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The intimization of journalism

On August 6 2014 Fredrik Græsvik, a Norwegian *TV 2* national broadcaster correspondent to the Middle East, published a rather peculiar post on Facebook. Græsvik, one of the most experienced and profiled war correspondents in Norway, had been covering the Gaza conflict during the summer on TV and social media. Since 2007, when he started blogging, Græsvik had been one of the most active Norwegian journalists in social media with thousands of followers on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram, in addition to the many readers of his blog. On this day in August, things were about to change. 'From now on, this is a private account', wrote Græsvik on Facebook. Then came the peculiar part:

> I ask those of you who are my friends but who do not know me to delete me as your friend. You are a couple of thousand, so it is easier for you than it is for me. As of Monday, all status updates are from me and have nothing to do with TV 2.[1]

This rather strange attempt at privatizing his social media persona came as a result of massive critique from friends of Israel related to the way Græsvik commented on the Israel-Palestine conflict on social media. His followers on social media could not possibly miss that he sympathized with the Palestinian side, a fact that became especially apparent during the Gaza bombings the summer of 2014. The complaints he generated, which were

outnumbered by supportive comments, became too much for *TV 2*. It urged him, and all the other journalists working for the broadcaster, to be as neutral and balanced on social media as on air. This was not an option for Græsvik, who instead tried to distance his social media persona from his *TV 2* persona by privatizing the former. Of course, this was an impossible manoeuvre, illustrated by Græsvik himself when the next day he wrote on Facebook: 'As a private person I can report that the Gaza war so far has caused the death of 415 children. On both sides'[2].

Græsvik's paradoxical manoeuvre of stating in public that he spoke as a private person may serve as an example of the problems journalists face when they joggle their mediated personas in the increasingly messy landscape of private and public spheres. Social media combines elements of broadcast media, mass communication and face-to-face interaction (Marwick and Boyd, 2011: 123), seemingly collapsing the boundaries between the public and the private. This chapter takes a closer look at how social media challenge our conceptions of private and public communication and asks how the potential merger of these spheres affects journalism. The chapter argues that the changing boundaries between private and public communication imply that journalism is becoming dominated by a discourse of intimacy, in which personal opinions and self-disclosures are key characteristics. However, such a discourse of intimacy is not new to journalism. A core aim of this chapter is to show that journalism has a long history of mitigating the tensions between the private and the public, the personal and the professional, and that recent developments due to social media represent continuity as much as change.

The chapter starts with a review of the significance of social media, journalistic adaptations of them and the consequent intimization of journalism marked by the blurring of boundaries between the private and the public, the personal and the professional. It then moves on to discuss similar kinds of intimacy in pre-social media journalism. The chapter ends with a discussion, inspired by Sennett's (2002) classical analysis in *The Fall of Public Man*, of whether social media represent to journalism what the 'electronic media' represented to politics in the second half of the 20th century, namely a fall of the public role of its practitioners due to an intimization of the public sphere. Sennett argued that broadcast media, especially television, obscured politics to such an extent that it no longer mattered what politicians did; what mattered was their ability to reach through to an audience with charismatic personalities. Sennett called this 'the tyranny of intimacy', and argued that the public sphere had become invaded with intimate details from the private spheres of public figures. If journalist today find it hard to separate their private personas from their professional ones in social media, we might therefore ask whether the same kind of tyranny of intimacy applies to journalists as public figures, and if so, what the consequences are for the future role of journalists.

Of particular interest to this future role is the relationship between journalists, news organisations and audiences. As journalists build direct relationships with audiences in social media, they detach themselves from the news organisations that employ them and thereby from the context and audience reach provided by those organisations. This might make it harder for journalists to assess whom their audiences really are and to what degree their social media behaviour reaches 'a public'. It also makes self-presentation more

difficult, as having a sense of both context and audience is essential to how we present ourselves, according to Goffman (1971). Mastery of self-presentation might therefore be a new and defining skill for the journalists of the future.

Social media and news consumption

The emergence of social media, and services like Facebook in particular, have changed both the media industry and media culture. The popularity of these services means that individuals are more prominent communicators in online spaces than institutions such as traditional producers of journalism. This increased significance of the individual over institutions has some significant consequences for how news is perceived along the private/public continuum.

