

Society, ownership and networked journalism: Polis at the PICNIC in Amsterdam

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These are the notes from my talk to the [PICNIC festival in Amsterdam](#).

You can watch video of my talk and the subsequent debate with Storyful's David Clinch on the [European Journalism Centre's website](#). The slides are on [Slideshare](#).

David Clinch from Storyful is going to talk to you about clever ways of storytelling.

Storyful is yet another good example of what I call Networked Journalism

You can tell I am enthusiastic about this idea because my book about Networked Journalism is called [SuperMedia](#): I think that the new forms of journalism have 'super' powers.

The formula is this:

Professional journalist+Public participation+New technologies='Better' Journalism

New technologies allow us new techniques to create narratives that are MORE informative, interactive, and multi-dimensional.

But before we get our hopes up I think it is important to remember the context for this networked journalism.

The first bit is about Changing Society.

I haven't got time to talk in detail about how society is changing and how that effects media – but I want to make sure that we understand the relationship between journalist technology and the citizen. Technology alone does NOT determine people's use of media – social forces do.

Have a look at this photo.

Here's a family:

What are they looking at?

[It's an iPad]

What are they doing with it?

Why are they doing it?

Is it a good or bad thing that they are all looking at a screen instead of talking to each other?

The technology allows them to do this, but what motivates them and how do they use it?

How does it change them as individuals and as family – of three generations in this case.

These are SOCIAL AND ETHICAL questions

What shapes the answers is not the technology – it will be other forces or factors –

The granny is there because of increased longevity

The small child understands because she is taught media in schools

The others family live in a different country because of globalisation – they are high powered highly educated sisters



with jobs in different places – including Amsterdam – so they use this technology to keep in touch
How they use this technology is based on their own values of identity, personality and their own history.

So social trends plus personal choices = media trends.

If you understand that then you will be much more likely to come up with journalism that is relevant to them – not just in topic, but format, platform, style and the rest.

Now bearing that in mind – here's the point about Ownership.

If you accept that social trends drive media consumption. If you accept that journalism is now networked. Then ownership changes.

In the old-fashioned sense media is still 'owned' by public service organisations, private businesses etc.

People like Murdoch and NewsCorp. They are bigger than ever before.

Those are changing as new players come into the market. It's arguable that Google or Facebook is now a major player in journalism because search and social networks are now how we find the news that we want.

Those structural changes are important to you as creators of journalism. But they are still media corporations in the traditional sense.

There are also new 'media magnates'.

You all know Julian Assange and WikiLeaks of course – that's the subject of my new book out this year.

You should also be thinking of these Syrian opposition fighters as a media network as they too produce content for YouTube, Twitter etc that reports on the war in that country

And then there is this revolutionary nine year old.

Martha Payne's had a school dinner blog called Never Seconds which reviewed the food served at her school – it was banned by Argyle and Bute council – within a few hours they had to change their minds and allow her to continue after a storm of protest on twitter. The ending was even more happy because Martha used all the attention online to raise £100,000 for a charity that provides school dinners for poor children around the world.

These are all examples of new actors in the media environment – these are the change-makers – these are the new kids – literally – on the block – and because you don't know what they are going to do next they are dangerous – no-one predicted them but here they are.

So we see that with all these new players – we now live in an age of uncertainty and complexity with a changing diversity of possible media producers – the world is more complex and uncertain and so is media and communications.

You only have to think of the number of possible sources and devices in your own personal media lives.

There is another sense of ownership of content and that is the news itself. And the idea of news itself is changing.

News used to be a product. It is now a process.

It used to be a manufacturing industry – it's now a service industry.

The Internet means that you can't retain control over content.

You can pay wall it, copyright it, encode it – but the narratives themselves are the property of everyone the moment that you make them public.

So in the future the important thing for media to 'own' will be the brand – the reputation – the skills – THE ADDED VALUE – what is it that you add to the news? and most important of all the relationship with the network.

That relationship is different – it's about trust, transparency and that added value.

So if you understand the social context of journalism – if you understand the new meanings of ownership of news – if you understand this new networked relationship with the public , then you can start to think about building a business model and creating content that people want – and even pay for.

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