Re-imagining crisis reporting:

Professional ideology of journalists and citizen eyewitness images

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Abstract

This study, based on interviews with journalists representing major news organizations in Finland and Sweden, explores how the professional ideology of journalists is shaped by the international trend of citizen witnessing. Citizen-created photographs and videos that have become a routine feature of mainstream news coverage are approached as a potential force of change that transforms professional imaginaries of journalism vis-à-vis crisis events. From journalists' lines of thought three interpretative repertoires were identified: resistance, resignation and renewal. Our results hint at a rethinking of the professional norms and roles of the journalists.

Citizen eyewitness images have become a routine feature of mainstream news coverage and by expanding the reporting capacities of news organizations they have transformed the visibility of contemporary humanitarian and political crises around the world. The public sharing of amateur images of the post-election protests in Iran in June 2009 and the Arab uprisings in 2011-2012 can be seen as further turning points in this regard. During the post-election protests in Iran, professional news organizations strongly relied on various on-the-ground sources to provide information and, most importantly, images from the street protests

(Hänska-Ahy and Shapour, 2012; Pantti and Andén-Papadopoulos, 2011; Saugmann Andersen, 2012). The shift towards 'networked journalism', in which professional journalists collaborate with citizen journalists 'to get the real story' (Jarvis, 2006), thus represents a break with the monopoly of journalistic story-telling in favor of previously marginalized individuals who can now narrate the events themselves and become recognized not only in social media but also in the global and national mainstream media (Cottle, 2009: 17-18; Cottle, 2011; Deuze, 2008; Chouliaraki, 2012). These changes in the professional practices of news making, we argue, may also pertain to changes in journalists' thinking about what journalism is and what it should do (Heikkilä and Kunelius, 2008; Nerone and Barnhurst, 2003).

Through interviews with journalists representing major news organizations in Finland and Sweden our study explores how the professional ideology of journalists is negotiated in response to citizen-contributed imagery from global crisis events. While concerned specifically with how journalists assign meaning to citizen-contributed eyewitness imagery in the context of crisis reporting, the principal aim of the article is nonetheless to contribute to the wider discussion about how the emerging networked media environment is affecting the professional culture of journalism. Until now, the literature has suggested that journalists hold on to traditional journalistic values and practices to defend their profession (e.g. Lewis, 2012; Singer, 2005, 2009; Williams et al., 2010), and when incorporating new practices and alternative media formats (such as user-generated content or Twitter), journalists tend to 'normalize' them to suit entrenched professional routines and norms (Becker, 2011; Hermida, 2012; Hermida and Thurman, 2008; Lasorsa et al., 2012; Newman, 2009; Singer, 2005; Williams et al., 2011). However, as Seth Lewis (2012) suggests, this unwillingness to rethink journalism in the face of a rapidly evolving networked media environment may be slowly undergoing a shift and lead to a revised logic for journalism: a

'hybrid' one of 'adaptability and openness' emerging to resolve the fundamental tension between professional control and open participation in the news process (p. 836). The challenge for researchers, Lewis notes, is 'to track the contours of this nascent boundary work': to study, for instance, in what kinds of discourse and practice 'the professional logic of control become[s] rearticulated (or not) in relation to the participatory logic' (p. 852).

Our starting point is that *visual* audience material in the context of *crisis reporting* provides an excellent test case for tracking this 'nascent boundary work'. Crisis reporting, as a part of hard news journalism, is a field in which key journalistic values (such as objectivity, detachment, and impartiality) are constantly challenged (e.g. Tumber, 2006). Notwithstanding, crisis reporting possesses a high legitimacy among journalistic genres (Allan and Zelizer, 2004: 4) and is therefore a field in which any disruption to the professional ideology becomes clearly visible. Likewise, we argue that it is particularly useful to examine visual audience content – and not user-generated content in general – as a change factor since there is also a hierarchy of user-generated content among journalists in which audience photographs and videos of breaking news events are situated on the top, above audience comments and other forms of audience photography (Pantti and Bakker, 2009; Wardle et al., 2009). Drawing on 'the authenticity of photographic realism' (Taylor, 1991: 37), audience eyewitness photographs and videos have become crucial for marking the on-site presence by which journalists constitute their authority for reporting distant crisis events (Allan, 2009; Zelizer, 2007). At the same time, however, the often unverifiable imagery from unknown sources inevitably creates tensions for the core journalistic norm of accuracy, and as a result, for journalists' profession-based claim of authority (e.g. Hermida, 2012). Thus, it is the clash between the high status of non-professional breaking news images as an indispensable instrument for representing reality today and these visuals' challenges to

journalists' statement of authority that may generate rethinking of traditional journalism ideology.

