



**10TH GLOBAL INVESTIGATIVE
JOURNALISM CONFERENCE**
Johannesburg, South Africa, November 16 to 19, 2017
With the African Investigative Journalism Conference (AIJC2017)

Global Investigative Journalism Conference 2017

Academic Track Reader



Investigative Journalism Education Consortium

Table of Contents

Almania, Ali	1
Challenges Confronting Investigative Journalism in Saudi Arabia	
Bahrani, Yasmine and Freeman, Bradley	2
The Vast and the Curious: teaching investigative journalism in a diverse Dubai	
Chenganna, Azhagan	3
Investigative journalism in the post-truth era: Views from Mauritius	
Desormeaux Parra, Paulette	4
TPA: A Successful Method of Teaching Top-Notch Investigative Journalism	
Dierickx, Laurence	5
News bot for the newsroom: how building data quality indicators can support journalistic projects relying on real-time open data	
Findlay, S.J., Bird, W. R. and Smith, T	6
“The more things change, the more they stay the same”: The impacts of social media and digital technology on journalism quality in South African newsrooms	
Homolova, Adriana	7
Graph my tender: Exploring public procurement networks	
Jurrat, N., Lublinski, J. and Mong, A	8
Raking Muck and Raising Funds - Capacity Development Strategies for the Future of Investigative Journalism in the Global South	

Kasoma, Twange and Pitts, Greg	9
Challenges in doing investigative reporting: A Zambian case study	
Mwita, George.....	10
Challenges of doing investigative journalism in Tanzania: How do you swim with sharks without being swallowed?	
Rasmin, M.C., Raguram, S. and Azad M.....	11
Investigative Journalism in Sri Lanka: A study on the process and effectiveness of investigative video storytelling	
Salazar, Milagros.....	12
Data-driven journalism: Visualizing the lie versus revealing the truth	
Valeeva, Anastasia.....	13
Investigative open data journalism in Russia: actors, barriers and challenges	

Foreword

We are pleased to present this collection of research papers submitted for the sessions of the academic track at the Global Investigative Journalism Conference 2017 in Johannesburg. Except for two papers, all research was presented at the conference by the authors and you can find additional material for some of their presentation at the [conference's Tipsheet Page](#). Some of the authors' sessions also were reported on and you can find those articles at gijc2017.org/category/academic.

The collection brings together views on investigative journalism from across the globe. A recurring theme is the influence of technology on reporting and the use of data in reporting. The authors explored the limits of using data, the impact of social media, visualizing networks, and quality indicators for data.

A second theme was the challenges investigative reporters face in different media landscapes. The authors detailed the difficulties in a number of countries, including Mauritius, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Tanzania and Zambia.

Readers will find many tips and tools for investigative reporters and data journalists as well as advice for creating sustainable newsrooms. This mirrored the overall approach of the Global Investigative Journalism Conferences, which provides a vibrant venue for journalists to come together to share skills and training and plan collaborative projects.

The Investigative Journalism Education Consortium is a site where journalism educators and trainers can share their curriculum, syllabi, teaching methods and knowledge throughout the year. You can find research papers at the site at ijec.org/research.

The Consortium would like to thank all the authors who submitted papers, the Global Investigative Journalism Network, and the Investigative Journalism Workshop at the University of Witwatersrand, which also hosts the annual African Investigative Journalism Conference.

Challenges Confronting Investigative Journalism in Saudi Arabia

By Ali Almania

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to explore the challenges confronting investigative journalists in Saudi Arabia. As a result of the prevailing political system, the gatekeepers of the Saudi news media have imposed legal restrictions on investigative journalism. This study considers whether the political changes that are taking place in some Arab countries after the so-called 'Arab Spring' in 2010 have led to more or less investigative reporting. Semi-structured interviews were held with three Saudi newspapers' editors in chief, who were asked about their criteria for accepting or rejecting investigative stories.

This study used descriptive analytical methodology, and the findings indicate that the practice of investigative journalism in Saudi Arabia is at a very low level due to the strong connection between media and the political system. This study asserts that Saudi newspapers are controlled by the political system, lack institutional structures, and are run by editors in chief who do not act independently, with the political system dictating what they can do. Some editors in chief are more cautious about allowing investigative reporting, as this might negatively reflect on them. They seek authorities' permission before publishing investigative reports, which is against the principle of freedom of the press. This study asserts that Saudi press laws do not encourage the practice of investigative journalism and that journalists have low levels of freedom. They are wary, lest their reporting lead to them getting arrested. The changes in the political climates in some Arab countries have led to sterner measures taken against investigative reporting. Due to the lack of a full-fledged policy to govern investigative reporting in Saudi Arabia, there is less opportunity for investigative journalism to flourish there.

Keywords: Investigative Journalism, Challenges, Politics, Saudi Arabia.

Introduction

Investigative journalism plays a key role in serving society by detecting corruption, enhancing transparency, and reinforcing public opinion. Investigative journalists often shoulder the responsibility for uncovering corruption and other wrongdoing (de Burgh, 2008; Kaplan, 2008; O'Neill, 2010). However, there are several issues that impact investigative journalists' ability to act with intellectual and professional freedom. Journalists face other influencing factors, such as media owners' mandates, advertisers' preferences, and the high cost of investigative journalism (Griffin, 2014; Raphael et al., 2004). Such factors are also true in the case of Saudi newspapers, which are greatly impacted by the political system and are not independent publishers, as they are forced to abide by the government's political guidelines and censorship (Freedom House, 2014). Saudi culture and politics are the primary obstacles to investigative journalism (Alhomoud, 2013; Al-Nassar, 2014). This paper examines the relationship between the political system and investigative journalism through the opinions of three Saudi newspapers' editors in chief. The study also examines how the political system impacts investigative journalism in Saudi Arabia.

Definition of Investigative Journalism

Investigative journalism means 'going after what someone wants to hide' (de Burgh, 2008, p. 15). The late Bob Greene, who was with the U.S.-based journalist organisation Investigative Reporters and Editors, said the three basic elements of investigative reporting are: 'that the investigation be the work of the reporter, not the work of others that he is reporting; that the subject of the story involves something that is important for his or her readers to know; and that others are attempting to hide the truth of these matters from the people' (Bolch & Miller, 1978, p.3). Investigative journalism is meant to uncover hidden facts. Aucoin (2007) describes several elements of investigative reporting: It's meant to expose information about an important issue that interests the public, it's related to an individual or organisation that does not want to be part of any investigative story uncovered through journalistic investigations, and it often aims to elicit reforms (p. 91). Weinberg (1996) believes that the journalist takes the initiative in reporting about issues that are important to the public, which is the essence of investigative journalism.

Investigative journalism, as it is applied in the West, differs from what Saudi and other Arab journalists consider to be investigative journalism, and what most newspapers in Arab countries publish demonstrates this difference (Al-Nassar, 2014). Furthermore, investigative journalism, as it is practiced in Arab countries, is still not even clearly defined. A common mistake in Arab journalistic usage is the use of terms for ‘features’ and ‘investigative’ reports that sometimes overlap. *Tahqeeq* (investigation) is mostly used to describe a feature, which is a story with a human-interest angle, while *tahqeeq istiqlaliyya* (investigative report) is the term used by media professionals to explain what investigative reporters do.

Additionally, the turbulent political and economic situation in Arab countries since the Arab Spring has made the practice of investigative reporting precarious. A 2014 report on freedom of the press in Arab countries indicates backsliding press freedom since the Arab Spring uprisings and dwindling political power in Arab countries that experienced such uprisings. In fact, the Arab Spring has led to some press-freedom gains in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya. However, in Libya, owing to a lack of security, journalists and press staff have been exposed to risks, threats, kidnappings, and attacks by groups, including militias, with the slaying of an Al Jazeera photojournalist in Benghazi being one of the most notable instances (Freedom House, 2014).

On the other hand, political turmoil in countries that experienced the Arab Spring led to violations of freedom of the press, higher risks for journalists, and increased censorship. There also have been occasions in which journalists were accused of presenting reports to the public that violated the norms of society and religion (Hamdy, 2013). Some Arab countries, such as the Arab Gulf states, which did not experience the Arab Spring, strengthened media censorship as they targeted potential opponents of their regimes (Davidson 2012). However, Arab citizens are encouraged by their access to so many platforms to voice their opinions, including social media, where stringent censoring measures are less effective.

Challenges facing investigative journalism

Investigative journalism flourishes with freedom of the press. In countries such as the U.S., U.K., Canada, Scandinavian countries, and Australia, investigative journalism is more common and free to flourish than in countries with stringent press censorship. In less-democratic countries, or those with unstable regimes, including Russia, some Middle Eastern and Eastern European countries, and nations in the Far East and Africa, investigative journalism is significantly scant or may not even exist at all (Aucoin, 2003; Martin, 2010). The challenges facing investigative journalism vary by culture and are influenced by politics, financing, time constraints, the commitment of media owners and journalists, and legal restrictions imposed by governments (Baker, 2005; de Burgh, 2008).

Investigative journalism faces many legal, political, and economic obstacles. In many countries, the lack of laws that protect the public also limits investigative reporting. There are instances in which the law of the land does not protect the privacy of journalists, and journalists do not have 'the right to reply' (Waisbord, 2001). Journalists also fear being insulted or having their reputations tarnished, leading to many shying away from investigative reporting. Regarding political barriers, politicians in these nations generally view investigative journalism as a nuisance rather than a democratic ideal. Hence, it is common for politicians to exert pressure on investigative reporters, which can include accusing them of wrongdoing. Consequently, politicians suppress investigative reports by allying themselves with publishers and editors to intimidate investigative journalists. It's no wonder that since most media companies depend on government financing, they toe the line adopted by the government. This shows that economic constraints can be a major factor that influences investigative journalism (Waisbord, 2001).

Fleeson (2000) asserts that some of the most common challenges to investigative reporting in both developing and developed countries include lack of information, lack of access to documents, and reporters' fears of being targeted or threatened, leading to safety concerns. This makes the work of investigative reporters very difficult. Additionally, when journalists are not granted the right to keep their sources secret, their informants might become more reluctant to supply them with important information, thereby hindering investigative reporters' ability to serve the public (Bauer, 2005). Such obstacles are more prominent in less-democratic countries. Martin (2010) says governments subsidise even privately owned newspapers to the extent that if those newspapers published material that went against the

government, they would lose government subsidies or even lose their licenses altogether. This has been documented in Arab countries. As Al-Zahrani (2015) stated, the media in Arab countries are still controlled by political authorities. Even private media, which do not depend on the government for subsidies, are still strongly controlled by the political powers there.

Martin (2010) asserts that challenges to investigative journalism exist in most Arab countries.

In Arab countries, journalists face a barbed maze fraught with intimidation, demotion, incarceration, and sometimes even death. The most common way that Arab governments stifle investigative reporting is by applying financial pressure. Arab states are intimately involved in the economic well-being of many Arab news organisations, so they apply pressure in several ways, most notably through ownership or advertising. (p. 85)

According to Bebawi (2016), the challenges to investigative journalism in Arab countries since the Arab Spring are related to the fact that investigative reporting is still under government control. Social pressure also exerts influence. Although investigative reporters have a duty to inform the public about hidden truths and other lesser-known societal developments, Arab society is often either sceptical of the changes or not comfortable with them. Thus, journalists often find themselves trapped between state control and societal mistrust. However, the image of journalism in Arab countries is changing due to citizens' increasing demands for wider access to information.

Regarding investigative journalism in Saudi Arabia, it's still not common there. Although the press is privately owned, the vast majority of newspapers remain subsidised and regulated by the government and tend to be subjected to strict censorship (BBC, 2015; El Gody, 2007; Rugh, 2004). Even the private press remains loyal to the government, which has the power of the constitution and can influence the press through both legal and financial means and incentives (Rugh, 2004).

It can be said that the lack of investigative journalism in Saudi Arabia is partly due to government interference and domination of the media. Saudi newspapers don't dedicate space to investigative stories or employ journalists specialising in investigative reporting, suggesting a lack of support for investigative journalism. Furthermore, there is a lack of clarity in media law, which creates difficulties for journalists wanting to do investigative reporting (Al-Nassar, 2014; Al-Shammari, 2011). Hence, there are three main obstacles that

hinder investigative reporting in Saudi Arabia: political factors tied to the government's management and domination of the media, the absence of investigative sections and investigative journalists at Saudi newspapers, and the lack of clarity in media laws (Al-Nassar, 2014).

Al-Jameeah (2006) referred to internal and external factors associated with media content. The internal factors include media ownership, financing, the political line toed by newspapers, and journalists' qualifications. The external factors include the political and economic systems, the culture of society, and media laws and regulations. Such factors impact the nature of media content. Investigative journalism can impact the culture and attitudes of systems that it targets. This can be interpreted in the context of the Saudi political system and what it imposes on the practice of investigative journalism.

Despite the significance of investigative journalism, for the reasons cited above, it has not attracted the attention of Saudi academics and researchers. There is a paucity of studies on investigative journalism and the ways in which it is influenced by the political system. Thus, investigative journalism and the challenges it faces, particularly in relation to the political system in Saudi Arabia, remain uncharted territory.

Saudi political system and the media

In the Middle East, the political system has prevented the media from becoming a tool for advancing the interests of the public. Instead, most of the time, news media act as a mouthpiece for the government to the extent that the public has lost hope of the media ever holding government officials accountable for their actions. It is for this reason that the Arab press is called the 'Loyalist Press' (Rugh, 2004). For instance, the king of Saudi Arabia has the legislative and executive power to control the country. This means the king has a stronghold over media, as the government can interfere with media content by restricting it from reporting on various issues of a political nature. Al-Shamiry (1992) argues that the government of Saudi Arabia limits freedom of the press and uses strong censorship to sustain the status quo, and the stability of the country. Rugh (2004) believes that the Saudi press is restricted from reporting crucial foreign-policy issues, among others.

The Saudi Arabian 'Basic Law' (the Constitution) stipulates clear goals for the media, which mainly focus on educating the populace and nurturing national unity:

Mass media and all other vehicles of expression shall employ civil and polite language, contribute toward the education of the nation and strengthen unity. It is prohibited to commit acts leading to disorder and division, affecting the security of the state and its public relations, or undermining human dignity and rights (Bureau of Experts at the Council of Ministers, 1992).

On this basis, the Saudi press remains independent as long as it doesn't interfere in anything that the government considers to be against the general welfare, as this might undermine its authority. Thus, anything the government deems as having the potential to cause turbulence and friction between it and citizens, or anything that might influence people's sense of duty toward their country, religion, or the community at large, can be stifled by the government (Awad, 2010; Rugh, 2004). Rugh (2004) stated that Saudi newspapers are not likely to publish any material that criticises the religion of Islam or the royal family. For instance, one of the editors of *Al-Madina* newspaper in Saudi Arabia was sacked in March 2002 for publishing a report in which he criticised Islamic judges, calling them 'corrupt'. Moreover, the Ministry of Culture and Information also has the power to close newspapers, and this makes newspapers fearful of crossing the line. The government is, thus, able to censor the daily content of newspapers, both directly and indirectly: 'A phone call from the Ministry of Information is usually enough to persuade an editor to emphasise one story or downplay another' (Rugh, 2004, p. 72).

The government certifies the appointment of national newspapers' editors in chief. This power strengthens its influence over editorial policies at these newspapers – influence already buttressed by its allocation of funding to these newspapers. Furthermore, most broadcast media, including TV and radio, are owned and controlled by the government, which is also the main advertiser in broadcast media, although there are other minor advertisers. The government has the power to terminate the employment contracts of editors or members of staff working for broadcast media if they violate government guidelines. The director general of the *Al-Ikhbaria* TV channel, Mohammed Al-Tonesi, was dismissed for criticising the government in a live debate with a viewer on the phone. Additionally, the government monitors and censors the content of webpages, and the public is warned against accessing certain websites due to their political content. Therefore, it can be said that since the

government controls the media to this extent, it is unlikely that the media will rebel against the government, unless the government loosens its grip on the media.

This leaves little latitude for the national press to pursue stories and publish work that contains critical or investigative aspects, since doing so would be seen as undermining national unity. Indeed, these societal goals can be interpreted in ways that highly restrict the activities of journalists (Mellor, 2011; Rugh, 2004). The Saudi Ministry of Culture and Information has jurisdiction over offences and violations of freedom of the press, which has the effect of reducing the objectivity of journalism in this area, exaggerating the roles of the editors in chief at certain Saudi newspapers, and restricting the freedom of journalists, writers, and readers to express their views. Hence, there is a tendency for journalists in Saudi Arabia to be cautious (Al-Askar, 2005). This caution motivates most journalists to exercise a high degree of self-censorship when criticising the government and prominent religious figures (AlFahad, 2015). Al-Shamiry (1992) argued that the censorship imposed by the Ministry of Culture and Information on newspapers leads to journalists self-censoring their reports. Nevertheless, the past decade or so has seen moves toward allowing some degree of criticism within the press, particularly from journalists favoured by the ruling elite (AlFahad, 2015).

Therefore, the Saudi system exerts pressure on journalists and editors in chief, making them conform by toeing the government line and adhering to the *status quo*. It is for this reason that Rugh (2004) said the Saudi government doesn't really need to employ censorship a great deal, as the press is already sensitive to any issue that goes against the government's positions. The Saudi press is self-regulated to conform with the political stance of the country. Journalists practise self-censorship out of fear of punishment by the editor in chief, Ministry of Culture and Information, or other political, religious, or social groups.

Consequently, the Saudi press has been unable to be a watchdog for the public, instead acting as a 'cheerleader' for the government (Al-Kahtani, 1999). For all these reasons, Saudi Arabia has been viewed from the outside as lacking freedom of the press (Freedom House Report, 2006). This makes the relationship between the government and the media complex and controversial in Saudi Arabia. The media are asked to support policies advanced by the government, but at the same time, media financiers, being close to the ruling family, can flout the laws. They finance Saudi media through advertising and subsidies. Thus, Saudi media cannot risk going against their financiers (Hallin& Mancini, 2011).

Although it has instituted several political and economic reforms regarding press freedom, the Saudi government has not done enough, as there are no clear-cut laws and regulations protecting freedom of the press. The perception of a lack of press freedom among journalists makes it easy for influential groups, particularly the government and religious leaders, to interfere with the work that journalists do. In addition, the lack of a democratic political culture in Saudi Arabia makes government interference of the press appear to be legitimate (Awad, 2010).

The effects of political systems are deemed to be more significant in less-democratic countries. However, studies have established that the obstacles and restrictions imposed on journalists by political systems differ among Arab countries. This paper has explored the impact of the political system on investigative journalism in Saudi Arabia by identifying and understanding the political challenges affecting the practice of investigative journalism in that Arab nation.

Gatekeeping

Gatekeeping theory involves deciding what is published by the media. This theory presumes that there are several gatekeepers who control processing of the news and have the authority to accept or reject news that passes through their gates. They also have the authority to modify messages so that they are in line with their attitudes and toe the political and cultural lines. It was back in 1950 when White applied gatekeeping theory to the editors of several newspapers, examining and assigning the causes and determinants of news selection for publication. This theory was developed later by researchers, such as Shoemaker et al. (2001), who proposed factors that play a role in the selection of news to be published. Among these factors are political, cultural, individual, organisational, economic, and work-routine considerations.

In this context, some Arabic studies alluded to pressures imposed on the media concerning publication and transmission of news and reports. Al-Shamiry (2001) found that 85% of Egyptian journalists admitted there are two types of censorship: self-censorship, which is exercised by journalists themselves, and censorship tied to external pressures from political or governmental systems. Despite increased openness in Saudi news media, challenges remain. Studies such as those conducted by Al-Nassar (2014) and Awad (2010) have found

that Saudi media are still influenced directly by political and cultural factors, as well as professional, economic, and work-routine factors. Moreover, both types of censorship, self and institutional, are still practiced, albeit to a lesser degree due to political and social changes taking place in society, as well as the impact of digital and social media. Al-Nassar (2014) argues that political, cultural, constitutional, professional, and economic factors are among those influencing the relationship between media and political change in Arab countries.

Methodology

This study uses a descriptive analytical method of data collection through a qualitative approach, based on semi-structured interviews with three editors in chief at Saudi newspapers, exploring how the political system influences investigative journalism in Saudi Arabia, as expressed through their opinions. These three newspapers were selected out of 13 newspapers published in Saudi Arabia. The choices were deliberate, as the study sample was limited. *Al-Riyadh* was chosen because it's the most widely read newspaper in Saudi Arabia, *Al-Hayat* was chosen on the basis of its international license, and *Arab News* was chosen due to its being the most widely read newspaper published in English.

The interview questions are specific and seek in-depth details, although follow-up questions also were used to acquire more information about the influence of the political system on the practice of investigative journalism in Saudi Arabia. The interviews provided a deeper understanding of participants' knowledge and responses (Brinkmann, 2014), as well as an understanding of their world, based on their perceptions and experiences (Roulston, 2013).

The interviews employed three main questions:

1. What is the status of investigative journalism in Saudi Arabia?
2. What are the challenges encountering investigative journalism?
3. How does the political system influence the practice of investigative journalism?

Findings

The names of the editors in chief interviewed for this study were not mentioned to encourage them to speak more candidly about the subject of the study. The results of the study have been presented according to the following themes based on the study questions:

The concept and reality of investigative journalism in Saudi newspapers

This study sought to identify the concept of investigative journalism in Saudi newspapers and the nature of its practice. There has been a disparity in the description of the concept and reality of the practice of investigative journalism in Saudi Arabia. *Al-Riyadh* editor-in-chief points out that investigative journalism is an in-depth professional practice that explores root causes, issues, problems, and events. It seeks to find solutions to these problems and expand the professional practice of the Saudi press. *Al-Hayat* editor-in-chief says investigative journalism in the kingdom has no concept and no mechanism applied. The most important requirements of investigative journalism are transparency and the availability of sources of information. Since these requirements are not available in Saudi Arabia, the journalist is left with inadequate access to the material he seeks. Some Saudi newspapers have tried to publish some investigations, but they were not judgmental. *Arab News* editor-in-chief said the concept of investigative journalism is a weak concept in Saudi Arabia and that investigative journalism does not exist in Saudi Arabia as it does in the Western world. Moreover, journalists do not like to expose people, especially perpetrators. There is a scarcity of Saudi journalists with the ability to search, investigate, and work in the field to conduct a documented investigation, as is done in the West. *The Arab News* said Saudi newspapers rely on the policies of the editor, but that some are not very efficient, while most are afraid of publishing investigative reports, e.g., the Ministry of Culture and Information was asked to fire the press editor of the newspaper for conducting a survey on domestic servants and maids.

Challenges faced by investigative reporters in Saudi Arabia

This question sought to identify the most salient challenges faced by Saudi newspapers in carrying out investigative journalism. The responses of the newspapers were different from those obtained in the study, but focused on the main obstacles facing this type of journalism. *Riyadh* newspaper pointed out that Saudi newspapers face a big problem in investigative journalism. The investigative journalist faces the challenge of a very large political influence

-- the most challenging factor these reporters face. Newspapers generally avoid investigating sensitive issues in society, such as drug abuse among women and homosexuality, as they reflect on the values and culture of society. Thus, the newspapers try to balance leaders' opinions and their desire for a consensus agenda on many investigative issues and avoid negative rifts. Fear of losing their jobs makes editors reluctant to publish some of their investigations. The legal dimension is the other major factor, restricting editors and investigative reporters from delving into the roots of the problem.

Arab News reported that 'fear' is the most important factor influencing investigative journalism because the results of the investigations may not be satisfactory to some people. For instance, one of the editors was asked to conduct investigations on the environmental effects of the Jeddah floods, but refused to conduct the investigation because of his fear of government reprisals. Insufficient funds, a lack of investigative journalists, and poor salaries have negatively affected the practice of investigative journalism.

Al Hayat newspaper said investigative journalism requires professionalism and high-level networks of relationships that help these journalists access the information needed, which most journalists working in Saudi Arabia lack. With the investigative press posing a danger in lieu of the media being a situation of anarchy, perhaps a case against newspapers is being raised by the parties in the investigation.

The influence of the political system on the practice of investigative journalism

Government influence on the press is considered a significant factor in investigative journalism. *Al Riyadh's* editor in chief categorised the political factor as the most important factor influencing investigative journalism. Sometimes the journalist's efforts in identifying the root causes of the problem are in vain because of this. The appointment of editors in chief is done only with the approval of the government. *Arab News* said media companies do not help the investigative press because of the large number of directives prohibiting writing and publishing certain items, along with the absence of clear rules and regulations on what can be printed, as the government continually tries to control the work of the press. For example, during the 2012 Olympics, newspapers were banned from writing about the participation of Saudi women in the Olympic Games. Moreover, when Saddam Hussein attacked Kuwait in 1990, Saudi newspapers were not allowed to write about the event until three days later. *Arab News* reported, 'Some officials in the Ministry of Culture and Information believed that the

newspapers under their command want to control them in their own sense’.

Al-Hayat’s editor in chief said the powers vested in him have been misused. In addition, information systems do not help provide integrated press articles. Although *Al-Hayat* is an international newspaper, there are red lines that it cannot cross, which are related to religion or the royal family. Hence, an investigation cannot be conducted concerning these two spheres. Investigations also can’t be done on countries that have a good relationship with Saudi Arabia.

Discussion

Based on this study, the results did not touch on the professional and legal dimensions of the concept of investigative journalism in the West, nor did they have a mechanism in place. The most important tool for the investigative press is the requirement of transparency and the availability of sources of information. Due to the unavailability of these sources of information in Saudi Arabia, the journalist gains only little access to the material. Also, the journalist does not focus on the roles of the press, such as the role of watchdog. This can be explained by the fact that the Saudi print press has not used this new concept in the press in such a way that it sets specific definitions, precise rules, and clear working procedures in line with internationally known definitions. This also indicates that it is not disseminated as required and has not yet reached the polling stage as required. The study also reveals that there is a lack of legal dimensions in the concept of investigative journalism, in reference to the fact that the laws on publishing content and information governing the work of newspapers and journalists in Saudi Arabia do not clearly delineate the limits on journalists’ work, such as the Freedom of Information Act or the limits on submissions to Saudi newspapers. The editor in chief of *Riyadh* pointed out that the dimensions of the law on investigative journalism deepen the roots of the problem because of the fear of legal repercussions. This is consistent with some studies that indicate media difficulty in understanding media laws in Saudi Arabia (Al-Shebeili 2000, Al Nassar 2014). This explains the relationship between the media and government agencies -- especially that of Saudi newspapers -- although being civil institutions, they are under the supervision of the state in their organisational and administrative aspects. This goes along with the findings of some studies such as Zahrani (2015) and Martin (2010), which point out that the political

authorities control the media, which publishes newspapers in the Arab homeland.

This study on investigative journalism describes the challenges faced by Saudi newspapers, and the gatekeeper theory conveys that the work of the investigation requires the disclosure of facts and that diving into files and information and the role of verification and investigation lead to the emergence of several professional and non-professional factors. The political factor is the most important factor influencing the practice of investigative journalism. The results of this study indicate the difficulties the media face, as well as the reduction in governmental hegemony over the media and the recognition of the media's role as a voice for the public, which may be consistent with Al-Nassar's study (2014). This affirms that the Saudi press does not exercise its role, as it's isolated from the political system, which is protected by laws and regulations that restrain the media.

The results of the study indicate that the practice of investigative journalism is dangerous to those working in Saudi media. In addition, the lack of legal clarity in news media has led to the presence of a state of fear among reporters and editors. Government officials were given free rein over newspapers. Although this factor is linked to the political factor, it is clear that the absence of clarity in media laws makes it difficult for newspapers to conduct investigative journalism based on internationally adopted definitions. Also, the results of the study indicate a need to establish special investigative sections and to hire reporters that specialise in investigative reporting to overcome obstacles in the practice of investigative journalism. This suggests that the concept of investigation has not received sufficient attention in the print press so far. Moreover, the values and culture of Saudi society also exert influence over the practice of investigative journalism. *Al-Riyadh* newspaper specifically pointed out that newspapers avoid investigating sensitive issues in society, such as drug abuse among women, homosexuality, and religious issues. *Al-Riyadh* newspaper reported on the influence of pressure groups as a force with strong influence within society. Therefore, newspapers are trying to strike a balance between the desires of opinion leaders -- who want a consensus agenda on many issues, events, and problems -- and the aims of the investigative press. Thus, newspapers avoid engaging in battles that negatively affect them. This factor may be associated with the values and culture of society. This confirms the findings of Bebawi (2016), that Arabic societies are always skeptical of change. Hence, journalists find themselves caught between government control and community distrust.

It's clear that Saudi newspapers, although controlled by restrictions in their professional practice, now have more freedom as a result of the influence of social media, which have raised the ceiling of freedom, though they are still subject to the attitudes and positions of the political system and cannot overcome them. This has led to a lack of investigative reporting in the Saudi press. *Al-Hayat* pointed out that investigative journalists have no concept or an applied mechanism on the environment in Saudi Arabia, which is not designed to accept such a mechanism.

Responding to the questions of the study, it is clear that there are differences among newspapers. The study included *Al Riyadh* newspaper reflecting on to what extent newspapers are linked to the political system and society, being a newspaper that is locally licensed and acting as a spokesman for the government. *Al-Hayat*, which is one of the Saudi-owned newspapers printed in Saudi Arabia and licensed in the United Kingdom, has come out with a more comprehensive description of the realities of investigative journalism in Saudi Arabia. It also has explored many subjects from an investigative standpoint (Rugh, 2004). *Arab News*, which is printed in English, focused on the lack of professional investigative staff and highlighted differences between Saudi and Western media.

Conclusion

This study indicates that investigative journalism in Saudi newspapers has not yet reached an advanced stage of maturity and practice. Their investigative work suffers from political, professional, and legal obstacles. This study reveals the need to pay attention to this type of journalism in the Saudi press, especially the restrictions that affect the performance of the press. Saudi newspapers should pursue issues such as corruption and other serious problems suffered by society, unlike in the past, when these issues were considered sensitive topics that the press should avoid. Despite political obstacles, if Saudi newspapers adopt a truly dedicated investigative approach, fueled by modern communication technology that includes online social media, it might lead to a better communication landscape.

References

- Al-Askar, F. A. (2005). Freedom of opinion in Saudi newspapers and their relation to human rights for communication in the community (Unpublished research submitted to the Human Rights Conference in Arab Countries). Mutah University Jordan.
- Al-Jameeah, A. M. (2006). Press Treatment on The Events of September 11th, 2001 and its aftermath in Saudi newspapers (Unpublished master's thesis). Riyadh, Imam Muhammad bin Saud Islamic University, Faculty of Da'wa and Information.
- Al-Kahtani, A. M. (1999). *The Performance of the Saudi Arabian Press During the Gulf Conflict, 1990-1991*. University of Leeds.
- Al-Shamiry, N. (2011). Investigative journalism in Saudi news sites. (Unpublished master's thesis). Riyadh, Imam Muhammad bin Saud Islamic University, Saudi Arabia.
- Al-Shamiry, S. 2001. The concept of self-censorship in four Egyptian newspapers. Riyadh, *King Saud University Journal*, 13.
- Al-Shamiry, S. (1992). *Press and Law in Arab World and the United States*. Riyadh: Altaqnia wa Alawfast press.
- Al-Shebeili, A. (2000). *Media in Saudi Arabia*. Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: Safer Press.
- Al Maghlooth, A. (2013). *The Relevance of Gatekeeping in the Process of Contemporary News Creation and Circulation in Saudi Arabia*. Media & Cultural Studies.
- Al-Nassar, O. (2014). Directions of Saudi newspapers printed towards investigative journalism. (Unpublished research submitted to investigative journalism Conference and the power of the media. Challenges, stakes and prospects). Monouba University, Institute of Journalism and Science News Tunisia.
- Alfahad, A. (2015). Saudi broadcast interviews: Moving towards aggressiveness. *Discourse & Communication*, 1750481315571179.
- Alhomoud, K. (2013). Impacts of Culture on Online Journalism in Saudi Arabia.
- Al-Zahrani, A. (2015). *Political Power and Media in Arab World*. Beirut: AL-wahda Alarabia Studies Centre.

Aucoin, J. L. (2007). *The Evolution of American Investigative Journalism*. University of Missouri Press.

Aucoin, J.L. (2003). Investigative Journalism. *Encyclopedia of International Media and Communication*, Vol. 2. Alabama, Elsevier Science.

Awad, T. (2010). *The Saudi Press and the Internet: How Saudi Journalists and Media Decision Makers at the Ministry of Culture and Information Evaluate Censorship in the Presence of the Internet as a News and Information Medium*. The University of Sheffield.

Bebawi, S. (2016). *Investigative Journalism in the Arab World: Issues and Challenges*: Springer.

BBC (2015). 'Saudi Arabia profile – Media'. Available at:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-14703480>.

Bolch, J., & Miller, K. (1978). Investigative and In-Depth Reporting.

Brinkmann, S. (2014). (Interview) *Encyclopedia of Critical Psychology* (pp. 1008-1010): Springer.

Bureau of Experts at the Council of Ministers (1992). The Basic Law of Governance, Available at: <https://www.boe.gov.sa/ViewStaticPage.aspx?lang=2&PageID=25>.

Davidson, C. M. (2012), Gulf atrocity in question: The Middle East channel, Foreign Policy. Available at: http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2012/11/13/gulf_autocracy_in_question.

de Burgh, H. (2008). The emergence of investigative journalism. *Investigative Journalism*. pp. 32-53.

El Gody, A. (2007). New media, new audience, new topics, and new forms of censorship in the Middle East. *New Media and the New Middle East*, pp. 213-234: Springer.

Fleeson, L. S. (2000). *Dig Deep & Aim High: A Training Model for Teaching Investigative Reporting*: International Centre for Journalists.

Griffin, S. (2014). The death of investigative reporting: Survey of mass media. Available at: <https://medium.com/survey-of-mass-media/the-death-of-investigative-reporting->

Hallin, D. C., & Mancini, P. (2011). *Comparing Media Systems Beyond the Western World*: Cambridge University Press.

- Hamdy, N. (2013). Arab investigative journalism practice. *Journal of Arab & Muslim Media Research*, 6(1), pp. 67-93.
- House, F. (2014). Freedom of Press 2014. Media Freedom Hits Decade Low. *Freedom House*. Washington DC (USA).
- House, F. (2006). Saudi Arabia: The Annual Report 2006. Available at: <http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=22&country=7051&year=2006&view=mo>
- Kaplan, A. D. (2008). *Investigating the Investigators: Examining the Attitudes, Perceptions, and Experiences of Investigative Journalists in the Internet Age*: ProQuest.
- Raphael, C., Tokunaga, L., & Wai, C. (2004). Who is the real target? Media response to controversial investigative reporting on corporations. *Journalism Studies*, 5(2), pp. 165-178.
- Roulston, K. (2013). Interviews in qualitative research. *The Encyclopedia of Applied Linguistics*.
- Rugh, W. A. (2004). *Arab Mass Media: Newspapers, Radio, and Television in Arab Politics*: Greenwood publishing Group.
- Shoemaker, P. J., Eichholz, M., Kim, E., & Wrigley, B. (2001). Individual and routine forces in gatekeeping. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 78(2), pp. 233-246.
- Martin, J. D. (2010). Investigative Journalism in the Arab World. *Nieman Reports*, 64(3), p. 85.
- Mellor, N. (2011). *Arab Media: Globalisation and Emerging Media Industries* (Vol. 1): Polity.
- O'Neill, E. P. (2010). *Investigative Journalism After Watergate in the USA and UK: a Comparative Study in Professional Practice*. University of Strathclyde.
- Waisbord, S. (2001). Challenges of Investigative Journalism, *The U. Miami L. Rev.*, 56, p. 377.
- Weinberg, S. (1996). *The Reporter's Handbook: An investigator's Guide to Documents and Techniques*: Macmillan.
- White, D. M. (1950). The gate keeper: A case study in the selection of news. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, 27(4), 383.

The Vast and the Curious: teaching investigative journalism in a diverse Dubai

By Yasmine Bahrani, M.A., and Bradley Freeman, Ph.D.

Introduction

There is a growing recognition that the field of journalism (and journalism education) is moving towards a more ‘globalized’ model. Indeed, as Goodman and Steyn reported in their 2017 study, many educators are preparing their students for a more cosmopolitan outlook and a wider cultural and linguistic perspective. Though the global flow of news and information has shifted only slightly in the past few years, the increase in mass communication programs in higher education across the globe is rising. With an education-based journalism curriculum, students are being trained with the tools and techniques of all levels of the trade. Overall, the changes give attention to the concept of ‘global journalism’, which arguably finds no better place of practice than Dubai. In addition to being one of the most popular tourist destinations, Dubai also has become a desirable place for people to study and work.

At the American University in Dubai (AUD), students from varied countries and cultures enroll in the Mohammed Bin Rashid School of Communication (MBRSC) to learn the trade of journalism. The students hail from such varied backgrounds as Egypt, Lebanon, Palestine, Russia, Nigeria, Pakistan, France, Italy, Sweden, and others. AUD’s journalism program is thus part of a ‘global journalism’ trend by the very nature of its geographical location, the diverse city population, and in particular the university’s diverse student body. MBRSC’s journalism program reflects these realities and might be said to offer a good example of ‘globalized’ journalism education. This paper details the story how the journalism school came to be, the basic philosophies of the professional journalism lecturers, and highlights four student reports, introduced as case studies, into the practice of one style of journalism that of investigative reporting in Dubai.

What the paper sets out to do is to explain how MBRSC teaches, in English and in Arabic, investigative journalism in a place like Dubai where challenges include the country’s respect for privacy, and the absence of a tradition of access to a subject’s personal, residential, and work history or filling out Freedom of Information Act forms – matters that are readily available in the West. MBRSC journalism professors apply what are believed to be universal practices in journalism. The students are offered the chance to know and understand Western-style journalism,

but they often end up practicing a hybridized model, a more ‘globalized’ model, which incorporates aspects from their background and upbringing.

Many of our program’s graduates go on to work as journalists and editors and the like at the following employers in the UAE: The Middle East Broadcasting Group (MBC), Al-Arabiyah News Channel, CNN Arabic, Abu Dhabi Media (ADM), Bloomberg, ITP, Al-Khalijiyya Channel, Al-Hayat Newspaper, Al-Sayegh Media, Bell Pottinger Middle East, Emaar Retail Group, and Gulf News.

Journalism as an Academic Discipline

Depending on which sources one examines, the dates for when separate journalism programs came to higher education varies. Much of what has been written on this subject comes from Western scholars, thus we know for example that France had a journalism program in the early 1900s, while the University of London offered a diploma in journalism as early as 1919 (Martin, 1948). Many of the world’s top schools for journalism today would like to claim the title of being one of, if not, the first school(s) to offer a degree in journalism. In the United States, Columbia University, the University of Missouri, and the University of Wisconsin-Madison all have a claim to being the country’s first ‘J-School.’ Around the world today, each country has a school or two with claims to being the first or best ‘J-School;’ proud to count famous journalists among their respected alumni. But of course, journalism (in its many forms) was being practiced far earlier than any of the educational programs that eventually came to the universities.

Students of journalism today are often familiar with the ‘paths’ that journalism has taken over the years. These paths vary from country to country. In the United States, early partisanship in newspapers and journalism gave way to penny papers and yellow journalism. In magazines, ‘muckraker’ Ida Tarbell became one of the most famous journalists for her investigative skills at McClure’s Magazine around the turn of the Nineteenth and Twentieth centuries. Eventually, by the middle of the twentieth century to be sure, journalistic objectivity became the norm to which many American journalists aspired. Whether or not this is still the case, or the degree to which it

is the case, is up for discussion and debate. Yet, without going fully into it, it is arguably the case that journalism schools still teach this neutral, objective philosophy as primary in their classes.

In the United States, investigative journalism has a long history. Indeed as far back as 1902-1903, the aforementioned Ida Tarbell profiled John D. Rockefeller and the fabled Standard Oil Company, which later in 1911 meant the U.S. Supreme Court found the company to be in violation of the Sherman Antitrust Act, ordering the breakup of Standard Oil. Since that landmark case there have been many noteworthy examples, including The Pentagon Papers, Woodward and Bernstein's Watergate investigation that led to the 1974 resignation of President Nixon. More recently the *Washington Post* and *Guardian* have reported on NSA surveillance, which led to Edward Snowden's exile in Moscow. Over the years, investigative journalism has come a long way, and it has changed a great deal.

Journalism Program at the American University in Dubai (AUD)

The Journalism Program at AUD was established only in 2008, one of the first of its kind in the country, as part of the Mohammed Bin Rashid School for Communication (MBRSC), which also includes another program called DPST – Digital Production & Storytelling. The school is named after the current Prime Minister of the UAE and ruler of Dubai H. H. Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum. The school is accredited by the ACEJMC (Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications), SACS (Southern Association of Colleges and Schools), and CAA (UAE’s Commission for Academic Accreditation). Each year, the program is reviewed by an International Advisory Board that includes administrators from University of Southern California (USC). The school generally follows an American Curriculum that was developed in consultation with faculty at the Annenberg School at USC. We say generally, because though we are the “American” University, we do also take into consideration our unique geographic locale when developing and teaching the courses. There are now several other schools in the UAE that offer undergraduate and graduate degrees in mass communication fields, including Zayed University and UAE University.

The MBRSC Journalism Program takes in around 15 to 20 majors each year, with a total cohort of around 60 to 70 students in any given year period. The students come from all over Asia. It is fair to say that the majority of students are Muslims, and this is worth noting with regard to how this may influence their scholastic endeavors. There is an English and an Arabic track for the major in journalism. The Mohammed Bin Rashid Foundation provides scholarships for students who have excelled academically in secondary school to attend the MBRSC. Students also minor in journalism, so each class may contain students from engineering or business, for example, though the majority tend to be journalism majors. Students are taught writing, editing, reporting, and other technical skills in order to become the region’s journalists of tomorrow. The program encourages them to become generalists. That is, they are advised to follow the news and be familiar with as many stories as there are out there to follow, in order to take any journalism job upon graduation whether it be in sports, or business, entertainment, or international news.

The program comprises several courses, including a class that deals chiefly with learning the skills of investigative journalism. Students who, of course, are not yet professionals are taught

basic skills to conduct journalistic investigations. While students are expected to uncover something new that was not previously known, what they expose is not expected to result in the resignation of a president or anything that dramatic. The students understand that we expect them to raise awareness and widen the discussion about the matter they chose to investigate.

Though the students are instructed chiefly in what we can call Western-style journalism, meaning they are encouraged to focus on balance, objectivity, and impartiality, they often independently combine this newly learned style of journalism with their own ‘flavor’ if you will that often follows a distinctive Islamic world view and reflects their upbringing in Dubai. That is to say, they are from the region, and many have lived for years in Dubai, as such they bring this background and experience into their studies and their journalistic pieces. This also means that rankings of the country by various outside bodies rarely affects how they approach their learning and assignments. The United Arab Emirates, which includes Dubai, ranks 119 out of 180 in a recent ‘Reporters Without Borders’ listing. That puts the UAE ahead of Singapore (151) as well as Nigeria, Qatar, Indonesia, Jordan, Iraq, Cuba, and North Korea. But the UAE is behind South Africa, which is 31 out of 180, and the U.S., which ranks at 43. These rankings generally don’t mean very much to the students, not least of which because they are still students, but also because the rankings are perceived, perhaps rightly so, as western-oriented and conducted by people who know little of the region.

Journalism and Education Over the Years

One could explain journalism in a place like Dubai in simplistic terms. For example, traditionally journalists who work within constrained systems practice self-censorship “[r]ather than risk being charged with defamation or breaking the country’s criminal laws on permissible speech,” according to Duffy (2010, p. 33).

Duffy’s analysis addresses the situation in Singapore. This description does not of course match exactly the situation in the UAE. Rather, journalism in Dubai might best be described as appropriate to the location. Journalists from such outfits as CNN, Reuters, and Bloomberg have said nobody has ever asked nor compelled them to refrain from reporting a story. Though some

might speak of certain limits, others say that journalism here follows Islamic principles. Some might worry that these principles might differ from western ones, but they are in fact very similar. The principles of Islamic journalism are -- commitment to truth, commitment to inform or notify, security (as in keeping the anonymity of sources,) and commitment to doing what is in the best public interest. The last one might raise some questions regarding whose decision it is whether the government knows best or the journalists know what's best for the public good. However, as explained by scholars (Muchtar, et al., 2017), these principles stem from what the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) said, which makes these principles suitable for Dubai. The authors argue that faith plays a role in reporting in Muslim majority nations.

Sometimes restrictions on journalism lead to objections, and other times they do not. The Singapore-based Duffy (2010) wrote that sadly few cared about press freedom because the everyday work of getting rich or just getting on was the focus of the lives of most citizens. Duffy also addressed journalism education when he said that most of class time is devoted to teaching theory and practical skills and that textbooks are primarily from the United States and the United Kingdom. Further, English-educated people tend to favor a more adversarial approach to covering the government whereas the Chinese-educated readers tend to favor retaining and supporting good government.

These developments, where citizens became less concerned with press freedom and more concerned with making money and getting ahead, were also addressed by Willnat, Weaver, and Choi (2012). The scholars found that reporters in such countries as Malaysia were not as involved in the idea of the journalist in the role of a "watch dog" as westerner journalists were. The article echoed the results of Donsbach (2010), which included the journalists' belief that among their responsibilities is the "adversarial" role. Donsbach's study, though it did not include Middle Eastern reporters, did focus on the impact of various influences on the journalist. The study looked into the system, the organization, the group, and the individual, all of which affect reporters worldwide. An examination of Donsbach's study shows that it may very well apply to the Gulf region in the sense that the Islamic approach to journalism plays a role in the daily work of the reporter.

Another study looked at the same matter. As mentioned, Muchtar (et al., 2017) said Islamic principles also play a role, though not the only one, in the work of the Muslim reporter. The principles of truth, moderation, notification, and best interest might be guiding ones but they are not alone. The authors found that self-censorship and restrictions in the newsroom also played a role in Muslim-majority countries. The article gave the examples of Sudan where the regime uses the press as a tool for political mobilization of popular support while implementing censorship and tight control over the media, and Qatar where the government pays for Al-Jazeera's operating costs. Another study examining the traits and values of journalists in Qatar found that some 90% of the media workers were "expatriates from Arab and Asian countries" (Kirat 2016, p. 171). The same study indicated common criticisms of journalism as "too often being viewed as a megaphone and a spokesperson for the government, concentrating too much on routine government activities" (p. 171).

AUD's student body is largely Muslim, as are the journalists in the region. Pintak and Ginges (2010) reported the same in their study of Journalists in the Middle East. As did Kirat (2012) in Journalists in the United Arab Emirates of the same book. That is, Kirat found that reporters in the UAE are often Muslims from other Arabic-speaking countries. Kirat also found that only 20 percent of journalists were female. The work of AUD professors might have an impact on the demographics because the majority of students at the MBRSC, at this time, are female. Meaning the ratio of male to female journalism professional is likely to change in the future once these students graduate.

There are other influences at play. Sakr (2016) wrote about Media 'Globalisation' in the Arab Middle East, and her examples included the recruitment of U.S. universities to teach journalism and media studies in Qatar and the United Arab Emirates. Sakr suggests that the role of the professors in the Gulf goes beyond simple education. Rather, Sakr says, journalism professors are hired by Gulf universities to advance a sense of the globalization of journalism studies in the countries, following a western style. Sakr wrote: "In Arab Gulf states, unlike those on the Mediterranean, public policy advocacy by non-government actors is extremely rare. Any such activity that exists requires the direct patronage of ruling elites. Instead, globalization of media institutions and journalistic practices is apparent in business deals." (p. 177). Utilizing Kovach and Rosenthal's (K&R) 'Principles of Journalism,' M. Duffy (2013) examined UAE

newspapers to see what style of journalism was prevalent. The study indicated that the English-language paper was following the K&R Principles more so than the Arabic language paper.

Several scholars have commented that there are universal truths to reporting, editing, and writing. These universal techniques and approaches are included in the MBRSC courses. For example, our students are told that they must check everything before they go to press or broadcast the report. The old saying of “if your mother tells you she loves you, check it out” is regularly repeated to the students.

Still, investigative journalism itself has changed. Lowenstein (2017) in the Columbia Journalism Review said that the gold standard used to be the indictment of an elected official, or a lawsuit filed on behalf of vulnerable citizens. But today, there is a shift, according to the CJR, driven in part by the increased online presence of readers, placing greater emphasis on less tangible markers such as raising awareness and sparking widespread conversation. They gave examples of coverage contributing to awareness among area residents about the presence of pesticides in local water and the such.

Method

The students were asked to write investigative articles of about 2,000 words, and they followed the guidelines. The participants, who hail from such varied backgrounds as Russia, Pakistan, Sweden, Jordan, Lebanon, and Egypt, sought to raise awareness and spark conversation as was described in the aforementioned CJR piece. The assignment was a graduation project, or as we say, a Capstone project, the students were to go off and do investigative pieces in Dubai. The instructions were that they had to uncover something new, not known before, as is the definition of an investigative piece, and they had to follow the basic requirements of research, background information, facts, and figures, and they had to interview human sources. They also were to do their best to be impartial. Among the challenges was reaching officials. It is difficult for any young person to get an interview with a government functionary, and in Dubai, the situation is no different. The students had the additional hurdle of language skills. That is, AUD includes courses in English while most of the students are not native speakers of the language. And, though English

is widely spoken in Dubai, the official language is Arabic, and most government officials prefer to speak in Arabic.

As was mentioned earlier because they are training to become reporters, the students had to find the story themselves, research the topics selected, and they were asked to go out and interview people for the articles. During the writing process, the students consulted the professors, who looked for unanswered questions and gaps in the information required to be in the story.

Findings

The students met the conditions as evidenced by the articles they wrote. They were each able to expose something, be objective, be accurate, and they met the requirements of the assignment. In other words, while they followed the demands of Western journalism, they also were successful Muslim journalists who followed the Islamic principles of truth, notification/information, and they followed the third principle, which is what's best for the public interest. In this case it means knowing the truth as something beneficial to the public. Working within the culture and respecting its boundaries, the students were still able to produce successful projects.

In case number one a student from Jordan and one from Lebanon worked in tandem. From their report about mental illness and how unprepared parents are for dealing with their children's conditions: "Optimism may be all over headlines in the United Arab Emirates, but behind closed doors, mental illnesses are roaming the area, increasingly and discretely destroying lives. Like any place else, individuals in the UAE live with the constant trial of emotional well-being, however, there is frequently a hesitance all through the Arab world to seek help. In an area where development and improvement have become pandemic, it may come as a huge surprise that many are suffering from the inability to receive proper mental health care. The United Arab Emirates, an Arabian landmass encompassing seven sheikhdoms, is positioned 21st in world population growth. The number of inhabitants in the UAE is 9.346 million, with an expansion of 2.71 percent every year. According to the American Psychology Association, "Despite the population boom, there are concerns that mental health services and the general field of psychology have not matched

the country's expansion, with a resulting increase in the level of unmet need." The students were able to expose the scarcity of mental health practitioners in the UAE.

In case number three, a Russian student looked into supermarket price trickery where the price advertised is different from the one that is rung up at the cash register: "The problem with controlling 'fake' promotions is in inability or unwillingness of customers to go and complain. According to the inspector's observations, many people think that the sum they got cheated is not so big to spend time on going to Municipality. As already was mentioned above, the poll tells that the majority of people do not even know that complaint procedure can take much less time and can be done online."

A Jordanian student in case number two looked at the luxury shops and found: Customers who feel rejected at high-end brands become more willing to make a purchase. From their assignment, "It appears that snobbiness might actually be a qualification worth considering for luxury brands like Louis Vuitton or Gucci," says Sauder Marketing Professor Darren Dahl."

Students in case number four, a student from Egypt and one from Pakistan worked as a team. They looked at the role culture plays in the early deaths of women with breast cancer in the region; "'There is a stigma of breast cancer in the Middle East,' says Dr. Sama Zibdeh, a consultant breast surgeon at Emirates Hospital in Dubai. "It comes from upbringing and false myths planted for ages in this culture. The breast is a sensitive feminine organ and it symbolizes for less educated women what defines them as worthy individuals, wives, or mothers in a masculine society." The students on this case also were able to expose the scarcity of female physicians who specialize in this matter.

Students in the Jordanian-Lebanese case found that culture and society continue to play a role in the fate of mentally unwell patients. Their report included very frank discussions with families: "'Hala was 16 when she first attempted suicide, an age when most teenagers are going through very drastic changes in their lives and are, therefore, increasingly dramatic,' explained Lina Al Assi, Hala's mother. 'I was very angry and I told her not to ever do it again. I guess I refused to give it attention because I just thought she was too young to be taking death that seriously'... ' It just did not make sense to me that a young teenager even thought about these things,' added Mrs. Al Assi. Mr. Nabil Al Assi, Hala's father, said, 'My wife and I were raised in

a time and place where worries were only valid when it came to war and death. I didn't know what depression was until my daughter experienced it, and to this day we both are confused about its root and validity.'”

The Jordanian student in case number two wrote about the marketing techniques of high-end shops selling luxury items: “Low self-esteem according to researchers is a huge factor that plays in when purchasing luxury goods, especially when consumers are less likely to afford it. For consumers as such, a luxury good can increase self-esteem and give a sense of belonging rather than feel socially rejected.”

The Russian case the student wrote that shops may well overcharge customers, but clients also play a role: “The problem with controlling 'fake' promotions is in inability or unwillingness of customers to go and complain. According to the inspector's observations, many people think that the sum they got cheated is not so big to spend time on going to Municipality. As already was mentioned above, the poll tells that the majority of people do not even know that complaint procedure can take much less time and can be done online.”

The UAE has an office to combat such market practices: “Our reporters contacted DED, Consumer Protection Department and got an official response by senior inspector Manal Yousuf Mohammad Abdulla on how supermarkets trick their customers. For example, she provided an example, which she constantly meets during inspection practice. As an anonymous buyer, she visits one branch of popular supermarket chains. The condition for this buying was that Mrs. Yousuf is the first customer on the first day of starting promotion.”

In the Egyptian-Pakistani story, the students wrote about personal responsibility: “‘Women tend to wait longer for various emotional and cultural reasons before they get breast lumps checked,’ elaborates Dr. Nader Salti, a general surgeon at American Hospital in Dubai. Additionally, many women are in denial and too afraid to discuss lumps with their family and friends, which frequently leads to delay in urging them to see a doctor and ultimately death.”

Discussion/ Conclusion

All in all, the students were able to take the tools and techniques that were taught in class and merge them with their own philosophies to create good investigative reports. Certainly, there were challenges. For example, learning about investigative journalism in the United States, students are taught to go downtown to the courthouse and dig up the dockets and read what transpired during the trial of the person investigated. Students learn how to fill out Freedom of Information Act requests and wait for the results for the investigation when the story calls for it. Neither of these things is available in a place like Dubai, and so professors have to work around these differences. Still, these students succeeded in their projects.

The results appear to show an overlap of Western and Islamic styles, a hybridized, more globalized form, if you will. In addition to following the path of Western journalism, the students applied the Islamic principles of truth, moderation, notification, and best interest in their projects, as described by Muchtar (et al., 2017). In searching for the truth in the project, the students followed the Western idea of accuracy. In searching for moderation in the investigation, the students matched that with the Western idea of objectivity. The idea of notification is the same as the general reporting the news to the audience, and finally, the best interest of the public is demonstrated in the “news you can use” idea.

The students who did stories that are “news you can use,” such as the case of the Russian student’s grocery investigation, met the requirements of both Western and Islamic styles of journalism. Perhaps businessmen did not want their customers to know they were being taken advantage of, but the UAE government made its people available to the student who uncovered the discrepancy. The student in case number three wrote about how at several supermarkets in Dubai and its neighboring Emirate, Sharjah, the price listed on the shelf is different from what gets rung up at the cash register. The UAE does not want its residents to be taken advantage of at the grocery store, and case number three had little trouble finding people to interview. The Jordanian student’s sales technique story is especially useful in Dubai where luxury is a way of life for so many. The student found that the snobbish approach of talking down to customers, in many cases, sells more products. The student researched marketing studies that showed that this is, in fact, a legitimate marketing technique, and she interviewed business owners who agreed that the system

works. Students in case number four addressed the taboo subject of breast cancer. What they found is the discomfort in talking about it ultimately means more women in the region are dying early because of the taboo. The students addressed the cultural reasons that women avoid examination because most doctors are men, and once they get diagnosed, many patients accept their fate and don't bother with treatment either because they believe they deserve it or it is written that they must die. And finally, students in case number one reported on another taboo subject where people suffer as a result of lack of information, this time about mental health. The students interviewed kids who were suicidal and their parents who said they did not know how to handle depressed children. The article mentioned the lack of facilities that address such mental illnesses as depression, anorexia, and other conditions that affect young people. Part of the reason is that the community does not wish to acknowledge such illnesses as they are seen as a sign of weakness or failure on the family's part. And as a result, few such professionals are available to treat the patients.

