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Abstract

This study is built around the appointment of a dedicated "conversation manager" at the Flemish public broadcaster VRT. We focus on (1) the impact of the conversation manager on Twitter activity of the viewers and (2) the impact of the tweeting audience in the newsroom. Our framework combines journalistic as well as social media logics in Bourdieu's field framework, for which we combine Twitter data and newsroom inquiry. The network analysis of Twitter activity shows the impact of the conversation manager, although his activities are primarily guided by traditional journalistic values. In turn, the tweeting audience impacts newsroom practices, predominantly as an indicator of audience appreciation. To conclude, social media data further complicates the definition and understanding of "the public".

Keywords: Twitter, journalism, television, audience, field theory, media logic, network analysis

Introduction

Audiences adopt social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook to comment on programs and interact with other audience members or even producers or the cast of programs (Harrington, Highfield, and Bruns, 2013; Highfield, Harrington, and Bruns, 2013; Wohn and Na, 2011; Wood and Baughman, 2012). Within the newsroom, these platforms can serve as a bridge between news producers and consumers, reflecting the development of journalism towards "an opening up of the conversation" (Deuze and Fortunati, 2011: 167). In this paper, we investigate the impact of a conversation manager at the Flemish public service broadcaster (from now: PSB) VRT. In essence, and as we will argue below, the appointment of a dedicated conversation manager intends to construct an interactive and mutually beneficent relation between the program makers of the current affairs debate program 'Terzake' and its viewing audience. This function was created only recently at the VRT and epitomizes the newsroom's efforts towards journalism as a two-way process. In this respect, it fits within a broader variety of initiatives under the labels collaborative and participatory journalism (e.g. Canter, 2013; Domingo et al., 2008).

Regarding the appointment of the conversation manager, it is fruitful to recall the Twitter quarrel instigating this decision. During one episode, a tweeting viewer questioned the journalistic relevance of the program by comparing it to a Flemish tabloid magazine. Although critique is not uncommon and usually neglected, this time, the program makers

told the respective user to find another waste of his time. Both on Twitter as well as in the mainstream media, this quarrel was framed as a "bad communication practice" and 'Terzake' was denounced for its arrogance (for which it apologized later).[1] The case is illustrative of the challenges social media bring forth, as the news production process can be interrupted continuously and publically by non-elite actors (Chadwick, 2013). Nevertheless, scholars have observed the continuing nature of conventional journalistic practices in relation to audience material in the newsroom (e.g. Domingo, 2008; Singer, 2005; Williams, Wardle, and Wahl-Jorgensen, 2011). On the other hand, audience feedback in the form of web metrics is found to influence news selection practices (e.g. Anderson, 2011; Tandoc, 2014).

The case study we present here combines offline data (via newsroom inquiry) and online data (via Twitter analysis), which to date have often been presented separately. The focus of our study is twofold, as we aim to understand (1) how the conversation manager impacts Twitter activity and concurrently (2) how the tweeting audience impacts newsroom practices. Related, our conceptual framework integrates journalistic and social media logics within Bourdieu's field framework.

The interrelation between the tweeting audience and the journalistic field

Concerning the rise of social media in relation to PSBs, van Dijck and Poell (2014) discuss tensions related to the encounter of "the social" and "the public". In short, the latter refers to the institutional mission and derived journalistic practices while the former refers to social media platforms and their logics. Below, we highlight relevant literature on journalistic and social media logics in the light of the phenomenon we are studying.

The paper departs from journalism as a social institution, by emphasizing its relation to other fields in society (Shoemaker & Reese, 2013). The internal workings of the journalistic field are described by concepts such as news media logic (Esser, 2013; Hallin and Mancini, 2004), journalistic doxa and habitus (Schulz, 2007; Tandoc, 2014). Hallin and Mancini (2004) define *professional* aspects of the news media logic, which entail the distinct norms journalists adhere to for selecting material, double-checking sources, determining news value and objectivity and neutrality from the political field. In particular, the journalistic judgment of newsworthiness is understood as a *doxa* (Schulz, 2007), i.e. an enduring convention that is tacit and undisputed within the field (Bourdieu, 2005). Studies on the integration of audience contributions in the newsroom suggest that journalists accept and embrace audience material (Domingo et al., 2008; Jönsson and Örnebring, 2011), although it is still subject to "traditional" journalistic practices (Chung, 2007; Domingo, 2008; Hermida and Thurman, 2008).

Early ethnographic research has shown that journalists ignore, if not reject, feedback from the audience (e.g. Gans, 1979). With the emergence of "audience information systems" (Napoli, 2011), audience feedback has become visible and measurable. Nowadays, online audience metrics are incorporated in the newsroom and alter journalistic norms and routines as editors seek to further increase web traffic (Tandoc, 2014). These audience metrics are grounded in the logic of "datafication", i.e. the facilitation of real-time feedback via aggregated analytics (e.g. the number of shares) (van Dijck and Poell, 2013). Linked to datafication, software algorithms reflect a key characteristic of new, digital media (Manovich, 2001). Computer algorithms enhance the asymmetrical nature of content distribution (and popularity), as a few messages receive a lot of attention and most remain unnoticed (Baym, 2013; Klinger and Svensson, 2014).

