Iberian hyperlocal online media: The birth of a new proximity network

Cibermedios hiperlocales ibéricos: el nacimiento de una nueva red de proximidad

Cibermeios hiperlocais ibéricos: o nascimento de uma nova rede de proximidade

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ABSTRACT

During the last decade, the communication ecosystem has undergone a profound transformation in the areas of proximity, due to the proliferation of hyperlocal online media. In this article, we explore the initiatives born in Spain and Portugal, and we show the existence of a new media network in the areas of proximity. This study compares different elements of information production of five online media with different organizational and management models. The results show common trends in terms of spaces and coverage issues, active participation of citizens or orientation to the community of the hyperlocal media.

RESUMEN

Durante la última década, el ecosistema comunicativo ha experimentado una profunda transformación desde la proximidad con la proliferación de los cibermedios hiperlocales. En este artículo se exploran las iniciativas que han nacido en España y Portugal y se evidencia la existencia de una nueva red de medios de proximidad. El estudio comparado de distintos elementos propios de la producción informativa se aplica a cinco cibermedios con diferentes modelos organizativos y de gestión. Los resultados muestran tendencias comunes en cuanto a los espacios y temas de cobertura, participación activa de los ciudadanos u orientación a la comunidad propia de los hiperlocales.

RESUMO

Ao longo da última década, o ecossistema comunicativo tem sofrido uma profunda transformação em relação à proximidade com a proliferação dos cibermeios hiperlocais. Este artigo descreve as iniciativas que nasceram na Espanha e em Portugal e mostra a existência de uma nova rede de meios de proximidade. O estudo comparativo de diferentes elementos da produção de informações aplica-se a cinco cibermeios com diferentes modelos de organização e de gestão. Os resultados mostram tendências comuns em relação a espaços e temas de cobertura, participação activa dos cidadãos ou orientação para a própria comunidade dos hiperlocais.

Keywords: hyperlocal cybermedia, digital journalism, network communication, communication ecosystem.

Palabras clave: cibermedios hiperlocales, periodismo digital, comunicación en red, ecosistema comunicativo.

Palavras-chave: cibermeios hiperlocais, jornalismo digital, comunicação em rede, ecossistema comunicativo.

INTRODUCTION

In the process of reconfiguration that is occurring in the media ecosystem in Spain and Portugal, proximity journalism is experiencing bad times on its paper version and there is an emergence of initiatives in the network. The last major economic crisis, which began in 2008 in our region, created a scenario characterized by significant indices of discontent with traditional media and the search for new channels of communication. This, in practice, has resulted in the birth of local and hyperlocal media that seek to become an alternative to the local and regional media belonging to medium and large media groups[1].

The economic crisis of recent years has hit many local media, with a significant number of disappearances and reduction of editions and/or disconnections[2], and has created a favorable breeding ground for new initiatives of communication of proximity. Although the closures of Spanish newspapers have not been as numerous as in the United States[3], the fact is that the adjustments have been very relevant in the media offer and led to a reconfiguration in the local spaces. In fact, in recent years, while some media had ceased to continue in the market, others began their small enterprise-driven projects that seek to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the network society and influence the sociopolitical and cultural dynamics of local communities.

The appearance of new communicative actors emerges in a scenario conducive to innovation, the rise of the social web and the use of information and communication technologies by important sectors of the population, but with *few policies to promote plurality,*[4] evealing a phase of transition towards a new model. However, the complexity of the transformations and the lack of political will of the state governors has led to a *letting do* that is the opposite of a strategic approach to intervene in favor of a greater plurality in the local spaces of communication of our surroundings.

While this lack of active policies of communication –characteristic of the strategy applied to the spaces of proximity during the first decade of the third millennium (Marí & Sierra, 2008, p. 131)– remains, the use of information and communications technologies (ICTs) has increased, causing a transformation of the way in which administrations, companies and citizens work and communicate[5]. The transition of the communicative ecosystem advances from the hand of citizens, increasingly involved in the use of current technologies, from a traditional industry in the phase of adaptation to the digital stage and online native media that experience with new technologies, in their aim to consolidate positions in the communicative flow of the network society.

The consolidation of the renewed interactive and collaborative manifestations of communication, in the hands of active citizens, entails great changes not only in the media ecosystem, where old and new media, as well as large and small media, coexist, but also in the uses and information consumptions, through different channels and devices. While the mass media struggle with different products and strategies to adapt to the new rules of the game and survive in an increasingly hostile environment (Scolari, 2012), and some of the new media bring innovations, all occupy spaces and feed one greater fragmentation in the field of professional preparation of journalistic contents.

