



Media Sector Development Working Group

Abstracts of papers accepted for presentation in the Online Conference Papers of the
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MPS paper - Sustainability through 20 years of media development evaluation

Authors

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Abstract

The pursuit of sustainability is one the most critical challenges of media development, especially in environments where fair competition is hampered by restrictive legislation, low revenue-generating capacity, corruption and donor dependence (McQuail, 1992). Although there is no consensus on a single definition of the concept (Nelson & Susman-Peña, 2012), the so-called “media development” is both a mix of external evolutions and inside changes (Cauhapé-Cazeaux, & Kalathil, 2015), as the Center for International Media Assistance sums it up: the “evolution can be stimulated by donor support, private investment, or indigenous processes of change led by media owners, managers, journalists, or other players such as media industry associations, or other collective efforts” (Cima, 2015). The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (Unesco) has set a milestone by defining it as “an object (an ‘ecology’) rather than an activity. In this rendition, such an object would not necessarily hinge on ‘media development’ intervention activity, and this is a welcome step to freeing ‘media development’ from being treated as only those outcomes that result from external interventions” (Berger, 2010:551). The aim of this paper is to analyze sustainability of media development projects in developing countries from a communication perspective. Through a meta-evaluation of 291 assessments of radio-related development projects over the last twenty years, the discursive construction of the paradigm of sustainability is analyzed, as well as its links with the radios’ professionalization, in order to find out what facilitates it and what hinders it. This study, which draws on the theory of sustainable communication (Berglez, & alii, 2017) and which is inspired by the work of Noske Turner (2017) shows how there has been a shift to what she calls a “post-media-missionary” era focusing more on social change and accountability from a bottom-up perspective and less on imbalances and inequalities in the production and distribution of communication. Such an evolution paves the way for a revision of the way media assistance is to be considered, as seen, inter alia, in the Dec. 2019 evolution of the OECD assessment criteria for international development evaluations. Moreover it highlights the challenges to the continuation of benefits over time. And with them the very existence of the media in a context that is more fragile than ever.

Submission ID

841

MPS paper - A Discussion of influencing factors in conflict journalism and implications for MediaDev

Authors

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Abstract

When conflicts emerge media often become, intended or not, a key actor. It is through media that every party within a conflict attempts to convey its own narrative, contributing hence to a complex reality that affects journalists' works in many different ways. Scholarly debate has recurrently supported media's agency for peace and conflict transformation (Hoffmann & Hawkins, 2015; Legatis, 2015; Rodríguez, 2015, 2011). Media development, similarly to peacebuilding interventions, in these contexts aim at strengthening media's potential to play a constructive role, through training, content production or advocacy actions. Despite the amount of peace-related media development projects, the link between theory and practice remains fuzzy (Hoffmann & Hawkins, 2015a; Legatis, 2015). This discussion paper aims at contributing to bridge this gap by reflecting on Bläsi's (2004) factors of influence on conflict coverage in the context of media development in Burkina Faso and the Central African Republic. Developed from a Western standpoint on war reporters covering foreign conflicts, we propose to adapt to different 'local' contexts in order to provide a more holistic analysis of journalism in conflict settings, but also to propose entry points for media development (Legatis, 2015). The paper will therefore discuss Bläsi's six factors through decolonial and intersectional lenses: (1) the audience dimension examines not only habits, interests and expectations of audiences, but also participation of audiences in narratives on conflicts; (2) lobby is another key factor for media development, as it suggests a self-reflection and positioning in relation to other organizations, policy makers and industries in the field; (3) the journalists' personal features will be discussed particularly through an idea of 'home-based' journalism, embedded in his/her 'web of relationships' (Heywood & Ivey, 2021); (4) the situation on-site that includes aspects of logistics, security, access to information, and also (but often neglected) the important aspects of social ties and self-censorship; (5) the structural factor referring to the broader media and information system, legal frameworks, but also post-colonial information flows (Sewornoo 2021); and, the last but not least (6) Bläsi's factor of political climate that requires a thorough examination in order to adapt to the relevance of 'home-based' journalists living in conflict affected areas in opposition to conflict coverage of far-away violent wars. The political climate is particularly relevant in considering public opinion and polarization in conflicts with foreign interventions, military or civilian. This last dimension is pivotal in understanding the coverage of different types of conflicts. Influencing factors of 'home-based' conflict reporting should not be removed from historical contexts, everyday lived experience and embedded practices, referring to what Wasserman (2011) had argued in terms of incorporating various local perspectives into a global media ethic. All these societal pressures to which the journalists are subject to may strongly affect their reporting decisions and practices. A careful adaptation of these factors of influence can contribute to a more detailed context analysis for media development programs, therefore contributing to do-no-harm

principles. It may additionally open up new entry points for constructive coordination among multiple media development actors.