Upon classroom reflection following their work, the students expressed confidence in their accomplishments. They learned to conduct investigations and write about them. In this way, they are more prepared to work in a professional environment where they might investigate more challenging stories.

In our program, in addition to teaching practical skills, there also is a focus on theory. Professors explain to students the different schools of thought regarding journalism, and they make sure that the students know how to report and write properly. Critics might say they believe journalists are barred from doing proper work in the UAE. But while in Dubai there is no clearly stated limit on press freedom, however, there is an understood barrier to certain expressions. Whenever we have asked professionals at CNN, Reuters, Bloomberg, and others, about their work, they have told us nobody has ever asked them not to print or broadcast a story or any item of news. But a Bloomberg journalist said they know not to write about the royal family, and he added that they have no interest in covering the royals. Having said that, it's still important to note that during the recent Gulf crisis, certain channels, namely Al-Jazeera, have been removed from our cable selection.

We certainly agree that the principles of truth telling, moderation, and informing the public are important, but the maslahah (i.e., public interest) might have a few interpretations. Our students agree that what's best for the public is to be told the truth. To others it means journalists must seek what's best for the public interest. It is certainly not unique to the UAE, many countries, including the US controls information in certain situations, such as times of war, because it believes it has the best interest of the public in mind.

Some of our best students have gone on to Masters' programs in the US and the UK, others have gone into Public Relations (it pays better!). Some have gone to work at CNN Arabic and BBC Arabic where they are just starting out. In other words, they have not yet engaged in professional investigative journalism. Bottom line is we do our best to teach the students Western style journalism techniques along with local-specific guidelines, which gives them the tools and critical thinking skills to decide how to best incorporate these ideals into practice after graduation.

References

Duffy, A. (2010). Shooting Rubber Bands at the Stars: Preparing to Work Within the Singapore System. In B. Josephi (Ed.), *Journalism Education in Countries with Limited Media Freedom*, pp. 33-51. Neww York: Peter Lang Publishing.

Duffy, M. J. (2013). 'Cultures of Journalism'in Arabic-and English-language Newspapers within the United Arab Emirates. *Journal of Middle East Media*, 9(1), 1-22.

Donsbach, W. (2010). The global journalist: Are professional structures being flattened? In B. Dobek-Ostrowska, M. Głowacki, K. Jakubowicz & M. Sukosd (Eds.), *Comparative Media Systems: European and Global Perspectives*, pp. 153–170. Budapest: Central European University Press.

Goodman, R., & Steyn, E. (2017). *Global Journalism Education In the 21st Century. Challenges & Innovations*. Knight Center for Journalism in the Americans, the University of Texas at Austin.

Kirat, M., (2012). Journalists in the United Arab Emirates. In D. Weaver, & L. Wilnat, (Eds.), *The Global Journalist in the 21st Century*, pp. 458-469.. New York: Routledge.

Kirat, M. (2016). A profile of journalists in Qatar: traits, attitudes and values. *The Journal of International Communication*, 22(2), 171-187.

Lowenstein, J. (2017, July 13). The New Yardsticks of Investigative Journalism. *Columbia Journalism Review*. Retreived from: <https://www.cjr.org/watchdog/investigative-reporting-impact-measurement.php>.

Martin, A. (1948). *Birds of a Feather*. London: F. Muller.

Muchtar, N., Hamada, B. I., Hanitzsch, T., Galal, A., Masduki, & Ullah, M. S. (2017). Journalism and the Islamic Worldview: Journalistic roles in Muslim-majority countries. *Journalism Studies*, 18(5), 555-575.

Pintak, L., & Ginges, J. (2012). Arab journalists. In D. Weaver, & L. Wilnat, (Eds.), *The Global Journalist in the 21st Century*, pp. 429-442. New York: Routledge.

Sakr, N. (2016). Media 'Globalisation' as Survival Strategy for Authoritarian Regimes in the Arab Middle East. In T. Flew, P. Iosifidis, & J. Steemers, (Eds.), *Global Media and National Policies*, pp. 173-189. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Investigative journalism in the post-truth era: Views from Mauritius

By Azhagan Chenganna, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, University of Mauritius

Abstract

Journalism, investigative journalism in particular, is undergoing major change. This paper focuses on the investigative journalism culture in Mauritius and more broadly on the challenges of investigative journalism in the post-truth era in Mauritius. With the emergence of social media and the phenomenon of an amplification of news sources, investigative journalists are often solicited and obtain information from many sources including hackers and leakers. In Mauritius, leaked documents including electronic and secretly recorded materials have recently constituted the backbone of investigative stories.

Based on comparative media research work and interviews of Mauritian investigative journalists, this paper argues that the relationship between Mauritian journalists and their sources has become more tenuous and delicate in the post-truth era, even more so in a context where access to information remains limited. Constrained by the difficulties to corroborate the stories leaked to them due mainly to limited access to information, Mauritian journalists may often have to work in uncertain conditions and maintain very close ties to their sources, often relying heavily on them or go into speculations about the stories. In spite of these constraints, some investigative stories have had real impact uncovering bad governance and corrupt practices.

The paper holds that in the post-truth era the pursuit of truth has become more messy and murky forcing Mauritian investigative journalists to take greater risks to reveal the truth. The paper concludes by making the case that Mauritian journalists adopt a policy of open journalism to draw on the potentials of new sources within the ethical parameters of journalism practice and work on fostering a culture of greater public trust and credibility in order to act more efficiently as the watchdogs of democracy and upholders of truth.

Introduction

In April 2017 Time Magazine pictured a cover story with a question in bold red ink: Is Truth Dead?¹ The magazine chronicled the FBI chief's testimony to the US House of Intelligence Committee rejecting President Trump's accusations that the Obama administration had put Trump Tower under surveillance. James Comey, the FBI Chief who has since been ousted, disparaged Trump's charges as false and made up by "a fabulist" (Time, 2017). Despite no evidence of wire-tapping from the Obama administration, Trump maintained his allegations on the premise that he is "a very instinctual person, [and that his] instinct turns out to be right". While interviewing Trump, Time journalists remarked that "the more the conversation continued, the more the binary distinctions between truth and falsehood blurred" and that "rather than assert things outright, [Trump] often couch[ed] provocative statements as "beliefs," or attribut[ed] them to unnamed "very smart people." Since Donald Trump's election, the media has been wrestling with how to cover a President "who can't be taken at his word"² and who seems to make false claims and lie blatantly³.

With the effect of Twitter, the tweets of President Trump are shared instantaneously amongst his approximately 36 million followers, even though they may also contain deceitful assertions. Occasionally the presidential tweets are disparaging as they dig deep into the crisis of trust against journalists with statements like the "media is the enemy of the people" or "You [the media] are fake news" while the Twitterati pokes fun at the memes war where the President is seen trolling CNN.

If true information is crucial for citizenship, in the post-truth age, right-wing political parties and their radical counterparts, the alt-right movements, have spread their ideologies through the use of social media to the point of threatening democratic systems and values. Their brand of authoritarianism, demagoguery and fake news or "alternative facts" constitutes serious challenges

¹ Time Magazine, April 2017

² <http://time.com/4710615/donald-trump-truth-falsehoods/>

³ <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/04/opinion/trump-truth-wiretapping-obama.html>

to democracy. The election of Donald Trump as well as the Brexit Election in the UK have opened wide the door on the “post-truth era” defined by Oxford Dictionaries as “circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief” (Oxford, 2016).

A second starting point to the post-truth era is the massive dump of data. Email accounts are hacked and their contents are made public as in the case of the WikiLeaks emails about the Clinton campaign. In South Africa, the #GuptaLeaks have rocked the ANC showing widespread corruption inside the Zuma administration. The Guptas, a wealthy and influential family, have been accused of buying influence into the South African state and the works of investigative journalists have exposed the extent of the state capture in South Africa. The massive dump of data through the Panama Papers, led by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ), has forced the prime minister of Iceland to step down in April 2016 following revelations that “his family had sheltered money offshore”⁴. More recently, Nawaz Sharif has had to resign as prime minister of Pakistan following investigations triggered by the Panama Papers which revealed the networks of corruption inside the Pakistani Prime minister’s family and his entourage.

The new networked media ecology is hence information-abundant and disruptive. This information revolution is a double-edge knife as it represents challenges, both opportunities and risks to the practice of investigative journalism. With threats to freedom of expression and new forms of censorship coupled with media systems which tend to coalesce around greater media concentration along with the phenomenon of click-bait journalism, the right to inform and uphold the truth has become more hazardous.

A glimpse into Mauritian Investigative Journalism

Investigative journalism in Mauritius is a tough craft given that access to information is limited as there is no legislation for Freedom of Information, no open data policy and no policy and law for the protection of whistleblowers. Yet, several political scandals have recently hit the headlines.

⁴ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/apr/05/iceland-prime-minister-resigns-over-panama-papersrevelations>

The most recent scandals revealed by local investigative journalists with the support of whistleblowers include the “Bal Kouler” affair (Colour Bags), the “Euroloan” saga, the ‘Choomka affair’ eponymous of a government representative allegedly acting as a lobbyist between government institutions and potential investors in exchange of influence and money, the ‘Chapekar affair’ based on allegations of an Indian businessman against a senior minister that the latter had asked him for money and many other affairs amongst others. Besides the money trail which is foregrounded in these cases, these investigative stories share a common thread as they are based mostly on secretly recorded materials and/or leaked electronic documents.

We focus below on three prominent scandals which have been exposed by investigative journalists and which are based on leaked digital information. The case of what has come to be known as “Bal Kouler” evolves around a secretly recorded conversation between a businessman and a minister of Environment in December 2016. A business promoter is heard exhorting the minister to grant him an Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) license so that he can start his building project. A voice which appears to be that of the minister informs him that he will not be able to do so immediately unless the business promoter provides him with money to fund the purchase of 50 bags of colours for the Holi, a religious festive celebration around colours. “We have activities that you need to support. I have to give 50 colour bags to people... you will need to fund”⁵ is heard in the recording. The secretly recorded conversation has been passed on to a Mauritian journalist who broadcasted it on Radio Plus, a local radio station, following which the minister has had to step down from government. Prosecution authorities have taken the matter to the courts. The journalist who obtained the information from sources and broadcasted the affair has been awarded by the Media Trust, a local media organization that aims to promote journalism.

Another prominent scandal that has caught media attention is the ‘Euroloan’ saga. A series of leaked information in the press reported that the then minister of Finance and Economic Development had obtained a loan of 1.1 million Euros from a parastatal bank which falls under the responsibility of his ministry. The leaked news seemed to indicate that the minister had allegedly used his position to obtain the loan on very favorable terms. In his defense the minister swore an affidavit in the Supreme Court of Mauritius pointing finger at his ministerial colleague, the then

⁵ <https://soundcloud.com/radioplus-3/affaire-bal-kouler>

minister of Financial Services and Good Governance, as the one who leaked the information. Rivalry between the two top guns of the Government (the minister of Financial Services and Good Governance has since left the Government) had reached a point of no return and the minister of Finance accused his colleague of being an informer to the media. According to the minister the leaked information was intended to defame him as the informer was willing to grab his post of minister of Finance. Following the leaks in the press, the prosecution authorities began an investigation but a while after, the authorities stated that no evidence of wrongdoing was found and no further action would be undertaken.

As the ‘Euro loan’ saga seemed to reach its epilogue, an investigative journalist of La Sentinelle Ltd, a Mauritian media group, in possession of leaked banking files regarding the loan granted to the minister reported on the many questions raised by the Bank’s management regarding the loan and its approval. The article titled “Euroloan: Le grand cover-up?”⁶ pointed fingers at the minister following which the latter organized a press conference to challenge the reporting of the investigative journalist. During the press conference a brazen exchange between the journalist and the minister took place and while the journalist questioned him the minister ordered his expulsion from the press conference. Thereon, the minister sought a gagging order in order to prevent the journalist from making further revelations but the courts refused to accede to the minister’s demand. The follow-up articles by the investigative journalist flagged up that the minister had provided “insufficient”⁷ bank guarantees to obtain the loan. On the other hand, the Bank has started proceedings to sue the local media company for breaching the bank’s secrecy.

A recent piece of investigative journalism made revelations about a senior minister. Sunday Times a local newspaper published a series of WhatsApp messages exchanged between a senior minister, an intermediary and an Indian businessman which seemed to reveal that the Indian businessman and the senior minister had several meetings in Mauritius and in Dubai. The Indian promoter wanted to start the building of low cost housing units in Mauritius. Sunday Times reported that the Indian businessman alleged that he had lent a sum of Rs 1 million

⁶ <https://www.lexpress.mu/article/303990/euroloan-grand-cover>

⁷ <https://www.lexpress.mu/article/304103/pret-en-euros-lutchmeenaraidoo-tente-museler-lexpress>

(approximately 30,200 USD) to the senior minister at the request of the intermediary⁸. After allegedly handing over Rs 1 million to the senior minister, the businessman was informed that he will have to make further arrangements for more money.

The story was published in Sunday Times but on the day of the publication, the newspaper reported on its website that it had learnt all the copies of the newspaper were bought by a group of people “who looked suspicious”. Since the print copies of the newspaper were unavailable, the editorial team took the decision to publish the article online. After publication of the story the senior minister lodged a complaint to the police and the editor-in chief of Sunday Times received the visits of the police. During her interrogation at the police headquarters, the police queried her about her sources. The editor-in-chief refused to reveal the sources of the article and used her right to remain silent.

Methodology

This paper highlights the challenges of investigative journalism in Mauritius in an era of technological proliferation and in a culture of leaked information. It underlines the state of the relationship between Mauritian journalists and their sources, and the power relations and risks in a context of limited access to official information. It highlights the bottlenecks in carrying out exposure journalism and some of the practices adopted by investigative journalists and the associated risks. It dwells on the extent to which the leaks in the networked news media ecology represent a challenge to conventional journalism and redefines the craft of investigative journalism. The paper provides a Mauritian view of the challenges and messiness of doing investigative journalism in the post-truth era.

In order to carry out this research, comparative media research work allowed the contextualization of the Mauritian investigative journalism culture within a larger framework of journalism and news practice. We interviewed local investigative journalists, namely the three

⁸ <https://www.sundaytimesmauritius.com/kedar-chapekar-ceo-de-garware-infra-projects-ltd-allegue-showkutallysoodhun-ma-demande-un-million-de-roupies/>

investigative journalists⁹ who have been upfront in the revelations regarding the investigative stories mentioned above. A questionnaire containing open-ended questions has been used for the interviews. We have also used available data namely press articles and video materials related to investigative journalism in Mauritius. The study reveals the opportunities and impasses of carrying out investigative journalism in Mauritius in the post-truth era. The working conditions of investigative journalists are characterized by greater availability of sources and yet greater reliability on them in a context where paradoxically sources are viral but access to official information is limited.

Investigative journalism

Rusbridger (1999) states that “all journalism is investigative to a greater or lesser extent, but investigative journalism - though it is a bit of a tautology - is that because it requires more, it’s where the investigative element is more pronounced” (Cited in De Burgh, 2000, p. 17). Waisborg assures that investigative journalism “goes beyond conventional reporting” and that its “mission [is] defined as the discovery of the truth” (Waisbord, 2002, p. 377) through evidence. The work of investigative journalists towards upholding the truth is crucial as “sometimes, at least, reporting what authority says, or even analyzing it, is not enough; because authority may have an agenda that is counter to the general interest; because there are officials and politicians who are swayed by ignorance or self-interest; because there are systems that work to the detriment of people who have no voice” (De Burgh, 2000, p. 12).

Investigative journalism is about revealing public abuses that individuals and institutions want to remain secret. De Burgh expands on the muckraking functions of investigative journalists as “‘going after what someone wants to hide’ although not everything that someone wants to hide is worth going after” (De Burgh, 2000, p. 15). Investigative journalism appeals “to our existing standards of morality, standards they know that they can rely upon being held by people they know will be shocked by their violation”.

⁹ Axcel Chenney is an investigative journalist and multimedia producer at La Sentinelle Ltd. Yaasin Pohrun is a Mauritian investigative journalist who worked at Le Defi Media Group. Zahirah Radha is the Editor-in-Chief of the Sunday Times.

The search for truth does not refer to absolute hard facts “because what the investigative journalist is after, as with the historian, is a more complete version of truth” and De Burgh states that it is the method and the substantive documentary evidence used by the investigative journalist that make a difference. De Burgh adds that investigative journalists “can move towards a more complete truth by collecting good evidence and by corroborating accounts of people who can either be shown to be disinterested or who speak from different vantage points” (De Burgh, 2000, p. 16).

Along the digital age, WikiLeaks has come to prominence and interrogations abound as to whether it can be considered as a part of investigative journalism. It has gained worldwide attention with the publication of “Collateral Murder”, a video showing the crew of an Apache American helicopter shooting at a group of Iraqis. In the 2016 US elections, WikiLeaks released an avalanche of hacked emails from Clinton’s campaign chairman, John Podesta’s gmail account¹⁰. Beckett and Ball (2012) underline the paradox of WikiLeaks which advocates for transparency using the power of the internet to keep the powerful on check and yet remains a closed and secretive organization.

Another phenomenon of the networked age and information revolution, in the lineage of WikiLeaks, is the rise of hacktivism, epitomized by the group Anonymous and represented by the Guy Fawkes mask. Klein underlines the paradox of the activities of such a group and highlights the contrasting personas of the hacktivist movement which may be cast “in the eyes of citizens as being in league with spies, traitors, and threats to national security; hence, “hackers are a danger to everyday citizens”. However, for open-source advocates, which include some journalists, Anonymous’ work and association with actors such as Assange and Snowden would be viewed nobly as part of a changing wind of media and politics that is challenging old power structures and reforming them through their unique brand of communicative sabotage” (2015, P. 382). Anonymous has taken on corruption, especially in global institutions.

Cyber-hacks have garnered a lot of attention. For instance, US Intelligence agencies believe that the Russians hacked the 2017 US elections in favor of Donald Trump even though the Kremlin has vehemently denied such activities. On the other hand, in the wake of the US presidential election, the #pizzagate internet conspiracy “falsely claim[ed] Clinton and her campaign chief John

¹⁰ <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/nov/06/wikileaks-emails-hillary-clinton-campaign-john-podesta>

Podesta were running a child sex ring from the restaurant's backrooms”¹¹. The absurd and fake news had real consequences as one man armed with an assault gun went to the pizza restaurant and fired to only discover that the internet information was a hoax¹².

The new media ecology is disruptive. Audiences stand divided living in ‘filter bubbles’ and the question is to what extent can the media create an informed opinion in such an environment and keep truth alive?

Access to information

One of the major challenges of Mauritian journalists and of investigative journalists in particular is the limited access to official information and the subsequent difficulty to verify and fact-check information. Despite the many promises of several governments to come with a legislation that authorizes access to official information there is no Freedom of Information Act or Access to Information Act or Right to Information Act, whatever denomination that may be used in this respect. In fact, it is the Official Secrets Act which is currently enforced and it forbids the disclosure of official information. It is a colonial law which prevents public officials from disclosing and releasing official documents into the public domain. This culture of secrecy is an obvious hurdle as it complicates and renders the work of journalists difficult.

It has become customary for many public and private tenders and contracts to be kept secret and this practice of opacity has become prevalent even when contracts are signed between Government to Government. When contracts are signed, the latter often contains clauses that forbid their disclosure into the public domain. This absence of transparency breeds rumors and public suspicion of wrongdoings. When journalists put questions regarding these contracts often they are told to refer to parliamentary proceedings to get some elements of information. The problem is that

¹¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/dec/05/gunman-detained-at-comet-pizza-restaurant-was-selfinvestigating-fake-news-reports>

¹² <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/jun/22/pizzagate-conspiracy-theorist-prison-sentencewashington>

even parliamentary questions may at times remain unanswered. Similarly, citizens hardly have access to information pertaining for instance to how public lands are granted and used.

Axcel Chenney who is a journalist at La Sentinelle Group who investigated the “Euroloan” saga and who is also a multimedia producer observes that

The absence of access to information is like the Sword of Damocles dangling over the heads of journalists. Without official information, we use our address book and our contacts for verification purposes. We corroborate with the sources we can in order to verify the truthfulness and authenticity of the information. When we receive leaked information, for instance, we make sure that we know the context of the story and we verify with the people who are immediately concerned with it. However it takes a whole lot of work to verify a piece of information. If there was access to information, a simple email to verify the information would have probably been enough.

Yaasin Pohrun, who was an investigative journalist at Le Defimedia Group who revealed the “Bal Kouler” affair also agrees that the difficulty to access information is a major hurdle, even when information is leaked to journalists. He asserts that

Ministries and parastatal bodies are often perceived as being difficult zones to investigate especially if it is about a scandalous matter. Sometimes they delay in giving you the requested information or they simply don’t answer the queries. To get the facts correct, the journalist needs a good network of contacts through which s/he would be able to make the coherence of events or the exact chronology and put forward facts without any official inputs.

Zahirah Radha, Chief Editor at Sunday Times who investigated the “Chapekar Affair” observes that there is a need for a culture of transparency and accountability to citizens and the media and that

Until the Freedom of Information Act is not introduced, we will always be debarred from information which is of public interest, especially when the information is related to the decision-makers of the day, to public administration or even private companies.

Sources

The relationship between sources and Mauritian journalists is a top-down relation and with the absence of the Freedom of Information Act, sources retain a lot of power over official information. Official sources are generally forthcoming when they act as Communication officers inviting journalists to public events like press conferences, make use of prepared public statements and play spin to the benefit of their institutions and their representatives.

Communication is hardly the turf of investigative journalists.

The vertical power relationship between sources and journalists is highly problematic for investigative journalists since information is often monopolized by these institutional sources, including by sources such as police and prosecution authorities. The situation becomes even murkier to handle by investigative journalists when people stand accused under provisional charges. In fact, no reference is made in the Mauritian statute books about provisional charge but Boolell remarks that “it has survived as a settled practice and is probably unique to Mauritius” (Boolell, 2016). In an article titled “Provisional Charge Conundrum”, Boolell who currently holds the post of Director of Public Prosecution (DPP) notes that “given its purpose of bringing a detainee under judicial control, one would assume that any transgression or abuse by the police when effecting arrest would be set right by the magistrate, yet there is a well-founded (but not new) concern [...] that the judicial control is inadequate and provisional charges are being used as a cover for arbitrary arrests and detentions. It would appear that very often police officers have recourse to a provisional charge as a mere routine practice ignoring completely the principles attached to the lodging of provisional charge” (Boolell, 2016). When a provisional charge is lodged, information about police enquiries is often leaked to journalists as a way to cause prejudice and damage to the reputation of the accused. Often the provisional charges are later struck off in the courts.

Hence, the information exchange system is often skewed against journalists and official sources may, in intent, force journalists to be dependent on them for information and seemingly to be under their control. This dependence is even more tenuous when these formal sources, despite playing a public role, insist on anonymity and provide information which is “off-the-record”.

Hence, articles involving police and investigative sources are often attributed to unnamed sources unleashing cycles of speculations over the police enquires and the reported stories.

It has become customary for Mauritian journalists to write articles using conditional verbs, highlighting the probability of an information, because they have not been able to officially confirm the information. This practice has developed especially when journalists deal with powerful institutional sources in politics. Another characteristic of unconfirmed news is that often journalists use question marks in the title and in the text of their articles. The reason being that the information has had no confirmation from official sources and that by turning the article into a series of questions, the journalist speculates and expects that s/he will be able to get feedbacks and later rebound with a follow-up article. Hence the constraints imposed on journalists to toe the line, particularly with regards to state and authorized sources.

Nonetheless, the post-truth era which is characterized by technological proliferation has also transformed the nature of the relationship between journalists and their sources as it has also become a horizontal relation based on networked interactions. Charon, a French scholar, notes that “there is a change in the ways of getting informed. That is, the passage from a vertical relation between the public and newsrooms, to a horizontal research of information [...] based on social media and information platforms. The shift is ongoing. It is incomplete” (Charon, 2017).

In the networked era, mainstream media has lost its exclusive character. As noted by Wasserman “the contemporary news ecology is a place where mainstream news outlets do not have the monopoly of breaking news anymore. Some of the most incisive analysis can often be found online on independent platforms or individuals blogs, and social media have caused ‘filter bubbles’ where users can surround themselves by others who share and confirm their views and entrench pre-existing beliefs” (Wasserman, 2017).

Yet, Mauritian sources who prefer to leak information are generally doing so from a position which is personal and at best civic. Even though they may wish for anonymity, there are some leakers who have had no qualm that their identity is revealed. In the Mauritian context whistleblowers often leak information because it is their last recourse. They often turn to the media in their capacity as citizens and they expect that by exposing their situation they will benefit from the support of public opinion and that their political and civic rights would be respected and

restored. The advent of mobile phones and electronic media has made it easier for these whistleblowers and leakers to expose their situations.

However, leaked information can also be misleading and misrepresenting. Often leakers use fake profiles, for instance on Facebook, to leak information which journalists can hardly use. Recently a spat of hoaxes hit social media falsely claiming that the children of a very important personality were involved in an overseas accident; that a beauty pageant was arrested for drug trafficking and even that a foreign country had requested the Mauritian government to prepare for snap general elections. The problem is compounded by the fact that the Mauritian social media landscape is, to a large extent, a space often filled with acrimonious and abusive discourses and polarized political exchanges.

The right to inform

Being at the receiving end, investigative journalists are required to take information obtained from leakers and verify to see whether there is evidence and truth to the story. Krüger (2017) observes in reference to South African journalists that they are used “to see political warfare by leak, and journalists should not allow themselves to be misused in factional battles.” Nonetheless, Krüger adds that “this is a secondary question to the one about whether the information is true and in the public interest. If the leaked stands up as accurate, and if it is important for the general public to know, it would be reasonable to publish even if it furthers somebody’s interest”.

Regarding the fact that sources and leakers may be motivated by political interest, especially when it comes to political partisanship and brinkmanship, Zahirah Radha, the Chief Editor at Sunday Times, underlines the role of journalists in terms of assessing the intents and the credibility of the sources. She highlights the need to be skeptical vis à vis sources and to assess their motivations and to look into the evidence.

The denouncer may have certain interests with regards to the denunciation but it is up to the journalist to make sure that there is no manipulation. We need to have evidence that the denouncer is acting in good faith.

Yaasin Phorun insists on the contextualization and the write-up as a way to avoid the trap of manipulation by sources. The editing process is crucial as

An article will not stand if it has not been corroborated and verified. Because it is all about relating facts which should at least have been certified even by unofficial or off-record means, without imputing any biased tendencies, be it political or commercial. A proper investigative article will necessarily require not only a fact checking process but also a comparative analysis. For example, X on the market would leak to you news about Y. Your pen is not to write about Y to play the game of X. You should define properly the angle of your article and make it of journalism nature. The paper should be of public interest and not pleasing to vested parties. As an investigative reporter, you don't judge for the public rather you let the public judge independently.

Axcel Cheney observes that if the good faith of sources is proven they can be powerful allies in the search for truth. Cheney observes that sources had provided him with documentary evidence of Bank files in the case of the 'Euroloan' affair and that he had more than necessary information and facts to question and quiz the minister. In the brazen interaction, the minister expelled Cheney from the press conference. The heated exchange was video recorded and shared on the web and social media platforms. Cheney asserts that

In the case of the Euroloan saga, I had a copy of the banking file and documentary evidence which were given to me by a source. With such material, I could go to the moon and come back. I had no other choice than to challenge the minister in his press conference. For sure when I interrogated him he got rude but there was no reason for me not to be defiant and combative as an investigative journalist. The video of the press conference was viewed several times on social media and I did not expect that I would receive so much overwhelming support from people on Facebook who encouraged me in my work.

Code of ethics

Only one Mauritian media group, La Sentinelle Ltd, has officially adopted a code of ethics for its journalists. Other media groups and outlets do follow codes of ethics for journalism even though

they have not officially formalized such usage. The code of ethics at La Sentinelle Ltd contains a number of principles that journalists have to follow. With regards to investigative works, it notes in Section I (c) under the ‘obligation of honesty’ that “the recourse to a false name or to a hidden mic is acceptable only in exceptional cases where the information is of primordial public interest (illegal practices, trafficking, etc) and when all the authorized means have been exhausted. If s/he has operated in clandestine manner, the journalist has to indicate it to the reader”. However, the code of ethics at La Sentinelle Ltd makes no mention of digital sources and the kind of relationship, the buffer, that journalists should maintain with whistleblowers, hackers and leakers.

Nonetheless, even though not formalized, a code of ethics remains an important guide and harbinger to investigative journalists. Yaasin Pohrun underlines its importance as

Journalism is either about informing or exposing. If a code of ethics is not taken into account, journalism would turn into a platform for settling scores.

Following the revelations of the “Chapekar affair”, Zahirah Radha was interrogated “under warning” by the police and despite being compelled, she refused to reveal the source(s) of the investigative story published in Sunday Times. She underlines the need to protect sources as

Confidentiality and the protection of sources are sacred principles in journalism. The fact that someone gives information to a journalist is a mark of trust. If the informer chooses to remain anonymous, we have at all cost to preserve it.

However, the challenge is for investigative journalists to make sure that their sources, including digital ones, are protected. The mobile phones of journalists should be secured and protected. Mauritius has voted The Prevention of Terrorism Act in 2002. The Prevention of Terrorism (Amendment) Act of 2016 notes that orders and directives may be given by the authorities to Communication Service Providers for the interception of information and digital materials. Hence citizens as well as journalists may be under surveillance and tapped as per the Terrorism laws. In such a context, the sources of journalists, especially digital sources, remain vulnerable and laws allowing journalists to protect their sources should be considered as a democratic imperative.

Newsroom support

Investigative journalists take several risks in the context of the profession. The support of the management, the editorial team and the editor-in-chief remains an important back-up and assurance for them. Media companies should generally ensure psychological and professional support to investigative journalists in a context where they are often intimidated. Often important stories can be discarded because media managers do not want to take risks especially when the stories are based on anonymous sources and may entail legal actions and commercial liabilities. Support to investigative journalists entails that the management stands up to protect and ensure the safety of the journalist against possible threats *before, during* and *after* the publication of an investigative article. From the sourcing of information up to its publication, professional support is crucial.

Yaasin Pohrun notes that

Sometimes investigations can have major consequences on the personal life, political positions or even future of implicated parties. The investigative journalist should definitely be needing the support of the newsroom and the editor-in-chief to go through with the article. In cases where aggrieved parties will try to threaten or retaliate, the newsroom will be the only place to secure your position, as far as you were right.

Axcel Chenney highlights the need for a conducive organizational set-up that supports investigative journalism in a context where such stories entail financial costs. He observes that investigative journalism is

A question of solvability as it implies a lot of costs. Unlike traditional reporting, it may take a long time, at times up to three months, to investigate a story. The newsroom may provide you with leave of three months for your investigation and colleagues may replace you and this is an indirect kind of support as you get release. Besides, there is need for team-work. For instance, as a matter of reference, it is known that at the Washington Post there were at least three journalists working on the Nixon affair.

Risks

There are plenty of risks associated with investigative journalism in Mauritius. Defamation, sedition and publication of false news are documented in the Mauritian Criminal code. Journalists are often intimidated and at times the state may use financial pressure as was the case recently of L'express newspaper which was hit with a financial boycott¹³ to the point that public institutions would not advertise in the newspaper and systematically boycott the outlet.

Zahirah Radha of Sunday Times who has taken on several powerful political figures details the nature of the risks that her newspaper has undergone in the 'Chapekar affair'.

We did not take the allegations lightly. We asked the different sides for their versions. Right at the outset, we knew that retaliation will be coming sooner than later. Between the purchase of all the copies of Sunday Times by a group of individuals on the day of publication of the article, to the hacking of our website and the statement made against us to the police, everything was done to try to deny the right to information to our readers but also to intimidate us.

She observes that

In Mauritius, the risks associated with investigative journalism are almost always the same, especially when your investigation is related to the government of the day: either you are sued for defamation, or you are summoned to the police for interrogation 'under warning'. You also run the risk, as in our case, that you no longer receive governmental advertisings. The goal is simple: use all the means of possible repression to censor you.

Another tactic used by the powerful is to undermine the works of investigative journalists on the basis that the latter are not experts. For instance, several times the professional identity of journalists has been challenged by asking whether they are experts in the fields in which they are investigating. These deliberate attempts aim to intimidate but also to put a layer of supposed

¹³ <https://www.lexpress.mu/idee/boycott-publicitaire-juste-les-faits>

expertise through legalese and technicality on the issues involved so as to stop investigative journalists from putting questions.

Chenney observes that

When I was asked if I was doctor or a lawyer, I laughed at it as I have a sense that I am doing my job. Politicians know that we are doing our job. However, they will never tell you same. During press conferences or their press interventions, they will challenge your motivations as a face saving device.

The way forward

The new media environment and the availability of data are redefining the ways and practices of investigative journalism. Digital convergence is a major advantage. As a multimedia producer of media programmes, Chenney notes that

The future is challenging as digital technologies and platforms have changed the profession. Journalists cannot work only on one single platform. They have to make the most of media convergence. Unlike a newspaper article where journalists are constrained by space, both digital large volumes of data and evidence can be graphically and visually represented through multimedia and this is a definite advantage that journalists have to tap on. The future is also going to be in the fields of data journalism and there is need for greater skills for investigative journalists.

Investigative journalism aspires to make a better society where there is transparency, good governance and where power is kept in check.

Radha asserts that

As long as there will be suspicions of wrongdoings, investigative journalism will have its full right of existence. Under the condition, of course, that we have a press which is independent and works without fear or favour.

There is surely not one single response as to what attitude should Mauritian journalists adopt in a context of networked journalism and yet limited access to official information. Mauritian government has to come forward with the Access to Information Act so as to ease both the work of journalists and facilitate citizen's empowerment. However, as sources multiply and become viral, this paper highlights that journalists should embrace a policy of open journalism which is able to tap on the potential of the new information ecology. Drawing on new sources of information for news gathering can foster greater partnership between journalists and civil society as well as redefine the contours of investigative journalism in a changing digital landscape without surrendering the core values of journalism.

Fact-checking remains a key element. Beckett in his analysis of the current information ecosystem notes that "the news media should not abandon traditional journalism values. Journalists have much-needed skills in processing information as well as ethical and political values that we need to sustain democracy. But the answer is not to return to a mythical model with journalists as gatekeepers of objectivity" (Beckett, 2017). Fact-checking is a basic cursory of journalism and Mauritian journalists should go beyond fact-checking. Mauritian journalism seems to be too focused on politics and on its adversarial role towards political figures to the detriment of other issues which matter for citizenship.

In a context where information is widespread especially on the web and social media, building greater trust and credibility into journalism is also primordial. Against the cacophony which prevails on social media there is a new opportunity for mainstream media to reaffirm its identity and authority as space of facts and verified information. Wasserman (2017) notes that "the rise of fake news may have a positive outcome for mainstream news outlet to whom audiences may start returning after they have deserted them for more individually-tailored online sites". In the new media ecology mainstream media can reclaim its place for informed public opinion.

The question of the independence of media groups is also a crucial one. Mauritian media companies have to demonstrate that they are independent from political and financial powers. It is at this cost that public trust in journalism and in investigative journalism in particular will be reinforced. Beckett argues that "transparency and interactivity are key" and he makes the call to journalists to "show your sources, admit that you don't know, find better experts, listen to your

audience and act with greater humility and engagement.” (Beckett, 2017). This call is more than relevant to Mauritian journalism.

Conclusion

This paper has looked at the challenges of investigative journalism and particularly at the puzzle of the relationship between sources and journalists in the post-truth era. It has highlighted the uncertain and murky conditions in which Mauritian investigative journalists have to work in a context where information has exploded and sources have become viral and yet there is no access to official information. Among the challenges, the paper has also underlined the skewed relationship of police and prosecution sources with investigative journalists, especially when suspects stand accused under provisional charges. Despite the odds, the practice of investigative journalism is resilient in Mauritius and the paper has argued that by adopting a policy of open journalism and by building greater trust of the public to their journalism practice, investigative journalists may redefine themselves in the new information system and consolidate their place as upholders of truth and watchdogs of Mauritian democracy.

Post-script

On September 11, 2017 L’express newspaper penned an investigative story regarding money laundering through a gambling platform in which the Mauritian Attorney General would have allegedly been involved. The newspaper published a letter signed by the Attorney General in which he provides guarantees in these terms: “there is no legal impediment to Mr [the name is masked] lawfully receiving any stakes due to him from BET365.” The letter states further that “I am providing this letter as a formal clearance in respect of Mr [the name is masked].” The last line of the letter reads “I may be personally contacted should any other clarification be required.” The whistleblower in the case is the gambler himself who has an earlier case of swindling. Through his letter, the Attorney General seems to give assurances to the various authorities so that the gambler’s travelling ban could be lifted given the fact that he faced charges of swindling. The gambler was

able to travel to Europe and make arrangements to receive the gambling money. A series of allegations regarding the opening of bank accounts in Dubai and Switzerland are also reported.

The following day of the article, the whistleblower swore an affidavit in the courts to certify that he was telling the truth and the affidavit contained documentary evidences including emails, WhatsApp messages, photocopies of passports, pictures pointing to the Attorney General. The latter has had to step down.

A week later, on September 21, 2017, the whistleblower, on a radio station, changed the version of his accusations stating that he “has been manipulated” by the three journalists¹⁴ of L’express who reported on the case and presented live on radio his apologies to the fallen Attorney General. The whistleblower argued that the journalists wrote the affidavit for him and claimed that the journalists held him in sequestration. The journalists denied these accusations.

A few days following the dramatic twist, the police made very early morning landings with search warrants to the homes of the journalists but they were not present. Later the three journalists reported to the police and they were seemingly to be arrested under charges of “conspiracy against the Attorney General”. The journalists were allowed to return home after the interrogation sessions. After several visits to the Police headquarters, they recovered their right to freedom. It seems that the police case is not over yet since several journalists of La Sentinelle Ltd, which publishes the L’express newspaper, are still being called for questioning. The police has been adamant that the mobile phones of the journalists are searched risking that their sources are compromised. But the police met with strong and severe resistance.

Several criticisms have been formulated against the three journalists. Amongst them that they rushed to publish the story without taking time to verify the information of the whistleblower and to corroborate with other sources; that they overstepped their role by helping the whistleblower to write the affidavit and that they should not have kept the whistleblower in their custody. However, this event has also triggered a “#Fight for Truth” media and civic campaign and as part of their defense, the investigative journalists have maintained that they have been pursuing the

¹⁴ Nad Sivaramen, Director of Publications at La Sentinelle Ltd; Axcél Cheney and Yasin Denmamode, both investigative journalists at L’express

truth in this affair. They insist that the whistleblower may have changed his version but ultimately the truth will prevail!

Bibliography

Beckett. C and Ball. J (2012) *WikiLeaks: news in the networked era*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press

Beckett. C (2017) *Truth, Trust and Technology: finding a new agenda for public information*. <<http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/polis/2017/08/17/truth-trust-and-technology-finding-a-new-agendafor-public-information/>>. [Accessed: 29 August 2017]

Boolell. S (2016) *Provisional Charge Conundrum*. <<https://www.lexpress.mu/idee/273600/provisional-charge-conundrum>>. [Accessed: 10 August 2017]

Charon. J. M (2017) *Pour combattre la post-vérité, les médias condamnés à innover*. <<http://www.inaglobal.fr/presse/article/pour-combattre-la-post-verite-les-medias-condamnesinnover-9656>>. [Accessed: 29 August 2017]

De Burgh. H (2000) *Investigative Journalism*. Oxon, UK: Routledge

Klein. A. G (2015) Vigilante Media: Unveiling Anonymous and the Hacktivist Persona in the Global Press. *Communication Monograph*, Vol 82(3), pp. 379-401

Krüger. F (2017) *Ethical journalism: What to do, and not to do, with leaked emails*. <<https://theconversation.com/ethical-journalism-what-to-do-and-not-to-do-with-leakedemails-79211>>. [Accessed: 11 August 2017]

Oxford (2016) *Word of the Year: post-truth*. <<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/word-of-the-year/word-of-the-year-2016>>. [Accessed: 10 August 2017]

Waisborg. S (2002) The Challenges of Investigative Journalism. *University of Miami Law Review*, pp. 377- 395.

Wasserman. H (2017) *In the Twitter trenches: how fake news influences journalism*. <<http://www.news24.com/Columnists/GuestColumn/in-the-twitter-trenches-how-fake-newsinfluences-journalism-20170126>>. [Accessed: 20 August 2017]

Note on the author

Azhagan Chenganna is lecturer in Media Studies at the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, University of Mauritius. Correspondence: a.chenganna@uom.ac.mu

TPA: A Successful Method of Teaching Top-Notch Investigative Journalism

By Paulette Desormeaux Parra

Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, Santiago, Chile.

Abstract

This article examines an innovative method that has proved to be consistently successful at teaching investigative journalism to undergraduates in Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile. With a practical approach to knowledge and learning, this method of teaching has enabled students to systematically produce relevant investigative journalism stories, focusing on data, access to open sources and Freedom of Information Act requests. The analysis suggests that experiential learning as a teaching method, applied by teachers who are active in the media industry, and lead by a practitioner trained at a Global Investigative Journalism Conference, has a determinant impact in the new generations of journalists. This, in a country with no strong tradition of investigative journalism education.

Keywords: investigative journalism, teaching methods, access to open sources, freedom of information, experiential learning

Introduction

Focused on teaching investigative journalism, the course at Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile called “TPA: Taller de Periodismo Avanzado” (or “Advanced Journalism Workshop”) started in 2013 with four students. Two years later, over 40 students were enrolling each semester and it became key before graduation.

Its popularity among undergraduates does not come from a perception of it as an easy course. Quite the opposite: students must research and write stories that tackle failures in public policies, unearth corporate corruption or expose organized crime, with a very restricted budget and in a time frame of 15 weeks.

How to achieve this? With a methodology based on experiential learning (see Kolb & Kolb, 2005). This means that students learn about investigative journalism by doing investigative journalism stories.

The stories published as an outcome of this teaching method include the sterilization in public hospitals of women with mental disabilities, the misuse of public funds by parliamentarians, the illegal working conditions of inmates employed by private companies, among others.

Since 2014, their authors have won all the national awards of journalistic excellence for content developed by undergraduates, demonstrating the high professional quality standards of the stories, which are regularly replicated by the mainstream media, amplifying their reach.

Moreover, this teaching methodology has proved to be strongly effective in equipping young journalists with tools and skills that differentiate them from its peers when joining the media industry. Importantly, journalists educated at TPA have won in Court access to documents they had requested under the Freedom of Information Act, and that had been denied by the Army, the Police and the National Tax Service. This way, they might be moving the border of what is considered public information in Chile and impacting on the reporting possibilities at their newsrooms.

Theoretical Framework and Definitions

How we define investigative journalism has a key impact on how we should teach it, as the objectives or core elements we identify with this genre will determine which skills and tools students should acquire.

According to “Story-Based Inquiry,” a manual for investigative journalists published by Unesco in 2009, “investigative journalism involves exposing to the public matters that are concealed, either deliberately by someone in a position of power, or accidentally, behind a chaotic mass of facts and circumstances that obscure understanding” (Story Based Inquiry Associates, 2009). Importantly, investigative journalism is not in-depth journalism or precision journalism, nor is the interpretation of particular events; although it can incorporate all those elements, because it “uses facts gathered in foreign investigations properly quoted; it investigates in depth, with precision, it interprets, it denounces” (Faúndez, 2002:14).

Kaplan (2013) warns that investigative journalism should not be confused with what has been called “leak journalism”: “Quick-hit scoops gained by the leaking of documents or tips, typically by those in political power” (p.10), and suggests that in countries with emerging democracies the definition might be ambiguous as it might include stories just because they are centered in corruption or provide some analysis.

This is relevant because when teaching the genre, the focus should not be put then on how to get leaks, and should not be limited to developing skills that enable the correct interpretation of events.

There is consensus that there are three elements that distinguish investigative journalism from other genres, such as interpretative journalism or journalism of denounce: it reveals something hidden, it has relevance for the public, and it is a product of the initiative of the journalist (Atwood, 2000). As Santoro (2004) points out, it is “done by the reporter and not the judicial system, the police or individuals with an interest” (p.24-25). This excludes from the genre those stories that merely reproduce information that has been gathered in the investigation of other institutions (Fuentes, 2006). Indeed, one of its constitutive elements is the systematic in-depth investigation done with original reporting (Kaplan, 2013).

The times in which the milestone for reporters was to get closer to the solitary news-hunter, that experienced (typically overworked and badly fed) reporter with a nose for scoops and leaks, is long gone. These are the times of collaboration and methodology, as the Panama Papers project well show. Even looking back at Watergate, which became “a journalistic goal that did not exist before” (Dinges quoted by Scharfenberg, in Cañizales, 2006:60), according to Dinges this was not only due to the consequences of the story or the fame gained by the reporters; but because Woodward and Bernstein “wrote how they covered the story, demonstrating this way that their investigation was successful because it followed a specific method” (quoted in Scharfenberg, 2010:78).

Considering these elements, it is possible to identify the need of teaching students how to find or propose a socially relevant story without expecting to get a leak, how to investigate independently not counting on a deep-throat or depending on external sources, and how to properly manage their own investigation. Thus, they need to be taught a proper method that helps them carry out an original investigative journalism story.

If they are not to depend on external sources, students need to know how to find and use open sources. They need to know about computer-assisted reporting. They need to understand how the State operates, so they can develop a document mindset and know which documents they need to request when using the Freedom of Information Act.

To effectively match this challenge, I created a methodology based on experiential learning, which is mainly practice-based (Tanner et al, 2012). As Kolb & Kolb (2005) define it, it consists in “the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience” (p.208). As it has been said, students learn about investigative journalism by doing it and reflecting on what, how and why they are doing it. Thus, the learning cycle is recursive and has four stages: experiencing, reflecting, thinking and acting (Kolb&Kolb, 2005, p.194).

The History of a Method

There is little literature on investigative journalism in the Chilean landscape (Lagos, 2013, Fuentes, 2006, Faúndez, 2002). Some scholars consider that the first investigative stories started under the socialist government of president Salvador Allende (1970-1973), and dealt with the nationalization of companies and the social inequalities of the 70s (Guerra, 2014). During Pinochet's dictatorship (1973-1990), investigative journalism tried to fill the void left by other institutions in the accountability of power and was centered in human rights violations (Jara et al, 2003). It is the case of media such as "APSI", "Análisis", "Cauce" and "Fortín Mapocho", and journalists that published their investigations in books, like Patricia Verdugo's "Burned alive" (1986) or Mónica González' "The secrets of Comando Conjunto" (1989).

When Chile returned to democracy in 1990, many of these media that had been publishing investigative stories during the dictatorship disappeared. The two main TV stations in the country, the public broadcaster "TVN" and the private channel "Canal 13," had programs that produced in-depth stories. Sometimes, they broadcasted consequential investigative pieces.

What is clear is that since the genre started to be produced in the country, investigative journalism was not consistently taught at universities, nor was it systematically produced in the media industry.

It was in 2007 when things started to change. A senior journalist that had reported under the dictatorship, Mónica González, founded the "Center for Investigative Journalism CIPER Chile", a not for profit online media focused on unearthing corruption and failures in public policies. This is the only online media that systematically does investigative journalism in the country. Five years later, several mainstream media, including national newspapers such as "La Tercera" and "El Mercurio", started to create small units of investigative journalism within their newsrooms.

In this process, a need was identified: journalists who had graduated from university did not have much knowledge on investigative journalism. In Chile, most working journalists are

university-trained. If they wanted to make a difference in the media industry, they would have to gain certain skills that would enable them to pursue independent and socially relevant investigations.

In 2013, an experiment was put into place in the Communications Faculty of Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, based in Santiago, the Chilean capital. Focused on educating journalists to become professionals oriented at satisfying the right to information and the strengthening of democracy, the faculty considered that it was of key relevance to address this need. Being a mid-career journalist who had worked as a reporter at the Center of Investigative Journalism, I put together an elective course to teach what I had learned at CIPER. The purpose was to give new generations of reporters the tools that would enable them to do top-notch investigative journalism. Chile's democracy needed it and the cultural and political context were favorable for such change.

The course was named “Taller de Periodismo Avanzado” (TPA), or Advanced Journalism Workshop, and its objective was that the students could develop their own piece of investigative journalism with emphasis on public policies, involving the State, the economic, political or judicial powers, or the organized crime. This had to be achieved in a time frame of 15 weeks and with no financial resources.

Four students enrolled in the class that was first given the second semester of 2013. Each of them worked on their own stories during the semester, meeting me once a week to get guidance and reflect on their reporting. Only one of them was able to finish the semester with an article.

To improve my methodology, that year I attended the Global Investigative Journalism Conference in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and went to every panel on how to educate students on this genre. My attendance to the conference was key to upgrade the course to what it is now. Understanding how to think and report in terms of open sources, how to follow the money across borders, to see people such as Giannina Segnini teach how to report on organized crime, was key for my understanding on how this class had to be organized and the objectives it had to achieve.

Back in Chile, I re-designed the course to put the focus on the use of open sources. To make sure that 15 weeks were enough to finish the investigation, students were paired around one topic. They would have to reveal a failure in public policy, taking as a starting point a Freedom of Information Act request. Chile has the 20.285 law of Access to Public Information and Transparency. This law protects the right that all citizens have to gain access to the information in hands of the administration of the State. This includes governmental bodies, municipalities, public companies, among others. It refers to information in any means of support: paper, audio, video. Importantly, it also includes the information that civil servants take into consideration when ruling or deciding on any public matter. This legal framework has a key relevance in the success of this method.

The law was not written to satisfy journalists' needs – which is clear in the time frame defined for the civil servants to answer requests: 20 working days plus 10 extra days when the governmental body considers that such time is needed. Still, it is a very effective way of obtaining documents to analyze public policies, and also those that people in power within the state do not want to make public. As the law is from 2009, not many journalists know how to effectively use it, so for me it was key that students could become experts in the tricks and resources that they could use to assure access to such information.

The first semester of 2014, eight students took the class and four investigations were produced. Two of them were published on the website of the university where stories written by undergraduates are exhibited. They all had at its core the analysis of information they had access to by filing a Freedom of Information Act request.

The first story published was titled “25 Members of Parliament financed election polls with money from Congress”. The story revealed that over \$137 million of Chilean pesos were spent by 25 MPs that since 2012 and until March of 2014, payed for 44 surveys with electoral purposes. The money came from the allocation for external consultancies, although the law that norms these expenses specifically states that these funds are to finance work conducted to support the legislative work. The MPs involved belonged to all political sectors and among them was the chairman of the Ethics Committee of the House of Commons.

The story impacted on the national agenda and it was replicated by “El Mostrador”, a major mainstream online media. It was also published in a book that gathers the best written journalism of the country each year. This was the only piece published in the book that had been reported and written by an undergraduate student. The author also won the award of Excellence in Journalism for the undergraduate level. He is currently working doing investigative journalism for a TV show of the public broadcaster.

The second story published uncovered an unregulated public transportation system that services citizens of 18 municipalities traveling daily to Santiago, on buses with safety issues and coordinated fare increases included in the price of the bus tickets. This research won the national Chile Etecom Contest in the Print Media category. The year after the publication, one of the authors interned at CIPER.

Award-Winning Stories and the Method Behind It

TPA methodology is based on the practical experience that students gain in the course. Experiential learning applied to investigative journalism means that the role of the teacher gains a significant importance. As students engage in the production and research of these stories, they need appropriate guidance and editing. It is important that teachers are involved in the media industry and have experience in the genre. Also, the amount of students that a single teacher can guide is restricted, as he or she needs to be on top of every step of the reporting process and on how the topic that is being covered unfolds.

As the interest in the course grew, I had the need of hiring new teachers. By 2015 the course already had 40 students enrolled each semester and it became compulsory. To join me, I chose a mid-career journalist trained at the Center for Investigative Journalism CIPER Chile, and two senior editors in chief that also worked in CIPER. The relevance of sharing common criteria and a similar understanding of what it means to do investigative journalism could not be underestimated.

The semester unfolds with weekly editorial meetings with specific reporting goals, complemented with field trips to the Judicial Archive, the Center of Justice, the Real Estate Records Office; and practical exercises on data bases built with information from the Civil Registry Office, the Security and Exchange Commission, the Stock Market, among others.

Most of them, places where anyone can have access and ask for a specific document: the archetype of an open source. The students learn that if they want to know who owns a house, for example, they can find that information bringing the address to the Real Estate Records Office. If they want to know if a person owns a corporation, they can track it at the Official Bulletin.

To train them on finding independently a story that is worth pursuing an investigation, the students are faced with the challenge of pitching a proposal to key journalists and editors working in the media industry. They get feedback and then reflect on their performance and the quality of their story. Likewise, when they hand in the final version of their story, they are requested to reflect on what they revealed and how they did it, and answer potential questions and requests by an external editor that publishes the stories on the university website.

The students that take the course are in their final semesters of their journalism undergraduate studies and normally they graduate after TPA. These are some of the stories they have produced the last two years:

In 2015, two students investigated and published a story called “Gendarmerie recognizes that prisoners work under illegal conditions in prisons”. It revealed that remunerated employment of prisoners in jail “Colina I” and the Metropolitan Women's Correctional Center did not meet the requirements dictated by the norm that regulates it. Some of the irregularities were the payment of lower wages than the legal minimum, the absence of contracts and the lack of insurances. Gendarmerie is responsible for ensuring that employers respect the minimum set by law, but in practice that did not occur, as the institution is part and parcel of the conflict. With this story, done at TPA, the authors won the Chile Etecom Contest in the Print Media category and the award of Excellence in Journalism for the undergraduate level. The story

was published in the book “The best Journalism of Chile 2015”, and replicated by online mainstream media.

In 2016, we published a TPA story revealing that women with mental disabilities were being sterilized in public hospitals. The students found that in Chile women with Down syndrome, neurological damage and mental disorders are operated to prevent them to have children. Their fallopian tubes are ligated or cut irreversibly, without complying with the minimum requirements that the law sets for this procedure. Irregularities include not to consider the consent of the patient, not to take the case for discussion at the ethics committee of the hospitals, and not to have the recommendation of the National Commission for the Protection of the Rights of Persons with Mental Illness, an agency under the Ministry of health. The authors of this story won the Chile Etecom Contest in National and Print category and were awarded with an internship in Animal Político, an independent online media from Mexico.

That same year, we published a controversial story that also set agenda. “In 2015 the Army spent more than \$1.000 millions reincorporating through invoices former military that were retired.” According to the investigation based on Freedom of Information Act requests, the army reinstated 153 retired military officials in that year, leaving them with double monthly income: the reinstatement salary and the pension, both funded almost entirely by the state. A commission put together to analyze the pension system in the country, established that in Chile the "principle of uniformity of pension rights" is not fulfilled, since there are two pension systems: that of the military, where the state finances 94% of pensions; and that of civilians that are listed through the compulsory private system of pension funds, AFP, which provides lower amounts and does not have any fiscal contribution. This story also won the award of Excellence in Journalism for the undergraduate level and was published in the book “The best Journalism of Chile 2016”.

Conclusion

The development of an experiential learning method guided by investigative reporters, with a focus on open sources and the use of Freedom of Information Act, has made the TPA course successful at teaching students how to do investigative journalism stories.

Indeed, all the stories described here match the definition of investigative journalism that was provided in this paper, as they are the result of systematic and independent investigation of a topic of social relevance and they reveal something that was kept hidden or unknown. After the publication of the story regarding inmates' illegal working conditions, for example, the reaction of Gendarmerie proved that the institution had no interest in making such information public. The institution heavily complained about the story with the Director of the Faculty but could not point to any wrong fact in it. Likewise, the story revealing misuse of Congress funds by parliamentarians was certainly uncomfortable for some of them. One even tried to make the faculty pull down the story from its website. There was nothing inaccurate in the text and every fact was sustained in FOIA request documents, so the attempt was unsuccessful.

The focus on open sources encourages and allows independence in reporters. Knowing and using such sources changes the perspective and possibilities for any media worker and especially for young journalists. At TPA they develop a way of understanding reporting and their relationship with sources. They do not depend on a specific interview or on someone to leak certain information. They know where to find the documents that support their story. They do not aim at doing a journalism of declarations, but of facts that are proven with documents. They also follow a methodology that works as a strategy to find a topic and manage their research. They understand that doing top-notch journalism is not a matter of luck or of having access to a good network of sources. It is the result of hard independent work, developing a document mind-set, being perseverant, critical and creative.