Besides online audience behavior as aggregated measures, we understand "rapid responses" (Elmer, 2012) (e.g. via Twitter) to televised events as additional input in the accelerating news cycle (Chadwick, 2013). Hence, contributions of individual audience members become visible. Klinger and Svensson (2014) understand the logic of content production on social media through concepts as "produsage" (Bruns, 2008), which reflects news as an ongoing process of evaluation and discussion, open to new participants in the debate. Domingo's (2008) newsroom inquiries have shown journalists embrace this ideal (i.e. the inclusion of more non-elite voices in the debate), but not necessarily put this into practice as the division between news production and interactivity management

remains. In addition, scholars argue that social media users reflect a self-selected, hence, unrepresentative sample of the audience, let alone the general public (Baym, 2013; Klinger and Svensson, 2014; Napoli, 2011).

In short, we recognize both journalistic logics and social media logics, as distinct yet interrelated principles. We rely on Bourdieu's (1984, 1988) field theory to conceptualize the *mutual* adaption of journalistic logics and social media logics. Whereas the journalistic field has been discussed extensively (e.g. Benson & Neveu, 2005), the appropriation of field theory on web 2.0 (Song, 2010) and social network technologies in particular is still emerging (Papacharissi & Easton, 2013; Author). Bourdieu (1993) uses the metaphor of "refraction" to define how fields refract external influences (i.e. external logics) through their own logics. This metaphor emphasizes the *indirect* impact of external logics, hence, the impact of social media on the journalistic field is co-defined by journalistic logics and vice versa. The combination of our two research questions, presented below, exemplifies our relational framework.

RQ1: How does the presence and activity of the conversation manager impact communication patterns on Twitter?

RQ2: How does the tweeting audience, as internalized via the conversation manager, impact newsroom practices?

Research design

We depart from a case study approach in the sense that we provide a multi-faceted understanding of a purposefully selected phenomenon (Yin, 2009). The study focuses on the role, meaning and impact of a conversation manager in a single organization, more specifically the newsroom department of the Flemish PSB, VRT. In particular, we focus on the TV program 'Terzake', which is aired from Monday to Friday on the in-depth channel of the VRT, called 'Canvas'. Since 1994, 'Terzake' covers debates and interviews with studio guests (mostly politicians) and news correspondents.

Although 'Terzake' attracts a relatively limited number of viewers (e.g. compared to the daily news bulletin), it has a lively and critical Twitter audience (as the Twitter quarrel illustrated). The tweeting viewer did not receive systematic attention until the editorial staff decided to "offer" one of its existing staff members to become a dedicated social media manager in charge of the promotion of the program and interaction with the audience via social media. To date, no other news and current affairs TV program has decided to equip its team with a conversation manager. In this respect, it is a pilot project, in exploration of the added value of interacting with the tweeting audience, but without specific goals or targets that need to be attained. Our fieldwork took place in December 2013, i.e. about two months after the conversation manager was appointed. In addition, we rely on Twitter data reflecting the period before and after the appointment of the conversation manager.

Below, we outline the different information sources on which the description and understanding of our study is built. We combine in-depth interviews, participant-observations and a network analysis of Twitter conversation on the program. We approach Twitter from "small data" perspective (Stephansen and Couldry, 2014) in which a mixed-method approach allows the validation and contextualization of online behavior.

Interviews and participant-observations in the newsroom

Both semi-structured as well as open-ended interviews (i.e. "ethnographic interviews", Tracy, 2013) were conducted. The semi-structured interviews cover the role of social media and the conversation manager in the newsroom. The interviews took place in the news department (albeit in a separate room) and lasted about 60 to 90 minutes. The open-ended interviews took place during the participatory observations in the newsroom and focus on the clarification of specific choices and practices. Hence, most of time we talked with the conversation manager himself. In addition, the daily 'Terzake' crew consists of a managing editor, technical staff and about four journalists of which one is the on-screen host of the program. We conducted interviews with the editor-in-chief and the program host. Further, we interviewed the online news manager of the overall news department. To summarize, our four interviewees are relevant actors with distinct roles, positioned at different levels of the hierarchy but all situated within the same newsroom.

In our observer-as-participant role (Lindlof and Taylor, 2010), we attended editorial meetings, observed interactions in the newsroom (from and to the conversation manager in particular) and followed the conversation manager in his daily routines. In total, observations took place on two non-consecutive weekdays, chosen after negotiation with the editor-in-chief and based on the potential social media impact of the program's topics. Observations took place from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m., since the program is aired live at 8 p.m. and the conversation manager also engages on social media after the program is aired. Given the limited observation period, our efforts predominantly serve to enrich the interviews and in extension, the conversation manager's online behavior. In addition to the field notes, we retrieved additional data sources (Yin, 2009) such as internal guidelines for social media conduct, e-mail interaction with Twitter users and print screens of their paid-for social media monitoring tool, i.e. 'Engagor' (https://engagor.com).

The data sources were analyzed using NVivo, a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS). We analyzed perceptions, practices and actions in the light of the different logics we ascribed to the journalistic field and social media. We assessed and coded the data in an iterative fashion, reflecting an interplay of inductive and deductive coding (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). In the text, we use abbreviations for interviewee identification (reflecting their first and last name), and if useful, we mention their professional function. Concretely, we define the conversation manager (N.V.), the

online news manager for the entire newsroom (E.R.), the editor-in-chief (K.L.) and the program host (K.C.).

