

DOING GOOD BUSINESS AND QUALITY JOURNALISM?

entrepreneurial journalism and the
debates on the future of news media¹

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Brasileira de Pesquisadores em Jornalismo

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ABSTRACT - As journalism finds itself in a process of accelerated transformations, Internet seems to be a place where both the reproduction of traditional models and a wide array of journalistic and business models experimentations happen at the same time. Here, at the intersection of changes in news models, job definitions and in career trajectories, the figure of the "entrepreneurial journalist" (BRIGGS, 2011) resurfaced and gradually gained in popularity over the last years in discourses celebrating innovation, flexibility and risk-taking. In this context, how can the figures of the journalist and the entrepreneur co-exist whereas commercial and journalistic activities have been historically strongly separated? How can business development be compatible with independent and objective news gathering when it is done by the same person? How do the notions of independent news writing and respect for the public interest – all strong elements of the journalistic ethics discourses – are negotiated by these actors? In this paper, we wish to explore these issues, first by contextualizing the rise of entrepreneurial journalism before presenting findings of an exploratory study about the ways the links between entrepreneurial and journalistic imperatives have been thought and presented in the existing journalistic literature in France and United States of America.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial journalism. Webjournalism. News business models. Professional identity.

TINO PARA OS NEGÓCIOS E BOM JORNALISMO? A figura do jornalista empreendedor nos debates sobre o futuro da profissão

RESUMO - No contexto de uma dinâmica de mudança do jornalismo, a web se manifesta, simultaneamente, como um lugar de reprodução e de experimentação de diferentes formas de fazer e de conceber o jornalismo. No cruzamento das mudanças de *status*, de atribuições e de trajetórias de carreiras, a face do jornalismo empreendedor ("entrepreneurial journalism"; BRIGGS, 2011) voltou à tona progressivamente e ganhou popularidade ao longo da última década, nos discursos que celebram a inovação, a flexibilidade e o prazer de correr riscos. Como as figuras do jornalista e do empreendedor podem conviver uma vez que as atividades comerciais e as jornalísticas eram historicamente dissociadas? Como são articulados, de um lado, o imperativo de busca de financiamento, e de outro, o de prática de coleta e de difusão da informação? Como as noções de independência, de liberdade de expressão e de respeito ao interesse público – princípios tão fortes da moral jornalística – são apropriadas por esses agentes? Nosso artigo tem como objetivo situar o jornalismo empreendedor em uma

perspectiva histórica e, a seguir, apresentar um estudo exploratório de como os imperativos empresariais e jornalísticos foram conciliados e tratados na literatura profissional francófona e anglófona nos últimos anos.

Palavras-chave: Jornalismo empreendedor. Webjornalismo. Modelos de negócios. Identidade profissional.

HACER BUENOS NEGOCIOS Y PERIODISMO DE CALIDAD?

Periodismo emprendedor en los debates sobre el futuro de los media

RESUMEN - La participación de la audiencia, en cualquiera de sus formas y denominaciones (public journalism, periodismo ciudadano, periodismo participativo, UGC), revitaliza, aparentemente, la democracia, gracias a las posibilidades que las tecnologías de la información y la comunicación ofrecen para el debate público. Frente a estas posiciones, sin embargo, no faltan las voces que se cuestionan si las tecnologías interactivas realmente fomentan la democracia o el mercado, potencian al ciudadano o fortalecen al consumidor. En este contexto, disponemos todavía de poca información sobre las motivaciones que impulsan a los ciudadanos a participar activamente a través de los mecanismos de participación que los medios de comunicación ponen a su disposición en sus propias webs o a través de las redes sociales. Así como del rol que los usuarios atribuyen a su implicación en el funcionamiento de los medios y si contribuye a mejorar la función democrática de los medios de comunicación. Este artículo pretende aportar algo de luz en este aspecto.

Palabras clave: Participación. Periodismo. Audiencias activas. Periodismo participativo. Democracia.

