

GRASSROOTS ONLINE JOURNALISM:

Public intervention in Kuro5hin and Wikinews

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ABSTRACT

Grassroots online journalism, as defined by Primo and Träsel (2006), are the practices developed in web news periodicals, or parts thereof, where the boundary between reading and publishing is either blurred or non-existent. The question is no longer whether individuals with no professional license or formal education will publish their own writing and influence, but how and to what extent they will do so. This paper presents results from a study focusing on interventions from various contributors in the journalistic content published in the participatory news websites *Wikinews* and *Kuro5hin*. A sample of ten texts was collected over seven weeks to create a *corpus* of interventions, which was later submitted to content analysis with the goal of verifying whether the interventions had a predominantly pluralizing character or not. The results show that, for *Wikinews* and *Kuro5hin*, the interventions are mostly pluralizing, which indicates grassroots online journalism can make important contributions to democracy.

Key-Words: Journalism, Online Journalism, Grassroots, Content Analysis, Interaction

INTRODUCTION

Journalism is changing. For the first time since the rise of mass society, the development of media and computing technologies has enabled citizens to threaten mainstream media's monopoly on the flow of information, while actually holding the power to do so. With the development of real time communication technologies, such as mobile phones and wireless networks, the flood gates are wide open, releasing a great load of expressive energy that had been building up due to high production costs and inhibitory policies for concession of press licenses and use of the electromagnetic spectrum. Under the influence of this wave of amateur publications, journalism is being forced to review its concepts, values and commercial strategies. More importantly, it is being forced to review its role in a democratic society.

We must acknowledge that only a small slice of the global population has access to computers and telephony, and it is impossible to foresee whether even this small slice has the skills to use them constructively for the benefit of democracy. Despite their having access to technology, individuals and groups interested in distributing their cultural production via the Internet are nevertheless subject to historical, economic and social factors which cannot be ignored. Although we recognize the existence of such factors, for the present research we would not be able to discuss the problem of usage and access conditions regarding telematic networks. This work will focus on groups which have crossed the barriers of access to the Internet, specifically to the World Wide Web, and are already making use of it to publish their multimedia material.

Online news sites have increasingly been inviting readers' participation¹, however timidly, through e-mail, bulletin boards, forums, polls and other resources. Generally, however, publishing control is kept in the hands of a staff consisting of professional journalists who might or might not have a specific educational background, depending on the legal context of the country in which the company is based. Some online news sites have made space available for readers to comment on stories, such as the German *Die Zeit*², or have created news staff blogs featuring space for comment, such as Britain's *The Guardian*³ or the Brazilian *Globo Online*⁴. Others, such as the *Los Angeles Times*⁵, have gone to the extreme of opening up their editorials for direct public intervention – withdrawing their initiatives shortly afterwards, due to the profusion of pornographic images that were published by collaborators⁶. South Korean *OhmyNews*⁷ was one of the first papers based from scratch on the interaction between readers and journalists (BRAMBILLA, 2006). Under the motto “every citizen is a reporter”, founder Oh Yeon Ho allowed any citizen to send in stories which were then edited and published by *OhmyNews*'s staff of journalists, in exchange for a small sum of money.

Another front of citizen participation in online media consists of publishing collaborations with no previous or subsequent supervision by professional journalists. The great pinnacle for this type of participation are weblogs, or blogs, frequently updated World Wide Web pages, featuring dated records which are placed in chronological order so that the most recent items appear on top (BLOOD, 2002). According to the report *Bloggers: a portrait of the Internet's new storytellers* (PEW, 2006), 12 million adult Americans claim they maintain a blog and 57 million are blog readers. Blogs are most commonly used for the publishing of diatribes and everyday accounts, but many bloggers devote themselves to spreading highly specialized information, news reports or analysis and criticisms of news published by the press:

Blogs are filtering the news, detailing daily lives, and providing editorial responses to the events of the day. For many people, a weblog is a soapbox from which they can proclaim their views, potentially influencing many more people than they can in their everyday lives. (BLOOD, 2002, p.X)⁸.

