We try to train our journalists carefully. We train them to ask inconvenient questions and not to stop until they find answers. We train them to be critical and to inform us about what’s going on in the world. They inform us even about things we’d rather not see, but that need to see the light of day.

In the Netherlands the Dutch Association of Journalists (NVJ) drew up an ethical code

for journalists (NJV, 2008). It communicates in the form of 28 statements about what a journalist ought to do. It focuses on verifiability of the news and the fairness with which the data have been gathered and are represented in the news article.

In the Netherlands journalism is a free vocation and you’re not bound to a certain training or overarching community in order to be able to call yourself a journalist. The code is an opportunity for journalists and the public to dialogue.

Citizen journalism

What is citizen journalism? I see citizen journalism as a democratized form of journalism: A form of journalism where private citizens gather and report the news. This can only exist if citizen journalists have a broad network with which to share the news. Social media is the perfect network for that. If you can combine the speed of Twitter and the potential snowball-effect lurking in other social media, you have the perfect combination of factors

According to Eric Qualman the rate has risen to 72 hours per minute (Qualman, 2012). Michael Wesch tells us that they do so without producers or professional equipment. He tells us also that most videos are meant for less than 100 viewers and that 88% of the videos are new and original: “This is not mass media” (Wesch, 2008). Often people react to each other’s videos, either by posting a new video or in the (somewhat infamous) comments.

YouTube has been democratized. But so has Twitter. Qualman shows us that “New Yorkers received tweets about an east coast earthquake 30 seconds before they felt it,” (Qualman, 2012).

In essence, social media are no more or less than a communication tool. Their use is dictated by the strengths and weaknesses of each instance of social media: Twitter’s speed and YouTube’s or Facebook’s scope.

Democratization here works well, but it means that if you do not comply with the “culture” of the social media, your presence will not be valued and you will not reach the people you want to reach.

to bring something that everyone needs to see into the public realm.

An example of this is the video [<http://youtu.be/Y4MnpzG5Sqc>] made to stop Joseph Kony (Invisible Children Inc., 2012), which has over 112 million views at the time of writing on YouTube and Vimeo. This is the power of social media and other examples are covered in Social Media Video 2013 [<http://youtu.be/QUCfFcchw1w>] (Qualman, 2012).

I remember my first encounter with citizen journalism very well. I remember 9 November 2012 as the day I learned an important lesson. This was the day I first heard the silent calls for help by Abidin Wakano and Jacky Manuputty from Indonesia and Nigerian Reverend Istiphanus Habila. For them, social media are not a matter of leisure, but a matter of life and death. They don't care about Return Of Investment (ROI), Facebook Insights Monitoring or Customer Care programs. They turn to social media to show the world to the world.

They don't use Twitter because it's easy to tailor to your spare time, but because it's such a fast means of communication. They don't use Facebook because it's laid-back, but because they have the chance to reach many people there.

This was the first time this call hit home and completely put my knowledge of social media in perspective. Of course, I knew about the problems in the world; of course I'd heard about the Kony video. But as a child of the West, what did I really *know*? It all changes when you meet someone who's been there. It started a thought-process of which this article is the result, for now.

What does citizen journalism aim to do?

Why do citizens pick up their cameras and notebooks to cover the news themselves? A large part, at least as far as the West is concerned, comes down to ability. Our communication tools, social media mostly as far as they democratized, give us the ability to dump something on the web and see if it catches on. We all hope our news becomes *viral*. But that, sadly, is not the reason someone turns to citizen journalism in the rest of the world.

It is when you feel you can't *trust* traditional media that you turn to what your neighbour says,

or your neighbour's neighbour. It is when you feel facts are, consciously or unconsciously, distorted or downright wrongly that you pick up the camera to report the news yourself. It is then that Facebook turns from leisure to need.

A huge constraint facing citizen journalism is that it is almost never neutral. People report only the items that are of interest to them. Hardly anyone posts news items because they can, but only because they feel they need to. This entails that citizen journalists are always deeply involved in the news they report - which puts pressure on its neutrality.

This results in questioning the content of the news. Citizen journalists often have a purpose and interest other than just reporting the news. Even in traditional media, it's not uncommon to see or read conflicting stories. In citizen journalism this happens more often.

How can we counter this? Ought there to be an agency that verifies this news? Do we stamp "good" citizen journalists with some symbol of integrity -

"Citizen journalists are always deeply involved in the news they report - which puts pressure on its neutrality."

like a Kitemark? Or do we need a code of conduct for citizen journalists to adhere to? These are difficult questions and the answers aren't easy to find.

The nature of the news citizen journalists report is indeed very hard to verify. Also, because the interests are so great, and so much is at stake, the neutrality of such an agency would easily become questioned. And, as Juvenal asked, "Who will guard the guards themselves?"

The ad hoc nature of news gathering will make Kitemarking citizen journalists extremely difficult. When someone picks up his camera for the first time and reports something we absolutely need to see, will we distrust him or her because there is no Kitemark?

And if someone with a Kitemark comes into a different conflict and reports it to us, does that mean the news is trustworthy? What would the criteria be and how would they be maintained and controlled?

Both options practically impossible. As is keeping citizens to an anonymous code-of-conduct. The

codes are there. They ought to work, but *do* they?

I think a solution to the above problems shouldn't be aimed at the citizens gathering the news. They have something else on their minds, which is the reason they gather this news in the first place. The solution ought to be organic: verification before re-sharing and trust in the inductive quality control of user-generated content.

If every time before we share a piece of news, we do our best to verify its claims, we'd separate a lot



of wheat from the chaff. Often this is hard or downright impossible; but when it can be done, it ought to be done. And when it can't, we can simply, as the NVJ Journalism Code tells us, attribute the news to the citizen journalist using quotation marks.

On the other hand we ought to trust in the social structures to sort the wheat from the chaff. The mechanisms that start a snowball effect, can stop it too. We needn't worry. We did worry at first about the reliability of Wikipedia but that turned out well in the end.

If citizen journalists claim something extraordinary or grave, it *will* be researched. Not when the snow-ball is still rolling, but before important decisions are made.

Conclusion

Ultimately news is communication of facts between people and social media are communication tools. Often they are used to enhance communication. In this respect, there's hardly any difference between journalism and citizen journalism.