Some authors also highlight the potential of the added value of proximity information to make viable and profitable the operation of online media. The fact that age positively affects the willingness to pay for local online news services (Goyanes, 2015, page 228) is a symptom of the possible emergence of a renewed appeal for incorporating local information in online media and for the multiplication of local information initiatives.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK
THE CONFIGURATION OF THE NEW MEDIA ECOSYSTEM

The new communicative ecosystem has forced all actors to reconfigure and renew strategies and products, with ongoing adaptation processes and initiatives born and planned for the network society. In the new sphere, while *self-communication* has emerged (Castells, 2009), the journalistic industry is immersed in a profound reconversion to face the challenge of technological innovation derived from digitalization and the financial crisis (Casero, 2010). This has led to declines in virtually all their income channels (especially advertising) and the questioning of many of their industrial projects, as well as

of professional autonomy (Curran, 2010; Kreiss & Ananny, 2013). The companies of the sector are living in bad times (Díaz Nosty, 2011) and the search for new business models (Casero, 2010; Kaye & Quin, 2010) and new management models (Campos, 2010) appears in all debates as an urgent need to face the challenges of nowadays.

Although journalism lives one of the worst periods of its history (Canavilhas, 2015), in the current communicative scenario there are opportunities for new media and important changes in the relationship between them and their users. In this ecosystem, citizens can interact, produce content and participate in the media (Carpentier, 2011), which confers to the users of information pieces disseminated through different channels renewed roles in the technologically mediated communication processes. The media still play a central role in the ecosystem, although other actors, such as search engines and social networks are becoming increasingly important. Citizens now have many ways to inform themselves and to intervene, to the point of reaching informational self-sufficiency in the areas of proximity through the search, dissemination, filtering and social recommendation of news from their social networks (Bonini & Sellas, 2014; McCollough, Crowell & Napoli, 2016). In this way, the user is no longer subjected to the passive-consumer/ active-producer dichotomy, and the practices of low participatory intensity are more important (Masip, Guallar, Suau, Ruiz Caballero & Peralta, 2015). Uses and consumptions, in these processes of change, also undergo mutations.

The current media, both the *ones based on printed and/ or audiovisual matrices* and the *digital natives* (Cebrián Herreros, 2009) –but *metamedia* (Manovich, 2013) after all, as they have become new media– have arrived to the ecosystem with the decision to remain on it and they know that information has to be where people are (Canavillas, 2015). In order to try, despite the obscure economic scenario for the sector and the consequences of the technological paradigm shift, some of the main companies have started innovation laboratories (Salaverría, 2015). Their efforts to be in the vanguard augur them possible successes in the coexistence and competition with many other initiatives. It is here, in those small proposals of proximity, where the new local media, with less actives but with the knowledge of the next scenarios to bring value to the information (Picard, 2012), want to have a place.

PROXIMITY ONLINE JOURNALISM IN SPAIN AND PORTUGAL

Within this reconfiguration process immersed in the network society, information of proximity is revalued as a bonding and meeting space of the community, which develops new forms of communication and interaction in a globally connected environment. Physical social network connections are reinforced on the Internet, which also modifies some community socialization behaviors, such as the greater facility to create affinity networks, establish community-based and selective links between people who search for others like them (Castells, 2001).

It is this linkage with the closest community that has promoted the growth of local online media in the last decades, understood as "that issuer of content about the local entity that has the will to mediate between events and the audience, mainly using journalistic techniques and criteria, multimedia language, is interactive and hypertextual, is updated and published on the Internet "(López, 2008, p. 64).

In Spain and Portugal, the evolution of the Internet media industry began just over two decades ago. The first Spanish online media appeared in 1994, with the publication on the Internet of the *Boletín Oficial del Estado* and the weekly supplement *El Temps* (Salaverría, 2008). A year later, *Jornal de Notícias* inaugurated the experience of online media in Portugal (Bastos, 2010). Among these first online journalistic editions there are already are local media, like *Vilaweb*, appeared in 1996 as the first regional online media without a printed referent (García & González, 2012), or *Setúbal na Rede*, published in 1998 also like a regional digital native (Jeronimo, 2015).

Cyberjournalism in Spain begins to develop at a time when the local press maintains a dominant position in the market, with the proliferation of local newspapers in virtually all Spanish cities. At the beginning of 2000, when a web edition of most traditional media is common, the local and regional press constitutes the most stable group of newspapers in Spain. In those years, the efforts of media companies to provide quality proximity information products resulted in renewed designs, more information on society and services, and an increase in the number of pages dedicated to proximity information (López, 2005).

Local online media in Spain has followed the general development trends of online journalism, which has

evolved into innovative narrative models based on hypertextuality and multimedia, as well as new forms of interaction and participation with readers in a multi-device context. Applying this pattern to the local scope, the trends have materialized in a greater involvement with the communities, with more and more channels of participation for the users in the informative process.