The tools that enable anyone to create a blog without needing to be a computer specialist have extended the possibility of self-expression to virtually every citizen who has access to the Web. Other tools which enabled Web-publishing without the need for programming knowledge had been available previously – such as the wikis⁹, for instance –, but none has surpassed the blog in popularity. Blogs became an alternative source of information when online news sites became inaccessible due to the immense traffic of cybernauts looking for news about the WTC attacks. From Iraq, blogger Salam Pax¹⁰ published the view of local civilians about the second American invasion of the country. In 2004, Democratic Party pre-candidate Howard Dean effectively entered the dispute with John Kerry for the nomination by raising millions of dollars in small donations through his campaign blog (GILLMOR, 2004).

Such events are the landmark for Web participative journalism, or participative webjournalism, defined by PRIMO and TRÄSEL (2006, p.9) as “practices developed in sections or in the entirety of a Web news periodical, in which the frontier between production and reading cannot be clearly defined or is nonexistent”. The term refers to those online news sites in which the public is able to intervene in published content, whether by submitting their own journalistic material¹¹, or by rewriting texts, commenting and debating on journalistic material published by other collaborators. Blogs which are dedicated to debating daily events or publishing articles and news and online news sites such as *OhmyNews* are examples of participative webjournalism.

We have come to a point at which it is no longer debatable whether individuals without formal education or a professional license are going to publish their own production and influence the media sphere; the question is how and how much this is going to occur. Sooner or later journalists will have to deal with the fact that their task assignments are to be designated by the very people who previously held the position of mere consumers of news in the imagination of editorial office staffs. From now on, for any given subject, there will always be a specialist ready to point out factual errors or even cases of journalistic misconduct using the tools of participative webjournalism. GILLMOR (2004) describes how a group he dubbed “former audience” is using blogs, e-mail, chats,

forums and other Internet-based communication vehicles to contribute their own version of events and, most importantly, contest information published by the press.

Once mere consumers of news, the audience is learning how to get a better, timelier report. It's also learning how to join the process of journalism, helping to create a massive conversation and, in some cases, doing a better job than the professionals (p.XIV)¹².

Certainly, the participation of this “former audience” in the journalistic process is not a benefit in itself, and is in need of in-depth research. There is, in fact – especially among journalists – a great deal of skepticism when it comes to the advantages public participation could bring to journalism. Given that participative webjournalism indeed exists, that isolated individuals and interest groups are actually producing journalistic material and publishing it on the Web, with or without the supervision of press professionals, it is important to analyze this without prejudice, in order to identify both the promises and the threats this phenomenon holds for the future of journalism and democracy.

The present work introduces part of the results from a research carried out during my masters course, which gave origin to the thesis entitled *A pluralização no webjornalismo participativo: uma análise das intervenções no Wikinews e no Kuro5hin (Pluralizing in participative webjournalism: an analysis of interventions in Wikinews and Kuro5hin)* (TRÄSEL, 2007). The main goal of this research was to verify whether the participation of “laymen” in webjournalism resulted in a significant proportion of contributions attempting to comply with journalistic criteria and values and generally expand democratic debate, or only in interferences concerned with grammar and spelling, style, fripperies and even useless quarrels. In other words, are the collaborator interventions in participative online news sites prevalingly pluralizing, or formal/disruptive? In order to answer that question, two participative online news sites in English were selected for analysis, *Wikinews* and *Kuro5hin*, which are briefly introduced in the following section.-

Wikinews

Wikis are systems whose most notable feature is enabling any cybernaut to edit Web pages without any knowledge of HTML or any other programming language, using only an ordinary Web browser. Besides that, every link introduced in a text redirects to a page within the wiki itself, or creates a page in case that title has not yet been created.

Wikis also feature a history of modifications for each page, so that it is possible to reverse errors or acts of vandalism. *Wikinews* (WN)¹³ is the project of an open and free news agency, based on a wiki system and produced by a community of collaborators.

Upon entering WN's main page, the cybernaut is shown a headline, followed by other important stories below. Generally, there are photos. A menu in the top right corner offers links to lists of news in different languages. Above the headline, there is a text box with pointers linking to "latest news", to pages about how to participate and start an article, to the "newsroom"¹⁴ and to audio and print versions, as well as other services. In the left column there is a navigation menu.