The article proceeds in three parts. First, we discuss professional ideology in the context of crisis reporting. We single out for particular attention journalistic witnessing, defined here as journalists' practice of narrating an event in a morally compelling way, and the eyewitness image as an immediate source of it, connecting them to the core journalistic skill of story-telling, professional norm of objectivity and value of autonomy. Second, we provide an account and analysis of how journalists talk about their own practices of processing citizen-created eyewitness imagery from crisis events, and how they asses the relative value of such imagery for their reporting. As a conclusion, the article discusses the (re)articulation of the professional ideologies in relation to journalistic labour of bearing witness to distant crises.

Professional ideology and crisis reporting

We approach professional ideology from a discursive perspective, conceiving it as a shared, but continuously contested, collection of values and strategies that characterize the ways in which journalists construct their expertise and socio-political authority, in response to changing external and internal circumstances (e.g. Zelizer, 1992, 1993; Anderson, 2008; Deuze, 2005). Professional ideology thus is a resource on which journalists can lean when they make news decisions, try to relate to and understand the changes that are taking place in the profession, or discursively demarcate their territory (Aldridge and Evetts, 2003: 548–549; Zelizer, 2004a: 33). In journalism studies, creating the boundaries of journalism has been regarded central to justifying the privileged position of a profession (Zelizer, 1992). In the networked era, the boundary work has been engaged with articulating the distinctions

between professional journalists and 'citizen journalists' or 'amateurs' (Bock, 2012; Carlson, 2007; Lewis, 2012; Örnebring, 2012).

Drawing on the work by Zelizer (1992, 1993), Singer (2003), Deuze (2005) and Ahva (2010) it is possible to identify three dimensions of journalists' discursive construction of their profession: *specified skills* (such as story-telling), *norms* (or ethical standards, such as objectivity and public service), and *values* (such as autonomy). The last two dimensions represent the normative and ethical aspects of professionalism, while the first one stands for the experienced aspect of what being a professional journalist means, or what professional journalists do. Zelizer (1992, 1993: 221) has drawn attention to the centrality of narrative and story-telling to the profession, claiming that the journalistic authority is established through the craft of narrative. The norm of objectivity has long been considered a cornerstone of the professional ideology of journalism, together with a set of related concepts such as accuracy, relevance, truthfulness, impartiality, balance and neutrality through which journalists delineate their territory. Furthermore, the value of autonomy is important in discursively structuring the profession. Autonomy refers to the need to resist different forms of internal and external pressures: it is about being 'free' and 'separated' from non-journalistic actors and practices (Ahva, 2010; Schudson, 2005).

Journalists' reporting of crises and disasters involves bearing witness to human tragedy, that is, providing a truthful and a morally compelling narrative of it, and thereby presenting the struggle and suffering of those caught up in such events as a cause of emotion and political action for their publics (Ashuri and Pinchevski, 2009; Chouliaraki, 2006; Tait, 2011). This witnessing is conveyed by the on-site presence (eyewitnessing) and professional skill of storytelling, which weaves images, narrative, and different voices together. In the literature on the witnessing of distant suffering, the basic conviction is that media narratives have the *potential* for shaping our engagement with the distant events and sufferers (e.g.

Boltanski, 1999; Chouliaraki, 2006; Silverstone, 2007). Thus, a crucial link has been established between journalistic narrative and emotion/action, and respectively, between narrative and indifference/nonaction.

The journalistic narratives can then be defined as a discursive arena where journalists can establish their authority by referring to their traditional commitments to impartiality, detachment and objectivity, while also imposing moral demands on their audiences and inviting them to care through poignantly representing the reality of other people's suffering (Cottle, 2009: 107-108; Pantti, Wahl-Jorgensen and Cottle, 2012; Zelizer, 2007). Journalists involved in crisis reporting need to constantly negotiate this paradox between the traditional normative constructions of journalism and the committed narration that underwrites the idea of witnessing (Pantti, Wahl-Jorgensen and Cottle, 2012: 103-109). The understanding of the social roles of journalists covering disasters and conflicts, however, may be in flux in today's rapidly changing communication environment: one claim that has been made is that the journalistic practice of witnessing is today more a matter of journalists making an effort to 'shake' people than reporting in a disinterested, detached manner (e.g. Tumber, 2006).

In adhering to the norms of detached and objective reporting, journalistic claims to truth-telling are based on an asserted fidelity to the 'real' world enabled by particular news practices – among which the journalistic presence ('being there') together with the use of news images is key (e.g. Carlson, 2009; Taylor, 1991; Zelizer, 2007). Traditionally, as Tait (2011: 1232) argues, the concept of eyewitnessing casts the reporter as an unmoved observer who relates events as they actually are back to the news audience. The news industry has long valued images for their eyewitness authority: since they are commonly held to 'provide a mode of reliable eyewitness unavailable in words' (Zelizer, 2007: 418), camera-based images have been indispensable in establishing the objectivity and documentary authority for

journalistic reporting. This is of course a very limited and contested account of the role of images in journalistic storytelling. News images are also seen by the journalists to play the key role in engaging emotions and bringing a strong moral message of the plight of those suffering (Pantti, 2010: 175). Obviously, news images are also authored enterprises which compel attention not only for their ability to tell the 'facts' but also because they are constructed as aesthetically and emotionally powerful (Zelizer, 2004b).

