Networked Journalism in Mexico

Towards New Paradigms
of Public Sphere and Democracy

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Abstract

This thesis discusses the influence of the Internet, internet-mediated new media and social networks on the development of the journalistic discipline. It provides guidance to categorize and appreciate new forms of journalism and their influence on society. Furthermore, this research studies the use of *networked news sites* in Mexican society. The central research question is: What is the impact of networked journalism on Mexican democratic life? This study examines ten of the most visited networked news sites in Mexico and measures their impact on Mexican public opinion. It identifies a disconnection between Mexican journalists and citizens. This thesis aims to facilitate the understanding of *networked journalism*, and how this new practice supports a new form of *public opinion*, described as *networked public opinion*. It explores the forms of power produced by the exchange of information.

Dedication

To my Aristotelian love, Rob: the man with the gift for flying. Thank you for being the *Flying Dutchman* who keeps his promises. To Lupita: Your love, your support, your strength, your wisdom, your exemplary life, they guided me –and still do, on the rocky path of my life. I miss you every day. This is for you: my beloved aunt, my most loyal friend, my strongest counsellor, my ultimate inspiration, my life model, and above all, my real mother. You will always live in me because I am your legacy. I love you.

Guadalupe "Lupita" García Hassan

January 13, 1961 – July 6, 2013

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Contents

1. Introduction

How has the Internet changed journalism? If anything changed: What are the new practices promoted by this technology? Furthermore, how do these new practices affect society? These are questions that students, academics and professionals in *Communication Theory, New Media* and *Journalism* face in current times. The *European Newspaper Publishers Association* (ENPA) indicates that the diffusion of news websites has increased the forms of news consultation to levels never experienced before (Rusdal 2012). Taking a closer look, the *Post-Industrial Journalism Manifesto* points out that the changes in the news publishing industry are the consequence of a *new ecosystem* enabled by the Internet and the internet mediated new media, like laptops, tablets and smartphones (Anderson, Bell and Shirky 2012, 18).

This new ecosystem is nothing more than the interaction of the news with the *Network Society*, a notion conceived by the sociologist Manuel Castells. According to Castells, the network society is a form of social organization where the structures and activities are organized around "electronically processed information networks, which process and manage social information" (Castells 2001, 4). In this context, Castells also suggests that this particular form of social organization is shifting the traditional practices of journalism towards *networked journalism*: "Networked journalism refers to a diffused capacity to record information, share it, and distribute it" (Van der Haak, Parks and Castells 2012, 2927).

As an active journalist in Mexico since 1999, I am fully aware of the new ecosystem in the news industry as described by Anderson, Bell and Shirky (2012): A decline in sales of printed newspapers that contrasts with the increase in visitors to news websites by thousands. In line with the conception of the network society described by Castells and networked journalism suggested by Van der Haak, Parks and Castells (2012), I also have witnessed how journalists and the networks' users engage with the information by sharing their opinions with larger audiences. Furthermore, I have seen how Mexican citizens use the news systems, internet mediated new media and social media (blogs, Facebook, YouTube, amongst others) to monitor public issues and take action in public life.

The active collaboration of Mexican citizens in the news system manifests itself in two different forms. On the one hand, they use social networks and new media as a mechanism of surveillance for mafia attacks or shootings. Also, Mexican citizens use social media to distribute the news that news agencies do not publish, due to drugs cartels threatening, kidnapping and killing journalists. On the other hand, Mexicans use social networks to question the performance of

politicians. Concerning the first scenario, the Mexican Drug War and its relation to social networks has been reported in an array of journalistic investigations.[1]

Nevertheless, there is a gap in research concerning the use of new media and social networks by citizens in order to monitor the performance of the political class. Some traces of the general use of ICT to monitor the political class can be found in *Sousveillance: Inventing and Using Wearable Computing Devices for Data Collection in Surveillance Environments* (Mann, Nolan and Wellman 2003) and more specifically in *Monitory Democracy* (Keane 2008a). However, these researchers have not applied their conceptions to *real life* case studies. This research gap motivates me to analyze how Mexican citizens and journalists engage with information published in *networked news sites.*[2] Benkler et al. as well as Friedland, Hoves and Rojas claim that the network society enables a new dynamic of opinion exchange, which allows the formation of a *networked public sphere*. Besides, this thesis seeks to understand the impact of the networked public opinion in Mexican democratic life. The central research question is:

What is the impact of networked journalism on Mexican democratic life?

To answer the research question, I first need to find answers to the following sub questions:

1) **What is the impact of the public opinion formed on the ICT networks on democratic life?**
2) **How have ICT networks changed the news?**
3) **What are the new journalistic practices enabled by the use of ICT networks?**
4) **How do Mexican journalists and networked news sites practice networked journalism?**

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[1] Some of these works are: *The Mexican Drug War, on Twitter: Using Social Media for Social Action* (Kavanagh and Epstein Ojalvo 2011); *Mexico Turns to Twitter and Facebook for Information and Survival* (Cave 2011); *In Mexico, Social Media Becomes a Battleground in the Drug War* (Goodman 2011); *Mexican Drug Cartels Now Menace Social Media* (Burnett 2011); *Media as Both Weapon and Defense in the Mexican Drug War* (Kichner 2014); *Social Media Networks and the Mexican Drug War* (Morteo 2012); and *"Narco" Emotions: Affect and Desensitization in Social Media during the Mexican Drug War* (De Choudhury, Monroy-Hernandez and Mark 2014).

[2] In *¿Qué es el Periodismo OnLine?* (2000) (Translated: What is online journalism?) Núria Almiron explains that *online news site* is "an unfortunate literal translation" meaning that an electronic device is ready to function. *News-website* is also inaccurate, because it makes reference to *web pages*, *web domains* or *web servers* accessible on the *World Wide Web.* Current ICT media enable the interaction of computer networks with telephone networks, social media networks, news networks, etc. Therefore, *networked news sites* is the most accurate term, because it involves the "non-linearity, multidirectional, interactivity, use of hypermedia and a whole new culture of the cyber" of the sites ad hoc with the dynamic of the network society.

5) **How do Mexican citizens use networked journalism to form their opinions?**

Throughout chapter 2, *Networked public sphere,* I answer the first sub question mentioned above by analyzing the postulates of the *public opinion* and the effects of this opinion on society. The starting point of this analysis is the work of Jürgen Habermas: *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1991) and *Between Facts and Norms* (1996). However, this analysis focuses on the evolution of the *public sphere*, which is possible due to new forms of communication enabled within the frame of the network society. The study of the networked public sphere is based on the works: *Network Journalism: Converging Competences of Old and New Media Professionals and Professionalism* (Bardoel and Deuze 2001), *The Wealth of Networks: How Social Production Transforms Markets and Freedom* (Benkler 2006), *Social Mobilization and the Networked Public Sphere: Mapping the SOPA-PIPA Debate* (Benkler et al. 2013) and *The Networked Public Sphere* (Friedland, Hove and Rojas 2006). In order to understand specific forms of networked public opinion, this analysis includes the review of *Public Sphere Dialogue in Online Newspapers and Social Spaces: The Nuclear Debate in Post Fukushima France* (De La Poype and Sood 2012) a research that analyzes the different levels of users' engagements in relation to the information contained in the news. Moreover, this analysis studies the work of John Keane: *Monitory Democracy* (2008b). Keane suggests that due to the *communicative abundance*, opinion exchange and democratic media use of the network society, citizens are transformed into *monitoring agencies*, observing, arguing and debating with politic entities. Keane believes that the unity of many monitoring agencies may overthrow governments, if required.

The third chapter, *Networked journalism,* gives answers to sub questions 2 and 3, studying the influence of ICT networks on the development of news. This chapter also discusses a new form of journalism practiced in ICT networks, which is called networked journalism.

The fourth chapter, *Methodology*, aids to outline the procedures used in this study to analyze how Mexican journalists and NNS practice networked journalism, how Mexican citizens use networked journalism to form their opinions and the influence of networked journalism on the Mexican society (Sub questions 4 and 5). *Participant Observation* for *Media Ethnography* is the qualitative research method used to approach this study, because it aids to "draw out broader contexts surrounding media usage, as well as to understand how people actually engage with media. Researchers focused on the contexts for media consumption, the process of reception as well as the many experiences and practices of people as they used media" (Brennen 2013, 161). As a research method, participant observation comprises a range of techniques in order to collect information; my

study is based on the observation of ten of the most visited networked news sites (hereafter NNS) in Mexico, from May to June, 2014. Furthermore, I conduct interviews with journalists and users of the selected NNS, to gather information about their practices, perspectives and opinions on Mexican networked journalism.

In the fifth chapter, *Results and discussion,* I examine the data obtained from the monitoring and interviews in the light of the concepts outlined in chapters two and three. Moreover, I make judgments of the results obtained as to what has been learnt and found in the particular case of Mexico in order to answer the main research question of this thesis.

The sixth chapter, *Conclusion and recommendations*, analyses the impact of networked journalism on Mexican democratic life and suggests improvements to the performance of Mexican NNS to aid the development of public opinion and social change in Mexico.

2. Networked public sphere

This chapter seeks to analyze how ICT networks aid shaping the opinions of citizens in a society. One of the most influential studies about the role of ICT systems in the quest for democracy can be found in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (Jürgen Habermas, 1991). Habermas claims that societies are structured into three *macro levels*: The political system, functional (economic) systems, and civil society. While the political system must adapt to the demands that come from the other two *macro social* systems; one of civil society's purposes is to communicate public problems to the political system. This particular political power is known as the *public sphere*, which is enabled by the communicative interaction between different argumentations, deliberations named *public opinion*. According to Habermas, individuals are the medium through which public opinion is expressed. Nonetheless, when the social interaction of the public sphere involves large groups of people, an entire society or nation, this social interaction is possible due to the use of media (Habermas, Lennox and Lennox 1974, 49). In this case, newspapers, magazines, radio and television are the media through which the public sphere can be formed, with the appropriate mediation of journalism.

Habermas' contributions are a benchmark to sociology, media and journalism studies across the 20th century. Nevertheless, the arrival of the Internet suggests a rectification of Habermas' concepts of *journalism*, *media*, *public* and *public sphere*. Lewis Friedland, Thomas Hove and Hernando Rojas (2006) suggest the *periodical transformation of the public sphere* due to particular dynamics of the societies in specific moments of history. In this context, these academics indicate

that the public sphere conceived by Habermas in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* is rooted in the emerging bourgeois state and the economy of the 19th century.

In the research *Social Mobilization and the Networked Public Sphere: Mapping the SOPA-PIPA Debate* (Benkler et al. 2013, 10) is claimed that the latest approach to public opinion was formed under the *Mass Mediated Public Sphere*. According to Benkler et al., the new social and technological environments imply the rising of a *networked public sphere* (hereafter NPS), due to the impact of the ICT social networks on the organization of the political and functional systems, but specifically "on the organization and the dynamic of the civil society" (Friedland, Hove and Rojas 2006, 18).

Friedland notes that in the structure of the NPS, the two most influential *macro levels* (the political and functional systems) remain "robust and close" to Habermas' conception or even more tightly related in terms of control and power. However, in the c*ivil society*[3] the NPS allows a more distributed form of socialization. This feature exponentially increases *communicative reflexivity*[4] of society at any level of communication to "read, discuss, argue and challenge the assumptions of elites in the political public sphere", especially amongst the generations under 35 years old (Friedland, Hove and Rojas 2006, 24).

Based on Habermas' conception of the public sphere, the works of Friedland, Hove and Rojas (2006), Benkler (2006) and Benkler et al. (2013) still consider journalism as the a facilitator of the public sphere in a society, because this practice distribute socially relevant information that motivates critical thinking, public debate and even political actions, if necessary. However, these works just focus on the independency of the networks from the media mainstream in order to achieve less manipulative information –free of the economic interests of the media corporations-, commodification and consumerism. In the research *Habermas' Heritage: The Future of the Public Sphere in the Network Society* (2005), Pieter Boeder inquiries how media technology affects journalism. Boeder indicates that "because of the increasing individualization and segmentation in communication such notions as "community" and "public debate" should be taken less for granted: The traditional task of journalism will shift from collecting information to directing the social flow of information and public debate"(Boeder 2006).