Submission ID

843

MPS paper - PR or Media Development? The UN efforts on Media and Public Information in Peace Operations

Authors

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Abstract

Since its foundation in 1945, the United Nations (UN) has been recognizing the role of media and public information in maintaining international peace and security. Until today, the UN has mandated 71 peace operations around the world, with 13 still in place. In many of these operations the UN has created media and public information programmes including UN radio stations to support its efforts. These media and public information programmes have various tasks: to inform the audience about the UN's goals and activities (*public information*), to promote the UN's goals and activities (*strategic communication*) and to counteract propaganda and public incitement (*counter-propaganda*). Peace operations take place in fragile and (post-)conflict contexts where media systems are often shattered, and quality information is hard to find. UN radios are bound to the mandates of the UN and therefore fall rather in the category of public relations than journalism. However, they perform – at least to some extent – journalistic functions and provide the audience with news and conflict-related information. How do UN radios contribute not only to peace and security but also to media development? What are their strengths and weaknesses? And what happens after the peace operations end? This paper, which reflects some backgrounds of my PhD project, seeks to evaluate the UN efforts on media and public information in fragile and (post-)conflict contexts by comparing the UN peace operations in Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia and Sierra Leone with a special focus on UN radios. I will first outline the main features of the UN's media and public information programmes in peace operations and then compare the three case studies. The aim of this paper is to give an up-to-date overview about the UN's efforts on media and public information in peace operations and discuss the ambiguous role of the UN radios regarding public relations and media development.

Submission ID

845

MPS paper - The importance and challenges of COVID-19 pandemic health reporting in Uganda and South Africa

Authors

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Abstract

In early 2020, the world was confronted with a new health threat in the form of a new type of coronavirus called SARS-CoV-2 that can cause the pulmonary disease COVID-19. SARS-CoV-2 has already showed its potential to having major impacts on everyday life, health systems and economies all over the world. The social and economic impacts of the pandemic challenge especially developing and emerging societies that already have to deal with a variety of health-threatening problems like poverty, insufficient health systems and also a wide range of communicable diseases like Ebola and HIV. In this regard, a higher perception of COVID-19 and its sanitary and socio-economic consequences which is generated and fostered by journalistic health reporting is supposed to contribute to a better preparation against COVID-19. But especially in sub-Saharan countries, there often seem to be barriers to professional journalism, foremost financial dependencies, inadequate journalistic education, and fake news which affect the journalistic health reporting and therewith the perception of health news, too. Against this background, this paper primarily seeks to analyze both the societal potentials of health journalism in times of a worldwide health crisis and the circumstances and challenges African health journalists have to encounter in such a humanitarian crisis. Starting theoretically mainly from an actor and communicator perspective and methodologically relying on a comparative case study comprising interviews with journalists from differently developed sub-Saharan countries, this study brings into focus how health journalists from Uganda and South Africa perceive their profession's role in times of COVID-19 and what individual, political and media systemic challenges they have to encounter to fight the new coronavirus. The results can be considered as first insights regarding the societal importance of professional health journalism in sub-Saharan countries during a global health crisis and should also serve as a starting point for media assistance initiatives to take measures in order to further improve health journalism in sub-Saharan Africa in the future. This is especially important to prepare the media in African states for future public health crises.

Submission ID

846

MPS paper - Rethinking borders and boundaries: Differences in journalism trainings in media development