There are at least three major trends, which all privilege the role of the individual over the role of institutions: First, people increasingly get their news updates from their social media feeds instead of from traditional news publishers (Hermida et al., 2012; Nielsen and Schrøder, 2014; *State of the News Media 2014*, 2014). Second, people increasingly discuss and make sense of news through social media instead of through for instance comments to stories on professional news publishers' websites (*State of the News Media 2014*, 2014). News stories are increasingly framed by, and re-contextualized within, personalized social media feeds and shared and discussed with friends and family within those feeds. Third, and as a consequence of the two other trends, advertisers are shifting from traditional publishers to Google, Facebook and other social media (WAN-IFRA, 2014).

All these three trends empower the news consumer at the expense of the news producers, and thereby make news consumption more like acts of individual and personalized choice rather than acts that relate to a commonly shared public sphere. However, social media feed heavily on mainstream media, with much of the content on social networks coming from these traditional providers (Kwak et al., 2010). This suggests that social media serve as filtering tools for news provided by traditional media. Users, though, tend to downplay the importance of social media to their news consumption and instead emphasize social media's role in controlling the information overflow (Groot Kormelink and Costera Meijer, 2014; Pentina and Tarafdar, 2014). In one cross-country study of news consumption, only one in ten said that social media were their most important news sources, while more than 50 per cent of the respondents in all countries said that television was their most important source for news (Nielsen and Schrøder, 2014). Another cross-country study also shows that television is still the most important platform for news consumption (Papathanassopoulos et al., 2013).

Social media are in other words not replacing traditional media. Rather, they are avenues to access, make sense of and distribute traditional journalism, and they are often used not instead of, but in addition to, traditional, mainstream media (Hermida et al., 2012). Twitter discussions peak during news broadcasts and Facebook activity increases when major news breaks. The news flow of today is complex. It involves many actors, actants, audiences and activities (Lewis and Westlund, 2015). It is best described as networked (Anderson, 2010; Domingo et al., 2015; Russell, 2013) and ambient (Hermida, 2010). Social media has pushed news consumption in a more private and individualized direction, but the traditional

news producing institutions still play an important role in what is perceived as news among audiences. The question then becomes how these traditional news institutions and the journalists working in them have responded to this shift in news consumption.

Journalists in social media

Given the significance of social media to peoples' lives and the way they consume and participate in news, news organizations and journalists have found it necessary to establish a strong presence in social media (see Hermida, 2013 for an overview). Journalists were early adopters of social media, and they have continued to be overrepresented (Gulyas, 2013). Initially, journalists used social media predominantly to extend their already established public presence; they started to promote and distribute their own stories through social media (Artwick, 2013; Blasingame, 2011; Messner et al., 2011; Pew Research Center, 2011). However, social media soon also became an arena to push breaking news (Vis, 2013). It seems as if journalists' use of social media started as a practice in which the new media were adapted to existing practices through a process of normalization (Lasorsa et al., 2012), similar to the process that took place when journalists started to blog (Singer, 2005). Such normalizing practices imply no changes along the private/public continuum in how journalists perceive and perform their role. However, such professional normalization of social media is currently contested as journalists increasingly use social media to interact with sources and users (Gulyas, 2013; Hedman, 2015; Zeller and Hermida, 2014). When a journalist interacts with a source or a member of the audience through social media, s/he opens up for more individual and non-public communication on a platform that is not to the same degree institutionalized as the preferred platform of news outlet s/he works for.

Furthermore, journalists use social media not only for professional reasons. Hedman and Djerf-Pierre's study show that private use of social media is in fact more important to journalists. They found that 65 per cent of Swedish journalists use social media for private purposes daily or 'all the time', while only 44 per cent are as active in their professional use (2013: 373). This implies that journalists increasingly mix their private and professional roles within the same platforms.

The platform that best reflects this mix of private and professional roles is Twitter. The micro-blogging service has developed into a social medium in which the dissemination of news and information is a core activity, emblematically reflected by the company's 2009 change in default question to users from 'what are you doing?' to 'what's happening?' (Dijk, 2011). In a thorough review of research into journalism and Twitter, Hermida concludes that the service 'has developed into an always-on, event-driven communication system where news is shared, contested, verified and recommended' (2013: 306). Twitter is therefore of special interest to scholars interested in the interplay between journalism, news and social media. For the purpose of this chapter, there are especially two aspects of this interplay relating to the blurred distinction between the private and the public, the personal and the professional that are of interest: First, journalist tend to reveal their *personal opinions* to a greater extent on Twitter than through their traditional media platforms. Second, journalists tend to use Twitter to reveal details from their *personal life* to a wider audience.