As said, the image has been considered particularly important in the act of bearing witness to disasters and other critical events as an evidentiary proof based on bodily presence that works to reinforce textual discourses and as a tool for engaging audiences emotionally. Today, we argue, the journalistic witnessing is changing as its central source, the eyewitness video footage and photographs, is increasingly coming from citizens (or victims, or activists) already present at the crisis zone. Zelizer (2007) observed how the centrality of 'eyewitnessing' to journalism's professional self-image and claims to authority has shifted historically in relation to journalism's professed role and use of available communication technologies. The most recent evolution in new communication technologies and the connected emergence of 'nonconventional journalists', she wrote, reduce journalism's centrality as eyewitness to major events. As Zelizer argued, the role of the eyewitness is increasingly being 'outsourced' to private citizens with digital cameras, which 'has allowed the news media to claim that they "have been there" as witnesses of events they have not witnessed' (2007: 425).

Since the actuality and objectivity of images has played the key role in guaranteeing the authority of news reporting, the fact that newsrooms today increasingly base their crisis reporting on citizen eyewitness imagery whose origin and reliability have proven difficult to verify raises fresh questions about the extent to which journalists still 'normalize' audience content to fit traditional routines and ideals. Indeed, such non-conventional imagery

directly challenges the professional ideology of journalism, at the heart of which lies 'the belief that journalists, acting in their normative roles, ought to wield gatekeeping control over news content on behalf of society' (Lewis, 2012: 845). Journalism's ideological commitment to control is closely linked to the prized journalistic value of autonomy, which is held to be a safeguard of credibility (e.g. Singer and Ashman, 2009). That is, journalists' ability to make autonomous news judgements independent of other institutions, primarily the state and the market, is viewed as the best guarantee that professionals will be able to fulfil their societal duty to report in the public interest. With the rise of digital networked media, however, the notion of journalistic autonomy is being increasingly contested by 'a specter of parajournalists' (Lewis, 2012: 850) – citizen journalists, bloggers, and others – who collect, filter and provide news rooms with (or publish directly) news material and thus effectively challenge journalists' self-appointed role as exclusive authors of 'factual' information about current events. Specifically, we argue, the unique news value and emotional power assigned to eyewitness footage shot by 'ordinary' people at the scene of crisis events suggests that these visual testimonies have the potential to push the boundaries of the profession of journalism, leading to a rethinking of key principles such as impartiality, verification and professional exclusivity.

Methodological framework

The article is based on a qualitative analysis of interviews conducted with 38 journalists working for main newspapers and broadcasters in Finland (20 interviews) and Sweden (18 interviews). The news organizations selected for the study are the following:

Finland

Public service broadcaster: YLE

Commercial broadcasters: MTV3; Nelonen (Channel Four)

National/regional morning newspapers (quality): *Helsingin Sanomat* (HS), *Aamulehti* (AL)

National evening newspapers (tabloid): *Ilta-Sanomat* (IS)*, Iltalehti* (IL)

Sweden

Public service broadcaster: SVT

Commercial broadcaster: TV4

National morning newspapers (quality): *Dagens Nyheter* (DN)*, Svenska Dagbladet* (SvD)

National evening newspapers (tabloid): *Expressen, Aftonbladet* (AB)

Interviewees were selected on the basis of their experience with processing amateur images, covering crisis events and/or role in developing related policies for their news organization (i.e. online news editors, foreign news editors, visual editors, foreign news reporters and photojournalists).

We do not aim to compare interviews based on their national specificities: A shared professional ideology among journalists that transcends national contexts is assumed. Specifically, both countries belong to what Hallin and Mancini (2004: 11) call the 'Democratic Corporatist Model', characterized by a strong mass circulation press, a high level of journalistic professionalism and a strong idea of the press being an autonomous entity separate from the state. However, it is critical to note that while audience-created photographs and video play a prominent role in today's breaking news stories around the world, there are a variety of journalistic strategies and ethical standards to accommodate non-professional images in crisis reporting (Pantti and Andén-Papadopoulos, 2011). Hence, while we may expect basic similarities among major news organizations in two Nordic countries addressing national audiences, their practices regarding audience images are essentially different from

leading global news organizations such as the BBC World or CNN International. The latter make direct requests for photographs and videos when an international news story breaks, receive them in large numbers and have established special departments, 'UGC hubs' to actively solicit and authenticate eyewitness pictures and other audience material across different media platforms. In Finland and Sweden, citizen imagery from non-domestic crisis events enters the news rooms mainly through the international news agencies, including Reuters, AP, AFP and Eurovision.