Network and user analysis of the Twitter debate on the program

For the analysis of the social media data, we focus on Twitter as it is the predominant platform through which discussion on the program takes place. The program makers provide on-screen prompts of the dedicated hashtag '#TerzakeTV' and actively communicate through the official Twitter account '@TerzakeTV'. It is through the official Twitter account (which exists since 2012) that the conversation manager engages in the Twitter debate.

Data collection is based on the presence of the keyword 'TerzakeTV', which returns all messages *from* and *to* the '@TerzakeTV' Twitter account as well as Twitter messages that contain the official hashtag '#TerzakeTV'. Although this approach is not comprehensive, we study users that deliberately and publically associate themselves with the program, which is common practice in audience research on Twitter (Deller, 2011; Highfield et al., 2013; Wohn and Na, 2011). Based on this sample of Twitter messages, we constructed networks of users tweeting about 'Terzake'. We collected data during a four-week period *before* the appointment of the dedicated conversation manager and a four-week period *after*. Data collection occurred within the 2013 fall TV season and reflects 20 episodes per period. Hence, we cover 40 episodes in total.

Since we are particularly interested in the *conversation* part of the Twitter debate, the construction of the networks is built on a particular Twitter convention, i.e. the use of the @-sign followed by the addressee's username. Papacharissi and de Fatima Oliveira (2012) refer to this convention as an "addressivity marker", which allows the user to communicate to a specific other user. These markers can be placed at the beginning of the message (i.e. a reply), within the message (i.e. a mention) or in the form of a retweet. We constructed networks for each of the specific conventions (i.e. mentions, replies and retweets) as well as the combination of these conventions both *before* and *after* the appointment of the conversation manager, resulting in eight networks in total. We used the Social Network Analysis (SNA from now) software UCINET (Borgatti, Everett, and Freeman, 2002) to analyze the respective networks. Network analysis served to understand the changes in user activity as well as the relative position of the program's official account (i.e. '@TerzakeTV') after the appointment of the conversation manager. The measures are clarified throughout the discussion of the results.

Further, we provide user insights for the reply, mention and retweet networks *before* and *after* the conversation manager. More specifically, Twitter users were coded into four categories, which serve to enrich our understanding of the respective networks as well as the interview data. The four user categories we defined, are the following: (1) politicians and political parties, (2) media and journalists, (3) opinion leaders, i.e. people that have been staged in traditional media for their expertise and professional opinion at least once

and (4) non-established/non-affiliated users, i.e. users that are not part of a news organization/formally affiliated with a political party. We relied on the users' public profile data to categorize the actors. Similar user categories and a similar coding procedure have been applied in a study on Austria's public Twittersphere (Ausserhofer & Maireder, 2013). In our study, the first and the third user category reflect actors that are staged in the program, while the second category reflects colleagues or competing journalists who are promoted or involved in the discussion. The fourth category best fits the non-elite voices with whom 'Terzake' wishes to build an interactive and mutually beneficent relation.

The appointment of the conversation manager and his impact on the Twitter debate

Notwithstanding the business-oriented feel of the function title, a former journalist within the newsroom was appointed for the job (and not an external professional within the field of social media and communication management). Acquaintance with the TV program and in extension, an understanding of "the journalistic game" (Schultz, 2007) are perceived to be very important. Concerning socio-demographics and personal characteristics, Tandoc (2014) found that age, self-though skills and interest co-define involvement with digital audience metrics in the newsroom. Here also, we are dealing with a young male journalist, who has some basic technical skills (e.g. cutting parts of a video fragment to include them in Twitter messages) and interest in/affiliation with social media. Whereas the other journalists in the newsroom have a Twitter account and consult

it in relation to their journalistic work, the conversation manager is the one pro-actively promoting the program and reacting to questions and thoughts uttered via social media. Journalist and program host K.C. suggests the following:

> "*I cannot and will not engage with every question or remark that is uttered on Twitter. I don't consider this to be part of my tasks as a program host. I have discussed this with N.V.* [the conversation manager]. *Moreover, the editor-in-chief of the VRT news department expressed a similar attitude.*

In this respect, we acknowledge the "segregated integration" of social media in the newsroom, as practices are centered around the conversation manager rather than being rolled out in the newsroom (see also Domingo, 2008). On a more strategic level, the conversation manager contributes to the VRT's general endeavor "*to enlarge the digital footprint*" (E.R., online news manager for the entire news department). This aim is reactive to the changing media landscape and consumption patterns, such as the use of mobile internet devices. As E.R. further explains "*It is our duty to inform the Flemish population. If they are consuming content via Twitter and Facebook, then that is where we need to be."*

In the first part of the results section, we focus on the conversation manager's footprint on Twitter as we discuss user activity before and after his appointment.

Since the appointment of the conversation manager, the overall conversation network grew substantially. The number of users increased with 44% and the number of ties (i.e. connections between two users) with 65%. More specifically, 660 additional users entered the conversation and 3198 additional connections were found between the tweeting viewers, resulting in a network of 2145 unique users and 8103 connections.

Below, we distinguish between outgoing user activity (i.e. sending messages) and incoming user activity (i.e. receiving messages). The overall growth in network size is discussed along these two lines because we constructed *directed* Twitter networks. A directed Twitter network distinguishes between the users that *address* other users and the users that *are addressed* by other users.