In Portugal, the evolution of proximity online media has also followed the general trends of the media industry. Pedro Jeronimo (2015, p.231) identifies a four-time development of the Portuguese local and regional press on the Internet: implementation period (1996-1997), in which the first media make the leap to the network; period of reaction (1998-2006), in which the punctual and gradual transition of a second group of media takes place; the boom (2007-2009), with a significant increase in the number of press online media, digital natives and televisions; and a final period of stagnation as of 2010.

In these two decades of development, Portuguese proximity online media has gone from editions consisting of a mere transposition of texts from paper to the web, to more complex models in which multimedia content, hypertextuality, design, usability and the forms of interaction and participation of users have grown significantly (Jeronimo, 2015).

THE EMERGENCE OF HYPERLOCAL ONLINE MEDIA

Proximity media, with a long tradition in the history of communication, have always been part of the media system, with its different formats and models, and have now adapted to the new communicative ecosystem of the network society. It is in this process of adaptation and in the reconfiguration experienced by the media industry due to the economic crisis where we should locate the birth of the new network of hyperlocal online media, which has its main point of connection through the Internet.

Hyperlocal online media is a recent phenomenon that has its background in the United States, where cable television operators first used the term in the 1980s to refer to local television content (Thurman, Pascal & Bradshaw, 2012). According to Thurman et al. (2012), the hyperlocal concept began to be used in the 1990s to refer to new websites specialized in ultra-localized content and alternative blogs with local information. In 2004, Jeff Jarvis used in his blog *Buzz Machine* (2004) the term hyperlocal to talk about certain proximity online media. On her study of 2007 on the hyperlocal media in the United States, Jan Schaffer places in 2005 and 2006 the explosion of this media movement.

Its growth takes on a strong journalistic character starting in 2009 (Flores Vivar, 2015), driven, according to Damian Radcliffe (2012), by the reinforcement of the connection of the communities in Internet, the crisis of the traditional local press, the geographic niches, and thematic issues that are not adequately covered by these media, as well as the low cost of the tools of web content creation and distribution, the active behavior of audiences through social networks, the new business models that are possible in the digital environment and the growing business interest in the exploitation of hyperlocal space.

The definition of space and hyperlocal media is a complex issue in which geographical, media and technological aspects are interrelated in the formation of communities (Bingham-Hall & Law, 2015). Sara Hartley (2010) identifies some features that are common in this type of media, such as the active participation of the authors in the community and the publication of their opinion about the facts, the participation of the citizens of the community in the media, the coverage of small themes and events and their constant monitoring and updating, the use of several technological platforms for the creation and distribution of content, as well as the passion and independence to sustain a media difficult to monetize.

Among the authors who define information and hyperlocal media, Shaw (2007) describes them as news websites dedicated to the small stories of a very specific geographical area, which can range from a neighborhood to a town or a city, that is, a community geographically defined (Radcliffe, 2012). Complementarily to this concept, Flores Vivar (2015) explains that the term hyperlocal also refers to the combined use of technological applications and GPS through mobile devices, so that, applied to local websites, they are able to deliver content relevant not only for a community, but for a specific individual.

Mark Glaser (2007) also identifies the low cost of online publishing tools as one of the key factors in the growth of this type of media, which –according

to Barnett and Townend (2014)– employ a very heterogeneous variety of communication technologies, such as blogs, forums or social networks. The use of these technologies allows promoters to create independent hyperlocal news sites, with the aim of serving communities forgotten by traditional media, thus fulfilling a fundamental democratic function (Miller & Stone, 2009). With this same objective, Crucianelli (2010) highlights the variety of sources in the hyperlocal media, which give greater prominence to the neighbors and digital sources little explored.

According to Jerome Turner (2015), independence and the high degree of participation of community members allows establishing hyperlocal online media as alternative media (Atton, 2002), which present new stories from different points of view than those of the traditional local media, serving smaller audiences and giving voice to alternative sources. Turner (2015) presents some results of the study of the hyperlocal online media of the United Kingdom (Williams, Harte & Turner, 2015), where it is observed that not all these media pursue journalistic standards, since many of their authors are not necessarily journalists, and base their work on their experience as bloggers, designers and other roles.

According to the same author, the most relevant factor of hyperlocal as alternative media is the active role of their audiences, who act as sources and authors with little need for mediation by editors. The involvement and active participation of citizens is achieved through the channels of operative interaction in these media, especially social networks. In addition, this engagement often turns readers into collaborators of the media, with roles of citizen journalism that, according to the authors Firmstone and Coleman (2015), can be producers, contributors, sources or participants.

The hyperlocal online media are also characterized by a clear community orientation in the geographical area in which they operate. Although the opportunity and the market determine their agenda, they seek to inform the community of everything they care about and affects them, covering the spaces forgotten by traditional local media. In the study of content published by the United Kingdom hyperlocal online media, Williams et al. (2015) identify the coverage of local activities as the most relevant topic, followed by local politics, sport, economic and event information. Although this type of information oriented to the activities, events and concerns of the hyperlocal community may lead to some information trivialization (Turner, 2015), there is also a tendency towards quality information, based on original, contextualized and in-depth content, that has in the specialization one of its main assets (Picard, 2012).