A good example of this achievement is that most of the TPA students who joined newsrooms after their graduation have started filing FOIA requests to pursue stories at media where almost no one had that tool in mind before they started working there. They stand out as they are used to think in terms of public information and which documents are produced in the

deliberation process of authorities. Not only they know that when an institution denies information they can appeal at the Council for Transparency. They have already done it themselves.

As a matter of fact, in 2016, a student gained access to documents stating abuses perpetrated by policemen in a shanty town in Santiago. The police wanted to keep them secret and the students appealed to the Council for Transparency. The council instructed the police to make the documents public.

This year, the requests of two former students got to the Court of Appeals. Both were won. One was requesting the documents containing the list of people that the army had hired under a specific type of contract and the amount of money spent in their salaries. The other, requested the reports that the Tax Service had of donations from certain not for profit foundations and corporations.

By knowing how to request such documents and how to persevere in their right to access them, former TPA students might be helping to move the border of what is considered public information in the country, also impacting on the reporting possibilities of all media workers.

This teaching method might be replicable in different contexts with a similar legal framework, especially in countries with a strong Freedom of Information Act and safe access to open sources.

References

- Atwood, R. (2010) Un Manual para periodistas de investigación. En Métodos de la Impertinencia. Mejores prácticas y lecciones del periodismo investigativo en América Latina. Instituto Prensa y Sociedad de Venezuela (IPYS Venezuela).
- Cañizález, A. (2006) Ojos frescos y bien abiertos. Apuntes sobre periodismo de investigación. Caracas: IPYS Venezuela.
- Faúndez, J.J. (2002) Periodismo de Investigación en Sudamérica. Obstáculos y propuestas. Publicaciones Forja, Capítulo chileno de Transparencia Internacional.
- Fuentes, C. (2006) ¿Es viable el periodismo investigativo? En Cuadernos de Información 19.
- Guerra, T. (2014) ¿Cómo investigar y no perderse en el intento? Una guía para la realización de reportajes investigativos basada en el método de Ciper. Pontificia Universidad Católica de Valparaíso.
- Hunter, M. (ed) (2009) Story-Based Inquiry. A Manual for Investigative Journalists, Unesco
- Jara, M; León, N; Migliaro, A; Sepúlveda, A; Vergara, F. (2003) Periodismo de investigación: los medios recuperan su rol. Universidad Diego Portales.
- Kaplan, D. (2013) Global Investigative Journalism: Startegies for Support. A report to the Center for International Media Assistance. 2nd Edition. Center for International Media Assistance, National Endowment for Democracy.
- Kolb, A. & Kolb, D. (2005). Learning styles and learning spaces: Enhancing experiential learning in higher education. Academy of Management Learning & Education, 4(2), 193-212.
- Lagos, C. (2013) Apuntes sobre Periodismo de Investigación en el Cono Sur, en El Estado del Periodismo: Desafíos en el Siglo de la Comunicación. Comunicación y Medios n.28, Instituto de la Comunicación e Imagen, Universidad de Chile.

Santoro, D. (2004) Técnicas de Investigación: Métodos desarrollados en diarios y revistas de America Latina. 1.a ed. vol. 1. México D.F., Fondo de Cultura Económica.

Scharfenberg, E. (2010) El “Método Dinges” de investigación periodística. En Métodos de la Impertinencia. Mejores prácticas y lecciones del periodismo investigativo en América Latina. Instituto Prensa y Sociedad de Venezuela (IPYS Venezuela).

Tanner, S., Green, K., & Burns, S. (2012). Experiential learning and journalism education: Special Olympics – A case study. Australian Journalism Review, 34(2), 115-127.

**News bot for the newsroom: how building data
quality indicators can support journalistic projects
relying on real-time open data**

By Laurence Dierickx, Université libre de Bruxelles

Abstract

Storytelling with data has become a trend in journalism with the rise and growth of data-driven journalism practices encompassed in the field of computational journalism. It aims to provide quality information, which may not be made possible without high quality data. According to the ISO 9000, definition of quality is regarded as the ability to satisfy stated or implicit needs.

This paper proposes a conceptual framework to assess data quality with a combination of deterministic and empirical quality indicators. If data quality is a multidimensional concept, the object is here to establish how to fit the needs of journalistic projects. Formal quality indicators are essentials when data are collected and/or automated. We can call it the technical challenge. Empirical indicators are also essentials regarding professional practices. We can call it the journalistic challenge. This part of the paper also demonstrates how and why data quality literacy is able to meet and to support journalistic requirements.

This framework was applied in the context of a case study. “Bxl’air bot” is an automated web application (news bot) fed with real-time open data about air quality in Brussels. Air quality can be here considered as a social problem, which concerns environment, mobility, economic and health politics. The news bot aims to objectivate a situation regarding the European’s norms as well as the World Health Organizations’ recommendations. The news bot is here considered as an object of journalism and as a tool for the Belgian newsroom Alter Echos involved in this research project.

If the framework has helped to make appropriate conceptual decisions, from a constructivist approach, the necessity to well understand the data lifecycle was also highlighted to complete the framework.

Keywords: computational journalism, data journalism, open data, data quality

Introduction

Data are playing an important role in the journalistic context, with having become the raw material for trending projects encompassed under the name of “computational journalism”. According to Flew & al. (2012), computational journalism draws from the fields of computer science, social sciences, and media and communications theories. It is described by Hamilton & Turner (2009) as a combination of algorithms, data, and knowledge from the social sciences to supplement the accountability function of journalism. From a process perspective, it can also be seen as an application of computing and computational thinking to the activities of journalism which include gathering, organization, sense making and dissemination (Diakopoulos 2011). Diakopoulos points out that it upholds core values of journalism, such as accuracy and verifiability. For Coddington (2014), computational journalism differs from data journalism *inter alia* because it offers less transparency in its process, even if it also deals with large amount of data.

Data storytelling relying on practices and tools of computational journalism can adopt heterogeneous forms which include news applications, statistical analysis and automated contents generation like maps, infographics or texts in natural language. Fed by structured data, they are challenging both the technical and the journalistic sides. Moreover, the pursued goal is not different than any other form of journalism, which is to provide quality information.

What does quality mean in journalism? According to Clerwall (2014), this is a multifaceted concept *“that can refer to an overall, but something vague, notion of ‘this was a good article’”* and that can also depend on the sociocultural background of the receiver. The concept of quality in journalism covers a wide range of other empirical concepts, broadly discussed among researchers, like objectivity, accuracy, believability, reliability or trustworthiness. If it could also be resumed as the degree or level of overall excellence in a news story (Sundar 1998), the concept remains difficult to define likewise in the field of data science when it is talked about quality information. In this field, it is considered that quality information may not be possible without high quality data (Batini & al, 2009).

The concept of data quality could be related to formal characteristics as well to its intrinsic, representational and contextual dimensions, while the ISO 9000, related to the management of quality, proposes a user-centric approach. Quality is so regarded as the ability to satisfy stated or implicit needs (Boydens & van Hooland, 2011). These needs will depend on their contexts of use, making the issue of quality even more complex to tackle.

In addition, it is important to identify the data lifecycle correctly in order to understand how data are produced, validated and disseminated. Data lifecycle is a concept derived from data management. Its purpose is to study the processes of acquisition, curation and data preservation. Its modeling aims at optimizing the data flow management within an information system, from the creation of data to their archiving and destruction (Reid & al 2007). On the epistemological level, a positivist approach assumes that data reflect the reality observed. A constructivist approach argues that data are built over time: as results of empirical observations, data are likely to change over time (Boydens 1999).

Those considerations could be applied as well to computational journalism. An accurate and reliable information can only rely on accurate and reliable data. Data quality issues are not trivial, especially when data are used as raw material for news contents. As Essa underlined (quoted by Flew & al. 2010), both journalism and information technology are concerned with information quality and reliability.

Graefe (2016) has defined the double condition to succeed with automation of news information: data must be structured and with a good quality enough to achieve goals of accuracy and actuality. “The Quartz guide to bad data” (2016) underlines that journalists are increasingly confronted with data, which can be “full of problems.” Knowing those problems makes it possible to provide solutions. Otherwise, data cannot be used.

Those observations have conducted to the building of a conceptual framework that aims to identify possible issues before using data within an automated data-driven journalism project. This framework was applied to support the design of an automated news application (news bot), which relies on real-time open data about air quality in Brussels to support a broader investigative project led by the French-speaking newsroom Alter Echos.

Theoretical backdrop

The conditions of use of data-driven journalistic projects have been little discussed in the journalistic field. However, they focus on the accuracy and reliability of the data, while emphasizing the need to develop these projects in accordance with the ethical principles governing journalistic practices. Ethics in journalism have been defined and upheld for decades, notes Howard (2013), but the context in which they are practiced “*has shifted with changes in technology and society*”.

Bradshaw (in Zion & al. 2014) argues that it is useful to ask whether data are accurate and verifiable. He advocates that journalists have to question themselves about the precision of data, the way in which data are collected as well as the way to put them in context. He also highlights the value of working with the most relevant data rather than working with the most accessible data. In a post published on his own blog (Bradshaw 2013), he says that the most basic ethical consideration relies on the need to be accurate and to provide proper context to the storytelling.

Kent (2014), editor at the US news agency Associated Press which has been using natural language generation technologies since 2014, has established an ethical "checklist" where he proposes to think about - inter alia - how accurate the underlying data is, if the subject is appropriate for automation and in this case, how automation is organized.

Dörr & Hollnbuchner (2016) have pointed that if structured data is a precondition for automation and its journalistic use, the origin of data must be identified. But data must also be reliable and accurate: a software could do erroneous reporting due to a poor coding or poor data sources. What happens when missing data are sent to the information system or when items are in disorder, limiting so the value of the data-set? Missing items can lead to biases during content generation, researchers say. Because it is entirely driven by structured data available, an automated news production system is limited. In addition, if data are available, they are not free of anomalies. Data can be mixed with other data in a single field, or arbitrarily presented in multiple fields (Casswell & Dörr 2017).

Data quality literacy

Data quality was mainly studied in the context of private and public institutions where large databases must be managed. It consists in a multidimensional principle, which concerns both the contents, the process and the design of the database. It involves different kinds of aspects such as management, design, data analysis, quality control, storage and presentation (Pipino & al 2002, Chapman 2005). The relevance of this principle lies both in the decision-making and operational processes (Wand & Wang 1996).

Researchers agree that data quality can only be defined by the uses, which are always linked to a particular application domain. They have also underlined that data quality cannot be reduced to the only formal prism of the triple "entity-attribute-value" (Redman 1996, Eckerson 2000) which leads, for example, to detect formal anomalies in databases. Furthermore, data collected

from empirical observations are subject to change over time. This is why there is no absolute reference to test the correction of empirical databases. Like instant pictures, values enclosed in empirical databases reflect the real world only at a given moment (Boydens 2012). This posture refers to the principle of actuality underlying the dissemination of journalistic information.

Researchers also emphasized the importance of having quality metadata (Scannapieco & al 2004, Weidema & Wesnaes 1996). The function of metadata is to document a data-set and thus promote the re-use of data. Shanks (1999) points out that metadata are important to help users to easily assess and understand data.

Data quality is even more problematic when data are posted on the web (Batini & al 2009): are they up-to-date, is there a management of records and versions?

Data quality can be regarded as a set of multidimensional characteristics, which were broadly discussed among researchers. Brodie (1980) has emphasized three components: reliability, semantic integrity and physical integrity. Strong & al. (1997) have identified four main characteristics translated in a set of data quality attributes: intrinsic (objectivity, accuracy, believability, reputation), contextual (value added, relevancy, timeliness, completeness, appropriate amount of data), representational (interpretability, ease of understanding, representational consistency, concise representation), and accessibility (accessibility, access security).

All of those attributes are summarized by Redman (2001): data must be accessible, accurate, timely, complete, consistent with other sources, relevant, comprehensive, with a proper level of details to be read and understood. Haug & al. (2009) retain, in the context of Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP), three data quality dimensions: intrinsic data quality dimension (completeness, unambiguousness, meaningfulness, and correctness), data accessibility dimension (access rights, data storage, representation barriers), and data usefulness dimensions (relevance, value-adding).

An approach based on semiotic levels was proposed by Shanks (1999). This concerns the use of symbols to convey knowledge: syntactic (formal representation, about data structure), semantic (completeness and accuracy, about the meaning of data), pragmatic (usability and suitability to the task, about the uses of data) and social (understandability, about the sharing of knowledge generated by the use of data).

Tejay & al. (2005) have suggested to add an empirical layer to this semiotic framework, which includes the dimensions of accessibility and temporality. The syntactic level should take into account criteria such as accuracy, consistency and integrity. The semantic level should also refer to dimensions of non-redundancy, credibility, reliability and non-ambiguity. The pragmatic level should consider dimensions of relevance and completeness.

These different approaches demonstrate that data quality cannot be evaluated solely from a deterministic perspective. Empirical considerations must also be taken into account, regarding the application domain related to data.

Bad data quality: causes and effects

Reasons of bad data quality are numerous: from the design of the information system (Moody & Shanks 2003) to the respect of the integrity constraints of a relational database (Fox & al., 1994), via the semantics of data, whose heterogeneity can lead to problems of interpretation (Madnick & Zhu 2006). Boydens (1999) also points out that large amounts of anomalies could mean that the database is no longer relevant. For the researcher, the question is not so much to define what are correct data but rather it would involve questioning how data are built over time. This position refers to the data lifecycle concept.

Chiang & Miller (2008) found that quality problems often occur due to changes in uses, to changes in the perception of data, or to violations of the database integrity constraints (which functions are to preserve data consistency and accuracy).

Networked databases are also a potential source of data quality issues (Batini & al 2009): information systems could be heterogeneous, encoding practices may differ from a database to another, the same data could be recorded in several databases.

If those aspects are more linked to the technical field, the understanding of the conditions in which data are produced might highlight issues related to the data producer. That involves to investigate this point from a journalistic point of view, especially if data are sensitive: a story could be hidden behind.

In the field of news information, bad data quality can have serious consequences. This is particularly the case in the field of economic or business news, where information could likely have an impact on markets, which are particularly sensitive (McCallum 2014). However, bad data are not the only reason why an automation project could fail. It can also be due to

exogenous factors such as the design of the process or even as wrong interpretation by the information system, which are related to human errors (Zion & Craig 2014).

Lecompte (2015) cites the case of an automated news about Netflix's second-quarter earnings, which stated that the company had not met expectations. The error - a human one - came from values that could have been split in two: “7” and “1” became “71”. Another example of abnormal data value has occurred more recently, when the automated writing system Quakebot has reported, for the L.A. Times, an earthquake that happened in 1925, creating panic movements on social networks. The error came from a human update in the database of the American Geological Institute (UGS), reported the L.A. Times. When a story relies on bad data, the story will be bad too: garbage in, garbage out. But the main lesson learned from those cases is the need for some editorial control on automated news contents: in any cases, the human factor remains important.

According to Linden (2017), integrity, quality and reliability of available data are essential to automated news as well as to other forms of journalism. Therefore, the choice and assessment of data should be a journalistic process while validation, standardization, normalization of data should be a playing field for programmers. However, it appears that this borderline is not so clearly defined. The development of computational journalism practices has not only led to new collaborations between journalists and computer scientists (Lewis & Usher 2014, Karlsen & Stavelin 2014). It has also led to the emergence of new professional profiles, where journalistic skills meet technological ones (Royal 2010, Paraise & Dagiral 2012). This illustrates the fact that databases are more and more escaping the interest of computer scientists. This evolution would be linked to both technical and social transformations (Flichy & Parasio 2013).

Building quality indicators for automated data-driven stories

Beyond data and their processing, the journalistic value of an automated project lies in the sense given to it. This variable was important to take into account within the design of a framework aiming to evaluate the relevance of a data-set in the perspective to be automatized in a data-driven project. The framework first proposes to assess the strengths and weaknesses of a data-set with the help of data quality indicators which meet technical and journalistic challenges. Those were first experimented in a previous research which aimed to assess the overall quality of the open data portal of the French city of Rennes regarding four different types of uses, journalistic included (Tredan & Dierickx 2017). In this research, assessments were made with

the use of Open Refine, an open source software that can be used for data profiling (Verborgh & De Wilde 2013). A third kind assessment, more global, is based on five axes covering both technical and journalistic challenges, and was designed for the context of automated news production.

Formal data quality indicators: the technical challenge

Quality indicators associated with formal data quality as well as the dimensions of data quality are facing the technical challenge for an optimal reuse of data free of error or of bias. The objective is to get data that fit development requirements for the use in the context of generated news contents (web applications, data visualizations, natural language generation...).

Four axes are here proposed to assess the formal data quality of a data-set: (1) the documentary axis, related to the understandability of data-sets, (2) the encoding axis, related to the technical encoding aspect of the data, (3) the normative axis, considering that the respect of norms fosters the interoperability and so the reuse of data, (4) the semiotic axis, related to the syntactic and semantic coherence of data.

Table 1

Formal data quality indicators

Axis	Assessment types
Documentary	Unique identifier
	Available metadata
	Conformity metadata/data-set
	Terms of use
Encoding	No encoding problem
	No HTML overload
	No duplicate data
Normative	Use of standards (e.g. e-mail, date, address, geolocation,...)

Semiotic	No missing value
	No orthographical incoherence
	Explicit labelling

Those deterministic indicators aim to assess data quality in a formal way. That means that the assessment could be made on a Boolean mode, with simply responding “true” or “false”.

Note that the total amount of formal indicators used for an assessment could vary from one data-set to another, as each application domain has its own particularities. In addition, formal anomalies in a data-set could be subject to interpretations. For example, the NULL value can be interpreted in several ways: the information exists but is not known, the information is not relevant for the entity, information is relevant but does not exist for the entity, the attribute value is equal to zero (Hainaut 2012). Besides, poor quality data can coexist with correct data without generating errors (Wang & Strong 1996). Sources may contain an error such that the data does not have the meaning expected by the user.

Data quality dimensions and empirical indicators: the journalistic challenge

Journalism literacy has permitted to frame the requirements of an automated data-driven project. Quality indicators associated with them are based on the dimensions of data quality and on the journalistic requirements. They are facing the journalistic challenge. The focus is here placed on two particular dimensions: the intrinsic one and the contextual one, which meet journalistic preoccupations about accuracy, correctness, precision and completeness.

Table 2

Data quality dimensions indicators

Dimension	Assessment types
Contextual	Primary Source (authentic)
	Appropriate amount of data
	Completeness (no missing values)

Relevance	
Intrinsic	Accuracy (syntactic correctness)
	Precision (no anomalies observed in values)
	Correctness (f.e, last update mentioned)

Those quality indicators aim to complete the formal aspect of data quality assessment. Insofar, they can also be assessed on a Boolean mode (true or false). The “completeness” indicator might be more difficult to assess due to the issue of the NULL value. The indicator related to the appropriate amount of data might as well be difficult to assess, mostly if the data-set counts hundreds of records.

It is also important to note that a primary source, which refers to the responsible for the control and of the monitoring over time of the quality of the information produced, does not guarantee the quality of a data -set but only give indications about it (Boydens 2014).

Global assessment model

The quality of a data-set cannot only be assessed with deterministic indicators. If empirical indicators are subjective they cannot be avoided in journalistic context. It is up to journalists, or those involved in a data-driven project to remain critical to a data-set, including when it comes from public authorities or when it is reported from an authentic source. Furthermore, data may contain truths but also bias (Howard 2014). This critical level cannot, either, be objectified without a bit of investigation.

A global assessment model for the use of data in the context of news production proposes to join both the technical and the journalistic challenges with putting the two previous models under the lights of the principle of reliability, which concerns both fields of journalism and computerized databases. This global model intends to evaluate (1) the reliability of the data source, (2) the modalities to access data, (3) the keys to understanding data and their production context, (4) if data characteristics allow automation, (5) if data are relevant for journalistic use.

Table 3

Global evaluation model for the use of data in the context of automated news production

Axis	Questions to answer
Source	Is the data provider the producer and/or the authentic source? In the case of the data provider is not the original producer and/or the authentic source, what is the nature of its relationship with the original producer of the data and/or the authentic source? Are the data provider, the data producer and the authentic source of data trustworthy?
Access	Are data freely accessible? Are they licensed for free reuse? Are they available in a structured format?
Documentation	Are data documented by metadata or any other type of information which permit to understand the structure of the database and/or to remove any ambiguities in the data labeling? Is any expertise provided to understand what data values are? Are contextual elements provided?
Automation	Are data provided in a free and usable format? Do the data values meet the standards? Are the data values accurate? Is the data-set complete and up-to-date?
Journalistic relevance	Do data have an added value in journalistic terms? How does the data processing make sense?

Case study: a news bot for a newsroom

This conceptual framework was applied in the context of a broader research about the uses of an automated news systems developed by the researcher to fit the needs of a Belgian newsroom Alter Echos, for the purpose of a wider investigative about air quality in Brussels. This research studies the relationship between journalists and automation technologies of news content production. It aims to establish the conditions of an association between journalists and automation technologies, as well as a use frame, based on the hypothesis of a fruitful collaboration.

If the news application, or news bot, results from a co-construction with two members in particular of the newsroom, their involvement has started from its first prototyping. Called “Bxl’air bot”, it provides real-time information about air quality in Brussels’ area. Generated contents are from various types: natural language generation, infographics and interactive map. It also provides a daily bulletin about air quality published on Alter Echos’ website. An RSS feed automatically publish news on Twitter as well as it send an e-mail alerts when an observed value exceeds a limit value defined by the World Health Organization (WHO).

Object of journalism with its own materiality (Anderson & De Maeyer 2014), the news application is also developed as a tool for journalists. Various data on air pollutant measurements are recorded daily, so that the history can be traced. On the platform, journalists can view the monthly reports for each air pollutants measured, as well as different types of statistics (cumulative totals per measured station, average and maximum). Five pollutants are monitored: small particles PM10, PM 2.5 and black carbon, ozone and nitrogen dioxide.

This experiment, which began in April 2017, intends to provide raw material for a wider investigative work, led by the editorial staff, to put data in context and to make sense of it. If we recognize to machines many virtues, they are not without limits. Automation technologies are suitable for performing repetitive tasks quickly, but they cannot be a substitute to the human being by providing the contextual dimension or in-depth analysis to enrich the narrative.

Due to the severe consequences linked to air pollutant emissions affecting public health, the WHO have published recommendations, which consist of average rates not to be exceeded either by twenty-four hours either by year. Those limit values are different from one atmospheric pollutant to another. Despite its potential effects more harmful to health than other types of small particles, there is nothing about black carbon. Those recommendations are somewhat more severe than the limit values fixed by the Directive 2008/50/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 21 May 2008 on ambient air quality and cleaner air for Europe. Limit values are here the result of compromises between EU Member States, the EU policy also taking into account the divergent economic interests of the car lobby.

European norms are binding. On 28 April 2016, Belgium was given a formal notice reminding its obligations, in particular as regards compliance with the limit value of the nitrogen dioxide in Brussels’ area, which has been exceeded during three consecutive years, from 2010 to 2012. In addition, the Commission considers that Brussels does not collect nitrogen dioxide concentrations in areas presenting the highest concentrations.

In sociology, the case of air quality in the European capital can be seen as a social problem, which consists in the transformation of any social fact into a public problem. The fact becomes a problem when it meets a process defining the experience as an offence and as a situation generating litigation (Neveu 1999). As it was defined by Becker, air quality in Brussels is a social problem because European norms are violated. Authorities are viewed a social agent with the power to produce legal norms and moral judgement. The delinquent act consists in exceeding the limit values. According to Neveu (2015), data contributes to the justification of a social problem, with playing a role of objectivation. The social problem of air quality in Brussels can also be viewed regarding the trilogy “naming-blaming- claiming” (Felstiner & al, 1980): measurements of air pollutants are generating disputes among citizen and environmental organizations which denounce the poor quality of the Brussels’ air while the European Commission requires Belgium to respect the European standards (“naming”); Belgian and Brussels authorities are considered as responsible of the situation and are blamed for not taking appropriate measures regarding the potential effects of pollutants in terms of public health (“blaming”) ; authorities are asked to remedy the situation with adopting appropriate policies (“claiming”). Belgian journalists are participating in this process as they publicized controversies.

The Directive 2008/50/EC establishes “*reciprocal exchange of information and data from networks and individual stations measuring ambient air pollution within the Member States*”. In Brussels’ area, the station’s network is managed by the regional authority within the public organism Brussels Environment. Data collected are then transmitted to the federal authority within the Belgian Interregional Environment Agency (IRCEL-CELINE), which communicates on the ambient air quality in the three regions of the country.

There are thus two possible public data sources, which provide real-time data on their respective website. The publishing mode differs from one actor to another: the regional institution will put the accent on the communication aspects while the federal institution will put the accent on the scientific aspects.

Application of the framework

Once identified, data sources have been submitted to the conceptual assessment framework. It has quickly appeared that data published by Brussels Environment were not complete enough to reach the aims of the news bot. Therefore, the global evaluation model was only applied to

data available on the IRCEL-CELINE's website, identified as the most complete and as the most relevant. It has permitted to make the most relevant choices within the design of the news application.

Source: The data publisher is not the original producer or the authentic source. However, its specific status makes it possible to assimilate it. The source is considered as reliable.

Access: Data related to fixed averages are only published by IRCEL-CELINE. If it exists, there is no publicity about an application programming interface (API) which provides real-time open data (slippery averages of the observed air pollutants) while the website provides both slippery and fixed averages. That means that only the website will be chosen for the data retrieval which supposes parsing techniques. Data are published in open data, under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 license that covers free sharing and free adapting with the obligation to cite the source. They are presented into HTML tables, in a structured format which can be modified during the experiment. That supposes a regular monitoring to correct any abnormalities linked to changes in the pages' structure, including changes in the tables' structure. This can be detected with a human monitoring of the web pages as well as with a human or automated monitoring of the database.

Documentation: Data are not documented with metadata files, but are widely explained and commented on many pages of the website, in a disparate and abundant way. Data are presented in separated pages depending on the air pollutant type. European norms are also explained. The structure of the tables, in which data are presented, is clearly understandable without any ambiguity. Data are available not only for the Brussels' area but also for the two other regions, measurement station by measurement station. Dates are well mentioned. Those observations will help to create the structure of the database and to make appropriate decisions to get appropriate averages.

It was also observed that on the contrary to the others air pollutants, there were no averages concerning nitrogen dioxide for the Brussels' area. That means that a computational function should be developed to get this particular average. The case of one measurement station is also mentioned. If it provides data about nitrogen dioxides, those data are not estimated as representative of the air pollution in Brussels. When looking at the values, it appears that this station presents one of the highest concentrations. To serve a journalistic purpose, data of this measurement station should be included in the news application.

Automation: Due to the HTML format of the page, data retrieval will require a parser to get real-time data as well as to get and store fixed averages data. As the news application is developed in PHP and MySQL, there are no obstacles for processing recorded data. Issues are more linked to the values of data itself. Some cells present missing or unknown values, marked "NA". Automation process should include this dimension, with defining how to treat empty or NULL values without affecting the information system. Where necessary, the indication "Data not available" could be mentioned. Process should also take into account the fact that web pages and tables could evolve with time and should prevent from publishing empty fields or anomalies in order to remain accurate.

Journalistic relevance: The observation of data allows to quantify exceeding of European norms and WHO's recommendations. This quantification permits to establish the difference between accepted and unacceptable values and to monitor the progress of measurements per station. Data allow a better representation of a state of facts at a given moment. Monitoring the evolution of air pollutant data over time is a relevant entry point for dealing with a controversial situation. If each pollutant is produced in a different way, the impact of the cars in the emission rates can be objectivated. Others entry points are also possible such as mobility and environmental policies or as impacts in terms of public health and economics. Therefore, data support a potentially rich subject on the journalistic level, the controversies to which they are subjected, mainly among citizen or environment associations, add to the journalistic interest. Moreover, automation permits to store data and is designed to provide relevant analysis to journalists.

The global assessment model has permitted to highlight strengths and weaknesses of the data-sets, regarding the journalistic purpose. It has also permitted to make the most relevant choices within the design of the news application. Despite lots of documents were provided on IRCEL-CELINE's website, there were no indications about how are data collected, validated and then published.

The understanding of the data lifecycle related to air quality in Brussels has permitted to lift the last issues identified as problematic, such as the most appropriated tables to use to retrieve real-time data and as the relevant time to retrieve fixed averages. Being accurate means retrieving right data at the right time: as this process is also automated, the best instructions must be provided to the information system.

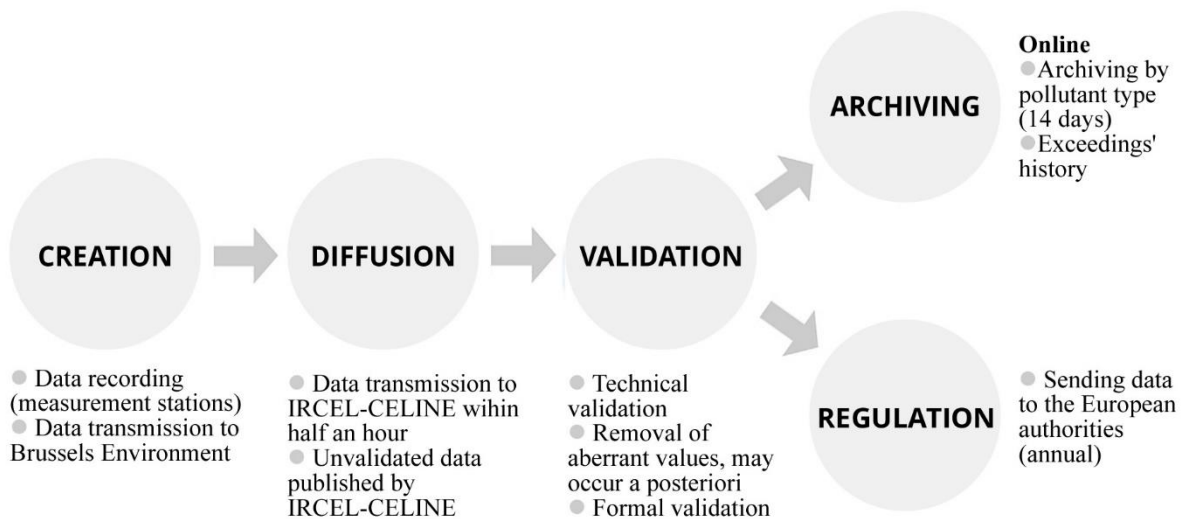


Figure 1. Data lifecycle of measured air pollutants in Brussels' area published by IRCEL-CELINE

An interview with the representatives of the public institution IRCEL-CELINE has provided the expertise needed to fix once and for all pending issues, especially regarding the automated CRON procedure launched from a third-party online service for the retrieval and for the recording in the database. However, human monitoring is still required to ensure that the system does not encounter problems. These maintenance operations, even if they need very little time, are essential to guarantee the reliability of the news application.

Conclusion

This conceptual framework has linked two domains (data quality and journalism) in order to be used to assess the quality of a data set before its use in the context of automated news production. It can help to make the most appropriate decisions for the designing of an automation system as well as to prevent errors in relationship with the data retrieval.

Ambiguities can be lifted, partially or totally, with the understanding of the data lifecycle. As metadata are not always provided as well as other kinds of contextual information, an expert of the application domain can also be required. This was underlined in the case study, due to the scientific complexity of the domain of air pollution which thus has necessitated a bit of investigation. Limitations of this framework are mostly linked to subjective human interpretations.

With taking into account both technical and journalistic aspects, this conceptual framework has shown that data quality and journalism are sharing common concerns in order to produce quality

information, despite the fact that this concept, likewise the data quality concept, remains complex to define. Data quality issues may be encountered in any data-set from any organization, public or private. At best they are known, at best they can be treated to serve the purpose of their finale use.

References

- Anderson, C. W., & De Maeyer, J. (2015). Objects of journalism and the news. *Journalism*, 16(1), 3-9.
- Batini, C., Cappiello, C., Francalanci, C., & Maurino, A. (2009). Methodologies for data quality assessment and improvement. *ACM computing surveys (CSUR)*, 41(3), 16.
- Boydens, I. (1999). *Informatique, normes et temps*. Bruylant.
- Boydens, I., & van Hooland, S. (2011). Hermeneutics applied to the quality of empirical databases. *Journal of documentation*, 67(2), 279-289.
- Boydens, I. (2012). L'océan des données et le canal des normes. In *Annales des Mines Responsabilité et environnement* (No. 3, pp. 22-29). ESKA.
- Boydens, I. (2014). Open data et eGovernment. *Research Note (Smals)*, 33.
- Bradshaw, P. (2014). Ethics in data journalism: accuracy. *Online Journalism Blog*. URL: <https://onlinejournalismblog.com/2013/09/13/ethics-in-data-journalism-accuracy/>
- Brodie, M. L. (1980). Data quality in information systems. *Information & Management*, 3(6), 245-258.
- Caswell, D., & Dörr, K. (2017). Automated Journalism 2.0: Event-driven narratives: From simple descriptions to real stories. *Journalism Practice*, 1-20.
- Chapman, A. D. (2005). *Principles of data quality*. GBIF.
- Chiang, F., & Miller, R. J. (2008). Discovering data quality rules. *Proceedings of the VLDB Endowment*, 1(1), 1166-1177.
- Clerwall, C. (2014). Enter the robot journalist: Users' perceptions of automated content. *Journalism Practice*, 8(5), 519-531.
- Coddington, M. (2015). Clarifying journalism's quantitative turn: A typology for evaluating data journalism, computational journalism, and computer-assisted reporting. *Digital Journalism*, 3(3), 331-348.
- Diakopoulos, N. (2011). A functional roadmap for innovation in computational journalism. *White paper*.

- Dörr, K. N., & Hollnbuchner, K. (2016). Ethical Challenges of Algorithmic Journalism. *Digital Journalism*, 5(4), 404-419.
- Eckerson, W. W. (2002). Data quality and the bottom line: Achieving business success through a commitment to high quality data. *The Data Warehousing Institute*, 1-36.
- Felstiner, W. L., Abel, R. L., & Sarat, A. (1980). The Emergence and Transformation of Disputes: Naming, Blaming, Claiming... *Law and society review*, 631-654.
- Flew, T., Spurgeon, C., Daniel, A., & Swift, A. (2012). The promise of computational journalism. *Journalism Practice*, 6(2), 157-171.
- Flichy, P., Parasie, S. (2013). Sociologie des bases de données. *Sociologie*, 2(3), 9-19.
- Fox, C., Levitin, A., & Redman, T. (1994). The notion of data and its quality dimensions. *Information processing & management*, 30(1), 9-19.
- Graefe, A. (2016). Guide to automated journalism. *Tow Center for digital journalism*.
- Hainaut, J. L. (2012). *Bases de données-2e éd. : Concepts, utilisation et développement*. Dunod.
- Hamilton, J. T., & Turner, F. (2009, July). Accountability through algorithm: Developing the field of computational journalism. In *Report from the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences, Summer Workshop* (pp. 27-41).
- Haug, A., Stentoft Arlbjørn, J., & Pedersen, A. (2009). A classification model of ERP system data quality. *Industrial Management & Data Systems*, 109(8), 1053-1068.
- Howard, A. (2013). On the Ethics of Data-Driven Journalism: of fact, friction and public records in a more transparent age. *Tow Center for digital journalism*.
- Howard, A. (2014). The Art and Science of Data-Driven Journalism. *Tow Center for digital journalism*.
- Karlsen, J., & Stavelin, E. (2014). Computational journalism in Norwegian newsrooms. *Journalism practice*, 8(1), 34-48.
- Kent, T. (2015). Ethical check-list for robot journalism. *Medium*. URL: <https://medium.com/@tjrkent/an-ethical-checklist-for-robot-journalism-1f41dcbd7be2>

- Linden, C. G. (2017). Decades of Automation in the Newsroom: Why are there still so many jobs in journalism?. *Digital Journalism*, 5(2), 123-140.
- Lecompte, Celeste. 2015. Automation in the Newsroom. *Nieman Reports*, 69 (3): 32–45.
- Lewis, S. C., & Usher, N. (2013). Open source and journalism: Toward new frameworks for imagining news innovation. *Media, culture & society*, 35(5), 602-619.
- Madnick, S., & Zhu, H. (2006). Improving data quality through effective use of data semantics. *Data & Knowledge Engineering*, 59(2), 460-475.
- McCallum, Q. (2012). *Bad data handbook*. O'Reilly Media, Inc.
- Moody, D. L., & Shanks, G. G. (2003). Improving the quality of data models: empirical validation of a quality management framework. *Information systems*, 28(6), 619-650.
- Neveu, E. (1999). L'approche constructiviste des "problèmes publics". Un aperçu des travaux anglo-saxons. *Etudes de communication. Langages, information, médiations*, (22), 41-58.
- Neveu, E. (2015). *Sociologie politique des problèmes publics*. Armand Colin.
- Parasie, S., & Dagiral, E. (2013). Data-driven journalism and the public good: "Computer assisted-reporters" and "programmer-journalists" in Chicago. *New media & society*, 15(6), 853-871.
- Pipino, L. L., Lee, Y. W., & Wang, R. Y. (2002). Data quality assessment. *Communications of the ACM*, 45(4), 211-218.
- Redman, T. C. (2001). *Data quality: the field guide*. Digital press.
- Reid, R., Fraser-King, G., & Schwaderer, W. D. (2007). *Data lifecycles: managing data for strategic advantage*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Royal, C. (2010, April). The journalist as programmer: A case study of the New York Times interactive news technology department. In *International Symposium on Online Journalism*.
- Scannapieco, M., Virgillito, A., Marchetti, C., Mecella, M., & Baldoni, R. (2004). The DaQuinCIS architecture: a platform for exchanging and improving data quality in cooperative information systems. *Information systems*, 29(7), 551-582.

- Shanks, G. (1999, September). Semiotic approach to understanding representation in information systems. In *Proceedings of the information systems foundations workshop, ontology, semiotics and practice*.
- Strong, D. M., Lee, Y. W., & Wang, R. Y. (1997). Data quality in context. *Communications of the ACM*, 40(5), 103-110.
- Sundar, S. S. (1998). Effect of source attribution on perception of online news stories. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 75(1), 55-68.
- Tejay, G., Dhillon, G., & Chin, A. G. (2005). Data quality dimensions for information systems security: A theoretical exposition. In *Security management, integrity, and internal control in Information Systems* (pp. 21-39). Springer, Boston, MA.
- The Quartz guide to bad data (2016). *GitHub*. URL: <https://github.com/Quartz/bad-data-guide>
- Tredan, O., & Dierickx, L. (2017, 10-12 July). *L'Open data à Rennes ou en quoi l'Open Data ne change pas le gouvernement des villes*. Paper presented at Les données et le gouvernement de la ville, Montpellier : Association Française de Science Politique.
- Verborgh, R., & De Wilde, M. (2013). *Using OpenRefine*. Packt Publishing Ltd.
- Wand, Y., & Wang, R. Y. (1996). Anchoring data quality dimensions in ontological foundations. *Communications of the ACM*, 39(11), 86-95.
- Wang, R. Y., & Strong, D. M. (1996). Beyond accuracy: What data quality means to data consumers. *Journal of management information systems*, 12(4), 5-33.
- Weidema, B. P., & Wesnaes, M. S. (1996). Data quality management for life cycle inventories—an example of using data quality indicators. *Journal of cleaner production*, 4(3-4), 167-174.
- Zion, L., & Craig, D. (Eds.) (2014). *Ethics for digital journalists: emerging best practices*. Routledge.



“The more things change, the more they stay the same”: The impacts of social media and digital technology on journalism quality in South African newsrooms

By Findlay, S.J., Bird, W. R. and Smith, T.

Media Monitoring Africa, JHB, South Africa

Abstract

While we continue to grapple with how the processes of news production are changing in the era of digital journalism, what is of even greater significance is how these changes impact journalistic quality. In addition, the ongoing revenue crises experienced by many media houses has meant that one of the few ways to ensure quality investigative journalism is by setting up dedicated investigative journalism units. What does this model mean for existing newsrooms? How has social media and digital technology impacted on newsmaking processes and how have they affected the efficacy and potential for in-depth investigative reporting? We undertook to study the changes to newsrooms brought about by the digital revolution and to understand how these shifts were affecting the quality of news and journalism being produced. We conducted in-depth interviews at three South African newsrooms and examined the media coverage of two critical events over a seven-month period. The research shows that despite diverse media being monitored, common narratives emerged about who was to blame for particular issues. Moreover, the findings reveal how despite technology making journalists' lives much easier and more efficient on some level – such as the ability to instantly file reports from virtually anywhere in the world and the potentially limitless group of new sources of information - the same kinds of views and voices tend to be put forward and heard. What is clear from this research is that unless clear and deliberate efforts are made to democratize it, media will continue to reflect and perpetuate existing power dynamics and narratives of the powerful. It seems to leave us in the invidious position of increasingly relying on dedicated investigative journalism units for quality investigative journalism, and if this is the case what does the future look like for existing media houses?

Acknowledgement

This research was undertaken by Media Monitoring Africa (MMA) through funding generously provided by Open Society Foundation (OSF).

1. Introduction

There can be little doubt that social media and digital technology have fundamentally changed the way in which news is gathered, analysed and disseminated in the modern world¹. While much evidence reveals how these disruptions have impacted newsrooms from a business perspective (read in most cases: reduced economic and commercial viability²), there doesn't seem to be a lot of research which has examined the quality of journalism being produced in these new systems, nor the impact this has on self-censorship.

Anecdotal reports suggest that the speed and immediacy of our news, as offered through social media networks such as Twitter and Facebook, has critically lowered the quality, diversity and analysis of news coverage across the globe^{3,4}. Here, online audiences consume one-liner news blasts as soon as they are published and faster news updates appear to trump the importance of good quality in-depth analysis. In addition to this, audiences are no longer simply passive consumers of news⁵. They have also become critical sources and publishers of their own news content with the means to add to, amplify or even distort traditional sources of news messages through social networks⁶. With this, many acknowledge the increasingly levels of 'noise' that media houses have to compete with in terms of breaking news and analytical pieces⁷. Despite this digital media space, or perhaps because of it, the challenge to maintain ethical, transparent,

¹ Alejandro, J. 2010. Journalism in the age of social media. Reuters Institute Fellowship Paper: University of Oxford. pp 47.

² Franklin, B. 2014. The future of journalism. *Digital Journalism* 2(3): 254-272

³ Jones, N. and Pitcher, S. 2015. Reporting tittle-tattle: twitter, gossip and the changing nature of journalism. *Communicatio* 41(3): 287-301.

⁴ Lee, A.M. 2015. Social media and speed-driven journalism: Expectations and practices. *International Journal on Media Management* 17(4): 217-239.

⁵ Russial, J., Laufer, P. and Wasko, J. 2015. Journalism in crisis? Javnost – The Public: Journal of the European Institute for Communication and Culture. 22(4): 299-312.

⁶ Adornato, A. 2016. Forces at the gate: Social media's influence on editorial and production decisions in local television newsrooms. *Electronic News* 10(2): 87-104.

⁷ Adornato, A.C. 2012. A digital juggling act: New media's impact on the responsibilities of local television reporters. Presented at Annual Conference Electronic News Division. Chicago, Illinois.

quality journalism remains as vital to democracy as ever before. Indeed, as Adornato (2012) points out citizens rely on journalists to help make sense of all the information, news and ‘noise’ now available at their fingertips. And as the economic pressures to meet the news demands increase so too does the pressure to place commercial values over news values.

While we continue to grapple with how the processes of news production are changing in the era of digital journalism, what is of even greater significance is how these changes impact journalistic quality and potentially even contribute to self-censorship in the digital media environment. The changing technological environment has allowed for variety of new pressures to develop (accelerated news cycle, fewer resources etc.) and each of these has the potential to fuel a range of behaviour changes in the newsrooms that may ultimately weaken traditional forms of gatekeeping and ultimately undermine the very values of ethical and quality journalism that media attempt to uphold. So our question becomes: where are we now in terms of journalism in the digital age? This research was undertaken to unpack this very issue by attempting to answer the following questions:

- How has social media and digital technology changed the newsroom landscape?
- What challenges are South African newsrooms now facing in light of these changes?
- Have these changes opened up opportunities for unintended shifts in the news agenda?

2. How we conducted the research

2.1. In-depth interviews

We interviewed two to three employees at three South African newsrooms to gauge how digital technology has impacted on their news production processes as well as the challenges and opportunities that such changes have brought about for their specific organizations. Three newsrooms participated. Although each newsroom adopts a different approach to social media and technology, active websites, a strong social media presence and the implementation of ‘convergence’ are all standard practice across the three news outlets.

For the purposes of this report, findings and references to both individual participants and/or their affiliations have been anonymised. Three employees at Newsroom A and two employees at

Newsroom B and Newsroom C were interviewed. Participants' roles varied in their respective newsrooms (see Table 1 below).

TABLE 1. Table showing the employees interviewed at the three newsrooms.

NEWSROOM A	NEWSROOM B	NEWSROOM C
Executive producer	Associate editor	Executive editor (and co-founder)
Producer/journalist	Production editor	Journalist
Senior multimedia producer		

The interviews were conducted in August 2015 and May 2016. The interviews were roughly one hour long, with the longest being 110 minutes. These interviews, although flexible, aimed to address specific questions, including: (1) definitions of good and/or bad journalism, (2) the life cycle of news stories, (3) factors and individuals involved in decision-making processes, (4) influential internal and external pressures facing the newsroom and (5) the impact of social media and technology on newsrooms and journalism. All discussions were recorded and transcribed. Information from these discussions was then used to detail a narrative of each newsroom.

2.2. Case studies

To assess the quality of journalism produced in these news systems, we analysed media content for two major events over a seven-month period in 2015. These were: (1) The Marikana Commission of Inquiry, better known as the Farlam Commission, which was established to interrogate the events around the shooting of 34 miners in Marikana in 2012 and (2) the xenophobic attacks of 2015 which saw foreign nationals being attacked across South Africa. Hereafter the first case study will be referred to as Farlam Commission, while the second will be simply named Xenophobic Attacks.

These events were chosen as case studies as they dominated the media space at the time, both in terms of traditional media and social media. There were also clearly vested interests of different groups involved and these could potentially shape and drive a specific narrative around the events.

We identified all stories, both in print and online, related to the two events. The date range of the two case studies was similar (See Table 2 below). Information from 18 South African media was extracted through specialized online software, *Dexter*. See Appendix A for the full list of media used. Information from each story was checked and recorded by specially trained monitors at Media Monitoring Africa (hereafter monitors). The data included: (1) name, type and origin of publication, (2) headline and summary, (3) identity of quoted sources (including name, race, gender and affiliation of individuals or groups who were accessed either directly or indirectly in the stories) and (4) underlying key message. The key messages are those that the article implied without stating such outright. By analysing these messages, we can identify the main frame of each article and thereby understand primary media agenda and the overall messaging around such an event. The key messages were identified by clustering the topics selected in *Dexter*. These topics were clustered according to issues raised and the content found in the news item.

TABLE 2. Media items were extracted for the two case studies between the dates indicated.

CASE STUDY	START DATE FOR RETRIEVED ITEMS	END DATE FOR RETRIEVED ITEMS
Farlam Commission	5 January 2015	10 August 2015
Xenophobic attacks	4 January 2015	11 August 2015

2.3. Limitations

In terms of the newsroom interviews, this small sample size (n=3) is certainly not large enough to offer an absolute understanding of the current South African media system. However, the findings from the interviews do provide some important insights into some of the changes and challenges facing South African newsrooms more broadly.

In terms of the case studies, our analysis was restricted to 18 South African media. These media were limited as all analysed articles were: (1) written (i.e. radio and television footage were excluded), (2) available online (to be extracted by *Dexter*), (3) in English and (4) based in urban centres because of the nature of the South African media landscape.

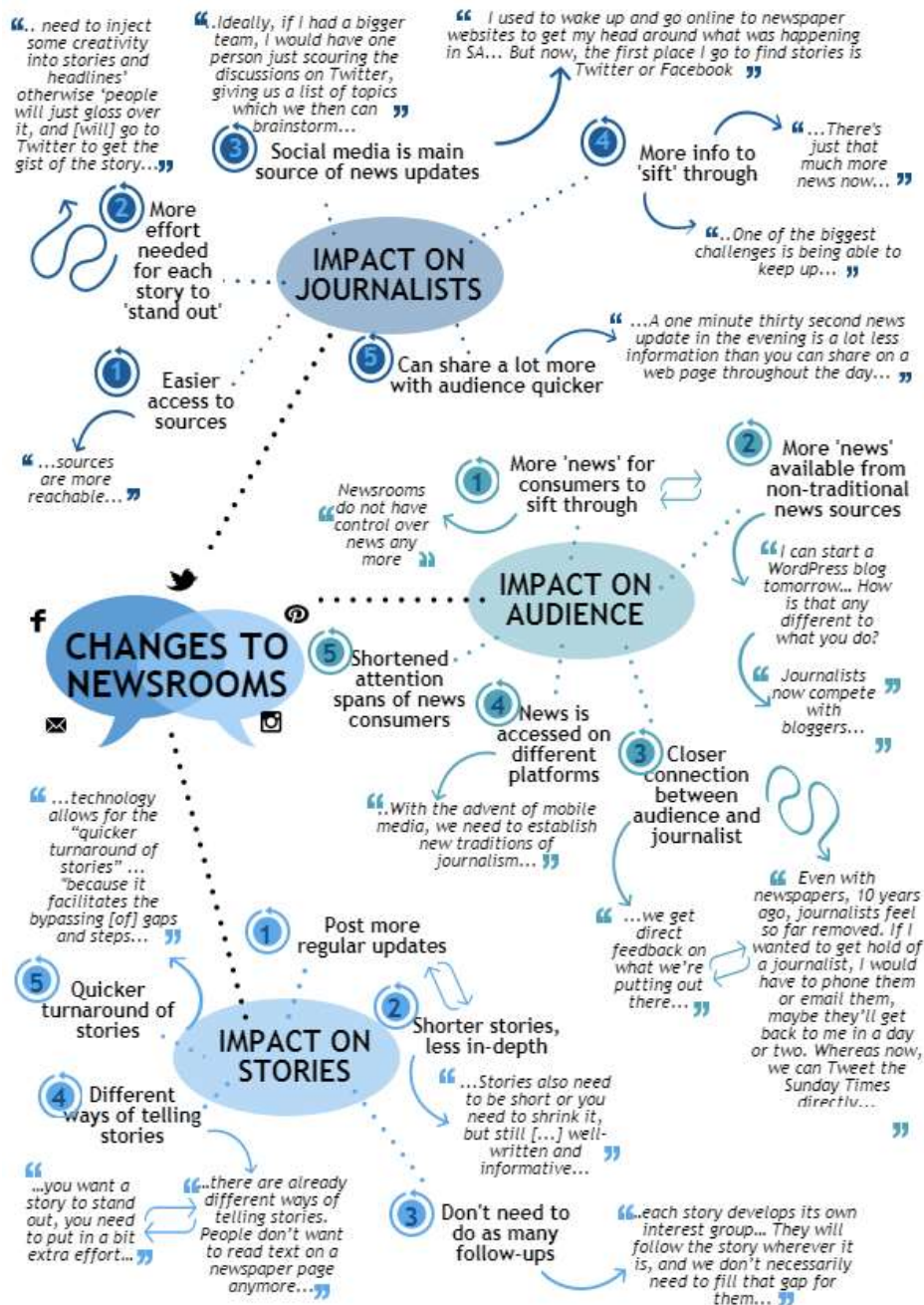
All monitors received the same monitoring training and followed the same monitoring protocols. Despite these attempts at uniformity and standardisation of results, the possibility of some human error and/or bias cannot be completely eliminated.

3. What we found

3.1. How do social media and digital technology change the way news is produced?

Figure 1 (below) shows the ways in which social media and digital technology have changed the news production process, as identified by the participants. Their ideas were distilled into primary messages and direct quotes are used to support these ideas. Many of the changes were shared across newsrooms.

Figure 1. Ways in which digital technology and social media have changed newsrooms in South Africa, as identified by interviewed journalists (n=7)



What became immediately clear was that social media impacts the journalists, the audience (consumers of news) and the stories themselves in interrelated but diverse ways. From this, some of the most common changes experienced by those in South African news systems include: (1) the use of social media to source information, stories and leads, (2) better means of telling stories through technology, (3) the accelerated news cycle, (4) greater engagement with consumers (to some extent), (5) greater competition from informal news sources and (6) more information available both to journalists and audience.

One of the most frequently identified changes was the speed with which information and news could be disseminated. Here, many journalists remarked how they could share a lot more content a lot quicker with their audience than previously (Impact on journalist). This not only means that there are now more stories being produced and shared, but also that these stories are often a lot shorter and tend to be less in-depth than previously (Impact on stories). This, in turn, means that there is more news for consumers to ‘sift through’ (impact on audience), which has been seen as both a good and a bad consequence.

This analysis therefore shows the many interconnected and complex ways in which technology has affected all aspects of the news systems in South Africa and this provides the perfect starting point to unpack and identify mechanisms to improve the current state of journalism.

3.2. What are some of the challenges facing newsrooms in light of the changes brought about by social media and digital technology?

It follows that the shifts in news production identified above have also brought about certain challenges to newsroom operations. Figure 2 below reflects some of these.

One of the most common challenges was that of funding and revenue. For all three newsrooms, the impacts of resource constraints were keenly felt. However, it appears that the knock-on effects from declining revenue were most acutely felt by Newsroom B participants, the historically print-only newsroom. Here, participants repeatedly shared how they struggled to achieve an income equivalent to print using only online content. This had led to cutbacks in the newsroom and as a result, staff were overstretched and had less time to do ‘good quality’ stories,

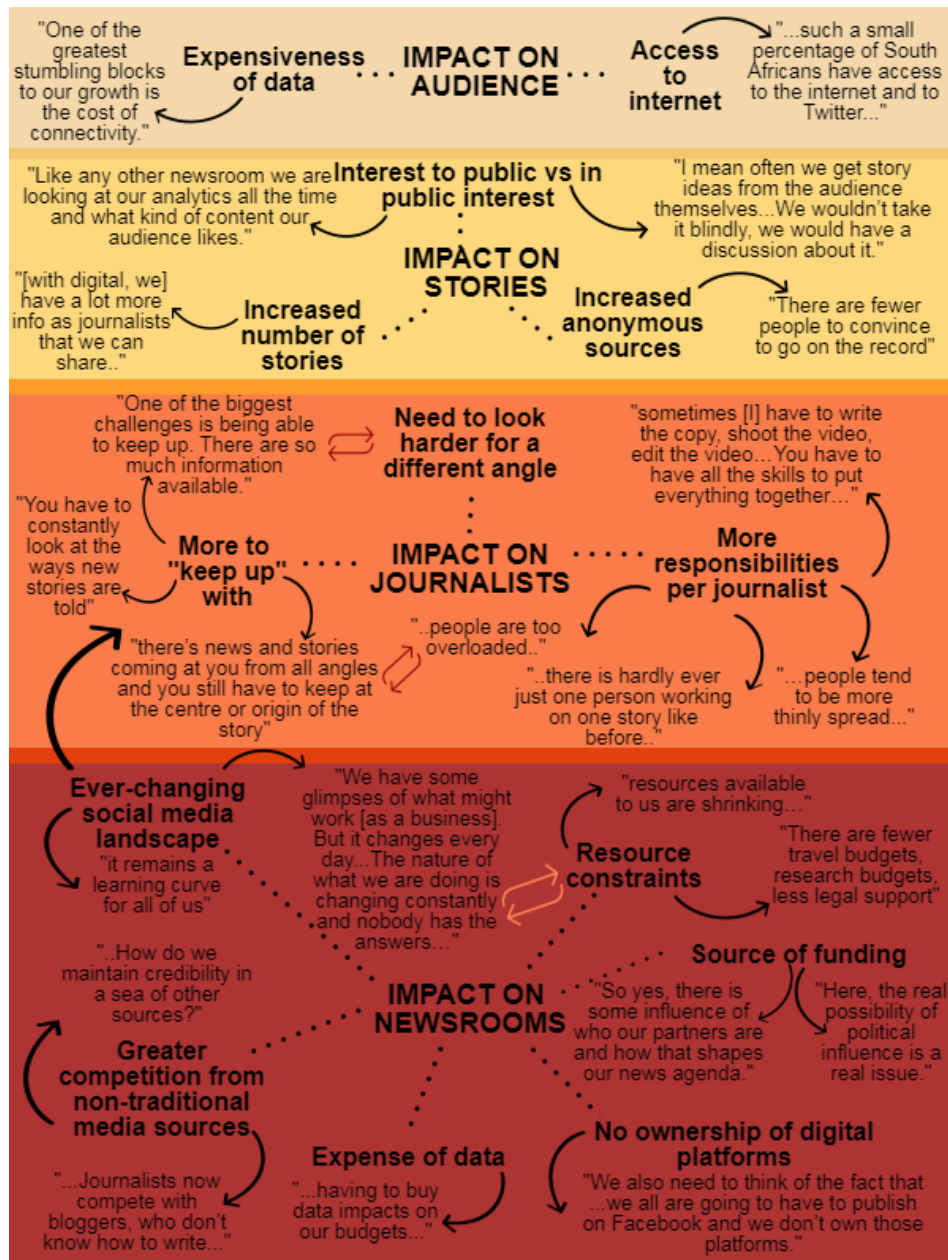
follow-ups or stories outside of their primary scope. The idea of “fewer hands on deck” had a marked impact in interviews. This concern over revenue losses and job cuts has been seen across the journalism sector globally⁸, and specifically on traditional print media.