On top of every WN page, tabs allow users to participate in an open discussion about the first page with other collaborators, view the source code and the history of changes. It is not necessary to register in order to do so. If the reader clicks on "*edit this page*", a platform will display the text code in a simplified syntax. There is also a toolbar to enable the introduction of specific syntax without the need to memorize it. The reader is then ready to make the changes he or she sees fit in the text and then republish it by clicking on "save page". Changes are applied automatically.



Figure 1– Wikinews Main Page

Source: <http://en.wikinews.org>. Access: 01/21/2007

According to the WN guide¹⁵, published news must be: a) focused on only one subject; b) written from a neutral point of view; c) factual; d) relevant; e) global and local; and f) collaborative. Editorials, press releases and scientific papers are not accepted. “A *Wikinews* story does not have one reporter as its author; the world is invited to join in and write, edit and rewrite each article to improve its content”¹⁶. There is no previous control over the publishing of stories. The community itself is expected to correct mistakes and eliminate content that breaks editorial rules.

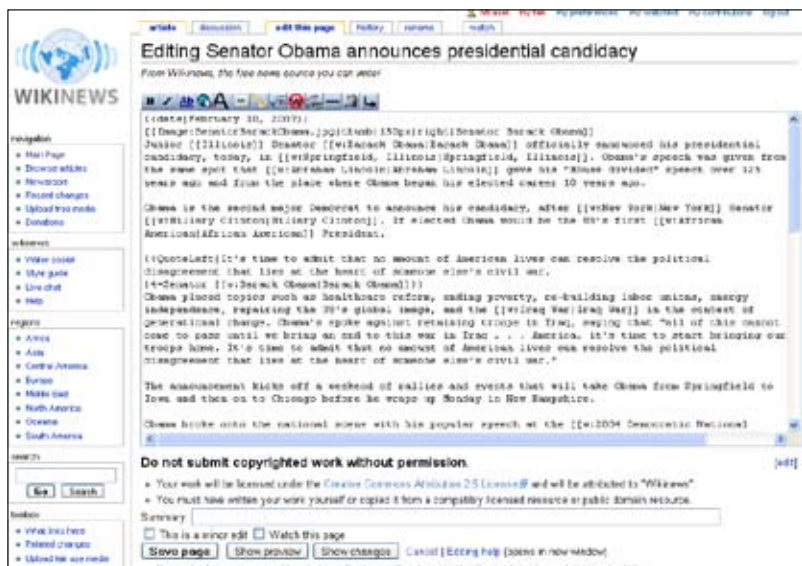


Figure 2 – Platform of edition of a story on *Wikinews*
 Source: <http://en.wikinews.org>. Access: 02/11/2007

Each WN story comes with a history of changes, which makes it possible to return the text to a previous version in case of error or vandalism. After a week, in general, a collaborator with system administrator status shuts down the story for editing, if it is considered to be complete by the people involved in its preparation.

KUROSHIN

KuroShin (K5)¹⁷ works very differently from WN, although it is also based on the principle of collaboration among amateur reporters. K5 was set up by programmer Rusty Foster on December 21, 1999. The title is a nickname used on the Web by Rusty himself, a pun on his name, because *KuroShin* is a variation of corrosion, and Rusty resembles the word rust. The “5” replacing the letter “S” is a tribute to the character Da5id¹⁸, from

Neal Stephenson's book *Snow Crash*.

In terms of content, there is a clear preference for discussions on the forums related to each story, rather than the publishing of news *per se*. "We very much prefer article submissions that express an argument or point of view about the article, and encourage discussion or debate"¹⁹. Articles are often written in the first person and are hardly ever related to a story published in another webnewspaper or website.



Figure 3 – Reproduction of *Kuro5shin* main page.

Source: <http://www.kuro5shin.org>. Access on 8/16/2006

The center column of the main page displays ten stories which have been chosen for the position. They are not necessarily recent. On August 6, 2006, for instance, the first position was occupied by a first person account of a Japanese funeral²⁰, published on that day, while the last position contained a recipe for an Indian dish called vindaloo²¹, which had been published on June 22nd, over 30 days before.