Looking at professional ideology as *discursively constructed* served as a tool for analyzing the impact of citizen witnessing on journalists' professional self-perceptions and values. Questions guiding the interviews were: How do journalists speak about their own practices of gathering, interpreting and authenticating citizen eyewitness imagery? How do they assess the value of such imagery in crisis reporting? How do journalists perceive the impact of such material on audience engagement and on the future of crisis reporting and photojournalism? By analyzing both common features and inherent inconsistencies in the ways our interviewees talked about and gave meaning to citizen-contributed imagery, we have identified three meta-discourses or *interpretive repertoires* (Potter and Wetherell, 1987) that all the journalists drew on when reflecting upon the impact of citizen eyewitness imagery on crisis reporting: *resistance*, *resignation* and *renewal*. While these repertoires together constructed the perceived values and threats of citizen imagery to journalists, they each invoked different key components in the articulation of professionalism. The resistance repertoire centred on a set of skills that journalists apply in their work. The resignation repertoire mainly concerned what Singer (2003) terms the 'evaluative dimension' of the profession: journalistic autonomy. Finally, the renewal repertoire was most prominent when journalists talked about the normative dimension of the profession: objectivity and a commitment to public service.

Resistance: things we do better

The resistance repertoire is expressive of traditional journalistic boundary-work, whereby the journalists attempt to demarcate what they do from what citizen photographers do. When assessing the value of citizen-created imagery, the journalists assert their professional expertise with a defensive attitude. This repertoire is used especially when journalists talk about what they *do* in their daily work. It centres on professional expertise, as encapsulated in the traditional roles of journalists as storytellers, gatekeepers, 'fact-checkers', and also as on-site eyewitnesses. Journalists defend their special standing in society, on the one hand, in terms of traditional occupational norms such as objectivity and truthfulness, and, on the other hand, in terms of their ability to tell a 'good story' within the conventions of newsmaking.

In general, journalists take for granted their importance and invaluable skills. Our respondents persistently forefront the ability of the professional journalist to filter information, decide on behalf of the public what is important, analyze and put facts into context and to create compelling stories to which audiences can relate. This is exemplified in categorical statements such as 'they [amateurs] will never be able to compete with us when it comes to telling a story and providing context' (Foreign reporter, SVT). It is also seen in how amateur images are commonly described as providing a broader selection of *raw material* for reporting, or serving as a *starting point* or an *additional element* in the craft of storytelling, which is taken to accentuate the need for professional journalists to provide this crude input with meaning and drama, thus 'refine' it into a finished news product:

> This only gives us even greater ability to tell stories, a broader selection. But it is after all we who make the selection and it is we who decide what to cover and what to show. (Head of foreign news, SVT)

This discourse corresponds with the 'opportunistic model' (Bruno, 2011) of approaching audience material. Journalists are not embracing the idea of sharing authority over the news making process but, rather, stress that citizen images are employed to enrich professional narrative, or to temporarily cover the information gaps until professional journalists arrive on the scene. Our informants agreed that when a news story breaks, the news value of citizen eyewitness recordings takes precedent over the typically poor technical quality of these images, but as the story progresses so does the need for 'good quality' professional images. As one journalist stated, 'After 12 hours we must have a good picture' (Head of online news, YLE). Thus, journalists can easily admit that amateurs beat them in speed and timeliness but not in storytelling, which is carefully explicated as a specific skill of professional journalists. As Zelizer (1992) noted, highlighting the importance of practice in creating journalistic authority, journalists rhetorically legitimate themselves through the craft of narrative.

While the value of citizen eyewitness visuals is fully recognized as materials creating a surrogate presence when events are unexpected or journalists' access is restricted, at the end of the day however, the journalists are not also willing to abandon the authority derived from 'being there'. Our interviewees still believe that citizen accounts are of secondary value to the presence of the professional journalist:

It enhances the trustworthiness of course if you have an image of what has happened. Straightforward events, unexpected events, maybe in places that are difficult to get access to, that is, where there is not an abundance of photographers. […] In those cases it goes without saying that it is the amateur photographers in nine cases out of ten that have the best picture - in the first

phase. After that, the media show up and then other images get produced.[…]

Social media is a help when it comes to getting an image of what is happening

[…] that is not as good as being there, it's never as good as being there, but it is

much better than the alternative. (Chief news editor, SvD)