Metzgar, Kurpius and Rowley (2011, page 774) propose the following definition of hyperlocal media, which is a reference point in this research: "geographically-based, community-oriented, original-news-reporting organizations indigenous to the web and intended to fill perceived gaps in coverage of an issue or region and to promote civic engagement".

The authors also characterize hyperlocal online media as *web-native media*, "media formats that exist only on the Internet and media entities whose first distribution channel is the Internet" (Miel & Faris, 2008, p.3), whose growth is based on the credibility that the readers deposit in them (Salaverría, 2015).

The lack of a printed or audiovisual matrix is a business weakness for these media, which also lack a recognized business model; this forces them to experiment with new forms and sources of funding (García & González, 2012). In a context marked by connectivity and mobility, sustainability can be found through new payment systems (Goyanes, 2015) and other initiatives ranging from geolocalized advertising to sustainable crowdfunding systems. In digital natives, business and productive structures are smaller and more flexible; they follow less hierarchical and more decentralized models, concentrating the set of productive processes in a small group of professionals and an extensive network of collaborators (García & González, 2012).

Hyperlocal online media is a booming phenomenon worldwide, whose growth and research from academia is especially relevant in the United States and the United Kingdom. Data from the Pew Research Center (2015) shows that more than half of the small digital media organizations in America are hyperlocal initiatives. But this boom is not only led by the online media promoted by small teams, but many corporations and

large communication groups have wanted to diversify and expand their media with specific proposals for hyperlocal communities (D'heer & Paulussen, 2013). Thus, the results of Chadha (2016) show that 40% of the hyperlocal online media in the United States have more than 20 full-time employees, while only 14% are managed individually.

This important development at a productive level and differentiation regarding the European reality is due to the great inequality in the funding of these media. According to the data collected in the report *Where are we now?,* produced by Damian Radcliffe (2015), their funding in the United States was $400 million over the last two years, compared to £5 million in the United Kingdom for the last three years. However, the presence of hyperlocal media is equally relevant in the latter country, with more than 400 active hyperlocal online media (Radcliffe, 2015).

Harte, Turner and Williams (2016) portray this set of media as initiatives promoted with civic rather than entrepreneurial objectives, where the promoters' commitment to the community is above economic interest. Resistance to a possible loss of independence and lack of confidence in exchange of financing are the causes of the low profitability of the hyperlocal online media, which results in reduced and precarious teams, which depend on the voluntary work of a wide network of collaborators for the updating and maintenance of the media. However, Harte (2013) shows the important contribution that this media network is making to the public sphere as a whole, with a high volume of stories published daily.

OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The main objective of this research is to make a first approximation to the new network of hyperlocal online in Iberian space, in order to observe the relevance of this phenomenon in Spain and Portugal, as well as the main tendencies that these media follow for their development. Specifically, we seek to know the type of content and the characteristics of the information published by the hyperlocal online media, based on the representativeness of the different production models.

The relevance of hyperlocal media growth in Spain and Portugal has been observed in an initial exploratory phase of the research. This is based on the first results of a map of local and hyperlocal online media of the Iberian space, whose elaboration is still in progress. For the identification and localization of these media, we used the official directories and agendas, other academic works that collect this data, and we reinforce the results obtained with Google and Bing searches of standard combinations (media + locality).

From this first map of proximity of online media, we selected five hyperlocal initiatives from Spain and Portugal. The choice of these media was based on the definition proposed by Metzgar et al. (2011), from which the representativeness of the two countries studied is sought, reflected in initiatives whose activity has been constant during the last years and which have reached a certain degree of stability.

In addition, we sought to represent the different productive and organizational models of the hyperlocal online media, with media of small professional groups with different business models. These are media produced and funded exclusively by citizens or integrated into large media corporations and covering geographic areas of varying degrees of proximity, such as the neighborhood, municipality, district or city.

Based on these premises, the media analyzed are:

- *Somos Malasaña* (http://www.somosmalasana. com): it is defined as the first Spanish hyperlocal online media and operates in the geographical area of Malasaña, as the Universidad neighborhood is popularly known, of the Central District of the City of Madrid. It was founded in 2009 by journalists Antonio Pérez and Diego Casado, who previously worked at adn.es, closed by Grupo Planeta (López, Toural, Rodríguez & Silva, 2015). *Somos Malasaña* is financed, as explained on its website, through the sponsorship of neighborhood businesses, the contributions of partners, and consulting services on presence in the network and dissemination of local content.