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[3] Civil society can be understood as a "network of formal associations, informal associations and private spheres of the *lifeworld"* (Friedland, Hove and Rojas 2006, 15).
[4] Communicative reflexivity is the public sphere's capacity "to provide a social space in which feedback from citizens can travel upward from civil society to the political public sphere. This is the social subsystem where elite opinion is both generated and processed (opinion-formation) and where decisions are made (will-formation)" (Friedland, Hove and Rojas 2006, 10).

As an extension to Boeder's annotations, Ann-Louise De La Poype and Suresh Sood suggest that internet mediated journalism guides the flow of social information, reinforces the sense of community and public debate within the networks by: a) Accelerating the connectivity between groups and individuals; b) facilitating media users' tools to make voices heard; and c) encompassing the public sphere, the exchange of information and the public debate in a digital form (De La Poype and Sood 2012, 33). Hermida et al. point out that the coexistence of news with internet and internet mediated social media, transforms the users of these networks into a type of public who "gather publicly through mediating technology"[5] (Hermida et al. 2012). De La Poype and Sood suggest that the commentary space of the online news aid media users not only to generate content, but provide a platform to communicate with other media users about specific issues that bound them: "As hosts of that space, newspaper publishers may be inherently supporting civic society which may in turn create community, foster trust and loyalty to a particular site" (De La Poype and Sood 2012, 33).

2.1.   Networked news socialization and attention backbone

Hermida et al. indicate that the networked public sphere manifests itself on several different levels, especially when information coexists with internet mediated networks and social media. They identified three different level of engagement that correspond to information usage: Like, share and recommend (Hermida et al. 2012). Nonetheless, Heldman, Schindelar and Weaver (2013) suggest that this process is more complex and claim seven levels of social media engagement. Although Heldman, Schindelar and Weaver's research focuses on the use of social media by public health originations in order to promote public health communication strategies; Geoff Desreumaux applied this social media usage to marketing strategies and designed the infographic in order to depict these levels (Figure 1).

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[5] In *Public Sphere Dialogue in Online Newspapers and Social Spaces*, De La Poype and Sood distinguish between online and offline communities and conclude that even when both mirror on another, the type of opinion distributed through networks just describes the community using the network and not the entire society (De La Poype and Sood 2012, 33). This tendency to describe the whole reality based on the structure of a network is called *nodocentrism*: "Basically, nearness in a network is constituted on the basis of nodes recognizing other nodes. Nodocentrism constructs a social reality in which nodes can only 'see' other nodes, and only nodes deserve to be accounted for" (Mejias 2007, 13).

Fig. 1. The seven levels of social media engagement (Desreumaux 2014).

In *Sociability, Speed and Quality in the Changing News Environment* (2012), Angela Phillips claims that these social media engagement levels can also be found in NNS users. Furthermore, she thinks that journalists and all users involved in news production should ensure that "news is produced in a form that is capable of spreading virally [through social media]" (Phillips 2012). Jenny Preece and Diane Maloney-Krichmar agree with Phillips, emphasizing that news producers should consider the engagement of the users with the news, a practice that she calls *sociability of the news*, because this practice "help[s] to guide online behavior" (Preece and Maloney-Krichmar 2003, 26), and therefore to understand: a) A community purpose; b) the people that integrate that community, and; c) the policy that frames the behavior of that community. In the next chapter, *Networked Journalism* will be addressed in greater depth how journalists can develop models that enable users' linkage and engagement with the news distributed on networks, here addresses as *Networked News*.

Continuing with the different levels of networked news engagement; I argue that the levels of *attention* and *appreciation* have a personal impact and may have an influence in users´ private lives and private spheres. Due to the lack of networked opinion exchange and networked public debate these levels should be considered as weak manifestations of networked public opinion. The

level of *sharing* may not generate opinion exchange, but allows networked news to reach a larger public. The distribution of socially relevant information throughout social networks maybe considered a mild form of networked public sphere, although there is not opinion exchange, the distributed information may have an impact on the private sphere, or even public, of other users. Supporting De La Poype and Sood's suggestion about the exchange of comments (either in an area set up to leave comments or forums) as a first manifestation of the networked public opinion, because this action opens the possibility to debate, the engagement levels of *opinion*, *contribution*, *animation* and *advocacy* should be considered as a strong manifestation of the networked public sphere.

I would like to highlight that the interaction of the networked news sites with social media networks suggest the analysis of two issues: How does the distribution of networked news through different networks affect the networked public sphere? Moreover, what is the impact of the networked public sphere on societies? About the first interrogative, Jo Bardoel and Mark Deuze consider that the journalism residing within internet-mediated networks has not only the possibility of interacting with social media networks, but this type of journalism can also interact with other types of journalistic networks like TV, radio or printed news (Bardoel and Deuze 2001, 92-93). As an extension of this issue, Benkler suggested in 2006 that this *network interaction* stimulates a convergence phenomenon that he called the *attention backbone* (Benkler 2006, 12).

In a research published in 2013, Benkler et al. indicate that due to the dynamic of the attention backbone, the mainstream news systems in current societies do not play a central role; however, they aid linking together the news of the most trafficked sites or social networks with different clusters of the network society. In some cases, the attention backbone may provide a boost to the news report on less visible sites to reach broader audiences. In this context, Benkler et al. consider that the NPS "enabled a dynamic public discourse that involved both individual and organizational participants and offered substantive discussion of complex issues contributing to affirmative political action" (Benkler et al. 2013, 3).

2.2. Communicative power in the network societies

Concerning the second question mentioned above, about the impact of the networked public sphere in social life; Jürgen Habermas claims in the book *Between Facts and Norms* (1992) that the public opinion only produces a form of power known as *communicative power*; ironically, one of the weaker forms of power in the power structure of a society (Habermas 1992, 437). Elaborating further on this communicative power, Friedland, Hove and Rojas identified a paradox in the interaction of powers in democratic societies: Even when the public opinion produces a weak power, this power is

necessary to legitimize the political power: "If the political system doesn't receive the public sphere's outputs of considered public opinion and communicative power, the public won't regard political actors and institutions as legitimate, and they won't acknowledge administrative power" (Friedland, Hove and Rojas 2006, 11). In other words, in democratic societies the communicative power generated by the public sphere plays a decisive role in the impression that citizens have about public servants. Due to the legitimatization of this opinion coming from elections, the elected candidate becomes a legitimate political agent. Habermas suggests a *loss of legitimacy* when public opinion is formed in a public sphere that is fully supported by a single power; either the economic power or the social power.

Benkler et al. and De La Poype and Sood ensure that networked news "with the convergence of online newspapers, blogs, polls, message boards, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube" encompasses a form of public sphere less influenced by economic interests (hence, more legitimate) by "democratizing news processes" (De La Poype and Sood 2012, 33). The increase in legitimate social information through networks intensified the debate about the role and influence of ICT systems in the seeking of democracy. This issue has been the motive for several studies, which intensified in 2011 with the social mobilizations and the civil wars known as the *Arab Spring*. Research about this topic highlights the power of the social networks and new media giving voice to minorities, connecting media users who are geographically scattered and organize social mobilization. However, the use of social media and the networked news system in the current democratic life in Mexico may offer the opportunity to extend the findings about the use of social networks for democratic issues, even when this use does not lead to social revolutions.

2.3. Monitory democracy

Mexican citizens use the news systems, the new media and the social media as a mechanism of surveillance to monitor and warn for mafia attacks or shootings. However Mexicans also use ICT networks to question the performance of the politicians; John Keane defines this practice as a new form of *post-representative democracy* called *monitory democracy*:

"My conjecture is that monitory democracy is a new historical type of democracy, one that is defined by the multiplication and dispersal of many different power-monitoring and power-contesting mechanisms, both within the 'domestic' fields of government and civil society and beyond, in cross-border settings that were once dominated by empires, states and business organizations" (Keane 2008a, 1).

Keane points out that since World War II, citizens have the possibility to form a *well formed* opinion (public opinion) about politicians, due to the impact of journalism and media. Later on in time, this opinion starts having an impact on the outcome of any election. Therefore, Keane suggests that the *power institutions* have been transformed into *monitory institutions* by being exposed to the constant public scrutiny (Figure 2).
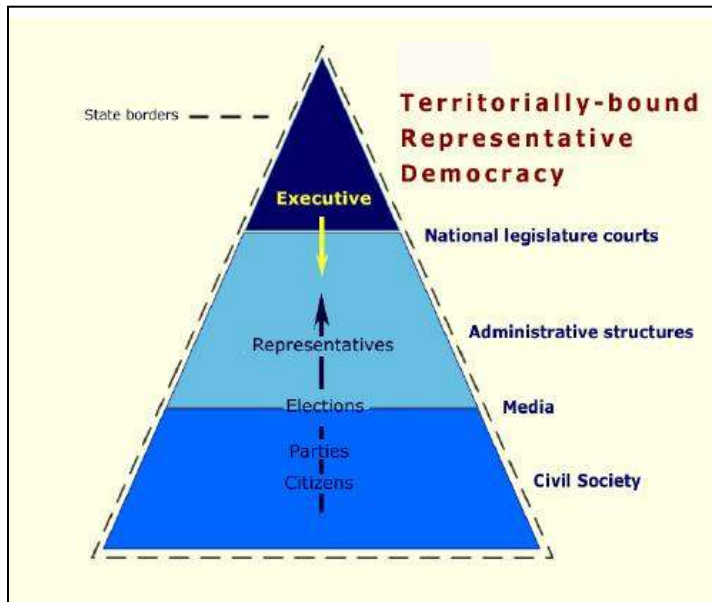

Fig. 2. Territorially-bound representative democracy (Keane 2008b, 8).

Keane considers that ICT networks embrace the *informative abundance* due to the mediated contribution of citizens, now turned into *monitoring agencies* (citizen journalism).[6] Monitory democracy works as a complex network of *monitoring agencies* of different sizes, continuously asking questions about who gets what, when and how, and to hold those in power publicly accountable, wherever they are located. For Keane, the monitory democracy in postmodern societies enables a democracy rich in conflicts and a political debate that does not wither due to constant arguments with political entities (Figure 3). Keane believes that several monitoring agents, pressing for greater public accountability of those who exercise power, may succeed in overthrowing a government, if necessary:

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[6] Keane explains that monitoring agencies appear in different sizes and operate at on various spatial scales: Ranging from individuals to global networks dedicated to control those who exercise power. About the monitoring agencies' functions, he explains that these are not just providers of information. They operate in different ways and on different fronts: Some scrutinize the power level of the inputs of citizens towards the government or civil society organizations. Others are concerned with control and refute the *policy throughputs*. Yet other monitoring agencies may focus on scrutinizing political outcomes produced by governmental and nongovernmental organizations (Keane 2008a, 11-12).

"The powerful consequently come to feel the constant pinch of the powerless. In the era of monitory democracy, those who make decisions are constantly subject to the ideal of public chastening, tied down by a thousand Lilliputian strings of scrutiny" *(Keane 2008b, 27).*
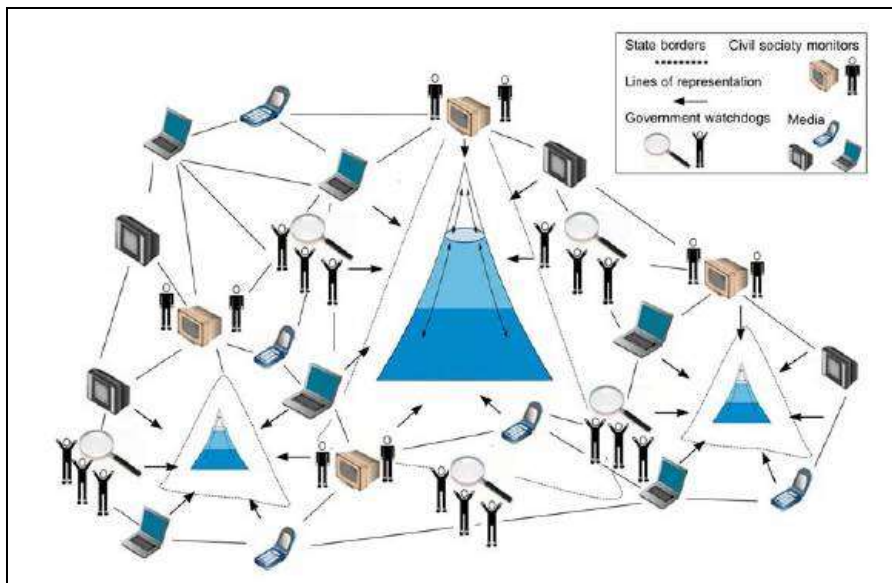

Fig. 3. Structure of monitory democracy (Keane 2008b).