The relative changes in outgoing user activity

First, we understand how the overall growth of the network relates to changes in outgoing user activity. In particular, we compare the average number of outgoing messages per user in the network before and after the appointment of the conversation manager. In addition, we discuss how outgoing activity of the official 'Terzake' account has changed.

In network terminology, outgoing messages are defined as "out-degree". For each of the users in the network we calculated their average out-degree, i.e. the proportion of other users in the network the user is connected to. In Figure 1, we present average out-degree per user *before* (i.e. the light, dotted line) and *after* (i.e. the dark, solid line) the

appointment of the conversation manager. Both lines show the inevitable "long tail" of user participation (Shirky, 2008), as a few users address a lot of other users in the network and a lot of users are connected to very few other users in the network.

[Figure 1 about here]

Both the shape of the lines and the highest average out-degree scores are very similar before and after the appointment of the conversation manager (i.e. 0.18 and 0.20). The Twitter user scoring the highest average out-degree (i.e. 0.20 or 20%) provides no user description, except a picture and a symbol indicating the user's fanaticism for the Flemish nationalist party N-VA.

In the light of our user analysis below, we discuss how the position of '@TerzakeTV' changed before and after the appointment. We distinguish between the replies, mentions and retweets. For the *reply* convention, we find the most notable increase. In absolute number, 'Terzake' sent 106 reply messages (compared to 19 before) and was able to reach 17% of the users (compared to 3% before). The same goes for *mentions*, which show an increase in reach from 4% to 16% (or in absolute numbers: 67 additional mentions). Compared to replies and mentions, *retweet* behavior shows a remarkably moderate increase, i.e. from 2% to 4% (or in absolute numbers: 31 additional retweets).

Below, we account for the diversity in users that are addressed by the 'Terzake' Twitter account. Table 1 shows that replies are predominantly directed to the non-established and

non-affiliated users (although this decreases after the appointment of the conversation manager in favor of replies to journalists). Concerning mentions and retweets, we observe that journalists are addressed most often. Remarkably, politicians' messages are not retweeted, as the redistribution of their opinions possibly conflicts with the impartiality of information, which is a core principle of public service broadcasting.

[Table 1 about here]

In general, the increase in outgoing messages does not lead to fundamentally different practices. We discuss underlying strategy and rationale of these actions in the second section of the results, reflecting the findings of our newsroom inquiry.

The relative changes in incoming user activity

Second, we understand how the overall growth of the network relates to changes in incoming user activity (or "in-degree"). Again, we understand activity as a relative measure to grasp changes in the network before and after the appointment of the conversation manager. In addition, we discuss the position of '@TerzakeTV' and how its relative number of incoming messages has changed after the appointment of the conversation manager.

In Figure 2, we present average in-degree per user *before* (i.e. the light, dotted line) and *after* (i.e. the dark, solid line) the appointment of the conversation manager. Although the

shape of the curves in Figure 1 is similar to the ones in Figure 2, average in-degree scores is much higher. In Figure 2, the top score is 0.87, whereas for outgoing activity, it is 0.20 (see Figure 1).

[Figure 2 about here]

The Twitter account scoring the highest average in-degree (i.e. 0.87) in Figure 2 is '@TerzakeTV'. After the appointment of the conversation manager, 'Terzake' is addressed by 87% of users in the network (compared to 52% before). As Figure 2 shows, we are again confronted with the "long tail" of user participation (Shirky, 2008). Few users are addressed by a lot of others in the network and a lot of users are addressed by very few users in the network.

Below we discuss how the position of 'Terzake' changed before and after the appointment. We distinguish between the replies, mentions and retweets. For *retweets*, we find the most notable increase. Since the advent of the conversation manager, 34% of the users in the network *retweeted* messages sent by 'Terzake', compared to 9% before. In absolute numbers, 'Terzake' received 360 retweets, reflecting an increase of 279 messages. Secondly, 'Terzake' received reply messages from 85% of the users in the network, compared to 37% before the appointment of the conversation manager. In absolute numbers, the conversation manager received 387 replies, reflecting an increase of 247 messages. This is still in sharp contrast with the 106 reply messages 'Terzake'

sent. Last, the number of mentions shows the most moderate increase, i.e. from 52% to 87% (or from 281 to 366 incoming messages).

In Table 2, we provide an overview of user diversity for the incoming messages. Again, we find little difference before and after the conversation manager. However, Table 2 looks very different from Table 1 in the sense that predominantly non-affiliated/non-established users address 'Terzake'. In contrast, Table 1 showed that 'Terzake' predominantly mentions or retweets established users (i.e. media/journalists) or affiliated users (i.e. politicians/parties). Hence, concerning user diversity, we find structural differences between the incoming Twitter messages and outgoing Twitter activity for the 'Terzake' account.

[Table 2 about here]

Overall, the above presented measures indicate a few core ideas and trends. The overall growth in network size predominantly relates to changes in *incoming* user activity. In particular, 'Terzake' strengthened its position and becomes a very central actor in the network. However, the increase in incoming activity only partly translates in an increase in outgoing activity. The proportion *in-degree/out-degree* (i.e. incoming messages/outgoing messages) rose from 13% to 27%. Hence, asymmetry in communication patterns between the program and its tweeting audience has decreased. In addition, we encounter several evolutions for each of the Twitter conventions, in

particular for replies versus retweets. The same can be noted about user diversity: outgoing retweets are used for media actors and mentions for political actors, while replies serve to react to non-established/non-affiliated actors. In contrast, for incoming messages, we notice the overall dominance of the latter.

