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PRESS.eu**

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*Reflections  
on the future of journalism*



# Youngpress.eu: reflections on the future of Journalism

Texts about and around the conference 27-29.10.2011

*Editor:* Ann Laenen

*YoungPress.eu is an initiative of the Evens Foundation and StampMedia*

*The conference took place in close collaboration with*

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*Aknowledgments to all authors, all particiants and all collaborators of the youngpress.eu conference.*

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# Introduction

STEFAN KOLGEN

We live in exciting times. Arabic regimes get overthrown by ordinary people. Austerity and outrage lives amongst the citizens of European countries. Banks destabilize economic growth. Small countries can't create a government within a reasonable timeframe.

And journalism, the so called watchdog of democracy, has problems coping with the pace and philosophy of modern mediamaking.

Citizens however make good use of the new tools at hand. Instant media is now everywhere and omnipresent. Trained journalists are not always sure how to react to this phenomenon of an increasingly numerous body of citizen journalists.

But getting the story out as fast as possible puts a lot of stress on an editorial staff. A staff that becomes lesser in numbers, due to the holy principle of commercialization. These factors present the newsmaker with a serious dilemma. Speed and money put high-quality, responsible and investigative journalism under serious threat.

Journalists have huge responsibility towards society. They still have some power to influence how the general public thinks, and therefore they play a major role in determining public perceptions. But companies, lobby groups and government bodies regularly feed journalists with intentional disinformation.

Too often certain types of biased information become almost instantly canonized by virtue of their wide dissemination and embed themselves in the world view of international public opinion and, therefore, of policymakers.

Despite of all these challenges, there are journalists who seek solutions to the problems at hand by creating new models, independently of the economically driven conventional media. The journalist-entrepreneur is on the rise.

These are the topics to discussed at the first youngpress.eu conference.

YoungPress.eu is a joint effort of the Evens Foundation and StampMedia, youth press agency.

We are thankful to our partners who made this all possible: the Flemish-Dutch House deBuren, Arenberg Theatre, KBC bank and insurances and Zuiderpershuis, centre of world culture. Antwerp is our host city. This conference fits perfectly in a city that holds the title of European Youth Capital 2011.

Last but not least. Thanks to all the professionals we invited to attend this conference. Thank you for creating time in your busy schedules. Thank you for finding the courage to address young and critical newsmakers, they will not make it easy for you, and that's ok.

Journalism: the final frontier. These are the voyages of YoungPress.eu, a conference for young and ambitious newsmakers. A 3-day mission: to discuss the future of journalism, explore strange dilemma's and seek out new methods, to boldly go where only young people can.

**Stefan Kolgen**, *general coordinator C.H.I.P.S. vzw*

# Youngpress.eu: Reflections on the future of Journalism

ANN LAENEN, TIM VERBIST & STEFAN KOLGEN

This publication gathers the proceedings of youngpress.eu, a conference for young reporters that took place in Antwerp, October 2011.

## CONTEXT

Antwerp had been designated European Youth Capital for 2011. The *Evens Foundation* and *StampMedia* planned to use this opportunity to organize a transnational exchange of ideas and views concerning the challenges facing media producers and the responsibility they bear. They wanted to engage, in particular, the news and opinion-makers of tomorrow. Therefore 100 young journalists (-in-the-making) from all over Europe were invited to take part in reflection and debate on the future of news broadcasting, using a series of polemical questions as their starting point.

## THE OMNIPRESENCE OF 'INSTANT' MEDIA

Much has already been written about the fact that we now live in a 24-hour news society. A constant stream of news feeds threatens to engulf consumers and producers alike, both of whom must continually make decisions about the importance and relevance of particular news items. Meanwhile, advances in modern communication technology imply that ordinary people have more and better tools at their disposal to communicate with the outside world. They can thus create their own news, outside the conventional/mainstream media channels. This democratization of news-making offers both opportunities and challenges to Journalism. On the one hand, reporting is no longer monopolized by media groups with economic interests, but is also open to individuals. This leads to a greater diversity in news. And a greater diversity of reporting results in a more multifaceted view of the world. On the other hand, news stories are produced by people with no journalistic training and who, in many cases, neither know nor respect the classic rules of journalism. Trained journalists are not always sure how to react to this phenomenon of an increasingly numerous body of citizen/non-professional journalists. Will these trends in news reporting continue and become further accentuated? Will the news of the future become even more omnipresent, anecdotal, emotional, and oppositional?

## HIGH-QUALITY JOURNALISM UNDER THREAT

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The media themselves also face internal difficulties and major changes coming from within the sector. First of all there is an enormous pressure to get scoops, to be the first to get the story out. This pressure has always existed, of course, but the fact that the Internet has become one of the most important sources of news has increased this pressure exponentially. There is a 24-hour news cycle that pushes journalists to work faster.

Secondly, there is the growing commercialization of the mainstream media. The prime concern of advertisers and shareholders is based on return on investment (shareholders want to see the largest possible circulation of their newspaper and as many advertisers as possible, while advertisers do not want to see their message overshadowed by ‘distracting’ stories).

These two elements present the newsmaker with a serious dilemma. Very often there is no longer enough time to write in-depth stories and to abide by the traditional rules of journalism, such as checking all the sources, respecting the right of reply, and situating a news story within its proper context.

The need always to be the first to get the story out thus means that there is a growing discrepancy between reporting an event and providing instant news. It is becoming more difficult to study the relevant documentation thoroughly, to put the facts in their correct context, and to cover in sufficient depth what is going on in the world. *Therefore it is said that the future of high-quality and responsible conventional and investigative journalism is under threat. Is this the case, or are new kinds of investigative journalism on the rise?*

## THE SPREAD OF BIASED INFORMATION

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The media experts have an immense influence on how the general public thinks. This influence often takes subtle or intangible forms. Without us being aware of it, news and opinion makers introduce issues that we end up adopting as our own, without giving much thought to what is really happening. In this context, journalists have a huge responsibility towards society at large. They play a major role in determining public perceptions. We see this, for example, in the global media where frequently repeated labels are applied to particular groups of people, who are then reduced to that label in public mind. All too often, journalists disseminate ideas that have been fed to them by lobby groups or government bodies; they thus become mere tools designed to serve a particular purpose. What is worse, news and opinion-makers are frequently exposed to intentional disinformation and even outright manipulation aimed at serving a particular interest, usually involving the maintenance of political and/or economic power. *Is there not a serious danger that, due to the omnipresence of the media, certain types of biased information become almost instantly canonized by virtue of their wide dissemination and embed themselves in the world view of international public opinion and, therefore, of policymakers?*

## NEW MODELS AND EXPERIMENTATION BY INDEPENDENT JOURNALISTS

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Despite the problems mentioned above, there are also journalists who have sought solutions to these challenges by creating new models, independently of the economically driven conventional media. One important development in this regard is the journalist-entrepreneur model: a journalist who, on a freelance basis, studies a particular topic in depth and then sets out to build a career around the specialist expertise that he or she has acquired. At the conference Olaf Koens talks about his way of reporting from

Russia, Alex Wood presents the Not on the Wires-platform and Rob Hornstra & Arnold Van Bruggen bring The Sochi-project into the spotlights. *Does this trend offer a possible solution that will counter the negative forces and enrich the media landscape, or will it have little effect in so far as these journalists become isolated within their specialist areas and develop tunnel vision?*

## THE PUBLICATION

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All these questions were raised during keynote sessions, workshops and debates over a period of two days. This publication wants to give an impression of the themes and discussions expressed at the conference. Anneleen Ophoff wrote an article about the participants of the youngpress.eu conference. In his opening keynote **Journalism and Digital Change; The Good News Story of the Future** Paul Lewis recognizes the challenges mainstream media faces at the moment, but he illustrates through his report of the UK Riots that they are true when taking newspapers into account but not when looking at Journalism at large. Mathias De Graag reflects on the speech given by Lewis in the article **Funding is the future of journalism**. Henk Blanken has based his opening text for debate on **The omnipresence of the media**. He invites young journalists to start to reinvent their profession. *“Forget about most of the stuff you thought was so important. Accept the values of the Google Generation and learn from them. Be involved and transparent. And do what you do best. Investigate. Ask better questions. And tell better stories, because that’s what’s going to make the difference.”* Look into new opportunities that is what Yves Torbeyns does in his article Experiments in Journalism based on one of the workshops. Olaf Koens stretches this further, he embodies one of these new models. His pamphlet zooms in on being a long distance correspondent today and the challenges to get stories out. In an era where there are fewer and fewer long distance correspondents he left as an independent journalist for Russia and reported in a thorough way. Further on the text by Annabel McGlodrick focuses on **The spread of biased information** and empathy as a key indicator of reactions to news about conflict. Stefan Candea illustrates through his expertise at the *Romanian Centre for Investigative Journalism* the challenges for an investigative journalist in Romania. And last but not least Erik Aerts reflects in the article **A new hope for journalism** on the final debate of the conference. The general tone of this debate was that these are difficult times indeed, but one should not get stuck by focussing at the problems. As Erik synthesises *journalists should look at the new developments as challenges, instead of problems. They should embrace the changes and, to paraphrase Stefan Kolgen in his opening speech, discuss the future of journalism, explore strange dilemmas and seek out new methods. Journalists should boldly go where no journalist has gone before.* Thus the circle closes or should one say opens up to the future. The publication ends with an impression from the final debate mentioned in the text of Erik Aerts.

Times might be though for traditional newspapers, but the future of journalism is open if one wants to embrace the new opportunities offered. More stories will be told in different ways using different layers and different media. Working together with readers. Working together with experts in different disciplines. One might imagine that the classical newsroom will not continue as it is, but will alter to a space that consist of different experts, mixing media, building better stories.

Enjoy reading these texts, quotes and reflections. And if you want to hear/see/read more about the conference, then do not hesitate to visit <http://www.youngpress.eu>





FOTO: VINCENT TILLIEUX



FOTO: VINCENT TILLIEUX

# Journalism and Digital Change; The Good News Story of the Future

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PAUL LEWIS

I don't think this is an era of pessimism for journalism. I don't think that we are in crisis. I don't think that journalism is not as good as it was before. I actually think it is far better. I think what journalists can achieve has massively expanded. But I should first of all touch on the themes you might expect me to talk about.