The hopeful panorama described by Keane inspired the Mexican artist Abisué Cortés, who created the picture on the cover of this thesis. My study recognizes networked journalism as a vehicle to increase communicative reflexivity at any level of communication within the networked public sphere.

In the next chapter I argue that networked journalism benefits from the information flow (appointed by Habermas and Boeder) and the networked public sphere in three ways: a) Connecting users in different geographical points but with common interests; b) accelerating the processes of news production and distribution; c) supporting a deeper analysis of the information: Providing context to the reports, contrasting perspectives and opinions and expanding the references to the information. To illustrate these three benefits, I would like to suggest a representation based on the symbol used to point out works and installations containing dangerous forces, namely dams, dykes and nuclear electrical generating stations; all of them relate to determinate forms of flows, just as the information flow (Figure 4).

Fig. 4. The three features of networked news: Speed, context and connectivity.

In the particular case of Mexico, this research seeks to analyze the dynamics of the networked public sphere and how this power affects the political life of the country according to Keane's conception of monitory democracy. This is not to say that the networked public sphere, or democracy, is not possible without technological development: Interaction and communicative reflexivity are possible, but at the cost of speed, context and broader citizen connectivity.

3. Networked journalism

The goal of this chapter is to describe, categorize and analyze new forms of journalism connected to the network society. I will start by defining journalism. In broad terms Jo Bardoel and Mark Deuze, whose work has been consulted in the previous chapter, define journalism as "the professional selection of actual news facts to an audience by means of technological distribution methods" (Bardoel and Deuze 2001, 92). Notwithstanding, Stella Martini suggests that for a more consistent definition and understanding of journalism, it is necessary to approach this profession from the basic unit of the journalistic product: The news. Martini explains that the news is a representation of the social present that involves or affects a community: "The news can be defined as the construction of an event whose novelty, unpredictability and future effects of this event towards the society, needs to be transmitted to public recognition" (Martini 2000, 4). Hence, she describes journalism as the system that produces the news, which is responsible for reconstructing a part of social reality, and which allows individuals to understand the world that they cannot access directly.

Martini's definition of news suggests that socially relevant information has always been present in societies, whether or not the medium is technologically massive. However, many thinkers and academics, from Plato, Marshall McLuhan (1994), Dahlgren (1996) to Bardoel and Deuze (2001), underline the relevance of the linkage between news transmission and the technological development of media, which provoke the redefinition of the concept every time that a new technology emerges. The latest trend in journalism, media studies and new media studies is analyzing journalism from the perspective of a new communication technology: The *Internet*. This has fostered terms moving into two directions: Media influence and new practices; both giving

names to concepts like *digital journalism*, *e-journalism*, *on-line journalism*, *web journalism*, *cyber journalism*, amongst others.

Núria Almiron suggests that all these terms mentioned above seem to be inaccurate descriptions of the type of journalism enabled by the Internet. A large number of academics[7] have pointed out that hyper linking, multidirectional interactivity and multimedia are the features that the Internet has given to the news. However, Almiron explains that the determining factor in all these features is connectivity (Almiron 2000). Networked News Sites are connected and interact, not only to websites, but to a large array of interpersonal, organizational, and mass media networks used by persons, groups, organizations or states. Due to this connectivity, Bregtje van der Haak, Michael Parks and Manuel Castells suggest the advent of networked journalism:

"Networked journalism refers to a diffused capacity to record information, share it, and distribute it. In a world in which information and communication are organized around the Internet, the notion of the isolated journalist working alone, whether toiling at his desk in a newsroom or reporting from a crime scene or a disaster, is obsolete. Every journalist becomes a node in a network that functions to collect, process, and distribute information" (Van der Haak, Parks and Castells 2012, 2927).

Paul Bradshaw claims that the interaction of the news with different networks has changed the news itself in terms of speed and contextualization, forming a novel news cycle that affects news production and distribution. Hence, I argue that with all the new software and tools enabled by the Internet and mobile apps, there is a need to deliver a model that organizes the new journalistic practices, which are possible within the framework of networked journalism, in order to produce a solid message. I propose the RED model for Networked Journalism in order to deliver an academic structure that supports the study of this thesis. Although the RED model is explained extensively in section 3.3, I would like to explain that this model is inspired by the model designed by Mario García for the Poynter Institute of Journalism (PIJ): The WED model for news printed media. PIJ suggests that this model is useful for anyone involved in news production, because "it refers to the harmonious marriage of Writing, Editing and Design to produce a journalistic project that is more powerful than any one element in isolation" (Reason 2002).

However, the RED not only captures networked news production but also news distribution, because one of the added values of the current ICT networks is the possibility to link media users,

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[7] From Jo Bardoel and Mark Deuze (2001); to Concha Edo (2009); Pere Masip, Javier Díaz-Noci, David Domingo, Josep-Lluís Micó-Sanz and Ramón Salaverría (2010); amongst others.

weather professionals or amateurs, to different types of public spheres. Therefore, while the RED model for networked news offers the structure to the practices analyzed here, this model may be used as a guideline by all individuals involved in the production and distribution of networked news. The following sections describe in depth the networked news cycle and the journalistic networked news practices inherent to networked journalism.

3.1. Networked news cycle and distributed journalism

With the consolidation of the internet and the familiarization of internet mediated new media, users are likely to report, comment and publish information without the intervention of professional journalists. This paradigm shift means that news gathering, production and reporting occur virtually massively and simultaneously. Paul Bradshaw suggests that the new scheme in the networked news cycle follows a six stage process, which fluctuates across two dimensions: Speed for news reporting and depth for news analysis (Figure 5).
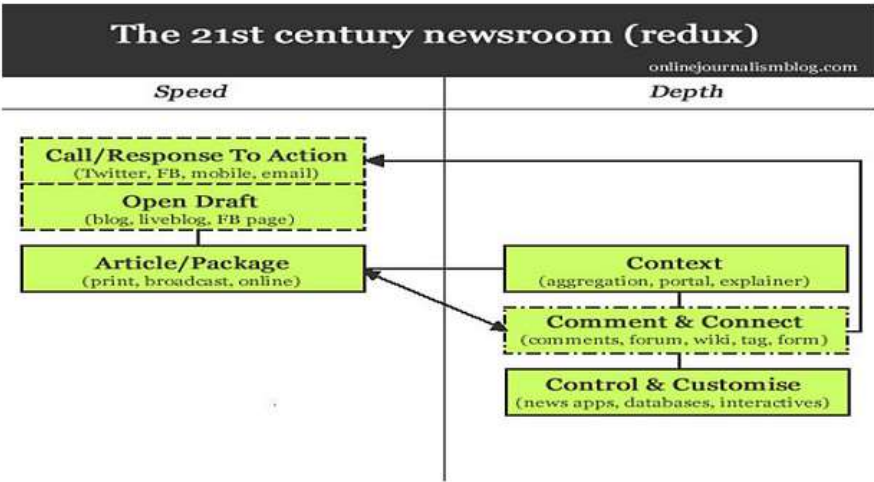

Fig. 5. The 21st century Newsroom (redux) (Bradshaw 2012b, 14).

Bradshaw indicates that when an event happens, the first stage is an *alert*. At this stage direct witnesses of the event post basic information on social networks. After the alert, the information can be periodically updated and improved: "First the tweets come, then the pictures, then the video, and then the wires" (Bradshaw 2012b, 18). This stage is known as *draft*, here the information becomes more detailed and sources are given. News reaches the *package* state once sufficient data on the event have been accumulated and the information is ready to be documented and produced.

While the speed level facilitates the input of information, the depth level focuses on managing the output: "Consumers move from a need for awareness to a need for understanding, the journalist and news organization are expected to provide focus, and filters" (Bradshaw 2012b, 36). It

is at this stage of the networked news cycle where the most significant adjustment to journalism is identified: Media users have the possibility to continue updating the information, providing more data, analyzing the information, sharing their opinion and liking the information to their personal contacts.

The stage *context* has the purpose to guide those who come late to the reported event and want an overview. At this level an editorial synopsis of the news is produced. Moreover, the reports are fully supported with images, maps and infographics. One of the added values of the context stage is the possibility of linking the news to previous reports or related information. The following stage is to *comment and connect*. As has been pointed out in the chapter 2, news is socially relevant information and as a consequence, highly susceptible to being commented on. Networked journalism has increased the social factor of the news by enabling new platforms that facilitate users to exchange opinions on the same media that published the news. Moreover, networked journalism offers the possibility to include users in the process of analysis and reflection within, or outside, the medium that published the news. Forums, open comment areas, sharing, linking and aggregation to virtual communities are some of the forms that characterize this stage. Networked journalism also integrates new software, tools and applications (apps) that can be a benefit to both journalists and news users. By using this technology, the networked news has the possibility to *control and customize* information; this is the last stage in the cycle of the networked news.

Note that Bradshaw's news cycle focuses on the professional treatment of the news and not on the new practices enabled by this constant information flow. Axel Bruns points out that the practice of monitoring the content of social networks and alerting the community about news is a task that can be practiced by any type of media user. He defines this practice as *gate watching*: "Observing the many gates through which a steady stream of information passes from these sources and of highlighting from this stream that information which is of most relevance to one's own personal interests or to the interests of one's wider community" (Bruns 2008). Users' gate watching may develop into forms of *citizen journalism*, a phenomenon studied in the next section.

3.2.   Users Participation: Distributed journalism or citizen journalism?

Although the aim of this thesis is to analyze the influence of networked journalism on the formation of the networked public sphere, I believe that it is important to clarify the nature of user-generated content. Within the networked journalism framework, the level of user participation has grown; not only for news reporting, but also in the way that users modify the news or news databases with comments, or collaborate in wikis, forum, blogs, etc. Bradshaw (2012a) considers

that, within the framework of the network society, the collaboration between users and journalists is blurring the gap between both groups on a scale never experienced before. This collaboration reinvigorates the discussion around citizen journalism.[8] Karin Deutsch Karlekar and Courtney Radsch define citizen journalism as:

> *"An alternative and activist form of newsgathering and reporting that functions outside mainstream media institutions, often as a repose to shortcoming in the professional journalistic field, that uses similar journalistic practices but is driven by different objectives and ideals and relies on alternative sources of legitimacy than traditional or mainstream journalism" (Deutsch Karlekar and Radsch 2012, 16).*

In other words, they indicate that citizen journalism occurs only in two circumstances: a) When politically motivated citizens are involved with a cause; or b) when activists are deeply engaged with the publication of information. Because citizen journalists generally work without payment, their motivation is assumed to be personal, idealistic, or activist, as Deutsch Karlekar and Radsch write.

Traditionally, all forms of networked facts reporting have been deliberately assumed as citizen journalism, but this is a mistake. Paul Bradshaw explains that user generated content produced in the networked news schema is nothing more than different forms of contribution to the professional news production. Bradshaw indicates that the participation enabled by networked journalism reinforces the social content of the news and creates a sense of community. He proposes the term distributed journalism to describe the type of practice enabled by the participation of journalists within the community (Bradshaw 2007a). [9]

A clear example that depicts the difference between distributed journalism and citizen journalism can be found in the use of social media during the Mexican Drug War. In 2007, when the Mexican authorities declared war on drug cartels, Mexican citizens began using social networks as surveillance systems to report shootings and other risky situations, in order to avoid them or to find shelter. This information was used by journalists to inform the community about the situation (distributed journalism). When the levels of violence increased, Mexico's news mainstream reduced

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[8] Citizen journalism is also known as *public*, *participatory*, *democratic* or *street* journalism (Wikipedia 2009).