The second most common challenge, described in various ways by the three newsrooms, was the sheer volume of information now available online. Interestingly, this was also noted as one of the biggest changes in the news space as described in the previous section. Here, issues around not being able to follow up on all story leads, receiving information that has already been shaped by others as well as the greater competition from new media news sources have all added stress to the newsroom system and journalists generally. Rusial *et al.* (2015) aptly describe this when they suggest that “[t]he world is in danger of missing the story because of all the noise. And there’s more and more noise”. This struggle of being “able to keep up” was frequently described by the journalists interviewed.

What is clear though is that the changes and challenges described here overlap with each other and often reinforce each other. For example, the impact of fewer available journalists (because of funding issues) is even more intense given the greater amount of online information that journalists need to sort through, the increased number of stories they are expected to produce as well as the greater amount of effort required (“wow factor”) to make the story stand out in a sea of other stories.

⁸ Daniels, G. 2014. State of the Newsroom, South Africa, 2014: Disruptions accelerated. Wits Journalism. pp 148. <http://www.journalism.co.za/stateofnewsroom>

Figure 2. Challenges brought about by digital technology and social media in South African newsrooms, as identified by interviewed journalists (n=7)



3.3. Case studies

While the reflections above highlight some of journalistic experiences around social media and the digital revolution, our question remains: How have these changes impacted on the output and quality of journalism being produced? Has it affected the breadth of events coverage? Has it amplified the range of voices seen in the media? To answer this, we analysed the media content of two significant South African news events.

3.3.1. CASE STUDY 1: How did the media communicate the Farlam Commission (2015)?

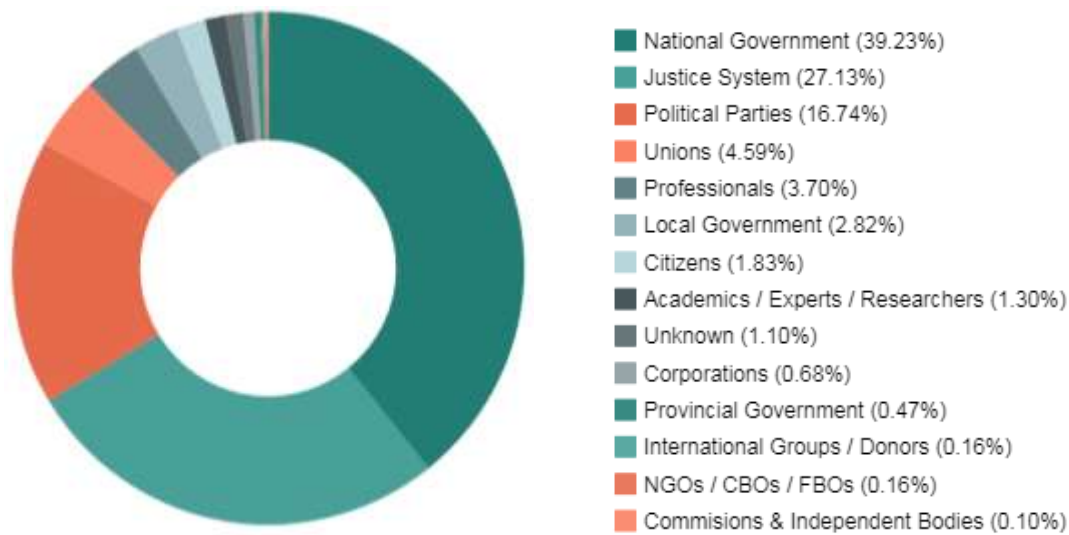
The Marikana Commission, also known as the Farlam Commission of Inquiry, was set up to investigate the events that lead to the death of 44 people, including the shooting of 34 miners by the South African Police Service, at a North-West mine in 2012. Although the actual event took place in August 2012, the media analysis below specifically interrogates media coverage of the Commission (*not* the massacre itself) over a seven-month period in 2015 (5 January to 10 August). 418 articles were retrieved and analysed in total.

Who was sourced in the coverage?

One of the easiest ways of determining who has control of the narrative or whose views and voices are considered valuable is by analysing who gets quoted in the news.

A total of 1917 quotes were recorded in the monitoring period. Of these, National Government (39%), those in the justice system (including lawyers and judges) (27%) and political parties (17%) dominated citations totalling almost over 83% of all article quotes. Other groups including those classified as ‘professionals’, ‘experts’, ‘corporations’ and ‘citizens’ made up less than 5% of all sources. Importantly, this points to an inherent and intense bias towards ‘elite’ sources where citizen’s voices are barely heard.

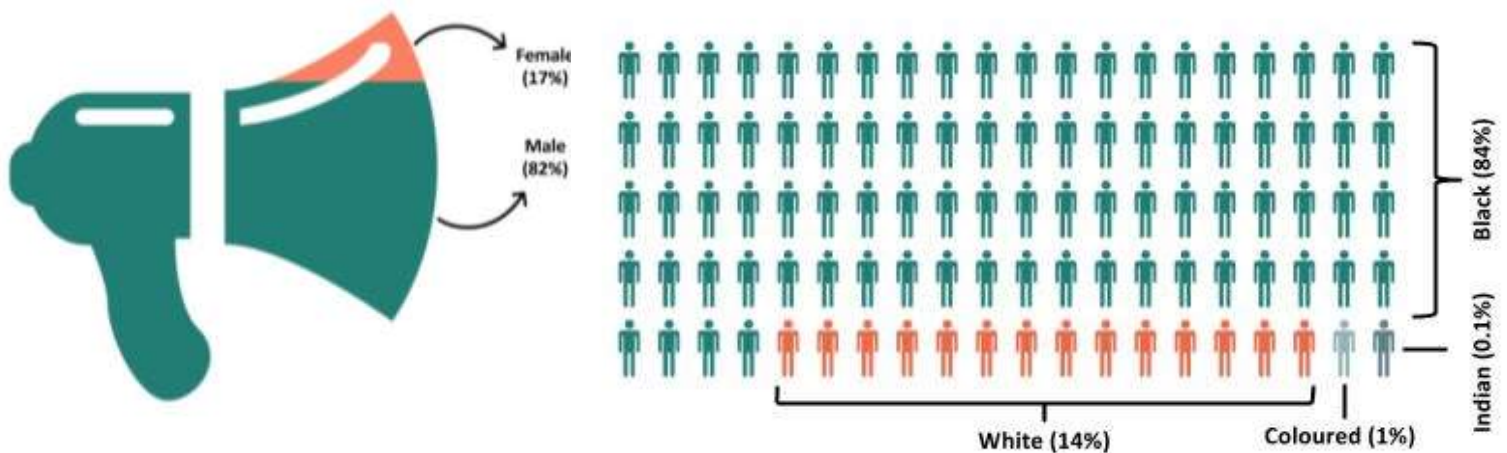
Figure 3: Sources by affiliation in the coverage of the Farlam Commission



What was the gender and race breakdown of those who were accessed?

The results of this coverage show a clear preference for male sources (Figure 4). Men constitute 81% of all sources (n=1544) compared to only 17% of sources being female. Within this, the majority of both male and female sources identify as black (84%). Only 1% of all quotes were accessed from Coloured sources and in all of these cases, the sources were male. Other sources including those of an unknown gender, unknown race or those that fall outside of these categories (identified as ‘other’), made up less than 5% of all sources in this coverage.

Figure 4: Gender and race breakdown of sources in Farlam Commission coverage



What were the main messages put forward by the media?

As part of the analysis, we also pinpointed some of the underlying hidden messages offered in each article. These messages are those that the article implied without stating such outright. 352 of the 416 articles had an identifiable key message. Figure 5 (below) shows the five most common of these. Most of these messages identify an individual or group who should be blamed for the Marikana massacre. Importantly, the most common message was that the unions (in this case, both AMCU and NUMSA) were at fault and were liable for the miners' deaths. Other stakeholders including Cyril Ramaphosa (Deputy President of South Africa), Jacob Zuma (President of South Africa) and the South African Government were also all directly fingered for their role in the events around Marikana.

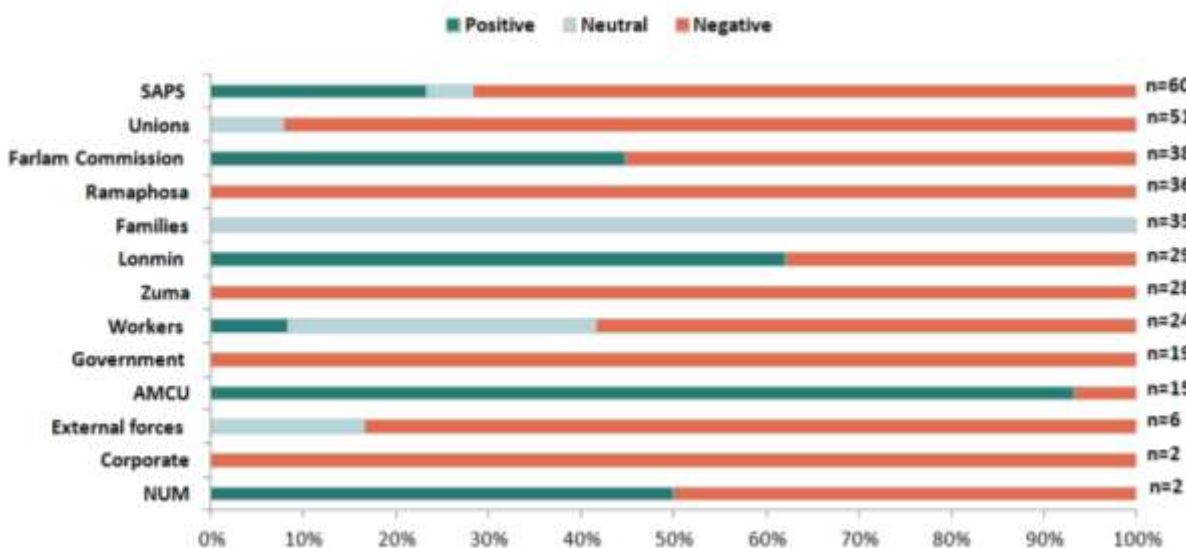
When we break these messages down further, we can also see how different groups are depicted across stories i.e. favourably, neutrally or unfavourably. What is immediately apparent in Figure 6 (below) is that political groups including national government, various politicians, national institutions (e.g. SAPS) and workers' unions are all portrayed in a mainly negative light. For example, the mainly negative coverage of the South African Police Service (SAPS) stems from the fact that most of the messages either accused SAPS of lying at the Farlam Commission or for their being too impulsive in their use of force at the massacre itself (Figure 8).

Figure 5. 5 most common messages implicit in media coverage about the analysed Farlam Commission.



Interestingly, the only groups to have positive sentiment outweigh negative sentiment were AMCU (Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union) and Lonmin (the company). In these cases, AMCU were seen as genuinely trying to assist the workers and attempting to “peacefully diffuse” the tense situation. Lonmin, who were not mentioned in any of the top 10 most common messages, were most frequently perceived in other stories as “attempting to resolve the strike at all costs” and as “a victim of tragic circumstance”. Given that the Massacre took place at Lonmin and the original cause of the strike were working conditions and wages of which their employer Lonmin plays a critical part, these findings are particularly revealing about who sought to shape the narratives surrounding the Commission. The mention of ‘families’ in this case refer to how families were awaiting the outcome of the Farlam Commission and it was therefore deemed a primarily neutral perspective.

Figure 6. Individuals and groups identified in underlying media messages and the main sentiment directed at them.



Concluding remarks

The analysis reveals a specific position that media appears to have taken in their interpretation of events and the roles of different players in the Commission. We argue here that the messaging clearly blames certain groups for the situation that emerged at Marikana. While the unions were identified as critical players in the massacre, a more important theme is that of self-interest by other political groups. Here, Cyril Ramaphosa, Jacob Zuma and the South African government as

a whole were accused of putting their own interests before the interests of the miners. This is a common attitude in much of the media. Interestingly, though, what this also shows us is how a group such as Lonmin, despite being at the centre of such a scandal, managed to gain more positive attention in the coverage than any other party or group. This begs the question: how did the corporate capitalist mine-owners manage to walk away essentially unscathed from such a big event while other groups, including the mineworkers, government and unions, all attract such negative attention? What else is at play here and what impact, if any, has the shift to digital technology played in shaping these narratives?

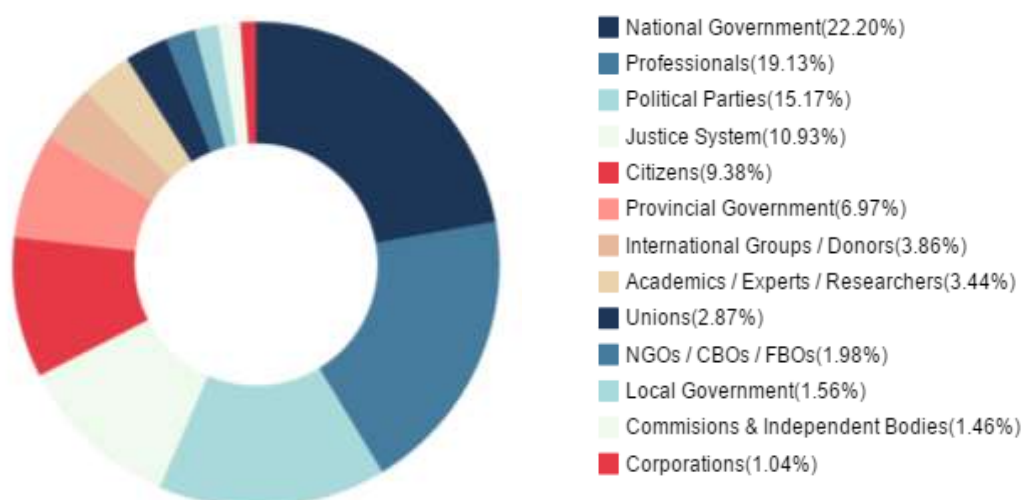
3.3.2. CASE STUDY 2: How did the media communicate the Xenophobic attacks (2015)?

In early 2015, South Africa saw a flare-up of xenophobic violence across the country which resulted in at least 15 deaths, hundreds of displacements and numerous shops and houses looted. These attacks were carried out by South Africans and were specifically directed at foreign nationals, and most commonly at other African nationals. We monitored all items (n=459) related to xenophobia between 4 January 2015 and 11 August 2015.

Who was sourced in the coverage?

A total of 2,126 sources were recorded during the monitoring period. As we have seen time and again, ‘elite’ sources dominate the voices in this coverage. Here, national government, ‘professionals’ as well as political parties make up 22%, 19% and 15% of all sources respectively. Only 9% of voices accessed are citizens. This is a particularly telling considering that these xenophobic attacks were carried out both by citizens and on citizens.

Figure 7. Sources by affiliation in the coverage of the xenophobic attacks

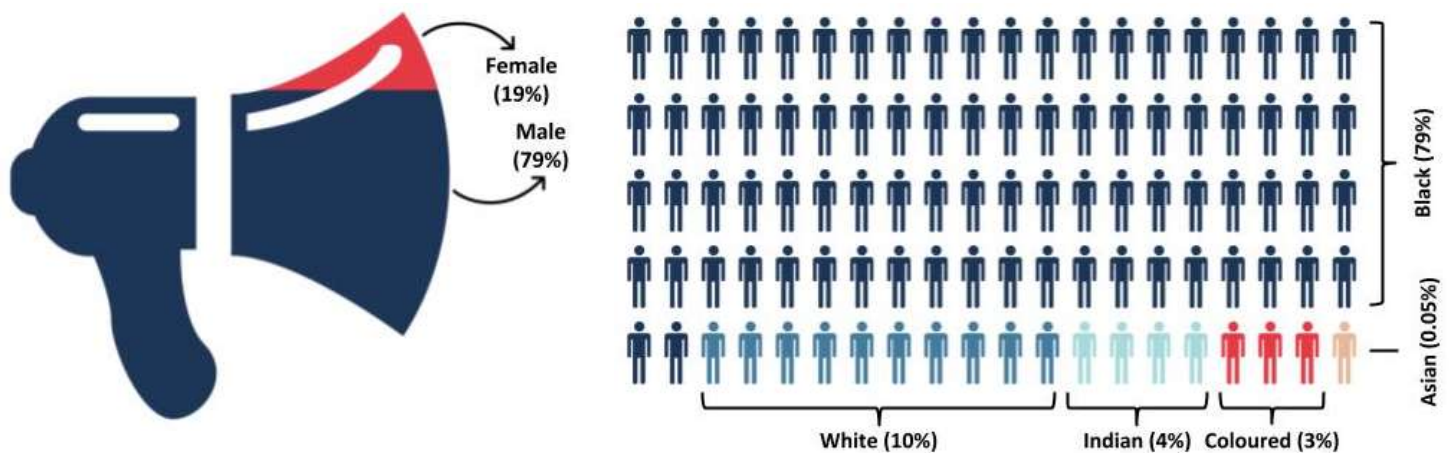


What was the gender and race breakdown of those who were accessed?

The gender breakdown of sources reveals continued biases towards men (79%) in the coverage. Here, women and unknown genders comprised only 19% and 2% of all sources respectively. While this striking imbalance is not new or unique, it does point to the ongoing marginalization and censorship of women across the media and gender bias in the media that is perpetuated globally.

In terms of race, black sources (79%) dominated voices followed by white sources (10%). Other race groups were under-represented at less than 5% of all sources.

Figure 8. Gender and race breakdown of sources in xenophobic attacks coverage



What were the key underlying messages presented over the seven-month period?

The following aims to unpack some of the implicit messages most commonly seen in the coverage of the xenophobic attacks. The visual below presents the five most common messages.

Much of the messaging in this case focuses on the government. Suggestions that the State both needed to do more in their response (“Government needs to take action”) or that their actions had been sufficient (“State is doing enough”, “State politicians are doing enough”) in relation to the xenophobic violence were regularly put forward in the media. Although these two sets of messages provide differences of opinion regarding the effectiveness of state action, the extensive inclusion of these underscore the perceived importance of government in and around the

xenophobic events. Even though the overall sentiment towards government is negative (Figure 10), we argue that the sheer number of messages tend to place the responsibility and outcome of the xenophobic attacks primarily at the government's feet.

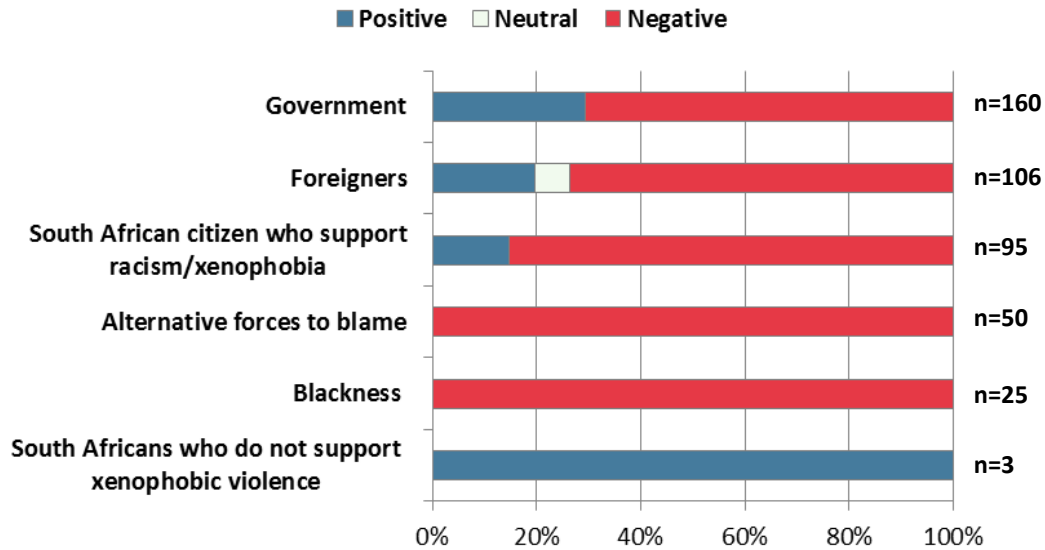
Foreign nationals were also blamed for the violence. Two of the top five most common messages indicate that foreigners “do not belong” in South Africa (33) and that they steal local jobs (23) (Figure 9). These ideas invoke a sense of condemnation towards foreign nationals and seem to suggest that the fault of the xenophobic attacks lies with foreigners themselves rather than with those perpetrating the violence. Here, too, and as can be expected, sentiment about foreigners is primarily negative.

Figure 9. 5 most common messages implicit in media coverage about the xenophobic attacks



The remaining messages shift the responsibility of the attacks to non-specific groups (“alternative forces”), such as the poor (“xenophobia only happens in poor communities”), or suggest that the attacks were thoughtless and primal in their behaviour (“not more than thuggery”). Even the suggestion that there is “no place for racism in the new South Africa” lays the blame for the violence on a seemingly simplistic understanding of what is driving the attacks i.e. race.

Figure 10. Individuals and groups identified in underlying media messages and the main sentiment directed at them.



In this context, we also identified the idea of “blackness” as a key player in these messages. Here, ideas such as “black governments fail” and “black South Africans are lazy” point fingers directly at black groups or individuals for their inaction and were found in more than 25 articles. In these cases, it was the explicit reference to race that set these messages apart from other identified groups.

Concluding remarks

The messaging and the type of consistent negative framing seen in this case study perpetuates racial stereotypes. These ideas fail to unpack the complexity of events around the attacks, such as the rising discontent and frustration with certain standards of living. This coverage also simplifies the networks of people affected into small vague groups. As we have seen in previous research on xenophobia⁹, these ideas undermine the genuine grievances and frustrations felt by those affected, and tend to downplay the motivations for such action to small-mindedness, senselessness and racism. Once again, this coverage speaks to specific agendas which, in this case, are dominated by narratives that are based in racist ideologies.

⁹ Mtwana, N. and Bird, W. (2006). *Revealing Race: an analysis of the coverage of race and xenophobia in the South African print media*. Johannesburg: Media Monitoring Africa. pp 43. Access here: http://www.mediamonitoringafrica.org/images/uploads/Final_report_v5_Print_final.pdf

4. So what do the results tell us?

4.1. Media content analysis: what does this tell us about how the news is being produced?

To answer the second part of our objective of what is the quality of news being produced in contemporary news systems, we look to our case studies. What is clear from our analysis is that despite the seemingly drastic changes to the systems in which newsrooms operate and the possibilities offered by technology, the content being produced largely perpetuates historical biases and existing power dynamics. This is seen across both case studies. For example, despite the numerous opportunities that the internet and social media afford citizens to contribute to public discourse (as noted by all newsrooms), it appears that the media remain caught up in accessing ‘elite’ sources. We would expect that the “ease” with which journalists can find sources as well as the closer connection between audience and newsroom, that there would be a greater diversity of people and voices being accessed than previously. However, national governments, political parties and experts all continue to have the loudest voices in the coverage. Citizens, academics and NGOs are all consistently sourced less frequently. Critically, the level of source diversity also points to which groups have the power and ability to influence and shape the narrative being put forward. In both cases, those who were the actual subjects, victims or those who stood to lose the most from the story were those that were consistently accessed the least. By inference, these groups also had the lowest ability to contribute to how the story was reported. Similar findings have been found elsewhere where regardless of the opportunities offered by the digital revolution, historical power dynamics exist and citizens continue to be under-sourced¹⁰. However, this is also likely to stem from journalistic time constraints rather than from an unwillingness to access on-the-ground groups¹⁰.

When it comes to the gender of sources, the coverage of both events illustrates how men’s voices are more readily accessed than women’s. This is despite women making up more than half of the South African population¹¹. This type of source bias is seen throughout media research¹².

¹⁰ Phillips, A. 2009. Old sources: new bottles In: Fenton, N. “New media, old news: Journalism and democracy in the digital age”. SAGE: London. pp 87-101.

¹¹ http://cs2016.statssa.gov.za/?page_id=142

Likewise, when it comes to breakdown of sources by population group, races such as Indian, Coloured, Asian and other continue to be under-represented. While we recognize the strides made by the South African media to access more voices, this lack of source diversity and the dominance of specific groups reveal how the political and economic elite continue to overshadow other groups.

Bearing the above in mind, we see how specific narratives were carried through the media analysed where specific individuals or groups were held responsible for the events presented. In both cases, very specific ideas about how events unfolded, who was to blame and how effective their efforts were all became clear in our analysis. There were plain and unambiguous narratives being put forward in each case study and importantly, these were largely shared across all the media surveyed here. For example, in terms of the Farlam Commission, much of the responsibility and blame was laid at the feet of political affiliates. Of interest to us was how little attention Lonmin and their board members were given. How did the mining company at the centre of this huge national controversy manage to avoid most of the potential negative press and come out with largely positive media sentiment? Likewise, the coverage of the xenophobic attacks was broadly limited in that it focused only on the roles of government officials and the State as well as on race and “blackness” as the motivations for such activities. Here, the much-needed interrogation of racism and representation of foreigners was almost entirely lacking. This type of reporting remains largely superficial and it fails to move the conversation about xenophobia beyond racial stereotypes. Similar findings have been seen previously on similar

¹² See: (1) Media Monitoring Africa. 2016. “From protest ban to biased reporting? SABC coverage of the 2016 municipal elections”. Johannesburg: Media Monitoring Africa. pp 46. (2) Media Monitoring Africa. 2014. Presentation: “Media coverage of the 2014 National & Provincial Elections in South Africa”. Accessed here: <http://elections2014.mediamonitoringafrica.org/> (3) Macharia, S. 2015. Who makes the news? Global Media Monitoring Project 2015. London & Toronto: World Association for Christian Communication. pp 158

topics¹³ which strongly suggests that extensive coverage of an issue does not necessarily ensure an in-depth examination thereof in South African media.

Importantly, and to reiterate, the similarity in messages across all surveyed media speaks to how these narratives are not individually set by newsrooms or even single media houses. Rather they are determined at a much broader level, with tacit and sometimes unconscious support of those in the newsrooms. Our question then becomes: how? How are those that seek to influence the news agenda doing so and how are we getting the news that we are getting? The next section aims to answer this.

4.2. How has social media and digital technology impacted on these systems and how has it affected decision-making processes?

The diagram below (Figure 11) is an attempt to consolidate the complex cascade of changes in the current South African news systems, as noted in the interviews. We appreciate that such efforts are necessarily reductionist in nature but we believe that it provides valuable insights into how the newsrooms have changed and, importantly, offer suggestions into what potential opportunities exist to improve newsroom practices.

It must be stated upfront that the biggest change to modern newsroom production is that it is no longer formulaic nor linear. Rather it is a circular process with multiple and continuous inputs and outputs. Here, the steps do not necessarily follow from 1 to 7 (as seen in the Figure below), but for ease of comparison and to help elucidate in the simplest way how the system has changed, the Figure attempts to provide like-for-like systems. Differently put, the news production process is no longer edition or time slot driven, but is a continuous process of gathering, editing and publishing on multiple platforms. In the process, audience input is also incorporated via social media in follow up stories. So instead of a reporter focusing on one version of one or more stories to complete each day for the paper or evening news bulletin, a

¹³ Mtwana, N. and Bird, W. 2006. Revealing Race: an analysis of the coverage of race and xenophobia in the South African print media. Johannesburg: Media Monitoring Africa. pp 43. Access here:

http://www.mediamonitoringafrica.org/images/uploads/Final_report_v5_Print_final.pdf

reporter works on version after version of the same developing story for different platforms throughout the day, and continuously interacting with sources and citizens.

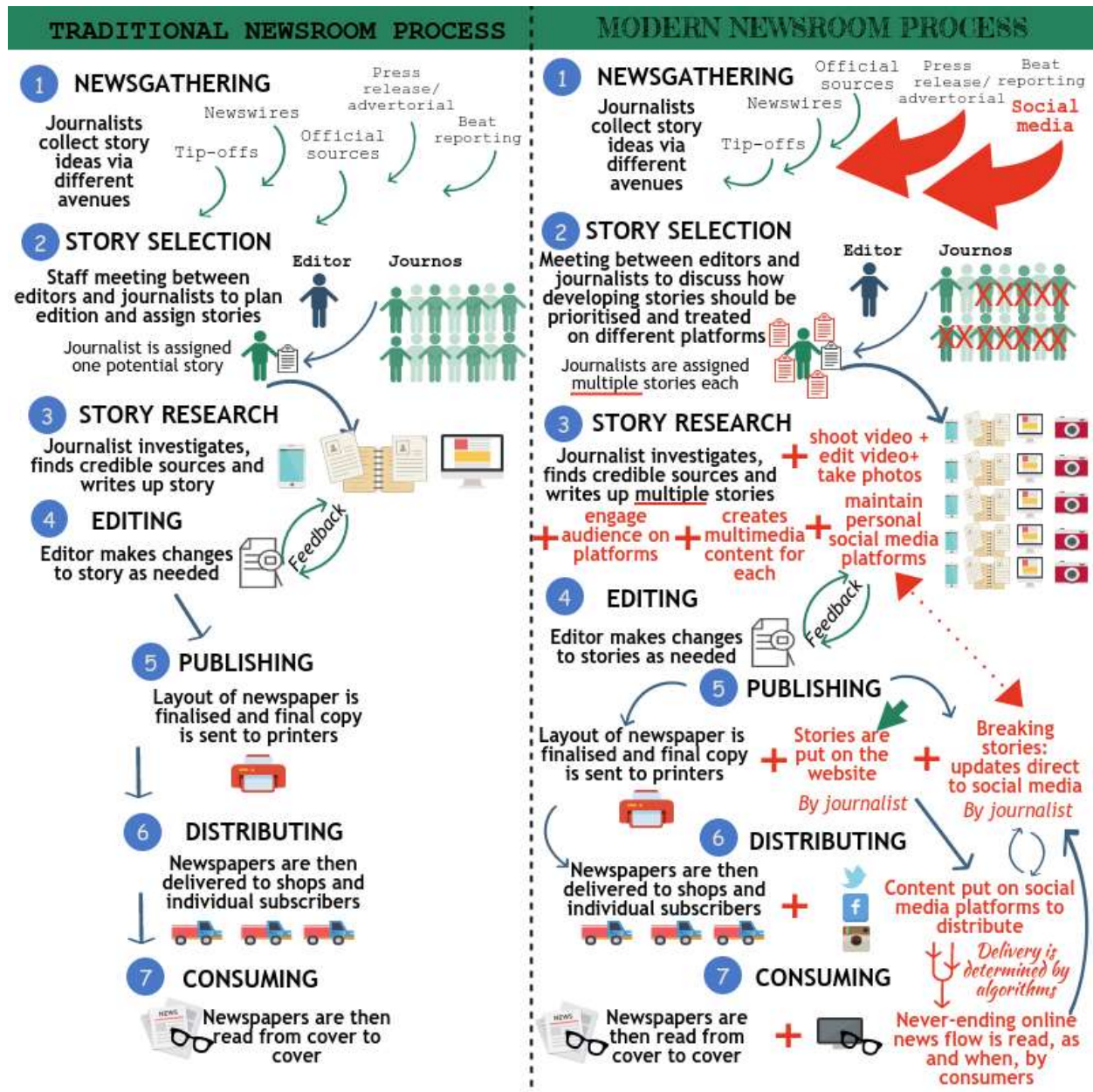
One of the most striking changes indicated in the shift is the huge and unrelenting pressure on journalists. This stems not only from the fact that there are simply fewer journalists (because of the failing economic models and rampant retrenchments in the sector¹⁴), but also because of the increased expectations of individual journalists to churn out multiple stories in a quicker turn-around time with more than just written copy (multimedia content etc.). They are also now expected to keep tabs on an ever-increasing volume of potential content through platforms like social media (see big red arrows in right block above). This has critical implications for the quality of reporting being undertaken. Indeed, some studies¹⁵ indicate that journalists struggle to find the balance between the speed-driven nature of modern news with the need for reliability and rigour in their investigations. Often in these cases, reporters acknowledge that the quality of their stories is compromised by the urgency to disseminate it immediately. These findings confirm other research¹⁶ that reveals how some journalists admit to no longer having the time to keep up with “traditional” practices of fact checking, contacting sources and following up on leads. Once again, this could lead to stories that are greatly undermined in their accuracy.

¹⁴ Daniels, G. 2014. State of the Newsroom, South Africa, 2014: Disruptions accelerated. Wits Journalism. pp 148. <http://www.journalism.co.za/stateofnewsroom>

¹⁵ Adornato, A. C. 2014. A digital juggling act: New media’s impact on the responsibilities of local television reporters. *Electronic News* 8: 3–29.

¹⁶ Alejandro, J. 2010. Journalism in the age of social media. Reuters Institute Fellowship Paper: University of Oxford. pp 47.

Figure 11. A summary of the changes to the process of news generation between 'traditional' newsmaking systems and what we are seeing currently.



The diagram shows the process of news production in a 'traditional' newsroom (left) and a 'modern' newsroom (right) using key steps (such as newsgathering, story selection etc.) to break down the different elements in the process. The text and figures in red (in the right block) are used to highlight some of the more pronounced shifts observed between the two types of newsrooms.

The incredible time pressure on journalists therefore has the potential to open up wide gaps in the news gathering process and these can be exploited by those with vested interests in shaping the narrative of a specific story, event or issue. In other words, with journalists too constrained to thoroughly examine and verify content, the possibility of them disseminating misleading information¹⁷ or sharing stories that suit a specific agenda is greatly amplified. As Raeymaeckers *et al.* (2015)¹⁸ point out, prepackaged news content, as provided by external sources, is nothing new in the media space and indeed these products have been used by newsrooms for decades to help them diversify their content. Of increasing concern, though, is that journalists no longer have the resources to scrutinise, interpret and explain the content being delivered to them. For many, they have simply become conduits for PR practitioners and advertisers to deliver material to an eager audience under the guise of news. This is therefore a critical entry point that can be used by those with specific intentions to shape how a story is told and this could also be the reason that narratives of specific events are so similar across newsrooms (as in our case studies).

Importantly, though, journalists are not the only ones facing pressure in these new systems. Editors are under equal strain as they strive to facilitate the production of newsworthy content in an increasingly commercialized media space. This is made even more urgent given the revenue losses in the traditional print industry. In this situation, it appears that newsrooms are therefore pushing for quicker turn-around times for stories in the belief that sharing more online, both in content and speed, translates into more being read and ultimately into more profit being made¹⁹. Critically, and as has already been noted, this is often at the expense of quality and accuracy and this could be one of the main drivers of the time pressure placed on reporters.

Another challenge to editors, and a potential opportunity to those looking to shape the agenda, is the expectation that stories or ideas “trending” on social media platforms should make their way

¹⁷ Adornato, A. 2016. Forces at the gate: Social media’s influence on editorial and production decisions in local television newsrooms. *Electronic News* 10(2): 87-104.

¹⁸ Raeymaeckers, K., Deprez, A., De Vuyst, A. and De Dobbelaer, R. 2015. “The journalists as a jack of all trades: Safeguarding the gates in a digitized news ecology.” In: *Gatekeeping in Transition*. (ed.) Vos, T.P and Heinderyckx, F. New York: Routledge. pp 104-119.

¹⁹ Lewis, J., & Cushion, S. (2009). The thirst to be first: An analysis of breaking news stories and their impact on the quality of 24-hour news coverage in the U.K. *Journalism Practice*, 3(3), 304–318.

into the mainstream news schedule²⁰. Here, editors are faced with the choice of airing content that appears to be of interest to the public (because it has a high volume of “likes”, “shares” and “retweets”), but that are not necessarily in the public interest, or are even true. The trade-off between what the public are talking about and what they ought to know is now made more obvious given the space that social media now occupies in peoples’ everyday lives. Social media platforms are readily accessible to anyone with an internet connection and this means that, with sufficient time and resources, huge volumes of content about a specific topic or with a particular narrative can be easily circulated by those with vested interests.

Equally important in the discussion around social media is the impact of the actual platforms themselves in the ways in which content is shared among users. Social media algorithms are increasingly a fundamental player in determining how and where information is presented and shared among consumers and their role cannot be underestimated. In these “filter bubbles”, as they have become known, it becomes increasingly difficult for users to access diverse content and this concept of closed circles of information can, no doubt, be used to drive or influence a specific agenda in certain circles.

5. Conclusion

There can be little doubt that digital media and the internet have huge potential to transform media, news and information. What is clear from this research, however, is that unless clear and deliberate efforts are made to democratize it, media will continue to reflect and perpetuate existing power dynamics and narratives of the powerful.

The research has demonstrated that despite diverse media being monitored (each of which serve different audiences), common narratives emerged about who was to blame for particular issues. Here, too, the findings demonstrate that despite technology making journalists’ lives much easier and more efficient on some level the same kinds of views and voices are put forward and heard.

²⁰ Adornato, A. 2016. Forces at the gate: Social media’s influence on editorial and production decisions in local television newsrooms. *Electronic News* 10(2): 87-104.

We also now see that the initial filters of knowledge (i.e. journalists) are under even greater resource and time constraints to fact check and do justice to stories. Journalists are therefore no longer able to properly fulfil their role as gatekeepers, which, despite the limitations, still remain a critical barrier to outside interference in the newsmaking process. This has therefore facilitated the ability of PR professionals and those with political agendas to impact the narratives of the news.

The real question therefore becomes how can media operate in a way in which the potential of the internet is harnessed to improve quality, independence and transparency of information, while also ensuring that the existing power narratives are shifted and challenged? We believe that this research has served to not only highlight some of the core challenges facing our media and media professionals more widely, but in so doing has also highlighted some of the points of resistance and opportunities to shift power and poor practice. As we take the research forward it will be with the direct aim of seeing what strategies, plans and activities can be developed and implemented to ensure we realize the media necessary for an emerging democracy.

Graph my tender

Exploring public procurement networks

By Adriana Homolova

Summary

Corruption in public spending poses a big obstacle in the efficient spending of public money (taxes). Therefore, it is crucial that government tenders can be monitored on a structural, rather than on an incidental basis. However, the basic mechanics of corruption in public spending varies greatly between countries, even within Europe.

One of the most obvious *red flags* of a corrupt tender is the ‘sole bidder’. If a state-owned hospital in Slovakia would want a particular company to deliver the CT scanner, it would tailor the tender description so no other company can sign up for the competition. However, if a Dutch municipality would want a particular company to win a tender it would call other companies to submit pro forma applications and the sole bidder is therefore obstructed by dummy applicants. As such, the average number of bids per tender in Slovakia is 1, as opposed to 5 in the Netherlands. Therefore, the red flags manifest themselves differently.

This paper explores the differences between these manifestations of red flags of corruption in similar public spending markets in Slovakia and The Netherlands using network (graph) visualization. Given the complexity of spending data, visualizing the interaction between companies and public bodies as networks provides a quick and more approachable way on how to spot red flags. These methods could aid in finding new directions and practices to uncover corruption on a more structural basis and help journalists to find Ariadne's thread in the maze of public spending markets.

Keywords: public spending, public procurement, sector, markets, taxes, SNA, Social Network Analysis, network, Slovakia, Netherlands

1. Introduction

Government spends a lot of money. This simple observation holds no matter which level of government - federal, state, or local - one is talking about.

(Coggburn 2003)

The primary source of government revenue is taxes. Simply put, the government manages tax revenues collected from inhabitants and businesses and allocates them to social security programs, public projects and its own operation. Since the government does not have all the expertise and manpower to execute most of the services it provides, such as infrastructure or security, it purchases goods and services from private companies. This process of acquiring goods and services by the government is called *tendering*, *public procurement* or *public spending*. Government spends a lot of money. Figure 1 shows how much euro per capita the EU member states spend in a year.

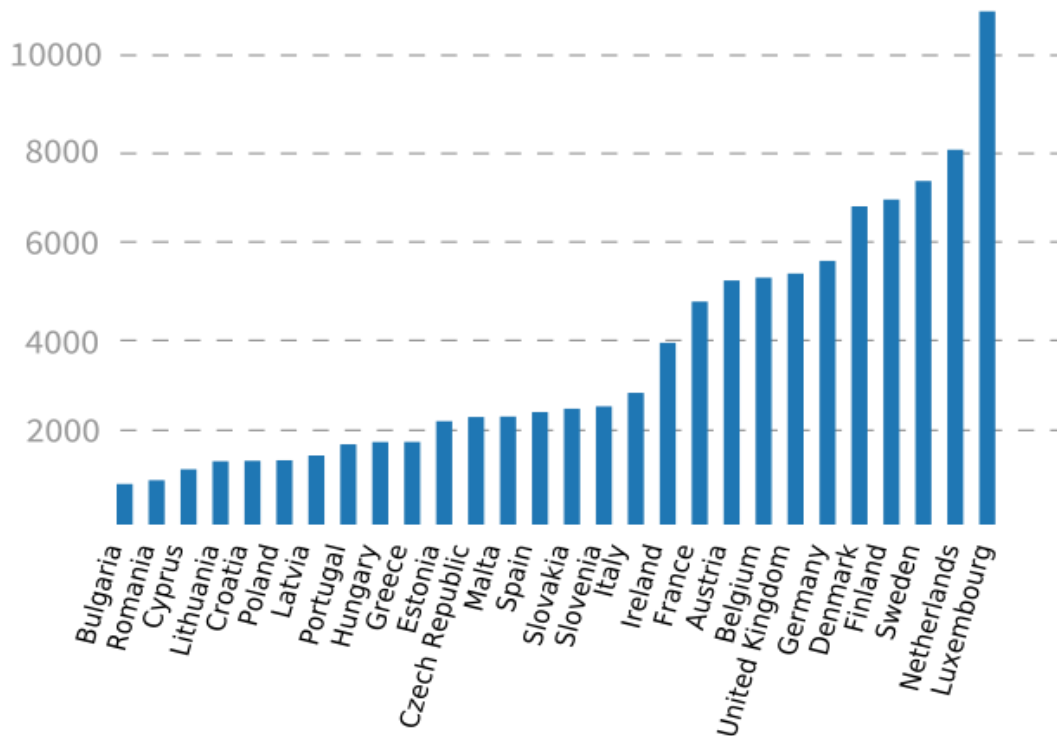


Figure 1: Estimate of yearly general government expenditures per capita in euros (EU 2016)

To ensure appropriate quality and price of the services, public office publishes a *tender* and (eligible) companies send a competitive proposal. The proposals are evaluated based on the quality of services

offered and their price. The best offer is chosen as winner. A fair competition should ensure that the government will get the best value for money.

The rules for competition vary according to the estimated cost of a tender. Broadly speaking, the tenders of the lowest value can be awarded directly without any competition (*direct procurement*). Whereas tenders of a medium value are awarded in procedures with simplified competition rules, such as shorter deadlines or less demanding selection rules (OECD 2010). Tenders with an estimated price above the 100 thousand or 200 thousand euros, depending on the government body, are called the *EU tenders*. EU tenders adhere to the unified rules specific for EU tenders and need to be open for international competition¹.

Apart from the EU tenders, member states set another two or three tender value thresholds below the 100 or 200 hundred thousand threshold, depending on the member state. The less expensive the tender is expected to be, the less competition is involved in the process. In these cases, the government can for example, choose which companies it invites to send bids instead of calling for an open competition. Interestingly, the amount of tenders falling onto these lower thresholds greatly exceed the amount of EU tenders. The *EU Public procurement indicators 2015* report estimates that the total EU member states public spending in 2015 was 2 trillion euros², whereas the EU tenders account ‘only’ for 450 billion euros, so about one fifth.

Despite the overwhelming amounts of money our governments manage, structured overviews of public tenders are scarce. Data on tenders are often simply not published. For instance, the Dutch government institutions generally do not keep any structured track of tenders that are estimated to cost less than the EU tenders thresholds. While they do keep a financial administration, details on the tendering process such as why a company was chosen and who else took part on the bidding process are not recorded in a structured way. Another problem is that the data is quite complex and not standardized. As such, each tender has a wide range of attributes ranging from obvious ones, such as title, description, winner and price, up to attributes that require a deeper knowledge of the tendering process, such as selection criteria, type of procedure, GPA etc. This complexity leads to tables up to seventy attributes (columns) per tender,

¹ For *construction works* this threshold is 5 million euros

² €2,015,400,000,000

making it difficult to filter out important information for the less data savvy journalists. As a result, journalistic stories about misuse of public money are therefore predominantly based on isolated incidents rather than structural analyses.

It is important that public spending data are easily accessible and understandable since national governments do not own money, but only redistribute money acquired from the tax payers. Therefore, the public should be well informed about which companies it is paying, how much it is paying them, and evaluate whether the services it gets in return are adequate. Only through transparency in the tendering process can the government and companies it hires be held accountable for the way it spends the tax payer's money. Here, journalism plays a crucial role.

This paper offers a simplified introduction and gives a concise overview on the availability and main problems concerning the data on public spending in the EU. Furthermore, it presents a method on how to visualize public spending to find interesting patterns. This paper uses two EU member states to illustrate the method, however this method is applicable on spending data of any country where these data is made available.

2. Data

The EU is collecting data on the largest tenders in their member states already since 1993. Member states are obliged to send a *Contract Notice* (CN)³ as well as a *Contract Award Notice* (CAN) for EU tenders to *Tender Electronic Daily* (TED), a tendering website of the EU. Companies can offer bids on contract notices published in TED. CN contains a brief description, requirements for participation, sector information, criteria and deadlines for submitting bids. After the tender is awarded, a Contract Award Notice must be provided containing details of the award such as the date of award, price of the winning bid, competition information and name of the winning party (one or more companies). An example of a part of CAN is given in Figure 2.

³ Also called a Request for Proposals (RFP)

29/09/2017 S187 -- Services - Contract award notice - Open procedure	
I. II. IV. V. VI.	
Norway-Lillestrøm: Scanning services	
2017/S 187-384308	
Contract award notice	
Results of the procurement procedure	
Services	
Directive 2014/24/EU	
<u>Section I: Contracting authority</u>	
I.1) Name and addresses	
Skedsmo kommune	
938 275 130	
Jonas Liesg. 18	
Lillestrøm	
2000	
Norway	

Figure 2: The first part of Contract Award Notice from TED, containing details on Contracting authority

The collection and accessibility of tender data for tenders under the EU threshold vary greatly throughout the EU. According to the Open Data index (OKFN 2016) only a handful of EU countries, such as Greece, have a downloadable, free, openly accessible and machine-readable record of actual and past government spending. In Slovakia, for instance, a public contract is not valid by law if it is not published on a designated national tendering website, which provides an overview of past and current tenders⁴. These data are public, but it was only made machine readable by a local NGO. Other countries, such as Netherlands, do not collect information on the smaller tenders on a unified basis throughout the government institutions at all.

As mentioned earlier, one of the biggest obstacles in analyzing tender data is the lack of structure. Given the tenders details are filled in by government officials without unified rules or technical restrictions,

⁴ This however does not always ensure a fair competition. In 2007, a 119 million euro tender was won in Slovakia by a party close to one of the politicians, after it was advertised only on a small pinboard in the Ministry hallway.

there are for example often more than one names for a given company in the data. These can occur due to usage or no usage of the local denomination for company (Inc, s.r.o., or B.V.), different spelling (BV or B.V., PWC or PricewaterhouseCoopers) and of course typos. Another example of such “dirtiness” in data is nonsensical prices of winning bids. An example can be found on the online application [The Usual Suppliers](#) which shows a single tender in Hungary costing 1.2 quadrillion euros, as can be seen in Figure 3. It is often difficult to know exactly what the original value was, if the problem was a misplaced decimal point, a space, and where this should be.

	Contracts	Total value
KSB Szivattyú és Armatúra Kft.	1	€1,200,000,014,400,000
JJ Rhatigan	1	€700,000,028,000,000
TLT-Turbo GmbH	1	€55,200,005,520,000
Van Dijk Educatie	1	€500,000,900,000

Figure 3: “Dirtiness” of data found in the online application The Usual Suppliers

While dirty data is a big problem, a perhaps even bigger problem is missing data, and most noticeably the prices of the winning bids. The chances of encountering missing prices depend on the national public procurement market dynamics. As we can see in Figure 4, Sweden, Netherlands, Finland, Ireland and the UK do not publish more than 50% of the winning tender prices. On the other side of the spectrum, Croatia, Hungary, or Slovakia publish nearly all of them. The Dutch government reasons, that how much the winning company bid on the tender falls under “company sensitive information”. In Slovakia however, publishing winning bids is a measure to prevent widespread corruption in public tenders.

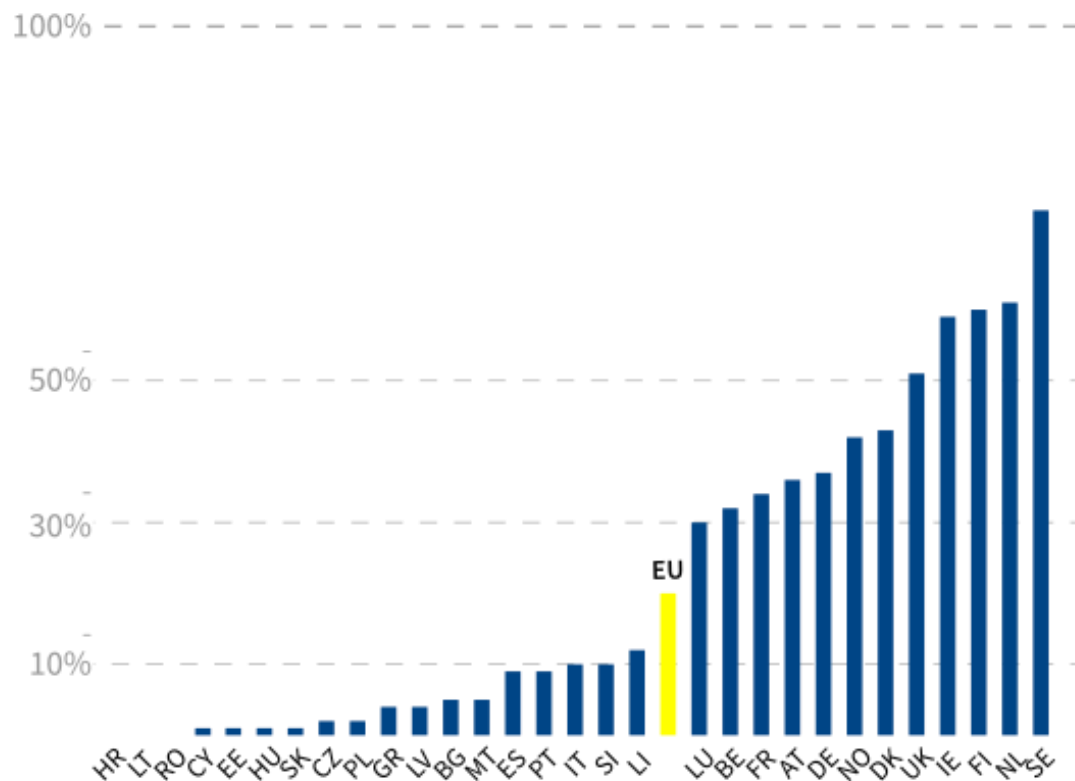


Figure 4: The differences between publishing prices of winning bids in the EU tenders from the TED data

Except EU tender data, there is no union in publishing national tenders. Some countries publish a lot, some do not publish any at all. Moreover, even the data that is published suffers from inaccuracies and missing data. However, analysis can be done using data that is present most of the time.

3. Red flags in public spending

In this chapter we will discuss what red flags we can encounter in the tender data. Public procurement processes is designed to secure the best value for money for each service or goods purchased. Competition plays a very important role here, as only genuine competition can achieve lower prices, higher quality and sector innovation. (OECD, 2011)

Sometimes however, the government or the companies competing for the bid might want to circumvent the competition. Government contracts are usually large and contain a lot of money and can therefore be very lucrative. Therefore, a company might want to circumvent competition simply because it wants to make money. Companies might want to offer personal gain to public officials in exchange for a winning bid. They might also engage in collusive practices and orchestrate bidding on various tenders, effectively dividing the market between each other. A known example of a largescale collusion in public tenders is the Dutch “bouwfraude” (construction fraud). In 2002 a government research uncovered that in the previous 10 years, 344 construction companies divided public construction contracts between themselves (Volkskrant, 2005). With the market divided between a few construction companies, no other companies made a chance to enter the market. Given the government is a very important purchaser in many markets, such corruption can not only lead to inefficient spending of public money, but even result into market distortions. (OECD, 2011)

Government institutions, on the other hand, may prefer a certain company to win a tender due to purely practical reasons. For example, a school could be buying classroom books by a certain publisher and does not want to change all of them just because by law there needs to be a new competition after some years. Another example could be an IT-infrastructure put in place by one company that would require lots of training or a costly replacement of the whole infrastructure if another company is hired. Other reasons may include positive professional or personal experiences during previous contracts. However, none of these reasons are lawful as previous experiences do not count as eligible criteria for winning a tender under current legislation.

Previous research (OECD 2, 2010) has identified various tender features that may signal circumvention of a fair competition, which have been termed as *red flags*.

The simplest red flag is when only a single company applies for a tender. This way, no competition takes place at all. Other red flags can be too short or too long deadlines and decision speed, one company dominating the public spending in a certain market, companies registered in tax havens, or a procedure without a public call for bids (so-called *negotiated procedure*).

Obviously, given the differences between sectors and countries, the meaning and manifestation of red flags differ from sector to sector and country to country. While for example catering can be offered by many parties for a comparable price and quality, specialized medical machines or supplies could be

offered only by a single company⁵. The same market in different countries, such as transport can have distinctive features. While landscape in Slovakia is hilly and mountainous, Dutch landscape is flat. This has implications for the costs of infrastructure. Given that different sectors have distinctive features, any red flags found in public spending data must be interpreted in the context of a specific sector and country. Moreover, no red flag can prove circumvention of the tendering procedure or even corruption by itself. Red flags can nevertheless, especially in the case of multiple red flags, provide a first sign or an impulse to investigate a tender, public office or a company.

4. Analysis

To demonstrate a way how to look at the tender data, procurement of IT services in two countries, Slovakia and The Netherlands will be compared. Data downloaded from local tendering sites will be visualized as multiple networks (graphs), where red flags will be shown.

Generally speaking, there are notable differences between public procurement markets of these two countries. Slovakia is more transparent (see Figure 4) and publishes more complete data on bigger and smaller tenders. However, the Slovak procurement market is overall less competitive. There is also a relatively high media reporting on corrupt tenders. The Netherlands on the other side is less transparent about the spending and publishes information only on the largest tenders. Some governments do not publish the price of the winning bid as it is deemed “company sensitive” information. However, the competition for public tenders is higher and reporting on procurement corruption is relatively low.

The IT sector was chosen as it is large and relatively comparable across borders. While there are different problems in procurement markets in both of the countries (as explained above), the joint problem in procuring IT projects in Slovakia and The Netherlands is a lack of domain knowledge in government

⁵ Purchasing price of highly specialized products can be however compared in cross-border tenders. Such as the case of an overpriced medical CT scanner purchased in Slovakia for twice the price as a similar CT scanner in Czech Republic.

institutions. This can lead to overpriced and eventually failed projects. There are numerous examples of projects like these analyzed in local media of both countries (Investico, 2017, DennikN, 2015).

Local tendering websites from Slovakia and Netherlands (UVO and TenderNed) were filtered for IT contracts. Dutch data span from 2011 to 2016 and contain 7,703 tenders. Slovak data span from 2009 to 2017 and contain 5,892 tenders. Duplicate company names were cleaned manually. A threshold for missing values was applied when visualizing the markets.

Two red flags were chosen to display on the networks. *Sole bidder* is one of the most widely used red flags as it is very straightforward and easy to measure. Median amounts of bids from all the tenders for each company and government institution was calculated. If the median is 1, red flag is risen. The other red flag measure is the proportion of tenders under *negotiated procedures* per institution or company. In a negotiated procedure, government chooses companies that compete for the tender instead of offering an open call for bids. This procedure is lawful; however, it is less competitive than an open procedure.

Visualizing the relationships between different entities results in networks. Network analysis has been used widely in journalism not only to show connections between different actors (such as [connections between mafia members](#) or [connections between influential people](#)), but also to draw conclusion about behavior of groups (such as the Twitter [communication divide between Trump and Clinton voters](#)).