A closer look at how journalists rhetorically construct their expertise in storytelling shows that a distinct boundary between citizen and professional witnessing was drawn by referring to differences in aesthetic, affective and moral sensibilities. All these issues coalesce in the prevalent discussion about the relative 'closeness' or 'distance' that audience eyewitness recordings are seen to afford to the reporting of crisis events. Many of the journalists subscribe to the claim that citizen imagery provides a heightened sense of presence since, as one interviewee puts it, non-conventional photographers 'take more risks, they are in the thick of it and they do not have to put on an act like journalists but can really be at the very centre of erupting events' (Publishing editor, SVT). At the same time, our interviewees are careful to point out that the kind of straightforward documentation provided by on-site 'amateurs' in effect tends to distance audiences from, rather than bring us closer to, events. Such imagery fails to forge points of connection and emphatic engagement between 'us' and 'them' because of its artlessness – i.e. lack of professional dramaturgy and story-telling features. Audience-submitted visuals are even characterized as form of 'spray painting': the camera is just rolling and somewhat aimlessly following events as they unfold.

In contrast, the interviewed journalists forefront their professional experience and skills in producing precisely that sense of 'closeness' and identification that brings the distant events and suffering of others closer to their national audiences. Hence, the journalists stress that photographic evidence alone is not sufficient to 'bring home' the reality of crisis events. It takes the expertise of professional (photo)journalists to artfully construct close-enough

renderings of events with which viewers can emotionally engage. Professional storytelling techniques, of which personification is a key feature, are thus positioned as a requisite for upholding a mediated ethics of care:

> A professional photographer tries to engage the audience by employing artistic means as well. You make sure to get that lonely child alone in the picture to create an image of this conflict or problem. As a professional you work in a much more conscious way, while the amateur works more to document an occurrence; not by means of this more subtle…artistic way. You have thought through what it is you want to narrate. You have an idea about what it is you want to tell. And then you create an image on the basis of that idea. (Head of foreign news, SVT)

Professionals are also characterized by their moral superiority, that is, their ability to create engaging stories while maintaining an appropriate distance to suffering of others. This characteristic is encapsulated in the discussion of the affectivity of citizen visuals. The emotional state of the amateur photographers is seen to have implications for the nature of their recordings. Amateurs are not selective, and the footage they produce is seen to be based on irrationality and emotional excess rather than on the calm reflection and pre-selected point of view needed for producing morally engaging stories: 'When a person who is angry enough sees a confrontation he takes close-ups of beaten people' (Foreign reporter, YLE). Journalists often express concerns about the graphic representation of suffering in amateur visuals:

> You don't need to have a face in agony or a bleeding open wound to show
>
> someone's pain. [...] An amateur takes the situation as it comes [...] and doesn't
>
> think in terms of dramatic arcs. (Foreign reporter, YLE).

The quote indicates that journalists know to mediate and mitigate suffering in the form of meaningful compositions, whereas amateurs capture suffering without the sense of storytelling, relying instead on the blunt shock-effect of graphic imagery. It also clearly indicates that the description of what professional photojournalists do differently centers less on the principle of truth-telling than on the craft of constructing dramatic and artistry narratives. The journalists in our study make the case that the value of citizen images first and foremost lies in the fact that amateur photographers can provide a swift, preliminary documentation of events. Citizen eyewitness images, then, are seen to have a very basic *evidential value*. Even if such images are seen to convey a unique sense of presence, it is only through the carefully constructed professional narratives that we will get a close-enough picture that allows us to connect with and make sense of the event in question (cf. Silverstone, 2007).

Resignation: things we must accept

The *resignation repertoire* is organized around the idea that journalists are *forced* to modify traditional standards of quality – for example accept blurry, unverified visuals and more graphic content – as a way of adapting to a new digital media environment. While the journalists acknowledge that the extensive reliance on imagery from unknown sources threatens to disrupt the very foundation of epistemic authority on which professional journalism builds, they reluctantly accept the reality of today's world news ecology with its interactive technologies of news dissemination and user-generated content. This is a context

in which journalism cannot distance itself from amateurs. Not including newsworthy visuals would seriously undercut their credibility as a news organization, while including them in effect means giving up the traditional virtue of editorial control. Hence, the repertoire of resignation revolves around the potential of user-generated images to disrupt journalistic autonomy.