As the current period is one of transition for most journalism actors, we find useful to observe journalism, its practices, standards, business models and institutions as dynamic processes, which are deconstructed and restructured in the same movement, recombining preexisting practices and logics in new configurations (DEMERS, 2007). Changes at work affect both reporting itself, but also the narratives structures, publishing formats, and the organization of journalistic production itself. Business models are also affected, as many actors – both old and new – are experimenting with new ways to monetize online content (BRUNO; NIELSEN, 2012; SIRKKUNEN; COOKE, 2012). However, Smyrnaioi (2012) invites us to take with caution any techno-deterministic discourse that would equate technological change with journalistic innovation but rather to locate online journalists and websites on a continuum of innovation that spreads from innovation-intensive journalism, breaking with mainstream journalistic codes, rules and logics, to the mere reproduction of existing models, as some actors may opt for economic efficiency first. In this regard, it seems that the various discourses on change and innovation leave room for marginal actors, viewed as more inclined to experiment than the established players (see eg DOMINGO & al., 2008).

Thus, far from being the only cause of changes at work, Internet should rather be seen as a place which stresses and puts light on certain preexisting issues (ESTIENNE, 2007), but also as an accelerator of important structural trends that affect journalism and media production structures, employment statuses and practices, media content distribution and consumption, and journalists professional identity. The latter has been constructed and mobilized through strategic collective discourses (for Quebec, see LE CAM, 2009) which separate journalism from marketing and advertising activities (BAINES; KENNEDY, 2010) and emphasize the need to respect particular ethical rules (RUELLAN, 2011). These elements are, among others, constituent elements of journalistic collective discourse and serve as a mean to include or exclude certain categories of actors. In fact, current changes do not represent a radical shift but should be rather seen in a long term perspective, where professional identity, practices and structures of production influence each other over time, leading us to conceptualize journalism not as a closed, fixed group of individuals, but rather as “blurred professionalism” (RUELLAN, 2007).

Here, at the intersection of changes in practices, statuses, job responsibilities and career paths, “entrepreneurial journalism” (BRIGGS, 2011) has surfaced and gradually gained popularity over the last decade in metadiscourses celebrating innovation, flexibility and a taste for risk-taking. Entrepreneurship could, in fact, allow journalists to regain control individually and collectively of their future, outside existing hierarchical and rigid media structures. This renewed interest for entrepreneurship translates into the recent proliferation of university curricula dedicated to journalism and entrepreneurship in North America and the publication of books often written by the same people who are trying to put journalistic entrepreneurship on the agenda (BERKEY-GERARD, 2012). Among the few courses offered at the university level, some short programs were created or integrated with existing curricula by promoters of the concept (see, for example, the creation of a graduate program at the City University of New-York by J. Jarvis). Existing programs are still in their infancy, but their number is growing as the idea disseminates from one journalism school to another². However, interest for entrepreneurial journalism goes beyond universities. We witness also an increasing number of teaching resources and programs for working journalists, beginners or experienced, who

wish to become “their own media” (BRIGGS, 2011; FORBES, 2012), be they seminars or “boot camps” (those organized by Poynter in the United States, or the Medialab initiative in the francophone world) designed to help journalists, designers, entrepreneurs and web specialists meet and discuss innovative and potentially profitable news projects.

However, entrepreneurial and journalistic rationales could be *a priori* (i.e. by most journalistic institutional discourses) considered contradictory and incompatible. Like traditional media institutions, web journalists and entrepreneurs must structure their journalistic activities by taking into account certain economic and market dimensions in order to be able to sustain their activity in the long run. This takes a new dimension in a context where the technical flexibility of Internet publishing, allows an individual to be both a journalist, an editor and an entrepreneur at the same time (REBILLARD, 2007). Thus, how do the figure of the journalist, and of the entrepreneur can coexist ? How can the business development, which may include public relations, marketing or ad-sales, be compatible with quality, ethical reporting ? How do the notions of independence, freedom of speech and respect for the public interest – all strong elements of North American journalism ethics – are addressed by entrepreneurial journalists ?