Both these aspects can be characterized as markers of a discourse of intimacy, implying that perspectives based on the inner thoughts and private acts of journalists dominate the journalistic discourse. Such a discourse of intimacy opposes the objectivity discourse, which has dominated journalism in modern democracies. In the following, I will explore these two aspects more closely.

The medium of opinions?

Even though journalists tend to adhere to established norms and values of journalism when communicating on social media in general and Twitter in particular, studies indicate that the norm of objectivity is contested by j-tweeters, especially among sports journalists (Sanderson and Hambrick, 2012) and among the most active and popular journalists on Twitter (Lasorsa et al., 2012; Vis, 2013). It might be that the 140-character format and the dialogical and highly networked structure of Twitter favours commentary over fact (Hermida, 2013). But an equally valid explanation might be that j-tweeters, as any other Twitter user, operate under their own name on a neutral platform outside their traditional media newsrooms and news outlets. A j-tweeter is not to the same degree a representative of his or her news organization as when s/he puts his or her byline on a newspaper story, a TV broadcast or an online newspaper story. A j-tweeter is more of a 'personal brand' (Bruns, 2012) and hence more inclined to express his or her opinion.

This tendency for journalists to contest the objectivity norm on Twitter has caused controversy and been a main reason why many news organizations have developed guidelines for social media behaviour for their journalist. The Norwegian correspondent to

the Middle East, Fredrik Græsvik, referred to in the introduction, serves as an example of this controversy. The controversy did not make Græsvik loose his job, as it did for the *CNN* senior editor of Middle East affairs, Octavia Nasr, when she in 2010 lamented the death of a Hezbollah leader in a tweet.

However, Græsvik's and Nasr's blunders are not representative of how foreign correspondents normally behave in social media. In a content analysis of US foreign correspondents' tweets, Cozma and Chan (2013) found that only 10 per cent of the tweets were expressions of personal opinions. An interesting finding from this study is that expressions of personal opinions did not have any significant impact on the popularity of the correspondents on Twitter. Those who did not express personal opinions where as likely to have many followers and get as many favourites and retweets as those who did express personal opinions. This suggests that sticking to the objectivity norm does not hinder a journalist's popularity on Twitter, which in turn suggests that there is no need for journalists to blend their professional and private personas.

In fact, expressing personal opinions on Twitter might alienate followers instead of attracting them. This was the case when a Norwegian National Public Broadcaster (*NRK*) sports journalist, a Manchester United fan, tweeted after his team lost to Liverpool 3-0 on 16 March 2014. Reflecting that the game was played close to the 25-year commemoration of the Hillsborough tragedy, where 96 fans were killed and Liverpool fans were falsely blamed, he tweeted: 'Well, at least we didn't kill any fans'. Even though it is rather customary for football fans to mock the opponent's fans, the tweet did not go down well.

He was bullied in the mainstream press and had to publically apologise, partly because of pressure from his employer, the *NRK*. Complaints were even made to the Norwegian Broadcaster Complaints Commission and *NRK* had to account for their social media policy to the commission. Four days after his infamous tweet, the journalist published one last tweet before taking a 11 months long break from the social medium: 'Apologies to everyone, this will not happen again. Sorry.'[3]

The kind of sharing of personal opinion this journalist did serves as an instructive example of how context collapses when private and public spaces converge in a medium marked by immediacy and breaking news discussions. The statement was not suited to reach an audience outside the private context of football fans watching a game together, but Twitter allows for the spontaneous and instant sharing of such statements to a much wider public within a spur of a moment. The line between what is acceptable or not is fluid and difficult to predict, and j-tweeters have to make quick judgments on how emotionally engaged and polemic they can be without alienating themselves in the public's eye. It is therefore not difficult to understand that journalists have a hard time performing such balancing acts. It is one of the reasons why many news organizations have established social media guidelines, which try to enforce traditional newsroom norms and values on the journalists' social media activities.

Establishing social media guidelines might therefore be a way for news organizations to try to maintain social control over their journalists, something which has been an important function of news organizations for decades (Breed, 1955). The social control dimension has

even made some news organization restrict, impose strict rules or even block access to social media from the newsrooms (Sivek, 2010: 154–155). However, Opgenhaffen and Sheerlinck's (2014) more recent analysis of social media guidelines indicates that news organizations have gradually moved away from such strict social media policies and now allow their journalists more freedom of opinion. There might be a pragmatic reason for this. News organizations may have observed that journalists, faced with the uncertainties of the job market, will prioritize their personal brand over the institutional brand 'feeling that in the name of survival, their own brands must come first' (Sivek, 2010: 152).