The general narrative is that journalism is in crisis. And it is true. It will be hard for young journalists to find a job in an industry for which the business model is not working very well. But let us look at the themes and how I think they are starting to work:

- 1.** The first theme is about '*a disappearing audience*'. This is true if you talk about newspapers. We are all losing readers and of course that has consequences for the business model. So we all lose sales, we lose advertising, our newsrooms shrink and there is less room for paid journalists.
- 2.** The next theme is based upon '*a dropping quality*'. There is this kind of blend between comment and news. The journalists who do have jobs spend a lot of time in taking over from agency – and press releases. And don't have time properly to interrogate stories and question them and do the important rigorous journalism that really matters. And to a degree we have to agree that is true.
- 3.** Thirdly, you hear a lot from journalists, particular older journalists, that their '*voice is diluted*'. If anybody with a mobile phone and access to Youtube can do video reporting, and if anyone with access to blog and Internet can do a bit of blogging or internet reporting. What is then the point of a paid journalist, a trained journalist, why are we here? Again there is a degree of truth in that but I will argue that this is not the whole story.
- 4.** The fourth theme is that '*there are fewer resources*'. This issue links in with the smaller audience, be-



PAUL LEWIS - FOTO: VINCENT TILLIEUX

cause there are fewer resources as a result of the declining and shrinking audience. And fewer resources means journalists get paid worse, and implies there are fewer journalists. But the irony I think is that we are entering a golden era of journalism where there may be fewer paid journalists but far more people doing journalism. And that is what matters. The process of journalism that we all agree is really important for accountability in society is done and is done well.

So as said I am going to argue that we are at the beginning of a good era. I will illustrate this by a case study in order to back up my

argument. For me I am in a fortunate position now, because I have had a really remarkable experience as a journalist in terms of my insight in a whole new way of tackling a really major story. It is the biggest story we had in the UK this year: the riots. They begun in a North London suburb and spread Across England from London to Birmingham to Manchester to Nottingham to Liverpool to Gloucester. We had tens of thousand of young people engaged in what was the biggest bout of civil unrest in a generation. So a major new story, a massive rupture for any society, particularly for England which had not seen anything like that in a generation. And as a journalist, if such a big story happens on your patch, you want to report is. For me I was particularly lucky because the beginnings of the riots, which were a response to the shooting of a black man in Tottenham by police, just happened 2 or 3 miles away from my house. So more than anyone else I felt a particular connection that I wanted to report this story. How do you do it?

Historically you would immediately take your notepad out and you would begin taking notes. You would also reflect on how you would work through these notes the next day, when you get to work since your editor will ask what kind of article you will write on this event. But we are entering a much more interesting era now. For me I just used my Blackberry. For five nights and five days I reported with this one handheld device. Since anyone that was identifiable a journalist was being attacked by many of the rioters we had to conceal ourselves and were dressed up as rioters reporting through our handheld device. The reporting did not just go to through notes and e-mails to get the story out, it crucially came across through twitter. Twitter had transformed journalism for good. And before I continue about the riots I should probably substantiate this statement.

Twitter is remarkable; it is a completely different pattern of flow of information. One person in the right place at the right time can be the source of a huge new story within hours, and the fascinating thing about news events is that there is always somebody there near to that news event that can channel that new event through. Twitter has enabled that network to come alive. This has only happened in the last 2 or 3 years. It began with Mumbai because India during the Mumbai terrorist attacks in 2008 was a country of early adopters. So lots of people were using Twitter. The attack were a difficult thing to report upon, because lots of

different things were happening in lots of different places, and people found out that actually people sending out their own citizen reports, people just noting what was happening around them, taking photographs or films or just text and putting it out into the Twitter sphere was a form of reporting. It was also massively accountable because as a news organisation you cannot have journalists in every part of the city. As was in the London during the riots, you could not have journalists in every single part of the city because the riots were happening on thousands of streets at the same time. So here was in Mumbai and again in London a huge resource of potential reporters through Twitter.

*in open journalism,  
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Let me give another example. After Mumbai there was another very famous incident: January 2009 a plane crashed in the Hudson River. If you think about that you will probably think about one images taken on an Iphone by Janis Krums. It was tweeted around the world and created news before most reporters had even arrived on the scene of the crash. So from that moment onwards we had a transformative experience with Twitter. Every big news event now will have Twitter as a dimension.

The biggest news event of the year was probably the death of Bin Laden and every dimension of that story was consumed through a lens of Twitter from the very announcement of Bin Laden's death. So without it that news story would have looked remarkably different.

Personally I signed up to Twitter on March 28 2009, so 2 months after the Hudson plane crash. 2 days after that we had a major protest in London. It was the G20 protest and I was experimenting with Twitter at that time. But it was actually in the days afterwards as I started to investigate the death of a newspaper vender who died at the G20 protest that I realised the real power of this kind of a social network. The man who died was Ian Tomlinson. Police initially said that he had died merely as a coincidence as he was just in the vicinity of the protests but that there was no encounter with the police. He just died of a hart attack. I was suspicious of that, but how do you drill down and investigate this story after the events? What I discovered was that there were people already doing it on Internet. So the crowd of the G20 had reconvened online and through Twitter they were beginning to digest what happened, disseminating their own suspicions: creating Flickr accounts of the photographs taken at the scene, doing investigative journalism. They weren't paid journalists, they weren't trained journalists, but they were doing really valuable investigative journalism. Over the days and weeks following Tomlinson's death I joined that crowd and began a kind of crowdsourcing. Fascinating was that there were people in that crowd that were part of my journalistic team. We ended up finding a video shot by a New York hedge fund manager who had been in London for business. He took his camera and he filmed the moment that Ian Tomlinson was struck with a baton and pushed to the ground and killed by a police officer.

It was in that context of being a journalist who was very conscious of the power of Twitter, of this new form of communication that I came to the riots August 6 2011. And I began Twitter reporting. Your stating what

is going on around you and this is a very raw and immediate form of reporting. I think arguably it is one of the best, because it is not just historically what has happened, which is the journalist imparting what they believe to be the truth/knowledge and just let de reader digest it, it is a conversation.

My very first tweet when I arrived on the scene was: 'I'm arriving in Tottenham, where should I go?' A question.

Journalists tend not to ask questions in their articles. They think that their role is to answer the questions, but in open journalism, if you tell people what you do not know, you are much more likely to kick start a conversation which will end up in everybody collectively advancing their knowledge. And I don't think it really matters whether it is a trained or a paid journalist that finds out the truth. What matters is that Journalism, the process of finding information out and proving it, is done. So over those five nights and five days, I was all night tweeting around the country everything that I saw and I accumulated 35000 followers of people that were at home, people that were scared to go out. They were communicating with me. They were engaging in the journalistic process, telling me where to go, giving me the address of where there was a building on fire, telling me the location of the hospital where people had died and had been taken to, directing me to where police had not yet arrived, but where there were really serious clashes and people seriously injured. Anything from recharge my phone, offering me food, telling me when I was wrong. For me personally, through the riots, I had this amazing insight into the potential of this group of online communities, who want to help in the reporting process, they were all citizen reporters, they were all helping and they were collectively with me advancing our knowledge of what was happening out there. During the riots Twitter's traffic increased significantly more than most media outlets did. This tells us something interesting, that people wanted to know what was happening on their street. They knew that the BBC wasn't going to have a report of what was happening on their street or even probably in their town. But they could go onto Twitter and they could search it. And anyone could tell them. That is a massively empowering thing. A window in what I think a future of journalism.

There are a lot of critics on Twitter in big news events. One of the things that people say is that it stirs hysteria, panic and rumours. But actually if you drill down into the way Twitter operates, the reverse is true. It has this capacity to self regulate, so if a rumour begins it will last and then there will be some interventions of people that will say 'wait a minute, that is not true'. But it will not always be journalists saying this. Often other people tell journalists what is not true. To give you an example, when people start to create hoax news stories e.g. the London Eye being on fire. Someone would mock up a photo of it being on fire and that would spread around the twitter sphere, and people would think it was true for a few minutes, but what I found most interesting is the kind of collective wisdom of the crowd would fairly quickly say it is not, because someone near London Eye would take a photograph of London Eye which wasn't on fire and that would correct the rumour. So people are refining news and making it more accurate.

So I emerge at the end of those 5 days, exhausted and fascinated by the capacity of a new media lens. But after a few days I was questioning myself: 'What were the riots about? , What did they mean? Who were the rioters?'. It was interesting from a perspective of media and social media, but actually let's think about the event that just has happened, as I said to you before, the biggest bout of civil unrest in a generation. And as always happens after big news events like that, politicians step in and they start telling you their



theories, interpreting the event through the lens of their own political bias. That was happening very much in England and in the UK in the aftermath of the riots, but there was now evidence. So people who believed passionately that it was on poverty, that it was because of social uprising, would say so. People who believed that it was a break down in moral fibre would say so. And people who believed it were, would say so, but all without evidence. And as a journalist that is frustrating because we are evidence-based commentators.

How do we drill down into this big significant social event? Somebody came up with a really interesting blog link. A link to Detroit in 1967, the deadliest riots in US history. The blog described a research study that was a collaboration between a newspaper and a university. They got together and hired some researchers and sent them out into the community to speak to the people who were rioting. It was a really interesting study because it actually found out something that was counterintuitive. Everybody assumed that the riots in Detroit were a result of migrants from the South of the US travelling to Detroit and they were somehow alienated, they were not mixing, and they rioted. But this study found out that this was not true, it had much more to do with poverty and housing. So it changed the political discourse.

Thus we asked ourselves whether we could replicate something similar? Can we replicate a robust research investigation into a really big news event?

I got in touch with the London School of Economics and their Head of Social Policy. We wanted to try it. Neither of us had any money, so we were relying on foundations. We received funds from the Joseph Rowntree foundation and the Open Society foundations. Thus we started designing a research framework. We put up an application for people who wanted to be researchers. We had 450 people apply from all over the country. We selected the best 30 in London, Manchester, Birmingham, Nottingham and Liverpool. They all received all academic training material they needed, and they got questionnaires, kind of qualitative surveys with open questions, but also quantitative data. And they went out to find people that took part in the riots to interview them. This was not easy, because if you were part of riots, you are not likely to come out, but we already have interviewed about 150 people by now and we have a team of 5 analysts now looking through that data to find out what it really means. Who were they, why were they doing it? What were they thinking at the time? Do they feel bad? What were the motivations of that largely poor, largely male group of people coming together to destruct?

Twitter was also important at the time so lets look at Twitter as well and we spoke to the company twitter and asked whether they could give us all the tweets related to the riots and remarkably they said yes. We now have a database of 2.6 million tweets. We have teamed up with other academics, Manchester University and University College London and we are analyzing that data. Running algorithms through this data.

