



Exploratory Workshop Scheme

Scientific Review Group for the Humanities

ESF Exploratory Workshop on

Mapping the digital news ecosystem

Professional journalism, new producers and active audiences in the digital public sphere

Barcelona (Spain), 8-11 May 2013

Convened by:

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Co-sponsored by



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ESF is in a period of transition; the ESF Member Organisations (MO's) have indicated that they would like to wind down certain ESF activities, such as EUROCORES, RNP's, ECRP's and Forward Looks by the end of 2015, but ESF will continue to honour its existing commitments until the projects are finalised.

In 2013 the only research instrument that will have a call for proposals is the Exploratory Workshops. The focus of the Exploratory Workshops scheme is on workshops aiming to explore an emerging and/or innovative field of research or research infrastructure, also of interdisciplinary character. Workshops are expected to open up new directions in research or new domains. It is expected that a workshop shall conclude with plans for follow-up research activities and/or collaborative actions or other specific outputs at international level.

ESF is also currently exploring new areas where we could serve the science community. Services we have identified that would leverage our expertise and experience and provide added-value to the science community are: peer review, evaluation, research conferences and career tracking.

Please check our website (www.esf.org) for regular updates regarding ESF and its future developments.

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Main Objectives of the Workshop

The workshop will explore the challenges that researchers face with the blurring of boundaries between news producers and consumers in the digital public sphere. We will discuss theoretical and methodological tools to map and analyse actors in online news ecosystems (journalists, engaged citizens, and other information producers), their self-perceptions, motivations, status and relationships. The profiles of participants will foster an interdisciplinary approach (journalism studies, public communication, information engineering), and the outcome of the workshop will be a roadmap for international comparative research on the role of professional journalism in fostering deliberative democracy.

Rationale

This workshop stems from a social need and a research challenge: at a difficult time, we believe that the European Union needs news media to foster citizen engagement in public decision-making processes, helping our democracies to become more inclusive, participatory, deliberative and transparent. Journalism is struggling to understand its role within the digital public sphere (Ruiz et al., 2011), where significant parts of the audience have become active participants in ways that challenge the traditional mediation of news professionals.

So far, research has described the tensions that arise in the new scenario, but we want to address the paradigm shift that recent findings on online communication are calling for: the blurring of the definition between news producers and news consumers requires a new comprehensive theoretical framework. The emerging context has consequences for the dynamics of the digital public sphere, the role of professional journalism in this context and the conditions that foster citizen engagement in deliberative democracy (Dahlgren, 2005). The workshop will bridge the existing gap between research on the evolution of online journalism that focuses on innovations in newsroom practices and the redefinition of



professional identity, and research on the evolution of active audiences, which revolves around changes in consumption habits and motivations for participation.

The workshop will develop a new theoretical framework that brings together advances in several disciplines to place journalism in the context of the digital public sphere. This calls for an interdisciplinary approach, bringing together research traditions in the sociology of newsmaking and innovation in newsrooms, the structure and dynamics of the public sphere, reception studies in the digital era, and hypertext and social networking analysis. Participants in the workshop have a background in journalism studies, public/political communication and information engineering. The European participants have published 335 ISI-ranked articles in these fields, and the five researchers from outside ESF countries are key proponents of specific solutions in relevant conceptual and methodological debates.

An initial step towards a new theoretical framework is adopting the concept of news ecosystems (Anderson, 2011) to analytically embrace the diversity of actors involved in the production, consumption and discussion of current events. Two principles will be the vantage point for our discussions:

- a) A normative understanding of journalism that expects it to fulfil its social role as a key actor in healthy democratic societies (Heinonen and Luostarinen, 2008).
- b) A critical approach to technological innovation that acknowledges the social construction of digital news and participation spaces, rather than relying on deterministic explanations (Domingo, 2008).