Networks are comprised of so called *edges* and *nodes*. Nodes represent the actors and edges the type and strength of connection between them. This way, networks offer an instant visual overview of the market and their biggest actors (see Figure 5 for details).

For our purpose, networks of tenders between companies and government institutions, will be visualized. Here the nodes are either companies or government institutions. Their size and color will represent different variables in different networks. The edge drawn from the government node to company node represents awarding of tender. Its thickness is the number of tenders awarded (see Figure 5 for details).

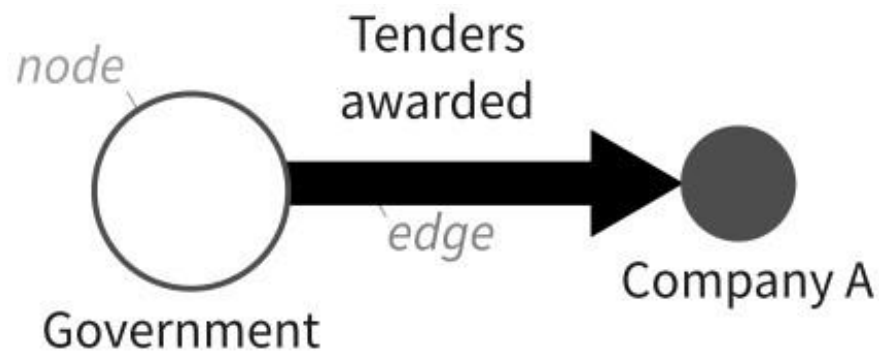


Figure 5: A schematic overview of a network. This comprises of Nodes and Edges. Where nodes represent members of the network, edge represents the relationship between members. In this case we will represent government institutions and companies as nodes and edge will show the number of tenders that was awarded by the institution to the company

4.1. Visualizations

4.1.1. Market structure

First, we will a look at the market structure of these two networks. The color in this case represents the type of node, the size of the node is the number of contracts. See Figure 6 and 7 (pages 11 and 12).

Figure 6: The Netherlands

The size of the node represents amount of contracts it has awarded or acquired. The thickness of an edge between two nodes represents the amount of tenders that specific government institution awarded to that specific company.

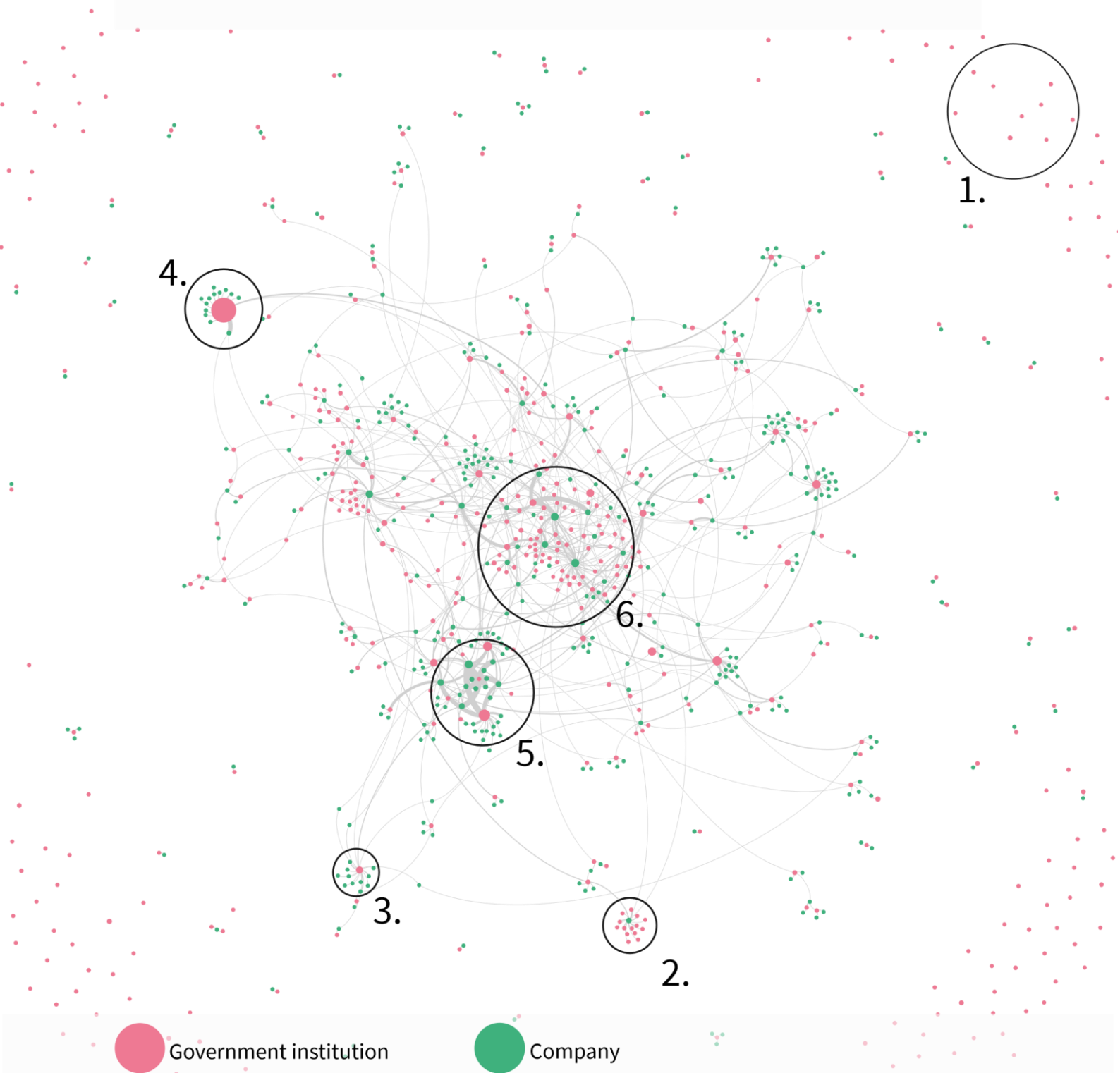
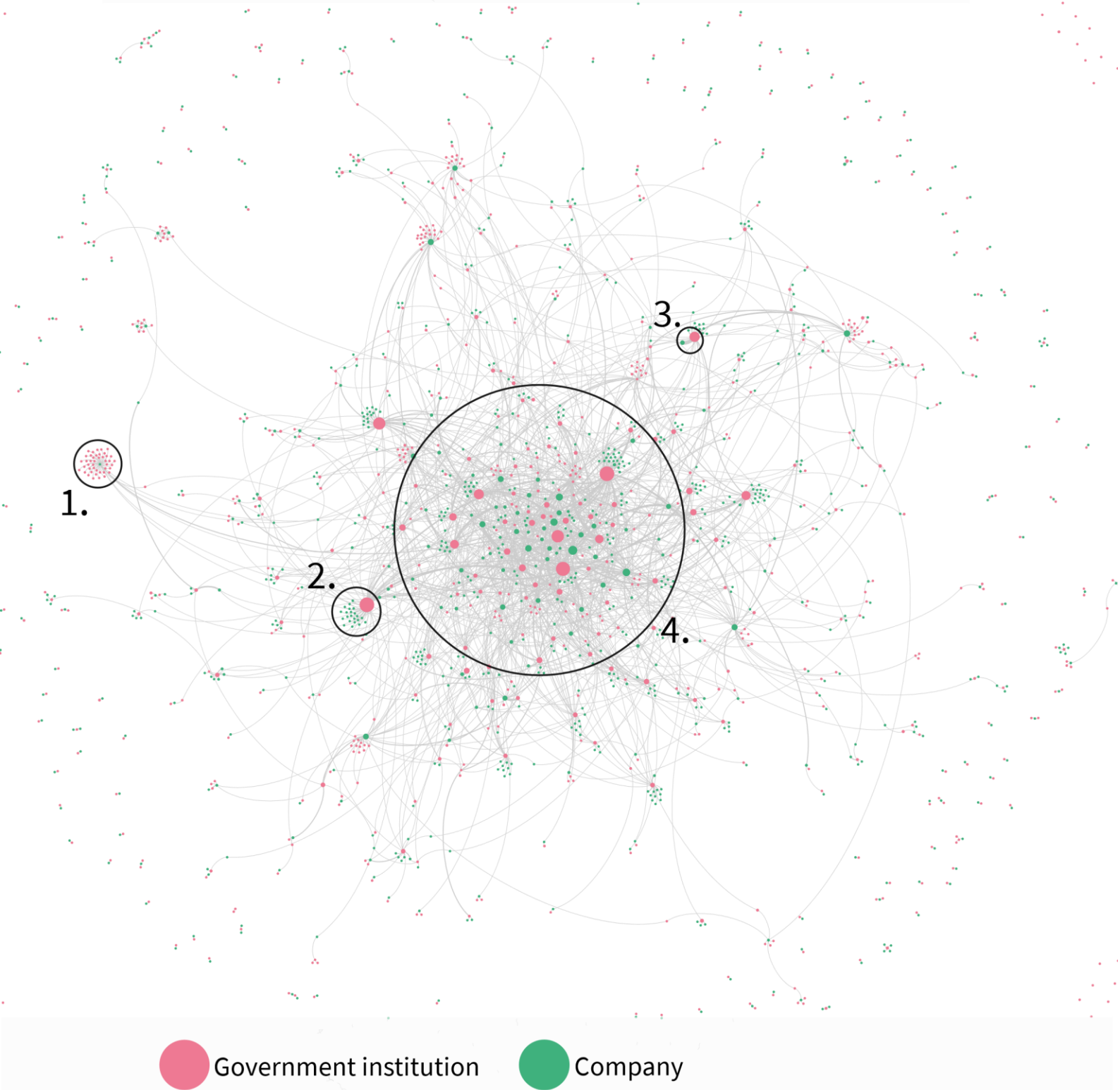


Figure 7: Slovakia

The size of the node represents the number of contracts it has awarded or acquired. The thickness of an edge between two nodes represents the amount of tenders that specific government institution awarded to that specific company.



1. Government institutions only doing business with the company in the middle
2. Companies only doing business with the government institution
3. A tight and from the company side exclusive relationship (thick edge)
4. Most of the tenders happening in a tight core of companies and government institutions

4.1.2. Sole bidder

First, nodes where information on how many bidders took part in the bidding was missing were filtered out. Only nodes where in more than half the cases bidders were present stayed in the visualization. This filtering caused more than a half of the Dutch network to disappear, while more than two thirds of the Slovak network stayed visible. See Table 1 for details.

	Nodes	Edges
> 50% data	left in the network	left in the network
<i>Slovak</i>	66%	78%
<i>Dutch</i>	43%	41%

Table 1: If more than ½ data on bidders was missing, nodes were left out of the visualization. Slovak network retained 2/3 of the nodes, while the Dutch network less than ½

Median amounts of bids from all the tenders for each company and government institution was calculated. If the median is 1, node became red. The difference between red flags present in these networks is big. While 7.3% of the nodes in the Dutch network became red, in the Slovak network it is 27%. It therefore seems that there is more competition in the Dutch IT market. See Figure 8 and 9 (pages 14 and 15).

4.1.3. Share of negotiated procedures

Negotiated procedure is a lawful procurement procedure. Yet it is limiting competition. Share of negotiated procedures was calculated for each node. Then, a gradient from white to red was applied to the network, where white = 0 and red = 1. In accordance with findings from previous network, Slovakia uses more negotiated procedures than The Netherlands and is therefore is less competitive than the Dutch IT market. See Figures 10 and 11 for details (pages 16 and 17)

Figure 8: The Netherlands

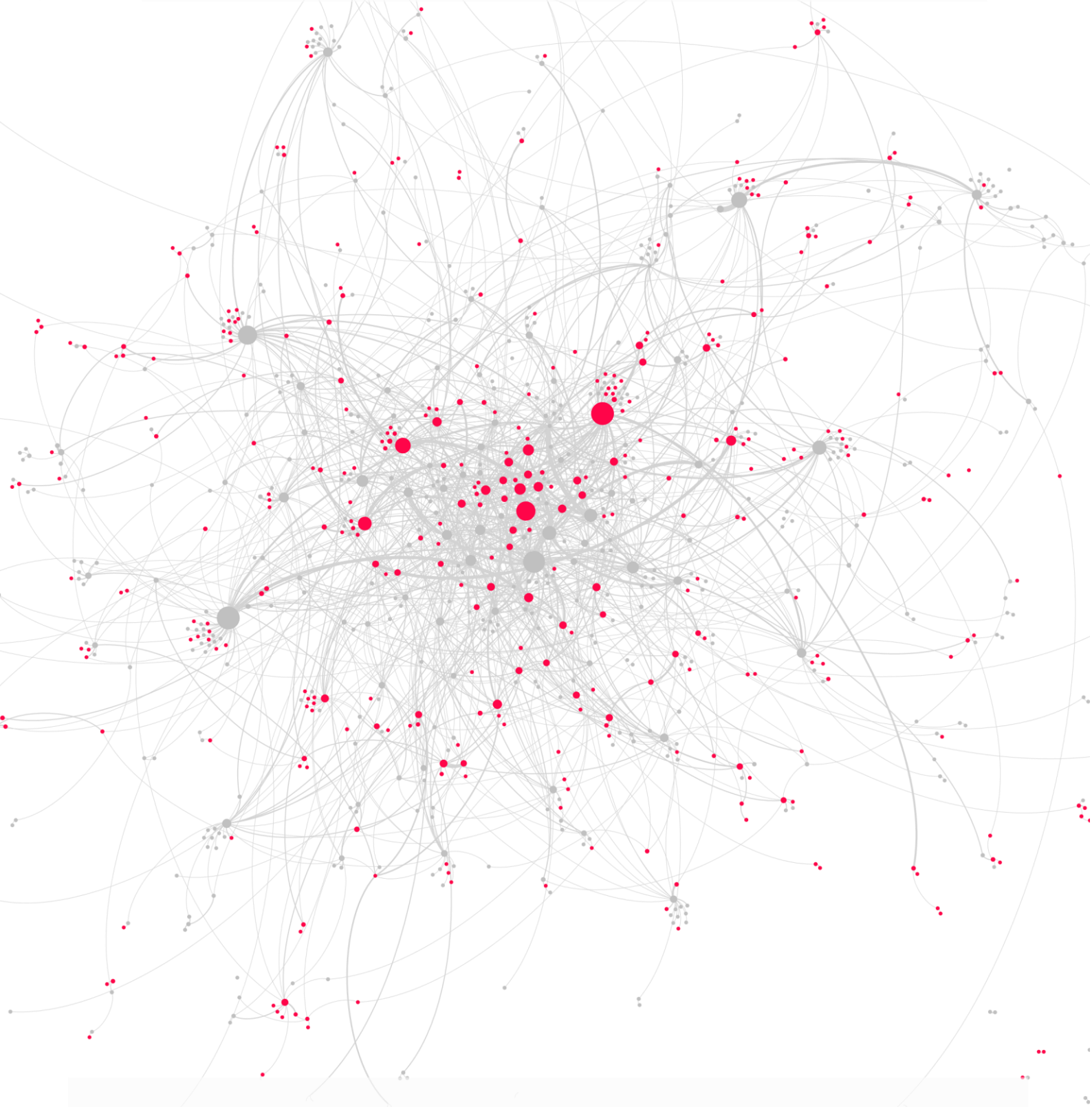
The size of the node represents amount of contracts it has awarded or acquired. The thickness of an edge between two nodes represents the amount of tenders that specific government institution awarded to that specific company.



Median of bids for all tenders the company or institution has taken part in = 1

Figure 8: Slovakia

The size of the node represents amount of contracts it has awarded or acquired. The thickness of an edge between two nodes represents the amount of tenders that specific government institution awarded to that specific company.



Median of bids for all tenders the company or institution has taken part in = 1

Figure 10: The Netherlands

The color of the node represents the share of contracts that were awarded or acquired under *negotiated procedure*. Values of some of the gradient are marked below.

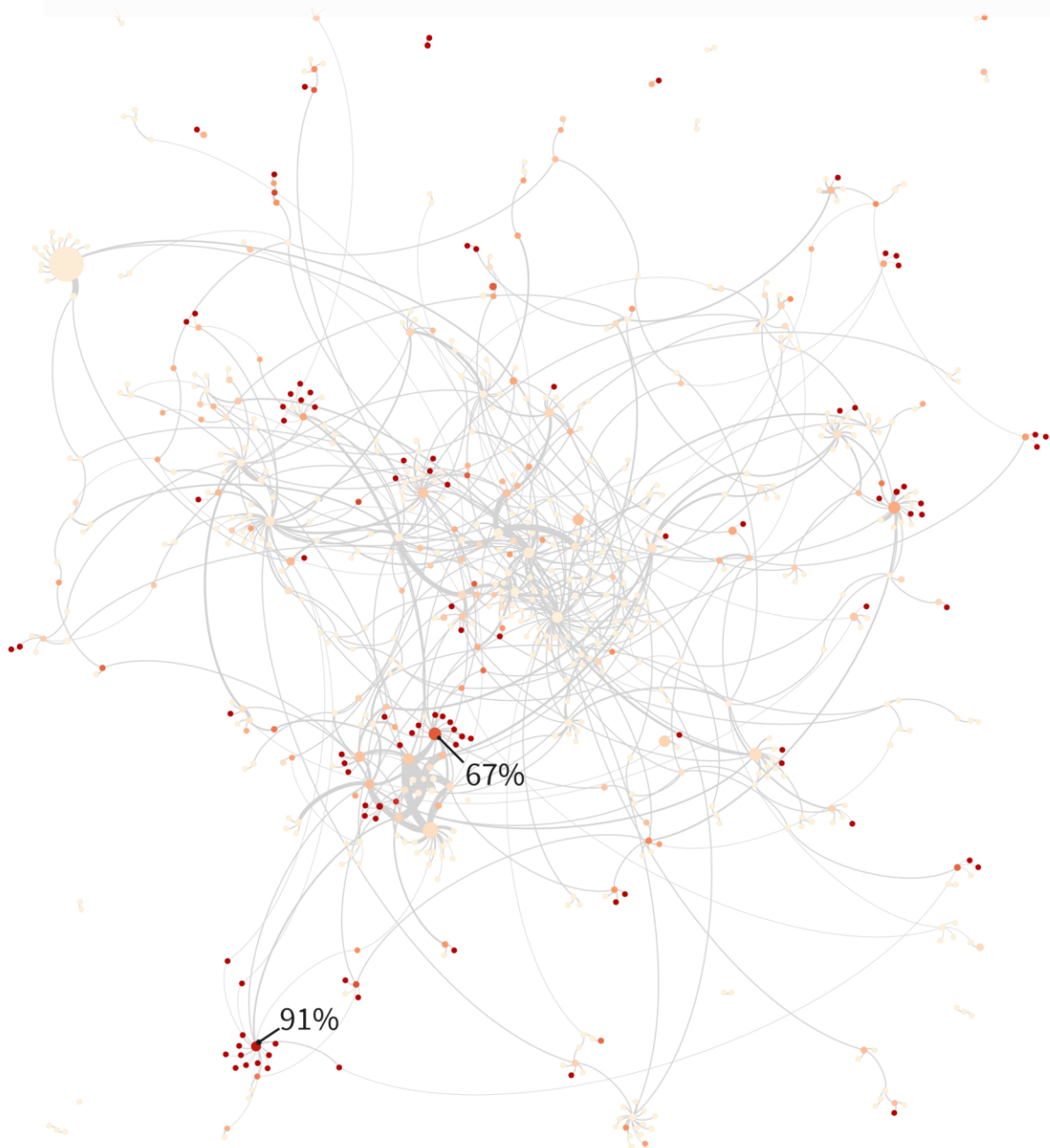
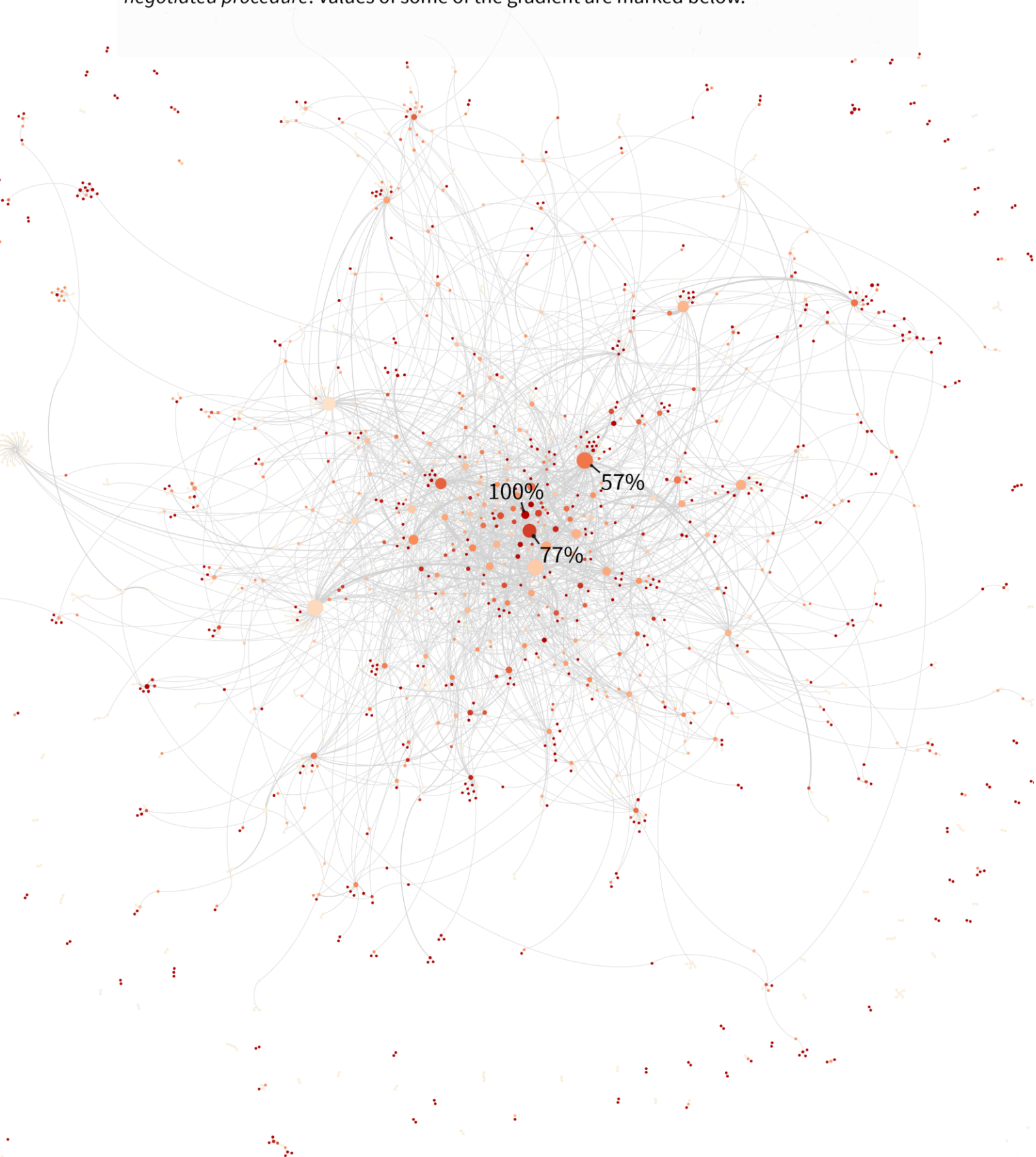


Figure 11: **Slovakia**

The color of the node represents the share of contracts that were awarded or acquired under *negotiated procedure*. Values of some of the gradient are marked below.



4.1.4. Market share

Similar to the sole bidder network, the first step in creating this network was to filter out missing values. Nodes stayed in the network if at least 25% of the winning bid prices were present in the data. This filtering caused only $\frac{1}{4}$ of the Dutch network to stay visible, while again, more than two thirds of the Slovak network stayed visible. See Table 2 for details.

<i>> 25% data</i>	Nodes left in the network	Edges left in the network
<i>Slovak</i>	69%	88%
<i>Dutch</i>	24%	25%

Table 2: If more than $\frac{3}{4}$ of data on tender prices was missing, nodes were left out of the visualization. Slovak network retained again $\frac{2}{3}$ of the nodes, while the Dutch network less than $\frac{1}{4}$

Afterwards, all the prices of tenders won were aggregated per node. The edges still reflect the amount of tender, not the aggregated price. We can clearly see the added value of knowing the price of the tender. While a company might have won just one tender, it might have gotten a lot of money for it. See Figures 12 and 13 for details (pages 19 and 20).

Figure 12: **The Netherlands**

The size of the node represents the aggregated value of contracts it has awarded or acquired. The thickness of an edge between two nodes represents the amount of tenders that specific government institution awarded to that specific company.

Government institution Company



Nodes in this network have different sizes than nodes in the network on the right. Their size depends on the aggregated prices of all the tenders won or awarded, as opposed to the number of tenders won or awarded. The lines are connecting nodes that have notably different sizes. This means that these nodes have won or awarded a small number of tenders, but for a lot of money or vice versa. This network gives an overview of the biggest tenders awarded in this market. Unfortunately, a lot of data is missing from this overview because it is not made available by the government.

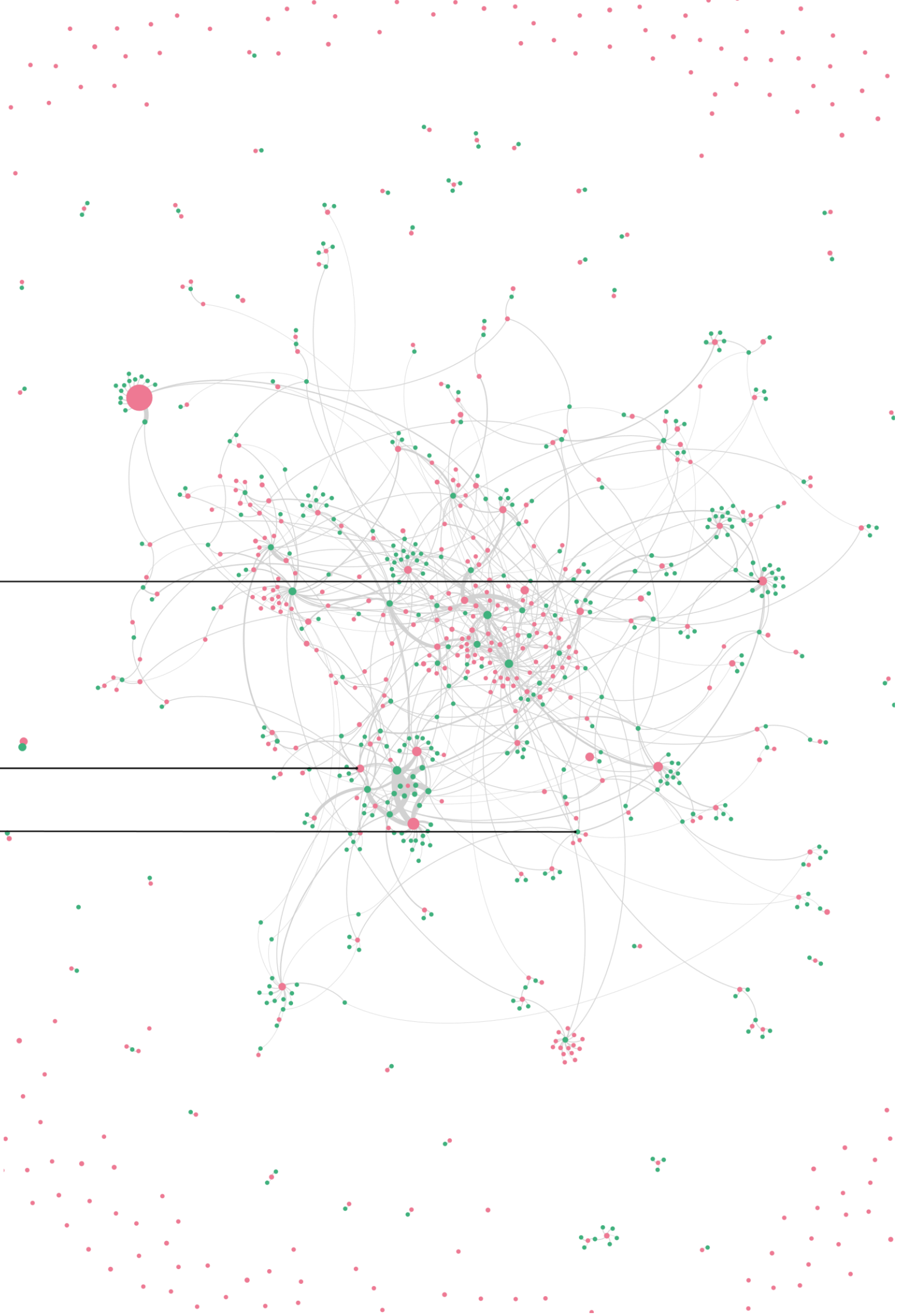


Figure 13: **Slovakia**

The size of the node represents the aggregated value of contracts it has awarded or acquired. The thickness of an edge between two nodes represents the amount of tenders that specific government institution awarded to that specific company.

Government institution Company

Nodes in this network have different sizes than nodes in the network on the right. Their size depends on the aggregated prices of all the tenders won or awarded, as opposed to the number of tenders won or awarded. The lines are connecting nodes that have notably different sizes. This means that these nodes have won or awarded a small number of tenders, but for a lot of money or vice versa. This network gives an overview on the biggest tenders awarded in this market. We can see that companies in the center of this network in general get the bigger tenders, as they are bigger when the price is plotted than the number.

Discussion

Corruption in public spending leads to ineffective spending of public money. Therefore, government tenders should be closely monitored by the public. Visualizing public spending markets as networks gives an overview of the market members and offers a good method to detect possible corruption. While size of nodes and edges and their position in the network show the importance of individual companies and government institutions in the market, combining this overview with procurement red flags helps focusing on the prominent and suspicious members of the market.

Two red flags were plotted on the network: sole bidder and the share of negotiated procedures. Both of these red flags measure competition in the market. These are, however, not the only red flags that could have been used. Companies registered in tax havens, duration of the tender or length of the tender description can also serve as a proxy for detecting corruption.

Nowadays, only information on the largest tenders is available in many western European countries. Moreover, a lot of the data is missing. To have a more complete picture of the markets, the method would benefit from more complete data and information on the smaller tenders. Also, information on other companies that placed a bid on the tender would offer interesting insights into the competition. Combination with other data sets, such as company ownership data would allow for example to draw more connections between the companies and visualize collusive practices.

Conclusion

Visualizing public spending markets as networks, hand in hand with qualitative research and traditional journalistic methods has a potential to systematically uncover corrupt members of public procurement markets.

As corruption in spending of public money has a negative influence on the welfare of the inhabitants, it is important that it is tackled and eradicated in a systematic way. Even if all EU countries are considered high income economies, even here corruption takes form of weak social safety nets or crumbling infrastructure. In middle and low-income countries, these effects are even more tangible and pressing. As media have the unique power to set topics and tone of public discussion, journalism plays a very important role in a complete eradication of corruption in public procurement.

References

Coggburn (2003), “EXPLORING DIFFERENCES IN THE AMERICAN STATES’ PROCUREMENT PRACTICES” [online], available at: <http://ippa.org/jopp/download/vol3/issue-1/Coggburn.pdf> [Retrieved August 23, 2017]

DennikN (2015), “Ako štát premrhal miliardu na IT” [online], available at: <https://dennikn.sk/304187/stat-premrhal-miliardu-it-jednoduche-video-kope-penazi-vysokejkrivan/> [Retrieved September 27, 2017]

EU (2016), “Public Procurement Indicators 2015” [online], available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/docsroom/documents/20679> [Retrieved August 12, 2017]

EU (2017), “Public Procurement” [online], available at: https://ec.europa.eu/growth/singlemarket/public-procurement_en [Retrieved August 12, 2017]

EU (2017) 2, “Single Market Scoreboard” [online], available at: http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/scoreboard/performance_per_policy_area/public_procurement/index_en.htm [Retrieved September 27, 2017]

Investico (2017), De ICT-chaos bij de overheid, available at: <https://www.platforminvestico.nl/dossiers/de-ict-chaos-bij-de-overheid/> [Retrieved September 27, 2017]

OECD (2017), “The OECD Social Expenditure Database (SOCX)” [online], available at: https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=SOCX_AGG [Retrieved August 11, 2017]

OECD (2010), “Public Procurement in EU Member States- The Regulation of Contract Below the EU Thresholds and in Areas not Covered by the Detailed Rules of the EU Directives” [online], *Sigma Papers*, No. 45, OECD Publishing. available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/5km91p7s1mxv-en> [Retrieved August 12, 2017]

OECD (2010) 2, “Collusion and Corruption in Public Procurement”, available at:
<http://www.oecd.org/competition/cartels/46235399.pdf>, [Retrieved August 11, 2017]

OECD (2011), “Competition and procurement” [online], available at:
<https://www.oecd.org/daf/competition/sectors/48315205.pdf> [Retrieved August 11, 2017]

OGC (2008), “An Introduction to Public Procurement” [online], available at:
http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110406052414/http://www.ogc.gov.uk/documents/Introduction_to_Public_Procurement.pdf [Retrieved August 22, 2017]

OKFN (2016), “Global Open Data Index” [online], available
at:<https://index.okfn.org/dataset/spending/> [Retrieved August 22, 2017]

Volkskrant (2006), “Staat haalt streep door schikking met bouwbedrijven” [online], available at:
<https://www.volkskrant.nl/politiek/staat-haalt-streep-door-schikking-metbouwbedrijven~a681221/>
[Retrieved August 22, 2017]

Raking Muck and Raising Funds - Capacity Development Strategies for the Future of Investigative Journalism in the Global South

By N. Jurrat, J. Lublinski, A. Mong

DW Akademie, Deutsche Welle

8

Abstract

In a rapidly evolving technological environment, investigative outlets today face a double challenge: They need to maintain their independence, while also securing their finances. Apart from investigative media outlets and journalists themselves, those who act in support of investigative journalism also need to find answers here: journalism schools need to reconsider how to best prepare young journalists; donors and civil society organizations that fund investigative work need to review their strategies. And the same holds true for international media development organizations which run programs to support media viability, especially in developing countries.

The authors present regional trends from Sub-Saharan Africa, the Americas, and Eastern Europe in light of global developments in investigative reporting, taking into consideration different muckraking cultures, and share examples of successful strategies of investigative media outlets. They suggest that a comprehensive and collaborative approach in supporting investigative media is needed to ensure a viable future for investigative media as well as the sector itself. For this, a model describing elements specific to the viability of investigative journalism is presented to help media startups, donors, media development NGOs identify possible areas of support.

Keywords: Investigative journalism, media viability, journalism education, African journalism, Latin American journalism, Eastern European journalism

Raking Muck and Raising Funds - Capacity Development Strategies for the Future of Investigative Journalism in the Global South

Introduction

Investigative journalism struggles to survive. This holds true for the United States and Europe, which have a long tradition of investigative journalism. It also applies to developing countries and emerging economies where investigative reporting has only taken roots since the mid-1980s. Freedom of the press in many countries faces severe obstructions. And with the digital media revolution, new finance models and new forms of investigative journalism practice are needed (Albrecht/Hairsine/Leidl, 2015).

The past ten years have seen an upsurge in the setup of so-called investigative media startups — online media outlets run by professional muckrakers who have a passion for editorial independence and journalism as a public good. This came as a result of technological and democratic developments, as well as continuous investment and support for dedicated defenders of investigative journalism in the Global South. In a large number of countries world-wide, this has led to the emergence of a new generation of investigative reporters, who are pushing the standards of the quality of investigative journalism within entire sector. Many have produced reports that have had an impact at the local, regional, and international level. The importance of investigative journalism is widely recognized (Kaplan 2013; Sullivan 2013). However, many investigative outlets operate on a shoestring and are continuing to face severe obstacles, from legal challenges to physical and digital threats. Overall, the viability of their media outlets and investigative journalism at large is in question.

The aim of this paper is to look at the obstacles and recent trends in investigative journalism in three selected regions: in Sub-Saharan Africa, which has seen a recent upsurge of investigative media outlets; in Eastern Europe, where investigative journalism has been supported by donors and media development actors for almost 30 years, hence offering many lessons learned; and Latin America, where a new generation of investigative startups has been experimenting with innovative digital research, fundraising, and distribution models. The authors will discuss ways

in which investigative journalism is currently supported and how these strategies can be improved.

Definitions and Scope of the Paper

There is no universal definition for investigative journalism, not among journalists nor academics, media development organizations or donors. This is also due to the fact that the culture for investigative journalism has developed differently in the various parts of the world. The definitions of Investigative Reporters and Editors (IRE) and UNESCO (2013) focus on the unveiling of facts that are of significant importance to the public but that are actively or accidentally hidden, as well as the personal dedication of the journalist to unveil the truth. American authors Ettema and Glasser (1998) as well as Protess et al. (1991:5-7) emphasize the moral aspect and its impact: investigative journalism “probes the boundaries of America’s civic conscience.” By telling “tales of villainy and victimization” it implicitly demands reactions and thus leads to change processes.

African authors have described various problems with the application of the Anglo-American model of investigative journalism, concerns that could easily be transferred to the other world regions: “There are very complicated relationships between the media, civil society, ideas of democracy and power, and processes of social change. Taking this model at face value may stop us from thinking more deeply about those relationships and how they work in our own countries.” Ansell (2010:3, 19) emphasizes that investigative journalism should be an “original, proactive process” which “looks beyond individuals to faulty systems and processes.”

Based on their research and to allow a comparison between initiatives in Eastern Europe, Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa, the authors of this paper will explore investigative journalism by looking at four different dimensions. While considering the definitions described above, they will add a new aspect: the interaction with the audience, which has become an important factor for a media’s viability. In the past years, investigative startups have increasingly been using digital and social media to interact with their audience for research and distribution purposes and to seek funds through donations from the public or promote advertising sales. The four dimensions are:

- 1. Content:** Investigative reports uncover previously unknown facts, which are concealed from the public or present known facts in a new context.

- 2. Work practices:** Investigative journalists need specific qualities and skills to uncover and connect pieces of information and sets of data. Moreover, due to the sensitivity of the information that is being uncovered, organizing the research process and protecting the findings require additional work routines by editors and journalists.
- 3. Impact:** Investigative journalism acts as a watchdog for society, exposing how laws and regulations are violated and holding those in power accountable. It aims to trigger change. This can vary from repercussions at a local level to the toppling of a president or forcing nationwide reform to take place. To maximize impact, investigative journalists may actively look for collaborations with other actors in their research or when publishing and disseminating their findings, such as NGOs or the judiciary.
- 4. Audience:** Investigative journalists see their trade as a service to society. They may actively involve members of the public when gathering information or to find relevant topics and to support fundraising efforts.

Overall, investigative journalists and editors are facing high obstacles in doing the job outlined above. In many countries it is not possible to report freely and in safety. Journalists who dig deeper are faced with serious threats which are endemic to their respective political, legal, and economic context. “The difference is that while [...] in the United States, (journalists) live under the eyes of lawyers, the rest of us in Latin America live under the eye of an AK-47,¹” describes Mexican journalist and experienced ombudsman Gerardo Albarrán de Alba (2001). While following the journalistic principle to give those investigated the opportunity to comment before a publication usually protects reporters working in countries with a functioning legislature from lawsuits, it can endanger an investigation all together if those in power realize that they are being investigated in countries with high levels of impunity.

Moreover, there has been a loss of trust in the media in many parts of the world (Reboot 2016; Sembra Media 2017), also due to unprofessional practices of some investigative journalists who have misused the term for personal political or commercial purposes or to extort money (Kaplan 2013). This affects all aspects of investigative journalism, especially its potential impact and the engagement with the audience. This, of course, is of great advantage and at

¹ Translation of: “La diferencia está en que, mientras tú, en Estados Unidos, vives bajo la mira de los abogados, el resto de nosotros, en Latinoamérica, vive bajo la mira de un AK-47”

times actively promoted by those who have an interest in hiding their political or business dealings from the public.

Nevertheless, professional investigative journalism has been recognized as an effective force for good governance (Kaplan 2013; Sullivan 2013) as well as improving general journalistic standards in a country. Muckraking has hence seen a renewed interest by governmental and private donors as well as media development NGOs (Kaplan 2013; Sullivan 2013; Schiffrin 2017). Digital investigative media have been established with the support of donor funding, producing high quality reports with profound impact. In Latin America, for example, the winners of the 2016 Gabriel Garcia Márquez Award for Journalism in the Americas, one of the most important in the region, were all journalists from media startups².

Media viability has become a widely discussed issue, especially since the financial crisis of the global media markets. Overall, technology has offered new possibilities for research and distribution but has also fractured audiences and therefore advertising markets. This has been exacerbated as digital companies such as Facebook and Google are dominating the advertising markets. But media viability is not only about financial sustainability – it encompasses much wider aspects to ensure that a whole media sector may survive (Schneider/Hollifield/Lublinski 2016). It includes the ability to produce independent, high-quality content, an enabling legal, professional and economic environment as well as the organizational capacity within a media outlet to analyze and react to changing advertising, marketing, and fundraising opportunities without losing editorial independence. As local developments, especially digital ones, are changing rapidly, it is important for media outlets to understand the elements that are key for their survival. Only if all aspects are taken into consideration can the viability of any media be supported. And there is no one-size-fits-all solution.

Methodology and Research Questions

For their assessment, the authors have applied a mixed-method design, including interviews with a total of 33 journalists, editors, and academics as well as international donors. As part of the desk research, a meta-analysis of evaluations on investigative journalism support programs was conducted. The authors used a selection of eight recent evaluation reports. Half of them

²See <https://premioggm.org/ediciones-anteriores/2016/ganadores/>

are available online³; the other half was made available to them confidentially for the purpose of this study.

It should be mentioned that the authors had initially hoped to access a larger number of evaluation reports but no other ones were (made) available. In the support of investigative journalism, monitoring and evaluation systems, although existent, still do not seem to be regularly used to assess and share lessons learned.

Specifically, this research paper endeavors to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the trends and potentials for investigative journalism in each region (Eastern Europe, Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa) and where could lessons learned be applied?
2. What strategies have been applied in the support of media viability at investigative news outlets so far?
3. How can effective strategies for the support of investigative journalism be developed in the future?
4. What should be suggested towards the capacity building of future generations of investigative reporters?

Investigative Journalism Culture – Past and Present

Eastern Europe

The investigative journalism scene in the post-communist bloc of countries in Eastern Europe is characterized, on the one hand by internationally acclaimed newsrooms and top-notch reporters— some of the world’s best—and on the other hand by outlets often operating on the fringes of the local media markets, struggling to reach their audiences and achieve the local impact they desire.

This duality is due to several factors, a weak culture of investigative journalism, and more generally the way journalists traditionally understand their role in these societies being among them. In the Soviet-style one-party state which defined all these countries until the fall of the

³ See References below

Berlin wall, journalists were far from acting as watchdogs, holding the powerful accountable or serving their audiences. It was rather the contrary. As an integral part of the dictatorial regimes, they were political insiders, directly participating in the decision-making process and influencing it from the inside by providing the forum for a high-level discussion among the political elite (Sullivan, 2013). This tradition is being carried forward, and although it is slowly changing, it still constitutes a major obstacle to investigative journalism: independent-minded reporters often have a hard-time working in mainstream newsrooms surrounded by colleagues, editors, media managers, and owners who continue to understand the role of media along the older traditions.

Moreover, economic conditions for investigative journalism in the region have considerably deteriorated over the last 10 years. The global trend of technological disruption in the news media was made worse by the economic crisis of 2007-2008 which hit these countries particularly hard, having a direct effect on advertising revenues for mainstream news media (Stetka, 2013). As a consequence, foreign investors often gave up their interests, leaving the space to local oligarchs whose primary objective was to exert political influence. In this context, investigations in the mainstream newsrooms are often understood only as instruments to pressure the political elite or discredit and blackmail opponents with Russian-style *kompromats*.

Against these trends, the region saw considerable media development activities during the 1990s focusing on creating a Western-style investigative journalism tradition and building capacities among reporters (Hume, 2011), who then found themselves more and more in conflict with their surroundings in the mainstream media. As a result, the common trend in these countries since the early 2000s is the creation of non-profit investigative journalism centers, using the latest research methodologies (CAR and data harvesting techniques) and running their own publication channels, mainly on the Internet (Smit et al., 2012).

Some of the world's most renowned investigative outlets have grown out of this context. First among them is the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP), which initially operating only in Eastern Europe and the Balkans, has by now truly global ambitions. It defines itself as an investigative reporting platform with around 40 non-profit investigative centers, scores of journalists, and several major regional news organizations in Europe, Africa, Asia, and Latin America, promoting transnational investigative reporting and technology-based approaches to expose organized crime and corruption worldwide. Another one, also

founded in 2005, is the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN) whose activities include more than cross-border investigative journalism projects. The network of local NGOs implements a range of programs to promote freedom of speech, human rights and democratic values in the Balkans.

These local and transnational non-profit centers are all almost fully donor-funded and operate in hostile political environments that are increasingly trying to discredit them. Governments in such countries label independent investigations as politically biased activism and the journalists as foreign agents (like recently in Serbia or in Hungary, where the government approved legislation based on the Russian example, requiring NGOs, including journalism organizations to register as “foreign-funded” if they receive grants from abroad). Targeting also is extended to some donors with the aim of scaring them away and drying out the financial support of investigations. Some of these outlets turn to crowdfunding as a way to secure alternative financial resources, although the weak tradition of small donations makes these efforts extremely difficult.

Latin America

Since the region started a transformation towards democracy in the early 1980s, most countries in Latin America have built investigative traditions, often with the support of U.S. and European donors. These traditions were established amidst very challenging environments, characterized by political polarization, violent conflict, organized crime, corruption, and impunity. Year after year, some of the region’s countries have been featuring among the world’s most dangerous places to be a journalist according to the Committee to Protect Journalists—most prominently Colombia and Mexico, where “it is more dangerous to investigate a murder than to commit one” (Knight Center 2017). But even in others, investigative journalists are walking a tight rope between restrictive laws criminalizing defamation, physical and digital threats, and the fear of losing advertising income as punishment for their reporting (Sembra Media 2017).

Nevertheless, there has been an upsurge in investigative digital media in the past 10 years, which are “deeply transforming the way that journalism is conducted and consumed in Latin America ...promoting better laws, defending human rights, exposing corruption, and fighting abuses of power” (Sembra Media, 2017, p.6). Being laid off from newsrooms at traditional

media after the financial crisis or frustrated by restrictive editorial policies at the main media houses that were guided by the media owners' political and commercial interests, many experienced investigative journalists set up their own online media. Others simply wanted to provide alternative voices in a severely concentrated media landscape. Many of the founders were women, an interesting aspect given the fact that Latin American media is traditionally male dominated (Sembra Media, 2017).

Making use of accessible and affordable distribution technology and cooperating with graphic designers, IT specialists, and even comic artists, a new generation of investigative journalists has emerged in nearly every country in the region, producing high quality in-depth reports on corruption and highlighting the plight of victims of violent conflict or repressive governments. This is a stark development from traditional investigations in the region, where “watchdog journalism” was common place, consisting of simply publishing leaked documents or other information on power abuses based on one or two sources (Waisbord, 2000). More profound investigations were usually published as books. Sharing mostly the same language as well as strong economic, social, and cultural ties enable cross-border collaborations and give investigations the possibility to be published on various national platforms, thereby potentially reaching a huge audience. Most of these startups are funded by international donors, although an increasing number are diversifying their funding and are also looking for financial support from local donors and private persons.

They have increasingly been experimenting with innovative ways to present the often-complex findings and interact with the audience, making long format reporting more attractive (Knight Center for Journalism in the Americas, 2017). One of the many examples is the Big Pharma Project, a collaboration between journalists from six countries in the region, looking into how 13 of the biggest pharmaceutical companies are maximizing profits at the expense of the poorest citizens. Headed by Peru's Ojo Público (Public Eye), results can be accessed online (<https://bigpharma.ojopublico.com>) via various formats—video, photos, infographics, written reports, and original documents. It also includes an interactive tool to find out the differing costs of the same medicine in various countries in the region.

Sub-Saharan Africa

The general environment for investigative journalism in Sub-Saharan Africa is far from supportive. Although elementary democratic institutions, such as elections or multi-party systems are in place in many countries, most political and legal systems are still dominated by power elites that control their societies. Media freedom generally remains very limited; many of those in power seek to control the media. Journalists and media houses are being threatened and attacked; self-censorship is widespread (Ismail/Deane 2008, Thomson 2010, Frère 2014). The economic and professional situation in African newsrooms is generally very difficult. Most media houses have limited means and capacities to provide elementary financial and legal support to reporters. Many reporters accept financial support by those who they report on: Brown envelope journalism is commonplace (Rodrigues/Schiffrin 2016, Frère 2012).

And yet, Africa has its own history of investigative journalism. Muckrakers deliver against all impediments their unique services to societies (Schiffrin 2014, 2017). Most cases of investigative journalism discussed in the literature stem from anglophone countries with diverse and strong media markets such as Kenya, Nigeria, Ghana, South Africa, and Uganda (see e.g. Yusha'u 2009, Mudhai 2007, Ansell 2010, Harber/Renn 2010, Reboot 2016). This is also where online investigative media outlets have been established, such as amaBhungane in South Africa, the Premium Times in Nigeria or the INK Investigative Journalism Center in Botswana. There have also been regional initiatives, such as Africa Uncensored, responding to the global trend of cross-border investigations. They increasingly seek to advance transparency and accountability. "In addition to directly holding powerful institutions accountable, media also amplifies the work of advocacy organizations, citizen movements, political organizing, and other accountability efforts" (Reboot 2016).

In francophone Africa, investigative journalism has not developed the same way as in the anglophone part, due to differing media systems and restrictive political and economic conditions. Examples for investigative journalism in francophone Africa are reports from Cameroon, Burkina Faso, and Cote d'Ivoire studied by Lublinski, Spurk et al. (2016). They treat issues like failures in the weather forecast systems for farmers, dysfunctionalities in drug delivery, or the lack of government action against the abduction of women. Here, the reporters were less engaged with the unveiling of secrets and wrongdoings of the powerful. Instead, they acted as change agents who triggered systemic reform processes and built ad-hoc coalitions with NGOs and other relevant actors. These stories were an outcome of the mentoring program

SjCOOP (Science journalism COOPeration), which did not have investigative journalism as its primary focus but built a peer-to-peer support network of journalists in Africa. It was run by the World Federation of Science Journalists and was supported by the British Department for International Development and the Canadian International Development Research Center (IDRC), among other international donors.

Across the continent, many investigative journalists perform their research as freelancers or individual activists. One prominent example from lusophone Africa is Rafael Marques de Morais of Angola, founder of the investigative website “Maka Angola”. Over many years, he has fearlessly pointed his finger to the corruption of the Angolan president as well as to the terror which the diamond trade has brought to his country. Even imprisonment could not stop him. Marques de Morais, in a way, is a classic example for muckrakers in Africa and at the same time an exception: As many other investigative journalists on the continent, he works as a freelancer, without the support of a big newsroom and sees himself as a journalist and a human rights activist. Unlike many of his peers, he has received support and Awards for his journalistic work from international organizations, such as the Open Society Foundation and the Committee to Protect Journalists (Rodrigues/Schiffrin 2016) and is well connected internationally.

Generally, African investigative journalism is often supported by development organizations to shine light on a specific developmental issue, such as health. It generally holds true that donor support is of key importance in Africa to make investigative journalism possible. However, investigative media outlets rarely receive seed money to strengthen their overall organizational structure, giving them the opportunity to making them more viable beyond the project cycle.

The experts interviewed for this study observed that African investigative journalists are more and more present at international conferences, not solely as listeners but also as experts, suggesting that there seems to be a global interest in the experiences of investigative reporting in Sub-Saharan Africa. This can also be applied to investigative journalists from other regions in the world. They are in touch with donors and actively use this opportunity to shape the future of their work and the muckraking culture in their respective countries.

Common Obstacles, Trends, and Lessons Learned

While the culture and heritage of investigative journalism differs in Eastern Europe, Latin America, and Sub-Saharan Africa, there are several common trends and restraints that they are all dealing with.

Organizational Development and Business Models

Investigative startups as well as investigative teams in traditional newsrooms not only face challenges muckraking itself poses to individual reporters. They also need to (re)organize their work and team structures to meet old and new challenges. As teams grow and staff members with different professional backgrounds working from various locations join the team, new cooperation models need to be considered and established.

At the same time, new, viable business models must be developed. Many media startups have turned to international donors, both private trusts and foundations such as the Open Society Foundations and U.S. and European government agencies, for financial support. The reliance on donor funding, however, remains a substantial risk to their sustainability, even if there has recently been an increase in the number of donors with an interest in media development and investigative reporting (Sullivan 2013, Kaplan 2013) due to the rise of new technologies and the proven impact.

In order to access and manage donor funds, some media outlets have set up fundraising and administrative structures within the media; in others, reporters use their spare time for this, “time that could be spent doing what they do best-investigative reporting,” argues Paul Radu⁴, editor of OCCRP. A recent study on Latin American startups by Sembra Media (2017) confirmed that those who did invest in the professionals with these skills have been able to successfully keep their donor base and complement donor funding with other sources of income.

One successful example for the diversification of funding is Atlatzo.hu, based in Hungary, which has managed to raise the considerable share of 44 % of their budget through crowdfunding. In Central America, El Faro from El Salvador finances its team of 29 staff through cooperation deals with international agencies (75%), advertising (17%), syndication (3%) and crowdfunding (4%). However, there seems to be a general understanding among the

⁴ Interview on September 6, 2017

experts interviewed that most investigative journalism will be relying on donor funding for a long time, especially in weak economic markets.

Technology for Investigative Journalism

In Brazil, Agência Pública has been experimenting with storytelling techniques for investigative reports, bringing together reporters, data crunchers, technologists, and graphic designers in so-called ‘J-labs,’ focusing on applying multi-media and technology to journalism. It is part of a general trend in Latin America of using digital technology to present long-format reports in an interactive way, thereby engaging the audience not just by exploring the findings but also for investigative research and topics to cover. In return, this promotion of ownership encourages support from the audience in terms of funding (through crowdfunding campaigns or other grassroots fundraising events) and helps establish a professional culture of investigative reporting, which in turn can be supportive in promoting enabling legal frameworks in the long term.

However, studies have also shown (Kaplan 2013, Robinson/Grennan/Schiffrin 2015) that the strong focus on technology has not been able to solve the problems investigative reporters and newsrooms are facing or to promote viability. “Tools and technology are often overemphasized at the expense of strategies that can be just as effective, if not more, at helping organizations be sustainable” (Robinson/Grennan/Schiffrin 2015, p. 19). In their report on digital medias startups in Ghana and Nigeria, Reboot (2016, 9) notes that “digital media isn’t a magic bullet, it’s the latest battleground of the ongoing struggle.”

Security

This struggle is based on the difficult political and legal environments in many countries. Intimidation as well as physical and digital violence against investigative journalists are a growing trend. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists⁵, most of the reporters that are killed had been investigating politics, human rights abuses, crime, and corruption. A culture of impunity not only denies those attacked justice but also encourages others to use violence and intimidation as a form of censorship. As a result, many reporters turn to self-

⁵<https://cpj.org/killed/murderd.php>

censorship as a form of personal protection or to prevent their media to be closed down (Jurrat, 2016).

Access to data

In addition, access to reliable data was defined as a problem, even in countries with access to information legislation. In Hungary, for example, the Orban government has introduced fees in order to access specific data, making the assessment of big data sets more difficult. In Colombia, public information is either disorganized or access is denied due to national security reasons, “a concept they are using for everything, even for the CV of the Supreme Court’s magistrates” (Juanita León, editor, La Silla Vacía⁶).

Cooperation

There has been a strong focus by donors on cross-border investigations to increase impact, which has been furthered by the success of the Panama Papers, amongst others.

While this may take away much needed support for local investigations, it can provide the necessary information to local journalists for their own reports: “Panama-Paper style of investigative journalism and local investigative journalism does not contradict itself — if you start at the grassroots and then go 'up' to the powerful,” argues Evelyn Groenink⁷. This is the main mission of the African Investigative Publishing Collective (AIPC) – looking for local stories and then exploring ways that these can be published to an international audience by showing the link to a national interest in the West.

An increase in networking opportunities among investigative reporters and editors, as well as with professionals from the IT, design or research sector, and an exchange of knowledge and experiences has promoted high standards of reporting in all regions and motivated the creation of investigative media startups. Moreover, cooperation between these media outlets has supported joint investigations and consequently the creation of online and offline exchange structures.