K5 is divided into 12 sections: *diaries*, which function as blogs for personal digressions, under the subtitle "if you have nothing to say, you can say it here"; *technology*, for stories about hardware and software; *science*, for articles related to research and studies; *culture*, under the description "the world we live in: discuss"; *politics*; *media*, focused on commentary about news and entertainment; *Internet*, focused on the social rather than the technological aspects; *Op-Ed*, for opinion articles (editorials); *fiction*, for the publishing and discussion of narrative and poetic texts; *meta*, where articles about K5 itself are published; *MLP or Mindless Link Propagation*, for notes of website recommendations; and finally *news*, where collaborators can publish current information. A warning in

the description of this last section better defines the difference between linked stories and what the community criticizes as being “mindless propagation” of links: “This is where YOU report the news, come up with your own conclusions, adding links as a way of providing supplementing information (as opposed to MLP where the link IS the information)”²².

Any cybernaut can register as a collaborator in K5 simply by picking out a *username* and entering a valid e-mail address. After this quick operation, users are able to *submit stories* for the community to vote on. On the top of each page there is a pointer to submit story, which, if clicked on, redirects to a form. A text asks the collaborator to read the editorial guidelines at least once, and offers some reminders, for instance, remembering to pick a topic, checking all URLs which are linked and checking the facts. The guidelines also include a warning informing that the editorial staff – older collaborators with system administrator status – has the right to correct grammar and style errors, but always seeking to maintain the original meaning. Editorial guidelines are limited to explaining the technical aspects of publishing, with a few recommendations about style, such as picking a short and attractive title, or trying to adapt the subject to the chosen section as much as possible.



Figure 4 – Form for the submission of stories for the editing or voting list
Source: <http://www.kuroShin.org>. Access on 8/15/2006

The form features the fields *post to*, in which the section is chosen; *formatting mode*, which can be automatic, HTML or plain text; *title*; *category tags*, to retrieve stories by subject; *introduction*, an excerpt of one or two paragraphs which appears as a summary or introduction to

the text; *body of text*; and *poll*, which is not a required field.

Upon registering, collaborators also gain the right to vote on proposals by other cybnauts, as well as to submit moderating comments. Following the *moderate submissions* link, a list of proposals for voting is displayed and, by clicking on any of the titles, one can read the complete text. At the end of the form, a selector offers the options *post it to the front page!*, *post it to the section page only*, *abstain!*, and *dump it!*. Each option corresponds to a numerical value. Points are added and, after a certain level is reached, the story is rejected or accepted. The publishing standard generally consists of 70 points, while the rejection standard corresponds to -20 points. Collaborators may also comment on the text, in the same structure of comments made in the open zone of K5, and comments made by other collaborators can also be rated. Ratings are made through a selector, with the options *hide*, *discourage*, *neutral* and *encourage*. All comments can be viewed or read under their classification. Non-registered readers can also access the comment viewing options, but are not allowed to rate comments.

Your vote really does count! You decide whether this story ever sees the light of the front page. For more information on story voting, please see [the Story Moderation Guidelines](#). Then vote!

Your vote:

Post it to the Front page! (+1)
 Post it to Section page Only (+1)
 Abstain (0)
 Dump it! (-1)

View: Display: Rate? Yes

[Traveling by Train in North America](#) | 9 comments (4 topical, 5 editorial, 0 hidden) | [Post A Comment](#)

Figure 5 – Form and voting options in a story submitted by a collaborator
 Source: <http://www.kuro5hin.org>. Access on 8/16/2006

The goal of all these rating levels is, on one hand, to enable the community's self-management of collaborators and the publishing of texts and, on the other hand, to prevent vandals from flooding relevant comments with unnecessary interventions or gratuitous attacks. Another advantage of the system is to provide an easy filtering of information, since readers can count on ratings by dozens of other readers as a form of quality endorsement.

Research method

The method used in this research was content analysis. The choice was made hoping that this method's techniques would enable a better highlighting of the prevailing trends in interventions made by collaborators of participative online news. The hypothesis to be tested was that collaborators produced a prevailing amount of interventions that expand the journalistic aspects of the original texts to which they referred, resulting in a multiplication of perspectives about the topics covered. This kind of intervention has been

called “pluralizing”, and it included the following subcategories: editing, data, sources, news value, multimedia, links and argumentation. The other interventions found were grouped under the category “formal/disruptive” and included the subcategories spelling/grammar, formatting, disruption and spam. In addition, a category named “others” was created, for those interventions that would not fit into any of the other categories.