There are in other words tensions between news organizations' need to maintain credibility and objectivity associated with their brand on the one hand, and journalists' need for self-promotion and personal branding through social media on the other. In their study of Flemish journalists' view on such guidelines, Opgenhaffen and Sheerlink (2014) found that the journalists oppose them, arguing that common sense should drive their social media practice and that strict guidelines would jeopardise their personal freedom.

Journalistic self-disclosures in social media

The other important aspect of journalistic social media behaviour that promotes a discourse of intimacy to journalism concerns the way in which j-tweeters tend to reveal details from their personal lives to the public through self-disclosures. Bruns (2012: 105) argues that individual personality rather than institutional association drives Twitter visibility. Herrera and Requejo argue that '[t]he media voice on Twitter has to be (…) personal and human' (2012: 82). Hence, social media make the news market more driven by personalities,

implying that j-tweeters feel pressured to reveal some personal information in order to attract an audience.

This brings to mind the classical distinction between front-stage and back-stage made by Goffman in *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1971). This distinction implies that self-presentation always is related to context and audience. People navigate between the more private back-stage areas and the public front-stage areas, like actors on and off stages. With social media, this distinction falls apart. With Twitter, there is only the stage, no front or back. Hence, balancing the personal with the professional, the private with the public becomes more complex in social media like Twitter (Hermida, 2008)

In an investigation of how high-profile tweeters balance personal and professional identities, Marwick and boyd (2011) found that they adhered to authenticity, a norm marked by revelation of personal information. The revelation of personal information is strategic for these high-profile tweeters, according to Marwick and boyd, who argue that such revelations are 'self-conscious identity presentations that assume a primarily professional context' (2011: 127). Many of the tweeters they interviewed described how difficult they found it to strike the right balance between being personal and being professional. Marwick and boyd concluded that for high profile tweeters the personal/professional equilibrium 'implies an ongoing front-stage identity performance that balances the desire to maintain positive impressions with the need to seem true or authentic to others' (2011: 124).

There are not that many studies dealing with this personal/professional equilibrium regarding j-tweeters in particular. However, an analysis of 500 j-tweeters with the most followers globally revealed that female journalists are more likely to tweet about their personal lives than their male colleagues (Lasorsa, 2012). Lasorsa argues that this gender difference may have something to do with the fact that female journalists to a greater extent than their male colleagues write 'soft' news. 'Soft' news, or feature journalism, draws upon a discourse of intimacy (Steensen, 2011b), and journalists who write in these genres are therefore more likely to adhere to an ideal of subjectivity in their journalism. This connection between 'soft' news production, subjectivity and journalistic activity in social media will be addressed later on in this chapter.

An interesting experimental study of whether personalized j-tweets increased likeability among followers showed that journalists who tweet self-disclosures came across as more likable persons (Boehmer, 2014). However, such personalized self-disclosures had no effect on *professional* likability, according to the same study. This finding indicates that striking the right balance between being personal and professional is difficult for journalists.

The two social media and journalism tensions described above – between personal opinion and objectivity, and between personal self-disclosures and professional identity – and the intimization of journalism they may represent, are, however, not new to journalism. Journalism has a long history of relying on a discourse of intimacy and finding ways to make public the personal opinions and self-disclosures of its practitioners. In the next

section, I will take a closer look at how such a discourse has been articulated in pre-social media journalism, and what we might learn from such historic articulations.

Journalism and intimacy in pre-social media times

As with the entrance of new technology and new media in previous times, the social media discourse on journalism resembles a discourse of revolution. Discussions around social media and journalism tend to emphasize the potential changes and effects as something new and unique, with disruptive powers. Mosco (2004) has shown how new technologies and new media always have been framed within such a discourse of revolution upon their introduction. He argues that the changes presumably brought forward by new technologies and new media are usually the result of processes that started long before the introduction of the new. Furthermore, they tend to happen much slower and in a much less radical fashion than early predictions would estimate. This was the case when the Internet hit journalism (Scott, 2005; Steensen, 2011a), and it seems like it is the case when social media now make their impact on the profession.