This paper presents an exploratory study on the matter, designed to analyze the ways entrepreneurship and journalistic imperative have been discussed in the existing recent professional literature. By it, we include the publications of journalism think tanks and education that propose to discuss and map the current transformations, the succession of trends, both successes and failures. We wish to emphasize the exploratory dimension of this contribution, as we do not pretend to be exhaustive or to identify all the issues at work, but rather to discuss some of the most salient points that comes out of current discourses. To this end, we will first contextualize entrepreneurial journalism in the current changes observable in journalism work and job conditions. We will then turn to a qualitative thematic content analysis on the implications of entrepreneurial journalism for existing professional standards and the establishment of “good” practices in the domain. This approach allows us to discuss the tensions and articulations between existing business and journalistic practices that could be mutually enriching.

1 METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

Data collection has been carried out in two stages. First, we explored a selection of websites through keywords and selected categories (ethical issues, new business models, entrepreneurial journalism). Those publications were identified through a systematic content monitoring on journalism transformation in the context of our own doctoral research on independent news websites and newswork (*Buzzmachine*, *Poynter*, *Nieman Journalism Lab* and the *BBC College of Journalism* for english speaking publications, *ObsWeb* and *WIP* for french ones). All articles focusing on entrepreneurial journalism and its ethical issues produced between 2005 and march 2013 were collected. However, the relatively small size of the sample led to an expansion of the number of titles monitored. We thus included *PBS Mediashift*, the *Online Journalism Review* and two reference books on entrepreneurial journalism (BRIGGS, 2011; DVORKIN, 2012) and some frequently cited articles in the corpus.

Through this process, we collected 90 articles about entrepreneurial journalism, its practical aspects and challenges; 30 of which were discussing the issues related to the practice of journalism and business operations by the same person – be it in a single paragraph or the entire text. Origins and forms of the collected documents ranged from practical guides, list of good practices, case studies to ethical debates, all written by professionals or academics from training institutions, universities or public service media outlets. We must take into account the limitations of our sample, especially the relatively small space devoted to ethical issues, which are clearly underrepresented compared to practical considerations, but also the fact that professional literature does not always offer a systematic, in-depth treatment of the issues at hand, as some questions are discussed in a few lines. Keeping that in mind, we analyzed the documents based on our initial research questions, *i.e.* the identification, by the actors themselves, of the points of tension between journalism and business operations and the ways those tensions could be overcome. The goal was not to restrict our investigation *a priori* to a limited number of elements, but rather find what kind of (un)ethical issues and practices were raised by entrepreneurial journalism and the solutions proposed to address them. We have been looking for the recurring topics that emerged through the period and the points of tension between commercial

and journalistic activities. As previously noted, we do not claim that we have been able to identify all the issues at stake. Rather, this papers intends to open a discussion on several issues related to entrepreneurial journalism which has not yet been subject to a lot of attention from journalism scholars, with few exceptions that will be discussed in the next sections, and open new avenues to our own research which focuses on independent webjournalism in Quebec.

2 FROM FREELANCING TO “ME-INC”³

Overall, the academic literature on entrepreneurial is limited, whereas the first attempts of independent online entrepreneurial journalism have been discussed by journalism professionals as early as 2006-2007. Until now, only a few papers have been devoted to case studies, the renewal of journalism curricula and their adaptation to the new job market requirements. Despite this, it is useful to replace the emergence of entrepreneurial journalism in a larger context of work transformations, in studies focusing on independent journalism and the reorganization of labour in the last forty years. The first affiliation can be easily traced : at several times in history, some journalists have decided to launch and operate a newspaper, magazine or radio channel. The coexistence of business practices and journalistic work preexists by far the advent of the Internet. Media owners, pioneers and personalities may even have received a greater historiographical attention than the daily work of journalism (Hardt, 1998). However, as noted before, it is now easier than ever – both from a technological and financial point of view – to launch a media in smaller, more flexible, organizations.