Looking back at the riots and the research I think “wait a minute, this is supposed to be an industry with no resources”, “this is supposed to be an industry that does not do quality journalism anymore, it just comments”.

When going back to the themes I quoted at the beginning of this text, I see the following:

**1. ‘disappearing audience’** I had an audience, who were following me on Twitter, actually a massive Internet audience. And yes my newspaper, the Guardian, has fewer readers for the newspaper, but massive readership online. That is not a declining readership. So a disappearing audience, I do not buy that argument.

**2. 'A dropping quality'**. It is not for me to judge the quality for our own journalism, but if I look at the research study that we are doing now it far exceeds what journalists would normally say was within the bounds/scales of what they can achieve and what they can do. Having 270 people talking in detail terms as part of rigorous research. So I do not buy the kind of dropping quality either.

**3. 'Diluted voice'**. Yes we do have, but I do not really think that is a problem because we do not know everything and there are often many people who are experts, either because they are experts in their own field or because they happened to be at the right place at the right time. They are where the journalist should be, why ignore them? Why shouldn't we give them the voice? And actually in the more democratic system of social media that is happening.

**4. 'Fewer resources'**. I am a reporter and in the midst of the riots I was drawing on 35000 people who were helping me report. That is a resource that would have been unimaginable 2 or 3 years ago. And now in the midst of this research project we have 30 researchers across the country, 10 data researchers, another 6 data analysts and money from foundations. So we do not always have to work with fewer resources.

To conclude, is journalism in crisis? The business model is, nobody can deny that, but journalism itself is thriving. Because of technology there is a digital footprint of any important news event that happens, which will last forever. We as journalists are about finding evidence. How it happened, why it happened and in which ways. We now have a huge resource of information. And that is now, what about in 5 or 10 years when Twitter is as ubiquitous as the mobile phones that are used to tweet? Then you the paid reporters/ trained reporters have a massive resource to draw on. I think that is a very good news story.

- *Report Reading the riots:*  
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/interactive/2011/dec/14/reading-the-riots-investigating-england-s-summer-of-disorder-full-report>
- *Infographic made from the tweets:*  
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/datablog/2011/dec/09/data-journalism-reading-riots>

# Future journalists at Youngpress.eu

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About ninety students in journalism and novices participated in the European conference for young journalists. Their purpose? Meeting their great examples, networking and learning.

The conference wasn't that far away for Xanadu Dijks in comparison to other participants, coming from Rotterdam. However nobody of her friends knew about the conference. "I came over purely out of interest for the invited speakers, but now I have learned a lot", she says. "Not only on a professional level, but also about the media abroad. Berlusconi is considered a media mogul, but I had no idea that Italian journalists had to mind so many rules."

## ALL FOR ONE...

The diversity between the participants is not only visible on the outside; they are also diverse in the reasons for their presence at the conference. Francisco Pedro (23) from Portugal thinks that particularly the concept of the conference attracted him. "There's an abundance of conferences that highlight pessimism when it comes to journalism. Youngpress not only offers a more hopeful view on the future, but also aims at creation and broadening your horizon. It stimulates far more than any other university does.

Kamil Baluk (24) came over from Poland just to meet new people with the same ideas and ideals. "The networking tops the offered workshops. If I would like to write an article in a European framework, I'll have more sources in my directory to turn to. Moreover, I will be able to make a reportage abroad far more easily. I will certainly keep contact with the people I met here and will hopefully attend the conference once more next year", he adds.

The Irish Leah Jessica Yeung will also go back home in good spirits. "I am not only going home optimistically, but also full of ideas to elaborate and topics to write about. A lot of relevant themes have been tackled", she says, "and I am really up for it again now." Leah also says that perhaps the concept is a bit too young. "We are often called the Internet generation, but that is not always true. I would like to have a chat with some more experienced journalists, to see what they think about our generation."



## NEW INSIGHTS

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Spain, Austria, Finland, Romania... The international and intercultural mix of participants enabled many diverse and new contacts. The Palestinian Alaa Muhsen Sinokrot (21) is young, beautiful, speaks British English fluently, wears a headscarf and is a journalist. This combination is not as obvious as it sounds. “Female journalists aren’t taboo at all in Palestine. On the contrary, they are received with open arms for they have another way of seeing things. Obviously there are dangers to it, but male journalists are confronted with the same threats raging in our country.”

Palestine is not a European state, but Alaa and her colleague Yousef Abdullah Yasser Shakarnah (22) were able to participate in YoungPress.eu. “Youngpress enables us to gain new experiences and to look at journalism in a new way”, Yousef says in fluent Arab. Alaa translates and helps. “It is very comforting to see that you are dealing with the same problems in Europe. I didn’t know that work uncertainty for journalists and the decrease of quality media was so widespread.” Still, Alaa and Yousef share a different interpretation of journalism. “Journalism is our weapon against prejudice of the conflict between Palestine and Israel. It helps us seeing the world from another point of view.”



FOTO: VINCENT TILLIEUX

# The omnipresence of the media

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**HENK BLANKEN**

It's a funny world we live in, funny and confusing.

Just imagine you were sent to a deserted island, about ten years ago. You were selected for an Expedition Robinson-kind of TV-show, and somehow they forgot about you. Oops.

You missed 9/11. Never heard of Obama. You never got to worry about the financial crisis, the swine flu and the rise of China as the new economic superpower. You would think that Steve Jobs would return to save Apple and would live forever.

And then you would return to the world we live in.

Probably you would buy a morning paper at a newsstand – because that is what most people did back in the 20th century. You would order a coffee and wonder what on earth a Nespresso could be, or a latte macchiato. And you would look around you and soon realize that people started talking to the same computers that they, back in the old days, mainly used to write on. That they are using their phones now to send text messages, typing on a keyboard that is amazingly inconvenient.

Their electronic calendars have been transformed in rather professional video equipment. Instead of a Shell roadmap they navigate by listening to a device that talks to them.

They don't buy music, books or films anymore but download them from something called a cloud. And for some reason 50 million people recently bought a gadget that no one needed, a computer without a mouse or a keyboard that looked like one of these new fancy telephones, but that's far too big for your jacket, and by the way: it's everything but a phone..

It's a gadget no one thought he would ever really need, before Steve Jobs found a way to convince them that they could not live without it.

\* \* \*

It's a funny world. And it gets even more confusing.

Back in the nineties you might have been one of the early adopters of the internet. But when you look around you, you immediately realize that we haven't invaded the net, but that the internet has invaded us.

It's all over us, it's everywhere, it's like a viral disease that took off and infected all we do, and say, and think. And when you take a closer look, it might dawn to you that these electronic devices actually have changed



HENK BLANKEN - FOTO: OLIVER NIMET

and shyness. They created a public sphere, called social media, in which privacy is ... well, something else compared to what it used to be. It's a privacy you share with 400 friends on Facebook or with millions on YouTube. Pictures of your bedroom. Snapshots of a rather wild party. Blog posts about last night, when you and your lover broke up.

When you study some of the stuff we publish on the Internet, you might get the impression that we are naked. We make love on YouTube, we give birth on YouTube, we bully and kill, and we die on YouTube.

\* \* \*

It's a strange world.

About ten or fifteen years ago – just before you were selected for Expedition Robinson, remember - most internet gurus could imagine a society with another kind of democracy, thanks to the internet. More open. More transparent. Not top down, but bottom-up.

To our surprise the Internet played a big part in starting revolutions in the Arabic world, but the new kind of everyday democracy that seemed so inevitable in our part of the world never materialized. Although it seemed so likely that we would discuss politics on an open forum like the net, we got trapped in a reversed routine: we only talk to people we already agree with.

Democrats talk to democrats. Republicans discuss politics with republicans. People call this the balkanization of the Internet.

There are more weird paradoxes. Back in the nineties one of the promises of the Internet was that you as a person could be anyone you wanted to be. You could even have multiple identities. You actually had the opportunity to create your own avatar – and become anyone.

But for some reason most of us didn't care and started to copy-paste the identities of others. Need a nickname? Who cares about being original? John215 is good enough. We now are individuals with 387 friends that we hardly know, not to mention our 1000 followers.

Something similar has happened to media. Now that we are able to find more information than ever, now that we have better opportunities to dig out the truth, we believe in more conspiracies than ever before – at least that's what you pick up in the echo chambers of the Internet; that the CIA plotted 9/11, that the pharmaceutical industry was responsible for the spread of swine flu, that Steve Jobs didn't die – but, well – someone will come up with a theory on that.

We thought we were getting smarter, thanks to the Internet; that we as consumers were getting stronger, that we were in control. Some of that is true. But we could not prevent the banking crisis – which was largely caused by the same network systems that we proudly call our own. Are we really in control, as consumers, as voters?

And now some people even say that the Internet is making us stupid; that we are losing the ability of deep reading, that we are shallow-brained people in a flat world.

I want to be clear on this: some of that criticism is bullshit. My impression is that – thanks to the internet and the network society - young people are smarter, more outspoken, more involved – but in another way. On the other hand: when you read what we sometimes publish in comments on the Internet, it's hard not to be sceptical.

\* \* \*

It's a funny media world we live in.

It's not overstated to say that the culture of the Internet has changed our media. You can say, as my friend and media scholar Mark Deuze does, that we no longer live *with* media, but that we live *in* media.

I'd like to take this one step further. We are our media, because they would not exist without us.

There's no doubt in my mind that media are omnipresent. They are everywhere. And they are more important to our everyday lives than ever before. Try to spend a day without your pack of gadgets, go cold turkey on your media consumption, and you will find out.

Is this abundance of information a problem? Do we suffer from information overload? I doubt it.

Sometimes I think that this awful concept of information overload was thought up by a forty year old journalist – a dead tree, as you would probably call him - who was trying to convince us – and himself, poor soul – that there would be a job for his kind of journalist for years to come, that the people who were drowning in this information extravagance would need his filtering skills for at least twenty more years.

I think information overload is a myth. Young people have found ways to deal with all these triggers and newsflashes and network rumours. They have trained themselves – like my son who taught himself to type on a keyboard with ten fingers when he was 9 years old, “the only way to survive in an internet game”, he said. Young people, the Google Generation, have developed strategies to handle all this information.

Some of them have started companies like Zite, my personal favourite on the Ipad. Most importantly they have created new filters. They use each other, they use social media to stay up to date and they just skip most of the rest. They know that when news is really important, it will find them, and when they need to check on a story, they simply Google. Or twitter. Or text a friend.

Information overload is a fairy tale – but there might be another consequence of the omnipresence of media

that actually is a problem. I have been talking about “media”, not about “the media”. I have painted a picture of obtrusive electronic devices and an overwhelming culture of always on communication.