The potentially change-making tensions related to social media and the intimization of journalism due to the blurring of boundaries between the private and the public, the personal and the professional discussed above all have historical parallels. Reviewing these historical parallels is important to avoid losing sight of how dynamic and adaptable the profession of journalism always has been. Early notions of journalism were dominated by an ideal of activism, in which the journalist's personal comments and opinions flourished, like they do once again in social media today. And genres of feature journalism have promoted intimacy as part of the professional role.

The historical importance of the journalist as activist

When the British journalist and editor James Mill published his seminal text 'The Liberty of the Press' in *Edinburgh review* in 1811, he had something particular in mind. There was at the time a general fear in Great Britain, and in other European countries, that the French revolution would inspire similar bloody uprisings elsewhere. Mill argued that it was possible to achieve social reform without the entire blood spill – if the press was free to criticise the government. Mill wanted to make the government so afraid of revolution that it would pass on reform before social uprisings made a mess of things. Journalism was the means to achieve this end in Mills view. He believed that journalists should agitate for social reform.

When the British government passed the free press act at the beginning of the 1830s, journalists and editors in newspapers like *The Scotsman* and *The Pall Mall Gazette* became political actors who envisioned themselves as more important than politicians in creating societal change. It was the era of 'the press as parliament' (Hampton, 2001: 226). From then on, journalism has had an adversary side to it. Being personal, in the sense that journalists let their personal opinions influence their professional work, is in other words quite common throughout the history of journalism. Weisbord argues that journalism, before objectivity became a seemingly hegemonic professional ideal, was 'largely "advocacy journalism," a propaganda tool for political organizations, a platform for press entrepreneurs with political ambitions, a path for political activism reporters' (2009: 372). In fact, this has been the main function of journalism, even in liberal democracies, in most of its existence.

The objectivity norm, which is one of the strongest markers of demarcation between the personal and the professional, and the private and the public for journalists, became institutionalized in the US press during the 1920s (Schudson, 2001) and much later in the European press. In many democracies in Europe, like the Scandinavian countries, the party press system, which did not promote objectivity as a professional ideal, lived on until the 1970s and 80s. In these democracies, objectivity has in other words been a significant ideal only for a few decades. Furthermore, the press system in other democracies, like those in the Mediterranean countries, has never embraced objectivity as a significant journalistic ideal (Hallin and Mancini, 2004), thus suggesting closer ties between a journalist's personal opinions and his professional work.

The insistence on neutrality and the separation of fact from opinion in news reporting is in other words a relatively speaking novel idea with limited global penetration. That being said, objectivity as a journalistic ideal has diffused from one press system to the other globally during the last decades, according to Hallin and Mancini (2004). However, even in press systems in which objectivity has become a seemingly hegemonic ideal – the US press system and other liberal press systems – advocacy journalism has never vanished. In the 1980s, 17 per cent of US journalists defined themselves as 'adversary' (Weaver and Wilhoit, 1986). This share has increased over the last decades and has been coupled with a new type of journalist, the 'populist mobilizer', according to Beam, Weaver and Brownlee (2009). And even those journalists who adhere to an ideal of objectivity find it hard to separate fact from opinion, according to a cross-country European study conducted by

Patterson and Donsbach, who conclude that 'there is (…) a perceptual gap between journalists' self-image and their actions' (1996: 466).

When journalists suddenly start stating their personal opinions in social media, they are in other words in tune with not only the journalism of the past, they are also in tune with journalism as it has been practiced in the objectivity-era. The difference might be that their self-image now is more in tune with their actions.

Subjectivity and self-disclosures in feature journalism

The second tension, between personal self-disclosures and the professional role as journalists, also has its parallels in the history of journalism, most notably in the genres of feature journalism, or 'soft' news. In an analysis of historical and modern textbooks on feature journalism, Steensen found that a discourse of intimacy always has been central to these genres. This discourse implies that the feature journalist 'seeks to connect with the reader on an intimate level, and that she allows herself to be personal in her writing, by for instance using the personal noun "I"' (2011b: 54).

This discourse of intimacy has been a vital part of reportage journalism and literary/narrative journalism. The reportage genre is perhaps the oldest and throughout the history of journalism most sustainable journalistic genre. Haller (1987) argues that the reportage dates as long back as the days of Herodotus in ancient Greece and his travel logs *The Histories*, which he wrote during the years 431-425 B.C. *The Histories* is based on Herodotus' own observations during his travels, and this – the eyewitness account – has

been portrayed as a defining characteristic of the reportage genre (Carey, 1987). Bech-Karlsen defines the genre as 'a personal narrative based on the reporters own experiences in the real world' (2002: 216 my translation). The reportage is by default subjective, and many of the great reportage journalists in modern times, like Ryszard Kapuściński, have made personal self-disclosures a natural part of their journalism.