The issue of verification is clearly a point of tension among the journalists in this study. On the one hand, they stress that the need for making an independent verification is paramount when it comes to images provided by 'ordinary' citizens from areas of conflict and tension that often comes with an agenda. An oft-perceived value of the onslaught of amateur imagery is indeed that it encourages increased attention to accuracy. As one journalist said, 'It forces us to reflect and be more particular and think through and be able to justify why we do what we do' (News editor, SVT). On the other hand, our respondents persistently point to the difficulties inherent in trying to authenticate this material. First and foremost, none of the news organisations included in this study have any written policy, guidelines or codified praxes for handling this material. It is rather a matter of ad hoc decisions. Many journalists also refer to the lack of resources and personnel as a factor that makes independent verification difficult if not impossible. In this regard, they often compare themselves to global news organisations who have a 'hub' set up specifically to gather, filter and verify user-generated content. Being a small news organisation in a small country, they will never be on a par with big media. The reality is that an overwhelming majority of amateur imagery enter the Finnish and Swedish news rooms through the international wire agencies. This is due to issues of cost, convenience and copyright:

It is of course much simpler to work with news agencies because if there is a problem then it is the agency that is held accountable. There is absolutely a

question of cost […] we use the agencies because we subscribe to them. It is a

material that we do not have to pay extra for. It is a crass reality. (Head of

images, SvD)

In effect, this means that Finnish and Swedish news organisations have

'outsourced' the central practice of verification to the intermediaries of the international news

agencies. While our interviewees contend that they cannot take the material provided by the

news agencies at face value, they simultaneously admit to not having the resources to cross-

check the amateur images and videos provided by the agencies. Our respondents are clearly

not at ease with this situation. On the one hand, they stress that the agencies have a 'very strict

image policy' and are 'highly protective of their credibility and their customers', and thus can

be regarded as trustworthy in themselves. On the other hand, the journalists are well aware

that the agencies in actuality often cannot vouch for the accuracy of this material:

We don't really trust them [amateur images that come through news agencies].

Hey, they themselves don't trust them either. If they label them 'alleged' then

they are in fact saying that 'we don't know but here's the picture – take it or

leave it'. I think it has changed a bit. In the beginning, we were more hesitant to

use amateur images but when it started to look like 'oh damn, nothing else is

coming' and we needed to illustrate stories somehow then we started to use

those amateur images. (Foreign news editor, HS)

The interviewees thus admit to being caught on the horns of a precarious

dilemma. Basing their news reporting on citizen-created images of dubious origin presents

potentially devastating challenges to conventional journalistic notions of credibility as

produced by professional routines (including fact-checking and source criticism); yet, not including such imagery would at times prevent them from reporting anything at all. Their way of solving this dilemma is to bracket the questions of reliability by attributing non-professional footage to third parties - i.e. renowned news agencies - and/or labelling the imagery with disclaimers such as 'cannot be verified' or 'allegedly shows':

> Impartiality and authenticity, the demands put on us are only increasing. And we throw in disclaimers. […] We have strict orders to declare: These are images we got via YouTube. They allegedly show this and this. We cannot control it, but they are the only images we have access to at the moment. (Foreign correspondent, SVT)

A prominent point of tension among the interviewed journalists relates to the challenges that user-generated imagery pose for the professional model of 'objectivity'. The routines of objectivity require balanced and trustworthy sources and personal detachment in reporting. While the journalists in our study subscribe to the objectivity norm in principle, they simultaneously admit to the difficulties of upholding it in practice. The fact that amateurs are often participants in the events they record typically means that they are interested parties. It is rarely the case that people who publicize their testimony to a particular crisis or conflict are simply seeking to be heard. More often they are seeking to get a particular message across and the journalists are well aware of this:

> The motives of Syrian activists are very clear. Of course they try to tell to the world about their suffering as nobody else is doing that. And of course they have their own propaganda motives too – perhaps they even try to make things

bigger as they are. Perhaps they hope to get a similar intervention than in Libya

that happened surprisingly fast and I think that amateur images played a role in

the creation of that international consensus (Foreign news editor, HS)

The extensive reliance on audience-created imagery also means that the journalists often find

themselves pressured to disregard the key routine of balancing the overall reporting:

We have the rules to follow: be balanced, hear both parties. But this is a problem

[…] if we take Syria for example. What we get from there are only amateur

images coming from oppositional groups. We get very little from the other side,

the ruling powers, since we are not allowed to get in there and they do not come

forward themselves. […] It is hard for us to balance if we cannot get both sides.

(News editor-in-chief, SVT)

The journalists thus abide by the demand to employ images as 'evidence' of

critical events, regardless of the acute questions that their dubious origins might pose to their

credibility and impartiality. Hence, while recognizing that the employment of this material

clashes with entrenched notions of professionalism, the journalists in our study admit to

having no choice but giving up responsibility in order to, paradoxically enough, preserve the

news' claim to reality and authority.

Renewal: things that are changing

The *renewal repertoire* stands out in the sense that the journalists challenge the traditional

ideological framework and negotiate an alternative view of what journalism might be. This

repertoire speaks to the normative dimension of professionalism, in that it dwells on the

ability to enhance a professional public service role through the employment of audience eyewitness material. Referred to by one interviewee as 'the best thing that ever happened to journalism' (News editor, SVT), the citizen documentation of crisis events is seen to promote a more democratic journalism which includes more diverse voices and views, and also is more open and transparent than ever before. This, in turn, is believed to increase the credibility of crisis reporting and, ultimately, to reaffirm journalism's commitment to reporting in the public interest.

