

## UGC in the professional newsroom

*New(s) generation. Exploring the opportunities of user generated content*

FLEET & IBBT Conference, 31 January 2008, Brussels

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## The challenge of citizen media



### Citizen media

Amateur  
Participation  
Active users  
Community-driven  
Bottom-up  
Conversation  
Open

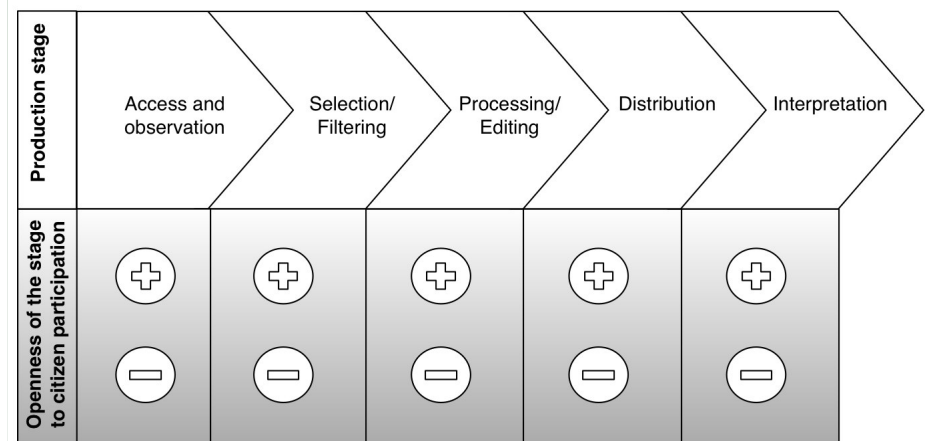
### Traditional media

Professional  
Limited participation  
Passive audience  
Journalist-driven  
Top-down  
Lecture  
Closed

## Overview

- How are media in Europe reacting to the trends of UGC and citizen media?
- What are the context factors that shape the adoption of **participatory journalism** in the professional newsroom?
  - **Social** context (cultural patterns)
  - **Economic** context (business strategies)
  - **Professional** context (organizational level)

## Participatory journalism in Europe



(Domingo et al., 2008)

# Participatory journalism in Europe

- Slow adoption of participatory journalism practices in (leading) online newspapers
  - only interpretation stage is opened up
- Most experiments focus on (hyper)local news production

# Participatory journalism in Europe

Production stage	Access and observation	Selection/ Filtering	Processing/ Editing	Distribution	Interpretation
Openness of the stage to citizen participation	+	+	+	+	+
Professional context					
Market context					
Social context					

↑  
Factors of change

## Social context: Who wants to participate?



## Social context Research@FLEET

- What are citizens' **motivations and tresholds** to participate in news making?
  - personal motivation factors: time, rewards, skills, self-expression, ...
  - social motivation factors: sense of community, sense of responsibility, good cause, ...

# Market context: vision & strategy

Michelle McLellan & Tim Porter (2007). *News, Improved. How America's Newsrooms Are Learning To Change.*

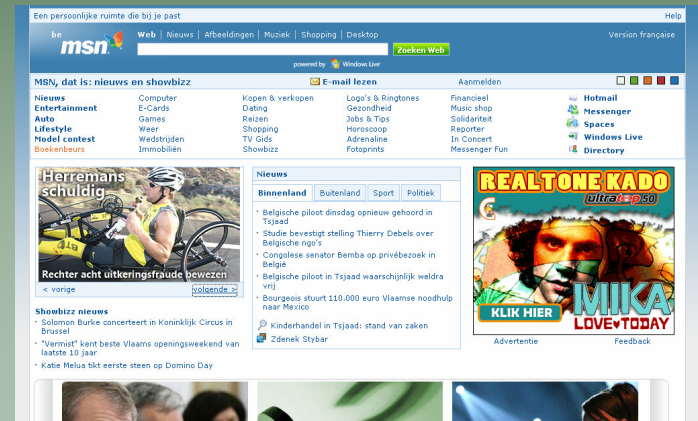


→ Emphasize the importance of “knowing just where you’re going”

- WHY do we want participatory journalism?
- HOW do we want participatory journalism to take form?