The reportage genre had its modern breakthrough in newspapers in Europe in the early 19th century, when authors/journalists like Balzac, Zola, Dickens and Dostojevski introduced realism and naturalism, in which it became important to depict the world as it presented itself to them. At the same time, the penny press in the US paved the way for the 'human interest' story, which had many similarities with European reportage journalism of the time. An early and significant example is a reportage published in the *New York Herald* by the editor Bennett following the murder of a prostitute in a fashionable New York resort, writing:

> What a sight burst upon me! There stood an elegant double mahogany bed all covered with burnt pieces of linen, blankets, pillows, black as cinders. I looked around for the object of my curiosity. On the carpet I saw a piece of linen sheet covering something as if carelessly flung over it. (cited in Hughes, 1981: 12)

Bennet then describes his feelings when looking at the corpse and likens it to a statue of marble. His 1836 crime scene reportage is in other words highly subjective. He positions himself as the point of identification for readers; all depictions are filtered through his subjective point of view, thus framing the reportage as a first person narrative, in which the

journalist is the main character. Such subjective reportage journalism reached a high peek in the 1890s in many European countries and in the US, where it according to Hartsock took the form of narrative literary journalism, which provided 'a challenge to or resistance against mainstream "factual" or "objective" news' (2000: 41).

In the 1960, history would repeat itself when journalists like Tom Wolfe and Gay Talese once again challenged mainstream factual and objective news. Talese and Wolfe were the early front figures of what was to be labeled 'new journalism', a journalism marked by narrative structure and personal point of view (Wolfe, 1975). Some of the new journalists, those who are labeled by Eason (1990) as 'the modernists' – e.g. Hunter S. Thompson, Joan Diddeon and Norman Mailer – challenged the by then conventional notion of journalistic epistemology and described 'what it feels like to live in a world where there is no consensus about a frame of reference to explain "what it all means"' (1990: 192). They insisted that it was not possible to say something true about events in the world without making visible their subjective perspectives and interpretations. These journalists where not only subjective, they also added details from their personal lives to the stories they wrote. Such an ideal of subjectivity has continued to thrive in literary, narrative journalism in the US and in European reportage journalism (Hartsock, 2011). The last decades, too, have seen an increase in intimate, self-confessional long-form literary journalism (Harrington, 1997; Steensen, 2013).

The Fall of the Public Journalist?

It should now be clear that the blurring of boundaries between the private and the public,

the personal and the professional in social media are not new to journalism. Such a discourse of intimacy has been part of journalists' public personas across genres and press systems in various ways and degrees throughout the history of journalism, even in times and places in which objectivity has been the dominant professional ideal. Herein lies an important lesson. Journalism is a complex and quite schizophrenic profession and practice in which competing and seemingly mutually exclusive ideals, norms and discourses co-exist. Journalism is both objective and subjective, it is both fact-driven and opinion laden, it is both personal and professional.

We should therefore not assume that social media bring about major changes to journalism as profession and practice. What social media do, is to add complexity to the already existing paradoxes of journalism. This added complexity is primarily related to the way journalism and journalists relate to audiences, what I below will refer to as the audience collapse. In this last section of the chapter, I will discuss the implications of this added complexity and if it means the ultimate fall of the public journalist.

The audience collapse

When Bennett wrote his highly subjective crime scene reportage in 1836 and when Hunter S. Thompson wrote his euphoric alcohol and drug inflated gonzo-reportage from the Kentucky derby in 1970, (Thompson, 1975), they had one thing in common besides the highly subjective and personal accounts they included in their journalism; they knew whom they wrote for. The publications that would run their stories had relatively stable audiences, who would be presented with the stories in fixed contexts. The stories would be laid out

and presented in fixed spreads in the respective newspaper and magazine, which would provide a stable context and thus a frame of reference for genre affiliation and possible interpretations. The boundaries between the journalists and the audiences were clear, and the publications had means to control the message.