For journalists themselves, entrepreneurial journalism echoes the booming market of freelance work and the needs for freelancers to pitch and sell stories to editors. Pilms (2007) or Accardo & al. (2007) show how the managerial, sales and entrepreneurial logics are internalized by freelancers : in order to sell a story to an editor, they must put themselves in their shoes, understand what topics and stories will appeal to a large readership, the commercial imperatives, and then adapt their pitches and stories accordingly. Business and managerial logics thus confront the sociocultural and political motives which

are dominant in collective discourses, calling into question the ideal figure of a journalist entirely devoted to the common good, detached from market interests (BAINES; KENNEDY, 2010; LADENDORF; EDSTROM, 2012).

The emergence of entrepreneurial journalism also takes place in a context of a global insecurity on journalism's job market and the increased individualization of employment conditions – linked to a rise of the overall freelance orders and the use of flexible workers in the communication sector – which come to question the efficiency of unions and collective agreements that helped structure the media labour market, particularly in Quebec (LE CAM; DEMERS, 2006). Thus, the growing importance of atypical work (BAINES; ROBSON, 2001) questions the idea of a stable career path that existed previously on the job market (BASTIN, 2012). Finally, the strengthening of freelance work causes power relations to switch : an exacerbated competition between journalists for jobs, freelance contracts and media space overlaps the existing competition between media outlets themselves. Estienne and Vandamme (2010) noted that “[in] the digital era, the journalist has to “brand” his name and work to be able to interact with his “clients” (*i.e.* his employers), stand out from competitors and establish a long term career plan [...]” (171, our translation)

The permeability between commercial, managerial and journalistic logics is particularly noticeable in online newsrooms compared to established ones, notes Estienne (2007). His analysis of webjournalists in France shows how the “start-up” logic is important : in small teams, where job descriptions are vague and rapidly changing, where new jobs can appear over time (*e.g.* community management or search engine optimization⁴ specialists which are more directly tied the publishing aspect of the business), each and everyone has to adapt and work on several tasks as needed. Thus, this blurring of responsibilities brings “the journalist-manager [to] decluster the mental categories through which he sees his “profession” - categories he inherited during in professional socialization” (ESTIENNE, 2007, p. 284, our translation). Furthermore, until recently, these job – less paid and less prestigious – were mainly occupied by young journalists who did not have the opportunity to socialize in newsrooms before.

From a theoretical point of view, it is useful to analyze entrepreneurial journalism in the context of the ideological changes brought within capitalism in the last decades, labelled, among

others, as a “new spirit of capitalism” (BOLTANSKI; CHIAPELLO, 1999) which finds traces also in journalism (CARBASSE, 2011). Here, elements of what Boltanski and Chiapello call the “artistic critique” of the late 1960s, calling for increased autonomy, freedom and creativity have progressively been reclaimed by capitalism by the end of the following decade. Those values serve now to disregard another form of critique – “social critique” – which emphasizes well being through collective action, in a more hierarchical, stable social organization. This new “spirit”, those new values can be found in the entrepreneurial ethics: nowadays, say Boltanski and Chiapello, individuals become self entrepreneurs, responsible to showcase their own creativity, their own realizations, achievements, skills and networks. Neff & al. (2005) point out that workers in the creative sector are more likely to accept such values, as well as the job uncertainties that come with them. In this sense, the changes witnessed in work organization and the justifying discourses that come with it go well beyond the sole scope and journalism: this is rather a matter of a global shift in the intellectual, artistic and creative sectors (see HESMONDALGH; BAKER, 2011; BOUQUILLION, 2012).