I have not spoken about “the press”, the newsmen that are the personification of “the media”. There is good reason for this distinction.

\* \* \*

*My appeal is to journalists.  
Start to reinvent your  
profession. Right now. Forget  
about most of the stuff you  
thought was so important*

Over the past fifteen years we got more and more media, more people connected on the Internet, more digitized news. That’s fine. There’s nothing wrong with media, although some of it is stupefying. There’s nothing wrong with our media consumption. But there’s something terribly wrong with the media.

Over the past ten years newspapers in the western world have lost 20 to 25 percent of their circulation.

Over the last two years they have lost 25 percent of

their advertisers. Some of them went bankrupt. All of them cut costs. They shut down local offices and stopped reporting from foreign countries. They filled their pages with entertainment and sport news that is easily produced – because it’s thought up and sometimes even written by the entertainment and sport industries.

Ten years ago I predicted the decline of newspapers – and I was almost kicked out of the office by my newspaper colleagues. It simply was unthinkable. Newspapers were at the peak of their power. They had always been around – hadn’t they?

Actually: no.

Newspapers as we know them are a product of the 20th century. Or more precisely: mass media as we got to know them - newspapers, radio, television – originated in the late 19th century, as a by-product of industrialization, just like mass consumption and mass marketing. And mass media rose to their greatest power during the 20th century, culminating in the 80s and the 90s.

The point is: there was a time without mass media, not even that long ago – your great-grandfather could have told you. It’s just that because we grew up with these omnipotent, intrusive and very powerful mass media, we just cannot picture a world without them. But when you realize that mass media were nonexistent only 150 years ago, it becomes easier to accept that they will disappear again – because something more efficient will replace mass media.

That’s a tough idea to swallow for most people over forty. They grew up with mass media and are so influenced by the rules of mass media; by the way they frame journalism and the news that they simply refuse to accept that newspapers –these icons of mass media journalism – will fade out.

On the other hand, young people, people under 40, think it’s obvious that old school journalism will disappear. The news will find me, they say. I don’t trust the press, they say.

When there is so much media – who needs the media?

Who needs journalism?

\* \* \*

I think *we* do.

A modern democracy needs journalism. It does not need newspapers or news shows on television – I have been a newspaper journalist for more than thirty years, and I love newspapers – but I can accept that most of them will disappear, but not journalism.

Why not? What makes journalism so essential for democracy, now that all information is out there and everything is becoming transparent, thanks to Wikileaks, for instance.

This of course is a plea for journalism, but another kind of journalism than we are familiar with. In the years to come journalists have to accept that their main task is no longer to select the news, to decide what our readers should now. Their audience – the people formerly known as the public, Jay Rosen would say – are better equipped to filter the news. They don't need most of our systems to spread the news – printing presses, mail delivery, broadcast satellites. And they can do without most of our comments.

Most of the news will reach them without most of the journalists that were needed ten years ago: a crashing plane, the death of Kaddafi. But they don't know what they don't know. And in many cases they don't know the story behind the story. Why that plane crashed. How Kaddafi died. How the fall of one bank – Lehman Brothers - could turn into a worldwide financial crisis that would last for years.

And more importantly: they don't know what the truth is. In the Netherlands we have counted ten times as many spin-doctors and public relation people as there are journalists. These pr-people are not dedicated to the truth, but to their bosses and companies and institutions. Most of the time what they do and say is not very relevant for democracy – a lot of that stuff is entertainment anyhow and you as an audience know perfectly well what to believe.

But in some cases the truth is deadly important. And we need skilled and reliable journalists to investigate it. And we need them to report it to the best of their abilities. It might not be the absolute truth – most of us have accepted that there is no such thing. IT might even be a biased story – which is fine with me, as long as it's completely transparent.

\* \* \*

Media are everywhere. But “the” media are far from omnipresent. They are in deep shit.

So what's going to save them?

I believe that there are three options. The most unpleasant escape is this: the state will start to finance journalism. Not newspapers, not magazines. But journalism. More precisely: the kind of journalism that is indispensable for democracy. It's easy to see the parallel with banks. Governments took control of banks and supported them with billions of Euros, because the financial system of these states would have gone down with these so-called system banks. I suggest we start thinking about what the “system press” could be, what part of journalism is needed to keep democracy.

The second option might seem a little unlikely and romantic, but I truly believe there's a good chance it will happen. Over the last fifteen years “the” media have not succeeded in creating a sustainable business model for journalism on the internet.

Young people like Larry Page and Mark Zuckerberg created all major start-ups. They did not find an alternative way to sell the news, but came up with a thousand other ways to share information.

I will not be surprised when another kid – one of you, maybe? – will fill the gap. And find a way to sell journalism.

It's going to take years to convince governments – and the old media companies – that more financial support for journalism might be inevitable. And it's hard to bet on the future of journalism – and democracy – hard to bet on a kid that might still be unborn as we speak.

Therefore, finally, my appeal is to journalists. Start to reinvent your profession. Right now. Forget about most of the stuff you thought was so important. Accept the values of the Google Generation and learn from them. Be involved and transparent. And do what you do best. Investigate.

Ask better questions. And tell better stories, because that's what's going to make the difference. Tempting stories, compelling stories. Better stories

# “Funding is the future of journalism”

© 2011 - MO\* - MATHIAS DE GRAAG - TRANSLATION: HANNES VAN PEER

In the year 2011, young journalists are on the verge of a golden age, according to Paul Lewis. Instead of predicting hard times for the future journalistic talented, on the contrary, the journalist of The Guardian even believes that there are chances for this generation. “The path lies wide open for you with new media as Twitter and also the attracting of funds.”

Paul Lewis stressed the importance of social media in his speech at YoungPress.eu, a conference for young European journalists in Antwerp. He witnessed the possibilities of Twitter at first hand during the recent riots in London. Together with his colleagues, he gathered all the tweets that were sent into the world during the riots in the British capital. To his surprise, all those tweets ended up in The Guardian. “We have already been analyzing all the tweets and have spoken to various rioters. Without the use of Twitter, this wouldn’t have been possible.”

## MOVE ON

It seems that a lot of future journalists share the opinion of Lewis, when glancing into the room. At first sight, the audience doesn’t look too interested in what the speakers have to say, however the opposite is true. Almost everyone in the room is looking at their smartphones, lightening up the conference room. They are twittering.

Afterwards, some questions arose about the financial prospect for the future journalist. Vincent van Nauw, freelancer at a regional broadcast, asks Lewis how future journalists can earn enough each month to make up for their journalistic efforts. Lewis replies decidedly.

“The future of journalism lies in attracting funds. I’ve often been told that there is no money to do a journalist’s job. That is not true. There is money available, however it doesn’t reach a journalist in the traditional way anymore. I work for The Guardian, but I also have to find other ways of funding in order to realize my projects. Eventually, my search resulted in funds that do understand the value of a certain well-considered project. It is all about looking at the future, instead of getting stuck in the past. The future of journalism lies in attracting funds.”





FOTO: VINCENT TILLIEUX

## LOADS OF MONEY

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Lewis underlined that journalism, regardless of the age, has never been a profession that guaranteed loads of money. “This shouldn’t be a surprise to you. Journalists always had to struggle for their income. It is a very dynamic job that cannot be compared with the harsh commercial sector. The world of journalism is a very hard world, though it isn’t money driven. Your story is what counts; it is what you fight for. Lower wages are part of the job.”

# Experiments in journalism

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YVES TORBEYNS

During YoungPress.eu journalist Alex Wood presented his views about experimentation with online reporting. He stressed the importance of design for experiencing a strong narrative. “Journalism shouldn’t be reduced to bricks of information, but can deliver an exploration of a subject.” The boundless freedom in telling the story puts a burden on the editor. The decision which medium would be most effective for a certain story is a daily concern. “Try to think about the full story and in many cases there isn’t a right format at hand. Then it’s up to you to create your own.” Wood talks about the iPad as an example, where most magazine apps haven’t found the best solution. “At first glance they seem to be exciting, such as CD-roms in their days, but they still prove difficult to navigate.”

## IMPORTANCE OF DESIGN

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That is why he and his team at *Not on the wires* don’t just talk about stories. “I think design is often forgotten in the journalistic world. However the way people focus and read stories is an essential part of the job.” Widescreen monitors have made it possible to read without scrolling and Wood believes design should make the best use of that. Reading posture is another element developers should be aware of. Tablet computers simulate the handling of a press paper, where the reader is leaning back, digesting the material. A great contrast to the active leaning forward, hunting for stories behind your computer screen. Thinking out how people relax is vital to storytelling. Another concern of Wood consists of the social dimension of news. “In our current society reading journalistic reports is reduced to a solitary activity. I’m interested in exploring a more communal experience. Participating in a shared environment could stimulate discussion.” Wood tells how the most enjoyment derives from the exchange of ideas between friends after movie attendance.

## EXPERIENCE THE NEWS

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“At the moment I am tossing this crazy idea of digital news installation. Wouldn’t it be fun to experience a news report in a full room? People used to listen to and watch the news in a room together. You could present an audiovisual story via the use of interactive screens.” Tying three screens together at a side the exhibit could show the different perspectives of an event. In this way the audience is confronted with the problem of framing in an intuitive way. Although we are living in an image culture, Wood believes we shouldn’t limit ourselves to audiovisual material. By assembling academics, journalists can really ground an issue in a founded manner. “In most cases academics are an untapped resource. Mainstream media don’t want to present certain issues in a way that does them justice.”

## ONLINE REVOLUTION

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One of the possibilities for the exhibit could be prostitution. Lately there's been talk about officials clearing areas in London for the upcoming Olympics. This has driven their activities even more in personal homes. "Through my own research as a student I discovered that sex workers extensively use Facebook. Prostitution has been unchanged for more than 400 years, but the online revolution has made them adapt their behavior."

Streetwalkers have transgressed rapidly to the online adult business. It has made it easier for them to keep contact with their clients. At the other side it has exposed them to more stalker behavior and direct complaints from spouses and girlfriends. "An exhibition about this subject could bring together the different view sets from round the globe. My time spent in Japan has introduced me an eccentric view set on porn and paraphilia's. I think this challenging material really would be suitable for a documentary approach in a digital installation."