This all changed when journalism went digital. Online newspapers could not package stories in fixed contexts the way the printed press and broadcast media could. Different web browsers would present online newspapers differently, as would different screens. Online newspapers are not fixed entities, they change continuously and the stories that are published change with them. This is what Manovich (2001: 30) labels the 'variability' of digital media and what Yates and Summer call 'loss of fixity' (1997: 3). When journalism went digital, journalists and editors lost the power of fixing stories in time and space. Consequently, journalists and editors lost some of the control they had on how their stories would be presented and by whom they would be consumed. With the increased spectrum of platforms, from smartphones to big smart TVs, even more control was lost. Finally, with social media journalism has lost almost all fixity and has become as variable as never before. In today's social media world a journalist has no way of knowing whether a reader will access a story while reading a printed newspaper or through an embedded link on his or her Facebook wall. With social media, journalists and editors have lost the ability to control the context in which stories are consumed, interpreted and commented upon. The imagined audience, as journalists and editors previously were able to envision it, has collapsed.

Furthermore, when journalists publish something in social media they loose the privilege they have when publishing something for a newspaper (offline or online), magazine or broadcaster, namely the privilege of knowing the approximate audience reach of what they publish. This is especially important in social media with limited or no means of controlling audience reach, like, for instance, Twitter. A tweet can reach only a few of your friends and therefore function as a private message, or it can go viral and reach a global audience. A journalist has no way of knowing beforehand what kind of audience his or her tweet will reach, and therefore what kind of status along the private/public continuum it will gain. As pointed out by Marwick and boyd, social media 'collapse multiple contexts and bring together commonly distinct audiences' (2011: 115).

This is the challenge of social media to journalism. Having a sense of both context and audience is essential to how people present themselves, argued Goffman (1971). When control over both context and audience is lost, self-presentation becomes problematic. An instructive example of how this might affect journalistic self-presentation is the way some Norwegian journalists communicated on social media following the 2011 terrorist attack in Norway. A group of journalists with the online newspaper *VG Nett* managed to observe and take pictures of the police's reconstruction of the terrorist attack on Utøya 22 July 2011. The journalists were so happy with their scoop that they high-fived each other on Twitter and bragged about the 'scoop' they had secured by taking pictures of the terrorist Anders Behring Breivik as he showed the police how he had murdered 69 youngsters on Utøya.

This self-bragging was clearly not meant for a broader public. It was part of an internal

collegial discourse. But it reached way beyond the inner collegial circle. Some of the survivors of the Utøya massacre read the Twitter exchange, found it appalling and complained to the Norwegian press complaints commission, Pressens Faglige Utvalg (PFU). They argued that the journalists' Twitter bragging, in addition to the publication of the pictures, was in violation of Norwegian press ethics. *VG* and the journalists regretted their Twitter activity, but argued that PFU had no jurisdiction over what journalists write on Twitter. PFU agreed and concluded that Twitter messages were to be regarded as 'private statements that fall outside of the commission's field of operation.' (PFU, 2011, my translation).

In other words, when journalists write in social media they are not bound by press ethics. This becomes problematic when journalists have social media nick names that affiliate them with the organisation they work for (like '@TV2Fredrik') or if they in other ways make the affiliation apparent in their bio. The PFU later specified that a journalist's social media activity could fall under the commission's jurisdiction if the journalist made such an affiliation apparent. This is the reason why the *TV 2* correspondent Fredrik Græsvik formally disconnected his social media persona from his employer. Nevertheless, the problem remains, at least for high-profile journalists like Græsvik, who in a Norwegian context always will be associated with *TV 2*, regardless of what his Twitter and Facebook bio might state.

That being said, the lack of context and imagined audience that obscures self-presentation in social media is less problematic for those journalists who have managed to brand

themselves heavily in social media. Journalists like Græsvik in Norway, Anderson Cooper (*CNN* host with more than 5 million followers on twitter) in the US and Caitlin Moran (columnist for *The Times* with more than 500k followers on Twitter) in the UK, to name only a few, have all turned their names into popular social media brands. For them, social media becomes similar to a traditional mass medium, through which they know they reach a large audience within a relatively controlled context. But even for such high-profile journalists, the private/public distinction can be difficult to balance, as the Græsvik example illustrates.

Social media, journalism and the tyranny of intimacy

Sennett's (2002) analysis of public life offers some insights regarding what this audience collapse in particular and the increasingly complex intimisation of journalism in general may imply for the future public role of journalists. In *The Fall of Public Man,* Sennett laments the end of public life. He argues that public life had been deprived of value unless it involved some kind of intimacy. He romanticized public life in the pre-industrialization world, in which man could experience emotionally meaningful encounters with strangers while remaining aloof.