3 THE CONCEPT OF ENTREPRENEURIAL JOURNALISM

In this context, if the concept of entrepreneurial journalism came with the rise of the Internet, it is also shaped by trends that surpass journalism itself. However, at the time being, studies focusing on the relationship between journalism and entrepreneurship are scarce. Entrepreneurship is in itself a notion for which there is no commonly accepted definition (HANG; VAN WEEZEL, 2005): it can either refer to the ability to apply managerial and corporate discourses and attitudes towards individual actions, to be in a competitive mindset or to try to identify and occupy a niche market in order to make a profit. In fact, entrepreneurship is often reduced to a series of psychological traits that distinguishes an entrepreneur from other members of the workforce. For example Gibb (2005, in BAINES; KENNEDY, 2012) lists twelve of those “entrepreneurial” traits which, taken together, identify who is an entrepreneur. Applied to the media sector, Hang and Van Weezel (2005) note

a recent peak in the literature examining the links between entrepreneurship, innovation and media, which they attribute to an increased demand for data and analysis from the industry.

Hermida (2012) judiciously suggests that journalism was already familiar with entrepreneurship. Both activities are closer than it appears at first sight, as the journalist and the entrepreneur share common qualities and abilities: a place for intuition and autonomy in daily work, the ability to network or to solve problems creatively (HUNTER; NEL, 2011). Again, few studies have effectively studied those links or entrepreneurial journalism itself, whose definition differs (BERKEY-GERARD, 2012). Berkey-Gerard shows that the term may mean to different things, but that the definitions are usually closer to those of the entrepreneur rather than those of journalists. For Briggs (2011), one of the main promoters of entrepreneurial journalism, the term simply describes the combination of journalistic and entrepreneurial activities, without indicating if it is the hybridization of those or just their mere coexistence. Here, it is particularly interesting to stress that the definitions proposed refer more to a state of mind and personal actions than to the product that comes out of them (*i.e.* the media outlet and its content). Thus, entrepreneurial journalism does not equate with a particular organizational structure or a specific for-profit objective. However, the definitions given by the literature cautiously separate entrepreneurial journalism and freelance work done for an existing media outlet. While both share some similarities, the entrepreneurial journalist does not produce content for a third party which will distribute it. Rather, in this setting, contents are produced in order to be published, promoted and sold by the journalist himself. In this sense, the entrepreneurial journalist differs from the freelance journalist by being also its own editor and publisher.

Most of the existing papers on entrepreneurial journalism discuss the role of journalism schools and journalism training in the matter. The idea is to prepare future professionals to the atypical forms of employment that may soon dominate the media job market (BAINES; KENNEDY, 2010; ESTIENNE; VANDAMME, 2010; HUNTER; NEL, 2011; BERKEY-GERARD, 2012; DROK, 2013). These contributions evaluate the ongoing and future job market changes, and the ways journalism schools can adapt their curricula in order to prepare students to a market where freelancing and self-employment may replace the traditional career trajectory that dominated most of the 20th century. Ultimately, J-Schools

must renew their ability to give their trainees a competitive advantage in the job market (BAINES; KENNEDY, 2010). However, as ESTIENNE; VANDAMME (2010) insist on how schools can instill some entrepreneurial spirit and abilities to their students, they also address the potential risks associated with the rise of entrepreneurship in journalism: less time for investigation and research, an increase of high-commercial potential stories designed to reach a wide audience. If those trends and worries are not specific to entrepreneurial journalism – those are old debates in journalism – they reach a new magnitude in this context.

In short, entrepreneurial journalism reflects the uncertain definitions of its two constituting components: it would refer again to certain traits of character common to journalists and entrepreneurs, such as discourses and actions modelled on those of the private industry, a taste for innovation, the research of profit. It refers at the same time to individual skills and actions designed to research, write, edit, publish and promote news content as a small organization. So defined, entrepreneurial journal is far from representing a radical shift with the traditional organizational models and logics of media corporations, but is rather an extension of the traditional model of cultural industries, modelled as an oligopoly where a multitude of small players revolve around large cultural and communication corporations (BOUQUILLION, 2008). This necessary contextualization done, we will now discuss how the concept has been treated in the professional literature and focus on the identity and ethical issues.