Also, it's all about people. If we aim for full ob-

jectivity, we have to wake up. 100% objective news is never going to happen. There are simply too many agendas in play for that to happen. It's also not in our nature to be completely neutral.

Projects such as the journalism code can help, but are only as good as they convince people to use them: how they bring the *is* to the *ought*. These guidelines can help the next stage to verify as they share or, when there's a hurry, verify later after they share.

We ought not change citizen journalists, as they have everything on their mind *except* a neutral report of what's going on. We ought to focus on changing the people on the receiving end to be critical about what they read and not to believe something simply by virtue of seeing it on their screen. ■

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Gauwain van Kooten Niekerk studied philosophy at Utrecht University and religious studies at the Radboud University Nijmegen in the Netherlands. He specialises in the connection between film and social media with religion. His firm/company/business, Gauwain, tries to tie religions institutions and social media together.

Ethnic diversity in Canadian film and television production

Paul de Silva

Film and television productions in Canada, due to several factors, including the high cost of producing quality television, and the relatively small size of the market compared to the United States, is heavily subsidized by public funds, for good reason. The identity of Canadians for a large part depends on the stories they see on their screens. Some time before our own Marshall McLuhan pointed out the importance of the role television storytelling has in shaping both our collective and personal identity; the ancient Greek Philosopher Plato said most succinctly, “Those who control the stories, control society!”

It is also generally accepted that an accurate portrayal of our increasingly diverse society is critical to our sense of belonging and inclusion. Visible minorities (an increasingly problematic term but one that still has widespread currency and is used as an official designation by the Federal government) now make up more than 50% of the population in Canada’s largest urban areas, and will likely be close to or over 30% of the overall population in the next decade. Canada has been recognized as a leader in developing policies which enshrine concepts of multi-Culturalism, and equity and inclusion in all parts of its social, economic and political fabric in its Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Unfortunately, while all media institutions have “diversity policies” concerning portrayal and employment, there are no requirements for them to manifest these policies in any meaningful or con-

sistent way in both on screen and in behind the screen positions and to conform to both the spirit and the letter of the laws that address these matters. It is now clear that, despite a great deal of goodwill and several “diversity initiatives” and the existence of “diversity policies”, without specific requirements, monitoring and enforcement, very little progress is being made in this area with significant negative impacts on a number of fronts for Canadian society.

The Report and Action Plan of the Roundtable on Cultural Diversity in the Toronto Screen Media Production Industry (June 2012), initiated by Ryerson University Professor Dr Charles Davis, RTA School of Media, among other issues addresses the importance of the key “gatekeeper” roles in the production of Canadian film and television and how they influence what we see on our screens. Research shows there is currently not a single person from a racially diverse background in any senior management level responsible for television production in mainstream screen based media institutions, including the CBC, or in federal funding agencies – a shocking fact in itself. This is even more troubling when it comes to the CBC, as it is primarily funded by Canadian taxpayers and has very specific mandates in this area. This has occurred in spite of several “diversity initiatives” that have been employed over the past thirty years.

The CBC is currently undergoing a long postponed license renewal review by the CRTC and hopefully the representations made by the Canadian Media Guild and others in this regard will cause the CRTC to give this issue their serious attention. However without political support in Parliament and elsewhere, this issue is unlikely to get the attention it warrants.

While I strongly support Public Broadcasting and the CBC and its vital role as a key cultural institution, CBC television’s track record in the area of cultural diversity representation and employment, particularly in the area of management and decision making positions that directly affect what we see on our screens, regrettably falls far short of its responsibilities and its stated policies. This is unfortunately both contrary to public policy, and

short-sighted in terms of building audiences and support for the CBC in the increasing racially diverse population and it requires it being made a higher priority with specific targets with measurable outcomes by the CBC. This is particularly important at a time when the CBC is facing several challenges to its existence, including coping with substantial budget cuts, increased competition, market fragmentation, and technological change.

Stories by writers and producers from racially diverse communities, if given the resources to tell them in a consistent way and at a quality level now expected by the Canadian public, will undoubtedly attract audiences from these communities and build new audiences and loyalty for the CBC. A serious commitment by CBC television to reach out and appeal to these audiences and to ensure compliance with their stated policies will benefit the CBC in the long run and serve to strengthen their connection to the increasingly diverse communities across Canada while fulfilling their mandates.

It should be noted that in the 1990's senior executives at CBC Radio made a strong commitment to reflect the cultural diversity of the communities it served and to make its service "sound like its audience looked." This has resulted in enriched radio programming and larger audiences who are fiercely loyal to the network. However, the representation of visible minorities groups in management positions at CBC Radio are still far below acceptable levels given the demographic realities of the country and the legislative mandates for employment equity and inclusion.

When it comes to film and television, Dr Rita Shelton Deverall, a veteran broadcaster and educator who was honored with an Order of Canada for her work in Media Advocacy, has said that many broadcasters construct "diversity smokescreens" by organizing diversity "workshops and training initiatives", and creating short term internships and mentorship's, instead of doing anything substantive that would create meaningful jobs for people of colour in the screen media industry. The statistics sadly bear this out. Why does this occur? While the reasons for this are complex, involving many factors that effect many areas of our soci-

ety, including rapid changes in demographics as well as technological changes and the recent economic challenges, a key reason appears to be the lack of clear and transparent requirements for the representation of cultural diversity in front of and behind the camera in the screen based media industries. As a former broadcast and media fund executive explained at the Roundtable "without specific requirements and targets from the CRTC or from senior management, and no consistent measurement, monitoring and enforcement practices in place, it is left up to the goodwill and personal commitment of the commissioning executives to ensure there is cultural diversity in the programming."

Given the complexities and highly developed creative, technical and business skills required to produce high quality television programming, it is less time consuming and safer for broadcast executives to keep hiring the tried and true and people who are known quantities who they have developed successful working relationships with - in other words individuals who already have a track record and have amassed "cultural capital" in the industry. Without specific requirements in this area there is no incentive for broadcasters to spend the time and the resources needed to source and develop the talent from culturally diverse communities, needed to produce programming in what is a complicated and challenging business at the best of times.

Hence the status quo continues to be maintained. Those projects that have been produced involving individuals from diverse cultural communities in key producing/creative roles have tended to be short lived, and without ongoing and consistent opportunities, the skills and expertise that have been developed get lost, and these individuals either leave the industry altogether or leave the country to find work elsewhere, mostly in the United States or in Britain.