In the 20th century, this dimension of public life was lost, according to Sennett. In a society without gods, the humanitarian spirit is defined by an ideology of intimacy; what is considered morally good is connected to the warmth and closeness of intimate, personal relations (2002: 259). Such relations could no longer be found in public life, which consequently was deprived of meaning. Public spaces were dehumanized as man only

found meaning in private spheres. Strangers stopped talking to one another in public spaces, and moving in such spaces – for instance to and from work – was reduced to instrumental necessities. In such a culture, politics without personalities became impossible. People started to 'conceive of the political as a realm in which personality will be strongly declared', argued Sennett (2002: 261). Politicians were judged based on the charismatic nature of their public appearance. A politician's motivation, not his actions, became the defining factor of his success. If he could convince the public that his motivations were true and authentic, it did not matter what he actually accomplished through action, argued Sennett. At the core of this development was the rise of broadcast ('electronic') media: 'The electronic media play a crucial role in this deflection, by simultaneously overexposing the leader's personal life and obscuring his work in office' (2002: 265).

Sennett's analysis is today echoed by researchers like Bruns (2012) who argue that personality is more important than institutional affiliation for professionals who strive for impact through social media. If one believes that social media make public life even more intimate, and if one thinks that Sennett's analysis was accurate, then the following question prompts itself: Do we conceive of social media as a realm in which personality is strongly declared, and will the publically displayed personality of a journalist in social media therefore define his or her professional success?

There is some evidence in the research that personality is crucial for attracting an audience in social media. The more journalism moves to social media, the more dependent on the

personality of its practitioners, and hence a discourse of intimacy, it is likely to become. Journalism may go down the same path as politics has: charisma, motivation and emotional engagement may be the future drivers of journalists, and not the actions they undertake in their fact-finding watchdog and independent fourth estate mission to save democracy. If that will be the case, then the public journalist, as we know him or her, will fall.

However, the public journalist will not necessarily fall in the Sennettian way, which implies a moral collapse of public life. Sennett's vision of modern public life is deeply normative in the sense that he evaluates the intimization of the public sphere as a tyrannification. To Sennett, charisma, emotional engagement and personal motivation are difficult to combine with a solid and accountable performance of public, professional obligations. This resembles the same kind of normativity that suggests that journalistic professional objectivity cannot go hand in hand with emotional engagement and public displays of subjectivity. The history of journalism shows that objectivity and subjectivity, the personal and the professional, the private and the public are not necessarily dichotomies. Therefore, the intimization and individualization of journalism that social media seem to promote do not automatically imply a fall of the professional and public role of journalists. These effects might simply imply a transformation of what 'professional' and 'public' mean to journalism.

Furthermore, social media has not yet transformed journalism to being individual acts of intimacy. Perhaps it will never happen. Journalism has not entirely switched over to social media. In spite of the economic difficulties, journalism still thrives in institutional media,

and social media would be deprived of much meaning if traditional media content vanished. Social media does not replace traditional media. They are counter-parts to them and they feed on them. What is vital is that journalists do not succumb to a kind of technological determinism that highlights a demand for a further intimization of journalism in social media. Instead, journalists eager to create a successful social media persona might find comfort in the findings of the studies conducted by Cozma and Chen (2013) and Boehmer (2014): Being personal and intimate in social media might increase your likeability, but it does not necessarily increase your professional esteem.

Notes

1. Translated by author. Original post, published 5 August on https://www.facebook.com/fredrik.graesvik, read: ’Fra og med nå er dette en privat konto. Jeg ber dere som er venner med meg uten å kjenne meg om å slette meg som venn. Dere er noen tusen, så det er lettere for dere enn meg. Fom mandag er alle statusoppdateringer fra meg og har ingenting med Tv2 å gjøre’. Græsvik published a similar message on Twitter.

2. Translated by author. Original post, published 7 August on https://www.facebook.com/fredrik.graesvik, read: ’Som privatperson kan jeg melde at Gazakrigen så langt har kostet 415 barn livet. På begge sider’

3. Translated by author. Original tweet: ’Ber alle om unskyldning, dette skjer ikke igjen. Beklager.’ The original tweet (‘Well, at least we didn’t kill any fans’) was published in English.

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