3.1 BEING AN ENTREPRENEURIAL JOURNALIST: THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE PROFESSIONAL LITERATURE⁵

Worth noting, is an important difference we did not anticipate between the coverage devoted to entrepreneurial journalism in the French and North American outlets in our corpus: very few professional or academic articles have been written in French, all of which simply describe the rise of the phenomenon in the United States, and the possible implications for the French news market. They also elaborate on the importance of innovation and French lateness on the matter, as traditional media actors took a lot of time before exploring online new models. This is

particularly interesting in light of the relative high number of native online players that emerged in the French mediascape during the last decade and the significant media space and readership those outlets manage to reach. A possible explanation lies with the local rules governing the allocation of the professional journalist status (a “carte de presse”, press card) which impose a clear separation between editorial and business activities.

3.2 A SMALL NUMBER OF PROMOTERS AND A DISCOURSE DOMINATED BY PRACTICAL ASPECTS

Commentaries on entrepreneurial journalism are also particularly influenced by technological enthusiasm and optimism about their affordances. This type of promotional or prophetic discourses should however be put in perspective and compared to those which usually precede and come along with the introduction of every new technology throughout history (MOSCO, 2004; REBILLARD, 2007). In the articles gathered for the purpose of this study, entrepreneurial journalists are described in a positive light, as promoters praise the complementarity of journalistic work and marketing activities, which could now be better articulated in order to serve the consumer better (Franck, 2012). Comments insist also on the renewed ability given to journalists to take the power back and shape their own future, outside the rigid hierarchies of traditional media corporations.

As was stressed by De Maeyer (2012) about the use of hyperlinks in journalism, the debates about entrepreneurial journalism are structured around a very limited number of commentators and institutions, most of the major commentators being also involved in the creation of training programs dedicated to entrepreneurship in journalism schools across the United States. We can think of J. Jarvis, D. Gillmor or M. Briggs, all of whom are promoters, teachers and commentators. Thus, as we established earlier, it is not surprising that the issues of training, education and awareness of entrepreneurial issues are also recurring themes in the professional literature.

3.3 MANAGING EDITORIAL CONTENT AND BUSINESS EXPANSION: ISSUES IDENTIFIED

Like some other aspects of online journalism, entrepreneurial journalism renews old debates among practitioners and scholars in the United States – be it on who should be considered a journalist or on professional ethics. Among those is a replay of the quarrel between traditionalists and disruptors: all observers agree that the current period should be seen as a massive “work in progress”, requiring experimentation and creative solution making should be needed as new problems arise. However, ethical issues raised by the rise of entrepreneurial journalism are rarely addressed directly by analysts, but rather as responses to criticisms directed towards them by other members of the journalism community. It is only then that those issues are acknowledged and discussed publicly.

The first concern is about time management: for a journalist working alone on all aspects of a website is raised the question of how can be balanced the time required by business development in regard to the time spent on research and actual reporting. The flexibility that comes with small organizational models (COHN, 2012; ROSENBLUM, 2012) leads quickly to practical issues: how can a journalist make sure he can combine both activities in his daily routine? Should he allow specific time devoted only to business development and advertising sales? At the end of the day, what time will be left for original, quality reporting? In a related matter, comes the issue of the separation between advertising and editorial content on a same web page: observers note that both should be easily identifiable by the audience and clearly labelled. Space also becomes an issue. Different categories of content may be juxtaposed on a same page and written by the same person, whereas branded content seems to be one – among many – business solutions considered by media owners. Thus, according to Sivek (2010), it becomes more critical than ever that the distinction between advertising or paid content and journalistic articles should be easy to make for the reader.

From an organizational point of view, questions arise about the way journalists are able to negotiate the end of the (theoretical) structural separation that existed between editorial and business activities in the traditional media organizational model, often coined as the “church-state separation”. At the time