[9] Bradshaw identifies seven different types of collaborators: The *brain* to describe those collaborators with an expertise in an issue; the *voice* are those with strong and well expressed opinions; the *ear* for those who aggregate what is taking place in their field; the *accidental journalist* for a sudden witness of an event; the *value adder* to describe collaborators that improve the quality of content through activities such as commenting or tagging; the *technician* are the type of collaborators with technical skills, who add value to the news by facilitating the placement of content or data into new contexts. Finally, the *crowd* defines a group of collaborators who contribute to a project by individually performing small parts of it (Bradshaw 2007a).

or stopped publishing drug related information, due to the systematic murder and kidnapping of journalists (Hastings 2013). Consequently, bloggers assumed the role of reporting events exclusively related to the Mexican Drug War. The most notorious of these is *Blog del Narco*,[10] a website run by anonymous activists, who are committed to the safety of Mexican citizens (citizen journalism). Blog del Narco functions as a social network that collects *user generated content* from social media. The administrators report the information to the public in a form that newspapers do not dare to publish.

Having analyzed the way in which the news has changed under influence of the Network Society and having discussed the nature of user generated content, it is time to analyze the new networked journalistic practices and how these enable new skills, while updating others within the framework of traditional journalism. I will do this in three steps, analyzing the process for news production: Information gathering, news production and news distribution.

3.3.   Networked journalism practices: Towards a new model

In broad terms, the traditional journalistic news production is described by a large number of academics as a three level procedure. Bregtje van der Haak, Michael Parks and Manuel Castells (2012) consider that this process can be understood as gathering, interpreting and spreading information, while Paul Bradshaw (2012a) approaches the process as newsgathering, news production and distribution. Mario García (1993) suggests that news production can be approached by considering the three tasks practiced in a newsroom: Writing, editing, and design. Derived from the acronyms of these procedures, Garcia has developed the W.E.D. model for news production in the late 1980's. Its goal is to produce news with a solid communicative message, encouraging the collaboration amongst different types of journalists in a newsroom: Reporters, photographers, editors and designers (Stark 2011). Having this goal as a reference, I propose a model that matches the attributes of networked journalism: The RED Model for Networked News. This model's acronym comes from the three networked journalistic tasks: *Reporting*[11], *editing*[12] and *distributing*[13]. In the coming paragraphs these tasks are discussed.

3.3.1. Reporting: Data journalism

Data journalism is a new form of reporting enabled by the processing, analysis and visualization of large data sets. Paul Bradshaw explains that these data can either be the source upon

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[10]Spanish for "Drug trafficking blog", http://www.blogdelnarco.com/
[11]"The act of collecting facts about an event or an issue and then summarizing it in a brief article" (Snell 2013).
[12] "The process of selecting and preparing written, visual, audio and filmed materials gathered during an event for later publication" (Mamishev and Williams 2009, 128).
[13] "The process of production and dissemination of literature, music, or information — the activity of making information available to the general public". (Magayu 2014).

which a story is based, the tool to tell a story, or both (Bradshaw 2012c). These applications describe two ways in which data journalism is evolving: Data-Driven Journalism (DDJ) and Database Journalism (DJ).

Cory Janssen defines data-driven journalism as "the use of data and number crunching in journalism to uncover, better explain and/or provide context to a news story" (Janssen 2013). DDJ relied on the philosophy of the online free access to public information, or open data, and the free software available to analyze social patterns. The aim of this practice is to help politicians and citizens to make decisions based on the findings. However, the actual trend is more inclusive about the information source and the software used for the processing and visualization of the data.[14] DDJ focuses on the ways in which NNS develop new forms of access, processing and visualizing large sets of numeric data in order to facilitate visitors to obtain their personal findings, without a whole journalistic story or leading to a point of view. For example, WikiLeaks released documents about the number of casualties registered in the Iraq War from 2004 to 2009. The Guardian´s NNS enables the visualization of each of these deaths on a map of Iraq using Google Fusion Tables. By clicking on the nodes, it is possible to display on the screen small windows where the visitors can learn about the type of murder, the number of casualties, wounded, their politic situation, etc. (Figure 6).
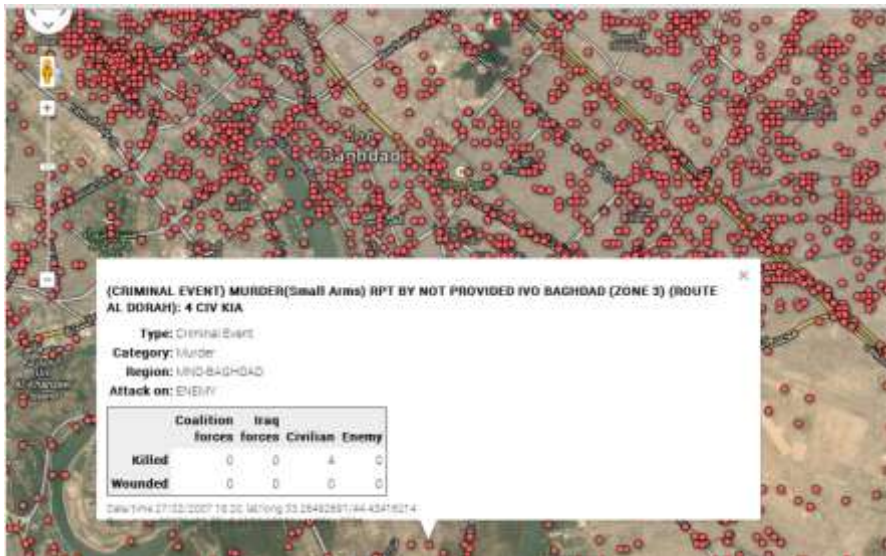

Fig 6. Wikileaks Iraq: Data journalism maps every death (Rogers 2010).

Database Journalism (DJ), is a form of journalism, which is based on information management, whereby news content is ordered around structured pieces of data. Adrian Holovaty

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[14] Using data, the networked news sites of *The Guardian*, *Los Angeles Times*, *The Telegraph* and *The Texas Tribune* have developed data visuals based on maps, graphs and timelines in diverse cases like: Discrimination trends in public schools, council budget execution, casualties in the Iraq War, public transportation routes and trends over land's use or staff salaries, amongst others cases (Marshall 2011).

explains that the information gathered by journalists within the scope of their investigations (text, photos, videos, graphics) can also be considered *structured data*, which one can aggregate, shuffle and compile just like precise figures (Holovaty 2006). Holovaty points out that one of the journalistic tasks that has been strengthened and renewed due to the network society is the collection of data in order to create a database. Creating and reporting from a database is not new at all. Newspapers and broadcast news programs use this resource, especially when making summaries of conflicts, following professional trajectories or annual specials. However, DJ goes beyond simple data collection, it also comprises the categorization, cross checking and analysis, updating and maintenance of the data from which journalists can extract information and upon which web or mobile applications can be built. Furthermore, what makes DJ different from the other forms of data journalism is the manner in which this information is used: While DDJ is understood as a process whereby journalists visualize stories using numerical data as a primary material; DJ seeks to create visual, eye catching media to realize data driven stories. Holovaty indicates that contrary to the classic printed storytelling structured by headlines and catch lines, DJ relies on the interaction of figures, graphs, dynamics maps and visualizations.

Fig. 7. Clinton and Obama: Road to the White House (ABC News 2008).

Figure 7 shows the ABC networked news site's timeline of Barack Obama's and Hillary Clinton's road to the USA's national administration. This particular report is enabled by a large amount of information gathered from the database of ABC, comprising of photographs, videos, charts and articles.[15]

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[15] Refer to the On-Line Journalism Blog for a deeper understanding of data journalism (Bradshaw 2011).

3.3.2. Editing: The tumbled pyramid

The inverted pyramid is conventionally the most accepted guideline amongst reporters and editors to prioritize facts and structure information into news. This method consists of writing the news, starting with the most relevant information by answering the interrogatives *what*, *who*, *where*, *how*, *when* and *why*.[16] The rest of the news report is followed by supplementary information organized in blocks of decreasing relevance (Figure 8). João Canavilhas suggests a new pyramid to prioritize and structure information with the use of hyperlinking in networked news. Having analyzed the reading patterns of networked news, Canavilhas points out that the readers of networked news do not follow a linear reading pattern, because they prefer to follow other reading patterns to explore certain topics by clicking on the links in the information.
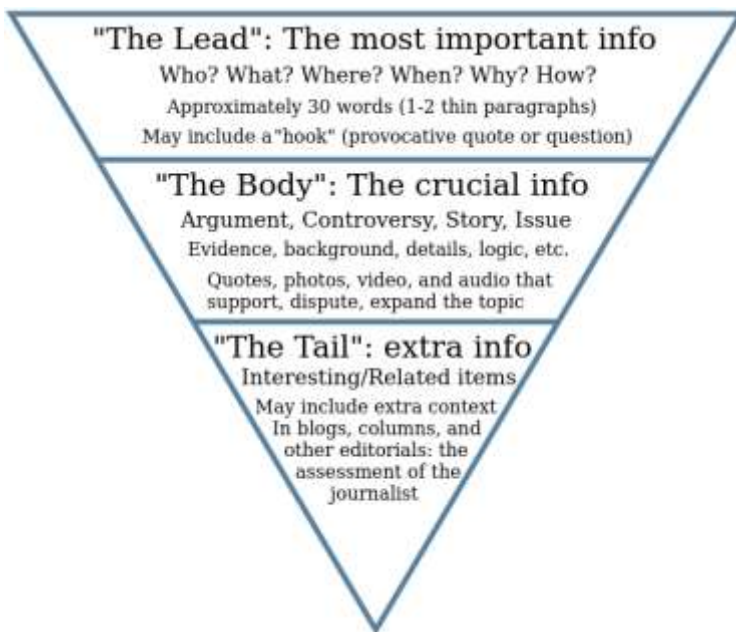

Fig. 8. The inverted pyramid for news writing (Schwartz 2013).

Canavilhas indicates that the inverted pyramid is a technique for printed news reporting, which proves less efficient when it comes to more elaborate networked news, because it conditions readers to reading routines similar to those of the printed press. The fragmentation of the hyperlinked information allows multiple reading experiences that vary according to the amount of links created between texts and other multimedia components. This feature not only liberates the story from spatial limitations in paper editions, by creating shorter texts linked to others, it also allows readers to have a more "personalized reading experience, moving from text to text using the links created by the journalist" (Canavilhas 2006, 3). The non-linearity enabled by the hyperlinking allows readers to access information at different levels of the same story, which reflects that in networked news the information contained in any part of the story is as important as the information contained in the

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[16] A technique also known as the *5W and an H.*

initial facts. The fact that information no longer needs to be read in hierarchical order signifies a shift in the traditional understanding of news reporting and news edition:

"In web journalism the amount (and variety) of available information is the reference variable. The news builds from a level of less information to increasingly deeper and varied information levels on the theme. Though information levels are clearly defined, texts are not organised according to relevance. Instead, there is an attempt to highlight reading clues. By contrast with the inverted pyramid model, a graphical representation of this architecture seems to suggest a tumbled pyramid. As in the case of the inverted pyramid, readers may abandon reading at any point without missing the meaning of the story. However, this model offers the possibility either of following through only one of the available reading axes or of navigating freely across the news" (Canavilhas 2006, 12).