We resume the discussion of the interview data below, starting with the understanding of the network structure from the journalists' point of view.

Journalists' perceptions on the network structure and its users

The networks we constructed, are internalized within the newsroom through the perceptions of the journalists. In order to understand how this "translation" takes place, we asked participants to estimate (1) the size of the tweeting audience and (2) the amount of interactivity taking place in the network. Remarkably, they all *under*estimate the actual number of users tweeting about the program and *over*estimate the number of interactive Twitter messages (i.e. replies, mentions and retweets). Journalists recall the more active users (sometimes even by name) but seem to "forget" the long tail of occasional contributors. In addition, the large amount of personal messages 'Terzake' receives, is mistaken as a general characteristic for the entire network.

With the above in mind, we asked the interviewees to describe the profile of the "average" Twitter user in terms of socio-demographics and personality characteristics. The interviewees all perceive that the average tweeting viewer is a white, middle-aged man

with a rather conservative or right-wing agenda. Concerning personality traits, we are allegedly dealing with a critical, news-savvy person with a sense of (dark) humor and a touch of narcissism. Moreover, these characteristics overlap with their conceptualization of the medium as such (as we discuss below). We understand how journalists denote Twitter when they make the comparison between Twitter and Facebook as social media platforms. For Twitter, we found references as *"immature"*, *"sour"* or *"anonymous*", compared to *"feminine"*, *"cozy"* or *"friendly"* for Facebook. Nevertheless its negative charges, the added value of Twitter in the newsroom remains incontestable. The quote below illustrates that the integration of social media in the newsroom is characterized by "the duality of suspicion and attraction" (José van Dijck & Poell, 2014). On the one hand, its possibilities are recognized but on the other hand, reluctance and precaution are uttered as well.

> **K.L., journalist & program host:** *Twitter is very immature and way too blunt. It's a bunch of adolescents.* [later during the interview] *When I read the reactions on Twitter during the program, I notice that amongst the noise, there is some interesting thinking going on.*

In our second and final results section, we discuss how the tweeting audience impacts newsroom practices and contextualize the numbers presented above.

The internalization of the tweeting audience and its impact on journalistic practices

First, audience feedback comes in the form of aggregated analytics. In essence, this reflects the number of messages or posts about the program on social media. Via a paid-for monitoring tool (called 'Engagor'), social media traffic is captured and visualized in graphs. It allows program makers to understand social media buzz on the program, defined as *"engagement"* (K.L., the editor-in-chief & N.V., the conversation manager). In addition, the tool defines *"the influencers"* (E.R., the online news manager for the entire news department) in the debate, reflecting the selection of the most active viewers we discussed above. Journalists adopt the terminology as defined by this monitoring tool to make sense of and attribute value to the audience. The concept of engagement is emblematic for the "post-exposure audience market", but still lacks a uniform definition and interpretation on how it can be valuable as a comparative measure within the industry (Napoli, 2011). Moreover, the lack of transparency on aggregated metrics obscures and supports the inevitable inequality in social media participation, rather than controlling for it.

Within the newsroom, audience feedback via 'Engagor' predominantly functions "*to signal debate*" (N.V.). Alike viewing rates, the audience is conceptualized as a quantified and aggregated mass. The interviewees report that, to date, no connection is made between viewing rates, as measures of exposure, and Twitter traffic, as measures of post-exposure, i.e. engagement. Whereas the former is based on a representative sample of users, defined in terms of socio-demographics, social media (and Twitter in particular)

do not provide such demographics. Nevertheless, program makers argue that social media allows them to inform target groups which are different from the viewing audience in terms of socio-demographics. In particular, online/social media news consumers are understood as younger populations, as it fits the VRT's core mission to reach both general and specific audiences, such as young people (VRT, 2012).

Further, *"signaling debate"* is understood in "softer" (i.e. qualitative) terms: *"Diversity in reactions and users… The fact that it moves people, that it fits with the topics they perceive interesting"* (N.V.). This evaluation is defined intuitively, by consulting the actual Twitter messages via the free service tool 'TweetDeck' (i.e. a tool for real-time tracking and organization of Twitter streams). Based on our observations, 'Engagor' allows for a daily overview of the program's social media traction, whereas 'TweetDeck' receives more continued attention. Actual contributions (i.e. content of the messages) are perceived more informative, and in this respect, more significant than the aggregated numbers (e.g. web analytics) (Baym, 2013; Hermida and Thurman, 2008). In our case study, no pre-defined goals were defined for social media buzz and a systematic comparison between different programs was not at stake. In this respect, the use of social media metrics is different from web metrics in the form of clicks for specific articles on online news websites (e.g. Anderson, 2011).

Second, we describe communication between the program makers and the audience on Twitter in a Q&A format. The user analysis (as presented in Table 1) shows that replies,

rather than mentions and retweets, are used to interact with the tweeting viewers. The network analysis showed asymmetry between the number of replies 'Terzake' received and sent out. Below, we account for this mismatch.

