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BETWEEN NETWORKS AND
‘HIERARCHIES OF CREDIBILITY’

Navigating journalistic practice in a sea of user-generated content

Ingrid Volkmer and Amira Firdaus

From the uprising of Tibetan monks in 2008, through to Iran’s Twitter Revolution in 2009 and the 2010 Arab Spring, the journalistic coverage of transnational conflicts is often not only driven but – increasingly – framed by ‘authentic’ reports, uploaded to interactive media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube. Online sites appear to be affecting both the widening of the thematic scope through ‘authentic’ news of otherwise geographically distant events and also a refining of ‘co-orientation’, i.e. the emerging collaborative space among news outlets. From a journalism-studies perspective, these developments reveal not only new forms of digital journalism but rather a severe transformation of the journalistic professional environment to a networked ‘ecology’, in which the intersection between national professional journalism and user-driven media platforms merge within an increasingly complex professional transnational space. The particular form of negotiating of this emerging spatial parallelism of the journalistic professional ‘ecology’, between national ‘place-based’ organizational structures and transnational authentic news narratives and other sources, is one of the key areas of transformation, not only of journalism but of the professional identity of a news organization.

Digital news spheres are debated mainly within four contexts which, however – and this angle becomes increasingly important in such a transnational ‘parallel’ ecology – rarely address transcultural differences of networked spheres. One set of discourses identifies news models, such as citizen journalism (e.g. Paulussen, et al., 2007; Allan and Thorsen, 2009), blogs (e.g. Lowrey, 2006; Perlmutter, 2008), new forms of participatory online news production and dissemination (e.g. Bruns, 2005; Beckett and Mansell, 2008) and online news sites of newspapers and news broadcasters. These research focus contribute to inquiry mainly by problematizing the online modes and models of traditional print or broadcast news channels (e.g. Althaus and Tewksbury, 2002; Groshek, 2008), and by elucidating the processes of technological transformation in news production (e.g. Greer and Mensing, 2004; Boczkowski, 2005; Quandt et al., 2006; Singer, 2006; Domingo, 2008a; Phillips, 2010).