The workshop will also develop methodological tools for analysing the production and distribution of socially relevant information in contemporary European democracies and the role of active participants in constructing public spheres. There will be four interrelated topics of discussion:

- 1) Assessing current practices in professional journalism: What are the practices for information gathering in interaction with the active audiences and the new producers? How do professional journalists (re)define their normative role and professional identity in online news ecosystems? How are they accountable?
- 2) Mapping the new information producers in the digital news ecosystems: What social actors produce socially relevant information? What are their motivations? Which means of distribution do they use? To what extent do they deploy narrative and production practices of professional journalism? How do they define themselves as part of the news ecosystems and the online public sphere? What are their relationships with journalists and citizens?
- 3) Understanding news consumers as active audiences: What habits shape the selection of information sources? What are the motivations for and practices of participation and content production (or lack thereof)? How do they interpret the role of journalism in democracy and their own role in the public sphere?
- 4) Evaluating the implications of the dynamics of news ecosystems for the public sphere: What are the implications for democracy of the multiplication of information producers and spaces for public debate? Is the digital public sphere more inclusive and deliberative? Do the new information producers replace/complement/challenge/augment professional journalism? What is the role of professionally-produced media in the digital public sphere?

We will build on the findings of current national and European research projects (e.g. MediaAcT, FoodRisC) and networks (e.g. COST IS0906) by combining the accumulated expertise and developing new concepts and methods. Participants have demonstrated experience with the methods we will discuss, including software-enabled sampling and network analyses, content analysis, surveys, in-depth interviews, and performative questionnaires. Bringing together scholars with such diverse backgrounds and so much experience in international research promises to deliver a successful workshop and the foundations for further innovative projects and collaborations.



The workshop will be the starting point for developing a research agenda for the future of journalism and democracy in Europe, coordinating national research projects and producing an application for a project within the EU Horizon 2020 framework programme. Workshop discussions will consider the cultural diversity of news ecosystems in different countries. At the same time, we will strive to generate research strategies that allow for an understanding of the dynamics of the European public sphere through topics such as economy, migration and energy policies. The results of subsequent studies will provide an opportunity for professional journalists, citizens, policymakers and activists to critically rethink their involvement in the production of the public sphere for a vibrant democracy.

Workshop Agenda

The workshop will be structured around the research agenda described in the previous section. Prior to the workshop all participants will submit theoretical or methodological reflections (between 4-6 pages, plus references) on one of the topics relating to their expertise to guarantee that sessions are devoted to discussion, rather than to presenting findings. Papers will be delivered by April 12. They will be based on the research experience of the participants and will propose strategies to address the research of the challenges outlined above. During each session, the chair will summarise the contributions and highlight unresolved issues. The authors will clarify their proposals, followed by open debate with all the participants of the workshop. This way, we hope that thematic connections between the different panels will be shared by everyone and we will be able to come up with a global theoretical and methodological framework that takes into account the different aspects discussed in each session. Additional time is allocated on day three to catalyse synergies between participants and build the foundations for the Horizon 2020 research project.

The first day of the workshop will be devoted to theoretical debates. The second will focus on methodological challenges. On the last day of the workshop two of the convenors will lead a synthesis debate on all the topics covered during the previous sessions, and there will also be a session devoted to discuss future research plans.

Report publication and dissemination

A report summarizing the conclusions of the workshop will be published online. We have prospective contacts with an international publisher to produce a book based on revised and extended versions of the papers submitted to the workshop.



PRELIMINARY PROGRAMME

Wednesday, 8 May 2013

Afternoon Arrival

Thursday, 9 May 2013

- 09.00-09.15 **Welcome by the convenors**
David Domingo (Université libre de Bruxelles, Belgium)
Pere Masip (Universitat Ramon Llull, Catalonia)
Karin Wahl-Jorgensen (Cardiff University, Wales)
- 09.15-09.30 **Presentation of the European Science Foundation (ESF)**
Balázs Kiss (representing the Scientific Review Group for the Humanities)
- 09.30-11.00 News ecosystems: conceptualising news producers beyond professional journalism, and their relationship with newsrooms.**
- Chair:**
Steen Steensen (Oslo and Akershus University College of Applied Sciences, Norway)
- Participants:**
Chris W. Anderson (CUNY, USA)
Yana Breindl (Georg-August Universität, Germany)
David Domingo (Université libre de Bruxelles, Belgium)
- 11.00-11.15 *Coffee / Tea Break*
- 11.15-13:00 Active audiences, engaged citizens: conceptualising citizen news consumption, production and engagement in public debates.**
- Chair:**
Irene Costera-Meijer (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, The Netherlands)
- Participants:**
Laura Ahva (University of Tampere, Finland)
Peter Dahlgren (Lund University, Sweden)
Ann-Kristin Juntti-Henriksson (Lulea University of Technology, Sweden)
Jérémie Nicey (Université François Rabelais, Tours, France)
Víctor Sampedro (Universidad Rey Juan Carlos, Madrid, Spain)
- 13.00-14.00 *Lunch*
- 14.00-15:45 Newswork in the ecosystem: conceptualising practices in the newsroom: newsgathering, transparency and audience relationships.**
- Chair:**
Wiebke Loosen (Universität Hamburg, Germany)
- Participants:**
Henrik Örnebring (Karlstad University, Sweden)