Authors

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Abstract

Journalism trainings as part of media development work (MDW) are discussed differently. On one side, much has been written on their critical aspects and changes in their approaches (Dean 2019, Nelson 2019, Drefs & Thomaß 2015, Scott 2014, Manyozo 2012, Thomaß 2012). Some of these aspects even question their appropriateness, effectiveness, or sustainability. On the other side, journalism trainings are still considered as important tools for development (Drefs & Thomaß 2019, Jacobson 2019, Schiffrin & Behrmann 2011). However, the critical aspects cannot be ignored and need to be addressed. The discussion about MDW itself is fundamental because it forms the framework and the occasion for the trainings. The reasons for corresponding debates are that MDW creates tensions and challenges, as it tries to define development goals or to create a change, and as it distinguishes between donors and receivers or between trainers and trainees, to just mention a few. Additionally, the critical aspects are dealing with assumptions and definitions of “development” or “modernisation” for instance (Dean 2019, Scott 2014, Manyozo 2012). Furthermore, they are also dealing with different country- or culture-specific understandings of what journalism is for or how is it done (described as “journalism norms” or “cultures”, see Voltmer & Wasserman 2014, Hanitzsch & Seethaler 2009) or with assumed postcolonial structures (Serwornoo 2018). Despite the manifold perspectives, there is a research gap on the actual relevance of these critical aspects and how they occur as specific practical challenges in the trainings. Questions for this kind of research could be: When the funding or trainers mainly come from the so-called “West” or “global North”, how and what can they teach in “developing” countries? Are the trainings conducted and given on an eye level or do the trainers as well as the trainees negotiate unconscious hierarchies among themselves? When the trainers and trainees come from different working and living environments (“cultures”), how are they addressed and negotiated in the trainings? What has probably already become clear here is that the critical aspects negotiate and problematize differences, such as between the “global North” and the “global South”, between “developed” and “developing” countries or between different “journalism cultures”. However, even the studies on different “journalism cultures”, for example, are not dealing with a practical and didactical relevance for the training organizations and the training curricula (Betz 2019, Serwornoo 2018, Voltmer & Wasserman, Thomaß 2012). Finally, these differences can refer to not only geographical borders and boundaries, but also to those of culture, language, or communication. I am researching if and how differences are experienced as such in the trainings and what they are based on. In this paper I will refer to different critical perspectives on journalism trainings as part of MDW and I will elaborate how they can become practical challenges. I will present some constructive approaches to overcome or to deal with them. The motivation is to start reflecting different kinds of “borders and boundaries” and to address them appropriately in the design and implementation of future trainings.

Submission ID

847

Exploring the Business Model of Chinese Think-Tank Media in the Internet Era

Authors

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Abstract

This paper explores **whether media building think tanks can constitute an internet-based business model through the case of the Nandu Big Data Research Institute**. Statistically, as of December 2020, 29 media outlets in China have set up 63 media think tanks. Among them, the Southern Metropolis Daily established the Nandu Big Data Research Institute on 8 February 2018, and thanks to this initiative, the newspaper achieved its first positive growth in operating revenue in nearly six years in 2018. 2020 profits exceed \$100 million, with think-tank related service accounting for two-thirds of revenue.

This paper first clarifies what think-tank media is and what is an internet-based

business model; then, focusing on the case of the think-tank media Nandu Big Data Research Institute by analyzing its profit characteristics concerning its specific practices; finally, the paper explores whether its profit model constitutes an internet-based profit model and the possibilities for its next development.

Through the analysis of its think-tank products and fieldwork interviews, it is concluded that the data of the Nandu Big Data Research Institute is obtained from public data, back-office data, and research data, and is produced not only for the audience as the public but also for the audience as consumers, while providing customized services for the government and enterprises. The construction of a think tank by the media is an upgrade and extension of the traditional media industry chain, which can lead to the expansion of realization channels and increased revenue, but it fails to grasp the raw market data and build an autonomous and controlled platform to connect with a large number of users, and therefore does not yet constitute an internet-based profit model, and whether its new business can become the lasting core competitiveness of the media is yet to be further observed. Building its own database is essential to be explored in the process of building a think-tank media.

Submission ID

1058

International Media Exchange Program Adjusts as a Response to External Evaluation Findings and Pandemic

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Abstract

The Ukraine Media Partnership Program (UMPP) is funded by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the U.S. Department of State through the Public Affairs Section of the U.S. Embassy in Ukraine. Since its launch in 2002, UMPP has strengthened Ukrainian media outlets and their professionals by creating and fostering long-term professional relationships between U.S. and Ukrainian media outlets via exchanges and through supplementary activities that encourage continued growth and sharing. After 18 years of implementation, in spring 2020 when IREX hired an external evaluator, an M&E expert with an unparalleled understanding of regional media challenges, to examine six years (2014-2019) of UMPP's impact on partners and activities.

Through surveys and interviews, 90 Ukrainian participants from 33 media outlets and 11 American partners out of 8 U.S. outlets shared their positive views of the project as well as insights on improvement. The findings offer inspiring and unexpected outcomes of the evaluation of training *for journalists by journalists* and shares the impact of exchanges on media business models and practices. The finished product finds clear practices that had the largest impact on regional independent media in Ukraine and generates useful takeaways and program modifications, already embedded in the program cycle.