Canavilhas defines the information levels of the tumbled pyramid in four stages (Figure 9). The first level, the *base unit*, consists of the presentation of the facts. Answering the what, when, who and where questions. The *explanation level* completes the essentials of the reported event and at this level journalists answer the questions why and how. *Contextualization* is a level where journalists provide a deeper background to the previous levels, whether in text format, video, sound or animated infographics, etc. Finally, the *exploration level* is that stage at which the news is linked to other publication or external archives.
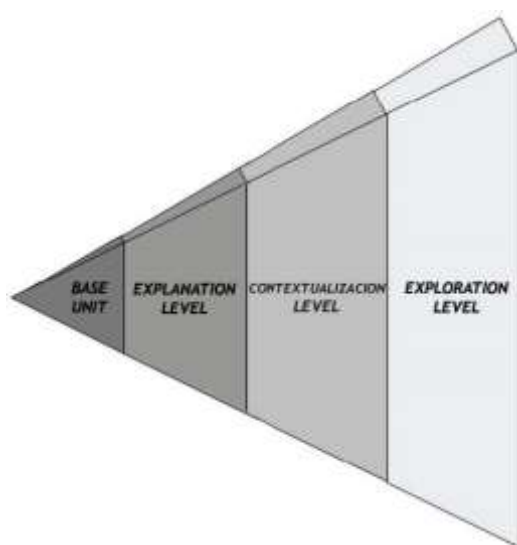

Fig. 9. The tumbled pyramid (Canavilhas 2006, 28).

Figure 10 depicts the organization of the news based on the architecture of the tumbled pyramid while figure 11 applies it to a real case. As can be seen in figure 11, all information is distributed among short paragraphs and the users have the choice to consult and expand the information while exploring any other of the available links, moving from one level of the information to another. In newspapers the information would be distributed in vertical hierarchical order, presenting the most important information at the top and the complementary information at the bottom of the news, stopping at some point because of space limitations. Applying the tumbled pyramid to networked news, space limitations are no longer an issue and the information can be extended ad infinitum.
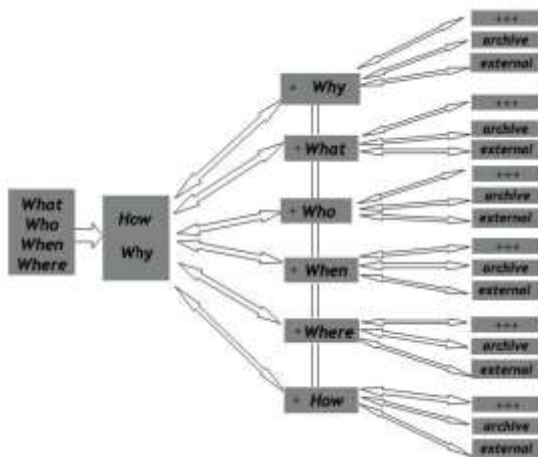

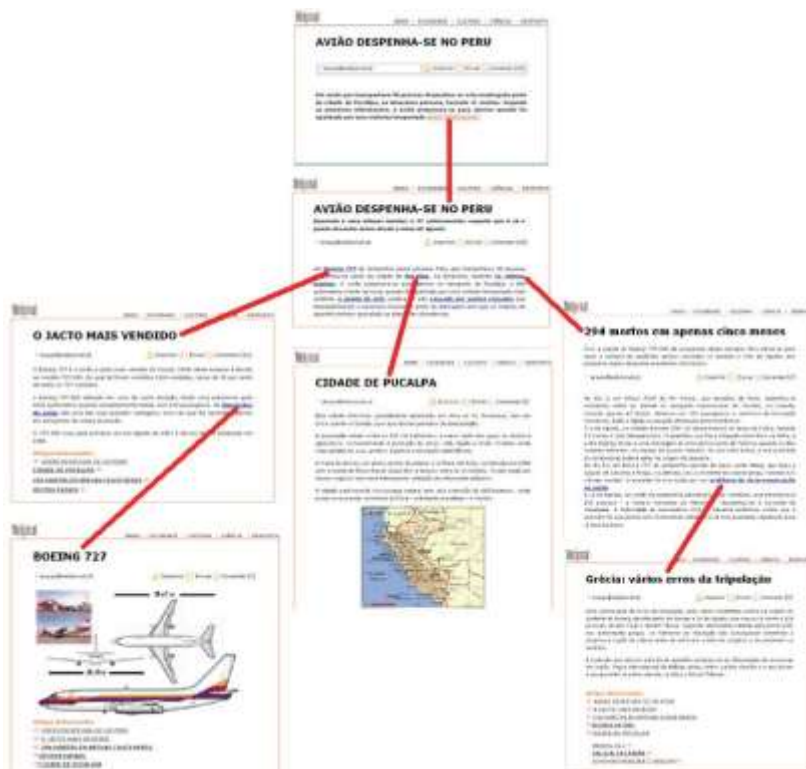Fig 10. Architecture of layered information (Canavilhas 2013).

Fig. 11. Architecture of the tumbled pyramid applied to news (Canavilhas 2013).

I would like to highlight that the tumbled pyramid does not suggest a shift in the forms of news reporting, but a reform in the tasks of selecting, organizing and matching the textual information with visual, audio and filmed information as well as subsequent tagging and linking, leading the news to different levels of information. In other words, this model changes the form *to tell the story* and this skill relies entirely on the *editors*, who at the moment of receiving information need to be aware of the story structure, in order to create the links necessary to approach the different information levels.

3.3.3. Distributing: 5W + H model for networked news connectivity

Networked journalism has introduced considerable changes in news distribution. First, during the 20th century, the news was distributed via mass media, where a message could reach large segments of the population. Networked news is naturally fragmented, reaching certain sectors, hubs or nodes, of a community. Secondly, last century's news system was settled in certain consuming time, broadcast news were more immediate, while newspapers took a day to be published. Networked news is practically simultaneous. Third, the social content of news has a very limited interaction with the media that provides the information and the information was difficult to archive and consult. In networked news the interaction with the information media is possible; [17] while the content can be consulted as far the information remains public on internet: "Its permanence is central to its power, and relates directly to its connectivity (and therefore visibility)" (Bradshaw 2007b). Finally, the content in traditional media is limited to the features of the medium: Text and still images for the press or audio and video for broadcasted news. Networked news has the ability to merge different forms of media content.

Beside the facts mentioned above, Bradshaw explains that in the context of the Network Society, once the news has been published, this information is susceptible to being linked to, commented on, discussed, tagged, bookmarked and/or sent to someone else. The latter signifies that the networked publishers are not only responsible for delivering a notice to the citizens in a society. In networked journalism, publishers are also responsible for enabling the other feature of networked news: Interaction. Journalists and newsrooms need to be aware of the form in which the news connects to the community:

"Let's look at conversations. Conversations are good. They help us work through our thoughts; they help us rethink ideas; put together compelling arguments; make connections; spot holes; negotiate; compromise. But they're only the start. Have you

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[17] The senders can also disable any form of interaction with the users.

ever been to one of those meetings where there is a lot of talking – but no action? That's what most news websites and blogs are like at the moment. One endless meeting. There are some hugely important issues right now. Traditionally news organisations have sought to explain what's going on, to clarify, to investigate. But given the infinite space, the permanence – and, above all, the connectivity and functionality of new media – shouldn't we do more? Shouldn't we be connecting?" (Bradshaw 2007b).

Bradshaw indicates that in the frame of the networked news a proper connection of the news on the networks will make it more accessible and it would be more susceptible to have a social impact. Hence, he proposes a modification to the 5W + H reporting model in order to achieve better distribution of the networked news. Furthermore, he points out that anybody working in networked news should keep these questions in mind when posting a story, while news agencies should be engaged in facilitating journalists and users with technology, tools and software to customize and connect networked news. As figure 12 suggests, these practices are *social networking*, *social bookmarking*, *mapping*, *calendars*, *databases* and *automation*.
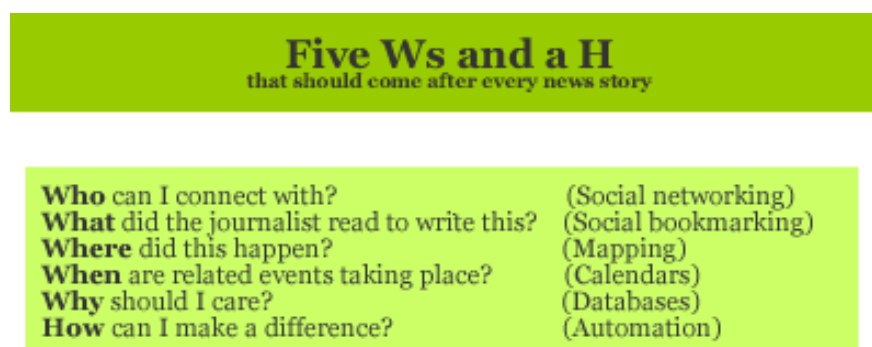
Fig. 12. Five W's and a H that should come *after* every story (Bradshaw 2007b).

These practices are described here by answering each question. *Who* (social networking) has to deal with the social content of the news and how this connects to the community. Who goes beyond the possibility of enabling a message board beside the news and acts as an intermediary; this practice seeks to link the news to different social networks in order to allow the users to lead the news into their circle of interest and influence. *What* (social bookmarking) signifies the possibility of linking the news to the original information source. Bradshaw proposes the creation of bookmarks, or agendas, where the visitors can personally visit sources like municipalities, police departments, hospitals, etc. *Where* (mapping) has to be the possibility to locate the stories. This practice allows people to find shelter in case of danger; or enables the visitors to choose stories within a certain radius and receive

alerts when the news agencies publish news related to that area. *When* (calendars) is about the possibility of adding or pinning upcoming events into personal calendars and, moreover, the possibility of generating alerts ahead of these events. Bradshaw indicates that the question *why* (database) is the most important and challenging of all the questions. The academic suggests that new media technologies and software, specifically those that aid to process and visualize data from databases, offer new ways to personalize news and illustrate how it affects the public. *How* (automation) is a consequence of all the forms in which journalists and newsrooms identify and retrieve press releases (and news of different sources) to incorporate, package, and redistribute them to specific networks of information diffusion. The goal of this practice is to stimulate collective intelligence.

Bradshaw suggests that in the network society the social distribution of news is more important than ever. An adequate use of the social networks and distributed journalism may help to enriched practices like *investigative journalism*[18], *crowdsourcing journalism*[19], engagement, transparency, community sense and utility:

"We are moving from a need for 'news that sells' to 'news that moves': Useful news, distinctive news, specific news, news that we're involved in" (Bradshaw 2008).

As we will see in chapters 4 and 5, these new models and shifts in journalistic practices have an impact on the situation in Mexico.

4. Methodology

Traditional ethnographic research requires academics to live in a specific community in order to understand the behavior, customs and practices of its members. However, in media ethnography this is not necessary, because the goal of this method is to observe "the work process at media outlets such as researching online investigative news agencies, broadcast news stations, newspapers, advertising agencies and public relations firms" (Brennen 2012, 162). Considering this quote, I argue that media ethnography is a suitable research method for this study, because its goal is to analyze the ways in which Mexican journalists and Mexican networked news agencies approach networked journalism and the ways in which Mexican users engage with the news, enabling a public sphere that may affect the Mexican democratic life.

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[18] A form of journalism in which reporters deeply investigate a single topic of interest, such as serious crimes, political corruption, or corporate wrongdoing. An investigative journalist may spend months or years researching and preparing a report (Wikimedia 2014).
[19] When news organizations invites citizens to co-produce the news and contribute to the news sites (Grabowicz 2014).

Brennen explains that in media ethnography researchers must establish reports based on observing, interviewing and participating in events with members of a group, community or organization, in order to learn about their experiences, routines and practices. To achieve this goal, the qualitative research method used here is *participant observation*: "An open-ended and flexible research process that may be carried out by one researcher or by a research team" (Brennen 2012, 163). There are four types of participant observers[20], and therefore, four different forms to obtain information about media usage in a community. This research obtains data in the form of *observer as participant* because this approach applies to researchers who distance themselves from those being observed. Brennen indicates that researchers may interview people in an organization or community, but they do not actively participate in activities, rituals or events, because they find that their research role limits their interaction with those being studied.