⁶ Interview on September 8, 2017

⁷ Interview on September 19, 2017

Supporting an enabling environment

During their research, the authors noted a recent emergence of support structures for investigative journalism at a local level: J-Labs, such as by Agência Pública in Brazil or Quinto Elemento in Mexico bring together professionals from different sectors to join forces on investigations and experiment with storytelling formats; Quinto Elemento also administers grants for investigative reporting in Mexico; technical support is provided by organizations such as Code for Kenya; Sembra Media offers business advice to media startups in Latin America; and the newly created Platform to Protect Whistleblowers, based in Senegal, is the first of its kind in the Global South. RoGGKenya provides legal advice in plain language to rural investigative journalists in the country.

In addition, an increasing number of fact-checking websites, such as Chequeado in Argentina or CheckAfrica, complement a supportive ecosystem for investigative reporting. And last but not least, local and regional associations of investigative journalists, such as Abraji in Brazil or the AIPC, are important elements to promote and defend a national culture of investigative journalism and give investigative journalists sustained moral and physical support in an unsupportive and often hostile environment.

Capacity Building

Many media startups are also training journalists in investigative skills—partly to crossfinance their work where trainings are offered for a fee, but mainly to address local demands to improve journalists' skills and ensure that there are enough muckrakers to look into the many injustices that happen in their countries. Paul Radu notes that "the lack of local capacities is impacting investigative journalism in Eastern Europe. There are a few centers for investigative reporting (...) but there are just a handful of people. What we are able to investigate is just a very small slice of what is going on." Also, universities such as the Knight Center for Journalism in the Americas are offering Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) on topics that are also relevant to investigative journalists and media viability for digital media, from data journalism to product management. These are available to muckrakers from all over the world.

These trainings are filling a void in many places where higher education in journalism is disconnected from the realities of the media industry, especially in the area of investigative

journalism, if existent at all⁸. Mark Lee Hunter⁹ states that university journalism education is currently often "among the most valueless part of the curriculum in many places," also because it is hardly ever taught by professors with personal experience in investigative reporting. He suggests that the skills needed to be an investigative reporter could be of value in many other professions and should therefore be taught separately, hence, attracting more talents who might otherwise not consider journalism as a profession.

Interviewees from all regions stressed that journalism education, especially investigative journalism, should become more practical and include collaborations with media outlets, big and small, as well as with business and management schools and involve them in the teaching of the craft.

Anton Harber, Adjunct Professor at the University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg believes that universities should not only be training journalists but aim to foster investigative journalism in a holistic way, thereby helping to create ecosystems for investigative journalism. Apart from its journalism curriculum, the university manages a grant system for individual journalists, hosts a project investigating the justice system in South Africa and offers courses to mid-career journalists on investigative journalism which they can follow while remaining in their newsrooms. Evelyn Groenink, co-founder and investigations editor of ZAM, who has worked in Africa as a reporter and been involved in trainings across the continent since 2003, confirms that "training and capacity building has limited impact if journalists go back to their news organizations and work in an environment where independent investigative journalism is not nurtured or where there are no funds to even pay for the most basic expenses, such as travel."

Mark Lee Hunter suggests that leadership, strategy, marketing, and basic accounting should be part of the training since future journalists will have to be involved in running organizations, including NGOs: "The idea that investigative journalism is the enemy of business has obscured the necessity for business skills for investigative journalism outlets." Generally, interviewees identified storytelling and the use of technology for research, presentation, and distribution as the most pressing additional skills needed by future investigative journalists. "Often reporters are good at finding and analyzing data, shooting drone videos, etc., but lack the skills of

⁸ Interview with Rosental C. Alves, July 16, 2017

⁹ Interview on September 12, 2017

effectively showing the relevance of their story for their audiences, making people understand why this story is important and how it affects their lives,” confirms Oleg Khomenok¹⁰, investigative journalist from Ukraine, co-founder of Yanukovichleaks and member of the GIJN Board of Directors. However, capacity building has to be tailored to local contexts and possibilities.

Furthermore, there seems to be a strong concentration of skilled investigative journalists in urban centers, which results in the neglect for supporting smaller investigations at the local level. Among the few exceptions are Consejo de Redacción and La Silla Vacía from Colombia, which focus on investigations in the regions and train regional journalists. El Pitazo from Venezuela and the Ground Up News Agency in South Africa aims to provide information on and for the most deprived people in their respective countries. Many local investigative journalists operate without any donor support and often struggle to find handbooks or advice tailored to their circumstances and in their language.

Developing Strategies for Supporting Investigative Journalism

The central finding of our review of the different evaluations of investigative support projects and interviews with experts is that there is a strong need for more strategic planning. Elements that have been considered as good practice within the development community for the past two decades still need to be taken seriously and adapted to the very specific context of investigative journalism support in a particular country. Among them are:

Basic research and needs assessment at the onset. This includes a mapping of the political, legal, and socio-economic situation in the countries in question, an analysis of the situation of freedom of expression and the media landscape with a strong focus on digital challenges. The world of investigative journalism and accountability projects is moving fast and things that worked in the past may be less relevant in a digitalized future. Still, too many projects are developed in the offices of a donor or implementer or by a very limited group of experts. What is needed instead is an intense and sometimes time-consuming consultation process in close cooperation with the partners on the ground, also involving a variety of experts.

¹⁰ Interview on August 15, 2017

A clear theory of change. It very often happens that people involved in a project think they have a common understanding of what it is they want to achieve and what the possible impact might be. In reality these ideas often differ. There are many ways of thinking of change, e.g., as political action, as structural reform in certain sectors, or as developing a new culture of investigative journalism within a media landscape. Consequently, there is a big difference between a project that intends to produce change by supporting journalism schools or investigative startups and one that aims to contribute to anti-corruption processes by giving investigative journalists networking opportunities as well as legal support.

A monitoring system that includes useful indicators. Indicators are not only there to satisfy donors. They should help project managers to focus their attention on relevant issues, involve their partners and keep a project on track. Indicators, if well introduced, can help to see how alumni of journalism schools advance in their careers, show which kind of mentoring models work, identify shortcomings in the research practice of unexperienced reporters and make the case that certain innovative ideas have made a real impact.

A timely evaluation process that stimulates learning. Many evaluations end up in drawers, especially if they are produced after a project ended. Instead, external evaluators should be involved from early onwards to capture learning and to find out what worked well and what did not and share the results. Cross-border investigations are a good example: there are well-known international muckraking cooperations that are extremely successful. But there are also indications from the evaluation reports that some transnational support initiatives seemed rather artificial while many reporters preferred to be supported in the pursuit of national stories of relevance to their national audiences. How to best support cross-border work and when not to force it is still an open question that needs to be answered for each context and in close collaboration with local reporters.

The three traditional activities to support investigative journalism — trainings, scholarships and participating at conferences — will, if not supported by more holistic activities, not suffice to prepare investigative journalism for its future. The current challenges the media is facing demand broader strategies to help investigative journalism survive. All this means that broader, long-term support schemes are necessary, where not only investigations into specific topics are being supported on a project base but where the investigative media as a whole is strengthened. This aspect was also emphasized by interviewees from investigative media outlets in all regions.

In the past, we have seen three different kinds of approaches:

1. Broad international support programs dedicated to various aspects of investigative journalism. One example, although outside of the regional scope of this paper, is the Arab Reporters for Investigative Journalism (ARIJ), which produced remarkable results of supporting individual journalists, the educational system as well as different facets of the investigative culture in the media industry (DANIDA 2013, SIDA 2015). Another is the Regional Investigative Journalism Network (RIJN), which is part of OCCRP. With its focus on the Balkans, Western Eurasia, and the Caucasus, the project promotes investigative journalism through the creation of regional hubs, which support capacity building and story production (USAID 2015). One of the many challenges here is the internal management and organizational development of such a large project while at the same time involving partners on the ground. And the risk of such projects is that those involved only stay among their peers, not leaving their ‘investigative bubble’.

2. Promoting investigative journalism as part of a larger journalism support or media development approach. Examples are the “Economic and Political Reporting from Southeast Europe” project funded by the Robert Bosch Stiftung and the Thomson Reuters Foundation as well as the aforementioned SjCOOP mentoring project in Africa and the Middle East, which supported science journalism and investigative journalism. Both projects were very successful in promoting networking and career development of journalists. At the same time, these projects show that investigative journalism is a very special case and that muckraking in different contexts requires very different skills from reporters with other specializations or interests. Hence, such mixed projects need to compromise — or at least match — very different requirements.

3. Investigative journalism as part of a larger program towards good governance and citizen engagement. The Rockefeller (2013) Western Balkans program is an example for this approach, bringing together a “civil society triangle” of think tanks, investigative journalists, and grassroots organizations to advance democratic structures. One concern with such projects is that the media — and especially investigative journalism — may be exploited to advance certain topics that donors, implementers, or other partners on the ground would like to see communicated to a broad audience. Here, a dedicated approach is needed that gives investigative journalism the editorial liberty it needs and the support it deserves.

Investigative Journalism Support Model

Based on the analysis of trends and lessons learned above the authors propose the model presented in Figure 1. It describes specific elements needed to ensure the viability of an investigative media outlet, no matter if this is a digital startup or an investigative newsroom at a traditional newspaper. It is intended to serve donors, media development organizations, and media outlets to systematically assess the most urgent needs at a specific time. Media can also use this to identify strategic focus areas for donor support, considering existing skills as well as support that might have already been provided by others. Each aspect should be examined within its specific local context, if possible jointly by the donor or media development organization and the local media outlet.

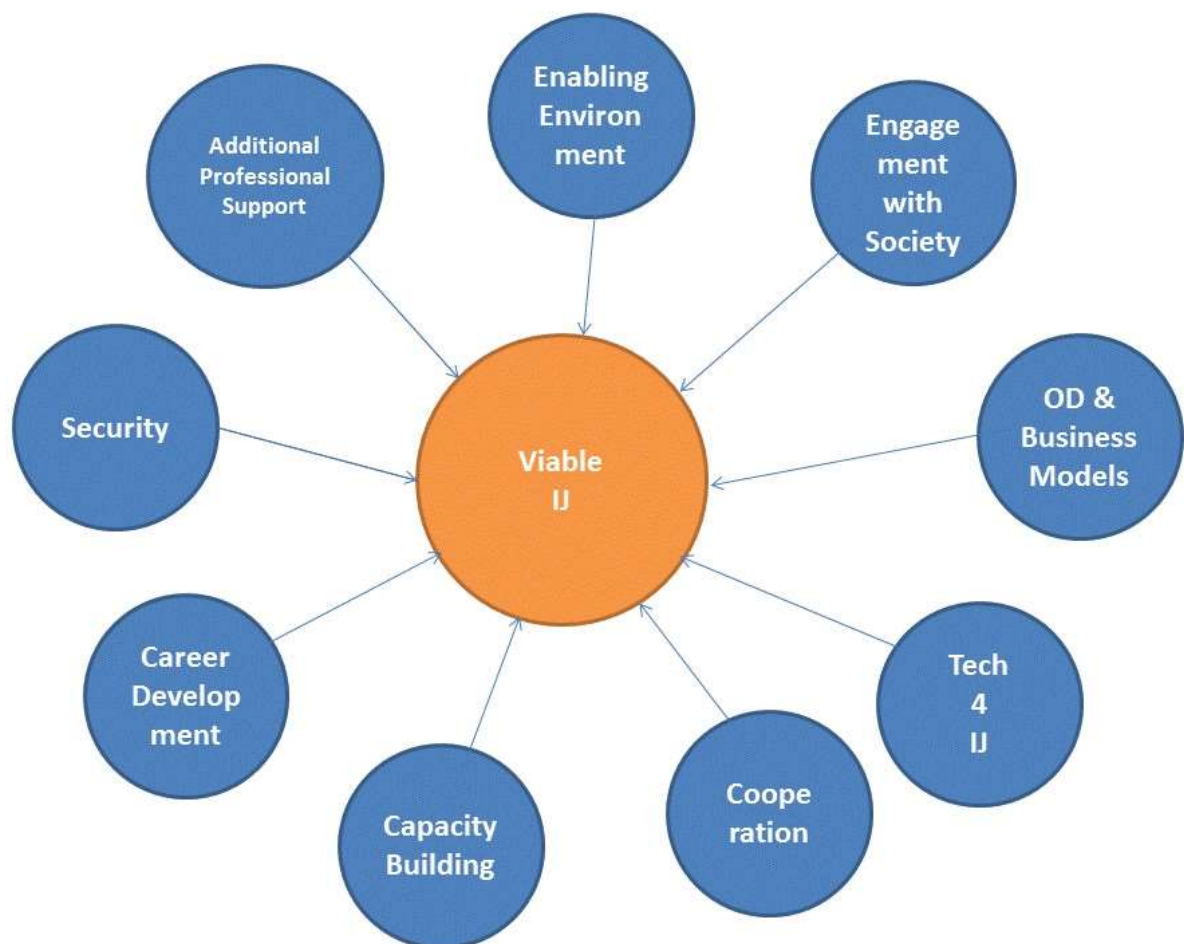


Fig 1: Investigative Journalism Support Model

The nine different areas (in blue) can be explored as follows. As support mechanisms might cover various viability aspects, they might be listed more than once:

Viability aspect	Lead questions	Possible support mechanisms
Organizational Development and Business Models	What type of processes do we need to manage and change our media outlet? What is a viable business model and how do we implement it?	Consultancy (e.g., on new organizational structures, kick-starting an organization, human resources, fundraising)
Tech 4 IJ	What technological tools exist to improve the research as well as editorial management and organization?	Expert consultancy (e.g., exploring or developing technology for the newsroom to (securely) share information, carry out research and analysis, facilitate data journalism, etc.); supporting development of technical services
Security	What are the threats against our journalists/editors/the media outlet as a whole? Where do they come from? How can they be anticipated and minimized?	Digital and physical security measures and trainings for journalists and editors, including how to deal with trauma; threat modelling
Cooperation	What other journalistic and non-journalistic actors exist who have a shared interest? Where are they? How can we meet them and exchange experiences?	Research collaboration at national level or cross-border; fostering exchange with peers and non-journalistic actors, e.g., at conferences or in JILabs
Enabling environment	Which legal, economic and political practices exist that prohibit/ foster investigative journalism? Are there any support mechanisms for IJs in place, e.g. membership associations, regular exchange, etc.?	Consulting and promoting actors to advance the right to access to information, source and whistleblower protection and the decriminalization of defamation; Support IJ Associations, Awards, Conferences as well as supporting actors of independent IJ
Engagement with Society	How can we involve our audience and other sectors of civil society to identify relevant topics, conduct research, increase our reach, and maximize impact? How would this open up	Exploring or developing digital tools for distribution, research, feedback, and fundraising to increase the audience size, income revenue, and impact; strategic consultancy of investigative teams and outlets

	possibilities for raising funds – crowdfunding, advertising, etc.? Who do we want to reach?	
Career Development	What are the needs of midcareer investigative journalists? How can investigative journalists and journalism overall be supported, nationally and/or internationally?	Scholarships, mentoring programs, awards
Additional Professional Support	What external professional support is needed?	Legal advice, strategic litigation and access to (affordable) legal defense in case of a journalist or media outlet being sued; administrative support; additional research from outside sources
Capacity Building	What skills do reporters and editors/teams need to carry out IJ? Are there people from other professional areas that we could train to support our investigations?	Consulting educational institutions on curricula for IJ; trainings, incl. e-learning, handbooks on basic journalistic investigative skills; capacities for editors to manage an investigative team, which may consist of reporters as well as other professionals; training of trainers

Final Conclusions and Recommendations

The research shows that a more strategic, comprehensive, and long-term approach is needed to support the viability of investigative journalism outlets as well as the sector itself. The proposed model can act as a guide for assessment and the development of a strategic approach. Successful and promising examples to foster a muckraking culture can be found in all regions and should be more widely shared, i.e., via evaluation reports. If this section of media (development) is to be supported in the long term for its impact on good governance, the donor community and media development actors need to invest more in assessing and sharing lessons learned and revise them on a regular basis as situations are rapidly changing. The main recommendations based on our research are:

Funds should be made available to support the organizational development of a media outlet and avoid short-term project funding, which can also question the editorial independence of a media outlet that is already vulnerable to intimidation by those in power. Moreover, seed

funding provides the necessary time and flexibility to develop a bespoke fundraising strategy and diversify income sources. For this, professionals with the necessary fundraising and administration skills need to be hired. Support needs to be flexible and adapt to evolving technological and political developments. Moreover, there should be a focus on the capacity building of editors and on the technological development for investigative newsrooms.

Engaging with audiences has been a key element of a successful business model and to ensure journalistic relevance as examples from Latin America and Eastern Europe have shown, promoting ownership and thereby increasing fundraising opportunities.

Capacity building remains still important but various facets need to be considered. While training courses in investigative skills are necessary to raise a new generation of muckrakers, these should be accompanied by mentoring programs and run over several months, not just days. Universities and/or training providers should include modules on basic fundraising, strategy development, and technology for audience engagement in their teachings and ensure that courses include practical aspects, such as internships at digital media outlets and the exchange with local experts. Moreover, the role of universities should be revised as possible facilitators of supportive ecosystem for investigative journalism to prepare and attract the muckrakers of the future.

References

- Albarrán de Alba, Gerardo. (2001). Diferencias en el periodismo de investigación en Estados Unidos y Latinoamérica. *Razón Y Palabra*. Mexico City. http://www.razonypalabra.org.mx/anteriores/n22/22_galbarran.html
- Albrecht, E., Hairsine, K., and Leidl, S. (2015): *Advancing Freedom of Expression. Using digital innovation to foster Article 19 in the Global South*. Bonn: DW Akademie. <http://www.dw.com/en/dw-akademie/digital-innovation-study/s-32581>
- Ansell, G. (2010). Chapter One: What is investigative journalism? *Investigative Journalism Manual*. Johannesburg: Jacana. http://www.investigative-journalism-africa.info/?page_id=31 on 23.05.13
- Bajak, A. (2017). *Eight Interactive Investigative Stories to Check Out*. Boston: Storybench.org <https://gijn.org/2017/07/10/eight-interactive-investigative-stories-to-check-out/>
- Buhl-Nielson, E. et.al. (2015). *Evaluation of the Swedish development cooperation in the MENA region 2010-2015*. Stockholm: SIDA. <http://www.sida.se/contentassets/49b982cf56bf4d649ceed9a87bf49524/0994b02a-a331-42d9948e-60c2a090a4c5.pdf>
- Chapman, J., Dziedzic, M. and Bajrovic, R. (2016). *The Rockefeller Brothers Fund's Western Balkans Program. Midterm Impact Assessment*. New York: Rockefeller Brothers Fund. https://www.rbf.org/sites/default/files/attachments/rbf-wb-assessment-report_march-2016.pdf
- Coronel, S. (2009) *Digging Deeper. A Guide for Investigative Journalists in the Balkans*. Sarajevo: Balkan Investigative Journalism Network. <http://www.osce.org/files/documents/1/f/77517.pdf>
- DANIDA. (2013). *Evaluation of the media cooperation under the Danish Arab Partnership Programme (2005-12)*. Copenhagen: Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. <http://www.netpublikationer.dk/um/11210/index.htm>
- Eijk, D. van (ed.). (2005). Introduction. *Investigative Journalism in Europe*, 1-30.
- Ettema, J. S. and Glassner, T. L. (1998). *Custodians of Conscience: Investigative Journalism and Public Virtue*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Evenson, K., Brunwasser, N., and de Garcia, D. (2015). *Midterm Performance Evaluation of the Regional Investigative Journalism Network (RIJN)*. Washington: USAID. http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00KM3J.pdf

Frère, M.S. (2012). Perspectives on the media in 'another Africa. *Ecquid Novi: African Journalism Studies*, 33(3), 1–12.

Frère, Marie-Soleil (2014). Journalist in Africa: A high-risk profession under threat. *Journal of African Media Studies*, 6 (2), 181-198.

Harber, A. and Renn, M. (2010) *Troublemakers. The Best of South Africa's Investigative Journalism*. Johannesburg: Jacana.

Hume, E. (2011). *Caught in the Middle: Central and Eastern European Journalism at a Crossroads*. CIMA. http://nieman.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/pod-assets/Image/microsites/post-comm/CIMA-Central_and_Eastern_Europe-Report_3.pdf

Hume, E. and Abbott, S. (2017). *The Future of Investigative Journalism: Global, Networked and Collaborative*. <https://cmds.ceu.edu/sites/cmcs.ceu.hu/files/attachment/article/1129/humeinvestigativejournalismsurvey.pdf>

Hunter, M.L. et.al. (2013). *Story Based Inquiry. A Manual for Investigative Journalists*. Paris: UNESCO. <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0019/001930/193078e.pdf>

Hunter, M.L. et.al. (2016). *Power is Everywhere*. <https://adobeindd.com/view/publications/b83cde7c-df9a-4c44-bc4e-001fc0e5200f/17dp/publication-web-resources/pdf/poweriseverywhere2017.pdf>

Ismail, J.A. and Deane, J. (2008). *The Kenyan 2007 Elections and their Aftermath: The Role of Media and Communication*. London: BBC World Service Trust. http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/trust/pdf/kenya_policy_briefing_08.pdf

Jurrat, N. (2016) *Media Development in Regions of Conflict, Transitional Countries, and Closed Societies*. Bonn: DW Akademie. <http://www.dw.com/download/35706157/dw-akademiejurratmedia-development-in-regions-of-conflict2016.pdf>

Kaplan, D. E. (2013). *Global Investigative Journalism: Strategies for Support*. Washington:

CIMA. <http://www.cima.ned.org/resource/global-investigative-journalism-strategies-for-support/>

Knight Center for Journalism in the Americas. (2017). *"It is more dangerous to investigate a murder than to commit one": Journalists confront grave violence in Mexico*.

<https://knightcenter.utexas.edu/blog/00-18826-it-more-dangerous-investigate-murder-commitone-journalists-confront-grave-violence-me>

Lublinski, J. and Spurk C. et.al. (2016). Triggering Change – How investigative journalists in SubSaharan Africa contribute to solving problems in society. *Journalism* 17(8), 1074-1094.

Mioli, T. and Nafria, I. (2017). *Innovative Journalism in Latin America*. Austin: Knight Center for Journalism in the Americas. <https://knightcenter.utexas.edu/ebook/innovative-journalism-latinamerica>

Mudhai, O.F. (2007). Light at the end of the tunnel? Pushing the boundaries in Africa. *Journalism* 8 (5) 536-544.

Protest, D.L., Cook, F.L., Doppelt, J.C. et al. (1991) *The Journalism of Outrage: Investigative Reporting and Agenda Building in America*. New York: Guilford Press.

Reboot. (2016). *People-Powered Media Innovation in West Africa*. New York and Abuja: Reboot. [http://westafricamedia.reboot.org/assets/2016_People-Powered-Media-Innovation-in-West-](http://westafricamedia.reboot.org/assets/2016_People-Powered-Media-Innovation-in-West-Africa.pdf)

[Africa.pdf](http://westafricamedia.reboot.org/assets/2016_People-Powered-Media-Innovation-in-West-Africa.pdf)

Robinson, J.J., Grennan, K. and Schiffrin, A. (2015). *Publishing for Peanuts. Public Version*. Columbia University School of International and Public Affairs. <http://www.cima.ned.org/wpcontent/uploads/2015/11/PublishingforPeanuts.pdf>

Schiffrin, A. (2010). Not really enough. Foreign donors and journalism training in Ghana, Nigeria and Uganda. *Journalism Practice*, 4 (3), 405-416

Schiffrin, A. (2014). *Global Muckraking. 100 Years of investigative journalism around the world*. New York: The New Press.

Schiffrin, A. and Rodrigues, E. (2016). Digital Technologies and the Extractive Sector: The New Source of Citizen Journalism in Resource-rich Countries, in Mutsvairo, S. (ed.).

Participatory Politics and Citizen Journalism in a Networked Africa. New York: Pallgrave MacMillan.

Schiffrin, A. and Lugambi, G (eds.). (2017). *African Muckraking*. Johannesburg: Jacana Media

Schneider, L., Hollifield, A. and Lublinski, J. (2016). *Measuring the Business Side: Indicators to Assess Media Viability*. Bonn: DW Akademie.
<http://www.dw.com/downloads/36841789/dwakademiediscussion-papermedia-viability-indicators.pdf>

Sembra Media. (2017). *Inflection Point*. Los Angeles: Sembra Media.
<http://data.sembramedia.org/download-the-study/>

Smit, M., et.al. (2012). *Deterrence of fraud with EU funds through investigative journalism in EU*. Brussels: European Union.

Stetka, V. and Ornebring, H. (2013). Investigative journalism in Central and Eastern Europe: autonomy, business models and democratic roles. *International Journal of Press/Politics*, 18 (4), pp.413-435.

Sullivan, D. (2013). *Investigative Reporting in Emerging Democracies: Models, Challenges, and Lessons Learned*. Washington: CIMA. <http://www.cima.ned.org/resource/investigative-reportingin-emerging-democracies-models-challenges-and-lessons-learned/>

Sullivan, D. (2016). Want more Panama Papers? Here's How!, *Foreign Policy*, 11 April 2016, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/04/11/want-more-panama-papers-heres-how/>

Thomson, A. (2010). *An Introduction to African Politics*, 3rd edn. London: Routledge.

Yusha'u, M.J. (2009). Investigative Journalism and Scandal Reporting in the Nigerian Press, *Ecquid Novi: African Journalism Studies*. 30 (2), 155-174.

Waisbord, Silvio. (2000). *Watchdog Journalism in South America. News, Accountability, and Democracy*. New York, Chichester: Columbia University Press.

Challenges in doing investigative reporting: A Zambian case study

By Twange Kasoma, Ph.D Radford University and Greg Pitts, Ph.D. Middle Tennessee State
University

Abstract

First, the newly installed Patriotic Front government of Zambian President Edgar Lungu launched indiscriminate shutdowns and license revocations against private media (Committee to Protect Journalists, 2016) deemed to oppose the PF government. More recently (April 2017) was the arrest of Hakainde Hichilema -- the president of the United Party for National Development, Zambia's biggest political opposition -- on treason charges (*Wall Street Journal*, April 19, 2017). The treason charges, punishable by death, stemmed from allegations that Hichilema's motorcade failed to yield to Lungu's presidential convoy. Although Hichilema was eventually released after four months in prison following a deal proctored by the Commonwealth Secretary General Patricia Scotland, local, full-fledged investigative journalistic coverage of his court proceedings was at best spotty.

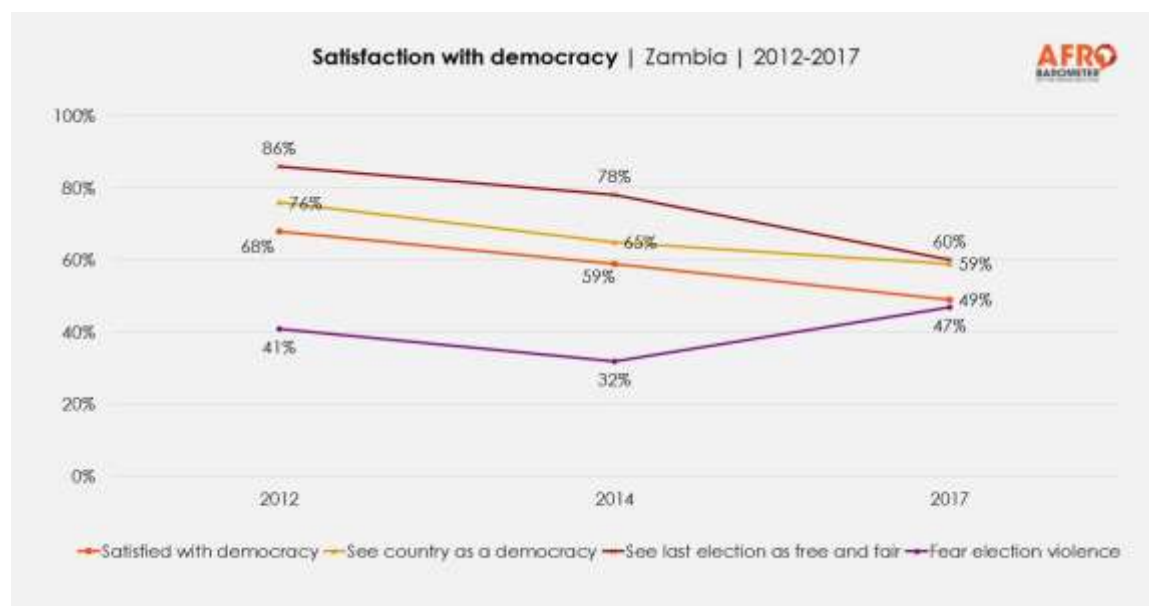
Ironically, these actions come when a survey of members of parliament finds overwhelming support for press freedom among the country's legislators (Kasoma & Pitts, 2017). Yet there appears to be a reluctance to implement changes that would provide for a freer press system. Using the results of this survey as a backdrop, in-depth interviews were conducted with a select number of journalists and editors on the challenges posed in conducting investigative journalism and day-to-day enterprise reporting in Zambia under the current political environment with a deteriorating press freedom index (Freedom House, 2017). The results elaborate on the professional orientations of the journalists and editors interviewed to understand their motivations for continuing in a career with ever-difficult challenges to professional success.

Key Words: Zambia, press freedom, media use, investigative reporting

Introduction

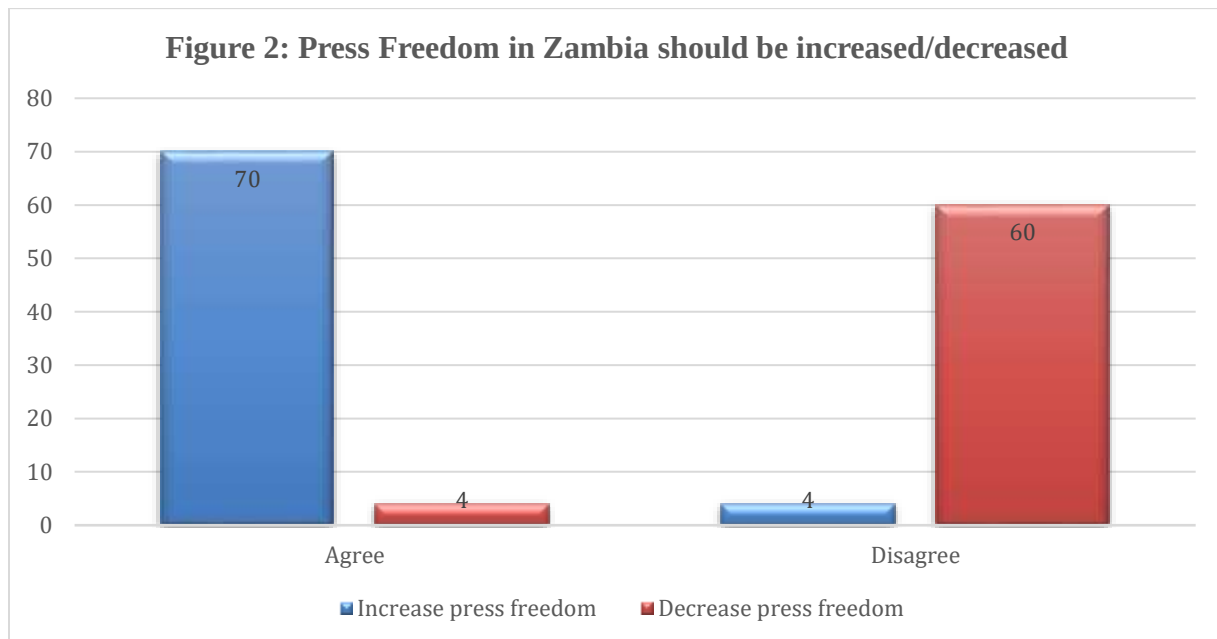
Starkman (2014) equates investigative journalism with accountability journalism and posits that it serves as “the mother’s milk of the journalism industry”. Investigative journalism lays the very foundation upon which the media’s watchdog role gains its impetus. According to Kovach and Rosenstiel (2014), the creation of the Pulitzer Prize in 1964 as an award for journalists who demonstrated good investigative reporting provided a division between journalism and other forms of communication. Noteworthy is that through investigative journalism “the earliest journalists firmly established as a core principle their responsibility to examine the unseen corners of society” (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2014, p.143). Without a free press, however, the ability to investigate issues of importance to the public is maligned, and with it the very essence of a democracy. According to Afrobarometer (2017), although Zambians have long been committed to the ideals of democracy, the last five years have seen a significant drop in satisfaction with the way democracy is working (Figure 1).

Figure 1



Source: Afrobarometer (2017)

When we rewind to 1991 when the wave of democratic change (Ake, 1996) swept across the continent, Zambia was hailed as exemplary. Pye (2004) noted with optimism that as multiparty democracy took deeper roots in Africa, “we (could) expect greater appreciation for the values of press freedom and the protection of the rights of professional communications” (p. 50). The aforementioned make the current dissatisfaction with the way democracy is working in Zambia -- which should be viewed concurrently with the deteriorating press freedom index (Freedom House, 2017) -- concerning. Interestingly though, a series of investigations into perceptions of members of parliament about press freedom suggest strong support (Pitts, 2000; Kasoma & Pitts, 2017). As noted in Figure 2, about 95 percent (n=70) of Parliamentarians surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that press freedom in Zambia should be increased. In the same survey, about 94 percent (n=60) disagreed with the counterpart statement that press freedom in Zambia should be decreased.



Source: Kasoma & Pitts, 2017.

Note: Although N=74, for the ‘Decrease in press freedom’ variable, eight Parliamentarians neither agreed nor disagreed with decreasing press freedom while two did not respond.

What pertains on the ground however is a reluctance to implement changes that would provide for a freer press system. This was particularly evident following the August 2016 elections when the newly installed Patriotic Front government of President Edgar Lungu launched indiscriminate shutdowns and license revocations against private media (Committee to Protect Journalists, 2016) deemed to oppose the PF government. In order for democracy including the essential elements of press freedom, individual rights, and competitive elections to develop successfully, there is a leadership mind-set that must be overcome (Blake, 1997).

Press freedom requires two things: parallel development of an independent and responsible press, and an elected government willing to allow the press to function without interference. Speaking to both conditions and specific to Zambia's case, Kasoma (2000) asserts that, "My view is that the press for as long as it is relatively free and independent can, in some measure, help to democratize society" (p. 40). Historically, African governments have been unwilling to cede their control over media and to establish independent, transparent, and credible regulation of the media (Callamard, 2010). Although theoretically, an unfettered press should go hand in hand with development, African development, politically and economically since British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan's "winds of change" 1960 pronouncement, has been a contentious issue for more than a half-century. Lahav (1985) identifies the obvious conundrum this creates. It is difficult for mass media to promote civil society development when the media system reflects the society in which it operates and that society is unable or unwilling to sustain a press vibrant in news gathering and in support of a local economy.

The seemingly bleak outlook has not necessarily deterred investigative journalism in Africa. Saleh (2015) demonstrates via a series of snapshots African journalists operating in conditions of risk and amidst coercive societies as they strive to attain the truth. In Zambia, Kasoma (1997) wrote about hard hitting exposés by the now defunct church-owned *National Mirror*. It is hard to separate the fact that the *National Mirror* is no more from the harsh reality of practicing investigative journalism in Zambia. Clearly, investigative journalism is by no means an easy undertaking anywhere in the world (Svensson, 2017; Starkman, 2014), but especially so on the African continent. Among the impediments that Yusha'u (2009) identifies that hinder the practice

of investigative journalism in Africa include poor remuneration, bad working conditions, corruption within the media, and the clientelism-laced relationship between publishers and politicians. Aiyetan (2015) cites cash-strapped newsrooms across Africa as phasing-out time-consuming investigative reporting.

In Zambia, the current political and legislative arena also poses its own challenges. MISA Zambia (2017) reports that Zambian President Edgar Lungu has given police the power to ban material deemed threatening to public safety. President Lungu granted the threatened state of emergency to deal with a string of arson attacks but the authority gives police the ability to ban public meetings, impose curfews and restrict movements, and prohibit the publication and dissemination of matters regarded as prejudicial to public safety. The actions effectively nullify citizen protections provided by Article 20(1) of the Zambian Constitution. A further consequence of this legislation, according to Bariyo (2017), is that it allows President Lungu to impose broad restrictions on the media. Invocation of laws restrictive of press freedom is not new (MISA Zambia, 2013), as the press tends to be perceived as an enemy of government (Kasoma, 1995). What is new is the heightened nature of such invocations under the current government (Kasoma & Pitts, 2017), all while stagnating the passage of progressive legislation such as the Freedom of Information Bill (MISA Zambia, 2016).

The dominant journalism paradigm in most of Africa has been development communication for conveyance of useful information through media outlets to improve the quality of life of listeners and readers, and unite nations to support the state (Rogers, 1990). But the false idea that development news is an effective replacement for robust, independent and investigative journalism clashes with the role of journalism outside much of Africa. The need for insightful news contributions about Africa from a healthy (investigative) journalism environment across the continent is even more important when viewed from the changed global reporting landscape. International news coverage once consisted of stories from Western reporters, sometimes characterized as promoting stereotypes or a colonial history (Bunce, 2015; Savelsberg, 2015). The mix of stories written by outsiders create a manufactured view of a *continent as country*, with famine and civil unrest from border to border. But changing news budgets have changed coverage

patterns. Wu and Hamilton (2004) found a dramatic reduction in the number of American nationals posted abroad. Dwindling news budgets have resulted in more international news coverage dependent, to a large extent, on journalists in the region (Bunce, 2015).

When local reporters are depended on to report to a national audience, the first challenge they face is the ability to practice their craft within a country with a chilled press environment and few, if any protections for journalists. Bunce (2015) noted the results of his 2011 research where he concluded “that local journalists may be more vulnerable to persecution of repressive governments” (p. 45). Thus, a healthy, supportive and sustaining relationship between press systems/ journalists and government is needed to ensure at least reasonable, if not robust reporting as the responsibility for international reporting of news from across Africa shifts to local journalists. Thus a slippery-slope exists for Zambia and other countries seeking democracy: without a free press and individual liberties there can be no democracy yet without democracy there cannot be a free press and individual liberties.

Confounding the problems of a free press in many African countries is the absence of democratic governance to promote investigative reporting. Raphael (2005) identifies the importance of officials and jurists as reporters’ best sources, collaborators and defenders of investigative reporting. Without the parallel tracks of good governance, civil society and a press system with independence from political and economic power, there can be little hope of relationships between reporters and government officials to support investigative journalism. Raphael (2005) is blunt when noting that, “Investigative journalism will not survive without sustaining the web of relationships with government that ensures that this more important kind of news for democracy is funded, distributed, and protected from extinction...” (2015, p. 245). This paper examines the state of investigative reporting in Zambia through a series of in-depth interviews with working journalists and editors.

Method and brief profile of interviewees

A case study, utilizing in-depth interviews, was the preferred methodology. Wimmer and Dominick (2014) note that case studies are advantageous when it comes to gathering descriptive and explanatory data. This is because the researcher is afforded “the ability to deal with a wide spectrum of evidence” (Wimmer & Dominick, 2014, p. 144). A total of twelve journalists and editors representing both privately-owned and state-owned, government-controlled media outlets, which included newspapers, radio, and TV, were interviewed over a two-week period. Seven were women and five men. Their professional experience ranged from two years to nearly twenty years. The interviewees’ educational credentials were also varied. They included journalists and editors who had diplomas (the equivalent of an associate degree in the U.S.) in journalism from Evelyn Hone College as their highest educational attainment. Others had a degree (a resultant of four years of study) in mass communication from the University of Zambia (UNZA). There was also a unique case of an editor at a privately-owned radio station who held a law degree. A few interviewees reported returning to school, as part-time students, to pursue studies in fields such as development studies.

All twelve interviewees fervently discussed how, despite the many challenges faced, passion for serving the public is what led them to pursuing a career path in journalism and what makes them continue to persevere. One interviewee posited that as they work for student media to gain professional experience, they already get a dose of the challenges they will face upon graduation, especially where intimidation of journalists is concerned. “UNZA Radio is a classic example of how the police walk in and intimidate student journalists for criticizing the state on The Lusaka Star, a current affairs magazine show,” the interviewee states.

Challenges journalists/editors face in doing investigative reporting

A question posed to all twelve respondents was: “In cases where you have had to engage in investigative reporting, what challenges have you faced in covering those stories? Cite some specific instances/examples.” The main challenges the interviewees highlight are: (1) Lack of legal

provisions/instruments that grant journalists access to information and running parallel to that the maintenance of archaic laws on statute books that limit access; (2) Government red tape; (3) Inadequate funding and institutional bureaucracy; (4) Political violence; and (5) Inadequate training.

Lack of Access to Information

A number of the interviewees pointed to access to information as a crucial challenge. Since the democratization process that took place in the early 1990s that saw Zambia transition from a one-party to a multi-party state, subsequent governments have flirted with the idea of passing a Freedom of Information Bill (FOIB), yet none has. A male journalist at a privately-owned newspaper vividly describes the dilemma journalists face:

Access to information is the greatest challenge. Zambian sources, especially government sources, are hard to find (i.e. for hard copy documents) and hard to speak to (i.e. human sources). For example, recently I wanted to unearth corruption in the Zambia-Malawi maize deal saga, but I couldn't due to lack of access to information.

For this journalist, the speedy enactment of FOIB would be a step in the right direction, but he is also quick to note what else needs to be fixed legislative-wise:

Lately, harsh laws hinder investigative journalism in Zambia. Draconian laws in the Penal Code, such as publication of false news, scare most of us from becoming too investigative. Moreover, for fear of arrest and jail, most of us just decide to write stories from press events and statements.

The interviewees further noted that the recent invocation of Article 31, which gives the President powers to declare a threatened state of emergency, has further compounded the access to information problem. As reported by the *Wall Street Journal*: “State-of-emergency legislation

would let President Edgar Lungu impose broad restrictions on the media and freedom of assembly and movement.” A female journalist at a privately-owned radio station provided the following insight about the impact currently being felt as a result of the invocation of Article 31:

Currently, there is an element of fear as journalists are not entirely free to report on pertinent issues. This is because of the state of Threatened Public Emergency Status which was declared by the President in accordance with Article 31 of the republican constitution. According to this Article, the President has power to make such a proclamation when he sees a situation, which if left unchecked, has the potential to result into a declaration of a State of Emergency. Even though the enactment of Statutory Instrument Number 55 of 2017 [Article 31] does not make any reference to media, the declaration has created a lot of caution and self-regulation in the media circles as people are scared of being detained for extended periods of time as the law permits.

The fear of detention became one editor’s reality at a privately-owned radio station as she pursued an investigative story highlighting the discrepancy in the administration of the BCG vaccination in newborns and what impact this had. Babies born at Zambia’s biggest referral hospital -- the University Teaching Hospital -- received the vaccination upon birth while in other health centers and clinics around the country there was a one-week time lapse. Here’s how the editor narrated her ordeal in pursuing this story:

I was covering a story that required me to package my news item as a report on Bacille Calmette-Guerin (BCG) vaccine that is administered in Zambia to newborn babies as a prevention of tuberculosis. Babies born at the University Teaching Hospital (UTH) are vaccinated immediately after birth while babies born in clinics are administered the vaccine after a week. Before embarking on my investigation I got permission from a doctor in high authority from the Ministry of Gender and Child Development and made an appointment to see a doctor at UTH. After a successful interview with the doctor I went ahead to interview breastfeeding mothers who had given birth from clinics [and were at UTH for referrals] when a

security guard told me that it was unlawful for me to carry out an interview with the women at the hospital because I was not in the company of a UTH Public Relations Assistant Officer. I was detained and threatened that I was going to be charged with impersonation. They attempted to confiscate my recorder which I resisted. I later asked for permission from the security supervisor to contact my superiors which I was allowed. After conversing with my superiors they released me.

Government Red Tape

Interviewees also bemoaned the government red tape that hinders their investigative endeavors. A male journalist at a state-owned newspaper noted:

In my coverage of investigative stories, government officials, especially junior officers and at times directors take long to respond to queries, especially those perceived to be too investigative in nature. They choose to refer journalists to their seniors who also at many instances advise us to write a press query which they may never respond to.

For journalists who work for state-owned media they face a further hurdle of government censorship as part of the red tape, especially where investigative stories are concerned. As a female journalist at a state-owned newspaper narrated:

I decided during COP21 [Climate Change Conference] in Warsaw to live at the same hotel where the Zambian delegation was living. I also took time to go shopping with them whenever they were going shopping (...) they would skip the meetings and most of the delegation were buying fitting materials [building implements] for the houses they were building back home while others had orders of clothes, shoes and related stuff for people back home. I had gathered quite interesting stories about the delegation and their behavior when they go for such

meetings *but this story was never supported by the minister* and my office thought it was very sensitive so it was never published. It is difficult to have an investigative story published if it is highlighting the ills of government officials.

Inadequate Funding and Institutional Bureaucracy

Delving into institutional bureaucracy, a male journalist at state-owned television station reports that: “It is very difficult to engage in investigative reporting at my place of work due to lack of a recognized support structure to support the beat.” He adds that this is also evident in resource allocation: “A car and camera is shared among no less than four reporters. This makes it difficult and almost impossible to conclusively follow up an investigative lead story. That's why most stories that are done are scheduled and event based.” Where inadequate funding is concerned, a female journalist at a privately-owned radio station aptly explains its negative impact on doing investigative journalism thus:

Financial constraints remain one of the biggest challenges in my quest to engage in investigative reporting in that it is difficult to travel to far-flung areas to cover a story because you will need transport, accommodation and sometimes people that have the information request that you pay them something for them to help you.

For example, I wanted to do a story about street kids that have been raping women in the night. The street kids requested that I give them some money for them to disclose the name of their friend who raped an identified lady.

Political Violence

The interviewees also pointed out that now more than ever before, political violence targeted at journalists has become commonplace. A female journalist at a privately-owned radio station explains how she and a colleague almost fell prey to political violence:

Political interference is also a challenge especially from party supporters. Sometime last year, my colleague from another radio station and I were almost beaten by party cadres because they felt we had written false stories about their president.

According to a male editor with ten years of experience at a privately-owned radio station, utterances by the police whom journalists should seek solace from have had their own negative impact:

The Inspector General of Police recently warned during a media briefing that media houses that publish or broadcast content that is deemed to alarm the nation risk being closed. That statement has caused a lot of fear amongst the journalism fraternity. There is a lot of self-censorship by journalists for fear of offending the powers that be.

Inadequate Training

Waisbord (1996) in studying Latin American journalists found that lack of training was an impediment to investigative reporting. Similarly, interviewees for this study also report the need to be better educated in not only how to be more strategic and deliberate in their pursuit of investigative journalism, but also how to cope with the challenges. One journalist, a female at a privately-owned radio station, noted that education in entrepreneurship would be helpful in overcoming the funding constraints they face. Another, a male journalist at a state-owned newspaper observed that: “There is need for us journalists to continuously sharpen our skills through training in order to meet the demands that come with the reporter working in the 21st century.” Adding that the investigative journalism landscape “will even be better when all journalists embrace [training in] professionalism and the need to adhere to media ethics.”

Way Forward for Investigative Journalism in Zambia

The term *development* in the African context has been tossed about with minimal sincerity and little impact on the quality of the lives of the citizens across the continent. Development for some leaders has come to mean establishing a media system that galvanizes support for the political party in power while pretending to unite the citizens. But if development is to enable a country to transition to democracy, development and governance must support not only free and fair elections but also free press and free speech. This includes a system promoting openness for journalists to access information from civil servants, including police and government record keepers.

The job of the press is to report the events taking place in the country. While many stories may be positive, even negative stories—investigative stories—are not meant to embarrass but to focus attention on problems of governance, administration or corruption that should not exist. The press can be a partner but it must be an independent partner, free of intimidation, whether from State House or local police officials. The challenge for any government is to resist being thin-skinned and recognize that journalists report issues of economic, social and civil concern; these are issues of concern to the citizenry and they should concern the officials representing the citizens. This is true for the United States where the current president blusters about fake news to Zambia with concerns of a threatened state of emergency and potential speech and press suppression. Saleh (2015) notes the importance of the free and independent press to promote not only immediate self-improvement but also improvement for future generations. Elected officials who campaign for office on the promise of developing the nation should likewise campaign in support of a free press that will address issues for improvement of future generations. Aiyetan (2015, p. 18) put it best when noting that investigative journalism “holds so much potential to have an impact on good governance and the substance of democracy and development...”

The five challenges we have identified through this series of interviews are within the scope of government to address. The challenge for elected officials is to remember why they campaigned for office in the first place. A transparent and freely operating government will create a climate for daily reporting and investigative work to examine important issues. An

important step in that direction echoed by all the interviewees for this study is that the government should prioritize passage of FOIB to enable them access to information.

References

Afrobarometer (2017). Zambians sound alarm for eroding democracy, Afrobarometer survey shows. Retrieved from <http://www.afrobarometer.org/press/zambians-sound-alarm-eroding-democracy-afrobarometer-survey-shows>

Aiyetan, D. (2015). Constant Change in Investigative Reporting in Africa. In Progress of investigative reporting overseas. Coronel, S, Aiyetan, D., Mulvad, N. and De Toletto, J. IRE Journal. 38: 2. Retrieved from Ebsco Host..

Ake, C. (1996). Democracy and Development in Africa, Washington, D. C.: The Brookings Institution.

Bariyo, N. (2017, July 6). Zambia's president calls for sweeping emergency powers as opposition crackdown intensifies. Wall Street Journal. Retrieved from <https://www.wsj.com/articles/zambias-president-calls-for-sweeping-emergency-powers-as-opposition-crackdown-intensifies-1499332951>

Blake, C. (1997). Democratization: The Dominant Imperative for National Communication Policies in Africa in the 21st Century, Gazette 59, 253-269.

Bunce, M. (2005). International News and the image of Africa: New Storytellers, new narratives? In J. Gallagher (ed.) Images of Africa, Manchester, United Kingdom: University of Manchester Press. From <http://www.jstor.org>.

Callamard, A. (2010). Accountability, Transparency, and Freedom of Expression in Africa. Social Research, 77:4, 1211-1240.

Committee to Protect Journalists, (2016, November 8). For Zambia's press, election year bring assaults and shut down orders. Retrieved from <https://cpj.org/blog/2016/11/for-zambias-press-election-year-brings-assaults-an.php>.

Freedom House (2017). Zambia: Freedom of the Press 2017. Retrieved from <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2017/zambia>.

- Kasoma, F.P. (1995). The role of the independent media in Africa's change to democracy. *Media, Culture and Society* 17(4), 537-555.
- Kasoma, F.P. (2000). *The press and multiparty politics in Africa*. Tampere, Finland: University of Tampere.
- Kasoma, T. & Pitts, G. (2017). The Zambian press freedom conundrum: Reluctance rather than resilience. *Journal of African Media Studies*, 9(1), 129-144.
- Kovach, B. & Rosenstiel, T. (2014). *The Elements of Journalism: What Newspeople Should Know and the Public Should Expect*, (3rd ed.). NY: Three Rivers Press.
- Lahav, P. (1985). *Press Law in Modern Democracies: A Comparative Study*, New York: Longman Publishers.
- MISA Zambia (2013). State of media freedom in Southern Africa 2013: Zambia National Overview 2013. In *So this is democracy?* (pp. 138-151). Retrieved from http://www.misa.org/files/STID_2013_Zambia.pdf.
- MISA Zambia, (2016). State of the media in Zambia. Retrieved from <http://misa.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/State-of-the-media-Zambia-Third-Quarter.pdf>
- MISA Zambia (2017). Threatened state of emergency cuts freedom of expression. Retrieved from <http://zambia.misa.org/2017/08/30/threatened-state-emergency-cuts-freedom-expression/>
- Pitts, G. (2000). Democracy and Press Freedom in Zambia: Attitudes of members of Parliament toward media and media regulation. *Communication Law and Policy* (5), 269-294.
- Pye, L. (2004). Communication and Political Development. In C. C. Okigbo and F. Eribo (Eds.), *Development and Communication in Africa*, (pp. 47-54). Oxford, UK: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Raphael, C. (2005). *Investigated Reporting: Muckrakers, Regulators, and the Struggle over Television Documentary*, Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press. From

<http://www.jstor.org>.

Rogers, E. (1990). Forward. In F. L. Casmir (Ed.), *Communication in Development*, (pp. vii-viii). Norwood, N.J.: Ablex.

Saleh, I. (2015). Digging for transparency: How African journalism only scratches the surface of conflict. *Global Media Journal: African Edition*, 9(1): 1-10.

Savelsberg, J. (2015). Rules of the Journalistic Game, Autonomy, and the Habitus of Africa Correspondents. In *Representing Mass Violence: Conflicting Responses to Human Rights Violations in Darfur* (pp. 205-221). Oakland, California: University of California Press. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/j.ctt1ffjn3g.14>.

Starkman, D. (2014). *The watchdog that didn't bark: The financial crisis and the disappearance of investigative journalism*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Svensson, M. (2017). The rise and fall of investigative journalism in China: Digital opportunities and political challenges. *Media, Culture & Society*. 39(3) 440–445.

Waisbord, S. R. (1996). Investigative journalism and political accountability in South American democracies. *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, 13, 343-363.

Wimmer, R.D. & Dominick, J.R. (2014). *Mass Media Research: An Introduction*. 10th edition. Wadsworth. Boston: MA.

Wu, D. & Hamilton, J. (2004). US Foreign Correspondents: Changes and Continuity at the Turn of the Century. *Gazette: The International Journal for Communication Studies*, 66(6), 517-532.

Yusha'u, M.J. (2009). Investigative journalism and scandal reporting in the Nigerian press. *Equid Novi: African Journalism Studies*, 30(2): 155-174.

Challenges of doing investigative journalism in Tanzania: How do you swim with sharks without being swallowed?

By George Mwita¹

10

¹ George Mwita is the Monitoring & Evaluation Manager, Tanzania Media Foundation (TMF)

Abstract

The business of journalism is about finding the facts; journalists, traditionally, are the watchdogs of the society, whose mission is to sniff out wrongs, point fingers at those to blame, and report in a way that triggers accountability and beneficial to public interests. If this is true, then, investigative reporting is simply good reporting.

Around the world including Tanzania, investigative journalism is under threat from a variety of hostile forces that may seem to have different agendas yet use similar tactics and procedures. Though we had few media entities in Tanzania during 1980's and 1990's the role of investigative journalism was evident. Today, despite the exponential growing of the media industry in Tanzania, investigative journalism is declining day after day.

Investigative journalists in Africa and Tanzania for that matter, often operate in environments – ‘Sharks’ which seem by default designed to shut them down. Repressive media laws, lack of resources, emergence of technology and a widespread culture of secrecy are but a few of the challenges facing journalists questioning the conduct of those in power. For example, the enactment of the cybercrime act (2015), Statistics act (2015) and the Media Service Act (2016) which criminalizes defamation and sedition offences have drastically put Tanzanian journalists in a tight corner in conducting any ‘critical and thorough journalism’ as referred to by the Dutch Association for Investigative Journalism. This situation has been made even worse since the 5th president of the Republic of Tanzania ascended to power.

Therefore, this research paper aims to identify and document the challenges - ‘Sharks’ facing investigative journalists in Tanzania and probable mitigation strategies ‘Ways to swim with the sharks’ as we focus in conducting journalism that involves not just relaying information but entails an in-depth research, using impact-driven approach in order to reach accurate conclusions that are unbiased and untainted by the beliefs or views of the investigative reporter.

The research is guided by the watchdog theory of the press by Lichtenberg (1990). The theory asserts that the press should criticize and evaluate the government and other institutions to ensure they don't become corrupt or overstep their power. The basic idea is that media needs to oversee the performance of government and private officials and uncover all hidden matters which may affect the public negatively.

Key words: Investigative journalism, environment

If investigative reporting reveals scandals, and shames the individuals involved, as indeed it does, it goes without saying, therefore, that those caught out in wrong doing will never like it and in fighting back, they are always brutal. In Africa, investigative reporters are increasingly censored, kidnapped, tortured, imprisoned and in the worst cases, killed.

A. Introduction

Today the investigative journalism is declining or rather dying despite the exponential growth of media industry in Tanzania if compared in 1990s because of the liberalization policies. Private ownership of media was allowed and the country started to witness variety of newspapers, TV and radio station. Immediately after the re-introduction of multiparty politics, newspapers like *Family Mirror*, *Rai*, *Motomoto*, *Heko*, *Shaba*, and *Wakati ni Huu*, *Tanganyika leo*, *Radi*, *Shaba*, *Baraza*, *The Express* and *Fahari* championed the reform agenda as well as playing the watchdog role (Kilimwiko 2009).