The findings illustrate that UMPP exchanges are a highly appreciated form of technical assistance. The opportunity to witness how U.S. outlets and professionals perform and ask countless questions during site visits was recognized as the strongest component of UMPP. Thanks to the exposure to American media business, participants gain an expanded worldview, a sense of place, and a vision for and confidence in the future. Media professionals mention important soft skills as some of the most valuable skills and insights they gained; including a developed vision of the democratic process and an advanced media market, and increased confidence in the ability to develop their business.

Participants also recognized UMPP's impact on their ability to think and plan strategically. UMPP offers potential top-down transformation when management and ownership are involved in the exchange. They facilitate the decision-making process implementing changes that lead to major development.

The evaluation also exposed areas of the program that can be improved in current and future iterations including: Expanding the use of data in the project, including broadening scope of M&E; Building stronger connections between Ukrainian and U.S. partners through more frequent moderated communication to update U.S. partners about the progress of Ukrainian media and; Prioritizing areas of technical assistance during exchanges in strategic thinking, digital advancement, content diversification, and community engagement.

This evaluation coinciding with the COVID-19 global pandemic allowed the program to improve its previous practices and provided insight that was taken into consideration when planning ways to create program activities while travel is suspended.

Submission ID

1173

Hyperlocal media in Spain: map and characteristics of a new media model

Authors

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Abstract

Hyperlocal media have established themselves as a new media model in the areas of proximity (Radcliffe, 2015; Metzgar, Kurpius & Rowley, 2011). Their growth is perceived since the first decade of the 2000's and it has been studied in several countries where similar trends were identified in their informative purposes within the community (Horning, 2012; Harte, 2013; Kerkhoven & Bakker, 2014; Hujanen, Lehtisaari, Lindén & Grönlund, 2019; Nygren, Leckner & Tenor, 2018; Halvorsen & Bjerke, 2019). However, the current editorial, organizational, professional and business models are very diverse and unstable, due to a still early phase of experimentation.

This paper studies the characteristics of the Spanish hyperlocal digital media with the aim of understanding the organizational and productive forms of this new media model, the informative and community service purposes pursued by their promoters, as well as the main challenges they face in the development of their journalistic activity.

First, we mapped the hyperlocal active media in the country –identifying 62 media outlets in 2018– and analysed their characteristics (use of platforms, digital native condition, temporality, ownership, language of edition). A survey of their promoters (64.0% response rate) reflects the motivations for the foundation of the hyperlocals, their legal constitution, the particularities of their professional teams, their financial models and the orientation of their journalistic work. Finally, we conducted semi-structured interviews with the managers of five hyperlocal projects, which allow us to develop an in-depth analysis of the limitations and challenges faced by their organizations.

Spanish hyperlocal digital media are looking for formulas that allow them to be stable in economic terms and maintain their journalistic independence, prioritizing their service to the community while

dealing with resources that are too limited. Promoters see opportunities for growth, which are born from the increasingly demand for local information and go through media association and audience involvement.

Submission ID

1194

MPS Paper - The State as the Guardian of Truthfulness?: Regulating fake news in the Americas

Authors

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Abstract

Disinformation and misinformation campaigns are currently distorting public debate and undermining the conditions for the exercise of democracy. In this context many countries are taking measures to inhibit or to regulate its circulation. In Latin America there are currently three countries with laws that punish the dissemination of fake news (Brazil, Nicaragua and Venezuela). Meanwhile, during 2020 seven other countries opened the debate on similar initiatives or draft laws (Chile, Colombia, El Salvador, Panama, Peru, Paraguay and the United States). The first part of our paper will analyze these initiatives based on questions like: ¿Which mechanisms do these draft laws contemplate to avoid the indiscriminate and arbitrary content removal?, ¿Which institution or mechanism is entitled to identify and remove fake content?, ¿Do they consider intermediary liability regimes?, ¿Do they assign a special role to the judiciary in weighing the cases?, ¿Is the dissemination of fake news punishable by civil or criminal penalties? and ¿How do these draft laws adapt to Inter-American standards of freedom of expression?

While some countries focus on the regulatory framework, other are currently implementing public policies to prevent the spread of fake news. That is the case of Uruguay, where politicians signed a "Pact against Fake News" and Argentina, where they implemented an "Observatory of disinformation and symbolic violence in the media".

In the conclusions, we will compare these initiatives and analyze which are the most appropriate, based on inter-American standards of freedom of expression and the most effective in practical terms.

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2413