- *Aquí Tetuán* (http://www.tetuanmadrid.com): it is a Spanish hyperlocal online media that covers the geographical area of the District of Tetuán in the City of Madrid. It is defined on its website as the first blog-diary of the District, founded with

the objective of providing a necessary service to its neighbors, with useful information about news, entertainment, culture and all the current news of Tetuán. It is also defined as a citizen journalism project, produced exclusively by the residents of Tetuán. It is financed from the authors' own contributions, the advertising banners and the sponsorship of the local commerce.

- *Soy de Liébana* (http://www.soydeliebana.es/): it is a Spanish hyperlocal online media that was born from the hand of the Vocento Group in 2011. It is an example of the adaptation of the large media corporations to the growth of hyperlocal online media, which in the case of Vocento materialized with the opening of multiple media in Extremadura, Cantabria, Castilla León, Asturias or Valencia (DigiMedios, 2011). *Soy de Liébana* covers the geographical area of the region of Liébana, southwest of Cantabria, formed by the municipalities of Cabezón de Liébana, Camaleño, Cillorigo de Liébana, Pesaguero, Potes, Tresviso and Vega de Liébana. Its management is conducted by a local delegate, in this case Pedro Álvarez, and the production of content is open to the community, which is free to create news, events and upload multimedia content.

- *Ovar News* (http://www.ovarnews.pt): it is a Portuguese hyperlocal online media that operates in the geographical area of the municipality of Ovar in the District of Aveiro. It was founded in 2006 and is defined as the first digital native of the municipality and one of the first in the region. Funding depends on advertising, although the media also encourages initiatives outside the digital field, such as publishing books, organizing seminars, debates or social gatherings.

- *Porto 24* (http://www.porto24.pt): it is a Portuguese hyperlocal online media that covers the geographical area of the city of Porto. It was founded in 2010 and is defined as the proximity online media of reference, of general information and open to citizen participation. Its funding also depends on the advertising, present on the website through banners and a specific section called *Gozto*, which offers specific products of the advertised shops. During four months of 2015, the media published a weekly paper publication, which it was forced to suppress for economic reasons.

In a second phase of the investigation, we conducted a content analysis of the information published by the selected media. The analysis focused on the news published on the cover pages, excluding other types of pieces (advertising, blogs, etc.). The sample was collected in a multi-stage phase where two artificial weeks are built for one month. Specifically, a daily sample (at 3:00 p.m.) was collected on January 25, 26, 30 and 31; and on February 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 13, 14, 17, 18 and 19.

The analysis code-sheet was prepared using the methodological tool of the Odriozola-Chéné research (2012), adapting it to the needs and objectives of the present research. The analyzed variables are summarized in:

- Contextual elements: identifier of the news, URL, title and author.

- Position on the front page: spatial distribution (column 1, column 2, etc.) and presence of multimedia resources (yes/no).

- Multimediality and hypertextuality: presence of images, graphics, audio, video and hyperlinks, indicating the number of elements present in each news item.

- Informative elements: theme (primary concepts of the taxonomy of news codes of the International Press and Telecommunications Council[6], see Del Valle & García, 2002, p. 115), geographical area (place referenced in the news), number of sources (name and position), identity of the first source mentioned in the body of the news (name and title) and other sources (name and position).

- Observations.

RESULTS

The results of the first phase of research form a first map of proximity online media in the Iberian space evidence the existence and growth of a new network of hyperlocal online media in the digital environment. Although the above map is an ongoing project and requires constant updating and revision, we can advance the number of localized initiatives, which should be interpreted as an orientation.

In Spain, more than 2500 proximity media have been identified, of which 480 (19.2%) correspond to the definition of hyperlocal online media taken as reference in this work. In Portugal, more than 200 proximity media have been located, of which 60 (30%) are hyperlocal.

The capture of the informative pieces during the fourteen days of the sample added a total of 466 different news, whose content has been analyzed according to the exposed methodology. Of this total, 96 (20.6%) correspond to *Somos Malasaña*, 27 (5.8%) to *Aquí Tetuán*, 48 (10.3%) to *Soy de Liébana*, 134 (28.8%) to *Ovar News* and 161 (34.5%) to *Porto 24*.

The cover pages of the analyzed online media follow similar structures, with a number of spaces for informative pieces that vary significantly, being higher in the Portuguese media, which are also the ones that record a greater number of information in the days of the sample. Thus, we see that *Somos Malasaña* has on its front page 22 news in 3 columns, *Aquí Tetuán* has 16 news in 5 columns, *Soy de Liébana* has 11 information pieces in 3 columns, *Ovar News* has a total of 40 in 3 columns and *Porto 24*, 31 in 6 columns.

Following the presentation of the news on the cover, we note that virtually all pieces are accompanied by a multimedia element, which generally corresponds to an image or an infographic. Specifically, *Somos Malasaña* presents an average of 1.03 multimedia elements per cover story, *Aquí Tetuán*, *Soy de Liébana*, and *Ovar News* have one each, and *Porto 24* has 0.97.