FOTO: VINCENT TILLIEUX

# The spread of biased information

ANNABEL MCGOLDRICK

Biased information spreads like a virus, it's toxic, mutates, infects and is potentially life threatening! It is implicated in some of the worst atrocities in human history from the Holocaust to the Rwandan Genocide. Each of these government-orchestrated killings was based on biased information – information that dehumanised the other. The perpetrators weren't just 'evil killers' – ordinary people were persuaded to do evil acts because of "empathy erosion" (*Baron-Cohen, 2011*). Ordinary Germans lost empathy with ordinary Jews, just like ordinary Hutus in Rwanda lost empathy with ordinary Tutsis, many of whom were their friends and neighbours.

Is it fair to lay the blame for such atrocities at the door of the media? Well, partly: the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda thought so, and prosecuted those in charge of Radio Milles Collines and the newspaper Kangura for their parts in inciting and even coordinating the genocide.

But surely journalistic objectivity will inoculate me against such toxic, biased information, I hear you cry? Well sadly not! I agree with the Spanish sociologist Manuel Castells that "the fundamental battle being fought in society is the battle over the minds of the people" (*Castells, 2007*), and with the advent of the blogosphere, Twitter and Facebook – we're all at it, this is the 'age of mass self-communication'. The media, in all its forms, is the social space where power is decided and sometimes that is the power of people – as in the case of the Arab Spring.

But when it came to Libya, there was the old Government and military power, Britain, France and the USA capitalizing on the 'people's movement', using biased information to legitimize their so-called 'humanitarian intervention'. We were told of rapes, atrocities and massacres but human rights organizations like Amnesty International refuted these claims (*Cockburn, 2011*). What I'm talking about here of course is good old-fashioned propaganda – about biased information being used to manipulate us for effect.

This time it wasn't groups of people being demonized, it was individuals, often just one man. Remember Slobodan Milosevic? Well he was no saint but many journalists got so drawn into the myth that 'it was all Milosevic's fault' they misreported some pretty huge issues like the Rambouillet agreement saying the Serbian President had refused to sign a peace deal for Kosovo before Nato's bombing of Yugoslavia in 1999 when in fact the small print revealed he was being asked to sign a mandate for occupation (Lynch and McGoldrick, 2005: 101).

Then there was the famous – or infamous – toppling of Saddam Hussein's statue in Firdaus Square, in Baghdad. All through the years of UN sanctions, Iraq was reported as if there was only one person liv-



ANNABEL MCGOLDRICK - FOTO: OLIVER NIMET

they create “contagious flows of information” or memes (*Canning and Reinsborough, 2009*). This is where that very battle for power is fought, in that small space between our ears. The man credited with inventing modern advertising and public relations was Edward Bernays, nephew to Sigmund Freud who unleashed on the world, the power of the ‘unconscious’. Bernays with the help of his uncle realized that people do not change their minds because they receive some new information, new facts, which advertising had previously offered. Instead Bernays worked through the unconscious desires and with emotions. In an early classic victory Bernays persuaded women to smoke by having suffragettes light so called “torches of freedom” so connecting cigarettes with challenging male power (*Curtis, 2005*).

This is why my own research is trying to get beneath the conscious mind to explore not only what people think but how they feel when they are watching TV news. What I am finding is that empathy is a key indicator of reactions to news about conflict. In the study I produced the same news about the same stories but put together in subtly different ways. One news bulletin was framed (*Entman, 1993*) as “war journalism” (*Galtung, 1998*). This generated more anger and disgust which encourages violence; whereas those framed as peace journalism (*Lynch and McGoldrick, 2005*) generate more empathy and ideas for solutions, thus de-escalating violence. So watch out when information being offered tries to persuade you to withdraw empathy! News is targeted for this because it presents itself not as a set of claims but a factual basis on which rival claims can be judged. What happens is, claims are disguised as facts, and that’s where we have problems. Why might empathy be important? Well there’s a whole explosion of science about the kinder side of human nature, that we are “soft-wired for empathy”, according to social commentator Jeremy Rifkin (*Rifkin, 2009*). Now I could get sidetracked in a whole argument here about post-enlightenment thinking promoting rational thought over subjugated feelings, but the point is that “empathy is the most valuable resource in the world,” according to British psychiatrist Simon Baron-Cohen: his argument like many others says there is an automatic empathy circuit in the brain and because of these wonderful things called “[m]irror neurons”, which “allow us to grasp the minds of others not through conceptual reasoning but through direct simulation. By feeling not by thinking” (*Rifkin, 2009: 83*). And if you have a mental illness like an anti-social or borderline personality disorder you have zero degrees of empathy. “Given this assertion, it is puzzling that

ing there – wicked old Saddam himself, the bad man of Baghdad. No wonder then, that Iraqis thronged to pull down the hated symbol of his rule. Or did they? That moment – captured by TV cameras and played and replayed to millions around the world – turned out to be a stunt organized by a PR firm. There were no Iraqi throngs – ordinary citizens of Baghdad were being kept out of the square by US military vehicles posted at the head of all the access roads, in case they said or did something to interfere with the message (*Rampton and Stauber, 2003*).

What this image did and propaganda does so well, is plant an image in our heads that tells a story – a narrative - like advertising

*I believe that  
one of the greatest biases  
facing mainstream journalism  
today is the total lack  
of images of solutions.*

in school or parenting curricula empathy figures hardly at all, and in politics, business, the courts, or policing it is rarely, if ever, on the agenda”.

The only institution he missed here is the media and journalism, hence my interest in whether media can make empathy more possible. This is where we need an update of the enlightenment concept of objectivity for journalism, it means restraining our own biases (*McGoldrick, 2006*) but it leaves out big chunks of the story

and our response to it. Partly because journalists don't know their own biases and because it calls for emotional detachment, a detachment from the impact the story is having on people in the conflict and its share of responsibility for that impact.

This doesn't mean journalism giving up its mandate to report the facts. In some important cases we should be more confident of truth-telling in journalism, not less. A classic example is the reporting of Israel and the Palestinians. Reporters in one national Australian broadcaster were cautioned by their Head of News not to refer to “Palestinian land” because this indicates a “lack of impartiality”. But Jake Lynch, director of Sydney University's Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, said the ruling showed “a lamentable ignorance of the facts and ... should be rescinded forthwith”.

“No reputable expert in international law, international relations or my own field of peace and conflict studies would dispute that the land in question is Palestinian,” he said.

“One of the main points of this story is that the occupied territories of East Jerusalem and the West Bank are Palestinian, and SBS journalists must be allowed to explain that, or viewers and listeners risk being misled and confused” (*Jackson, 2009*). Without that explanation, we have no opportunity to empathise with the day-to-day reality for Palestinians living in and with the conflict, this is why it seemed crucial to include a story about ‘peace talks’ between Israel and the Palestinians as part of my audience testing research.

The war version of the story has the familiar line-up of speakers – leaders on both sides, the Americans, an Israeli ‘expert’. And it concentrates on the so-called ‘settlement freeze’ issue without spelling out that these are illegal colonies built by Israel in defiance of international law. The other does explain that, and it shows a map of the ‘amazing shrinking Palestine’, letting viewers see for themselves how Israeli encroachment has squeezed and divided Palestinian territory over the years. The new speaker is a Palestinian refugee, living in Sydney, who invites people to imagine setting out to go “from Marrickville to Glebe” – two well-known Sydney suburbs next to each other – only to meet “14 military checkpoints” along the way. Viewers have seized on that with a sense of relief and gratitude – finally a way to get a handle on some real meaning in this story, which has been reported the same way for so long.

To take another current example, human-induced global warming is a fact, or as near as it's possible to get – the subject of almost universal scientific consensus. But Murdoch's Australian newspaper is just one that's been accused of presenting it as just one of two equally valid competing theories. Political and business power brokers tell us anthropogenic climate change is ‘disputed’ because that suits their purposes: to carry on polluting and making profits in the short term, which is what global markets are all about. So as well as the claims disguised as facts, there are also cases where facts are disguised as claims, and that causes problems too.

Then there are times when facts are created in order to be reported. The US employs 1200 people in psycho-



logical operations – basically how to win hearts and minds in that most biased piece of information this century, the so-called ‘war on terrorism’.

British academic Jeremy Keenan has found compelling evidence that “the US Administration of President George W. Bush used the pretext of its global war on terror to justify the launch of a new African, Saharan–Sahelian front in the global war on terror”. They infiltrated the so-called Al Qaida of the Maghreb, working through Algerian Intelligence, to provoke ‘terrorist’ incidents and supply justification for the US to become more involved. Not only has this been expanded under Barack Obama’s presidency, but Keenan concludes “that as long as US policy towards Africa remains fundamentally imperialist and conducted through AFRI-COM, it is unlikely to deliver peace, security or development” (*Keenan, 2010*).

You see if we empathically connect with the ‘other’ then the answer cannot be to simply kill him or her: there must surely be better ways to achieve peace, security or development. After all where has the war on terror got the USA, other than a three trillion dollar bill that’s triggered the debt crisis, the collapse of its empire, hundreds of thousands perhaps millions of deaths and the unleashing of fundamentalist Islam!

I believe that one of the greatest biases facing mainstream journalism today is the total lack of images of solutions, lasting creative and non-violent solutions that bring about peace with justice. That’s no easy task but there are endless examples out of there of people already achieving amazing things at the grass roots. I share the view of one of the world’s leading conflict resolvers, Jean Paul Lederach: “I have not experienced any situation of conflict, no matter how protracted or severe, from Central America to the Philippines to the Horn of Africa, where there have not been people who had a vision for peace, emerging often from their own experience of pain. Far too often, however, these same people are overlooked and disempowered either because they do not represent “official” power, whether on the side of government or the various militias, or because they are written off as biased and too personally affected by the conflict” (*Lederach, 1997*).

Speaking on Ted Talks recently Brazilian filmmaker Julia Bacha described her documentary about non-violent action by Palestinians, as rewarding good behaviour rather than bad. She said that violence and non-violence are both forms of theatre so by paying attention to events in Budrus provoked a whole series of copy-cat non-violent actions by Palestinians and solidarity support from Israelis. Not only had these West Bank villagers succeeded in moving Israel’s illegal separation wall out of their village they’d also pushed it back to the 1967 Green Line, victory indeed (*Bacha, 2011*). And just one small example of the kinds of stories that trigger empathy and perhaps an antidote to the spread of toxic biased information.

So – my message to journalists, stick to reporting facts, but with more plurality of sources, more transparency about assumptions and honesty about what we don’t know. Don’t give up on things we do know – the West Bank is Palestinian land; human activity is contributing to global warming. And keep those critical faculties ready to switch on, especially when a person or group of people are being put beyond empathy, in any representations by powerful interests. Ask yourself – how did these facts come to meet me? How did I come to meet them? What is being missed out, or distracted-from, in the process?