# Why participatory journalism?

- To reduce editorial personnel costs
  - E.g. *MSN Reporter*: “publication is not the end, it’s only the beginning” (Kurt Minnen, MSN Media)



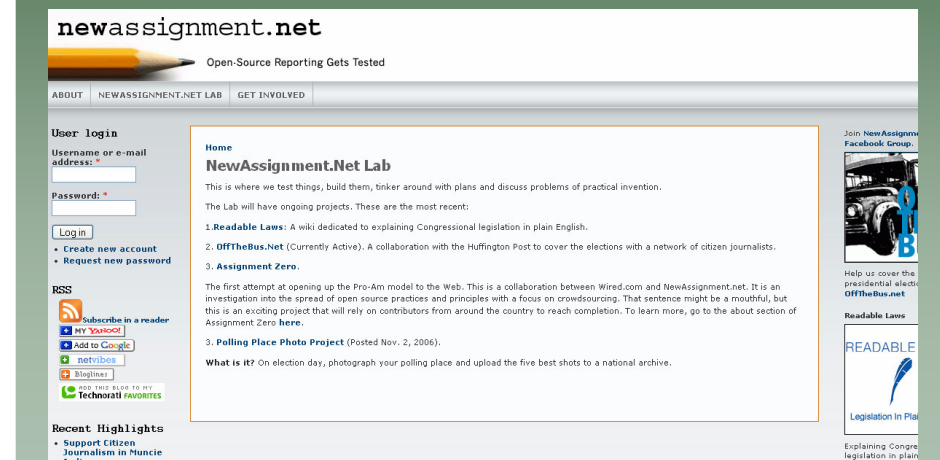
# Why participatory journalism?

- To connect with the community
  - E.g. *HasseltLokaal*: using ‘citizen reporters’ to cover the (hyper)local news



# Why participatory journalism?

- To make better journalism
  - E.g. *newassignment.net*: pro-am news production



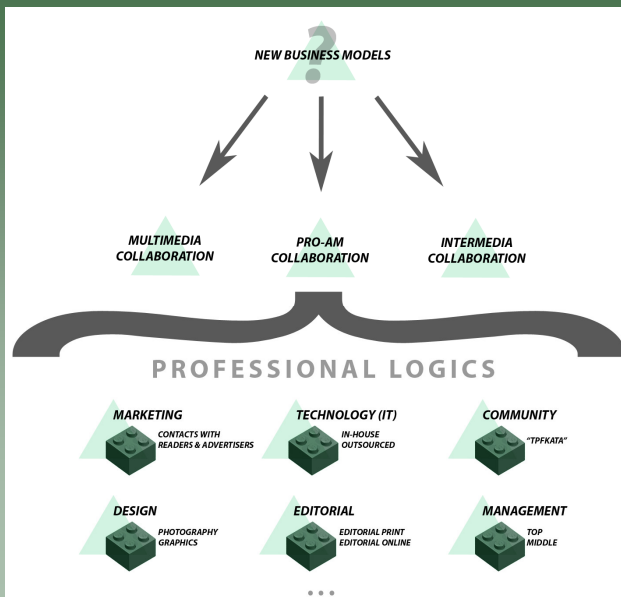
## Why participatory journalism?

- To reduce editorial costs?
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- To connect with the community?
  - E.g. *HasseltLokaal*: using ‘citizen reporters’ to cover the (hyper)local news
- To make better journalism?
  - E.g. *newassignment.net*: pro-am news production