Data was collected from WN and K5 during seven days over seven alternating weeks, in a total of ten initial texts and related interventions. An “initial text” was considered to be the first version of a story published in WN, on which collaborators will work directly, and the proposal of story submitted to the editing queue in K5, to which change suggestions and content-related opinion will be attached. The collection period started on Tuesday, October 17, 2006. The next collection took place on Wednesday, October 25, 2006, and so forth until the last day, December 3rd, a Monday. All collections were carried out during the same approximate time period between 1:30 and 2:00 p.m. Pages were opened in different browser windows and then filed as both HTML and text formats. In K5, the selected texts were those which held last place in the editing queue at the time of collection. On occasions when there was no text in the editing queue, no material was collected. In the case of WN, the selected texts were those which held the last position in the main page list of latest news. The total sum consisted of three texts collected from K5 and seven from WN. On four separate occasions, there was no proposed story in K5’s editing queue at the time of collection.

Each of the collected texts received a code. In the case of WN, the code consisted of the letter W followed by numbers in an ascending chronological order of collection (W1, W2 etc.). Interventions made in texts received an alphanumeric code. The criteria were the ascending order from the first intervention in the first text until the last intervention in the last text (IW1, IW2... IW45). The same system was used for K5, with the letters K (K1, K2...) and IK (IK1, IK2... IK63). These units were then tabulated according to an analysis script. The resulting data are interpreted in the following section.

Results

The journalistic material collected in both participative online news sites resulted in a *corpus* consisting of 107 interventions, 46 of these referring to WN and 61 to K5. This is an interesting distribution, since seven texts were collected from WN and only three from K5. Although K5 was less representative in the samples, it presented more interventions in initial texts, suggesting a higher level of participation in absolute numbers. This data could be explained by the editorial policy of K5, which favors debate

about the facts presented in the initial text. Therefore, collaborators keep intervening; even after all necessary modifications have been made in order for the text to conform to the expected standards (correct spelling and style, editorial policy, source attribution, links to other sites, etc.). In WN, on the other hand, comments about the facts narrated in texts are discouraged, and as a result, when all corrections and additions aimed at standardizing the text have been made, there is no further need for intervention. The fact that no intervention of an argumentative or disruptive character was identified in the analysis of WN supports that conclusion.

The 46 interventions made in WN texts resulted in 35 units of analysis categorized as pluralizing and 18 units categorized as formal/disruptive. The discrepancy between the number of interventions and the number of coded units of analysis is due to the fact that some interventions provided more than one unit. In an intervention made at 9:51 p.m. on October 15, 2006, in the story “Friday the 13 Buffalo, New York snow storm in pictures”²³, for instance, collaborator DragonFire1024 added a new source, the newspaper *Lockport Union-Sun & Journal*, and corrected data in the *lead*, such as the number of people affected by the blackout (from 340,000 to 300,000) and the inclusion of Pennsylvania among the affected states, thus generating the units “source” and “data”. The same criteria of coding and unit count were used for K5. In a comment that discusses MotorMachineMercenary’s text about TV Series²⁴, collaborator PsychoDave provided data about the cable TV service Comcast through his own testimonial, and went on to present arguments about the differences between the business models of Cable TV and standard broadcast, before concluding that some types of series are financially unfeasible for broadcast channels. For this intervention, two units of analysis were considered: “data” and “argumentation”. The 61 interventions made in K5 resulted in 54 units of analysis categorized as pluralizing and 13 categorized as formal/disruptive according to the following table.

Table 1 – Distribution of units per category in absolute and proportional terms

	PLURALIZING	%	FORMAL/DISRUPTIVE	%	OTHERS	%	TOTAL
<i>WIKINEWS</i>	35	63.6	18	32.7	2	3.7	55
<i>KUROSHIN</i>	54	76.8	13	18.8	2	2.9	69
TOTAL	89	73.2	31	22.7	4	4.1	124

Table 1 shows the distribution of units according to the categories of analysis in both absolute and proportional terms. Among the 107 collected interventions, 124 units of analysis were identified, among which the majority, 89, were considered pluralizing, and 31 were considered formal/disruptive. Proportionally, there was a significant prevalence of pluralizing units (73.2%). Participative webnewspaper K5 presented more pluralizing units in relation to WN, both in absolute and proportional terms. There were 54 pluralizing units in interventions from K5, representing 76.8% of the total of units. In the case of WN, pluralizing units represent 63.6% of the total. Despite a slight advantage obtained by K5, there is a striking similarity between both results, which suggests that collaborators to both online news sites are strongly oriented to interfere in the journalistic issues of a text.

