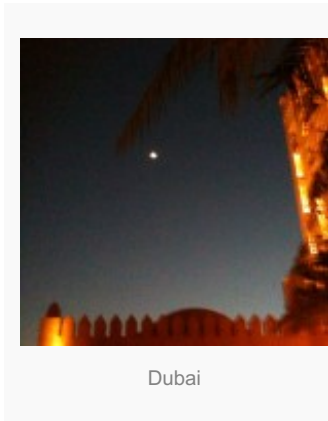


From Gatekeeper to Networker: The Public Promise of Networked Journalism (Polis in Dubai II)

 blogs.lse.ac.uk/polis/2009/11/22/from-gatekeeper-to-networker-the-public-promise-of-networked-journalism-polis-in-dubai/

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This was the final statement from the Future of Journalism Council at the World Economic Forum councils meeting in Dubai. It is a collective statement by a dozen different journalists from around the world, so I think the degree of consensus is remarkable. The statement is designed to be published to world leaders as part of WEF at Davos but the Journalism Council also has plans to take it 'on tour' to a series of world-wide journalism conferences in 2010.

The Global Agenda Council on the Future of Journalism believes there is a need to reconstruct journalism and its relationship with the citizen and society. Public engagement is transforming journalism, offering an historic opportunity to create unprecedented increased value.

The media industry in general, and journalism in particular, have been experiencing drastic changes which call into question their role in mediating information to the benefit of their audience as well as disrupting traditional business models. Yet in an age when information is more important than ever, journalism is vital for building societies. It is a systemic part of the social, environment. We need to build a new technical, political and financial eco-system to support it.

There is a need to reinforce its basic principles: freedom of expression, holding power to account, providing information and a forum for debate, empowering citizens to take decisions about their lives. But mainstream journalism must also recognise its past failings and take advantage of new technologies and new social forces to reframe its practice, role and purpose. Journalism has a responsibility to not only mediate today's realities, which go beyond national borders, are complex and inter connected, but also to engage local and global audiences/societies.

This poses an unprecedented set of professional challenges. Even in regions where conventional journalism is still growing as a commercial sector, it is also subject to the impact of the same kinds of technological and social changes. Likewise, the opportunities this paper identifies are available in diverse ways to all news media markets.



The Council believes that it is necessary to redesign organisations and identify business models that ensure the sustainability of professional networked journalism as the digital and mobile media have disrupted traditional distribution models and revenue streams. As a response, news organisations need to ensure constant refining of their talent pool's professional skill set and equip them with innovative tool kits. At the same time, to ensure sustainability and relevance, organisations with journalism and journalists at their core may likely develop joint networks and forge strategic partnerships by pooling resources and sharing revenues.

At the same time, the journalism itself is changing and so the business model that creates it must also be reinvented. There is a need to support the opportunity afforded by networked media to develop a more constructive journalism. This is based on some traditional values such as the Right to Know and some familiar kinds of editorial work such as investigative reporting. But new technologies enable a different functionality. Internet and digital journalism allows for fuller and more expansive story-telling.

It affords the opportunity for a much greater connectivity between experts, journalists and the public. But most

importantly, it allows the public to participate at all stages. Journalism can now tap into the boundless resource of knowledge and opinion within the audience. The role of the journalist changes from gatekeeper to a networker. The best obtainable version of the truth remains the goal but trust is not a given, it is a mutual relationship between the public and journalist. The authority of journalism will be built by the value it offers working with the citizen, not by a professional code alone.

The Global Agenda Council on the Future of Journalism sees as a priority the establishment and (self) enforcement of global guiding principles for professional independent journalism.

Existing Gaps:

1. Can a global concept and practice for independent professional journalism be encouraged in countries or environments where a different set of values exists and censorship still prevails?
2. Journalists are inadequately appreciated and protected. If journalism hopes to reinforce its role of watchdog for abuses of power and democracy, how can accountable journalists be valued and safeguarded?
3. Journalism needs the following in their new business models to continue to exist and fulfill their commitment to the global society:

Innovation and new partnerships

New and improved system of journalism education

Increased transparency and accountability

4. News organizations need to understand and leverage the new dynamic of the social media revolution. Traditional models of journalism are in danger of being marginalised as public discourse shifts to direct and networked media platforms, Journalism – both citizen and professional needs to be fostered in these new spaces.

Journalism needs to integrate the two new principle characteristics of digital media:

public participation

connectivity

Internet and social media permit engagement between the audience and professional journalists as never before. The new media interactivity promises a more dynamic business and society – but there will be a period of creative reordering that presents a challenge to all stakeholders.

This council believes that there are common values across diverse news media marketplaces as well as a global interconnectedness. Journalism has a world-role as well as a local or national function. This council believes that when it is networked, journalism offers a more sustainable business and a more socially useful way to inform and communicate about our world. Journalism at its best will continue to inform and inspire public debate and action. But this will not happen automatically and needs investment and strategic thinking, primarily by the journalism industry itself, but also by government and civil society

Read the [proposals for action](#) that the group came up with [here](#)

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