being, entrepreneurial journalism usually translate into small organizations, where journalists have to combine both editorial and business activities: in this context, how can they avoid conflicts of interests that may come with this double status. If this risk has always been there, it is now more visible. One of the observers notes: “Many of the situations a journalism entrepreneur will face present ethical challenges. The sole proprietor or a small operation will not have the hard church-state separation between editorial and business concerns that a larger news organization has between news and advertising.” (BUTTRY, 2011) However, some commentators remind us that the idea of a clear separation between journalistic work and business operations – a discourse that structures, among other things, journalistic professional identity in the United States and Canada – was historically a fiction. (GILLMOR, 2010a; MCLELLAN, 2008). A complete editorial independence from advertisers and other sources of funding is in fact hard to imagine, as forms of cooperation between marketing departments, head management and the editorial sector have existed in many newsrooms for a long time. Here, again, the situation takes a new magnitude at a time when these are literally the same people who are in charge of all these activities. In this context, to maintain their credibility and avoid any appearance of conflict of interest, journalists have to deal with these matter individually – be it their relationship with advertisers and other income providers or their sources in the case of local media coverage in small communities, without the help of an organization or a hierarchy. If many works in the field of the political economy of communication and journalism studies have already shown the existence of links – often indirect – between commercial and business imperatives and journalistic production and content (including, HESMONDALGH, 2007), these links should be investigated again at a time when smaller media organizations appear in greater numbers, and the fact that the loss of an advertiser for these organizations may have a greater impact than for larger ones.

3.4 ETHICAL REPORTING: INDIVIDUALIZATION OF ISSUES, BUSINESS OPERATIONS AND TRAINING

In the absence of colleagues or a hierarchy on which they could count, ethics and the establishment of good business and journalistic practices must be dealt with individually: the journalist must thus become his own barrier against potential conflicts of interests (JARVIS, 2010). Jarvis advocates that, now more than ever before, it is important to keep in mind the elements of a “healthy” journalistic practice. Doing journalism alone “ [...] makes is all the more important that we understand how to maintain independence and credibility. That makes these selected “old-school” values all the more critical.” (JARVIS, 2007). Journalist should then master established professional codes and values in order to overcome ethical dilemmas and adapt the rules if needed when a new situation arises. We are then in a conception of the Web as a new frontier, a space of experimentation and perpetual negotiation through trial and error, which applies also to journalism and business ethical issues.

Doing ethical, credible journalism goes beyond the realm of professional values. It also adds value to the product. “Whatever the differences between digital and predigital news and discourse – and I don’t mean to dismiss them, because those differences are legion – content providers still need to consider editorial integrity –credibility– the core of what they have to sell [...]” (quoted in SIVEK, 2010) That is where the journalist and the business owner meet: the journalist must produce “good content”, trustworthy, balanced news stories subjected to a fact checking process, in order to establish a trust relationship with the reader which can then be monetized by the business owner. There, it is interesting to note that in Briggs’ guide to entrepreneurial journalism (2011), the index entry for “ethics” refers the reader to “due diligence”, a term belonging to a managerial vocabulary to indicate the responsibility of a corporation. Journalism ethics serve here to differentiate the product from the contents produced by bloggers: the “journalist” label becomes a competitive advantage.

The first solution proposed to help entrepreneurial journalists make sound journalistic and business decisions is – not surprisingly – education and training. To be able to combine harmoniously both activities, make the good choices and navigate the gray ethical areas

where journalism and business overlap, entrepreneurial journalists must rely on extensive training in both sectors. In fact, it is “when the journalists are in charge of the journalistic enterprise—when they are founders or are key, strategic managers of that enterprise—they can and must navigate the conflicts you outline and I’d argue they are in a better position to do so—if they are qualified in business. Whether or not they sell the ad, the conflict and choices are the same” (JARVIS, 2010).

3.5 SET PRINCIPLES AS A BASIS FOR ETHICAL PRACTICE

Another consensus seems to be reached by commentators on the idea of a return to a set of “basic principles” of journalism, often modeled on those established by the main journalistic institutions in the United States (GILLMOR, 2010b; BRIGGS, 2011). However, according to the same people, those principles should not be written into a set of binding, fixed rules: the principles should rather be used a basis for a collective discussion about the best ways to do journalism, and guide journalists facing an ethical dilemma. Therefore, it should be the responsibility of every entrepreneurial journalist and every organization to identify what are their core, unbendable values, set their working guidelines and explain them to their advertisers and readers. By making these guidelines public, journalists should be able to navigate and negotiate the boundaries between editorial and business more easily, while reinforcing their trust relationship with their audience. On commentator states on the subject that “it’s fine if commercial reasoning influences editorial projects, as long as the projects fit into your overall mission. [...] You do need core principles that can’t be bent – even if that means the business doesn’t meet payroll.” (BENKOIL, 2011)