> **Interviewer**: *How consistent are you, in terms of replies to Twitter user?*
>
> **N.V., the conversation manager**: *When someone asks us what music is played during the program, I answer right away. On the other hand, it is impossible for me to answer all questions. As program makers, we choose between various topics or guests and these choices cannot be explained in 140 characters… and that is something we struggle with.*
>
> **K.L., the editor-in-chief**: *If you want to be recognized as an opinion-leading and relevant program, you need to have the guts to reply criticism and engage in the public debate. I think we tackled some of those negative comments pretty well, such as the often-made accusation of a left-wing bias in our selection of topics and politicians.*

As the conversation manager states, functional questions (e.g. "What is the name of the song used in episode X?") or technical issues (e.g. "I can't find episode X on the website.") are uncontested in the sense that these comments do not address journalistic practices. Hence, replies to these comments are evident. Further, replies to comments that do address journalistic practices, e.g. the selection of topics and guests, are understood as

a means to provide accountability and transparency (Lasorsa, Lewis, and Holton, 2012). Nevertheless, the conversation manager pointed to platform-specific as well as journalistic reasons to refrain from replying. As the quote above shows, the 140-character limit permits proper responses, as it does not allow the nuance and elaboration that is needed to account for one's actions. In addition, the anonymity and alleged subjectivity of users and their messages are also reasons to ignore comments or critique. For example, the use of a pseudonym prohibits proper identity control, which is considered problematic. In addition, when a user name and description is provided but contains a clear ideological affiliation (e.g. Flemish Nationalist), critique on the program is regarded as being subjective. Hence, the conversation manager is reluctant to answer these critiques, as they are not uttered by impartial actors in the debate. Professional norms of objectivity and neutrality are extended on Twitter (and its users), as the program makers aim to secure their conventional position within the public debate beyond the boundaries of the TV format. We illustrate this with a reply message to an anonymized user's critique that one of the proponents was getting too much talk time: *"@user_X we bring both sides of the story: both the mayor's and the youngsters' point of view. Afterwards you can make an informed judgment yourself"*.

As briefly mentioned by K.L. (the editor-in-chief of 'Terzake') in the quote above (cf. "*It's a bunch of adolescents"*), journalists utter frustration about the overload of negative reactions they read on Twitter. More specifically, they feel as if the tweeting audience

often challenges them. We consider these challenges to be explicit (i.e. through critical or offensive comments) as well as implicit (i.e. through the general subjectivity and opinionated discussion that characterizes the Twitter debate). However, there is no point were these challenges become challenging in the sense that core values of objectivity and neutrality are not negotiated. In contrast, these challenges make journalists very aware of their professional identity, which they confirm in their communication activities.

Third, we discuss the tweeting audience as a potential news source. User contributions that lead or add to stories are considered highly valuable (Williams, Wahl-Jorgensen, and Wardle, 2011). In practice, the retrieval of useable content is very low, as only two concrete cases were presented to us whereby audience members actually contributed to a story. In this respect, newsgathering via users is "a by-product", reflecting its exceptional character (Hermida and Thurman, 2008). The quote below reveals the hybrid role of Twitter users, as in practice, the different roles and meanings we demarcated above are in constant exchange.

> **K.L., the editor-in-chief:** *The example about 'De Crem' is obviously very useful information.* ['De Crem': information from a tweeting viewer on previous actions of an invited guest, which can be used in the light of the interview taking place in the studio]. *When people tweet about the shoes of Lieven* [one of the hosts] *that is not very useful, although you might pass that advice to the stylist. When users are tweeting how great or touching a particular story is, this*

information is also useful because it is about validation and collective agreement, whereas information on 'De Crem' is about knowledge and insights.

In addition, retweets are recognized as practices through which media share their gatekeeping role (Lasorsa et al., 2012). Nevertheless, the network analysis showed that the conversation manager's retweet activity remains very limited. Retweets are understood as endorsements of particular content and follow the same logic as the replies, in the sense that objectivity and neutrality prevail. This relates to our user analyses, which showed that politicians' messages are not retweeted. In addition, journalists (e.g. the host of the program) and established experts (which are occasionally featured in the show) are amongst the users that are endorsed. The endorsement of non-established users is very limited as their messages are not newsworthy enough or have not been verified (which is perceived to be the case for journalists' messages).

Last, we understand users as co-hosts in the program, which to date still reflects an exceptional practice within the newsroom. Occasionally, Twitter users are asked to provide questions throughout the day for guests invited later that evening in the show. In the evening, the selected messages are shown on screen (including the Twitter username) and presented to the invitees. The selection of messages is defined by social media parameters, which in turn are "refracted" by journalistic and format-technical factors. In first instance, popularity on social media defines the messages that are up for selection by the conversation manager. Subsequently, he defines the added value of the question, in

essence, by comparing it to the questions the host usually presents to the guests. In addition, the identity of the Twitter user is checked, as the program makers aim to include Twitter users that can be identified as neutral, objective actors in the public debate (i.e. no extreme or non-democratic voices). In addition, current program-technical issues permit the use of questions that pop up during the program, as for example real-time visual representation of Twitter messages cannot yet be established.