I consider that observant as participant is suitable for this research basically for two reasons: First, due to the geographical distance, because I reside in The Netherlands. However, I can access the NNS via internet. The other reason is based on the quest for objectivity. Although I am a Mexican citizen and I consider the findings of this research socially relevant, I am appealing to my professional skills as a journalist, having been trained to put my personal believes aside, reporting facts as the circumstances point out, or as the individuals involved perceive, in order to gain credibility. Credibility is important in the field of Humanities as well, since research is based on factual information and the academic's interpretation of it.

Matteo Bonifacio indicates that the specific methods used in participant observations are: "informal interviews, direct observation, participation in the life of the group, collective discussions, analyses of personal or confidential documents produced within the group, self-analysis, results from activities undertaken off or online, and life-histories and mythologies" (Bonifacio 2014). Therefore, in order to collect data about the production, displaying and distribution of networked news, I examined ten of the most visited Mexican *Networked News Sites* (hereafter NNS) for eight weeks, from May 1st to June 30th, 2014. I monitored the news that has been published on the home pages of the following NNS: *El Universal, Excélsior, Milenio, La Jornada, Reforma, Radio Formula, Noticieros Televisa, Azteca Noticias, Noticias MVS and Aristegui Noticias*. These NNS are in the Mexico's top 100 of most viewed websites (Alexa 2014) and are recommended by search engines like Google.

The aim of this monitoring is to gather evidence of practices, routines and trends; based on the RED model described in chapter 3, but applied to Mexican NNS. In broad terms, the monitoring

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[20] *Complete observer*, *observer as participant*, *participant as observer*, and *complete participant* (Brennen 2012, 164).

observes the five most important news items of the day as well as the form in which the NNS produce and distribute the news. The complete monitoring sheet is available in appendix 1.

Spanish editions of international NNS (like CNN) and local/regional news-agencies have been excluded, because national news sites encompass a larger number of Mexicans; while local/regional news sites often cover issues that may not have repercussions on the entire country. Moreover, in issues about the Mexican Drug War, local/regional news agencies face *self-censorship* due to threats and attacks by cartels operating in the area. Hence, national news agencies dare to publish the most accurate information. During the monitoring was discovered that *Noticieros Televisa* restricts access to its site for users from outside Mexico, while the content of *Reforma*'s NNS is exclusive to subscribers.

In order to understand the different attitudes, actions and behaviors of networked journalism in Mexico, and in order to understand the impact of networked journalism on democratic life, I conducted interviews with 6 journalists (regardless of their area of expertise: reporters, designers, editors, publishers), as well as 11 users of the aforementioned NNS. All users here interviewed are highly educated Mexican citizens, aged between 20 to 45 years, and coming from the States of Quintana Roo, Tamaulipas, Nuevo León, Tabasco, Guerrero, Nayarit, Mexico City, Veracruz and Querétaro. The interviews were done via *e-mail.* The participants answered questionnaires with the possibility of adding comments about specific issues on the topic. All participants were promised anonymity. The assumption of this research is that the outcome is representative for the needs, actions and opinions of all Mexican citizens and journalists at national level, while every region of the country may have a different social dynamic.

Questionnaires are *standardized, open-ended interviews* because this approach *"facilitates faster interviews that can be more easily analyzed and compared"* (McNamara 1999). The same open-ended questions are asked to interviewees divided into two groups: Journalists and citizens. Journalists´ questionnaires probed the performance of the NNS for which they work, while Mexican citizens were questioned about issues related to networked news consumption and the performance of networked journalism in Mexico. In order to analyze the practice of distributed journalism, both questionnaires consider issues related to new forms of interaction between Mexican citizens and journalists. To analyze the impact of networked journalism in democratic life, both Mexican journalists and citizens interviewed here share their opinions on how networked journalism influences the way in which democracy is exercised in Mexico. The complete questionnaires are available in appendices 2 and 3.

The information gathered through the interviews and monitoring is analyzed, using *thematic analysis*, an *analytic approach* and *synthesizing strategy* used to identify, quantify and find relationships in large volumes of qualitative data, to reduce and manage large volumes of data without losing the context, while focusing on the interpretation. This process starts with coding the answers of the interviewees and the field notes gathered from the observation. Mills, Durepos and Wiebe suggest: "Identification of themes can be done deductively, on the basis of theoretical constructs that the case study researcher wishes to investigate. Researchers might use their research questions, interview questions, or theory-derived categories as a start list of a priori themes for coding data documents, an approach that can facilitate within- or cross-case comparisons" (Mills, Durepos and Wiebe, 2010). The themes are describes in chapter 5.

5. Results and discussion

Networked journalism features

The first objective of this research is to identify the performance of networked journalism in comparison to journalism based on traditional media. All interviewees mentioned the speed of the news as the major advantage of networked journalism. Just one out of 18 of the interviewees (5 per cent) identified a greater connectivity as an advantage of networked journalism. Neither the journalists nor the citizens pointed out news' contextualization as an advantage. However, four out of eleven (36 per cent) of the interviewed citizens point out freedom of speech as an advantage of networked journalism in comparison to the journalism practice within the news mainstream. About this advantage, Citizen 8 states: "The immediate access to news and to different opinions. Also, this form of journalism offers access to a more free practice of journalism, which does not discriminate information and, therefore, is more honest; because the traditional media system obeys economic interests" (Citizen 8, 2014). This plurality in opinions and citizens' media access can be considered as a form of contextualization, because NNS users have the possibility to debate opinions and facts by accessing other NNS, whether these belong to the mainstream or not. This fact suggests that in Mexico, neither journalists nor Mexican citizens are fully aware of all the advantages of the networked news. While citizens value the plurality and the contextualization of news; both groups seem to ignore the advantages of networked news in terms of connectivity (not only with other users but the linking of the news with other media, news, forums, sources, etc.)

The analysis of networking journalism's performance continues with approaching the networked news cycle. The first stage is news production.

News production and distributed journalism

Being asked about the form in which Mexican NNS produce news, journalists declare journalistic values and editorial lines of the agencies the basis of the journalistic practice. Therefore, the news production remains based on the traditional journalism models. Journalist 7 declares: "Although news agencies also have their own reporters; they publish news from other news agencies. This has more to do with the ability of coverage. Sometimes someone addresses an issue that was not covered by the newsroom because they were focused on other issues" (Journalist 7, 2014). This fact has been proved during the monitoring: Of the 10 monitored NSS, Aristegui Noticias is the only NSS whose complete news production is meant to feed the networks and does not represent the online version of a newspaper or broadcast news. Nonetheless, the content of Aristegui Noticias is also supported by the collaborations of the journalist Carmen Aristegui with CNN-Español, MVS Noticias and Reforma. All interviewed journalists indicate that Mexican NNS produce their news by gathering the information delivered by their correspondents. Hence, the trend in Mexico is producing news according to the mass media news conventions, using the NNS as a showcase to promote their content. In this regard, journalist 4 noted with irony: "Is it networked journalism, or is it the traditional media being distributed on the networks?" (Journalists 4, 2014).

As this thesis points out in chapter 3, one of the added values of networked journalism to news production is the contribution of media users in news reporting, a practice known as distributed journalism. About this practice, the interviewed journalists indicate that Twitter is the favorite social network of journalists to report with immediacy on events. However, the journalists point out that the trend in Mexico is to gather the information directly from Twitter accounts of correspondents, other news agencies or other journalists. On the other hand, the interviewed citizens indicate their dissatisfaction with this practice, which they perceive as misuse, due to the lack of original content. One of the interviewed citizens said: "Sometimes you read the same news, over and over again in different media, and even making use of the same images as visual support (Citizen 11, 2014)."

Regarding the information produced by the citizens, both journalists and citizens are aware that users are generators of information. However, the journalists dismiss this information, because it is difficult for them to verify. Journalist 4 indicates: "NNS use information from the networks, but all information should be confirmed and verified with various sources. A citizen's photo of fire in the presidential palace required information from the official source. A video of a politician with a criminal suspect, forced the actors to look as far as human and technically possible for an official

declaration. Not everything that circulates in networks can or should be taken. Confirmation, confirmation, confirmation! Search the actors involved" (Journalist 4, 2014).

Six out of seven journalists (85 per cent) ensure that journalists have insufficient contact with citizens and the information provided by them: "There is too much reliance on official sources" (Journalist 1), "Many citizens' problems are not considered by national news organizations, perhaps due to lack of space. This provides greater national coverage than social issues" (Journalist 2), "The voice of citizen is still underestimated, the information offered by citizens is not used, it is considered to lack of rigor and is not used. Worse, if used no credit is given to citizens" (journalist 7). About this last comment, Citizens 11 declares: "I do not think that citizens often have the opportunity to express their views unless the opinion is required by the press. If this opinion is uncomfortable and difficult to publish, [the media] just limit its use to what is necessary, in a distorted form" (Citizen 11, 2014).

Journalist 3 indicates that concerning national issues, the information provided by citizens is also disqualified, because users tend to report accidents or complain about issues that have an influence just on their local communities. Moreover, Journalist 3 points out that the only information provided by social media is that information posted on the social networks of the authorities. "For example, if a politician uses a social network to provide details or to clarify certain information, this is the information that the journalists make public" (Journalist 3, 2014).

Journalist 2 explains that many data provided by users of the networks is often taken as data backup for the report. Through the monitoring to the Mexican NNS it can be conformed that images remain the most requested back up information provided by social networks. In this way, YouTube is the social network that currently holds the greatest demand for video searches that serve as evidence for reports; followed by images from Twitter and to a lesser extent Facebook. From this can be concluded that Mexico lacks the practice of distributed journalism, due to the discrediting of user-generated content. Therefore, Castells ideal of distributed journalism being used as a tool that frees journalists from facts reporting is not reached.

Nonetheless, this does not mean that Mexican journalists are not reporting from the networks. The monitoring of Mexican NNS shows that one of the most common practices from Mexican NNS is to publish on the NSS those events that are considered trends on social networks. That is to say: If news originates from the social networks, the trend is reporting this fact, not only on the NNS but also through traditional mass media: Newspapers, television or radio (Confirming the attention backbone defined by Benkler et al; this item is analyzed further in this section). One case that illustrated this practice was the reaction of the network users to the statement made by the 16-year-old daughter of the Mexican soccer team coach, when they lost the friendly match against Israel

during the last World Cup, Brazil 2014. The adolescent defended her father by posting on her Twitter account #Ladypioja: "Hey morons, this is the first game that we lose after 7, and it is a friendly match. Anyway, it was only by one goal #Stupid". This became a trend topic and was reproduced on both the NNS and all traditional news media (Figure 13).

Fig. 13 #LadyPioja, levelled by criticism of defeat of the national team (GrupoFórmula 2014).

Once the information is gathered, it needs to be produced. As explained in chapter 3, networked news needs to be reported, edited and distributed (RED Model). Hence, the interviewees were asked about their perceptions of practices like data journalism, the tumbled pyramid and news connectivity.

Data journalism

About the new forms of reporting, 63 percent of the interviewed citizens agree that data journalism is a practice that benefits a community. Citizens 8 explains: "The benefit of the diffusion and analysis of data is something never seen before in societies like Mexico, a society submitted to the governmental and institutional opacity. The information will give power and space to maneuver those who are interested in learning about the way in which public institutions handle the country. This practice will attract little by little more people, the only thing you need is to trigger your curiosity in order to be included in a society of individuals who require accounts to their public servants" (Citizen 8, 2014). Citizen 10 considers that data journalism is a new practice that facilitates monitoring the authorities, consequently, motivating the public debate (monitoring democracy): "Access to public information is for everyone, that's why it is public. However, the fact that a news agency provides access to such information would save citizens making some more clicks. For a society like the Mexican, this practice would generate new topics for discussion and probably, I think, greater surveillance of public officials" (Citizen 10, 2014).

42 per cent of the interviewed journalists think that data journalism has a positive influence on society. However, the other 58 per cent points out that Mexican NNS do not have efficiently used

this practice. Journalist 7 declares: "No, the numerical data are not well utilized. The [information] agencies do not make a correct reading of the statistics, nor data interpretation. There is no representation made on interactive graphs or diagrams" (Journalist 7, 2014).