**Check list:**

1. Ask ‘who wants me to know this and why?’ Inspect the bias and the possible agenda behind it.
2. Ask: who is holding the power here? Is this a hegemonic idea? Is this propaganda? Is this an elite (government, military, business) perspective? So seek out a non-elite perspective, a view of ordinary people as well.
3. Ask: what is absent? When watching, reading or listening ask what information (ideas, concepts etc) is present and what is absent. Bias can be most obvious by considering what it is NOT telling you. This is

critical thinking.

4. Ask: what pair of glasses am I viewing the world through, what are my own bias lens, perceptions and ways of seeing? Could I interpret this information a different way?
5. Ask: where is my empathy? If the information about the 'other' is telling you how 'bad' or 'evil' someone or some group is, like the rioters in Britain, asylum seekers coming to Australia, or the Taliban in Afghanistan, put yourself in their shoes, understand what is behind their behaviour. Remember such 'othering' was the start of the Holocaust and Rwandan genocide.
6. Ask: is this information mobilizing/supporting violence? Who would gain and who would lose from that violence? What are the alternatives? What other creative non-violent solutions could there be? Explore these perspectives.
7. Ask: about justice & human rights? If someone talks about peace but there's an absence of justice be suspicious.

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FOTO: VINCENT TILLIEUX

# Don't forget your reporter

OLAF KOENS

“If Germany had had grannies like her, we definitely would've lost the war”, one of the demonstrators says jokingly. He is referring to a 81-year-old brave woman, standing in front of me and gazing at me with a penetrating look.

“You seem nice, but if you're really a journalist, I obviously can't trust you”, she says. “I'm not scared to tell you what I think, and of course you may write it down, but I want to reread before you publish.” I try to explain to her that the papers I write for are published in Dutch. “So what”, she says, “It'll be published online sooner or later, no? I'll give you my grandson's email address and he'll make sure I can reread your piece.”

Deal. What this 81-year-old Vladivostok woman realizes hasn't sunk in yet with Belgian and Dutch publishers. Journalism has to interact. The days in which a journalist used quotes and comments of people in distress at will are numbered. This is exactly why I publish all my articles online, much to my publisher's despair. I send my interviewees my observations via Facebook, Twitter and if needed via email to their grandchildren. They will be able to capture the gist using Google Translate.

*Leave facts to the press agencies, and use the army of freelancers to report in an authentic, independent and thorough way.*

Journalism's financial heyday has passed. Back in the days, long distance correspondents were rewarded with a beautiful fin-de-carriere outpost with a great view, a great salary, beautiful housing, drivers, assistants and interpreters. There are no more outposts and if there are any journalists far, far away, they're freelancing. Be it Mexico or the Maldives, Afghanistan or Angola, your neutral correspondence from the world's most dangerous places comes from freelancers, and you should cherish it, because without them,

the world pages of your newspaper would consist of press releases, touched up by creative desk reporters.

Belga, ANP, Reuters, AP, AFP and DPA are all excellent and perfectly reliable worldwide press agencies when it comes to reports about what happened 3 minutes ago. When it comes to knowing what's going on in the world, however, they don't have a clue. They publish photographs of women protesting in Iran, fighting against the police, but they never report on the why, on what the women are thinking and feeling and more importantly, why they are demonstrating. Press agencies come and go, and newspapers usually only pick up on the most absurd of their stories. ‘Russian sets new world record for eating pancakes’, ‘Siberian village adopts 47 children’, I used to write those stories myself, but there was never room for the question ‘why’.

Obviously, newsrooms can digest and explain this sort of information, but no newsroom here has any idea

what's really going on. Attacks on the Moscovian metro will cause an overload on the telex, but none of those reports will convey what it feels like to be on that metro an hour after those events, nor will they tell you how the anxiety levels soar with the locals if someone jumps on the carriage at the last minute. They won't tell you about stoic commuters who focus on their crossword while bodies are being carried out.

The real story is the news behind the news, and that's something a press agency, an editorial room or a travelling editor just doesn't get a hold on. Obviously, these journalists tell nice stories and they tell them well, whenever they have the occasion, because they happen to be there because a prime minister or a national football team is visiting. But most of the time these stories are just wrong.

If you're not immersed in a society, you don't live there and you don't speak the language, you just don't have a clue. We would mock a South Korean journalist trying to make sense of our political intricacies on a two-day trip. Yet we award a Dutch desk reporter for explaining Caucasian troubles so clearly to us.

There are no Belgian journalists in Moscow. Most journalistic work for Belgium is taken care of by Dutch freelancers, like myself. That's a disgrace as well as an invite. There is a fulltime job here for a young Flemish journalist with a lot of courage, decent language skills, some commercial feeling and a lot of perseverance. Young journalists tend to get discouraged by recent evolutions in media, but they shouldn't. Leave facts to the press agencies, and use the army of freelancers to report in an authentic, independent and thorough way. Journalism should get more original, daring and inspiring that way. Readers are already craving for this genre, why won't Flemish newspapers?

*Olaf Koens' articles about the absurdity of Russia and the former Soviet-Union can be read on [www.olafkoens.nl](http://www.olafkoens.nl).*

*This text was written for Mediacafé#2 organised by deBuren*

# Journalism problems - your opportunity

STEFAN CANDEA

Most of my career as a journalist coincides with the existence of the Romanian Centre for Investigative Journalism (RCJI), an organization I co-founded that has more than a decade of existence in a troubled region. RCJI supports cross-border experimental investigative journalism. It pioneered in the region with alternative techniques and methods in gathering and packaging information, publishing, financing, building credibility, and teaching others about what we have learned about investigative journalism<sup>1</sup>. The organization stretches further than traditional journalism. It is involved in producing investigative reports, building networks and online tools, in training and advocacy. Our investigative stories cover organized crime but also media, human rights abuses, networks of power, the environment, resources, energy, sports and undercover stories. We are active in a post-totalitarian region in Eastern Europe, which includes the Balkans and the Black Sea Region. Our activities during the last decade aim to generate an infrastructure for investigative-related journalism initiatives that stretches across the entire region. This article gives an overview of some lessons my colleagues and I learned building from scratch an investigative non-profit organization in difficult circumstances.

## A DECADE OF CHALLENGES

The first challenge is based on access to information. When I started in 1999 doing investigative journalism in the newsrooms in Bucharest very few had computers. So when searching for company information I had to go to an office and ask a clerk to search through paper archives. My first investigative stories were thus written, using old school stakeouts, interviews and tons of paper documents at home. Today our subjects to investigate are living in eastern Europe, launder money through offshore schemes or football

1 CRJI was established in 2001 and its online network [www.crji.org](http://www.crji.org) started in 2003. Its mission is to deconstruct and expose corrupt structures of power, to enhance investigative journalism and to create an interdisciplinary community of producers as well as consumers of relevant and verifiable information. The organization is one of the founding members of Global Investigative Journalism Network. In 2006 it co-founded the consortium Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project which CRJI left in 2011. CRJI's activities over the last decade have managed to create a backbone for investigative-related journalism initiatives that stretch across the entire region.



STEFAN CANDEA – FOTO: VINCENT TILLIEUX

when abroad. We also developed our own publication systems in order to avoid censorship, because that is another big challenge.

Internet brought a real change in the past ten years in terms of online news platforms, in access to public information and in avoiding censorship. But investigative reporting is more than just access to a publishing platform. I still cannot TWITTvestigate stories.

It's about resources: you still need money and time to do in-depth reporting. The present ownership landscape leads to self-censorship and lack of resources for investigation and the Internet doesn't make any difference.

We never had the golden days in our media: it is hard to find relevant and verifiable information; separating facts from opinion is difficult; the managing editor, the publisher and the business manager often are the same person. There is a corrupt relationship between media as institution and politicians or business interests.

When I started journalism the biggest problems investigative reporters had to face were those of violence, direct political pressure, censorship and the danger of facing rigged court trials that could result in imprisonment or excessive fines. We also had to face expectations of corruption in the newsroom, on all levels. The same problems continue to exist in the area, and, in some countries, even worse: leading to the killing of journalists, and the closing down of newsrooms. Some countries actually became softer on journalists. Thus we work on investigative stories in a region where politicians, public servants, law enforcement and judicial power and big business are all too often deeply corrupted or active as part of organized crime structures. A variety of models of such involvement exists. All are networks of power, based on former communist Nomenklatura and the oppressive secret services, previously serving a dictatorship. Their power lies in control over information and no accountability. The framework in which we work means no culture for transparency and an almost absence of any meaningful functioning democracy.

Ownership of the media is a huge issue, with local oligarchs and even organized crime groups investing in media. They can afford to waste tens of millions of dollars to gain the power to pressure politicians and the

transfers around the world, buy property in the US and UK, open accounts and companies in Liechtenstein and bribe their way to get mining licenses in African countries. So to keep track of such movements I need to be able to search from my desk through multiple databases and I need to be part of an international network of journalists. Database access is a tricky thing in Eastern Europe since it is easier to get access to "illegal" datasets than to legal ones. So we worked our way around it by building our own database platforms, among which [www.crji.org](http://www.crji.org), [www.mediaindex.ro](http://www.mediaindex.ro), [www.reportingproject.net/peopleofinterest](http://www.reportingproject.net/peopleofinterest), and by gathering information online and offline

judiciary to serve their special interests. Whether they succeed or not, they subsidize a hysterical media because their business model is brokering and centralizing power unto themselves.

### OUR STRATEGY TO DEAL WITH THE CHALLENGES

- we developed a very dynamic and independent structure, we do not have an office;
- we had to acquire expertise in organizing our own security when touching sensitive topics, working on Organized Crime or in conflict areas;
- we put more effort in working with students, a much more efficient training then that with journalists;
- we built from scratch a community of honest journalists interested in investigative approach and in data-driven journalism;
- we identified and connect our growing network to an emerging global community;
- we participated in international projects, run for international contests and identified a variety of publishing partners and possible sources to pre-finance our investigation;
- we started real grassroots networks of collaboration: a difficult and long-term process, where transparency and honesty should be more important then existing skills. There is always the danger that networks are hijacked by outsiders and bureaucrats who are only interested in looking good on paper.

### ALTERNATIVES

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The international media crisis never really reached the media in my region. The media industry is broken because owners and employees destabilized the concept of Journalism. The lack of in-depth content and the chaotic media assistance also harmed the press. But this is a window of opportunity for any new comer who has a media product that is credible and in-depth researched. I do not have a business model on how to make such an approach financially sustainable – actually nobody has one yet – so I guess it is really important to keep going on an experimental strategy.