Conclusion and discussion

The appointment of the conversation manager reflects the *professionalization* and the *separation* of social media use in the newsroom on a daily basis. On the one hand, both activity towards and interactivity with the audience increased due to the conversation manager's dedication to the tweeting audience. On the other hand, program makers seek control in a public space in which the flow of information becomes ever more uncontrollable. Alike Graham (2012), we understand the conversation manager as a "facilitator" of the public debate, without getting involved in the actual discussion. Within the newsroom, the predominant value of Twitter is a "sensory" one, as it signals what the audience thinks, likes and dislikes. In this respect, audience metrics are a "supplement to news judgment" (Anderson, 2011, p. 563). As this case study is defined in time and space, behavior and attitudes reflect the very early stages of the conversation manager's appointment and are contingent upon the newsroom and program we studied. Moreover,

the Flemish audiovisual market is fairly small and usage of social media in relation to television is limited in Flanders (i.e. 16%) (iMinds-iLab.o, 2013).

The juxtaposing of Twitter data and the newsroom inquiry, embedded in Bourdieu's field approach, provides insight in the impact of social media logics within the journalistic field (which is governed by its own logic). Networks are shaped by social media logics as well as journalistic logics. The conversation manager consciously appropriates the different Twitter conventions. He was able to strengthen the program's position on Twitter and the overall debate grew in size. However, the conversation manager does not impact addressivity between users, as few users address/are addressed whereas the majority does/is not (cf. the long tails). In addition, we stress the impact of social media logics on journalists' perceptions and newsroom practices. Recent conceptualizations of social media logic (e.g. Klinger and Svensson, 2014; van Dijck and Poell, 2013) need further development towards a comparative framework in which both journalistic and social media *news* logics are defined.

In a public broadcasting context, social media metrics fit within the ongoing struggle to define "the public", traditionally understood in terms of aggregated viewing rates and accompanying demographics. Conceptual and empirical bridges between incumbent and emerging metrics are still absent. In addition, we encounter the role of third-party translators of audience data, e.g. commercial companies selling aggregated audience metrics and accompanying rhetoric but keeping the detailed records themselves. These

stakeholders (and journalists alike) are bound by data structures upon which these platforms are built and algorithms through which the flow of content is shaped. Awareness and critical reflections upon the data as well as the data labels, such as "influence", are missing in the newsroom, but definitely deserve further examination by scholarly research.

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Notes

1. "Misnoegde kijker en makers 'Terzake' ruziën op Twitter [Program makers bickering with their viewers on Twitter], " *Het Nieuwsblad*, 22 July, 2013

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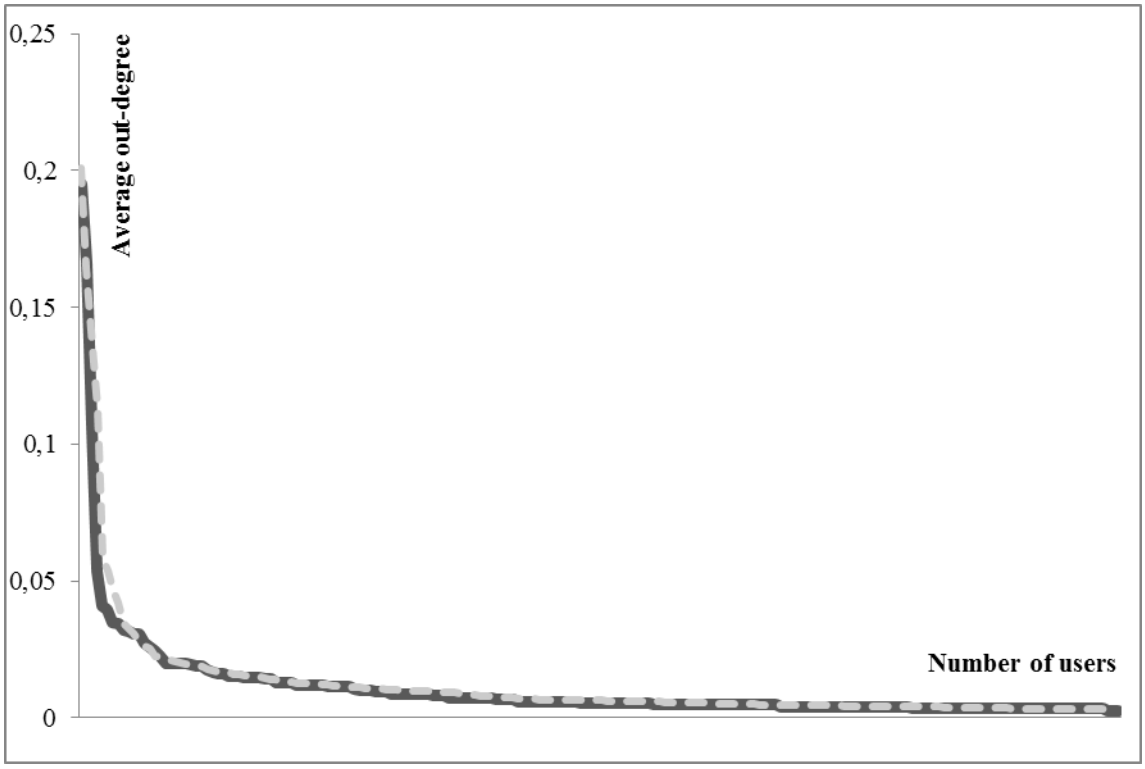