Investigative reporting can be understood as that type of high-quality reporting which is based on in-depth and sound research, facts, and statistics. Documentary research, far-reaching interviews involving public and private facts, are involved, along with the use of crime solving tools and technologies, like security cameras and surveillance instruments. Investigative reporting is all about bringing truth before public, which public is unaware of. Investigative reporting leads to fair depiction of facts, and is powerful and careful at the same time.

Paul Wilson, a freelance writer for Free Press Release, defines it as news with a difference. “It is critical and in-depth investigations into a happening or policy which will serve to prevent or correct a wrong, prevent crimes, save the planet from destruction, and shape the future of the world in more ways than one. It is reporting the unknown, the hidden, and so, the investigative journalist becomes the keeper or custodian of public conscience. It is a field where a mere niggling thought or suspicion becomes an expose of wrong doings. It questions actions and decisions and brings to the limelight outrageous acts and inhuman actions.” Simply put, he concluded, “An investigative journalist polices society in the larger interests of mankind.”

For any story to qualify as an investigative report, it must be based on the work of the journalist and where resources permit, his or her team. Such a report may start with a tip, and while such a tip may be an exclusive story if published, there must be an added value, an investigation

must be carried out, not only to authenticate the source but to validate the claims in the tip for it to qualify as investigative reporting.

B. Investigative journalism in Tanzania

For more than two decades post political independence achieved in 1961, Tanzania had a party or state-controlled-press which provided no fertile ground for the growth of the independent press.

Coronel argues that investigative journalists need to look beyond individuals; “The best investigative work exposes not just individuals, but also systemic failures. Investigative reports show how individual wrongs are part of a larger pattern of negligence or abuse and the systems that make these possible. They examine what went wrong and show who suffered from the mistakes. They probe not just what is criminal or illegal, but also what may be legal and overboard but nonetheless harmful.” (Coronel, 2010, p.113)

Investigative journalism though has evolved and matured over the periods into three distinct forms; original investigative reporting, interpretative reporting and reporting on investigations.

“Original investigative reporting involves tactics similar to the ones used by the police. It uncovers information not before gathered by others in order to inform the public of events or circumstances that might affect their lives. Interpretative (investigative) reporting develops as the result of careful thought and analysis of an idea as well as dogged pursuit of facts to bring together information in a new, more complete context that provides deeper public understanding. Reporting on investigations develops from the discovery or leak of information from an official investigation already underway or in preparation.” (Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2007, p.146-7)

Under such circumstances, journalism was shaped in the slavish manner to satisfy the actual demands of the state irrespective of the majority disapproval of what the media presented to the mass. Satisfaction of the minority vested with power was what the role of the press was determined by. The question of investigative journalism, throughout the stated period, had to be dependent on the approval of the party or government.

Therefore, this discussion focuses on why investigative journalism has been regarded as one of the most challenging and yet rewarding branches of media. It's going to look at challenges including; capacity, legal regime, ethics, economies, witness protection and the rewarding part that includes it contributing to an open and accountable society, contributing to good governance, promoting speech and democracy and personal improvement.

C. Environment

When journalists and other media stakeholders got together to commemorate World Press Freedom Day on 3 June, 2017, they recognized and discussed how government, media and society need each other (TMF² Report, 2017). Concerns raised at that meeting noted that the failure of government and media to work together has a negative impact on society, which has the right to reliable and relevant information.

A number of incidences has taken place since January 2017 that capture the mood of concern, suspicion and vulnerability that currently exists in the media sector in Tanzania. They include most notably the Dar es Salaam Regional Commissioner Paul Makonda's attempt to unduly influence Clouds Media's broadcast choices, the sudden and unexplained replacement of Nape Nnauye as Minister of Information, Culture, Arts and Sports with Dr. Harrison Mwakyembe and threats to the safety and security of journalists, during the course of their work that happened during a press conference held by one faction of the Civic United Front- CUF (TMF Report, 2017).

² TMF- Tanzania Media Foundation: is a company limited by guarantee and not having a share capital, registered as a public-interest, non-partisan and non-profit making organisation and stands for a strong and independent media sector promoting accountability.

D. ‘Sharks’ in Tanzanian Investigative Journalism

The ‘sharks’ in investigative journalism range from: Capacity, legal framework, ethics, poor economy, and emergence of ICT.

- i. **Journalistic Capacity:** This involves both professional and academic. Education system in Tanzania does not prepare adequately people joining the profession. Majority of the journalists hold diploma level of education. This limited professional capacity sometimes makes beating deadlines another stiff challenge facing investigative journalists. Sometimes the employer feels that the story is taking too long and due to these pressures, sometimes they are forced to abandon it sometimes while so close to seeing the light of day.
- ii. **The legal framework/regime:** The legal regime includes laws, constitution, statutes and regulation which are very prohibiting. For example, the enactment of the cybercrime act (2015), Statistics act (2015) and the Media Service Act (2016) which criminalizes defamation and sedition offences have drastically put Tanzania journalists in a tight corner leading to self-censorship. The access to information act, 2016 passed in September 2016 is yet to be operationalized, regulations are yet to be developed. This makes it very hard for the Tanzanian journalist to access quality information that will be used to report on stories that trigger accountability.

As Priscilla Nyokabi, former program officer for the Kenyan Section of the International Commission of Jurists once noted: “There are many reasons for having freedom of information legislation: To make government more accountable, increase public participation, promote the involvement of all in public life, including those currently marginalized, like women; to make private companies more accountable, monitor and expose corruption, lead to better decision making, protect privacy, expose human rights violations, and promote workers’ rights; and to make the country more secure. Access to information is instrumental to parliament’s oversight role.”

Freedom to information is enshrined as a fundamental human right by the United Nations, and upheld by the African Charter on Human and People’s Right. The Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression in Africa explicitly states:

“Public bodies hold information not for themselves but as custodians of the public good and everyone has a right to access this information, subject only to clearly defined rules established by law.”

- iii. **Finances:** The scarcity of resources for Tanzania journalists negatively impact their ability to cover stories. Due to this limited ability in finances, the journalists find it very difficult to travel and efficiently when a story breaks. Investigative journalism sometimes requires a lot of funding because it is resource intensive but you find that in Tanzania, few media houses are willing to finance a journalist to carry out the simplest of stories where as in the developed world, journalists can even make up to three air trips in a week or more in a week while following a story and its all on the media house.
- iv. **Gender inequality:** Despite what the Southern African Development Community (SADC) might say on the gender equality as a necessary tool for development in Africa, this equality is yet to be recognized in the media sector in Tanzania. There are fewer women working in our news rooms. Tanzania has a poor terrain and thus making it very hard for women journalist to travel to areas to cover stories.

Long hours required in the news rooms collide with her role as a career woman and as a wife at home. This results in her not becoming as productive as would be expected.

A survey on what journalists in Tanzania felt were the most critical challenges in their day to day work was conducted and the following were the findings highlighting legal frame work as the top most followed by the journalistic capacity and lack of finances at position two.

Table1: Table showing critical challenges facing journalists in Tanzania

Aspect	All the time	Sometimes	Not at all	I don't know
Capacity of journalists	80%	15%	5%	0%
Lack of finances	80%	20%	0%	0%
Gender inequality	76%	13%	10%	15%
Legal framework	90%	8%	0%	2%
Journalists interest	63%	27%	105	0%
Source: Field 2017, N= 113				

E. ‘Swimming with Sharks’

- i. **Support investigative training conferences:** Investigative reporting conferences play a key role in training and networking journalists, particularly from developing countries, helping to cost-effectively broaden the scope of their reporting. Especially useful are fellowships for journalists in less developed countries to attend the annual Global Investigative Journalism Conference and regional conferences. Establishing of a media lab that trains journalists could be the way to go as adopted by Tanzania Media Foundation (TMF), a media development organization that works to strengthen media for domestic accountability.
- ii. **Greater financial support of investigative journalism programs:** Despite its frontline role in fostering public accountability, battling crime and corruption, and raising standards in the news media, investigative reporting receives relatively little in international development aid—and comprises a significant gap in media development funding. A substantial increase in funding of this vital area could have a major impact in Tanzania.
- iii. **Creating more synergistic efforts with other media development organizations:** There is need to work more closely with the other media stakeholders/organisations in Tanzania such as Tanzania Media Foundation (TMF), Media Council of Tanzania (MCT), Tanzania Media Women Association (TAMWA), Tanzania Editors’ Forum (TEF), Media Owners Association of Tanzania (MOAT), the Community Media Network of Tanzania (COMNETA), Misa-Tan and BBC Media action to support the journalism profession (TMF Survey Report, 2016).
- iv. **Legal training to journalists:** Media institutions and universities should consider including more courses on legal issues for the journalists/students on how to write and publish stories without necessarily rubbing the government on the wrong side.
- v. The increased need for technology-enabled and cross-border journalism has developed alongside revenue decline and consolidation in the news media sector. The associated cost-cutting exercises in news organizations have affected their ability to invest in these long-term investigations, which are often perceived as “high risk and low reward.”

F. CONCLUSION

I wish to end this presentation by the following literature from the following scholars - Because of its nature of “comforting the afflicted and afflicting the comfortable” (Spark, 1999), investigative journalism often places news workers in conflict with the power elites, the rich and the corrupt who seek to conceal information. Scholars who have written on ethics of journalism such as Sanders (2010), de Burgh (2008), Kieran (2000) and Frost (2011) agree that in some situations where the flow of information is suppressed by the power elites, journalists are left with no option but to engage in questionable tactics—hide identity, deceit, invade privacy of individuals and even buy information from whistle-blowers so as to expose wrongdoing against the society.

Therefore, restricting the flow of information and the hindering of scrutiny of public offices causes problems to the fabric of professional journalism as put in Sanders words: “where there is a basic disagreement on fundamentals between politicians and journalists, notably on such issues as the need for scrutiny (the journalists’ role), the legitimacy of persuasion (the politician’s role) and the general need for information flow, ethical journalism cannot even get off the ground” (Sanders, 2010).

References

- Cabrera. R. (2011), "Who wants to forget?" Truth and Access to Information about past Human Rights Violations: The Global Campaign for Free Expression McGraw, Hill New York
- Feldstein (2006) A Muckraking Model; Investigative Reporting Cycles in American History; Washington, President and the Fellows of Harvard College,
- Forbes. D (2005) A watchdog guide to investigative reporting; a simple introduction to principle and practice in investigative reporting, Johannesburg, Konrad Adenauer Stifting media program;
- Fourie, P (2008). Media Studies: Policy, Management and Media Representation, Juta \$ Co
- Gaines. C.W. (2008) Investigative journalism; proven strategies for reporting the story, Washington, DC CQ press
- Kantumoya. L. M (2004) Investigative Reporting in Zambia: A Practitioner's Handbook, Zambia; Transparency International Zambia and Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Retrieved 23 March 2012 from. library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/sambia/50013.pdf
- Kennedy G & Moen.D (2007) what is good journalism? How reporters and editors are serving American journalism way of life, Columbia & London; University of Missouri Press, from search.library.wisc.edu. retrieved on 19 march 2012
- Killimwiko, L. M (2009) Media Power and Politics in Tanzania; Critical Analysis of Media Trends and Practices. Konrad Adenauer Stiffung, Dar es Salam
- Kobre.S. (1983) Reporting news in-depth, Washington DC, university press of America Inc.
- Kothari, C (2004). Research Methodology: Research and Techniques, 2nd Ed. New Delhi: New Age International Publisher
- Lichtenberg, J. (1990). Foundations and limits of freedom of the press in Democracy New York McGraw Hill
- Matjama. T. (2007) Presentation on the media environment in Lesotho, MISA Lesotho Information and Research Officer

Matumaini, J. (2009). The history of radio Broadcasting for development in Tanzania; Mwanza. St. Augustine Press,

Meiklejohn, J. (1960). Political freedom: The constitutional powers of the people. New and the Mass Media (pp. 102-135) Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge University Press, New York:

MISA (2009) Training on Investigating and Reporting Corruption for Journalists in Southern Africa: Workshop Report Johannesburg, South Africa

Mpagaze, D. (2012) Tanzania Journalists Perception of Bribe Taking: Mind you that he who pays for the piper calls the tune, Saarbrücken: Lambert

O'donnell. M (2006) 12th IACC Report; Constrains and Challenges of Investigative Journalism against Corruption, Universidad de Buenos Aires, Argentina, from iacconference.org/.../12th_iacc_workshop, retrieved on 23 March 2012

Investigative Journalism in Sri Lanka: A study on the process and effectiveness of investigative video storytelling

Author: M. C. Rasmin, Director/CEO, Sri Lanka Development Journalist Forum

Co-Authors: Dr. S. Raguram, University of Jaffna, Sri Lanka and Mohamed Azad, Country
Manager, IWPR, Sri Lanka

Abstract

Investigative journalism in its true sense plays a key role in maintaining accountability and transparency on issues affecting people in general. The recent studies conducted by International Institute of War and Peace Reporting (IWPR, 2017), International Research Exchange Board (IREX, 2017,) International Media Support (IMS, 2017) and Free Media Movement (FMM) observed that investigative journalism in Sri Lanka is growing slowly while facing a systemic challenge, as a result of weak media pluralism, lack of editorial independence, political and commercial orientation of media ownership, insecurity, impunity and a lack of enabling policy environment etc.

Adding a different dimension, the Investigative Video Storytelling program - #IVS, initiated by Sri Lanka Development Journalist Forum (SDJF) in partnership with IWPR and Postgraduate Institute of Agriculture, University of Peradeniya, intends to capacitate 25 young mid-career journalists who are interested in using videos as a potential tool to produce investigative stories on issues with public interest and issues that are often excluded by the mainstream media. The project was designed with the purpose of experimenting as to how the concept of investigative journalism works in the context of video. SDJF with its partner organizations intended to learn from the process of making investigative video stories to determine opportunities and challenges.

This study will not only concentrate on understanding the process and its effectiveness of investigative video story making program but also try to determine the possible threats and opportunities existing for investigative reporting in Sri Lanka.

1. Methodology

In order to explore the above objective, a case study method is used that includes a collection of tools, in-depth interviews with editors, sub-editors and academia, Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with regional journalists, partner consultations and reviews of existing literatures. This study is very much informed by Reporting for Change, Making Investigative Journalism a Reality in Sri Lanka (IWPR, 2017), Media Sustainability Index (IREX/SDJF, 2017), Rebuilding public Trust

(NSMR, 2016) and Corruption Investigative Reporting (FMM). In addition to the strong literature review, 5 FGD, 20 in-depth interviews, and two consultations were conducted. It is also noteworthy that the Media Sustainability Index (2017) that includes in-depth dialogue with journalists, and a consultation with regional journalists were also conducted by the main author of this study. The study conducted by IWPR includes interviews with 75 journalists, 10 FGD and series of consultations with media associations.

2. Investigative Journalism

Investigative Journalism has been historically defined by various schools. Some tried to define it by differentiating it from conventional reporting. Some do it by making it unique in comparing with Watch-dog reporting. According to Marl Lee Hunter (2011) Investigative Journalism involves exposing to the public matters that are concealed – either deliberately by someone in a position of power, or accidentally, behind a chaotic mass of facts and circumstances that obscure understanding. When a journalist tries to report on matters which somebody wants to keep secret, this is investigative journalism¹. It reveals the hidden truth for the purpose of informing and exposing all necessary matters as required by the communities. Derek Forbes (2005) noted Investigative journalism does not only report something new - it educates, exposes and uncovers secrets. It requires using both secret and open sources and documents. Derek holds that investigative journalism involves in-depth reporting in the public interest, while others regard the concept of investigative journalism as a myth – an extension of what good journalism should really be.

David Spark (2003) noted Investigative Journalism usually tackles unconventional subjects which may not always be covered in the mainstream news agenda. It appeals to the audience's senses of what is just, and can look beyond what is conventionally seen as acceptable. Typical subjects include uncovering illegal practices, revealing abuses of power, questioning official assertions, and exposing miscarriages of justice or cover ups. It often takes a very long time to do an investigative piece. Coronel (2010) argues that investigative journalists need to look beyond

¹ https://www.thenewsmanual.net/Manuals%20Volume%202/volume2_39.htm

individuals. According to her the best investigative work exposes not just individuals, but also systemic failures. Investigative reports show how individual wrongs are part of a larger pattern of negligence or abuse and the systems that make these possible. They examine what went wrong and show who suffered from the mistakes. They probe not just what is criminal or illegal, but also what may be legal and overboard but nonetheless harmful. There are several reasons why Investigative Reporting is extremely vital. People have a right to know about their society and decision on matters that is important to their life and to keep the people and organizations in governance accountable.

Conventional reporting and Investigative Reporting

Conventional news reporting depends largely and sometimes entirely on materials provided by others (such as police, governments, companies, etc.). However, IR is inherently expensive due to the need for extensive research, whereas ordinary news stories are fairly simple to obtain, IR may differ from other kinds of journalism because of the methods used. Mark Lee Hunter (2011) is of the view that conventional journalism is fundamentally reactive, if not passive. Investigative journalism, in contrast, depends on material gathered or generated through the reporter's own initiative.

IJNet refers David Kaplan (2013) who said Investigative Reporting is not getting a document leaked by a powerful official and writing it up that is not investigative reporting. Not all good reporting is investigative reporting. Investigations take time--weeks, months or even years. Investigative journalism may have critical elements, but just because you're writing something that is tough and critical does not mean you've done the digging that investigative reporting involves.

Defining investigative journalism as crime and corruption reporting sharply limits the discipline's scope. But great investigative journalism focuses on education, abuse of power, following money, great business stories.² We can see that while there is no easy definition of what constitutes

² <https://ijn.net.org/en/blog/four-things-investigative-journalism-not>

investigative reporting, there is agreement on some of its tenets. This generally includes more than one of the following:

- In-depth reporting of any social matters that affect the public interest.
- A long-term process of planning, information gathering and corroboration using a diverse range of sources.
- The application of more sophisticated techniques to interrogate and piece together meaning from fragments of information provided by various sources.
- Investigative reporting needs to be independent of special interests; it must aggressively serve the public trust and enrich public debate.
- Investigative reporting may have an agenda to expose any form of villainy or wrongdoing with the object of inspiring positive change through informed public debate and outrage (Derek Forbes, 2005).

3. Brief Account of IR in Sri Lanka

The ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka had systemic influence and effect in the entire media landscape. Both the conflicting parties used it to shape mass perspective in support of their position with regard to conflicts. In reinforcing such positioning, both the conflicting parties not only used media but also misused and silenced it as well. Journalists and media organizations with alternative political views were threatened, silenced, and killed during the war.³ People in conflict-affected areas are deprived from media and information.⁴ Natural fear lead to censorship within media.⁵ When it comes to safety of the journalists, during the war and aftermath, the rule of law is almost

³ Swaminathan Natarajan (2012) MEDIA FREEDOM IN POST-WAR SRI LANKA AND ITS IMPACT ON THE RECONCILIATION PROCESS

⁴ Reporters Without Borders (2008)

⁵ Clare Boronow. (2012). Freedom of Expression in Sri Lanka: How the Sri Lankan Constitution Fuels Self-Censorship and Hinders Reconciliation, University of Virginia School of Law

nonexistent.⁶ A large number of Sri Lankan journalists, IFJ estimated 40, fled the island fearing for their safety.⁷

The media that played significant role in setting up agenda for conflict, had to face different kinds of experience when it was globally urged for Sri Lankan government to ensure accountability and transitional justice. Most of the media organizations that had strong market presence embraced the nationalistic sentiments of political parties mobilizing support base. During the Rajapaksha regime, the overall media freedom was tremendously challenged. Media organization with alternative political view suffered immensely due to pressure created by Rajapaksha government.

Many believed that the victory of Sirisena government created new opportunities for media freedom. As an election promise present government under his leadership re-launched investigation against murder and disappearance of former journalists. Arbitrary and illegal blocking of political websites are released (Internet Freedom). It also recognized access to information as a fundamental right through the 19th Amendment to the Constitution. Right to information was enacted. Media Researcher M.J.R David observes it as an historic movement of Sri Lankan Democracy that has created vast opportunities for the journalists to embark the culture of investigative journalism while advocating for public justice. Increasing number of journalists are using RTI through their media organizations, in association with their organizations and their personal capacity to carry out investigative stories mainly on issues that has a relevance for them. Director General of Government Information Ranga Kalansooriya mentioned that more RTI applications were filed by the journalists in the north.

However, despite the action being taken by the government, media associations expressed displeasure on the outcomes and progress made so far. Lasantha Ruhunge, Chairman of the Sri Lanka Working Journalists Association indicated that launching investigation on the journalists who are killed is important. Still, what is more important is to offer the justice. Government need to prove its real intention by ensuring the justice. During FGDs, it was heavily noted that even the

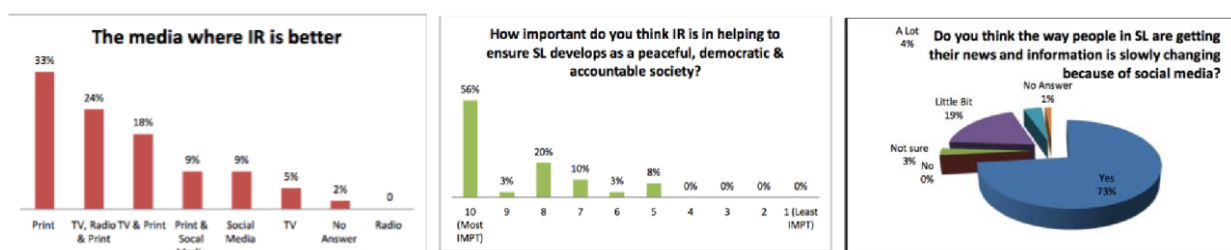
⁶ International Press Freedom and Freedom of Expression Mission to Sri Lanka. (2008). Media under fire: Press freedom lockdown in Sri Lanka.

⁷ International Federation of Journalists (2015) Country Report: “Media and Gender in Sri Lanka” Part of the IFJ Media and Gender in Asia-Pacific Research Project: IFJ.

future reaction of present government in creating safe working environment for journalists would be highly unpredictable. There had been some incidents of journalists are being threatened, equipment's are grabbed and beaten.

When it comes to media reformation, The National Secretariat for Media Reform in Sri Lanka along with several other stakeholders has proposed to form a new independent entity - News Media Council and is working closely with various stakeholders to educate the public about the bill developed by independent consultants aiming at the formations of the council. Despite it is being widely criticized by some section of media industry, it is understandable that the revised draft of the bill concentrates on safety, media freedom, and editorial independence, while ensuring the quality and the journalism. This could be yet another opportunity to come in support of IR, in Sri Lanka.

Looking at the current context, while investigative reporting is currently not a strong practice in Sri Lankan newsrooms. More than 65% believe that IR has made impact in their societies. FMM noted that the country's journalists are willing to improve their skills and do more CIR work. Both MSI (2017) and IWPR (2017) studies indicate that more than 75 percent of Sri Lankan journalists believe IR to be very important. Same amount of journalists believe IR has potential to help democratization in Sri Lanka. More than 70% of journalists believe IR has potential to change a social circumstance. When it was asked from journalists, 70% of them said IR has potential to change any given social circumstances. This makes a sense that potential of IR has been well understood by Sri Lankan Journalists.



It was revealed by IWPR that IR is practiced better by any media that has multimedia environment where Print, TV, Radio and social media are combined. However, TV and Radio as separate media believed to be not effective for IR. During a consultation with editors it was noted that except in few occasions by very few, television and Radio are inactive as whole in IR.

More than 70 percent of journalists agree the fact that traditional journalism in Sri Lanka is declining while social media is taking ground. At the same time, 70 per cent of journalists we interviewed think that social media is changing the way Sri Lankan people receive information. It was noted most of the journalists consider there are issues in which IR work better over the other issues. Amongst them are child and women issues, corruption, issue with public interest, cultural and racial issues, governance, development, politic, misappropriation of money, disappearance, health, and issues in relation with transitional justice. Journalist believe IR is weaker in discussing issues noted to be weaker corruption, ethical issues, politic, function of government entity (governance) and public contract and tenders. Some media continue to explore hidden truth around serious governance related issues. Central Bank Treasury Bond, Water pollution in Jaffna, Foreign trip of Ministers Using Public Funds are some of the issues explored by media with heavy interest.

Training Opportunities

There are few local organizations with the support from International organizations have conducted series of trainings and capacity programs for journalists. Sri Lanka College of Journalism, Sri Lanka Media Training Institute, Sri Lankan Foundation, University of Colombo, University of Jayewardenepura, Media Resource Training Centre in Jaffna had conducted series of short courses that covered IR as subject. FMM and Transparency International Sri Lanka have conducted series of customized IR trainings for the journalists. FMM has trained hundreds of journalists on corruption investigative Reporting. Both FMM and Transparency International Sri Lanka had taken notable steps to train trainers, produce tri-lingual training module and to train journalists. Both Internews and IWPR has started working with journalist on data journalism and IR. IWPR is implementing a two-year dedicated program to enhance IR sector in Sri Lanka. Thomson Foundation and Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung have conducted few trainings in Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka Development Journalist Forum (SDJF) has started investigative video storytelling

program to support mid-career journalists with experience and interest to use video to produce investigative stories.

However, despite notable contributions being offered, these local organizations did face few major common challenges; the programs are mostly donor driven - not certainly designed to support the broader development of the industry, IR has not been specific focus most the trainings being offered, there was no sense sustainability, and there is less of follow up and quality assurance. Rebuilding Public Trust (2016) noted that there are various courses for aspiring or entry-level journalists, but opportunities for mid-career or in-service training are more limited. The existing courses are not standardized or benchmarked. According to one media industry watcher, there is no training course that produces good news journalists with quality investigative and analytical skills.

Academia on Investigative Journalism

There is no dedicated IR courses or degree available in Sri Lankan universities. It was mentioned during the survey that no university in Sri Lanka has dedicated IR unit with extensive practical learnings. Most of the academic acknowledged that it has been little theory taught at universities and those theories may not be applicable to industry. NSMR (2016) observed that curricula of several universities are not updated to meet current need helping to enhance government transparency and accountability through investigative journalism. It also indicates evidence that some university academic believes IR is not high priority it is being taught amongst other topics.

4. Problems at mainstream level

Studies conducted by various institutions reveals that IR in Sri Lanka facing various challenges despite the fact that it is slowly growing. Following are the few major challenges commonly identified by this study.

- a. Poor media pluralism:** Poor media pluralism in Sri Lanka has been widely known factor that has caused most of the issues faced by the media. The research done by FMM, NSMR (2016), IWPR (2017), IREX (2017), and SDJF (2017) observed that media in Sri Lanka are owned by few segments of the society that are corporate either elite, religious leaders or political supporters. There is no transparency in the process of offering media license and allocating frequency for electronic media. NSMR (2016) given an extensive account on this issue. The poor media pluralism and legislation have implicit impact in the development of IR too. FMM noted that potential for investigative journalism is hampered by the political interests of press owners, fear of revenge, difficulty in collecting adequate information, and editors' political interests. Sri Lankan media seem to bear a sense of responsibility for exposing corruption, but many are cynical about the mechanisms in place to prosecute and punish the corrupt. It was revealed by IREX and SDJF political affiliation of media ownership vastly affect the quality of IR. IWPR found out that they would have difficulty in placing good investigative stories even if they went to the trouble and risk of doing them – simply because of the political or business interests of the media owners.
- b. Lack of support from editors:** Most of the editors who were interviewed are of the view that that majority of the editors do not make free choice in publishing IR stories. Decisions of any serious IR stories sometime determined by the owners and editor on behalf of the owners. Therefore, editors are often support stories of political opponents of their owners. IWPR study hold that two out of 10 journalists think their investigative stories are not valued by the editors. They would be nervous of and unlikely to publish any investigative story offered without having the full confidence and support of the publishers and owners, they said. And this was not an easy thing to secure, especially for a provincial journalist or freelancer. MSI (2017) observed that editors become helpless in some case when the corporate companies offer them advertising. Some editors accepted that it's the advertising section in their media institution that determine the nature of the first page of their newspaper.

It is noteworthy that some regional journalist feel that their task is not to try producing IR stories but to be content and information providers of the mainstream media. Kajan a journalist from *Mannar* noted that regional journalists do not have role models to produce IR. Their Editors or News Directors are not concerned above capacitating us on IR, they get us to do

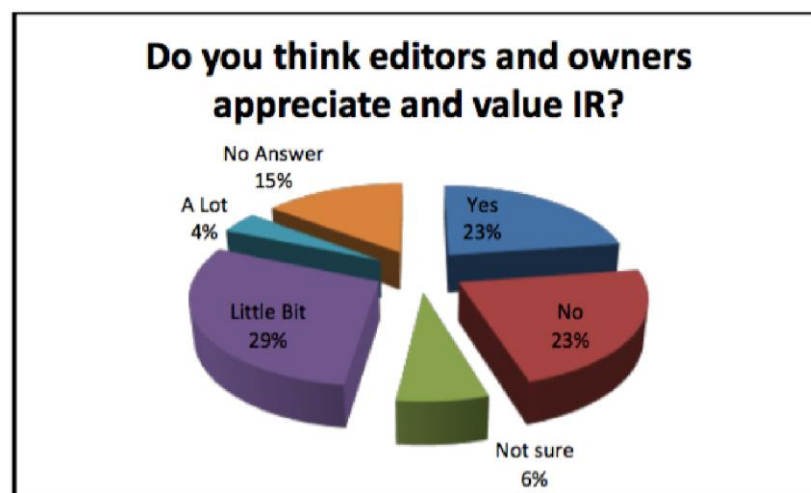
what their owners want them to do. Kapila Ramanayake, a journalist from Matara indicated neither we have role nor do we have any resources for us to learn IR. It is just a myth that we the regional journalists are working in favor of IR.

- c. **Skepticism:** It was well realized during the study that there is a natural skepticism amongst the journalists and the civil society on how broader democratic values. Tilak Jayaratne & Sarath Kellapotha (NA)⁸ observed concepts like independence of the media and freedom of expression remained alien to the Sri Lankan society. For the most part, governments, politicians, the intelligentsia and civil society did not take steps to popularize these principles. When it comes to IR the fate is more or less the same. Many official information sources, including police and government sources, which suggests journalists are aware of corruption. However, when questioned more than 70% of the journalists believed to have not written any IR stories in the recent past. Similarly, the journalists that were surveyed by FMM reported that they had written few stories on corruption. It shows that 63 per cent had not produced a Corruption IR story in the previous month. It also appears that journalist and media organizations has subjective positions in choosing areas of investigation. Majority of the journalists surveyed accept the fact that they purposely refrain from choosing certain concern for IR.
- d. **Lack of incentive:** Majority of the journalists interviewed are of the view that they are not sufficiently paid. This situation is a very complex phenomenon and varies in different media. However, it could be concluded that except very few senior staff most of the journalist do field work, and not adequately paid. More than 70% of the journalist are not happy about their job security. Most of the available studies noted that majority of regional journalist would not want to do the IR, primarily because it will not be considered by the editors, there is no guarantee that it will be compensated. It was observed that most of the regional journalist are paid one or two US\$ for their stories. However, regional journalists are of the view that this money is not at all sufficient. However, it was noted that some TV channels do pay nearly averagely \$20 per stories. Hence, IR faces strong threat due the condition explored above.

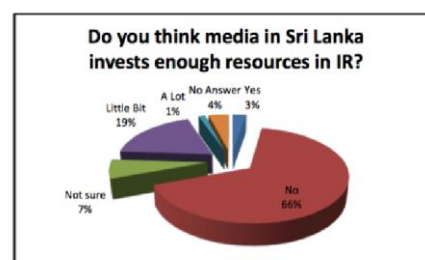
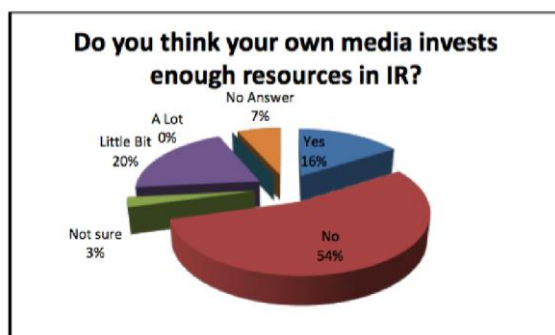
⁸ Tilak Jayaratne & Sarath Kellapotha (NA) The Political Economy of the Electronic media in Sri Lanka

Alex Kamilesh, a journalist from Jaffna observed that we spent several hours on a news. We are only paid LKR 2000. There is no guarantee that the news that cover would be taken by the editor. A journalist from north observed No machine waste, no transportation cost reimbursed. For fax we need daily 200, mobile we need 200 per day, for daily transport we need 500, we used to travel 50- 90 km sometime. Sometimes, they will get only one news even if I send five. This is the situation for regional journalists.

7. Appreciation of IR: Six out of 10 local journalists think that the general public appreciates and values IR in Sri Lanka, but only two of them think that their own editors do.



9. Resources to pursue IR: Majority – more than 60 percent -- of the local journalists surveyed think that media in Sri Lanka do not invest enough resources on IR, and about the same number believe that even their own media organisation do not invest enough on IR.



- e. Political affiliation:** It was noted that media time to time changes their political affiliations. At the same time the linguistic and regional affiliation of the media organization to the development of the IR. Good example that recent constitutional reforms process was reported very positively as a ‘new opening’ for Sri Lanka in Tamil newspapers, yet reported negatively

in the Sinhalese press where it was presented as being promoted by the international community as part of a 'plan' to divide the country. This shows clear divisions between journalists based on their linguistic and regional affiliation. Verity Research has continuously revealed on this.

- f. **Safety:** Most of the editors and journalists interviewed of the view that despite the fact present government not severely monitoring and directly threatening journalists they use indirect means to create fear amongst journalists. Study conducted by IWPR (2017) noted that despite the change in government and more favorable operational climate, safety and security remains a serious concern. Journalist interviewed reveal that safety of the journalists are not part of organization culture in most of the media organizations. More than 85% of the journalist said they do not have a life insurance. MSI conducted by SDJF and IREX noted that Journalist from Jaffna believe impunity has continued to be a concern. Chief Editor of Uthayan *Prame Ananth* noted that he has been asked to summon by court to reveal the source. Kamilesh - Still we have CID follow our journalists in the north. A journalist working for private TV station in Vavuniya observed that media organizations are not fully committed for the safety of the journalist. He mentioned "I was beaten by some people in Vavuniya assuming I am a strange film maker and not a journalist as I didn't have media identity card. When this happened, my media aired several news on this. I had to go in front of court around 13 times. They paid only for three times. Rest I paid on my own. Later it became my own issues. When journalists are threatened, media organizations tends to make it sensationalized rather than try to provide solution to the problem." Isbahan a print journalist working in Colombo told that "If I want to report a news, I should take responsibility of my own safety. No media would be willing to consider the safety of regional journalists. Most of the media do not have a safety policy for journalist. In case if we end up with any issues they will tell us why did you go for converge. It was also observing some media organization do not provide media accreditation card in recognition of regional journalist working for them. Some journalist from the north and east said they are managing with the Logo of the TV station and some said they managing with Branded T-Shirt it has some indication that they are journalist. A journalist working for a private TV station indicated that some media organization do delay the provision of media ID for various purposes.

- g. Lack of future orientation:** Several studies found most of the mainstream media organization are yet to understand the impact of the convergent media and how it has changed the way that people receive news and information. Except very few, most of the regional media organizations do not use social media tools for wider reach. Digital tools are available for IR. IWPR study noted that there is Pro-print lobby that is skeptics on convergent media: Traditional media outlets in Sri Lanka will face an existential threat as the prevalence of smart phones and social media usage continues to increase and consumption habits change dramatically. Thus, for IR to develop and sustain itself in Sri Lanka, innovation and creativity will be required across the board. A holistic approach is also critical.
- h. Problems in training:** When it comes to training journalist on IR, there is a serious problem on the quality of IR courses and training programs and how the journalists are being selected for the trainings. Sometime, much of these courses and trainings would end without any or proper practical experience. IWPR (2017), SDJF (2017), IREX (2017), NSMR (2016) acknowledged that lack of practical exposure and poor selection of the journalists required benefits are not attained. Tilak Jayaratne & Sarath Kellapotha observed internal favoritism and political affiliations have let wrong people to attend the trainings programs. At the same time, most of the trainings are being conducted to meet short-time project objectives of implementing organization and not necessarily to meet the demands. When International Media Development and Donor Organizations want to engage local media organization and training institute to conduct IR training - they usually don't invite journalist in the periphery. The key loyalists and members of those media association get most of the training opportunities. Trainings are given mostly for editorial staff. But they are the ones who do not do reporting. It's us who are doing reporting. Issues are not only in Colombo. Most of the issues are existing in villages.

5. Investigative Video Storytelling program

Investigative Video Storytelling Program - #IVS, initiated by Sri Lanka Development Journalist Forum (SDJF) in partnership PGIA and supported by IWPR to capacitate 25 young mid-career journalists who are interested in using video as potential tool to produce investigative stories on

issues with public interest and issues that are often excluded by the mainstream media. The project was designed with the purpose of experimenting concept of investigative journalism in the context of video. SDJF with its partner organizations intended to learn from the process as to determine opportunities and challenges in producing investigative video stories particularly with community participation.

SDJF called application through social media, partner organizations and likeminded networks to mitigate cost usually spent for traditional advertising. Out of 25 participants, 50% are TV journalists working for mainstream media and news websites - all of them are boys. 40% of the participants are girls - studying media or use video in their regular work. Rest of the 10% were youth passionate about using video story, in their works.

Eventually, 10 days of residential workshop on investigative video storytelling was conducted by SDJF and PGIA. Training was designed in a manner that four different aspects - learning theoretical aspect of IR, learning video storytelling relating with aspects of IR and data journalism, planning a story, and filming and editing. As a result of the training, participants ended up preparing 10 story outlines. It was anticipated that the video makers should involve respective communities - a community storyboard nearly with 10 members from the community, in a manner that is not hampering the video production process, to validate the story hypothesis developed for each story outline validated. This community story board is expected to help identify issues, validate the hypothesis, involve in story planning, facilitate filming and dissemination. Towards the end of the project, both SDJF and IWPR planned to host an investigative video summit and to invite immediate respondents - government and private authorities for a solution oriented discussion. At the time of writing this study, the half of the stories are filmed and rest of the activities project yet to finish. Therefore, this study would cover on the activities that has been implemented so far.

Working with a definition

During the training period, young mid-career journalists concluded a working definition for investigative video story. Accordingly, investigative video story is visualization of an in-depth and

objective inquiry of a journalist on a hidden truth or reality that is a matter in public life. The process of the story making is equally important as the purpose of the story. It is a creative and sensitive process to engage supporting institutions and individual to explore a hypothesis. The hidden truth could be on corruption, wrongdoing, power abuse of government, procurement fraud, unauthorized public business, land grabbing, systemic abuses etc.

The midcareer journalists noted that video may not be used throughout the process in filming entire stories. However, it was said video is extremely powerful when using it interviews, evidence, testimonials, visualization of effect of a hidden truth and archival documents. It is extremely an effective tool for data visualized and idea presentation. Video allows to bring people reaction and emotions into the story. It allows to show rather than telling a story. People regarding their literacy level can see what is happening around a story. A powerful story can be told in very few minutes. It allows the journalist or the news media organizations to creative advocacy too.

Observations

The initial evaluation of the training indicated young 95% of the journalists have never worked on an investigative story. Almost none of them has been requested to produce any IR stories in their regular reporting affairs. Some journalists noted that they have enormous stories to be filmed in their own settings and however, they are not sure those stories will be of interest of editors and owners. When inquired, 8% of the journalists noted sourcing story is not a thoughtful effort in their reporting. Most of the midcareer journalists noted their reporting involve; covering an incident - any political events where a politician would speak is the first priority, taking the voice cuts of government officials and particularly ministers, and victims who may speak in favors of the story considered to be the best way to source stories.

Katheesan, a journalist from Vavuniya observed that media organizations in Colombo is really keen to do speedy report and sometime, we cover three stories per day. Some time we get footage from fellow reporters as we cannot certainly cover two to three news per day. A TV journalist reporting to a private TV said his station encourages to take highly sensationalized short from incidences such as accidents, communal fights, death, gun fights etc., When we say there is an

accident the next questions from the editors would be how many died. However, the mid-career journalists agreed that investigative video story cannot be made this way. Mohammed Fazlan, a Television Reporter said I used videos to capture incidents. In future I will use the same camera to capture stories.

V. Kajan, Journalist, Mannar - For the last four years we have only been doing ordinary reporting of various events taking place in our district. We are always instructed to look for elements that make our news sensationalized. We thought that is what a journalist can cover to the maximum. After attending this workshop, I came to know, task of a video journalist is not just dictate what happened, but a narrating a story. Mohammed Rijaz, online journalist said that for the first time I understand investigative reporting is much unique from conventional reporting and realized that investigative reporting is a big responsibility, and deep commitment.

Kamilash, a journalist from Jaffna noted that what is more important in producing video story is to build trust in target community. We need cyber security and technology related knowledge with practice on GPS, digital recording equipment, follow-up footage collection, how to use hidden camera without breaking ethics. "I need more mentorship. There should also be link between editorial and regional reporting, not annual meetings." Majority of the participants noted that the way that they were asked to be filmed - they sometime missed the stories ended up filming some aspect of it.

The civil society activists noted that they are confident that video can be used to expose hidden realities of the communities they are working. Sujeewa Egodarachchi, Women's Right Activist holds that we have strongly engaged in media but never used video. Video sounds an interesting and effective way of collecting and compiling evidence, sources, etc. Niranjala Gunawardne, Women's and Child Right Activist - I learnt not only videography, but how to use video in the context of investigative journalism. I can realize my own insights towards community issues and I wish to address them using investigative reporting. I understand that investigative reporting needs a scientific process and wisdom.

Process proposed

Throughout a participatory learning process, participants ended up designing below methodology allowing journalists to film their stories. This methodology was pre-tested through sample stories that are made during the training period.

1. **Formulate a community editorial board:** Community Editorial board could comprise with cross section of people in the concerned community - 10 people in a community is maximum. It was observed, they may access the data quickly then the journalists. They would know the story angle equality as the journalists. They used to also suggest convenient way to access not only data but the people. They may or may not be sensitive to the process. However, it was noted that they need some form of engagements to abide by ground rules and working norms. A sensitization exercise very much needed for this methodology.
2. **Identify and validate issue and story:** It was noted that most of the journalists assumed issues and story are same. Story identification exercise allowed them to differentiate issue and stories. One issue may have several story aspects. One issue may have several filming viewpoints. The #IVS allowed participants to validate their issues by engaging the target community. For this, various creative methods are used with the view of sensitizing the community story board members. engaging community board is partly to empowering them and partly also informing the production with their local knowledge and perspectives. This is in some case helped the participants to re-visit the issues they have selected.
3. **Formulate a hypothesis:** In this phase, hypothesis will be formed. However, mid-career journalists with little or no knowledge of research experience had some uneasiness. In that context - participants defined a formula to form strong hypotheses - Simple, specific and Short (Three S's). Ask as many questions as can to determine that the hypothesis meet 3S criteria.
4. **Developing a support base:** Since #IVS concentrated on addressed issues that has community interest, it was determined that identifying supporting organizations and individuals - to validate issues, help collect and validate data, to help facilitate the filming,

to help with logistical requirements etc. It was experienced that connecting organizations and individual from concerned communities makes the investigative process very easier.

5. **Collects and validate data:** This is the most time taking step. Community Editorial Board members can also use in this process. This need regular reflection, examination of the types of data available. It is very important to make sure the data being collected informs the hypothesis. Various techniques can be used to engage both the parties to determined the reliability of the data being collected.
6. **Film the story:** This involved filming entire elements necessary for an investigative story. It was observed filming is the most hassles taking step. Having adequate time and passion and patience is very important for filming.
7. **Validate and publish:** Even after the filming is done, it is useful to get the story validated by the Community Editorial Board. By now, people in the community would have good amount of knowledge on a hidden reality.

Threats

Throughout the production process various challenges are observed. Followings are the common ones:

1. **Visual Fear:** It was noted even responsible authorities, and concerned parties refuse the support at last movement just for being fearful for video. So, whether a sophisticated filming process is required is contextual.
2. **Time taking:** Every aspect of the filming would take time. Every story that may not have value to conduct an investigation may not go through this process. This is a time taking process.
3. **Community Editorial Board:** Community Editorial Board can be extremely helpful and equally problematic as well. It was learned that working with immediate concerned parties will keep the support base alive and safer.

4. **Communication issues:** This process need physical intersection mostly. When dealing with people over the email, phone - everything may sound easy and convenient. But in the field filming crew will have to face practical challenges.
5. **Field work structure:** Field works should be planned well in advanced in a manner each activity is being build with other connected activity. Random planning may cost a lot.
6. **Process may change all the time:** There is no quarantine that the film crew will end up validating desired hypothesis. News issues, news stories, new people, new finding can appear at any time.
7. **Physical safety:** This is very important aspect video team would always work with equipment's too.
8. **Sensitivity concerns:** producing video is extra sensitive. Film crew should have strong sensitivity check list to filter potential issues.

At the time of writing this study, video has enormous potential for to develop social capital, establish community based support groups, mobilize target community with passion to explore the hidden truth, make data visualization, dissemination, create effective testimonials, etc. However, it is understood that the potential of the video story should be further discussed supporting evidences in completion of this project.

Conclusion

A structural transformation in the aspect of editorial independence is required to develop true IR culture in Sri Lanka. It was observed poor media pluralism, political affiliations and commercial dependency of ownership compromises the quality of IR in Sri Lanka and it needs a structural intervention. However, issues related to quality, awareness, capacity building etc., needs a strategic approach for development. A corporative organization with dedicated mandate and an integrated approach to enhance IR sector may address these issues. Isolated trainings and workshop may not be solutions for any of the issue discussed above. The second possibility to is to invest on

convergent media, support emerging web-based independent media workers. Trainings and capacity building offered to journalists who are not dependent on traditional media could enhance the sector. Supporting journalists who work for independent web-casting sites, news websites, blogs, social media with proven skills can be supported.

Looking Investigative Video Storytelling program being discussed in the papers, video could be considered as highly potential media for IR. However, it is realized that more action-oriented studies needed to make strong determinations as to how video could effectively work particularly with mid-career journalists and communities.

References

- Clare Boronow. 2012. Freedom of Expression in Sri Lanka: How the Sri Lankan Constitution Fuels Self-Censorship and Hinders Reconciliation, University of Virginia School of Law
- Coronel, S. S. 2010. 'Corruption and the Watchdog Role of the News Media'. In: NORRIS, P. Public Sentinel: News Media and Governance Reform. Washington DC: World Bank.
- Derek Forbes, 2005. Watchdog's Guide to Investigative Reporting, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, Johannesburg.
- Free Media Movements, Words to Action, Investigative Reporting on Corruption, Colombo.
- International Federation of Journalists, 2015. Country Report: "Media and Gender in Sri Lanka" Part of the IFJ Media and Gender in Asia-Pacific Research Project: IFJ.
- International Press Freedom and Freedom of Expression Mission to Sri Lanka. (2008). Media under fire: Press freedom lockdown in Sri Lanka.
- IREX/SDJF, 2017. Media Sustainability Index, International Research Exchange Board, Washington DC.
- IREX/SDJF, 2017. Viability and Strength - consultation Report (unpublished).
- IWPR, 2017. Retorting for Change, making Investigative Journalism a Reality in Sri Lanka.
- Mark Lee Hunter, 2011, Story Based Inquiry, A Manual for Investigative Journalist, UNESCO, Paris.
- National Secretariat for Media Reform in Sri Lanka, 2016. Rebuilding Public Trust, Colombo.
- Reporters Without Borders, 2008.
- Spark, David, 2003, 5. Investigative Reporting, A study in technique: *Focal Press*, Story-Based Inquiry: A manual for investigative journalists.

Swaminathan Natarajan, 2012. Media Freedom in post war Sri Lanka and its impact on the reconciliation.

Tilak Jayaratne & Sarath Kellapotha (NA) The Political Economy of the Electronic media in Sri Lanka.

Data-driven journalism: Visualizing the lie versus revealing the truth

By Milagros Salazar, Director of Convoca

Abstract

Journalism is full of data, but not everything is data journalism. There is a difference between using data and establishing a methodology in journalistic research that has, as a fundamental aspect, the organization, analysis and verification of data to find a real story.

But data alone are not enough. It is important to verify them and put a human face on them in order to find a real story to tell your audience. If data are not tested against the situation “on the ground,” there is a danger that they will show us lies, instead of helping us tell the truth in order to help people take better decisions for their lives.

Without a solid methodology built on ethical criteria, the use of database in journalism can lead to bad journalism on a large scale. Therefore, in this paper I describe the trend in the use of databases and their methodologies in journalism, challenges, learning and practices in Latin America. This analysis includes my experience at Convoca, digital media of investigative journalism and data analysis based in Lima, and interviews with journalists from Latin America. Also, the paper examines trends in journalistic projects in the region among nominees for and winners of the Data Journalism Awards, organized by the Global Editors Network and Google, between 2012 and 2017.

Data-driven journalism: Visualizing the lie versus revealing the truth

Introduction

Databases can lie more than people do. But a diligent reporter can detect its lies with the best weapon that journalism has: data verification beyond the computer.

“Without data corroboration, there’s no story, there’s no journalism,” says Paul Radu, Romanian journalist and founder of Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP), a platform dedicated to investigative journalism in Eastern Europe, with a great experience in the work with programmers and data scientists to account cross-border stories.

“The data are triggers of a story and you have to look for a story outside the database. I search for it even in funerary services,” says Sandra Crucianelli, an Argentine journalist known for promoting the use of data in Latin America, to suggest that the information must be confronted even among the dead.

The added value that we journalists give to a database is in what we have always learned: contact with reality, report from the place of the facts and cross information with various sources.

“To completely capture the value of the data, we must be able to distinguish between questionable information and information of quality, and be able to find real stories in the middle of all the noise. The data and technology shouldn’t distract us from our mission for accuracy,” explains the Costa Rican journalist Giannina Segnini, professor at the Columbia University (Verification Handbook for investigative reporting, 2015).

At the same time, the added value that a data base gives to the journalistic work is undeniable: it allows to analyze a wealth of information in a more effective way to look at all the pieces of a puzzle.

“Never before have journalist had so much access to the information. More than 3 exabytes of data – equivalent to 750 million of DVDs – are created every day, and that number is

duplicated each 40 months. The global production of data is estimated nowadays in yottabytes (a yottabite is equivalent to 250 trillion of DVDs with data),” adds Segnini.

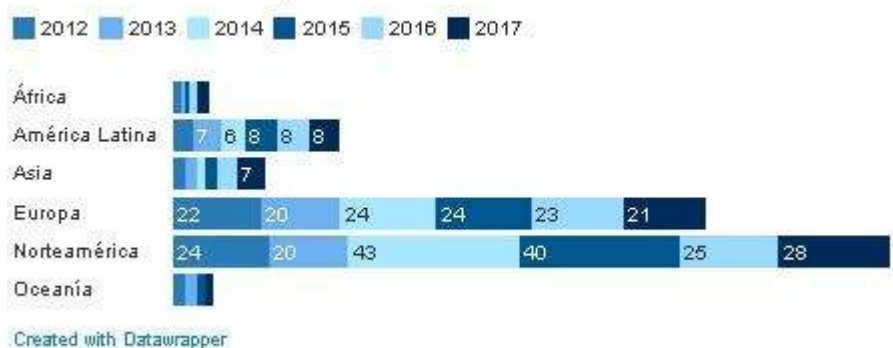
Therefore, for journalists that investigate, the work with databases has been revolutionary. It has empowered the reporters to find stories on their own and not depend on leaks. It has also allowed to be more convincing to reveal how a system operates, detect patterns of corruption and irregularities, connections and unique cases.

The power of the data has seduced journalists in Latin America in recent years. Every time more often, as it can be seen by the number of journalistic projects with databases nominated in different categories of the most important award of this specialty, the Data Journalism Awards, organized by the Global Editors Network (GEN) and Google.

Following the United States and Europe, the work with databases in Latin America stands out. Between 2012 and 2017, 398 journalistic projects have arrived to the final round, and 42 of them (11%), corresponded to Latin America, above Asia, Oceania and Africa, according to a data register built by my colleague at Convoca, Aramís Castro Ramos.

And if we review which journalistic projects are finally recognized with this global award, again Latin America appears in the third place with eight awards, while Asia and Oceania disappear from the list.

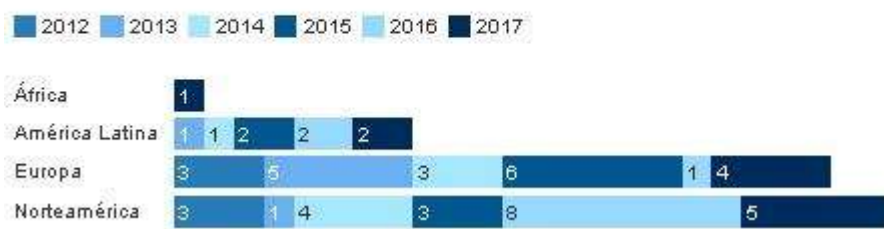
Nominados DJA por año



Source: Data Journalism Awards.

Elaboration: Aramís Castro/Convoca.

Ganadores DJA por año



Source: Data Journalism Awards.

Elaboration: Aramís Castro/Convoca.

“In the last four or two years the work with databases in Latin America has improved; specially, there are more useful projects for the readers and not only focused in data visualization and the fascination for the volume of information,” ensures Paul Radu, member of the jury of the Data Journalism Awards and journalist of the OCCRP, in an interview made for this report.

For Radu, one of the reasons of this growth in the recent years is an improvement of the cooperation between journalists and programmers. “This is important because it’s very useful for an investigative journalist to work with people that work with data every day as the data scientists who can bring a fresh and more specific point of view.”

However, the implementation of data units in the writing rooms is still not sufficient. Sandra Crucianelli ensures that the owners of the media are afraid to invest in works with databases because they look for stories in the short period and aren’t willing to invest resources. In this scenario, there are important exceptions as *La Nación* newspaper from Argentina and from Costa Rica, pioneers in the use of databases in the continent.

Furthermore, there is an important movement of investigative and depth journalism digital media, created by journalists that bet on the work with databases.

To delve in the evolution of data-driven journalism in Latin America, I interviewed journalists of the region and made a list of learnings and good practices from the contributions of my colleagues and my own experience at Convoca, digital media I founded almost three years ago in Peru to investigate with databases and technological support.

Here is a kind of guide not to visualize lies with databases and tell stories of great public relevance.

1. Working with databases begins with a biblical word in journalism: questioning

“The first rule is to question everything and everyone. There is no such thing as a completely reliable source when it comes to using data to make meticulous journalism,” says Giannina Segnini (Verification Handbook for investigative reporting, 2015).

For that purpose, the Costa Rican journalist proposes five important points we should take into account for the initial verification in the work with databases:

- Verify if the data are complete. A good way to start is to explore the extreme values (highs and lows for each variable in a group of data) and count in the Excel how many rows are listed within each group, to determine if we have all the information. Otherwise, we might come to the wrong conclusion.
- Determine if there are duplicates in the registry of the data in order to eliminate them and have a correct result.
- Verify if the data are exact. For that, Segnini recommends to “choose a sample record and compare it against reality.” Before continuing to work with the database it’s necessary to put it to test from the beginning.
- Evaluate the integrity of the data. Given that the database we usually obtain goes through several stages of “input, storage, transmission and registry” of the information, it’s important to perform tests of integrity. This means, check if it hasn’t been manipulated by people or information systems.
- Decipher the acronyms and codes that were used to classify the data so we can describe the importance of this information and find relevant stories.

2. Interview the databases and then confront them

As well as a reporter must prepare to interview a human source, it’s indispensable to know how to interrogate data. There are lot of simple and complex tools and computer programs to organize data and obtain important findings. Among the most used are Excel, Tableau, SPSS and SQL. However, the most important thing, as it happens in any subject we want to investigate, is to aspire to know the database more than anyone.

“Only if you invest a good quantity of hours understanding the structure of a database, it will be possible to interview it correctly and extract significant and juicy conclusions that will become the pillars of a successful project,” points out Hassel Fallas, editor of the Data Intelligence Unit of *La Nación*, a newspaper from Costa Rica.

Besides understanding the structure of the database, it’s important to know the context of the topic being investigated to detect inconsistencies in the database, mistakes in the digitalization of numbers, repeated names or any other anomaly that leads us to a wrong conclusion.

Once we get the preliminary findings from the database, we must confront the information with reality, go outside and speak with the protagonists of the data. This step can make a difference in the investigation, as we can see in the next cases:

In February 2011, the newspaper *La Nación* from Costa Rica, with Giannina Segnini at the head, set out to investigate the scholarship award system Avancemos, a program of subsidies to promote that more than 167,000 teenagers continue their studies. As a starting point, the team accessed the database of the beneficiaries and completed it with the name of their parents and crossed them with the information of the goods and incomes of these families. In a first crossing, it was determined that there were tens of scholarship holders with salaries that could reach 9,000 dollars and that also had properties and vehicles inscribed in his name.