When analyzing the elements of the interior pages of each news and continuing with the use of multimedia and hypertextuality, we generally observe little variety in the type of multimedia content used and a very low presence of hyperlinks.

All hyperlocal online media, except for *Soy de Liébana*, accompany the text with at least one image on average, reaching almost four in the case of *Ovar News*. The use of infographics is not important, highlighting the use made of that resource by *Somos Malasaña* and *Aquí Tetuán* in some news related to urban or municipal regulations, where they use maps of their neighborhoods or districts to explain new plans for reforms, cleaning campaigns, modifications in circulation, etc. The presence of the video is also very low, usually using material from third parties in cultural news and shows to show performances by the artists announced. As for the audio, no element has been registered in the analyzed sample. Finally, it is remarkable the low level of exploitation of the hypertext, with more than one hyperlink of average for news only in *Somos Malasaña*, and without the presence of any link in the texts of *Soy de Liébana*.

Another of the interior elements analyzed corresponds to the authorship of the news. The percentage of pieces signed by an author other than the media itself varies greatly between the different media. In *Somos Malasaña*, only 20.8% of the news is signed, compared to 85.2% for *Aquí Tetuán* and 92.5% for *Soy de Liébana*. In the

Multimedia elements and hyperlinks	Somos Malasaña	Aquí Tetuán	Soy de Liébana	Ovar News	Porto 24
Images	2	1.5	0.98	3.8	1.2
Infographics	0.21	0.11	0.02	0.03	0
Audio	0	0	0	0	0
Video	0.12	0.08	0	0.05	0.01
Hyperlinks	2.8	0.63	0	0.12	0.17

Table 1: Average of multimedia and hypertextual elements by news

Source: Own elaboration.

Portuguese media, *Ovar News* records a very low 7.2% of signed news, as opposed to *Porto 24*, where the author can be identified in 100% of the pieces.

Observing the number of different authors and the amount of news that they sign in each media it is possible to discern the importance that the networks of collaborators have in these hyperlocal online media. In *Somos Malasaña*, the twenty signed news correspond to six authors, no one of which have a specific theme of publication.

In *Aquí Tetuán*, twenty of the signed news correspond to the same author, Celia Tetuán, who does not appear as an editor in the organization chart published on the website of the media. The other three signed pieces correspond to Bea Burgos, identified as director and editor-in-chief, and deal with historical issues.

The authorship of the news in *Soy de Liébana* show that the majority weight of publication falls to Pedro Álvarez, the delegate responsible for this media, with forty pieces. The remaining five signed publications correspond to five different authors.

In *Ovar News*, the nine signed news items also correspond to nine different authors, which suggests that all of them are the work of specific collaborators, without identifying the usual editors and responsible for most publications.

In contrast, *Porto 24* is the only media in which the authors are recognized in the totality of the news. The editors Simao Freitas and Pedro Emanuel Santos, identified as such in the technical file of the online media, are responsible for most publications, adding 99 and 44 news, respectively. The remaining 18 news items correspond to ten other authors.

The analysis of the topic of the analyzed news evidences important differences in the most relevant themes for each of the media, but also remarkable common trends. In general, we see that information related to leisure activities and lifestyle is one of the most recurrent, along with culture, social issues, events or urban themes. A clear difference between Portuguese and Spanish media is the greater relevance of economic, political and sports information in the former.

Theme	Somos Malasaña	Aquí Tetuán	Soy de Liébana	Ovar News	Porto 24
Social affairs	4.2	29.6	14.6	1.5	3.1
Arts, culture and entertainment	33.4	7.4	4.2	11.2	22.3
Sports	1	0	4.2	15	15
Economy, business and finance	4.2	0	6.2	11.2	11.8
Education	0	3.7	2.1	2.2	4.2
Lifestyle and leisure time	30.2	14.8	33.3	27.6	11.8
History	3	11.2	0	0	3.1
Environment	6.4	3.7	2.1	3	0.23
Meteorology	0	0	8.3	2.2	1.8
Opinion	0	0	0	3.7	8.7
Police and justice	0	0	0	0.7	0
Politics	1	0	0	10.4	3.7
Health	0	0	2.1	1.5	3.7
Events	3.1	3.7	16.7	7.6	7.5
Urbanism	13.5	25.9	6.2	2.2	3.1

Table 2: News by theme for each online media(percentages)

Source: Own elaboration.

Adding the total absolute number of news for each of the themes, we see clearly that the most important are lifestyle and leisure (105 news), followed by art, culture and entertainment (87), sport (47), economy, business and finance (41) and events (33), confirming the general trend toward useful information on the activities of the hyperlocal community. The most recurrent themes are urban planning (31 news), social affairs (26), politics (20), opinion (19), environment (13), education (12), history (11), meteorology (9) and justice (1 news).