Figure 1 Average out-degree per user *before* (i.e. the dark, solid line) and *after* (i.e. the light, dotted line) the appointment of the conversation manager

Table 1 User diversity for outgoing messages of 'Terzake'*

	***Before* the conversation manager** N_{users} **= 44**	***After* the conversation manager** N_{users} **= 208**
Replies sent	94% - Non-affiliated/non-established 6% - Media/Journalists	81.8% - Non-affiliated/non-established 13.6% - Media/Journalists 3.6% - Politicians/Parties 1% - Opinion
Mentions sent	64.7% - Media/Journalists 35.5% - Politicians/Parties	52.1% - Media/Journalists 16.6% - Politicians/Parties 16.6% - Opinion
Retweets sent	82.6% - Media/Journalists 13.4% - Opinion 4% - Non-affiliated/non-established	74.4% - Media/Journalists 14% - Non-affiliated/non-established 11.6% - Opinion

* The category "Non-affiliated/non-established" reflects users that are not affiliated with a medium/a party and that have not been staged in the mass media for their expertise/opinion. The category "Opinion" contains users that have been staged in mass media at least once.

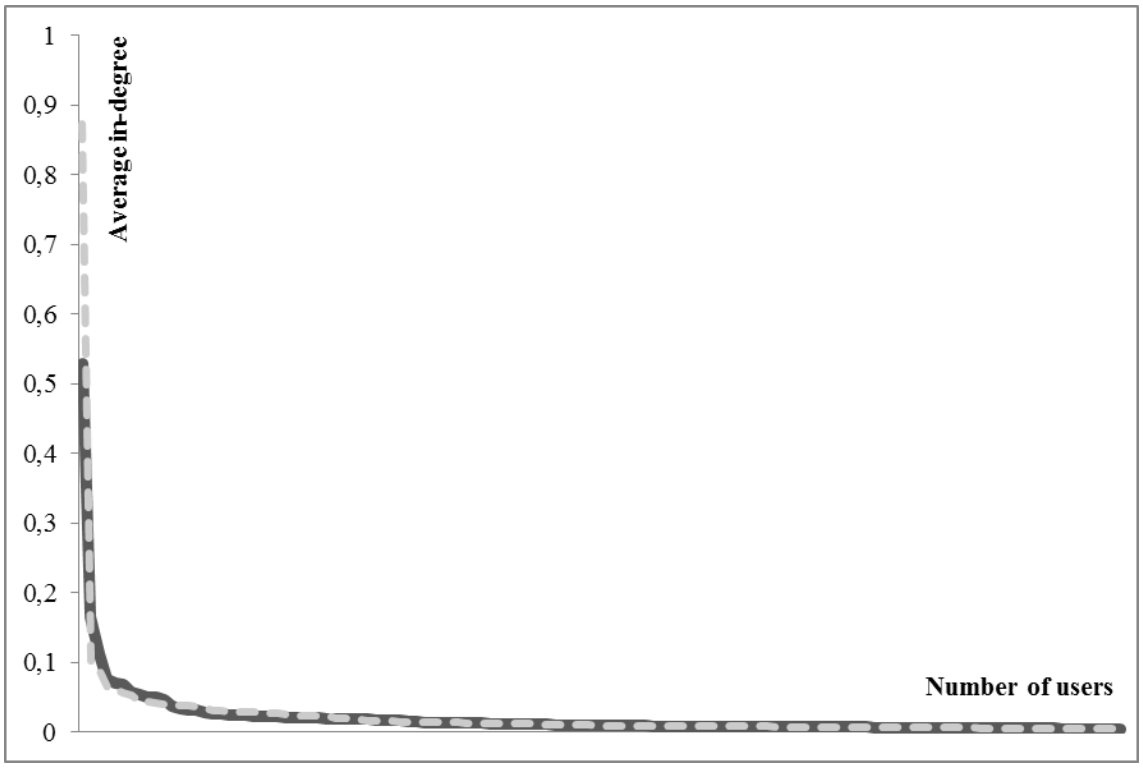

Figure 2 Average in-degree per user *before* (i.e. the dark, solid line) and *after* (i.e. the light, dotted line) the appointment of the conversation manager

Table 2 User diversity for incoming messages of 'Terzake'*

	***Before* the conversation manager** N_{users} **= 440**	***After* the conversation manager** N_{users} **= 931**
Replies received	84% - Non-affiliated/non-established 10.9% - Politicians/Parties 4.2% - Media/Journalists 0.9% - Opinion	82.8% - Non-affiliated/non-established 8.4% - Media/Journalists 8.8% - Politicians/Parties
Mentions received	75% - Non-affiliated/non-established 13.6% - Politicians/Parties 9.7% - Media/Journalists 1.7% - Opinion	80.4% - Non-affiliated/non-established 10.4% - Politicians/Parties 8.7% - Media/Journalists 0.5% - Opinion
Retweets received	69.4% - Non-affiliated/non-established 18% - Media/Journalists 11% - Politicians/Parties 1.6% - Opinion	78.2% - Non-affiliated/non-established 11.7% - Media/Journalists 9.7% - Politicians/Parties 0.4% - Opinion

* The category "Non-affiliated/non-established" reflects users that are not affiliated with a medium/a party and that have not been staged in the mass media for their expertise/opinion. The category "Opinion" contains users that have been staged in mass media at least once.