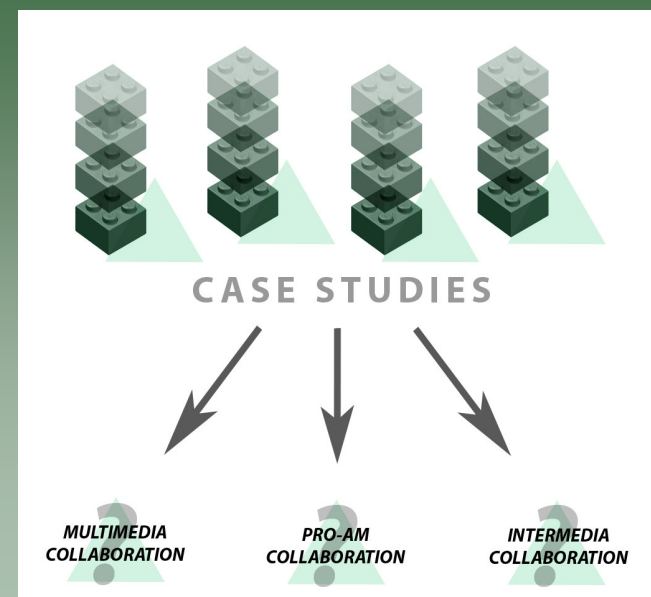
## From strategy to implementation: organizational issues

- If you know *why* and *how* you want participatory journalism take form in your newsroom, you still need to convince others...
- Change always generates resistance
  - Conflicting professional logics
  - Organizational tensions

## From strategy to implementation



## From strategy to implementation



## Professional (organizational) context: 2 Belgian case studies

- **FLEET** FLEmish E-publishing Trends
  - Newsroom ethnography at Het Nieuwsblad (Corelio)
- CoCoMedia: Collaborative Community Media
  - Interviews with newsroom personnel at Concentra Media



## FLEET: ethnographic study

- Focus on contested fields of negotiation between (converging) professional logics in the digitalized newsroom
- Fieldwork March-June 2007
  - Participant observation in *Corelio* newsroom
  - Online local news project at *Het Nieuwsblad*



## CoCoMedia: empirical study

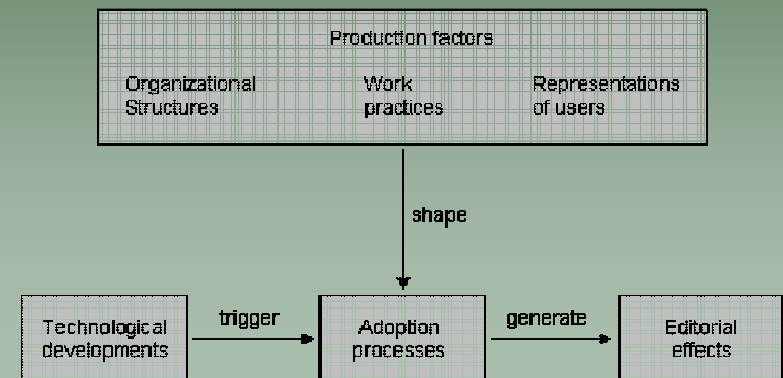
- Focus on opportunities for integrating UGC in the professional news production process
- 3 newsrooms at *Concentra*
  - *Het Belang van Limburg* + *Gazet van Antwerpen*
  - *HasseltLokaal* (citizen media project)
  - Interviews with
    - Editorial management
    - IT personnel
    - Professional journalists (print and online)
    - Non-professional 'city reporters'



## Professional context

- To what extent and in which ways do professional context factors hinder or foster (the adoption of) participatory journalism in the newsroom?

(Boczkowski, 2004)



## Professional context: Some general findings

- Pro-am collaboration requires newsroom re-organization: new jobs, new skills, new tools
- Institutionalized work routines (difficult to change) are in favor of official sources and traditional media
- Professional journalists have concerns about the quality and value of user-generated content
- Amateur journalists need continuous motivation, 'rewarding' and training
- Professional journalists try to retain their gatekeeper role and are reluctant to take up new roles (e.g. moderator)

## Conclusion

- Adoption of participatory journalism is shaped by different context factors
  - social, market, professional
- Implementing participatory journalism in the newsroom requires
  1. a clear vision and strategy
    - "Knowing just where you're going" (why and how)
  2. organizational change management
    - Communicate and motivate
    - Provide tools and training
    - Engage all actors/logics involved



Thank you for listening

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