However, the story changed when the journalists interviewed these families: the teenagers had parents with economical resources but they had been abandoned.

To arrive to this story, the reporters had to confront the analysis that the database threw in the computer with the protagonists of the story. This way, they could get closer to account what was really happening, give context, find an explanation and not only throw a figure.

Two years later, the team led by Hassel Fallas investigated the student desertion in public high schools. After reviewing the database, with the information of 643 schools, a case that was at the extremes of the ranking stood out: the students leak went from 68% of the enrollment in 2011 to 14% in 2014. It had been reduced by 53 points. Hassel Fallas narrates in his blog *The Data Accounts* that she sought the principal of this educational center to check the figures, reviewed the documents and confirmed that it was a bad fingering of the figure.

In another school, from 445 students that left classes in 2012, it changed to zero in 2013. Clearly, there was a mistake that was later confirmed by the Ministry of Public Education of Costa Rica.

In an interview with Hassel Fallas for this academic paper, based in the evidences of her work, she pointed out: “Before, during and after the analysis of the database we need to go out to the street to report about how is the life of the people affected by the phenomenon we discover in the data and also to validate this data with sources that help us better understand what it is telling us and why.”

As you can see, the cycle of the work with data ends where every journalist must step on: the street.

3. We have to build databases that don't exist and reveal what is hidden

The majority of databases the Latin American investigative journalists need to narrate stories of great public relevance don't exist. We have had to create them many times starting from documents, from paper.

To extract data in an automatized way from these documents, an Optical Character Recognition (OCR) program can be used only if the format allows. And in other cases, the majority of times, we will have to build them manually because the documents delivered in the information requests to the State, are almost always delivered in not accessible formats.

Hassel Fallas makes a list of the obstacles that exist to access to the data to find a journalistic story:

- Data in PDF or Word format
- Pictures of data in PDF
- Spreadsheets locked with a password
- Data in program formats that require a license
- Data without structure

- Incomplete data
- Refusal by the authorities to provide us with complete databases. In several cases, we are only offered to make specific crossings, which prevents us from seeing the whole data.
- Negative to supply the database when available in an online search engine. This leads us journalists to create an automatized extraction method to systematize them into a database with the help of system engineers even though the State has the information.

At Convoca, the digital media of investigative journalism and data analysis that I run from Peru, we had to manually enter to a spreadsheet hundreds of data from the sworn statements of property and income of the 130 congressmen of the Republic.

After more than two years of repeated requests of information to the General Comptroller of the Republic, we obtained the documents but in a JPG format (images), which made impossible to pass the files through an OCR program.

With the information, we decided to build a database with a team integrated by journalists with experience and young university students who were capacitated by us in the use of these tools and the work process with databases.

We soon discovered that in the sworn statements there was partial and doubtful information, not corroborated by supervisory bodies. If the information was doubtful, why build a database with these papers? Because those were official documents considered by the authorities as an effective tool to fight corruption and assets laundry. Therefore, it was of high public interest to know and show the lie.

The construction of the database and the process of verification allowed us to identify the patterns of error, omission, fake data and inconsistencies that appeared in the sworn statements of the politicians.

For that reason, it was indispensable to cross information with the public records of assets and companies, to visit properties and to access to other sources of information.

One of the stories we published in the elections of 2016 in Peru as a part of an investigative series we called Patrimonio S.A. (See the project: <http://www.convoca.pe/especiales/patrimonio-sa/>), was the one of the then legislator Joaquín Ramírez, former general secretary and financier of the party Fuerza Popular of Keiko Fujimori, who was leading the surveys in those elections.

As a part of the verification process of the sworn statements we could demonstrate that Ramírez hid, corrected and increased the number of properties at his name and through his companies.

Ramírez corrected the amounts from the property item of all the affidavits he gave to the Administrative Office of Congress since he became a legislator in 2011. In addition, there was an increase in millionaire purchases of goods through his companies when he began to exercise the parliamentary function. The acquisitions were concentrated in 2012, precisely when Ramírez concealed in his sworn statement of that year properties that never ceased to be his (See the investigation: <http://convoca.pe/investigaciones/el-patrimonio-disfrazado-del-financista-de-keiko-fujimori>).

In this case, it was important to show through the reportages the lies consigned by the congressmen in the documents and to make information of the sworn statements accessible for the citizens through a news application, as an exercise of effective transparency and contribution to public inspection. Not only to know more about the politicians, but to know about the information failures of these public documents that, supposedly, should contribute to prevent corruption in the State. See the News App: <http://www.convoca.pe/especiales/patrimonio-sa/rastreadorpolitico>.

4. To look always deeper: cross the databases and ask powerful questions to generate impact

How deep do you want to get with a story? That is a fundamental question that we journalists must ask when starting an investigative project with databases.

“Often, a database alone doesn’t include all the variables we need, then we join them with others to widen the context,” ensures Hassel Fallas.

The crossing of the databases allows the reporter to generate powerful investigative series with rigor, precision and effectiveness in the search for information to generate knowledge.

In the middle of 2014, Convoca started to build a database to measure the degree of accomplishment of environmental rules of the great mining and the oil industry in Peru because of the increasing number of social conflicts generated in the country for the execution of these projects and at the same time it's about activities of great importance for the Peruvian economy.

Regarding the relevance of the topic, there was no doubts. The big question was: What do we want to tell? Giannina Segnini, who is a member of the committee of advisors of Convoca, helped us to land the hypothesis: the companies relapse one and over again on the same infractions because they prefer to be fined rather than invest in the improvement of their productive processes not to damage the environment and the health of the people who live in the surroundings of mining projects. These companies even prefer to pay to law firms to freeze the payment of the fines in the Judicial Power.

Telling that story resulted more powerful than just accounting the number of fines and infractions that each company had and knowing which ones were the most infringing.

For the project, we had to create other databases with information from documents and other sources to deepen our findings. For example, to determine how many million dollars the Ollanta Humala government forgave in fines to the mining and oil infringing companies through the approval of the article 19 of the 30230 Law that was approved in July 2014 in the middle of interest conflict. The work with databases, information crossing and reporting, allowed us to determine that there were more than 17 million dollars forgiven in fines, despite the government inspector collected evidence of the infractions.

Other databases we built allowed us to detect the business and political relationships of these companies to determine the influence ability of business groups in the political power. Other spreadsheets built with the information of hundreds of documents helped us to determine that there were more than a thousand supervision reports linked to corruption cases and of great political influence kept under the carpet.

This project we called ‘Excesses unpunished’ won the Data Journalism Awards 2016 in the News App category, given by the Global Editors Network and Google, and it was finalist in the Innovation category in the Gabriel García Márquez Ibero-American Prize.

But the bigger impact was that, after two years of publishing our reports about the topic in a permanent way, the Congress derogated the article of the law that forgave the environmental fines taking as a base the evidences revealed by Convoca.

For this investigation, we crossed 14 databases built from thousands of documents obtained through more than 100 information requests to the Peruvian State and other sources. The registry of the data we built became a fundamental source of information to publish a series of reportages during two years until achieving a public impact.

A similar effect occurred with the investigative series ‘Pesca negra’ I published with IDL-Reporteros between 2011 and 2013, which showed the underwriting of the massive and millionaire anchovy fishing in the Peruvian sea, the second most important fishing nation after China.

The lack of state control allowed that, in a little less than two years, 630,000 tons of anchovy, valued in approximately 200 million dollars, disappeared from any state control.

For this investigation, there were processes more than 200,000 documents of fish landing, which were linked to a big database through an algorithm. A part of the database had to be built entering data by data.

In a first stage, the work was made with the participation of the system engineer Miguel López and then the investigation was expanded with a collaborative work with the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ).

After two years of permanent publications, this series of reportages made it possible to generate a reform in the fishing sector in Peru.

The research with databases allows to narrate in many deliveries a great story, give following to a topic and contribute to generate changes.

5. Follow the data beyond the borders

The crimes of corruption, money laundering and organized crime know no borders. The journalistic investigation with databases allows us to travel different countries to follow the money track and the felonies with a collaborative work. The internet and technology make possible nowadays the existence of global writing rooms as the one led by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) with the global project Panama Papers.

This global investigation became a powerful referent to promote the collaborative work because it involved around 400 journalists in the world.

The reportages were developed mainly from the search of information in more than 11 million documents from the Panamanian law firm Mossack Fonseca to reveal opaque financial practices, evasion cases, tax evasion and money laundering by setting up *offshore* companies in tax havens.

Though the main source of information wasn't a structured database, many teams of journalists built their own spreadsheets to cross them with other databases in each country and find good stories.

In Latin America, four teams of journalists from an equal number of media narrated for the ABCDatos publication of Convoca that they counted with programmers in their teams to develop their investigations. Between them were the journalists from *La Nación* newspaper from Argentina, one of the pioneer media in the use of database in the continent.

“We did a manual labor (registering the names of all the Argentinian characters) while the engineer tried to cross our databases with the new findings we obtained from the Panama Papers,” explained Iván Ruiz (ABCDatos, 2015).

Ruiz considers fundamental the previous experience that his team acquired in the projects *Swiss Leaks*, *Offshore Leaks* and *Luxemburg Leaks* of ICIJ, to find relevant stories for Argentina.

Following the ICIJ model, Convoca initiated the collaborative work Investiga Lava Jato along with journalists from Folha of Sao Paulo, to develop reportages and build databases about the enormous case of corruption Lava Jato, with the participation of more than 20 colleagues from media of Latin America and Africa.

Between the allies appear the newspaper Perfil from Argentina, the investigation portal Mil Hojas from Ecuador, El Faro from El Salvador, Plaza Pública from Guatemala, the organization Mexicanos contra la Corrupción y la Impunidad, Colombiacheck, the Regional Initiative for Investigative Journalism in the Americas of ICFJ/Connectas, the portals Runrunes and El Pitazo from Venezuela and the Jornal Verdade from Mozambique.

To investigate the corruption network of the Brazilian companies requires a cross-border, collaborative, persistent and effective work in terms of evidence and time. For that reason, we joined efforts to develop and publish reportages, to share relevant information about our countries where Odebrecht confessed to have paid around 800 million dollars in bribes, to learn from the process of investigation with methodology and perseverance as well as to bring light over the corruption patterns, what is kept hidden or what is half-told in the public sphere.

Our first joint investigation was published in June 2017. The series of reportages revealed that in seven countries where the Brazilian company Odebrecht paid bribes to officials and intermediaries, 50 works executed by the company under different modalities of contract, investment and concessions, had additional costs for more than 6 billion dollars in relation to the initial values between 2011 and 2016. This finding was possible with the collaborative construction of a database of the works from the contract, police documents, court documents, other databases and various sources.

The data analysis took us to investigate and arrive to other findings. The majority of the increments of budget were by extensions of terms, additional works and engineer alterations, that in many cases are under investigation by the justice. These extra operations didn't pass through public contests and were kept in hands of the Brazilian constructor and their partners through repeated modifications in the contracts or special regulation that skipped the laws of recruitment.

From this number of works with budget breaks in Peru, Panama, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Mexico, Colombia and Mozambique, 31 are being investigated by the Public Ministry or the Contraloria of these countries. This means 61% of the total number. Also, seven of these works, 23%, appear in the forms of the Odebrecht Structured Operations Division, known as the "Office of Bribes," according to the analysis of more than 8,000 documents made by the journalists of 'Investiga Lava Jato' until June 15.

Reviewing the documents of the Brazilian justice also allowed us to know other new stories of bribe payments in Mexico, Venezuela, Argentina, Peru and Mozambique.

Each journalist gave their talent and ability to the service of the project. Some members were focused on the construction of the database with the assessment of the Convoca team, the collaboration of Clomobiacheck, and other journalists were focused on the access to documents and human sources.

Also, the simultaneous publishing of the stories in a project of this dimension, protects the findings of the reporters before the pressures or the existence of “a propagandistic device to hide” and maintain impunity in Latin America in front of corruption, ensures the journalist Sandra Crucianelli.

Working in a collaborative way requires to develop a dynamic of horizontal work and put to the service of the project the best of what one we knows to do best. The result: revealing stories.

6. Apply the methodology with rigor and be transparent with our decisions

To dive in databases, organize, clean, interpret and confront them is part of a method that the reporter builds to arrive to determined journalistic findings. This process must be done with rigor and knowledge about the reality in order to tell real stories.

The Colombian journalist and editor of the Data Unit of *El Tiempo* newspaper, Ginna Morelo, points out that in the methodology the journalists build is essential the reporting, which has as a purpose to “standardize data” to decipher why some phenomenon and facts of public relevance occur.

“Journalism always -since its origin- has searched for data. Before, the problem was where to find them; today the matter is to standardize so many and interpret them and that takes on great importance because it lets us arrive to more complex patterns regarding why and what for facts occur,” she says.

A case that sets an example to the importance of methodology is the cross-border investigation “Niñas Madres,” a radiography of the causes and consequences of teenage

pregnancy in five countries of Latin America that reveals one of the faces of inequality in the continent. In this project, participated the journalists of Convoca from Peru, Nómada and Plaza Pública from Guatemala and journalists from Ecuador and Bolivia, with the coordination of Consejo de Redacción from Colombia and Deutsche Welle Akademie from Germany.

In “Niñas Madres,” I was in charge of the edition of the reportages from Peru and Colombia and participated in the debate with the editors and data analysts about the criteria we should take into account at the moment of interpreting the public databases and crossing the information.

One of the difficulties of the work with data was that in the majority of countries where we proposed ourselves to investigate the issue, the information was incomplete (the cases of Bolivia and Ecuador were the most alarming) or the public data was based on statistical projections.

Facing this challenge, we reviewed in detail the methodology of the databases and interviewed experts who could orientate us to make decisions regarding what information could be reliable to portray reality. Other decision we took was to evince in the reportages the inconsistencies and weaknesses of the public data and how this problem affected the design of a state policy to prevent teenage pregnancy.

For example, between 2012 and September 2016, there were registered in Peru 10 cases of suicide of pregnant teenagers between 12 and 17 years old, and 18 in minors of 20, according to the General Epidemiology Direction from the Health Ministry. But the official data didn't present the dimension of the issue because there was a high underreporting of information in indicators associated to teenage pregnancy.

Also, there wasn't an official record of neonatal mortality cases in pregnant teenagers organized by departments. The template employed to gather and analyze these data by the General Epidemiology Direction of the Health Ministry in Peru didn't include information about the age of the mother, only the place of residence. One of the fears of the authorities was to reveal the possible practices of abortion.

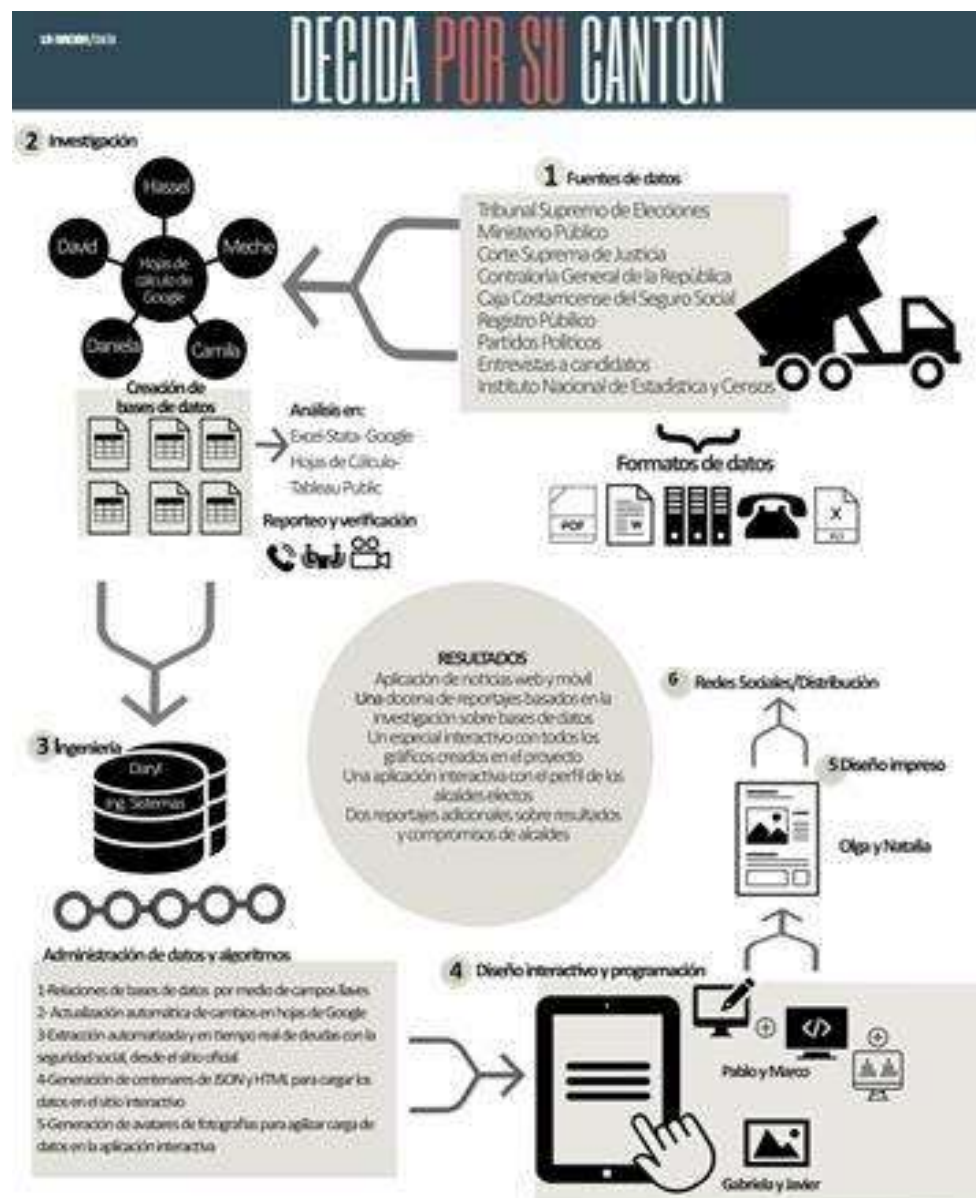
The work with databases demands us journalists to be transparent with our methods and decisions, as well as to show the inconsistencies in the public data. Therefore, it's very

important to explain in a clear and didactic way the process of the work with databases so the readers can draw their own conclusions.

Every investigative project with databases must explain step-by-step the process of work. This is one of the major lessons the reporters of this continent have learned, as we see in the investigation ‘Decida por su cantón’, presented by the newspaper *La Nación* from Costa Rica regarding the municipal elections from February 2016 in that country.

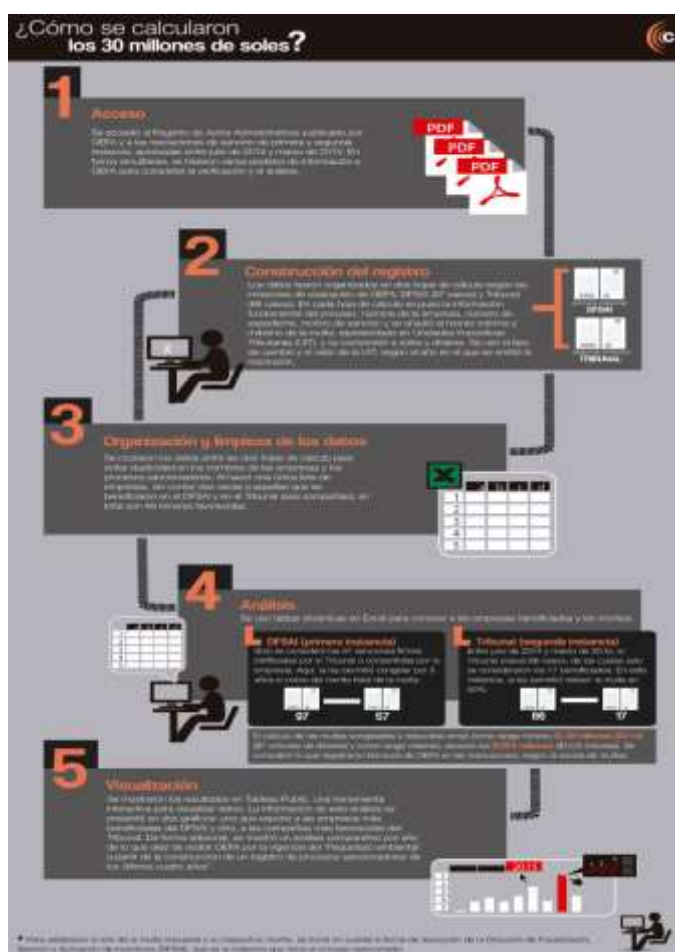
The Costa Rican newspaper investigated the 605 candidates that were running to occupy 81 mayors. It built a database with their judicial records, administrative sanctions, social security debts and information about their resume.

This was the process:



For the investigation ‘Excesses unpunished’ from Convoca, about the environmental behavior of extractive industries in Peru that we described in the first pages of this academic paper, there was also an infographic made to explain how were processed the thousands of documents obtained through more than 100 requests for information. To account this process was fundamental to belie the former Environment Minister, Manuel Pulgar Vidal, who tried to discredit the investigation because it questioned the approval of the article 19 of the law 30230 that forgave millionaire fines in despite of the serious environmental infractions committed.

Transparency tears down the lie of the powerful ones. But also, as ensures the Costa Rican journalist Giannina Segnini, journalists also must be transparent with our methods in the same degree we demand the same from the authorities.



7. Explore various formats to publish findings and involve the audience

Usually when we think of publishing journalistic findings based on databases, we think of maps, searchers, rankings, cakes, among other graphics. In data-driven journalism lingo we call that “data visualization.”

However, today it’s possible to publish these findings in various formats. In Convoca, we have experimented not only with the News App (or news applications), but also with podcasts to make a balance of the promises of the president Pedro Pablo Kuczynski (<http://promesasppk.convoca.pe/>), comics to portray the years of violence lived in Peru in the 80s and 90s (<http://convoca.pe/agenda-propia/episodios-de-la-historia-del-terror-senderista-en-comic>) and even a videogame to portray the social and economical impact of tax evasion and avoidance (See: <http://ilusionfiscal.convoca.pe/eljuego/>).

“The format is one: to creatively account a good story. A story is a life or many of them. When a number has a face, it tells a life and engages the audiences. In the end, is journalism, this means telling stories,” says the Colombian journalist Ginna Morelo.

Ginna Morelo and the Mexican journalist, Lilia Saul, won the Ortega and Gasset Journalism Award with a multimedia special about people disappeared in Colombia and Mexico. The journalists appealed to the interactive graphics, illustrations, videos and chronicles to portray the pain of the relatives of the victims and get in an effective way to the audiences (See: <http://www.eltiempo.com/multimedia/especiales/desaparecidos-duelo-eterno/16382245/1/>)

Other important aspect is to involve the community of readers in the process of the projects as the team of La Nación Data from Argentina did with the project “Two years of analysis of the listenings of Nisman.” (<http://blogs.lanacion.com.ar/data/argentina/el-detras-de-escena-de-la-investigacion-y-clasificacion-de-las-40-000-escuchas-de-nisman/>).

After the suspicious death of the Argentinian prosecutor Alberto Nisman, the team of La Nación Data, along with volunteers and university students, initiated a long process of investigation that comprehended the classification of 40,000 recordings, as described the New Ibero-American Journalism Foundation (FNPI). This project was finalist in the Innovation category of the Ibero-American Award Gabriel García Márquez.

The analysis of the recordings implied to upload audios in VozData, a collaborative platform developed by La Nación with the support of Knight Mozilla Open News and Civicus Alliance, for the citizens to help classify the information based on established categories that were then verified by the team of journalists so the citizens could finally download the available data.

For the Argentinian journalist Gaston Roitberg, from the newspaper *La Nación* from Argentina, journalism with databases opens a great possibility for innovation. And in that path of creativity and journalistic rigor there are many media and journalists in Latin America.

References

Convoca. ABCDatos. 2016: <http://abcdatos.convoca.pe/>

Convoca. ABCDatos. 2016. 'Lecciones de Panama Papers en Latinoamérica'. <http://abcdatos.convoca.pe/edicion/5/lecciones-de-panama-papers-en-latinoamerica>

Convoca. Excesos sin Castigo. 2016 <http://excesosincastigo.convoca.pe/>

Convoca. Patrimonio SA. 2016. <http://www.convoca.pe/especiales/patrimonio-sa/>

Crucianelli, Sandra. Interview for this report, 2017.

Fallas, Hassel. Interview for this report, 2017.

Fallas, Hassel. La Data Cuenta. <http://hasselfallas.com/>

Knight Center for Journalism in the Americas. 2017.

<https://knightcenter.utexas.edu/es/blog/00-18479-periodistas-de-11-paises-unen-esfuerzos-en-sitio-web-sobre-el-caso-lava-jato>

Segnini, Giannina. Verification Handbook for investigative reporting, 2015.

<http://verificationhandbook.com/book2/chapter5.php>

Investiga Lava Jato. 2017: <http://investigalavajato.convoca.pe/>

Morelo, Ginna. Interview for this report, 2017.

Poderomedia. Manual de Periodismo de Datos Iberoamericano. 2014.

<http://manual.periodismodedatos.org/milagros-salazar.php>

Radu, Paul. Interview for this report, 2017

Roitberg, Gastón. Interview for this report, 2017.

Investigative open data journalism in Russia: actors, barriers and challenges

By Anastasia Valeeva

Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, University of Oxford

Abstract

In this study, I wanted to show how open data is used for investigative storytelling in Russia, and what are the barriers that prevent journalists from embracing it. To answer these questions, the study draws on a combination of semi-structured interviews with investigative journalists and open data experts, case studies, and qualitative content analysis. In the final section, I discuss the existing barriers and provide guidelines on how to make investigative data journalism stronger in Russia.

The study revealed that in the emerging eco-system of open data, new actors perform part of journalists' functions. Politicians and non-governmental organisations use data as a tool to engage with their audiences; civic technology organisations build neutral applications on top of open data and hold it to account; data journalism hackathons provide experimental playgrounds for enthusiastic individuals to work together and investigate official data. However, objective, independent analysis of public data in the public interest, without political ambition or ad-hoc temporary opportunism, is possible only with a newsroom infrastructure that upholds professional ethics.

Qualitative content analysis is focused on three different products: traditional investigations, data stories produced at the hackathons, and data investigations published in the news media. Stories are ranked based on complexity of data organization and analysis. The content analysis showed, traditional journalistic investigations are far from embracing data as their information source. Certain newsrooms innovate and have reporters who build their investigations primarily on data. These stories rank high in the organization of data (providing a link and creating a database) and data analysis (search by keywords and statistical knowledge), but low in transparency (access to the database) and use of machine learning. Hackathons serve as an experimental playground, where participants are shifting journalistic culture towards open source and hacker culture.

Introduction

There are many things in common between doing journalism with data and being an investigative journalist. In a way, investigative journalists all over the world were working with government data long before the very term ‘data journalism’ came into prominence. Professional reporters were digging through government statistics, court records and business reports (Howard 2014: 10). These files were, essentially, open data – albeit non-digitised. Today, when data journalism has become a specialisation on its own, there are other clear similarities: both data and investigative journalism are focused on finding new information, both strive for objectivity and work in the public interest. The fact that ‘design of data-processing artefacts can fit the traditional epistemology of journalistic investigation’ has been noted internationally by media researchers (Parasie 2015) and particularly in Russia through the interviews made for this chapter.

But where, traditionally, journalists keep their story secret until the moment of publication, with data investigations they need to loosen control over their narrative in two ways: they should trust data and let it tell its own story, and they should share the content with people from other backgrounds to help with the analysis and presentation. Another distinctive feature of doing data journalism is being transparent about sources and processes, often publishing the data behind the story. This, again, seems at odds with the traditional culture of journalistic investigation. The fact that professional journalists often do not reveal their sources is criticised as a ‘fundamental bug of newspapers’ (Baack 2015: 6).

Apart from these epistemological and professional tensions, there are technical challenges that require investigative journalists to become data savvy to use open data the right way. The essential distinctive feature of open data is that it is ‘typically readable by computers, making it easier for humans to combine and interrogate them’ (Bowles et al, 142). As a result, journalists do not fully embrace open data, staying in their comfort zone, and at the same time, ‘journalists are not seen as end users of Open Data’ (Stoneman, 14) by governments and other actors.

This leads to the fact that in the emerging eco-system of open data, new actors perform part of journalists’ functions. In this study, I want to show how open data is used for investigative storytelling in Russia, and what are the barriers that prevent journalists from embracing it. To answer these questions, the study draws on a combination of semi-structured interviews with investigative journalists and open data experts, case studies, and qualitative content analysis.

In the first chapter I describe the actors who use data for storytelling in Russia: politicians, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and ad-hoc teams of journalists participating in hackathons. Politicians and non-governmental organisations use data as a tool to engage with their audiences; civic technology organisations build neutral applications on top of open data and hold it to account; data journalism hackathons provide experimental playgrounds for enthusiastic individuals to work together and investigate official data. However, objective, independent analysis of public data in the public interest, without political ambition or ad-hoc temporary opportunism, is possible only with a newsroom infrastructure that upholds professional ethics.

In the next section, I focus on the qualitative content analysis of three different products: traditional investigations, data stories produced at hackathons, and data investigations published in the news media. To assess the use of open data in journalistic investigations in Russia, I concentrated on three news outlets:

Novaya Gazeta, an independent journal founded in 1993 and famous for its investigations of sensitive areas such as the conflicts in the Caucasus or human rights abuses;

Meduza, a digital-based news organisation whose core team was formed of journalists who resigned from Lenta.ru when its editor-in-chief was fired in 2014; and

RBC, the biggest non-government media group in Russia which comprises of an informational agency, news portal, newspaper, magazine and broadcast company. It is particularly noted for its investigations into business and politics.

Stories are ranked based on complexity of data organization and analysis using a scoring system. I have measured transparency of journalism by seeing if there was a link provided to the source data; and if the journalist's own data was put online. Complexity of data analysis is measured by the tools used to produce insight: was it searching for a name in the dataset; performing statistical calculations or running an algorithm? The content analysis showed, traditional journalistic investigations are far from embracing data as their information source. Certain newsrooms innovate and have reporters who build their investigations primarily on data. These stories rank high in the organization of data (providing a link and creating a database) and data analysis (search by keywords and statistical knowledge), but low in transparency (access to the database) and use of machine learning.

In the final section, I discuss the existing barriers for investigative data journalism in Russia and propose guidelines to overcome it. This is followed by a conclusion and bibliography.

1. Actors. Who else uses open data for storytelling?

1.1. Politicians like Alexey Navalny

Blogger, lawyer, and opposition politician Alexey Navalny, head of the Anti-Corruption Foundation (FBK), currently running for the president of Russia, is also a journalist – or, at least, he plays a very similar role. He has been publishing stories about corrupt officials on his personal blog since 2006. In 2010, he has launched the Rospil project (Navalny 2010), the aim of which was to fight corruption in public procurement. Georgy Alburov, head of the investigative unit at FBK, confirms that Rospil has slightly changed direction since 2015:

Before, it was a mechanical analysis of government procurement. Now it's more about investigations. The analysis of procurement just gave us numbers – how many of the contracts are shady and how much money was lost. This is now not very important for us. What is much more interesting is to make investigations – this means not just finding the presence of corruption in procurement, but describing it and showing the connections between people. This needs more time but has more impact (Alburov 2016).

In December 2015, Navalny published one such story, “Chaika” (Navalny 2015). To use his own words, this was “the main investigation of the year” (Navalny 2015a), in the form of an hour-long documentary and a multimedia story. The story deals with the general prosecutor of Russia or, more precisely, his two sons. Their family name is Chaika. In Russian, “chaika” means seagull, and it is also the title of a famous play by the nineteenth-century Russian dramatist Anton Chekhov. Hence the visual style of the investigation: the theatrical curtain and the subtitle “the criminal drama in four acts”. Through these four acts, FBK tells a story of various corruption schemes and undeclared property of the Chaika brothers. Every claim is documented with the help of data such as land registries and Instagram geotags. What role does open data play here?

To support one of the claims, Navalny and his team downloaded from the official government procurement website all 36 tenders in which the company allegedly belonging to Igor Chaika had participated (Navalny 2015b). They show in an attached table that every time this company

participated in a tender, it had the same three competitors – whatever the tender, whatever the region. This indicated a suspicious pattern and a possible affiliation between those companies. When the team looked further, they found out that three companies out of four had the same address, and the other one was registered at the home address of Igor Chaika; besides, they promoted each other's vacancies on a job site.

This is a classic use of open data in investigations, but is it journalism? Among independent journalists in Russia, views vary: some say “It's a classic open data investigative journalism. They are the best team in the country today for working with data; not only in their competence and level of analysis, but also in their presentation” (Kolpakov 2016), while others see what they have done as a political activity rather than journalism. “The motivation is the political capital of Navalny, not the public service. But I only care if this is truth, and it is, since it's backed with open sources and open government data.” (Anin 2016).

The investigative team at FBK admits enjoying another level of freedom and does not deny that they go beyond journalistic standards in their investigations:

We do much of a journalist's job. But we also do something journalists cannot do. They see that people are thieves and crooks, but they cannot write it. We can. We don't have any journalistic ethics, we only have internal rules; for example, we do not touch personal issues unless it's very much about corruption (Alburov 2016).

There is another journalistic standard that FBK neglects: objectivity. It never seeks to provide both (or many) sides of the story, taking a shortcut to accuse a politician of corruption and call for public outrage. This disregard for professional journalistic standards was echoed in the media section of Open Data Day 2017 in Moscow: “the format and the presentation nullify the objectivity, although in its methods of information gathering this is classic data journalism” (Jourhack 2017).

Still, there is something important that journalists could learn from Navalny and his team. It is not just about being active users of data portals and databases, but about employing suitable technology to find the insights. Alburov underlines the importance of technology:

The future of investigative journalism is machine learning for data analysis. We received at least five anonymous messages that one official was buying apartments at a certain address, but we could not identify him. Finally, we downloaded the data for all the apartments in that house, analysed

it using machine learning, sorted owners by property, and the biggest owner was our lead. He turned out to be a crony of that official (Albuov 2016).

1.2. Hackathons as a meeting point of state agencies, NGOs, and community(ies)

Navalny's investigation of the general prosecutor's family certainly made an impact – it had more than 5 million views on YouTube. It might seem a little surprising in this context that the prosecutor's office would itself organize a hackathon – a meetup for developers and journalists to work together and investigate official crime data (Genproc, 2016). These hackathons and other initiatives like the All-Russian open data contest and the Open Data Council are healthy signs of a growing open data ecosystem. The Prosecutor General's office is not the only state agency actively investing in data stories: the Analytical Centre for the Government of the Russian Federation, the Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Finances and the Ministry of Health also take part in the organization and mentoring of journalism hackathons. At these events state agencies find themselves in the unusual company of investigative media such as Novaya Gazeta and the anti-corruption NGO Transparency International. And, of course, there is a growing community of users.

Citizen journalism is developing on a massive scale. See what Navalny is doing, or other bloggers or activists without journalistic education who learn how to work with open data, and make investigations. The FBK branch in St Petersburg is publishing investigations, Transparency Russia, which was never involved in investigations before, has started doing this. There are two reasons for this: open data and active people interested in analysing it (Anin 2016).

So says Roman Anin, investigative journalist at Novaya Gazeta, who attends hackathons as a jury member and teaches students how to work with data in the first master's course in data journalism at the Higher School of Economics in Moscow. His colleague Serafim Romanov, editor-in-chief of Novaya Gazeta in St Petersburg, has started organising hackathons himself, having witnessed growing interest in both data and investigations. He emphasizes that journalists have become full-fledged participants in these hackathons which used to be purely meetups for developers: "Journalists enter the hackathons as storytellers of data. They are needed even though they don't code." (Romanov 2017)

1.3. Civic technologies

In addition, many “non-governmental players are ready to work with data and create applications and websites on top of it” (Begtin 2016). Such products in Russia include a project of Transparency International, <http://declarator.org/>, which brings together the declarations of officials; a community-run project. <https://www.dissernet.org/>, which combines manual and automated analysis to detect plagiarism in dissertations; and <https://clearspending.ru/>, a project of NGO Infoculture which is built on top of the public procurement data, cleaning it and adding more search options. These are technical projects, which provide open data for anyone to use, be it pro-governmental or anti-governmental media or anything in between. As Begtin says, “it’s about creating infrastructure, an ecosystem”.

This is an important development and positive evidence of a growing open data ecosystem in Russia, animated by bottom-up initiatives, with some support from the state agencies. However, it is important to remember that no politician or NGO can substitute for journalists in the role of data storyteller. Objective, independent analysis of public data in the public interest, without political ambition or ad-hoc temporary opportunism, is possible only with a newsroom infrastructure that upholds professional ethics.

2. Content analysis of data journalism investigations

Three corpuses of data, each containing nine items, were chosen for this research: data journalism stories produced during the data journalism hackathon that took place in Moscow on 25–26 June 2016; all the investigations published during June 2016 at the website of investigative newspaper Novaya Gazeta; and nine data journalism investigative pieces identified during the interviews for this research as exemplifying best practice.

To evaluate the use of data in every piece and to be able to draw comparisons between them, two methods were used: qualitative content analysis and a scoring system. The scoring system was developed to measure the complexity of data use in the story. It consists of two groups: organization of data and data analysis (see Table 1). A score ranging from 1 to 3 points is attributed for each criterion, with 12 being the highest possible overall score (see the attached table).

Table 1: Scoring system for the complexity of data use

Group	Criteria	Points
Organization of data	Link to data	1
Organization of data	Creating database	2
Organization of data	Online access to database	3
Data analysis	Search by keywords	1
Data analysis	Statistics (using max, min, mean)	2
Data analysis	Machine learning	3

The organization of data measures the complexity of getting the data and being transparent about it. If a link to the source is provided, 1 point is attributed; if several datasets are combined for the story, there are 2 points; and if journalists give access to their raw data, this makes 3 points.

Data analysis ranges in complexity from searching the data for specific words (1 point); to performing simple statistical calculations like looking for the best or the worst in the group (2 points); to performing a complex analysis with the use of computers (3 points).

Topic of the story, human story to illustrate the data, and data visualization were the variables measured independently and evaluated during the qualitative content analysis. Data visualization is often referred to as part and parcel of data journalism; however, there is no proven correlation between the number of visualizations or its interactivity and the quality of the story. For this reason, they are not included in the score.

2.1. Hackathons

A distinctive feature of the investigations produced during hackathons is the wide variety of topics, whereas journalism investigations traditionally tend to cover procurement or corruption. At the hackathon, four stories out of nine covered health and another two were about sport. In general, the idea behind every story was to understand how a specific part of the system works, from law to implementation: orphan diseases, football legionnaires, the penitentiary system. This is also a source of hidden problems: since the investigation tackles the problem as such, it often lacks a human story from the journalistic point of view. Out of the nine projects, only two had human stories to illustrate the data.

Hackathons produce visualization-rich storytelling: no story had less than three visualizations, the average being seven. Five out of the nine stories had interactive elements in them, sometimes in the form of a game. This high number is not necessarily a sign of quality: some visualizations clearly do not add to the story, and it is hard to adapt interactive infographics for every device. But they are evidence of the active exploration of visual storytelling techniques by the hackathon participants.

As for the complexity score, the majority of teams (seven) created their own database, usually layering two or more datasets together and often (six) they would provide a link to data, but in only one case out of nine did the team provide their raw data for download. On the aspect of data analysis, every team used data for keyword search and statistical calculations. Three teams tried to run an algorithm to produce insights from the data: matching the addresses of prisons with the addresses of contractors on the procurement website; building a model for the number of Olympic medals; comparing the media advertisement of drugs with the number of publications about those drugs in the PubMed research database. This allowed the teams to reach interesting conclusions such as predicting future Olympic winners or claiming that “millions of public funds are spent on drugs of controversial efficiency”.

Overall, hackathon projects score 7 on average, mostly because of their sophisticated data analysis. The highest-scoring project reached the maximum score of 12. To sum up, hackathons provide great opportunities for brainstorming, but “it’s a quick job, whereas investigations take a lot of time” (Romanov 2017). It is also not very sustainable, as the links expire with time: out of 15 stories produced during this hackathon only nine are still online and so eligible to be selected for this analysis.

2.2. Classic journalism investigations

Out of nine stories published by Novaya Gazeta in June 2016, only two use open data in this way or another. To make sure that June was not an outlier month in this respect, another three months were checked for this variable, scoring 3 out of a possible 12. We understand the limitations of this sample due to the time constraints; however, I consider the conclusion that open data is very rarely used in traditional journalistic investigations to be valid. There are several reasons for this. One of them is the sensitive nature of topics investigated: people being killed in North Caucasus, smuggling, corruption and bribery, criminal proceedings, reshuffle at the state agencies. Not surprisingly, a lot of sources are

confidential and there is simply no open data on the topic. On the other hand, all stories had an exclusive human angle. Only one story used data visualization, illustrating a smuggling scheme.

However, there are three possible ways in which open data could help here. First, as Novaya Gazeta has a lot of specific knowledge in the sensitive areas of human rights, it could start its own open database and support its great stories with data, pointing out the growing or decreasing trends, or comparing situations across geographical areas. Second, a story could be put into a broader context when layered with other data: for example, a story on the construction of the nuclear burial near St Petersburg could be layered with the ecological data that is available. Third, the data is sometimes hidden inside the story. For example, their story “The Kremlin man” (Novaya Gazeta 2016a) reports on an analysis of the police procurement data which showed that “since Pushkaryov took the post of mayor, the “Vladivostok Roads” municipal enterprise has been recognized as the winner of various tenders 135 times, and in most cases, it was the only participant.” If Novaya Gazeta were to check this data for themselves, perhaps it could give new leads for the story.

The data complexity score for classic journalistic investigations is generally low: the average is 1.5 points for the two stories that did use open data. One of them used a declaration to prove the immense possessions of the official in question (Novaya Gazeta 2016b). Another used open data as the main evidence base. The details are as follows. In the republic of Karelia, in the north of Russia, a tragedy happened in June 2016: 14 children drowned in a disaster at a summer camp. Instructors from the camp took the children out rafting on a lake despite a storm warning. Further journalistic reporting focused on bad conditions at the camp, the negligence of employees, and their previous criminal investigations. Perhaps most alarming is that this was a social summer camp for orphans and children from troubled families, paid for with public funds after a tendering process. The investigation by Novaya Gazeta (Novaya Gazeta 2016c) looked at the public procurement contracts for this summer camp. It compared the description of services on the camp’s website with the description in the tender. They match so closely that it is already a suspicious sign. Moreover, a journalist who studied all the eight tenders that this summer camp had ever won discovered that in all cases it was either the only bidder, or there was one other camp competing which belonged to the same organization. Now, this was a careful reading of the open data about one camp. Would it benefit the investigation and society if we could have a broader view of how the procurement of camps works and flag up suspicious cases?

2.3. Data-driven investigations in Russian news media

In this section, we look more closely at the investigations published in the news outlets *Novaya Gazeta*, *Meduza*, and *RBC* that used data. They were identified during the interviews for this paper as best practices and analysed in terms of their data analysis and the transparency of the process.

Big data investigations at *Novaya Gazeta*

Novaya Gazeta is a newspaper traditionally known for its classic journalistic investigations. More recently, it has become famous for using big data and leaked databases in their investigations, as well as open sources and open data in their researching. Significantly, *Novaya Gazeta* joined with the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists and the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project in publishing the Panama Papers in May 2016 and Russian Laundromat in March 2017. These stories are run by an investigative team headed by journalist Roman Anin.

For my research, I wanted to see how much open data was used in the Panama Papers investigation (*Novaya Gazeta* 2016). Clearly, it was not the main lead for the story, but it was still used, particularly procurement contracts and declarations. All parts of this series of investigations layered open data with the Mossack Fonseca database. However, the open data was never linked to an original source, nor was the database put online. This is easily explained by the very nature of the investigation, but it is also evidence of the level of ‘openness’ in investigative journalism: it presents the reader with the results without giving access to the raw data.

As for the complexity of data analysis, there were no statistical calculations or special programs employed to establish correlations or discover patterns. Instead, simple ‘fishing expeditions’ were undertaken, searching in the database, for instance, for the names of people close to President Putin. In effect, journalists at *Novaya Gazeta* were continuing the tradition of old-school investigative reporters when they ‘read’ the data and searched for proof of corruption through various databases, including open data. Visualization of data, in contrast, is where the culture shift happens at the moment: every story had a visualization element to it, and one of them was interactive.

Statistical investigations at *Meduza*

At the online-first media organisation *Meduza*, based in Riga, there is no dedicated data group, but there is a team called ‘Razbor’ which in Russian means ‘scrutiny’ or ‘analysis.’ They work with data in a way which is interesting for two reasons. First, they use data to explain complex issues in step-by-step guides often referencing original data or reports. Second, this team also looks for interesting datasets and analyses them – and their reports are then combined with the traditional reporting done by special correspondents. For this genre, they coined the term ‘statistical investigation’.

One of their stories came directly from open data. One weekend, Denis Dmitriev, a member of the ‘Razbor’ team, had some time to look at the dataset published by the Federal Service of State Statistics which had information on the volume of all food products sold within the borders of the Russian Federation during the 2014 fiscal year. The data was available, albeit in pdf form. Having calculated consumption per capita, Dmitriev discovered, surprisingly, that in one remote region of the Chechen republic people consumed more food than anywhere else in the country. Initially, journalists had two explanations – it was either a secret resort for locals or Chechen officials were ‘inventing’ their data.

To check this, *Meduza* sent a reporter to the region to interview officials and locals. After further analysis of the data, the ‘Razbor’ team found that the same amount of consumption per capita was repeated across half of municipalities in the republic. This was a solid proof that the data was not collected in a fair and adequate manner – even if the total was true, the way it was divided across the regions was artificial. They tried to contact Chechen officials but nobody would pick up the phone (Data Team *Meduza* 2017). But the investigation had a sort of happy ending: after the new data for 2015 was published, the richest region in 2014 was assessed the poorest one in 2015. This is how data journalism can make an impact in Russia: encouraging officials to pay a little more attention to the data they publish.

As for transparency, *Meduza* always provides a link to the original data and always creates its own dataset, though still does not give online access to it. In terms of data analysis, journalists employ the basic understanding of statistical analysis, but do not use computer programming to provide the insights. *Meduza* supports every story with visualisations, but the most important part for them is journalistic reporting.

Open data investigations at RBC

RBC, part of the RosBusinessConsulting media group, has become famous for its investigations in the recent years. In particular, reporter Ivan Golunov built up a reputation for his exclusives based on in-depth work with procurement data and documents.

Golunov not only carefully reads the procurement documents to find the signs of corruption, he also works with the data by sorting, filtering and analysing it. For instance:

RBC has studied all the tenders of the Moscow City Hall under the 'My Street' programme [complex improvement scheme for the streets of Moscow planned for 2015-2018]. In 22 out of 31 cases, winners offered a reduction in the initial price in the range of 5.26-5.82 per cent. Of these, eight winners offered the same reduction of 5.2631 per cent (RBC 2015).

These investigations have a distinct data aspect since they analyse tender documents *en masse* trying to see the bigger picture – who wins most tenders for a project, who are the key players on the market. The link for the original data is always provided, but not for the database the reporter has compiled to draw his conclusions.

As for the data analysis, statistical knowledge is employed to discover the insights, but the algorithms are never used to detect hidden patterns. When asked if his investigation could benefit from developers' input, Golunov replied that 'they could automate the work that I am doing manually now' (Golunov 2017). This, in my view, is an evidence that programmers are not yet seen in the Russian newsrooms as fully-fledged members of the investigative team.

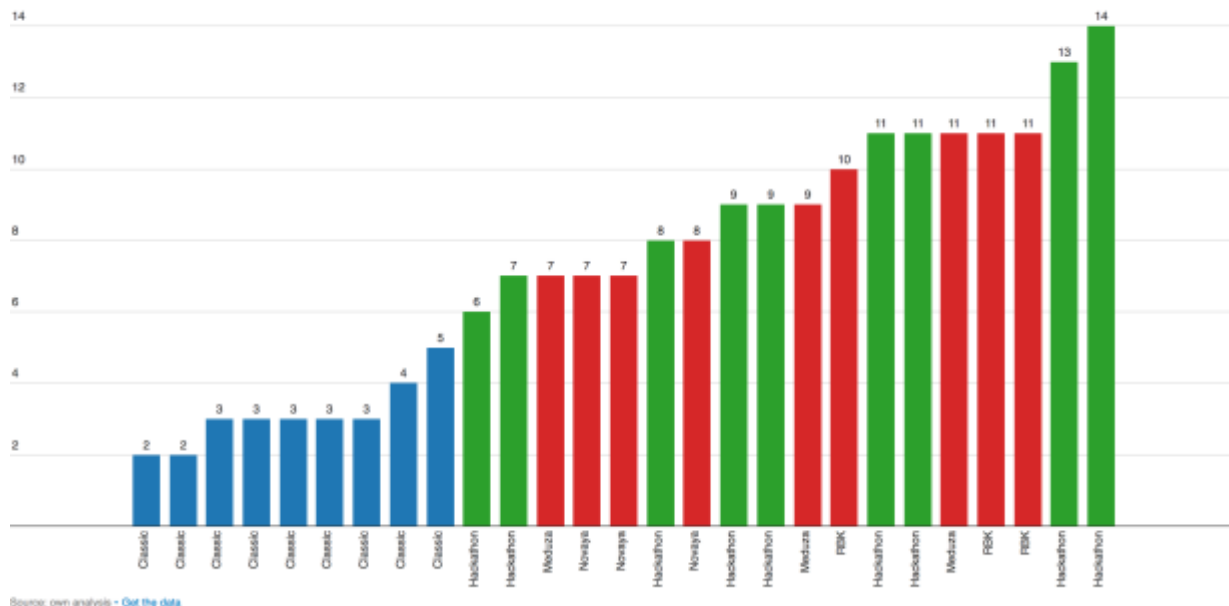
The same applies to designers: at RBC, the use of infographics is more an add-on than an essential ingredient of the storytelling. This is partly explained by the nature of the Russian media where no distinct data teams have emerged yet. But part of the answer lies in the journalists' determination to keep their control over the storytelling.

Table 2 is a joint table of the complexity scores for all the studied examples. Classic investigations are at the bottom of the list, with hackathons and data investigations competing with each other. Hackathons have both the highest and the lowest results, which is explained both by the ad-hoc nature of the work and the intense experimentation going on at the events. The media are more consistent in the way they work with data: scores repeat across the same news media. But they do not

score very high, since they never use machine learning to detect a pattern in the data and never provide access to the database they have created.

Complexity Score - General

Content Analysis of Classic Journalism Investigations, Data Journalism Investigations and Investigations produced at the Data Journalism Hackathons



3. Challenges for stronger data journalism in Russia

Better data

To tell better data stories, journalists need better data in the first place. Whereas in terms of financial transparency Russia competes with frontrunners such as the UK and the USA, there is a crucial deficiency in the areas of social well-being such as health, science, education, crime, ecology. For the data that is available, too often it is impossible to download in bulk. This denigrates the whole idea of ‘open data’ and leaves journalists continuing with their same routine: reading open data manually.

Data literacy

For many journalists in Russia, working with open data means getting information from Russian statistical websites, aggregators and registries. Ivan Begtin, open data expert, comments:

There is a terminological misunderstanding here. We confuse open data with the data from open sources. If journalists use open data, they usually use it in a dispersed way, compiling data for a specific investigation (Begtin 2016).

To harvest the fruits of open data, you need to realise its potential: open data gives an opportunity to work with structured information using digital means. Don't read the data, analyse it. In this way we can find the hidden stories. Getting people with relevant skills into the team and understanding the added value of their research is essential.

Culture shift in the newsroom: Transparency, presentation, investment

Developers coming from the open source culture can bring a culture shift to the newsroom and push for publishing the data and the source code behind investigations, making it replicable and available for anyone to explore. The same goes for designers who should not simply create illustrations for a story but be co-authors of the investigation, shifting the narrative away from text-only mode.

To implement all these initiatives, investment of time and money is necessary. This is hard when the resources in the newsroom are already shrinking, but change can happen if editors understand the specifics and added value of data investigations.

Conclusion

There is growing evidence of a developing open data ecosystem in Russia, animated by bottom-up initiatives, with some support from the state agencies. However, it is important to remember that no politician or NGO can substitute for journalists in the role of data storyteller. Objective, independent analysis of public data in the public interest, away from any political opportunism, is possible only with a newsroom infrastructure that upholds professional ethics.

Investigative journalism in Russia uses open data at the moment for 'fishing expeditions' and picking out pieces of information. Strong investigative units in various media are slowly growing their data literacy, but still prefer to keep text as the main medium of communication controlling the narrative and not sharing with other specialists such as statisticians, designers or developers.

I therefore argue that journalists should work with data in systematic ways and open up their work to colleagues from the other backgrounds. I believe this will empower and enrich investigative journalism in Russia.

References

- Arthur, C (2010), Analysing data is the future for journalists, says Tim Berners-Lee, *The Guardian*, retrieved at <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2010/nov/22/data-analysis-tim-berners-lee>.
- Baack, S (2015) Datafication and empowerment: How the open data movement re-articulates notions of democracy, participation, and journalism, *Big Data & Society*, Vol. 2, No. 2 pp 1-11
- Bowles, N, Hamilton, J. T., Levy, D. A. L. (eds.). (2013) *Transparency in Politics and the Media: Accountability and Open Government*, I.B. Tauris.
- Howard, Alexander (2014) *The Art and Science of Data-Driven Journalism*, New York: Tow Center for Digital Journalism, Columbia University
- Jourhack. (2017). *Data Analysis is just the half of the process. Experiences of 'Vedomosti, TASS and RBK of working with open data'*. Retrieved from <http://jourhack.tilda.ws/opendataday2017>
- Meduza (2016) 27 May. Retrieved at <https://Meduza.io/feature/2016/05/27/kak-dmitriy-medvedev-manipuliruet-dannymi-o-naselenii-dalnego-vostoka-faktchek>
- Navalny, A. (2010) 29 December. *Rospil. [Blog post]*. Retrieved from <http://navalny.livejournal.com/541417.html>.
- Navalny, A. (2015). *Chaika. [Online investigation]*. Retrieved from <https://chaika.navalny.com/>
- Navalny, A. (2015a). 1 December. '*Chaika. Main investigation-2015 from FBK*'. Retrieved from <https://navalny.com/p/4573/>
- Navalny, A. (2015b). *Tender Analysis*. Retrieved from <https://www.dropbox.com/s/qxuxrbvu1i58763/tender%20analysis.xlsx?dl=0>
- Novaya Gazeta (2016) 3 April. Retrieved from <http://krug.novayagazeta.ru/12-zoloto-partituri>.
- Novaya Gazeta (2016a). 3 June. Retrieved from <https://www.novayagazeta.ru/articles/2016/06/03/68821-chelovek-kremlya>
- Novaya Gazeta (2016b). 1 June. Retrieved from <https://www.novayagazeta.ru/articles/2016/06/01/68796-chemodany-s-dengami>

Novaya Gazeta (2016c). 22 June. Retrieved from

<https://www.novayagazeta.ru/articles/2016/06/22/68998-kak-otel-syamozero-vyigryval-auktsiony>

Parasie, Sylvain (2015) Data-driven revelation? Epistemological tensions in investigative journalism in the age of ‘big data’, *Digital Journalism*, Vol. 3, No. 3 pp 364-380

Prosecutor General’s Office of the Russian Federation (2016). 24 October. *Hackathon on crime data has taken place in Moscow, with the support of the Prosecutor General’s Office of the Russian Federation*. Retrieved from <http://www.genproc.gov.ru/smi/news/genproc/news-1131550/>

RBC (2015) 19 October. Retrieved at

<http://www.rbc.ru/investigation/society/19/10/2015/561b6c739a79474587968837>

Stoneman, J. (2015) *Does open data need journalism?* (Working paper). Oxford: Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism. Retrieved at

<http://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/Stoneman%20-%20Does%20Open%20Data%20need%20Journalism.pdf>

Interviews

Alburov, head of investigations unit at FBK, interview with the author, 28 September 2016

Anin, investigative journalist at Novaya Gazeta, interview with the author, 13 August 2016

Begtin, Ivan (2016) director at Infocultura NGO, interview with the author

Golunov, Ivan (2017) journalist at RBC, interview with the author

Data Team *Meduza* (2017), interview with the author

Kolpakov, editor-in-chief at Meduza, interview with the author, 10 August 2016

Romanov, editor-in-chief of Novaya Gazeta in St Petersburg, interview on 11 March 2017