As for the geographic scope, we can confirm that the location and coverage of news occurs in the geographic space of the hyperlocal community in which the online media operates. The analysis reveals that in *Somos Malasaña* only 6.25% of the news is from a wider geographic area, a percentage that coincides with that of *Soy de Liébana* and rises to 8% in the case of *Aquí Tetuán*. In *Ovar News* all news are located in the municipality of Ovar; and in the case of *Porto 24*, only 3.72% are located in a wider geographic space than the city.

The last item of information submitted for analysis is the number and identity of the sources referenced in the news of the sample. If, on a theoretical level, the different definitions of the hyperlocal online media speak of their democratic function by giving voice to a greater number and diversity of sources, as well as a better representation of the community, the analyzed reality shows that this is still a pending subject.

The average number of sources per news item is less than 1 in the five media studied. In each information of *Somos Malasaña* there is on average 0.55 sources,

which drops to 0.46 in *Aquí Tetuán*, and is a 0.62 for *Soy de Liébana*. In the Portuguese media the figure is slightly higher, with a 0.75 on average for *Ovar News* and a 0.77 for *Porto 24.*

The sources referenced in the news have been classified as official (government bodies, institutions, police forces, etc.), companies, media, associations (of neighbors, cultural, sports, etc.), and citizens of the community. Following this classification, we counted the sum of the absolute number of times the sources of each type had been quoted in the texts of each of the online media.

The result is Figure 1, in which, in an aggregate way, we can see that the official sources are still much more relevant than those of a neighborhood character. In general, the most quoted are the mayors and councilors of each city council, police and institutions, especially relevant in the news of politics, events, urbanism or sport.

The best balance between different types of sources is achieved by *Somos Malasaña*, which equitably represents the different actors in the neighborhood. In contrast, the greatest imbalance is found in *Porto 24*, where official sources are much more present than neighborhoods, media or companies.

In spite of everything, the weight of the individual voices of the neighbors of the community and of the associations is quite important. Of particular note are the sources related to cultural and leisure information, where independent artists, associations and neighbors are the protagonists.
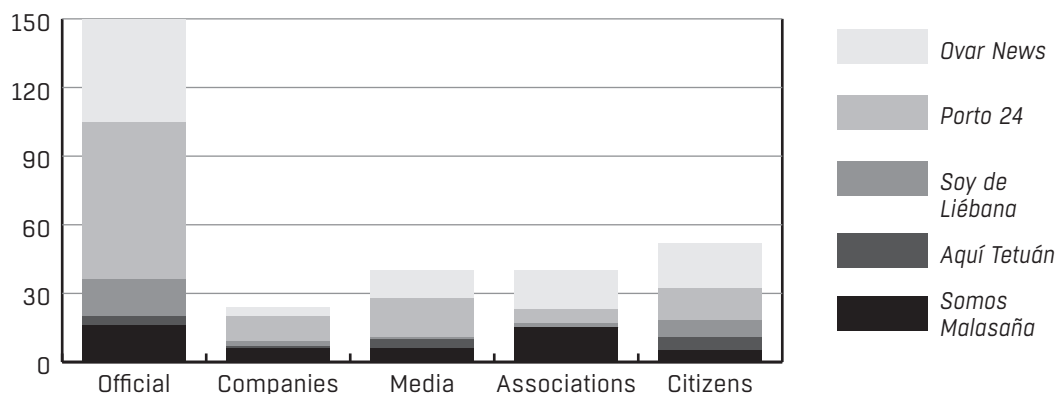

Figure 1. Absolute number of sources quoted by type and cybermedia. Source: Own elaboration.

Source: Own elaboration.

CONCLUSIONS

The changes experienced in recent years in the communicative ecosystem have also affected the areas of proximity, where for almost a decade a new model of hyperlocal communication has been formed. This global phenomenon provokes the proliferation of new digital native media in small and defined geographical areas, promoted by small professional groups or citizens that develop new organizational structures and information production, with models difficult to monetize but with the support of an active and participative community.

The exploration conducted in Spain and Portugal shows that this phenomenon also affects the Iberian area, where the hyperlocal media already constitute an important percentage of the whole of proximity media. The results of the research show some common trends among the media analyzed in producing their information, even in spite of the difference of country, the different size of the geographic areas covered and the various models of ownership and organization.

Firstly, we observe the adequacy of news coverage to the limits of the hyperlocal space in which the online media operates, confirming the definition of these media based on geography.

Another common behavior is the provision of information pieces on the front page, where all agree on the location of the news in the most relevant columns and spaces. In addition, the multimedia content is present in the form of an image or infographic in practically all the information of the media studied.

As for the use of the multimedia elements in the interior pages, there is little variation in the type of content produced, with an important use of images but with very little use of infographics, video and audio. Behind this low multimedia and audiovisual production could be the difficulties derived from a low number of workers, lack of time, knowledge and economic resources.