The debate on journalism ethical practices also leads to the legitimacy of the notion of “objective reporting” versus a need for a greater transparency. Whereas objectivity is one of the dominant characteristics of North American journalism discourses, many of the analysts discussing the future of the profession we have surveyed claim that it is rather one of the elements responsible of a trust crisis between the public and some journalists and organizations. As journalists are in fact unable to provide a fully

independent and entirely unbiased reporting, commentators rather prefer to advocate the idea of a public recognition of all the ties, bias, conflicts of interests that could affect the news coverage (INGRAM, 2009; NILES, 2009a; NILES, 2012). Instead of trying to cover them up, entrepreneurial must acknowledge the position from which they are speaking and try to be transparent to their readers. The value of fairness is put forward here, as both positive and negative news could be reported when it comes to advertisers of a particular media organization (BRIGGS, 2011), accompanied by an important attention given to educate readers, sources and advertisers to explain what journalistic rules cannot be bend. Jarvis (2010) argues that a journalist should rather give up an advertiser if he believes that it could affect the media credibility. This is summarized as follows:

Don't sell your content just the opportunity to reach your readers : this is what concerns most journalists I've met who are thinking about selling ads on their sites. They fear that they will be compromising their editorial integrity. Well, you're not selling that. You're not even putting it on the table. You're simply selling ad space. Truth is, most smart advertisers don't want you to sell your editorial content. They know that they do better with websites that offer good, solid, accurate content that readers will turn to again and again [...].” (NILES, 2009b)

CONCLUSION

Questions raised by entrepreneurial journalism are not new or uncommon. However, they take a new meaning in a context of important structural and organizational changes that it implies. Entrepreneurial journalism fosters existing tensions, as some journalists now also become responsible for publishing, business and technical aspects of their work. Thus, the phenomenon impulse a new direction in the hybridization process observable for journalism identity, and forces us to rethink how can these activities overlap and influence each other. At the moment being, the vast majority of the professional literature available focuses more on entrepreneurial and technical aspects than on the forms of journalism that can be done. Our analysis find that the journalistic dimension is left out of the equation: ethical, journalistic content and the practice of journalism in this particular context are far less covered than

business models, monetizing strategies or technical optimization of websites. Ethics and good reporting themselves are addressed in response to criticisms or to show how it can serve the overall business strategy: producing “good” content helps attract and retain readers. However, less than a break with the traditional journalistic models, observers seem to favor the strengthening of some core North American journalism principles and adapt them as new problems arise, through collective debate.

Far from being sufficient, our contribution should offer scholars and professionals some food for thought, as most issues here should be examined empirically individually. This exploratory analysis on the links about journalism ethics and entrepreneurial journalism points some issues that merit, we think, more investigation on the field to be able to see what changes are really at work – be it in terms of the reorganization of journalistic production, the individualization of labor relations or else. These should, in turn, give us a better understanding on how the moral contract between journalists and the public is actually renegotiated.

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Notes

- 1 This paper has been presented at Meior II – Structural changes of journalism, in Natal, Brazil, in May 2013.
- 2 We think, among other, about the seminars reserved to journalism

trainers organized by J. Jarvis. Available at: <<http://buzzmachine.com/2014/05/24/calling-entrepreneurial-journalism-profs/>>. Access: 18 jul 2015.

- 3 See Ouellet (2009)
- 4 This refer to strategies dedicated to improve the referencing of a webpage on search engines, including through the use of keywords. For its impacts on the practice of journalism, see Demers (2012)
- 5 We choose here to list only the elements of the corpus we quote in the analysis. All elements are available upon demand.

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