Ironically, despite the acceptance of data journalism, during the monitoring it was found that EL Universal is the only NSS that proclaims to have a section dedicated to data analysis, in the form of data driven journalism. This claim is debatable, since the analysis of such data is carried out by the newsroom, publishing the approach and conclusions of the journalists in a traditional way: Text and graphic illustrations. El Universal makes reports based on data collected by international organizations such as the WHO or by public governmental agencies. However, these reports lack the attributes with which other NNS have prepared their reports: There is no link to the source of the information; there is no interaction with the graphics or the data; there is no development of software to process the data. In addition, users do not have contingency, consulting the information to obtain their personal conclusions. The monitoring to NNS shows that database journalism is a more common practice. For example, one of database journalism's reports that had substantial coverage was the abdication of King Juan Carlos of Spain. Nonetheless, 50 percent of the interviewed journalists recognize that this practice might be more widespread, but the news agencies that they work for do not make a large enough effort to produce more stories based on their databases, with good usage of hyperlinking and multimedia. 63 per cent of the interviewed citizens consider that Mexican NNS do not use database journalism efficiently. Citizen 8 indicates: "The use of database information is insufficient. This is a mistake, because it is the duty of journalists to report this to the community. However, I believe that [NNS] are making the mistake of their predecessors, reproducing information as if it were traditional media" (Citizen 8, 2014).

Tumbled Pyramid

The Tumbled Pyramid is controversial: 54 per cent of the interviewed citizens favor reading and consulting news in a linear hierarchical / inverted pyramid fashion. The other 46 per cent prefer consulting networked news in short paragraphs and contextualizing the information enabled by hyperlinks in the tumbled pyramid fashion. Citizen 6 suggests: "I prefer to read the news in descending texts distributed linearly. However, if hyperlinks, images or videos are added to this, it becomes more interesting and appealing to the public. Generally you will always opt for the News with less information to read and opt for videos, photos and audio" (Citizen 6, 2014). Just 28 per cent of the interviewed journalists favor the practices of the tumbled pyramid in the structure and distribution of the news.

During the monitoring was found that Mexican NNS do enable some links to the news, especially when the news can be linked to previous reports in the same NNS. Nonetheless the NNS seem to be unaware of the opportunities of the tumbled pyramid. La Jornada and Radio Formula's NNS have a very archaic understanding of displaying networked news. The text in the news has no enabled links, neither for contextualization or interaction. Surprisingly, during the monitoring La Jornada's NNS design changed to a more updated, multimedia and interactive design.

Networked news distribution

This research focused on the 5W + H model described in chapter 3. This model is oriented to the interaction of the news with users, documents and other media. The practices here analyze are: Social networking, social bookmarking, mapping, calendars, databases and automation.

Social networking and the attention backbone: During the monitoring was found that the performance of the 5W + H model is very limited. Concerning the interaction of the NNS with the users, Aristegui Noticias and El Universal are the only NSS that poll the opinion of their visitors through their main pages. The rest of the NNS use their homepages as if they were the covers of newspapers. There is no other interaction than leading their visitors to the news.

Considering the form of interaction based on linking to social networks (who), it has been found that all of the NNS linked the news reports, connecting to many social networks. 42 per cent of the interviewed journalists pointed out that news agencies' goal is reaching the users' social networks in order to attract more visitors to the NNS (attention backbone). The other 42 per cent of these journalists point out that the use is not really efficient or better in entertainment news (Journalist 2, 2014). Linking news to private accounts in social networks seems to be a very effective practice, because all interviewed citizens recognize consulting news on social networks, especially Facebook and Twitter. 23 per cent of these citizens recognize news consulting directly from the home pages of the NNS. However, they admit to access news through links published on, or related to, their social networks accounts. Citizen 7 points out: "In my case I usually see the news, because a colleague shared an article from a site that was of his interest, not because I directly consulted the news agency that published this information" (Citizen 7, 2014).

During the monitoring of the NSS a phenomenon was identified: With the exception of Reforma and Radio Formula, most of the Mexican NNS offer the possibility to comment on published reports. However, these comments are posted through Facebook accounts. In other words, the comments on the NSS are mediated by Facebook. Mexican journalists assume that the interface of the platform allows one to make comments more quickly and hence, more comfortably.

About other forms of networked news distribution on social networks, the monitoring tracked that Azteca Noticias introduced an innovation; the home page of this NNS has a bar called Azteca Tweets News, which is an update of the Tweets generated on the Twitter account of the news agency. In this sense, Azteca Noticias relates both network contents (Figure 14). Aristegui Noticias supports a bar that constantly feeds on links to the Tweets of users associated with the government, opinion leaders or other NNS. However, this feature was disabled on the last day of the monitoring. Aristegui Noticias also enables a bar where users can read the comments of people in its Facebook account; however, during the monitoring there was no response from the journalists to any of the comments published there. NNS related to broadcast news, like Azteca Noticias, MVS Radio or Radio Formula, attempting to capture a larger audience by linking content of both types of media to users of the social networks.

Fig. 14. Azteca Tweet News (Azteca Noticias 2014).

The information exchange in Mexican networked news, using social networks, confirms the full practice of Benkler's attention backbone. However, Benkler claims that small networks connect with other networks in order to reach a bigger audience. Analyzing the practice of networked news in Mexico, my research proclaims a modification to the attention backbone, ensuring that once the connections between networks have been established, the flow of socially relevant information may be reciprocal: the information generated by small interest groups can reach a mass audience, while the information generated by mass media seeks to reach decentralized groups. In any case, both sectors have the same goal: A wider audience.

Summarizing, it is concluded that networked journalism stimulates the sociability of the news, especially on social networks. This sociability is possible thanks to the mediation of two media: Twitter and Facebook. While Twitter is used to spread news and bind content (first level of the cycle of the network news), Facebook is a vehicle for users to provide their views and share them on social networks and the NSS.

Social bookmarking: Regarding the linkage of the news with the sources of information (what), citizens and journalists believe that binding the reports to the information source increases the credibility of the report. Citizen 4 indicates: "Linking the news to its source (whether government

or any user) promotes empathy to one or several sources of information. In this way, it helps to promote the engagement with certain sources or sites" (Citizen 4, 2014). A journalist points out: "Linking readers to the source of information helps to enrich their reporting options so they can make better decisions" (Journalist 5, 2014), "It helps to know how the agencies perceive information and how they process the information" (Journalist 6, 2014), "Facilitates the informative transparency and promotes feedback, this practice can open new informative veins" (Journalist 6, 2014). Beside the broad acceptation of this practice, the monitoring suggests that only in few occasions the reports are linked to the information source. Aristegui Noticias is the NNS that makes use of this practice; including linking to the press releases from the government. In very few occasions the NNS intertwine with the accounts or Tweets of the public servants described in the reports.

Mapping: None of the NNS use interactive maps or maps alerts to relate news reporting with the users (where). Contrarily, 53 per cent of the interviewed citizens indicate that this practice allows "greater social impact in a community" (Citizen 10, 2014).

Calendars: About the possibility of generating calendars and agendas of events related in a community (when). Just El Universal publishes an agenda for the cultural and entertainment events of the weekends.

Databases: Concerning the possibility of carrying out simulations to predict future events such as natural disasters, or to illustrate possible situations by comparing the news of similar historical events (why), none of the monitored sites use this practice. 78 per cent of the interviewed citizens consider that NNS do not develop more information based on data contained in databases. About this practice, Citizen 8 considers: "It is an obligation [of journalists] to facilitate the understanding of information as the daily news are also the consequence of events that occurred previously. The records must be understood in order to understand the present. The easy access to records is very important to appreciate the full nature of that wild animal called news" (Citizen 8, 2014). 71 per cent of the interviewed journalists indicate that the use of databases is not effective, because their priority is the daily reporting of current events and not the analysis of data. Journalist 1 declares: "We have to work more on the tool. It is possible, and it would be so beneficial to do so" (Journalist 1, 2014).

Automation: Examining the form in which Mexican' NNS promote citizen participation, engagement and enable collective memory (how); Journalists consider that this practice might be a double-edged sword, because: "You can generate citizen participation, but may also cause no constructive reviews and create conflicts between citizens themselves" (Journalist 2, 2014). 81 per cent of the interviewed citizens consider this practice positive and an efficient form to promote social

engagement. Nonetheless, during the monitoring is noticed that La Jornada has a toolbar that is connected to the contents of Wikileaks and Los Indignados. El Universal has a section dedicated to citizen reporting. However, only 4 reports have been published until the first half of 2014 and 7 throughout 2013. In addition, there is no precedent of El Universal providing follow-ups to reports published by users. Another practice to promote citizen participation is through the formation of citizens' forums. Journalists and citizens consider this an efficient tool to promote citizen participation; however, only El Universal and Excélsior support this form of participation.

Monitory democracy

Mexico has a wide range of monitoring agents that constantly coerce their public servants. However, there is no evidence that public servants attend to the demands of citizens. One of the causes of this phenomenon is Mexican citizens believing that the Mexican news media and news agencies do not fulfill their roles as monitoring agencies. Citizens argue that NNS often function as a containment barrier in the flow of information, especially hiding or manipulating information that impedes certain politicians, political parties or groups in power. Citizens are reluctant to completely trust the NNS related to mass media. Most of the citizens interviewed for this study indicate mistrust of the information published by the mass media news agencies, especially Televisa and TV Azteca´s television networks. The interviewees see the economic interests of those companies as the main cause of the manipulation of information. This manipulation is detected when the television news networks favor certain political groups, certain campaigns, or by hiding and altering information. Although to a lesser extent, Mexican radio and press are also identified as manipulative. Reforma and El Universal are considered newspapers loyal to the national government, while La Jornada lost credibility due to its strong sympathy for socialism and leftist political parties. Therefore, these news agencies, and their NNS versions, are regarded as partisan or official.

This does not mean a collapse in the communication flow. All of the interviewed citizens show greater sympathy for monitoring agencies, especially when this comes from sites or social agents that have no connection with the mass media, like independent journalists or blogs of activists linked to any social cause, for example Blog del Narco. Distrust of the monitoring agencies is not the only reason to question the consolidation of the monitory democracy; other elements are the forms of power resulting from the reflexive communication and the impact of this power on the power structure. This is discussed in the coming paragraphs.

Networked public sphere

As has been discussed in chapter 2, in this post-modernist era known as the network society, public opinion has diversified, moving towards a new approach known as the networked public opinion: A virtual space that exists in the technologically mediated networks, endowed with the ability to exponentially increase the reflexive communication to discuss, argue and challenge the assumptions of the political elites. With the defragmentation of the civil society, it is believed that the networked public sphere can energize public discourse, motivating individuals and organizations to contribute to the discussion of complex issues and engaging in political action.

In the particular case of Mexico, all citizens and some journalists here interviewed confirm that: (a) The NNS increase the possibility to discuss their opinion, connecting users from remote geographical locations; (b) the NNS offer the opportunity to discuss their points of view, providing the possibility to make their technologically-mediated opinions public; (c) the NNS offer the possibility to question the assumptions of the political elites, especially by providing visual evidence on what the users of the media consider socially relevant. Two more facts can be added to this assertion: d) Networked news have the opportunity to reach different audiences of different technologically mediated networks due to the attention backbone effect; (e) in cases of media manipulation or censorship some NNS provide the opportunity to challenge not only the political elites, but the mainstream news industry, which is considered manipulative. With these benefits, one may believe that due to an effective practice of networked journalism a society could reach the high democratic ideals of the monitory democracy. The reality in Mexico is far from ideal.

It is believed that a strong form of networked public opinion manifests itself in the opinions posted within the reports. However, the interviewed journalists and Mexican citizens are skeptical about the debate based on the comments from the NNS. They also question the impact of this debate due to the lack of a critical reasoning that endorses these opinions. In fact, the interviewed citizens indicate indifference to the opinions linked to the reports, because very few times the information contained in these comments is reliable. Due to this fact, journalists feel that opinion is information out of control, chaotic and a generator of disinformation. Moreover, the interviewed journalists indicate that this motivates the lack of interest of journalists to monitor and interact with the citizens. Although both groups agreed and pointed out that no interaction takes place between the journalist and the citizens. Ironically, during the interviews this interaction is experienced as positive by both groups.