Although these limitations should not affect the use of hypertext in the information, in the analyzed sample the average of hyperlinks per news item is below one, with the exception of *Somos Malasaña*. Despite being one of the basic characteristics that define these online media, the low use of hypertext limits the interaction of readers with information and reduces their possibilities of contextualization, knowledge of other relevant sources and actors in the community, etc.

The small size and scarce economic resources of the hyperlocal online media require new forms of networked production that fit with the community orientation and the active participation of citizens. The authorship of the analyzed information makes it possible to verify the importance of a more or less extensive network of collaborators, so that although the greatest weight of publication falls on one or two editors, many citizens produce texts and contribute images on various topics and events.

The orientation and the informative service to the community are also evidenced in the thematic of the analyzed news. Although in the Portuguese media political, sports and economic information is significantly more relevant than in the Spanish media, it is generally observed that the news reports of cultural and leisure activities in the community are the most numerous. In the same way, events, urban themes and social affairs also occupy a large part of the news production, since they constitute useful information that determines the day to day of the members of the community.

Perhaps the only informative aspect that does not follow the theoretical principles that define hyperlocal online media is the one referring to sources. Far from finding a significant number of them and a greater representation of the members of the community and their neighborhood associations, the results show an average inferior to one source by news and a presence of actors and official institutions much superior to the rest.

In short, it is possible to conclude that the space and the proximity media are in the process of transformation in the digital environment of the networked society. Hyperlocal online media redefines the ecosystem of local communication in Spain and Portugal and opens new paths to the experimentation of new business models, organization and information production.

The hyperlocal online media of the Iberian space operate in very specific and limited geographical areas, offering useful information for the community. While the participation of citizens in content production is relevant and vital for the support of many of these media, the voice of associations and individual members of the community should be heard more in hyperlocal media. More effort is needed on the part of these teams in the search for and representation of new information sources, necessary to create a new network of proximity media that constitute a real alternative to traditional ones and local powers.

FOOTNOTES

1. This text is part of the dissemination of results of the research project of the Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness entitled *Innovación y desarrollo de los cibermedios en España. Arquitectura de la interactividad periodística en dispositivos múltiples: formatos de información, conversación y servicios* [Innovation and development of cybermedia in Spain. Architecture of journalistic interactivity in multiple devices: information, conversation and services formats] (Reference: CSO2012-38467-CO3-03) and of the exploratory works for the contextual and reference framework of the research project *Usos y preferencias informativas en el nuevo mapa de medios en España: modelos de periodismo para dispositivos móviles* [Uses and information preferences in the new map of media in Spain: models of journalism for mobile devices] (Reference: CSO2015-64662-C4-4-R).

2. The data comes from the monitoring of the employment section of the Federation of Associations of Journalists of Spain (http://fape.es/empleo/) and of the monitoring conducted by Novos Medios of the appearance and disappearance of media in Spain. Consultation for this work: April 1, 2016.

3. Data on the disappearance of media in the United States has been extracted from Newspaper Death Watch (http://newspaperdeathwatch.com/), which since 2007 has provided abundant information on the death of newspapers and periodical publications. Consultation for this work: April 1, 2016.

4. Several recent reports advocate the appropriateness of incentive policies to foster information plurality in conjunction with the new communication initiatives that appear in this phase of change. There were several projects in the UK to respond to the crisis in the local media. In 2014 was published the Knight News Challenge (KNC), developed by Martin Moore and titled Addressing the Democratic Deficit in Local News through Positive Plurality (accessible at: http://mediastandardstrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Positive-Plurality-policy-paper-9-10-14.pdf. Consultation for this paper: April 1, 2016). Some articles in the media have also highlighted the need for policies for the new local communicative scene. An example is a paper published in The Guardian. Accessible at: http://www.theguardian.com/media/greenslade/2014/oct/10/hyperlocal-media-digital-media. Consultation for this work: April 1, 2016.

5. The 15th report of the Telefónica Foundation on the Information Society in Spain, entitled *Informe Sociedad de la Información en España 2014* [Information Society Report in Spain, 2014], points out that Spanish society is the most "connected in Europe", since eight out of ten mobile phones are smartphones and 78% of Internet users are intensive users (accessible at: http://www.fundaciontelefonica.com/arte_cultura/publicaciones-listado/pagina-item-publicaciones/?itempubli=323.) Consultation for this work: April 1, 2016).

6. Thematic categories for the analysis of news are: art, culture and shows; police and justice; disasters and accidents; economics, business and finance; education; environment; health; workforce; lifestyle and leisure time; politics; religion and beliefs; science and technology; meteorology; social issues; sport; riots, conflicts and war. Also urbanism, history, events and opinion are added themes. The themes correspond to the general concepts of the taxonomy proposed by the International Press and Telecommunications Council for the codification of news. Accessible at: http://cv.iptc.org/newscodes/subjectcode. Consultation for this work: April 1, 2016.

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