Exclusion and lack of resources

The film and television production industry is a billion dollar industry in Canada According to the Canadian Media Producers Association. The vol-

ume of Canadian film and television production was \$2.39 billion in 2010/11, the majority of these funds come from public funding via direct appropriation by Parliament, subsidies, and tax credits, and racially diverse producers and other artists and crafts people (writers, actors, directors, cinematographers etc) are- for the systemic reasons outlined in the Roundtable report, being virtually excluded from this industry. Most of Canadian film and television programming other than News and Sports which are generally produced in-house by Canadian broadcasters, is produced by Independent production companies who are commissioned by broadcasters and financially supported by public funding and tax credits. “Third language” and “ethnic” television stations simply do not have the resources to participate in this arena and rely heavily on foreign “home country” programming and studio based talk shows to fill their schedules, hence they do little or no original production.

The situation is also affected by the reality that Canadian privately owned broadcasters rely on the prime time broadcasts of American Television programs, and produce Canadian original programs primarily to meet CRTC licence requirements. And not for the advertising revenue they generate. As a result, it is not a market driven industry with no specific requirements by the CRTC for representation of racially diverse people in front of or behind the camera positions, despite the fact that this sector is funded primarily by public funds and tax credits. There are also very few incentives for private broadcasters to commit to looking outside the established pool of creative talent that has developed a track record in the industry and to spend the time and resources to develop new talent.

While a small pool of experienced writers, directors and producers from racially diverse communities has developed in Canada, a lack of consistent opportunities have caused many of them to leave the industry or to seek opportunities in the US and

elsewhere, in order to find work. Therefore with no specific requirements by the agencies responsible for funding and establishing Canadian content requirements for broadcasters little progress has been made in increasing representation in on screen and behind the camera positions in this area. In fact some gains that were made have been lost due to funding cuts and the recent consolidation in the broadcast industry.

While CBC television does not broadcast Ameri-

“There are very few incentives for private broadcasters to commit the resources to look outside the established pool of creative talent that has developed a track record in the industry and to spend the time and resources to develop new talent.”

can programs in prime time, the same issues apply. Their record has been inconsistent at best, and CBC television provides very few opportunities for producers, writers, directors and actors, and other creative artists from racially diverse communities. The relatively few programs that feature on screen talent from racially diverse communities are invariably produced by established producers from non racially diverse communities with no specific requirements to involve “behind the screen” creative talent from racially diverse communities. This situation has been further exacerbated by recent funding cuts which have limited the CBC resources and has resulted diminished opportunities for racially diverse talent even further.

While the systemic issues involved are complex, and involve both historic and current economic and social factors, it is an issue that needs to be addressed in a meaningful way in order to create an equitable environment in this arena, and forestall the negative consequences that will undoubtedly affect our communities if we do not engage in finding solutions. A failure to do so, given our increasingly challenging economic times and the potentially socially disruptive situations associat-

ed with them, will have serious consequences on our social fabric.

One does not have to look too far to see examples of where this is taking place. The downstream effects of exclusionary practices, however unintentional they may be, in a sector as important and influential as screen media is in today's society, are simply unacceptable in a Canadian multi-cultural society committed to diversity and inclusion as a public policy, and should be cause for concern.

Increased “on screen” presence in television news offers false image

Just to clear, we are not talking about on camera presence in news programming. In 2002 the CRTC charged the Canadian Association of Broadcasters to conduct a Task Force on Diversity, which did not include the CBC, and examined issues dealing primarily with on screen representation. While the Task Force laudably did bring some attention to this issue and there has been an increased presence of racially diverse individuals in the television news area, particularly in Toronto, in fact, these positions tend to be short-term contracts and rarely translate into “behind the camera” management positions or lead to other opportunities within these organizations. The retention rates for these positions are also extremely low.

While the CRTC requires television Networks to file annual “Diversity reports”, there appears to be little or no analysis of these reports or follow up which would ensure that broadcasters meet specific requirements or set targets for visible minority inclusion at all levels of employment.

The increased “on screen” presence in television news, while a welcome improvement, and also tends to provide a false image of the media's actual diversity. It does not address the issue of employment equity in the film and television production industry or of prime time television storytelling, which is by far the most watched, and financially rewarding for its creators, as well as being the most influential genre of television in terms of messaging of identity and inclusion. Prime time dramatic programming is still far and away the most popular form of television programming.

The Roundtable Report and Action Plan makes an important contribution to our understanding of these issues. Media institutions and the regulatory agencies concerned, have to date, shown little interest in examining this issue in any consistent and meaningful way. Despite several attempts by producers and creative artists from racially diverse communities, to organize around these issues, due to the resources required to undertake on-going advocacy initiatives, there is presently no organization that is committed to doing so. The Report, along with other recommendations, recommends that an organization, similar to the Cultural Diversity Network established in Britain, made up of governmental and non governmental organizations, members of groups with cultural diversity mandates, the creative communities, and concerned citizens, to monitor, and provides a voice to those affected on this issue be established to assist in creating the changes required in this area.

Research undertaken recently in Britain has indicated that without inclusive reflection on television, immigrant communities will seek programming from their “Home” countries through the many means now available, and essentially bypass local and national media with both short and long term effects on the economy, as well as on issues of equity, inclusion, national identity and social cohesion. Several initiatives undertaken by the private broadcasting companies and the public broadcasters, the BBC and Channel 4 to address this issue have had very positive results.

In the United States, where film and television programming is primarily driven by market factors, as a result of pressure from organizations such as the NAACP and various Unions and advocacy groups, most US Television Networks have appointed senior level Executives with responsibilities for instituting Diversity programs for both in house and independently produced programs, with specific targets and goals.

The Roundtable report and Action plan outlines options and strategies, some of which have been successfully implemented by other countries, to address the issues of representation in both on screen and behind the camera positions, which can

be implemented here, and adapted to meet our own specific situation. To begin with, the CRTC, in order to achieve public policy goals and to ensure that equity and inclusion legislative requirements are being met, should put in place specific requirements for broadcasters with regards to representation in “behind the camera” creative decision making roles – as they do for Canadian content. They should also have a transparent process in place for monitoring and enforcing these requirements.