About the influence of networked journalism on the formation of public opinion and democratic life, all citizens interviewed in this research express their distrust to the government and

the hope that journalists will help to improve the economic and political situation of the country. However, the interviewees agree that the practice of networked journalism does not have a total influence on the power structures. Why has Mexico not experienced a radical change as seen in other countries? Journalist 1 suggests that this happens, because in Mexico only 3 of every 10 Mexicans have access to the internet. This argument can be refuted by appealing to the attention backbone effect, considering that internet mediated information, provided by the users of the networks, can reach the mass media. Another reason is the limited practice of distributed journalism for the Mexican journalists and the low credibility of monitoring agencies in the Mexican news industry.

In line with the arguments proposed by Jürgen Habermas and described in chapter 2, I argue a loss of legitimacy of the Mexican NNS. This illegitimacy is based on the strong influence of economic interests over the Mexican power structures, which spoil the effectiveness of the public sphere. As a result, the communicative reflection of Mexican citizens is diminished, in spite of the communicative technological mediation.

Beside the distrust between journalist and citizens, a poor exercise of distributed journalism, a defective communicative power, the loss of legitimacy of the networked news sites and the deficient practice of networked journalism; the Mexican parliament is discussing a new initiative, that has been proposed by the current president, Enrique Peña Nieto, in order to avoid social mobilization based on the use of networks and internet mediated new media. This presidential proposal considers censoring the use of the Internet for public mobilization. Apparently, Mexico's public servants do not understand that the information flow circulates with or without technological mediation; as an interviewed journalist points out: "When a society is going to rise up against a ruler, it will happen, with the network or without, as has happened with the great revolutions of humanity. The network may shorten the time taken, but by itself it is not synonymous with democracy" (Journalist 5, 2014).

6. Conclusion and recommendations

What is the impact of the public opinion formed on the ICT networks on democratic life? There is a proliferation of diverse publics, due to the developments in communication technology that enable a new social dynamic, known as the network society. The advent of a networked public sphere has been identified, based on the information flow and the opinion exchange produced in technological mediated networks, especially those internet mediated networks that enable the interaction amongst users. It is believed that this networked public sphere increases the

communicative reflexivity in a community to read, discuss, and argue the political public sphere", especially amongst the generations under 35 years old.

It has been found that the information distributed through networks, especially social networks, has different levels of engagement that have an impact on the development of the public opinion. One of the strong forms of the networked public sphere is found in the opinions published by media users in the news. The socialization of the news in different networks enables an attention backbone, a path for the exchange of information between different ICT networks. This attention backbone may provide a boost to news reaching a broader audience. Moreover, some scholars suggest the rise of a new approach to democracy, where citizens with access to internet mediated new media may monitor the performance of the authorities and publicly distribute the evidence on ICT networks.

Nonetheless, the communicative power resulting from the networked public sphere, or any other form of public sphere, is the weakest form of power in comparison to other power structures in a society, namely the politic and economic powers. However, the communicative power generated by the public sphere plays a decisive role in the impression that citizens have of public servants. Due to the legitimatization of this opinion coming from elections, the elected candidate becomes a legitimate political agent.

About the form in which ICT networks changed the news, it has been found that the network society increases the speed of news reporting as well as the amount of information published and diversifies the perspectives about a given topic. These features enable a new cycle in the production, distribution and consumption of news, in comparison to traditional media news cycles. The easier access to media networks not only increases the participation of media users in the production and distribution of news, it also enables a new form of journalism called distributed journalism. Professional journalists have the chance to consult this information in order to create more elaborate and contextualized news reports. Concerning the journalistic practices enabled by the use of ICT networks, three new practices have been identified: Data Journalism for news reporting from public data, the tumbled pyramid for news story telling through networks and the 5W + H model for networked news distribution.

Regarding the forms in which Mexican journalists and networked news sites practice networked journalism: This study has shown that Mexican journalists are not aware of the possibilities, which these practices offer. This research proves that Mexican NNS are considered an online version of the mass media news agencies. Moreover, the news sociability of the networked

news is practiced with the objective of attracting network users to their traditional news agencies. Moreover, journalists continue to produce news in the merge of the traditional schemas.

Moreover, it has been found that the credibility of the Mexican NNS is compromised by the constant discredit of journalists toward forms of distributive journalism, blocking much of the user-generated content that circulates on the networks. Journalists argue that most of this information lacks credibility. However, none of the interviewed journalists, or the NSS monitored, published reports refuting of contextualizing this type of information. Another factor in this lack of credibility is the absence of interaction between the journalists, NSS and citizens. In fact, the original aim of this research was not reached because the researcher was unable to reach the planned amount of journalists. Moreover, only one of the journalists here interviewed replied to the email published in NSS, all the other journalists interviewed were contacted because of the personal contacts of the researcher. Finally, despite the fact that some NSS support sections and spaces for citizen reporting, these are ignored due to the lack of public confidence in the Mexican news industry.

Concerning the forms in which Mexican citizens use networked journalism to form their opinions: Mexican citizens seem eager to use all the novelties introduced by this news practice, although they seem reluctant to certain forms, namely the tumbled pyramid. Mexican citizens also see a decrease in the direct visits to NNS, because they admit to news consulting directly from their social networks, specifically Facebook and Twitter. Mexican citizens experience a lack of credibility in Mexican NNS due to the influence of the economic power.

About the form in which networked journalism manifests itself in Mexican public opinion and democratic life, it has been found that a deficient practice of networked journalism and a mutual distrust between journalists and Mexican citizens triggers a wide disconnection between these social groups. These two facts also discourage the communicative reflexivity of the Mexican networked public sphere, restraining the possibility of Mexican NNS to be considered as reliable monitoring agencies and weaken the Mexican communicative power, causing the loss of legitimacy of the Mexican government.

This thesis calls upon journalists to reconsider and validate the NNS as a medium with unique characteristics. A full practice of the Networked Journalism aids to consolidate the professionalization of journalism and gives credibility to the news agencies and their journalists. How should Mexican NNS improve this practice? Developing software for the journalism of data; better use, access to and interaction of the databases of the news agencies; a reassessment by editors of the architecture, distribution and linking of the information; a reevaluation of the tasks of publishers, optimizing ways to connect the NNS. Publishers consider the news –and not the site- as the basic unit

of journalism; therefore, publishers must focus on linking and contextualizing the information in order to increase the communicative reflection of citizens. Moreover, this thesis also calls to the academic community to conduct a deeper analysis of concepts such as networked journalism, networked news, news sociability, attention backbone, networked public sphere and monitory democracy. It also appeals to the academic community to revisit the postulates of Habermas. Habermas' concepts of public sphere and communicative power remain valid, despite the fact that critics accuse the German philosopher of not understanding the network society.

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Appendix 1
NNS monitoring sheet

Month _____ Day _____ 2014

The monitoring follows the present issues in each of the 10 NNS described in chapter 4.

1. What are the national topics published on the day?

2. Was the news on the selected NNS based on information published in social networks ("distributed journalism")? Which news?

3. Was news reporting based on the principles of data journalism (Data-Driven Journalism or Database Journalism)? Which news?

4. Was the news structured and published in short sentences and linked according to the standards of the "tumbled pyramid"?

5. Did the news allow the possibility of linking it to personal social media? Which social media?

6. Did the news allow the possibility of linking the users to the sources of information?

7. Did the news have the possibility of mapping the stories?

8. Did the NNS facilitate the option to makes comments?

9. Did the NNS facilitate the option form forums or any other type of association related to the news?

10. Did the journalists or NNS interact with the visitors?

Appendix 2
Journalists' questionnaire

1. Which are the benefits, and/or disadvantages, of the journalism practiced on the networks compared with traditional media journalism?

2. What is the procedure for producing national news?

3. Are national news produced by your agency, or do you re-publish news from other news agencies?

4. Do you think that the networked news site in which you work (NNS) satisfies the needs of Mexican society? Why?

5. Do you think that the NNS remain the "gatekeepers" or managers of public information? Why?

6. Do you think that the NNS for which you work makes regular use of the information that circulates in non-journalistic sources or social networks? Why?

7. What do you consider the basic unit of information in the journalism practiced on the networks (Networked Journalism)? Why?

8. Do you think that the NNS in which you work links effectively the news within the technologically-mediated networks?

9. Do you think that journalists and NNS have sufficient contact with the citizens? Why?

10. How does the NNS in which you work react to the comments posted on the articles published on the net? Is there a follow-up of these comments?

11. To what extent do you consider that "Network News" impact on the interaction of public opinion? Why?

12. Do you think that networked news helps the linkage and interaction amongst citizens? What are the benefits, and/ or disadvantages, of this connectivity?

13. Do you think that networked news helps to produce, consume and distributing news faster in comparison with other media? What are the benefits or disadvantages of this acceleration?

14. How do you think network news affects political decisions of the country from the point of view of citizens?

15. Do you think that the Networked Journalism has changed the ways in which power in exercised in democratic societies? How?

16. Do you think that technological advances have changed the way in which journalism is practiced? How?

17. Do you think that technological advances have changed the ways in which journalism is consumed? How?

18. Do you think that Mexican NNS are at the technological vanguard? Why?

19. Do you think that the news agency for which you work makes effective use of information that can be obtained by analyzing numerical data? Why?

20. Do you think that the news agency for which you work makes effective use of information obtained from your database? Why?

21. Do you think that the information published in the agency for which you work makes effective use of the hyperlink? Why?

22. Do you think that the NNS where you work makes effective use of the space provided on screens? Why?

23. Do you think that the NNS in which you work makes effective use of the contact between networks? Why?

24. What do you perceive as the benefits of linking users to sources of information?

Appendix 3
Citizens' questionnaire

1. In which city do you live?

2. What are the benefits, or/and disadvantages, of the journalism practiced on the networks compared with traditional media journalism?

3. At the present time: Which media do you consult most often for news, social networks (like Facebook or Twitter) or networked news sites (NNS)?

4. What is more comfortable for you: Read all the news on the main pages of the NNS, or on social networks that you visit?

5. Do you think that the news published in NNS satisfy the "information needs" of Mexican society?

6. Do you think that the NNS make regular use of the information circulating in non-journalistic sources or social networks? Why?

7. Do you think that journalists have sufficient contact with the citizens?

8. How do you think that the NSS react to comments posted about articles published in social networks?

9. Do you think that the information in the news comments allows a greater understanding and extension of the news published?

10. Do you think that the NNS give adequate monitoring of the information contained in the comments?

11. Do you think that the NNS effectively link the news to the social networks of your use?

12. Do you think that networked news helps to improve the connection and interaction between citizens? What are the benefits, or/and disadvantages, of this connectivity?

13. Do you think that networked news help to produce, consume, and distribute news faster? What are the benefits, or/and disadvantages of this acceleration?

14. What is your opinion about the impact of Networked News on the interaction of public opinion? Why?

15. In which way you think that networked news has impacted political decisions of the country from the point of view of citizens?

16. Do you think that the type of journalism practiced on networks has changed the ways in which power is exercised in democratic societies? How?

17. Do you think that technological advances have changed the way in which journalism is practiced? How does this benefit or harm citizens?

18. Do you think that technological advances have changed the ways in which journalism is consumed? How beneficial or detrimental is that to the citizens?

19. Do you think that Mexican NNS are at the forefront of technology? Why?

20. What benefit would it be for you, if Mexican NNS facilitate access to numerical data and analysis on public information?

21. Do you think that news organizations make effective use of information based from their data bases?

22. How do you prefer to read articles published on screens, in texts distributed in descending linear or small paragraphs connected by hyperlinks?

23. Do you think that news organizations make effective use of the contact with other social networks and news agencies?

24. What do you consider to be the benefits of linking users to sources of information?

25. What do you consider to be the benefits of locating users with the area mentioned in the briefing notes?

26. What do you consider to be the benefits of promoting the formation of users' forum by NNS?

27. Do you think that the Mexican NNS´s offer enough links leading to the contextualization of the information reported? Why?