Data referring to the number of collaborators who intervened in each story indicate that individuals are accustomed to following the development of the text in which they take part. Figures 6 and 7 show that both in K5 and in WN, the number of collaborators in a given story is usually lower than the number of interventions. The ratio of interventions to collaborators is two to one, meaning that each collaborator tends to return twice, on the average, to the texts in which he or she takes part.

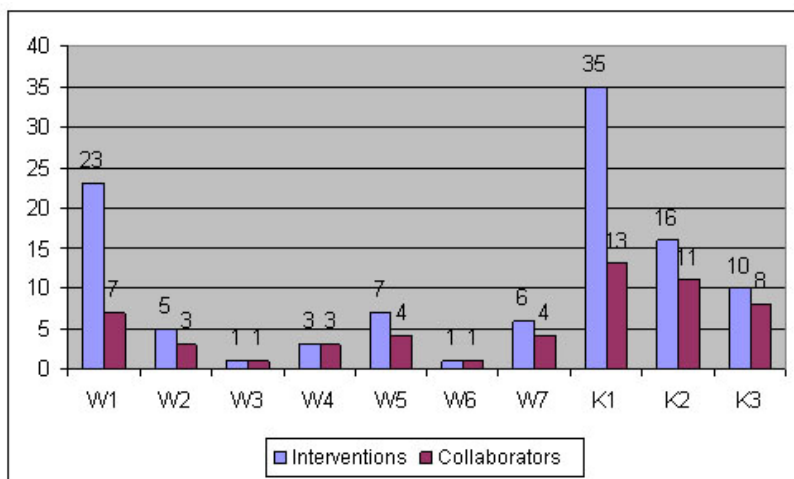


Figure 6 – Graphic comparison between number of interventions and number of collaborators

This means that, in general, individuals who intervene in the journalistic material of these two participative online news sites are not incidental collaborators, but collaborators who are constantly following the workflow. This is also an indication that suggests the existence of social networks of collaborators formed around participative online news. Figure 7 shows the difference between the number of total interventions in each participative webnewspaper and the total number of collaborators identified in the sample.

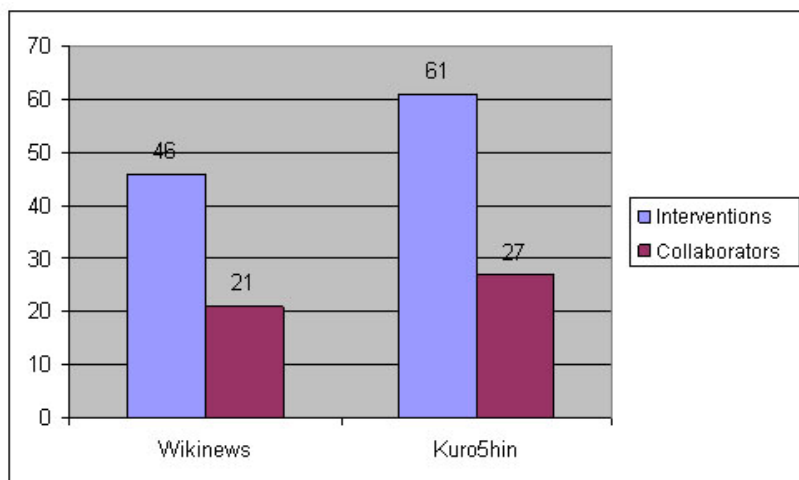


Figure 7 – Graphic comparing the total number of interventions and the total number of collaborators

The 46 interventions of WN were made by a total of 21 collaborators – possibly less, since 7 of the interventions were made by anonymous users who might or might not be repeaters²⁵. In the case of K5, where anonymous collaborations are impossible, we can be certain that 27 accounts intervened 61 times (although a single collaborator could theoretically be able to operate more than one account). The average of one collaborator for every two interventions is maintained here, confirming that the return rate is similar on both participative online news sites. This data also indicates that a current notion about projects which allow collaborative editing of editorial content - namely, the idea that every entry or story in these services is written by dozens of people, each of whom add a sentence or a word - is a misconception. When the productive process is examined over time, not “everybody” takes part in participative webjournalism, but only a relatively fixed number of collaborators, who thereby gain experience in the operation of tools and in the *making of* news features.