In addition, the Canadian Media Fund, a crown corporation which is governed by Parliament

“Without specific requirements, and appropriate monitoring and enforcement structures set by the CRTC and senior management in the screen-based media industries, the necessary changes will continue to take place at an unacceptably slow pace.”

through the Ministry of Heritage, which administers the public funds that enable the production of the majority of original Canadian television programming, should ensure that their policies and procedures are in line with both the spirit and the letter of the laws governing this sector with regards to equity and inclusion. Privately owned networks as well as the CBC can, by making this issue a priority and by establishing specific targets and goals and instituting transparent processes in terms of hiring and commissioning programs, actualize their diversity policies to create tangible and meaningful change, as well as increasing their audiences in the culturally diverse communities.

The example of the APTN (The Aboriginal People’s Television Network) is worth noting. The network was launched in 1999 to serve the specific needs of the First Nations communities and provide opportunities for creative artists from those communities. APTN was the first national public television network for indigenous peoples. It has, through its requirements for Producers and creative artists from First Nations communities to play key roles in the productions greatly enhanced the building of talent and production infrastructure in First Na-

tion communities across Canada. In order for programs to be eligible for consideration, the producer must be an Aboriginal person, which is defined to include a First Nations, Métis or Inuit person who resides in Canada; or an Aboriginal production company

An application made by Canada One television in 2006 to the CRTC to establish a television channel with a strong cultural diversity focus which had many similar goals as APTN vis a vis the culturally diverse communities, (in the spirit of full disclosure I was a partner in the application) proposed a

specified amount of the annual independent programming budget be designated to productions that would have key creative personnel from visible minority communities in order to ensure consistent representation and opportunities for producers and creative workers

from these communities.

Research had indicated there was a sufficient pool of talent that had developed the skills, both in Canada and in countries they had migrated from, required to create high quality television programming. The application was denied approval by CRTC as it stated that the existing regulations would ensure that cultural diversity would be adequately reflected in Canadian television. Several studies, including the Roundtable report have shown this is not the case. However the concept of designated amounts of programming budgets, particularly those supported by public funds, being allocated to projects that reflect cultural diversity in all aspects of its production, in order to ensure equity and inclusion, deserves serious consideration.

In conclusion, the research and recommendations contained in the Roundtable Report and Action plan indicate that the diversity policies and short term internships and mentorship and “soft” recommendations for “best efforts” practices have not resulted in any substantive progress in this area. Without specific requirements, and appropriate monitoring and enforcement structures set by the CRTC and senior management in the screen-

based media industries, the necessary changes will continue to take place at an unacceptably slow pace.

This issue has wide ranging economic, public policy, social justice and cultural implications for Canadians. It needs to be addressed for both ensuring equity and inclusion for racially diverse communities, as well for important social cohesion issues which are vital to the ongoing social, economic and political health of our communities in our increasingly racially and culturally diverse nation.

If Canadian societal goals of equity and inclusion and a sense of belonging for all Canadians regardless of race, colour or ethnicity are to be achieved, a new course of action needs to be instituted, not only to fulfill the letter and the spirit of employment equity, multi-cultural and broadcasting legislation, but ultimately for the benefit of Canadian society as a whole. It will also undoubtedly invigorate the Canadian film and television industries and enrich the cultural fabric of Canada by bringing fresh voices and new perspectives to our screens. ■

Note: The pieces of legislation that govern this area are the Canada Broadcast Act, The MultiCulturalism Act, The Employment Equity Act and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

The weblinks to the Roundtable report are:

http://www.ryerson.ca/~c5davis/publications/Diversity_Rountable_report_-_final.pdf and <http://tinyurl.com/c4p5lam>

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Reinstate the Fairness Doctrine!

William F. Fore

The Fairness Doctrine in US broadcastin was controversial in its time and was eventually revoked. Today there may be grounds for reinstating it. Local news is one source of contention, some believing that much of it has degenerated into bland, sensationalist coverage led by advertising. A level playing-field in communications is all very well provided that there is genuine diversity of choice. The Supreme Court itself ruled in 1969 that "the applications of fairness doctrine enhance rather than abridge the freedoms of speech and press protected by the First Amendment... we hold them valid and constitutional." The following short article raises the question of media reform in the context of the USA.

By the end of 1945, radio broadcasting had become the place where most Americans got most of their news and information. It had also become, by and large, the province of three giant networks – CBS, NBC and ABC. But the stations were not always scrupulous in their balance of news and public affairs. Listeners, both liberal and conservative, objected to the limited and biased coverage being given by holders of licenses that required them to provide coverage of all sides of issues of public interest.

In response to the growing problem, in 1949 the Federal Communication Commission (FCC) established the "Fairness Doctrine." This policy required stations to provide time to contrasting views on issues of public importance. It was meant to level the playing field, and it received strong support from the Congress and from the Supreme Court. By the

1970s the FCC called the Doctrine the “single most important requirement of operation in the public interest – the sine qua non for grant of a renewal of license.”

The Doctrine remained in force until Mark Fowler, President Reagan’s Chairman of the FCC, began to role it back during Reagan’s second term, and in 1987, the FCC repealed the Fairness Doctrine altogether. The Commission cited the proliferation of broadcast channels now available as reason enough to lay aside the requirement for balance.

Since then we have seen a disturbing growth of radio talk programs which regularly beat a far-right agenda with no attempt to provide even a semblance of balance. Rush Limbaugh, for example, would be hard pressed to stay on the air if he were required to provide contrasting sides in his daily diatribe against the all things liberal.

Of course, Mr. Limbaugh has every right to put forth his views, but the station that carries his program does not have the right to provide only one side of every issue. The law says the broadcaster is expected to meet the needs and interests of *all* of its listening public.

A large group within both political parties continue to see the Doctrine as a valuable asset to them in the case of their being attacked falsely. Reinstatement of the law has been brought to the Congressional floor several times in the past few years, but it has failed, primarily because of vetoes threatened by Ronald Reagan and H. W. Bush.

Opposition to the Doctrine cites the proliferation of cable television, multiple channels within cable, and public-access channels as reasons why reinstatement is not needed, since in theory there are plenty of places for individuals to make public comments on controversial issues at low or no cost.

But this viewpoint is wrong. In the first place, cable operations use the public streets and therefore they should be subject to regulation just like broadcasters. Second, does anyone seriously equate the audience for the CBS evening news with a cable cast that reaches an audience of 12,000?