At this moment, the only alternatives to finance independent investigative journalism projects are through grants from the media assistance industry. As far as I can conclude from different reports, the US and Western Europe put billions in programs dedicated to media in our region, over the past 20 years. But there are some fundamental problems related to the policies of media assistance, the main problem being that nobody can see the results of such huge financial efforts.

A few other problems I observed:

- the presumption that journalism will bring democracy and that only one specific style of writing is good journalism;
- no understanding of this fact: there is no universal model for Journalism!
- the lack of interest and the presumption that there was nothing in place in our countries in terms of cul-

- ture, writing styles and traditions, ignoring the context, background and things like strong networks of former propaganda journalists;
- the lack of real competition, accountability and transparent criteria for people who are implementing media assistance programs: trainers, editors, managers;
  - the creation, by bureaucrats, of artificial trends like the massive, useless and unaccountable training industry (for instance training thousands of journalists, on paper, and no editors);
  - generating artificial elites, leaving no room for criticism, building a huge bureaucracy and administrative apparatus;
  - creating artificial professions that need more assistance, running after mainstream media and not building an open infrastructure for experimental approaches.

### SOME CONSEQUENCES

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Despite the financial assistance efforts, looking back at the 20 years following the collapse of the Iron Curtain, I can say we have a broken media industry. Thousands of trained journalists through various programs have no place to work. Romanian media, but also regional media resembles the media as it functioned 100 years ago in Western Europe and the U.S.: blackmail, pressure, extortion for advertisement, lack of any professional journalistic body promoting ethical standards from within the newsroom, and the suffocation of relevant and verifiable information. Ownership is increasingly concentrated into the hands of local oligarchs. We are still living in an area with very fragile democracies. Local watchdog journalism has no power unless is taken over by international pressure groups, advocacy organizations or politicians. There is a huge waste of good resources, because of the lack of meaningful co-ordination among donors and the lack of direct communication with journalists on the field.

Wasted media assistance money has the same negative impact as the flow of “black money” over journalism because it sets artificial trends in assistance and jobs, it creates a strange establishment and gatekeepers for resources and information. There is no strategy to invest in an infrastructure that will support and encourage organic development from new generations of young local journalists. Most of the money spent on training programs has only created the odd profession of universal trainer or grant writer and the business of conferences tourism and its building bureaucracy. There are a lot of full-time media preachers who do nothing else but travel the world from one country to another, from Russia to Afghanistan to China to Mexico and now heading to North Africa, telling everybody that we need more and more training, no matter the context.

In my case, and in the case of young journalists I know, the hands-on collaboration with foreign journalists and editors in Western Europe and the U.S. was the most efficient training we ever had. On the other hand, the most efficient training I did was with students, thus not only with active journalists.

It takes a lot of effort to experiment independently on a long-term. We are constantly under-funded and under-staffed. Because of that, we miss a lot of topics that need to be investigated. So until we figure out a business model we need assistance but as partners and not an “intrusive assistance”. I see an urge in the radical re-thinking of media assistance, the strengthening of global networks of working journalists and a global consensus or formal policy on information and press.

Thus I am convinced that on the long run changes can be made; thanks to digital technologies, training programs, long-term experimental approach, partnerships and sharing. We need a flood of honest and in-depth



journalistic products in order to make hysterical and manipulative journalism just an entertainment option. Looking back I realize that the most important lesson I learned is that a troubled environment can also become a big opportunity. Nowadays, the lack of in-depth journalism is opening a wide empty field for experiments and young journalists are the first who should take advantage of this.

### SUGGESTING SOLUTIONS FOR AN EFFICIENT MEDIA ASSISTANCE

- for training target young journalists and students and shift most of the training processes into partnerships with universities, where there are rules and standards;
- as a training tool, journalists should have transparent, equal and fair access (based on competition) to resources, conferences and networking events, awards and fellowships;
- media assistance should be evaluated critically by direct beneficiaries and roles should be re-assigned – what works what doesn't work (for instance, the millions spent on training on paper thousands of journalists in each country could have support the appearance of super-strong and professional publications);
- donors are running after each other and don't commit for long-term projects and sometime just want to follow the mainstream media – a more international experimental approach is needed;
- the de-bureaucratization and standardization of the applying and reporting processes for media assistance grant proposals together with building an international registry of projects, organizations, trainers and trained journalists;
- look for a “zero friction model” – money should go straight to journalists and editors to produce investigative stories on long-term, to access the money based on open competition;
- it is important that local journalists have constant access to resources to work with;
- put some money into RESEARCH and DEVELOPMENT structures.





FOTO: VINCENT TILLIEUX



FOTO: VINCENT TILLIEUX

# A new hope for journalism

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*“These are equally difficult and interesting times for young journalists. There are fewer jobs and they are less well paid, but at the same time there is a lot more freedom and there are a lot more possibilities for a new kind of journalist. Stop considering yourselves victims and grab your passion by the balls. Become an entrepreneurial journalist!”*

**The final debate with Paul Lewis, Joel Gunter, Marietje Schaake, Ingrid Lieten and Teun Gautier.**

These words, paraphrasing The Guardian’s Paul Lewis and StampMedia’s Stefan Kolgen, are the message that many young journalists took home from Youngpress.eu, the three day conference in Antwerp that sometimes might have done better with the title ‘the uncertain future of journalism’ or ‘financial woes of the poor young journalist.’ The uncertainty that lives among the new generations of journalists was very palpable throughout the conference, and the topic of money and financing was never far away. At the closing debate MEP Marietje Schaake and Flemish minister for media and innovation Ingrid Lieten were inundated with pleas for more government funding and subsidies for journalism. One Italian participant lamented that she felt the government was abandoning journalists and called for more state funding. It was only after an almost biblical three interventions that The Guardian’s Paul Lewis was able to steer the topic back to the future of journalism.

## THE QUEST FOR A NEW REVENUE MODEL

All things considered, money is a big problem in the contemporary journalistic world, though. Newspapers have been experimenting on and off with different models to keep from going under. Trials with paywalls and online advertising have not really yielded unequivocal results, so the quest for the holy grail of new journalism continues. And journalists, young and old alike, have been feeling the repercussions of the changes in the media landscape: endless internships and layoffs have become part of the deal of being a journalist.

Paul Lewis acknowledges that there are problems, but takes a more pragmatic approach: “We see that money has been sucked out of journalism. It certainly does have a number of negative consequences, but at the same time it may be a good thing: journalism should be seen as a civic duty that serves a social good, like being a doctor or a teacher. And let’s be honest: journalists have never been in the profession for the money.”

### CHALLENGE... ACCEPTED?

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A new eco-system in which journalism might work, could be a mix of different models, in which state funded media companies could vie with profit-funded organizations over readership. But according to Lewis foundations or civic society will fund more and more organizations. The transitional period will be a difficult one, but instead of seeing problems journalists should embrace challenges. Stefan Kolgen speaks boldly: “There are so many opportunities! If you as a journalist are passionate about what you do and want to keep doing it you should grab it by the balls and not let go!”

One of the new challenges more and more journalists should embrace, for example, is that we’ve long entered a digital era that offers the chance to go far beyond the possibilities of the traditional insular media. The Guardian at least seems to have accepted this. According to Paul Lewis, social media has been embedded intricately in the whole process of journalism: “From when you arrive at the office until the rest of the day, it is there! Instead of news tickers editors nowadays will just have Tweetdeck, and have a constant stream not from wire agencies, but from other journalists and people.” At the moment Lewis heads a team that is specifically using multimedia and crowd sourcing to work on news stories.

### BILATERAL FLOWS

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If multimedia is a tough nut to crack for professional journalists, the rise of citizen journalists appears to be annoying many trained journalists to no end. Once again, it is an ingredient to a new journalistic world that is seen by many journalists as a problem, rather than an opportunity. Instead of lamenting the fact that citizen journalists are destroying the trade by selling stories and photographs too cheap, journalists could try to harness the power of social media and use crowd sourcing as a means to improve a story.

It changes the concept of journalism entirely: the relationship between journalists and their audience has become a bilateral system in which journalists are no longer the sole creators of a story. It is what Lewis would call ‘open journalism.’ Journalists tell people what kind of information they’re looking for, while they’re looking for it. This way people are more likely to help journalists with information, and the story becomes more accurate with each contact that contributes to the story.

In short: journalists should look at the new developments as challenges, instead of problems. They should embrace the changes and, to again paraphrase Stefan Kolgen, discuss the future of journalism, explore strange dilemmas and seek out new methods. Journalists should boldly go where no journalist has gone before.

# Highlights from the final debate

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*Journalism is in transition. It is a profession that is necessary and valuable. We need ways to make one able to do it.*

**Marietje Schaake** (*EMP – Media Commission*): “Effectively I think, we are facing - as a result of Internet and other information and communication technologies - a serious transition from closed systems monopolies on information and communication to an open and more horizontally structured society which impacts all of us and our daily lives. It certainly impacts the role media had but also the role politician had historically. This really means there has to be some sort of letting go of control of messages, a control over sending and accepting that individuals have become more empowered to also create platforms to communicate, to cross borders and to connect with each other over bigger distances.

It is uncertain where this transition will lead to at a moment of time where the speed of changes is very quick. It leads to sprawling of new initiatives, of connections of ideas, and I’m not sure where this will end, but I do think if we are considering in terms of solutions, that politicians - especially the ones in the EU - have to accept more serious scrutiny over the decisions that they make. It means making sure that there are more journalists that look at what we are doing as a serious check on power, because where there might be serious problems with traditional media and their funding, there certainly is when it comes to deploying journalists in Brussels. When I take the Dutch case as an example, most newspapers, television programs, or even broadcasters as a whole have one reporter in Brussels at the most. That is a serious lack of control on the decisions that we make there. In order to facilitate that change it is very important that governments, politicians and especially institutions open up their information to the public and to journalists, and open it up in a literal sense for journalists to access.”

**Ingrid Lieten** (*Minister of Media, Flanders*): “Our media organisations and everybody who is active in the sector are confronted like everybody with some challenges. Media is becoming a very global economic organisation, there are a lot of new technologies introduced and the existing media-players have to find out a way to work with these new technologies and to introduce them in their work life. We also see changing consumer behaviour. This is leading to a very specific turning point at which everybody is looking at the we are going to organise ourselves in the future. From my point of view as a minister of media I’m focussing in my policy on three points. The first point is based on quality. How can we coach, how can we stimulate, how can we help everybody who is active in journalism to maintain quality? It has to do with working conditions. It has to do with the autonomy of the journalist, the organisation of the staff etc. The second



FOTO: OLIVIER NIMET

people are fully aware how these new technologies influence their lives and how they should consume it and be a critical consumer about it.”