This is an important basic assumption, given that one of the main criticisms suffered by this type of vehicle is that collaborators supposedly write items without any commitment to the end result. The simple occasional addition of a sentence in a WN story or the publishing of a K5 comment by a cyberspace passer-by would result in a fragmented cooperation, in which none of the collaborators would see themselves as responsible for the text. However, if collaborators are accustomed to returning and following the development of stories, they are certainly obtaining some degree of learning through the experience. Collaborators are able to incorporate the editorial policies of vehicles through viewing comments that point out flaws and mistaken interpretations in their texts, in K5 comments or corrections made directly by other interactors in WN, much like they would in a professional news office.

Discussion

The main goal of this content analysis was to highlight the prevailing character of interventions made by collaborators in *Kuro5hin* and *Wikinews*. Based on the results, it is possible to safely conclude that there is a prevalence of the pluralizing type; that is, the majority of collaborators attempt to add important information to the initial texts in which they intervene – even when they are mistaken in their attempts. On the other hand, unlike what one could expect from participative online news sites in which publication is totally open and self-managed, bordering anarchy (in the strict sense), a significant presence of spam or vandalism was not verified.

The difference between both online news sites in numbers of interventions shows that there is not one single model for this kind of initiative. In this research, two models were analyzed: one system in which publication is totally open, although with a preference for a balanced account of facts, ideally without direct interference of the collaborator's subjectivity, and another in which there is a form of publication control – albeit self-managed – where opinion and subjectivity are highly valued. The analysis of intervention in other participative online news sites could perhaps result in different unit distributions, according to the available tools and editorial policies. However, it is clear that the proportion of pluralizing interventions was similar in K5 and WN, varying from 60% to 75% approximately. The data suggest that the trend of cooperation is constant in the different kinds of participative webjournalism, leading to the conclusion that people are willing to take part in news dynamics in a constructive way. Thus, the apocalyptic forecasts about the arrival of a communication chaos, when every individual is able to publish his

opinions and accounts without any control, must be discarded – at least with regard to participative webjournalism.

Another important aspect of this result is the fact that collaborators tend to follow the development of the stories in which they intervene. On one hand, it suggests the existence of a feeling of responsibility for what has been published. On the other hand, it is known that the pressure and power games to which a reporter is subject in the news office encourage the incorporation of the journalism professionals' ideation, especially the values of impartiality and objectivity (BREED, 1993; SOLOSKI, 1993). Through the sanctions imposed by the network of collaborators in each participative webnewspaper, it is believed that the specific ideals and values of each vehicle are incorporated and at the same time group-created by the interaction dynamics, in a manner similar to what takes place in professional news offices.

Therefore, we hereby support the idea that, through practical experience, collaborators in participative online news have the possibility of learning some techniques and incorporating a number of values which will enable them to produce material that complies with certain journalistic traits, gaining credibility over time – or else they would fall into disrepute due to their errors. This puts the public in the position of producer and mediator of information, a role that had previously been restricted only to journalists and other professionals in traditional media. This expansion in the role of the public is important, because it allows the pluralizing of perspectives regarding the facts on the Web, in the form of participative online news sites, blogs, or sections of web portals in which the line between professional and amateur is becoming increasingly blurred. This does not mean, however, that we are advocating the end of journalism. On the contrary: professional journalism certainly has and will continue to have an important role in democratic societies, since, through maintaining objectivity, it is able to claim impartiality, thus offering an "official" version of events.