In practical terms, the significance of citizen images lies first and foremost in their witnessing capacity. The journalists stress that the global flow of images gives news organizations access to a broader spectra of voices and perspectives, more material to choose from and thus also possibilities for more nuanced reporting. In this regard, rather than undermining journalism's claim to truth, the ubiquity and use of citizen material actually enhances the chances for accurate reporting:

> A long time ago there was maybe just one image from an event and everyone went for that image. In reality, you didn't have a clue, it could be wrong, it could be rigged and so forth. Or there was this one person who had been at a place. It should actually be the other way around now, that it increases the chances that we make the right turn, that we do the right thing, that we are objective and truthful.(Head of foreign news, SvD)

The journalists also forefront the possibilities of citizen camera-reporting for counteracting censorship, filling the 'news gaps' that often follow unexpected news events, and, importantly, covering crises that would otherwise remain off the professional radar:

[The biggest benefit of citizen imagery] is absolutely that we get access to events, places and situations we wouldn't otherwise get. Because of that, in my opinion, it [amateur imagery] is a really important and significant journalistic development. There are situations in which [our] cameras are not allowed and then we can't know if it is true what people who where there tell us. An image, and especially a moving image, has always that kind of evidential power that what it shows has most likely happened. (Foreign reporter, YLE)

The journalists thus stress the value of audience visuals as historical documents, which, critically, can help journalists to adequately reconstruct the chain of events in contested circumstances and to interrogate official accounts. A case in point is the mobile footage of the final moments of Gaddafi without which the 'truth' about what happened would have never seen the light of day: 'If they hadn't carried camera phones in their pockets, we would have never seen those pictures and so we would be still speculating as to whether they tried to take him nicely to the court and he just happened to die.' (Foreign news editor, HS)

As noted, the increasing reliance on citizen imagery poses serious challenges to the professional model of 'objectivity'. The journalists, however, make their shortcomings in this regard into a virtue, declaring that the net result of having to negotiate these difficulties is an increased openness on their part. In effect, then, the journalists here are re-negotiating the conventional model of objectivity in favour of the model of transparency (see Pantti and Andén-Papadopoulos, 2011). The latter model entails explaining and being open about the methods and problems of selecting and producing the news, thus allowing the audience to assess journalists' performance:

It has increased the demands that I, in my account, have to be very explicit
about where the images come from, that I have to use them because there are no
alternatives. I cannot verify the images. You have to openly declare that we
cannot control these images and we don'tknow where they come from. And of
course this is problematic, but at the same time it transfers a bit of the
responsibility to the viewer and I think that people… that the YouTube viewer
has become much better and critical in viewing images. I hope that is the case.
(Foreign correspondent; SVT)

The renewal repertoire is centered around the expressions of the importance of being
'humble' and metaphors such as 'coming down from the ivory tower' which suggest that
dealing with the citizen images involves a re-negotiation of professional attitudes and roles.
On the one hand, journalists refer to the need to come to terms with the fact that they are no
longer alone in producing 'the first draft of history', about the fact that they provide but one
'version' of events. On the other hand, the 'humbleness' talk refers to the increasing need to
ground journalism's legitimacy on a participatory model of journalism:

This is our reporting, this is the second-hand reporting. We have become more
transparent in the sense that [we clarify that] we provide one view of how we
perceive what is happening, here you can find more images. --- It increases the
credibility and it testifies to humbleness when faced with the difficulties of
providing an accurate puzzle. So all of this is about making it easier for the
reader to understand what has transpired. (SvD, chief news editor)

The journalists persistently value the alternative and often varied perspectives on crisis events afforded by the increased use of audience eyewitness material, embracing them as democratizing interventions. A reporter at SVT, among others, asserted: 'It feels like a democratic gain if more people participate. It might sound pompous, but that is really how it feels'. This is also to say that the journalists explicitly question the importance of objectivity in the context of crisis reporting, pitting it against the norm of truth-telling, non-elite sourcing and public service commitment of journalism. For instance, one journalist reflected on the need to suspend the criterion of objectivity in the interests of capturing diverse viewpoints and voices in the context of the Arab uprisings:

> I don't see it [objectivity] as a problem regarding these kinds of events, because the alternative is that we have nothing from them. Or we would only have nice pictures from the regime in which the president is drinking coffee in his neat palace. (Foreign news editor, HS)

The discourse on amateur images is also employed to critically reflect on, and at times challenge, the reigning ideas regarding the art of professional storytelling. Journalists recognize that their long-standing, prearranged conventions of depicting events might not, after all, be the best way to render the stories of distant others a cause of concern to today's news audiences.