- Steve Paulussen** (Universiteit Antwerpen, Belgium)
Albert Sáez (Universitat Ramon Llull, Catalonia)
Steen Steensen (Oslo and Akershus University College of Applied Sciences, Norway)
- 15.30-16.00 *Coffee / tea break*
- 16.00-17.45** **Digital public sphere: normative theories of journalism and democracy in the digital era.**
- Chair:**
Peter Dahlgren (Lund University, Denmark)
- Participants:**
Nico Carpentier (Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Belgium)
Todd Graham (Universiteit Groningen, Netherlands)
Agnieszka Stepinska (Adam Mickiewicz University, Poland)
Marisa Torres da Silva (Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Portugal)
Tamara Witschge (Universiteit Groningen, Germany)
- 19.00 *Dinner*

Friday, 10 May 2013

- 9.00-10.30** **Measuring news ecosystems: networks and flows.**
- Chair:**
Chris Anderson (CUNY, USA)
- Participants:**
Axel Bruns (Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, Germany / Queensland University of Technology, Australia)
Krishna Gummadi (Max Planck Institute for Software Systems, Germany)
- 10.30-11.00 *Coffee / Tea Break*
- 11.00-12:45** **Content analysis of unfolding news and debates.**
- Chair:**
David Domingo (Université libre de Bruxelles, Belgium)
- Participants:**
Anders Olof Larsson (University of Oslo, Norway)
Pere Masip (Universitat Ramon Llull, Catalonia)
Thorsten Quandt (University of Münster, Germany)
- 13.00-14.00 *Lunch*
- 14.00-15:45** **Assessing attitudes and practices: quantitative and qualitative approaches.**
- Chair:**
Tamara Witschge (Universiteit Groningen, Germany)
- Participants:**
Irene Costera-Meijer (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, The Netherlands)
Wiebke Loosen (Universität Hamburg, Germany)
Zvi Reich (Ben Gurion University of the Negev, Israel)
Karin Wahl-Jorgensen (Cardiff University, Wales)
- 20.00 *Dinner*



Saturday, 11 May 2013

- 9.15-11.00** **Towards new theoretical and methodological frameworks**
- Chairs:**
Karin Wahl-Jorgensen (Cardiff University, Wales)
Pere Masip (Universitat Ramon Llull, Catalonia)
- 11.00-11.15 *Coffee / Tea Break*
- 11.15-13:00** **Exploring agendas for future cooperation. Foundations for an international research project on news ecosystems and digital public spheres.**
- Chairs:**
David Domingo (Université libre de Bruxelles, Belgium)
Tamara Witschge (Universiteit Groningen, Germany)
- 13.00-14.00 *Lunch*
- 14.00 End of Workshop and departure



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Objectives of the ESF Scientific Review Group for the Humanities

The main tasks of the **ESF Scientific Review Group for the Humanities** are:

- to encourage interdisciplinary work through the independent evaluation of collaborative research proposals emanating from the scholarly community;
- to identify priority research areas and to play an integrative and co-ordinating role by creating links between research communities which in the Humanities are often small and fragmented.
- to provide expert advice on science policy actions at the European level in the field of its responsibilities.

The Scientific Review Group is well aware that the ESF is the only European Agency where the Humanities have a place next to the other sciences and where European projects are reviewed, developed and subsequently operated.

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ESF Exploratory Workshop:

Mapping The Digital News Ecosystem: Professional Journalism, New Producers And Active Audiences In The Digital Public Sphere

Barcelona (Spain), May 9-11, 2013

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