Participative webjournalism is therefore complementary, not a substitute for journalism. On the other hand, since it acts as a complement to traditional journalism, it becomes evident that one cannot require participative webjournalism to observe the same rules – or the same genre of credibility - as professional journalism does. If a critical spirit is expected from consumers of newspapers, online news, television and radio features, readers of material published on participative online news sites must be twice as cautious, since publishing control in these services is far less strict. Disdaining content created cooperatively by laymen

in order to protect society from the “dangers” offered by publications that lack professional control is a paternalistic attitude, which gives the public’s intelligence very little credit.

| NOTES

- 1 As proposed by SANTAELLA (2004, p.17), websites will be considered as readable objects, despite their inclusion of written language, image and audio, that is, being multimedia pieces. Thus, cybnauts who access such websites are designated as readers: “...since illustrated books and, later, with newspapers and magazines, the act of reading was no longer restricted to deciphering letters, but also increasingly incorporated the relations between words and images, shape and size of graphic types, text and layout.”
- 2 <http://www.zeit.de>.
- 3 <http://www.guardian.co.uk>.
- 4 <http://oglobo.globo.com>.
- 5 <http://www.latimes.com>.
- 6 MSNBC. Los Angeles Times suspends “Wikitorials”. 6/21/2005. Available at: <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/8300420/>. Last Access on 1/9/2007.
- 7 <http://english.ohmynews.com>.
- 8 “Blogs are filtering the news, detailing daily lives, and providing editorial responses to the events of the day. For many people, a weblog is a soapbox from which they can proclaim their views, potentially influencing many more people than they can in their everyday lives.”
- 9 Wikis are programs installed in a server, accessible through an ordinary browser, which enable users to create and jointly publish content on Web pages. In general, anyone is able to edit content, including contributions made by other users. Most wikis also offer a history of changes, which makes it possible to return to previous versions of the page. Available at: <http://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wiki>. Last access on 7/14/2007.

- 10 His weblog, discontinued in 2004, is hosted at http://www.dear_raed.blogspot.com.
- 11 The term will be used in this work to refer to the twelve journalistic genres proposed by MELO (2003): note, story, news report and interview, under the category information journalism; and editorial, commentary, article, review, column, chronicle, cartoon and letter, under the category opinion journalism. We prefer not to use the term “news”, because in Brazil it designates a very specific type of narrative text, based on the use of the inverted pyramid model (LAGE, 1993).
- 12 “Once mere consumers of news, the audience is learning how to get a better, timelier report. It’s also learning how to join the process of journalism, helping to create a massive conversation and, in some cases, doing a better job than the professionals.”
- 13 http://en.wikinews.org/wiki/Main_Page.
- 14 It consists of a page in which collaborators are able to check which articles are being written at the moment and learn how users can collaborate to develop such articles, as well as contact other members of the “*Wikinews* community” and have access to writing resources to use in their collaborations. Available at: <http://en.wikinews.org/wiki/Wikinews:Newsroom>. Last access: 05/14/2007.
- 15 Available at: http://en.wikinews.org/wiki/Wikinews:What_Wikinews_is. Access: 02/10/2007.
- 16 “A *Wikinews* story does not have one reporter as its author, the world is invited to join in and write, edit and rewrite each article to improve its content.” Available at: http://en.wikinews.org/wiki/Wikinews:What_Wikinews_is. Access: 02/10/2007.
- 17 <http://www.kuro5hin.org>.
- 18 This is a kind of writing known as leet script (also spelled l33t or 1337), typical of computer subcultures, used mainly among programmers, hackers and videogame players. The term is a variation based on the English pronunciation of the word “elite”, implying that whoever uses this type of spelling is an experienced computer user.
- 19 “We very much prefer article submissions that express an argument or point of view about the article, and encourage discussion or debate”. Available at: <http://www.kuro5hin.org/special/faq>. Last access on 8/5/2006.

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- 22 "This is where YOU report the news, come up with your own conclusions, adding links as a way of providing supplementing information (as opposed to MLP where the link IS the information)." Available at: <http://www.kuro5hin.org/special/faq>. Last access on 8/5/2006.
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- 25 Although IP addresses have been registered by the WN system, and are all different, it is not possible to ascertain whether these are different collaborators. When Internet is accessed via a service provider, it attributes a new IP to a given computer at every new access. Therefore, the same machine may have a different IP at every new work session when it is connected to the network.

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