Today the chances for the Fairness Doctrine to be reinstated are better than they have been for many years - for the following reasons.

The Fairness Doctrine in a nutshell

What it was: The Fairness Doctrine, as initially laid out in the report, “In the Matter of Editorializing by Broadcast Licensees,” required that TV and radio stations holding FCC-issued broadcast licenses (a) devote some of their programming to controversial issues of public importance and (b) allow the airing of opposing views on those issues.

Additionally, the rule mandated that broadcasters alert anyone subject to a personal attack in their programming and give them a chance to respond, and required any broadcasters who endorse political candidates to invite other candidates to respond.

How it came about: In the Radio Act of 1927, Congress dictated that the FCC (and its predecessor, the Federal Radio Commission) should only issue broadcast licenses when doing so serves the public interest.

How it was ended: The Fairness Doctrine sustained a number of challenges over the years. A lawsuit challenging the doctrine on First Amendment grounds, *Red Lion Broadcasting Co., Inc. v. Federal Communications Commission*, reached the Supreme Court in 1969. The Court ruled unanimously that while broadcasters have First Amendment speech rights, the fact that the spectrum is owned by the government and merely leased to broadcasters gives the FCC the right to regulate news content.

First Amendment jurisprudence after *Red Lion* started to allow more speech rights to broadcasters, and put the constitutionality of the Fairness Doctrine in question.

Source: “Everything you need to know about the Fairness Doctrine in one post”, by Dylan Matthews. *The Washington Post* WONKBLOG, 23 August 2011.

http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/ezra-klein/post/everything-you-need-to-know-about-the-fairness-doctrine-in-one-post/2011/08/23/gIQAN8CXZJ_blog.html

1. President Obama now has four more years, and he does not have to be as accommodating to broadcasters as he was when he was running for President. As he whispered to a visitor recently, he can now be “more flexible” than before.

2. The stridency of the recent election has convinced many citizens that the present electoral system is badly flawed, and requires change. There is a ground swell of support for cleaning up the endless attacks on radio and television.

3. With no concern need to run for re-election, Mr. Obama can place on the FCC more reform-minded candidates. There is still the Senate confirmation hurdle, but many Republicans are as concerned about the mindless charges in the media as are Democrats.

4. The President is counting on the media to help him get some of the legislation he hopes for. The Fairness Doctrine could help the more responsible broadcasters and begin to stop the irresponsible views on both sides of public issues.

5. The Electronic Church thrived because there was no significant oversight of their accusations and claims. But in recent months the public has begun to turn against the radical right. *The New York Times* recently revealed that the Christian Right has not only lost the presidency, but is facing rejection of their whole agenda – same-sex marriages, anti-abortion rights, and legalizing marijuana for recreational use.

6. The rise of unlimited anonymous donor money is going to make FCC oversight even more important. As people begin to realize the dangers of unlimited funds coming into the Congressional campaigns, support will increase for putting Fairness back into law.

Following up the Busan Statement

What is the implication of this situation for the WACC? A good place to look for the answer is to consider the recent Busan Statement (see *Media Development* 3&4/2012). This document focuses on the important issues facing the churches and communication today. But this kind of statement has no real value unless the WACC can find ways to implement its findings. I suggest we list some of

the Busan goals, and then see how they relate to a course of action that WACC might undertake.

Busan says “communicators in a particular time and place can use their insights to denounce the abuses of the powerful,” and that “communication ... affirms life by promoting truth-telling, fairness, participation, dialogue, openness and inclusion.” “Prophetic communication opens up alternative horizons that are not limited to the perspectives imposed by the dominant culture.” “Opening eyes and ears to diverse sources of information and knowledge fosters the depth and breadth of understanding that allows people to make informed decisions.” And finally, communication rights insist on the need to ensure a diversity ...that enhance and enrich the common good.”

In the U.S. context, these sentences seem to be shouting out for one thing: the reinstatement of the Fairness Doctrine!

It is time for the WACC to become a player in some of the media reform issues of our time. And reinstatement of the Fairness Doctrine is the kind of action that could become a major project of the North America Region.

Surely there are communication leaders in the denominations who could begin to consider what steps should be taken to get the Fairness Doctrine back on the FCC agenda.

And surely denominational leaders at the highest levels can be shown why this issue is so important to the future of our pluralistic democracy and the churches that operate within it. ■

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Movies and values in 2012

Peter Malone

A number of entertaining films (a key ingredient for box-office results) came out in 2012, but the year also saw a number of interesting films (which are not box-office dependent for estimates of their success). With Tom Hooper's film version of Les Misérables for Christmas and holiday release, we should have a film that is both interesting and entertaining. Victor Hugo's foundation story for the musical raises many questions of society and justice as well as humane values with religious undertones. The cinema year ended with a values boost from Les Misérables.

On the popular level, we have all the genre blockbusters which tend to be tales of the struggle between good and evil. The fans have had more than they might have expected with such bonanzas as *The Avengers* (many hero-figures for the price of one), *The Hunger Games*, *The Amazing Spiderman*, *The Dark Knight Rises*, James Bond back for a 50th anniversary celebration in *Skyfall* and, for that particular niche of *Twilight* fans, *Breaking Dawn, Part 2*.

Before looking more closely at some of the best films of 2012 (which tend to be non-English language films), it can be noted (which some alarmist commentators bewailing the pop, graphic novel, kind of action shows neglect to mention) that right up there with the popular and successful films of the year are the children and family-oriented films, especially animation features. Worth checking the box-office figures for these films (in fact, mainly American) and see how widely they have been seen – and more tickets have been sold because so many of the audiences pay for children's tickets rather

than adult tickets.

As this article is being written in the last week of November, 2012 *Wreck-it Ralph* has gained \$US150,000,000 in four weeks and *Rise of the Guardians* has taken \$32,600,000 in one week. (To be fair, it can be noted that *Breaking Dawn Part 2* has box-office of \$US227,000,000 in two weeks, *Skyfall* has \$US222,000,000 in three weeks. These figures are from the US box-office alone, not including overseas takings.)

Clearly, money is not a criterion for the worthwhileness of a film. However, it is an indicator of how many people choose to see a particular film. A lot of those that critics and parents wring their hands over are out there, of course, but not actually seen by such large audiences.

Films highlighting human values

My remit is to highlight some of the better films of the year which dramatise basic human values. As mentioned, my choices come from industries outside the United States.