> You can be a snobbish and a cynical, arrogant intellectual and say that 'they [audiences] are stupid – me and my colleagues are the ones who know how it should be done', but this is not a particularly useful approach. […] All the signals from the amateur world and also commercial contexts where they have adopted

the amateurish way of telling a story - it creates a pressure also on us, in public

service media, to keep up with this world. I think that the amateurish - which is a

bit clumsy, a bit ugly … jump cuts and badly exposed images - it lowers the

guard, it makes people feel perhaps …more engaged. (Foreign reporter, SVT)

The journalists thus express a readiness to revise their ideals for what makes a compelling

story in order to build credibility with and engage today's audiences. It follows that they have

to modify their traditional standards of quality, and accept anarchic, blurry, emotive and

fractional visuals as a way of adapting to a rapidly evolving media ecology, characterized

among other things by the 'amateurization' that the YouTube and other social media channels

have fostered:

New generations are growing up that presumably will have a different visual

language and other visual preferences. […] It is possible that there is a significant

element of amateurism in their ways of appreciating images. They watch

YouTube a lot, and the internet…and what is considered good or bad, what is

premeditated and systematized and what is spontaneous - maybe the difference is

not as important anymore. (Foreign reporter, SVT)

Conclusions

Our study has identified three interpretative repertoires (resistance, resignation, and renewal)

drawn upon by our respondents when asked to reflect on the relative risks and benefits

associated with the use of citizen (audio)visuals in their reporting of crisis events.

Importantly, all of our respondents articulated all three repertoires – with varying degrees of

emphasis and embracement. This supports other research showing that journalists are

conflicted about how to redefine themselves (or not) for new technological, economic and cultural conditions (e.g. Robinson, 2010). The analysis of the in-depth interviews brings to light many of tensions inherent in the articulation of journalistic professionalism. Even as they unanimously embrace citizen eyewitness material as a positive opportunity for journalism to reaffirm a commitment to reporting in the public interest, the journalists struggle to recast their authority via boundary negotiations that entail a composite, give-and-take reconciliation of 'the professional – participatory tension' (Lewis, 2012). Even so, overall our results hint at a rethinking among the interviewed journalists that indeed suggests a 'slow philosophical shifting' (Robinson, 2010: 140) in which the professional logic of content control is being reconfigured into what Lewis (2012: 851) describes as 'a willingness to see audiences on a more peer level, to appreciate their contributions, and to find normative purpose in transparency and participation'.

The resistance repertoire indicates that journalists' boundary-work is at its fiercest on the domain of their perceived expertise. Journalists easily articulate the difference between professionals and amateurs by referring to their specific skills and competence, and in particular to their skill in constructing compelling narratives that provide an indispensable resource for citizen understanding and moral responsibility. The resignation repertoire shows that journalists feel pressured to loosen editorial control and standards, as a way of adapting to the amateurization of media culture and, in particular, global outpouring of citizen news images of sensational news value but unknown truth value. While the issue of verification is something that news rooms worldwide are struggling with, employing various strategies for offsetting the threats such imagery presents for their credibility, this study points to the key differences between global and (peripheral) national news organisations. While the former to a greater extent have the resources and personnel to subscribe and vet this material in-house, the latter decidedly do not. In effect, the Finnish and Swedish are relying on a 'double

outsourcing': the key role of the eyewitness is increasingly farmed out to anonymous citizen journalists and other actors, and the key practice of verification is subcontracted to international news agencies.

The renewal repertoire suggests that the emerging logic of openness to participation is most pronounced in relation to the abstract norms of ethics. This repertoire signals a revising of the occupational ideology of journalism, into one that embraces fresh values, such as open participation (i.e. seeing citizen eyewitness visuals as a democratic intervention), transparency (seen (en)forced by the use of citizen material) and 'amateurism' (changing the notion that there is a single truth to be relayed by journalists) that are more compatible with today's networked media culture. It has been stated that the potential of citizen witnessing lies with the insertion of ordinary (distant) voices in Western structures of journalism, and thus with the challenge to longstanding hierarchies of human life (Chouliaraki, 2012). Among Finnish and Swedish journalists, it is embraced as a major contribution to the visibility of crisis events around the world: as a means of diminishing the number of natural disasters and political crises that otherwise would go unreported and unnoticed by the world. Besides contributing to the representation of crisis events, it is also seen to increase the capacity of the national media to involve 'us' emotionally and politically – but only when incorporated into a professionally crafted journalistic narrative. 'We can now show a specific event kind of like through the viewer's own eyes', as one foreign reporter put it. As we have shown, the sense of professional distinctiveness, in the context of crisis reporting, is at its strongest when it comes to their craft of storytelling, rather than to their normative roles, and the incorporation of citizen produced images is seen to add to their crafted narratives, enhancing their witnessing and the invitation to care.

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