**Teun Gauthier** (*publisher – De Groene Amsterdammer*): “I honestly think Journalism is about curiosity. Being truly and intrinsically curious about what is happening and why it is happening. That is what we are supposed to do. But also it is a curiosity that needs to be in a tribute of the journalist but also of the readership. It is not only our responsibility. It is also the responsibility of the readership to seek quality, to define quality and to differentiate journalistic quality. The problem, and that is where my initial negativity came from, is that curiosity does not sell, sex sells and shit sells. Second problem with curiosity is that it is very expensive, because it would take a journalist a lot of time and energy and effort to go into depth. And the third problem maybe is that curiosity is not something that larger co-operations or maybe politicians are so fond of. That was why I was so negative, but then it turned out, basically also inspired by Paul Lewis’s keynote, that the media and the journalistic institutions as we know them come from later days but mostly 18th, 19th century, that these have to fear their future. We will really be seeing the end of that, mostly because, and I used to work with Read Elsevier in The Netherlands, they have been I think financially corrupted. The real client of a media company is their shareholders, then the advertiser and then the reader and that corrupts the journalistic proposition and with that you undermine your trade. So I think what we will see is the demise of the institutional journalistic organisations, and they will as Marietje Schaake says verticalise to a grassroots wisdom and power of crowds. That will channel the curiosity of what is happening and why it is happening. So in that respect I’m very pessimistic about the institutions and optimistic about journalism.”

**Joel Weisz** (*Streetpress.com*): “We felt that these last 2 days we had great journalists here. Maybe putting them into incubators with marketers and businesspeople to develop new business models/ new ways of producing the news would be interesting, because you would be supporting directly journalists. We know that capital investors would not easily invest in these kind of start ups, because the return on investment is low, but the social return on investment is not low at all.”

**Suggestion from the public: What about using evangelists? Try and make journalists in more credible persons and than people will flock to those people instead of particular brands?**

**Teun Gautier:** "That is interesting. We should not only stimulate the supply side but also vitalize the demand side. So if you make the journalist into an icon, to help the public to be much more aware of good journalism and lesser journalism, that would be extremely interesting. Also coming back to the role of a government, because that could be an area where a government could work. I mean they stimulate things as obesity and create more media literacy. There is a role for government. There is one more thing that I want to bring into the debate. As a politician and an opinion weekly we should not follow the market, we should be leading it, we need much stronger leadership. Taking a direction and stand for that and leading both the institutions and the leaders into new directions. In that respect stimulating people to stand up as leaders in this discussion would be very helpful."

**Paul Lewis:** "That is a very good observation, because in terms of the direction we are traveling, and we only have just begun going down that road, that it is journalists who are acting like the magnets, because the information is free online and readers/consumers will be drawn towards individual journalists in a particular niche area quite separate from the organisations they work for. That is the way you presumably consume news. And that is the way we will be consuming news in the future. I really like the concept of the journalist as an entrepreneur as Alex Wood talked about yesterday. It is a new model."

**Ingrid Lieten:** "I absolutely agree that we need to give the public money to the journalists and not to the institutions. And so what I do is we have some kind of project subsidies I give them to Stamp-Media directly and they use it for their youngsters media agency, training young people, give them the chance to make articles/reports. I give money now to a new website Apache.be, an independent news site where journalists work on and it is also a media literacy project in fact. I also give money to "de wereld morgen", which is also more citizen journalism and it is highly criticized that I give money to these new projects, because they are looked at by traditional media as not being a serious project, but I find them very specific and very useful. They give independent people chances. What we also do is give money to a foundation Pascal Decroos, where for existing journalists, if they are young journalists or working in the press they can get money to work on an investigative piece. More and more of them do it on their own and do not get time off from the newspapers they are working for."







# The authors

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**ANNELEEN OPHOFF** (1990) is a young journalist training. After an exchange to Bolivia she decided she wanted to make her career out of her passion for stories. Thus she currently studies Journalism at Lessius Mechelen and hopes to be able to specialize in International Research Journalism. Anneleen is driven by the stories behind cultural phenomena, societal issues, but also by simple stories happening in day-to-day life. Photo, video or written stories, every idea fits its own format for the story Anneleen wants to tell.

**ANN LAENEN** studied Arts and Theatre Science in Leuven and has reached the PhD level in 2007 at the University of Leeds – School of Education on audience policy within cultural institutions. She was a free lance consultant in Arts Communication/Management & Audience Development Projects.

The link between Arts Marketing/Education and the use of new technologies in the dialogue between (socio)cultural institutions and their audiences, as been central to her work. The last four years the focus slightly shifted towards the way we deal with information in a networked society. Ann published several articles and reports on this topic.

In collaboration with Stefan Kolgen she published “The User is the Content – 10 scenarios for the future” and “Citizen Journalists – scenarios for the future”.

From 2009 onwards she combined her freelance work with the assignment as co-ordinator of the programme Communication & Media Design at the Media, Arts and Design Faculty – campus C-mine (Genk). October 2010 she became the Dean of this University College. She teaches mediacritics at the same institution.

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**ANNABEL MCGOLDRICK** is a pioneer in the field of peace journalism. A former journalist, turned psychotherapist, she is passionate about how information can help us to understand ourselves and each other. She is currently a PhD candidate and part-time lecturer at the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Sydney, Australia, specializing in Peace Journalism and the Psychology of Peace. Her television career includes reporting for World News Australia, on SBS Television. Credits include the Sunday programme, on Channel Nine TV, including an exclusive filmed report about the activities of Australian mining companies in the southern Philippines. Annabel McGoldrick has covered conflicts in Indonesia, Thailand and Burma, and helped to produce two major peace documentaries: the internationally acclaimed, multiple-award-winning documentary *Soldiers of Peace* (2008) narrated by Michael Douglas, and the BBC documentary *Against the War*, presented by Harold Pinter, during the

NATO bombing of Yugoslavia in 1999. Her publications include *Peace Journalism* (Hawthorn Press, Stroud, UK, 2005 – with Jake Lynch), as well as chapters in several books and scholarly journal articles. She edited and presented two educational video documentaries, *News from the Holy Land* (Hawthorn Press and Films for the Humanities, 2004) and *Peace Journalism in the Philippines* (Australian Centre for Independent Journalism, 2007). Annabel presented and chaired *Reporting the World*, a series of high-profile, on-the-record discussions involving editors and senior reporters in London, on issues of representation and responsibility in the coverage of conflict. She has led professional training workshops for journalists and peace workers in many countries, including the US, UK, Indonesia, the Philippines, Nepal, Armenia and Norway.

Annabel is also an experienced psychotherapist. She works in private practice, runs group reconciliations for families in crisis at South Pacific Private Hospital, Sydney and has consulted on issues around journalism, conflict and trauma to organizations including the Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma and the UN Population Fund.

**ERIK AERTS** is a Master's student of journalism at the Lessius University College in Antwerp, Belgium. Having travelled extensively throughout the Middle-East, he decided to combine his love of all things oriental and international by first obtaining a degree in Arabic, followed by a master's degree in journalism with a focus on international politics.

After an internship at the Belgian national newspaper *De Standaard*, he reported from Cairo during the 2011 revolution for several television and radio stations. He is currently a Middle-East researcher and writes for the Stampmedia youth press agency, filling his free time with MENAC, a subcommittee of the European Youth Press that aims to enhance intercultural understanding and to establish sustainable networks between young media makers from Europe and the Middle East & North Africa through media-related projects and events.

**HENK BLANKEN** (Rotterdam, 1959) is a journalist, writer and blogger. He was a reporter with *de Volkskrant* and was deputy editor in chief at *Dagblad van het Noorden*, a regional daily, until the 1st of September 2011. He is currently working as an investigative journalist. He published three books on digital culture, new media and the ethics of journalism.

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*Recent articles:* [www.guardian.co.uk/profile/paullewis](http://www.guardian.co.uk/profile/paullewis)

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**STEFAN CANDEA** has worked for several print publications, radio and television stations in Romania. He was an investigative journalist for the newspaper Evenimentul Zilei, where he wrote about the connections between international organized crime networks and high-ranking politicians and public servants. Other investigations by Candea include the international arms trade, illegal international adoptions and the diamond business in Romania. Stefan is a co-founder of The Romanian Centre for Investigative Journalism, and worked for the first investigative TV show in Romania (Reporterii Incognito). He also does freelance research and production work for several foreign media outlets, including BBC, Channel 4, ITN, ZDF, and Canal Plus. Since March 2001, he is a correspondent for Reporters sans Frontieres in Romania. One of Candea's latest projects for CRJI is an investigation of the separatist region of Transdnister. He also teaches investigative journalism at Bucharest, Iasi and Timisoara universities.

*Recent articles:* [www.nieman.harvard.edu/reports/issue/100067/Spring-2011.aspx](http://www.nieman.harvard.edu/reports/issue/100067/Spring-2011.aspx)

**STEFAN KOLGEN** is general co-ordinator of C.H.I.P.S vzw and guest lecturer at the Media, Arts & Design Faculty (Genk). He studied 'image/sound' at RICTS in Brussels. He is active in the field of new media and Internet since 1993. Testing and introducing new technologies and communication tools within the work of cultural institutions is at the forefront of his work, as well as implementing them in projects involving as many people as possible in a creative process: eg. citychromosomes, droom de stad, BoekenCast.be. Since 2008 he developed and is co-ordinator of the first officially recognised Flemish Youth Press Agency – StampMedia and he is also in charge of VideAntz a video-production unit managed by young videasts (16 to 26 years of age)

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**TIM VERBIST** has a bachelor degree in Psychologie and is master in the Comparative Science of Cultures. After being a scientific researcher for the universities of Ghent and Antwerp he started working in the field of community development. In 2004 he joined the Evens Foundation, where he is currently in charge of the Media Program. In this capacity he founded videAntz, a video-production unit managed by young videasts, in 2007.

**YVES TORBEYNS** graduated as a Master in Mediaculture, Yves Torbeyns has developed his skills in audiovisual media since his childhood. This prepubescent passion led him to extracurricular training at Borsbeek Art Academia and later on at youth press agency Stampmedia. Outside of college duties he has been working there as a journalist and videoreporter for more than 2 years. During this period he published on topics relating to film, festivals and youth participation. Born out of his thesis study, he is now actively pursuing an interest in screenwriting, whereby he aims to reconcile the opportunities of new media and digital storytelling with groundbreaking visuals.



## COLOPHON

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