Right from the start, I want to highlight two very fine films. One is French, *Les Neiges de Kilimandjaro* (*The Snows of Kilimanjaro*). The other is French-Canadian, *Monsieur Lazhar*. They are two films about goodness. But the goodness is seen in some harsh circumstances, in the midst of real life.

Looking back at my reviews when they were released, I find values aspects were emphasised. *Les Neiges*: Audiences can identify with the central couple in this film and get a lift from what they think and feel – and do – after a challenge to their way of life. And, it has nothing to do with Ernest Hemingway. Mt Kilimanjaro serves as an ideal goal, somewhere exotic to travel to but seemingly unattainable. It is also in the title of a popular French song which is sung in the film.

We are on the Marseilles' waterfront, the location of so many of director Robert Guedigian's films over almost a quarter of a century. Workers are being laid off. Michel (Jean-Pierre Darroussin) is an official but has decided to put his name in the hat for the lottery for retrenchment, against the advice of his close friend, Raoul (Gerard Meylan). He pulls his name out and goes into retirement – which, af-



Still above from *Les Neiges de Kilimandjaro (The Snows of Kilimanjaro)* directed by Robert Guedigian (France) and below from *Monsieur Lazhar* directed by Philippe Falardeau (Canada).



ter a busy life, he doesn't find easy. However, he is supported by his wife of almost thirty years, Marie-Claire (Ariane Ascaride, who is Robert Guedigian's wife in real life) who works in care for the homebound. Their married children and grandchildren visit for meals and are concerned.

At a joyous party for their thirtieth anniversary, with some of the retrenched men as guests, they are given a gift of money and a ticket for Kilimanjaro. It does not end there. One night they play cards with Raoul and his wife, who is Marie-Claire's sister and the house is invaded by two burglars who steal their money and the ticket and bind and hurt them. By chance, later, Michel sees a clue which leads him to one of the thieves.

What follows has an enormous effect on Michel and Marie-Claire. The thief is one of the retrenched men, young, with a chip on his shoulder, highly critical of the older generation, the way they managed union matters, their being stuck in the ways of the past. The young man has two little brothers – and their mother couldn't care less and is away working on a liner.

The goodness in the film is in how the couple deal with their anger, the fierce attitude of Raoul, the sullenness of the young man and his tirades. The goodness concerns the two young brothers and the decision by Michel and by Marie-Claire, taken separately, to come to the support of the boys (despite the hostile response of their own son and daughter who want attention for their children). The audience is immersed in the life of this part of Marseilles. And the picture of kindness in human nature is positive and hopeful. The film won the SIGNIS award at the International Film Festival in Washington, DC.

Monsieur Lazhar is a very fine and moving film, Canada's entry for the 2011 Oscar for Best Foreign Language film (beaten by the also wonderful Iranian film, *A Separation*). It won two awards from SIGNIS, the World Catholic Association for Communication, in Hong Kong and in Washington DC.

The opening shot is an overhead view of primary school children playing in a snow-covered Montreal playground. The film stays principally within the school and, at these times of debate about educa-

tion (teachers' hours and pay, classroom teaching and staff meetings and corrections, strict regulations about touching children and about discipline, all of which are part of this film), it is both perennial and topical.

The first segment, well orchestrated as it introduces us to two of the main children (who give extraordinarily convincing performances, especially in highly emotional sequences) leads to the discovery that their teacher has hanged herself in the classroom. The children's responses (and those of teachers and parents) and the need for grief and counseling remain a constant theme, the screenplay offering the many-sided, sometimes contradictory, facets of dealing with such a tragedy.

But the M. Lazhar, of the title, has not yet entered the film. Reading of the death, he comes to offer the school principal his services as relief teacher. He is from Algeria, a political refugee, whose wife and daughter have been killed in a deliberately political apartment fire. In fact, this part of the narrative raises another topical issue, that of asylum seekers. There are some stirring sequences where M. Lazhar has to justify himself to migration authorities who take a devil's advocate position, seemingly inured to thinking or feeling about what life's experience and tragedies have been for the refugees trying to explain what has happened in their lives.

Back to Europe.

Year by year, films about the holocaust have been released, recent examples being *Sarah's Key* and *The Round-up*, both from France. Two significant releases in 2012 were *In Darkness*, Poland's nominee for Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film, 2011, and the German *Wunderkinder*.

The darkness is in the city of Lvov, at the end of 1942, beginning of 1943, a severe winter. Lvov is occupied by German forces. Jews are being rounded up or fleeing. This is material from many a similar story. However, director Agnieszka Holland, returning to her Polish roots (both Jewish and Catholic) and drawing on a book about these events and the memoirs of one of the children, has made quite a distinctive and powerful drama.

In some ways, it is reminiscent of the story of

Anne Frank and her family and friends, trapped for safety in an attic. Where this family and group are trapped is far more difficult, even grotesque – in the city's sewers.

At first, we are introduced to two sewer officials who are seen robbing the homes of Jews who have fled. No righteousness here. The central character, Leopold Socha (Poldek) is Catholic. When he finds the families in the sewers, he helps them, but also exploits them. Ultimately, his better nature leads him to help the Jews.

At the end, there is a tribute to Poldek and his wife, their being acknowledged as Righteous Persons because of their sheltering the Jews. It is a sombre reminder that many of the Righteous helpers, like Oscar Schindler, were not as noble as they became – that involvement with suffering people drew on their better selves and enabled them to be heroic.

By contrast, a German film, *Wunderkinder*. The Wunderkinder are child prodigies. The three children here are musically talented, two violinists and a pianist. They are around 12 years old. The setting is a town in Ukraine. It is 1942. The population consists of Ukrainian traditional families as well as Jews. Two of the children are Jews. The other, who becomes friends with them, plays music with them, introduced by the local music teacher, herself Jewish. All seems to be calm despite the war. And that other girl is German, son of the local diplomatic representative who also owns the local brewery.

When German troops arrive, the purging of Jews begins. However, the three children are still in demand for performances. But, then, the German pact with Stalin broken, Russian troops arrive and situations are reversed. While the Jews are still cautious and have been sheltered in a country house by the benign German, it is the German family which now has to go into hiding. And, in a reversal of so many films where Jews are sheltered by sympathetic locals, it is now the German girl who is protected by the Jews.

The film presents the possibilities of harmonious living but does not shirk the anti-Semitism which is quick to rise to the surface, the exercise of power by local officials (who then have to go into hiding

when the politics change). However, it is the basic, common humanity which underlies this portrait of people who share values, who communicate by music. It is a sad story of childhood, with some tragic consequences.

The darker side of human nature

Two European films that are worth consideration concerning human values may cause some surprise. They offer powerful portraits of people whose moral code is not exemplary, to say the least. But this reminds us that we need to reflect on films showing the darker side of human nature. We are all redeemable – though many films and novels, including those from Graham Greene's stories, seem to indicate, in Sartre's words, "No Exit".

One of the best French films of 2012 is *Tu Seras Mon Fils / You Will be my Son*. It immerses us in the winegrowing regions of southern France. The central character is a ruthless and obsessed vintner. His life is his vineyard empire. But, his son disappoints him. He ridicules his son, excludes him from significant positions of management. In fact, he starts preparing the son of his long-serving manager to be his heir. As a portrait of malice, it is powerful. But – and here is the jolt to our moral sensibilities – the resolution of the plot will challenge us and our emotional responses.

It is something the same with *Elena*, from the fine Russian film-maker, Andrei Zvyagintsev (*The Return, The Banishment*). We respond well to Elena, a grandmother, devoted to her son and his family. Then, we watch, with growing amazement, Elena's behaviour where family love becomes an absolute norm for her conduct which – at the very least – is amoral. But Zvyagintsev draws his characters so well. He creates a contemporary Russian atmosphere which questions the material progress of the last two decades and the impact on the values (and destruction of values) of ordinary people.

Films for older audiences, seniors and pensioners

Clearly, there are many more films that explore values, worth our consideration. However, in bringing this article to a close, it is worth noting a trend



Tom Courtenay and Maggie Smith, two of the stars of Quartet directed by Dustin Hoffman.

in films from many countries: no lack of films for younger audiences, but what about older audiences, seniors and pensioners?

The year opened with the popular success, *The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel*, with such British actors as Judi Dench, Maggie Smith and Bill Nighy. Maggie Smith returned at the end of the year with *Quartet*.

The former film showed older British people beginning a new life in India. The latter focused on four opera singers retiring to a home for elderly musicians. *Hotel* showed the exotic beauty of India. *Quartet* was permeated with music and song. They were blends of humour and relationship issues.

The French film, *And We All Lived Together*, brought a veteran French cast plus Jane Fonda, with terminal cancer, and Geraldine Chaplin deciding that, for mutual support, they would live in the one house.

And, from the United States, though the central characters were in the sixties, came *Hope Springs*,

a comedy drama which showed how important marriage counseling could be for rejuvenating loving relationships. With Meryl Streep and Tommy Lee Jones giving intensely personal performances, *Hope Springs* had a great deal to offer older audiences.

There were many other films to like, of course. But, those discussed here remind us that film-makers are not neglecting the deeper human values – and that there are still audiences of all ages eager to watch and appreciate them. ■

Film critic Peter Malone studied theology at the Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome, and English literature and history at Australian National University, Canberra. He was World President of the International Catholic Organization for Cinema and Audio-Visuals (OCIC) 1998-2001 and President of its successor SIGNIS, the World Catholic Association for Communication, 2001-05. In 2008 he was awarded an Honorary Doctorate in Theology by Melbourne College of Divinity.

La dimensión comunicacional de la educación en medios

Patricia E. Cortés Gordillo

El presente artículo aborda una problemática que es producto de muchas reflexiones y esperanzas en el futuro del ser humano en los campos antropológico-filosófico, educativo y comunicacional. Se trata de una nueva concepción de la Educación en Medios que busca fortalecer el pensamiento crítico frente a los mensajes de los medios de comunicación (tradicionales y nuevos) a través de una práctica de la comunicación que tiene sus bases en el diálogo y la descentración.

Nos encontramos frente a una expansión sin límites, sobre todo, de los denominados nuevos medios de comunicación, tales como Internet, TV satelital, etc. Dichos medios influyen claramente en nuestra percepción, conocimiento e interacción con el mundo.

Esta situación ha provocado que la “autonomía del destinatario” tome mucho más importancia e implica que éste deba contar con competencias determinadas que lo lleven a aproximarse a los mensajes mediáticos de forma crítica y creativa.

Aquí se fundamenta la necesidad de implementar la *educación en medios* (EM). Si bien este tipo de educación no es del todo nuevo (antes se denominó: recepción activa, lectura crítica de la comunicación, educación de la percepción, educación comunicacional, etc.), adquiere actualmente una renovación y relevancia significativas por las exigencias del contexto mediático.

Asimismo, partimos del postulado de Dominique Wolton (1999) que sostiene que no hay *conocimiento sin pensamiento crítico*, es decir, sin puesta a

distancia y cuestionamiento de los discursos y de las técnicas. Producir conocimiento es, necesariamente, mirar de otro modo el mundo y no satisfacerse de evidencias.

Es así que la EM apunta a reforzar en el destinatario, su condición de *receptor activo*, de explorador autónomo de la comunicación mediática, de actor de esta comunicación. Pretende lograr que el ser humano sea capaz de *apropiarse* de un máximo de informaciones a partir de cualquier tipo de documento mediático. Apropriarse quiere decir: reunir la información, organizarla, jerarquizarla, ejercer al respecto una *mirada crítica*.

Así, el objetivo central de la EM, como sostiene el canadiense Jacques Piette (1996), no apuntará a la simple transmisión de conocimientos sobre las tecnologías y las maneras de utilizarlas, más bien buscará crear las condiciones de una *relación al saber* que favorezca la *emergencia del espíritu crítico*. Desde esta perspectiva la EM cobra todo su sentido.

En consecuencia, en el presente artículo, nuestro interés principal es el de proponer al lector un marco de reflexión teórico que pueda ayudarle a optimizar la práctica de la EM en cualquier tipo de experiencia educativa.

Propuesta teórica y praxeológica

Partimos de la constatación de que la EM, pese a los progresos obtenidos, no ha llegado a dotarse de *fundamentos teóricos autónomos* que le permitan guiar de manera coherente la concepción de programas y su respectiva aplicación. Los estudios que han abordado este tema de forma específica, son escasos.

Por tanto, nuestra investigación pone el acento sobre la necesidad de abordar los fundamentos teóricos de la EM sobre la base de un elemento clave de este proceso: el *pensamiento crítico*. Para interrogarnos sobre estos fundamentos teóricos, nos ha parecido necesario apoyarnos sobre los fundamentos de tipo *comunicacional*. En este contexto, postulamos que existen elementos que pueden ayudarnos a comprender el proceso del *pensamiento crítico*, tales como el *diálogo* y la *descentración* que fueron verificados dentro de una experimentación científica.

cialmente crítico.

Como se muestra en el esquema en la página anterior, estas tres dimensiones están en interacción constante, la división ha sido propuesta únicamente con fines explicativos. Asimismo y coincidiendo con la tesis de Jacques Piette, dichas dimensiones están entrelazadas por la urgencia de instaurar el pensamiento crítico.

Según este esquema, la dimensión antropológica-filosófica nos orienta, sobre todo, hacia la *legitimización* de la EM. Las dos otras dimensiones, educativa y comunicacional, se encuentran más bien en un contexto de *concepción* y de *puesta en obra* de la EM (saber-hacer, técnicas pedagógicas y comunicacionales). Las tres dimensiones están dentro de una relación dialéctica donde ninguna dimensión es superior a la otra y donde el hilo conductor, como ya lo dijimos, es el *Pensamiento Crítico*.

A partir de esta reflexión, podemos afirmar que la EM abarca un conocimiento para la acción comunicativa dentro de una perspectiva de ciudadanía democrática.

En nuestra propuesta ponemos el acento en la *dimensión comunicacional*, debido a que se ha demostrado científicamente de que ésta puede ayudar a que el ejercicio del pensamiento crítico se consolide (mediante la práctica del diálogo y de la descentración) y que las dos otras dimensiones (educativa y antropológica-filosófica) se enriquezcan, así como todo el proceso de EM.

Un fundamento comunicacional para la educación en medios

Nuestra propuesta se basa en los postulados que provienen de dos corrientes de la comunicación: crítica y cognitiva. Dentro de la corriente crítica latinoamericana, así como Paulo Freire pone en cuestionamiento la “educación bancaria”, otros investigadores latinoamericanos como Juan Diaz Bordenave y Mario Kaplún han intentado desmitificar la idea de la “comunicación-monólogo” y proponen una conceptualización de la comunicación que trata de recuperar su noción de base: el *diálogo*.

Se trata de un modelo de comunicación que busca establecer una relación entre los actores del proceso. Esta actitud de “pensar en el otro” es la base de

la relación dialógica, de la interacción dialéctica, de la interlocución, de la intersubjetividad, que busca el desarrollo de las capacidades intelectuales y de la consciencia social.

El investigador belga Jean-Pierre Meunier (2004) afirma que en la actualidad asistimos a la emergencia de un nuevo punto de vista de los fenómenos de la comunicación: la atención se está desplazando de la *relación* a la *cognición*.

El modelo cognitivo de la comunicación centra su atención en las representaciones mentales, en las operaciones cognitivas que acompañan a la comunicación y considera al individuo en interacción con los otros. El punto de partida no es el “yo” individual sino la interacción misma con el mundo y el “otro”. Sus bases teóricas están en la psicología del desarrollo (Wallon, Piaget) y la antigua psicología fenomenológica.

Las dos corrientes de la comunicación – crítica y cognitiva – nos muestran vías de reflexión profundas para poder presentar una *definición de la comunicación* que esté a la base de un proceso de EM. Se trata de una proposición comunicacional estructurada sobre un modelo crítico fundado en una perspectiva cognitiva del diálogo:

La *comunicación* no está asegurada por un emisor que habla y un receptor que escucha, sino por dos o más seres humanos que *dialogan* y comparten experiencias, saberes, sentimientos al interior de un marco significativo común. Es así que un individuo entra en cooperación mental con otro (*descentración*) hasta modificar y extender el entorno cognitivo mutuo que comparten. Es por intermedio de este proceso de intercambio que los seres humanos desarrollan el *pensamiento crítico* y pasan de la existencia individual aislada a la existencia social comunitaria.

Nuestra propuesta no quedaría completa, si no insistimos en su objetivo primordial: la libertad y dignidad del ser humano. El hombre mientras más crítico sea, será más libre. La EM debe llevar al hombre a la conquista de su plenitud, a través de la apropiación consciente de su entorno simbólico y de su

rol activo dentro de la dinámica social y cultural.

Para finalizar, podemos afirmar que en pleno siglo XXI donde las Tecnologías de la Información y de la Comunicación progresan rápidamente, la necesidad de una EM se impone. Los desafíos, siendo de gran talla, merecen un compromiso de los diferentes actores de la sociedad y justifican la pertinencia y validez de nuestra propuesta. Esperamos ser un apoyo para todos aquellos que trabajan para que las actuales y nuevas generaciones dialoguen y reflexionen eficazmente. ■

Este artículo sintetiza aportes teóricos de nuestra Tesis Doctoral titulada “La dimension communicationnelle de l’éducation aux médias: dialogue et décentration” (2011), Université Catholique de Louvain, Ecole de Communication, Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgique.

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New book on public memory and mass media

This book aims to provide a context in which a clear link can be traced between the politics of memory and its manifold representations and misrepresentations in public media.

Public Memory, Public Media and the Politics of Justice asks how the construction, representation and distortion of public memory affect the way we treat other people? How is policy-making influenced by the way the media cover contentious issues such as ongoing but largely ignored conflicts in different parts of the world?

The book contains 11 chapters including an introduction titled “Public Media and the Right to Memory: Towards an Encounter with Justice.” Authors focus on the contexts of Peru, Argentina, East Timor, South Africa, Rwanda, the Roma in Europe, Chechnya, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the Caribbean.

Public Memory, Public Media and the Politics of Justice argues that “those responsible for the content of mass-mediated products and artefacts... have a clear ethical obligation to opt for inclusion rather than exclusion, information rather than misinformation, representation rather than misrepresentation.”

The book is widely available from booksellers, including the publisher. *Public Memory, Public Media and the Politics of Justice*, edited by Philip Lee and Pradip N. Thomas. Palgrave Macmillan (2012). ISBN 978-0-230-35406-7. <http://www.palgrave.com/products/title.aspx?pid=536170>



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public media, and
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pradip n. thomas



palgrave macmillan memory studies

