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Citizen journalism

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1. Introduction

Throughout history, citizen journalism has changed and morphed but has remained one of the vital parts of modern civil society. Citizen journalism gives everybody a chance to be heard and everybody can have an active role in the society. In today's age of digital disruption, the role of citizen journalism has never been more important. The public can follow developments of certain events and happenings as they occur, or they can produce the news themselves. Furthermore, citizen journalism contributes to the variety and pluralism of media outlets.

In the first part of the thesis the development of citizen journalism will be explained, since it is a key element to understanding citizen journalism. In the second part I will provide a few definitions of citizen journalism coined by various experts, whereas in the third part I am going to explain blogging and microblogging and their correlation to journalism. In the fourth part the role of citizen journalism in the society will be clarified. In the next part the motives of citizen journalists to produce content will be explained, whereas the sixth part will be dealing with some criticism of citizen journalism, such as the lack of code of ethics. The seventh part will be dealing with citizen involvement in emergency reporting, which correlates to the next part dealing with various risks citizen journalists face while reporting during crisis. The final part will explain the impact citizen media had on traditional media over the years.

2. The history of citizen journalism

The history of citizen journalism is a key element when it comes to understanding citizen journalism as a concept. Due to the development of technology, the Internet and social media, citizen journalism is often considered as a new phenomenon. Although, according to some authors, it could not be farther from the truth.

For instance, Wally Hughes (2011: 6) states that citizen journalism has been around longer than the profession of journalism itself:

In 1908, the University of Missouri opened the doors of the world's first journalism school, but newspapers had been around for centuries before that. As a matter of fact, early colonial newspapers in the United States had such an impact on the country that founders included a clause in the First Amendment protecting freedom of the press. But if the country had no professional journalists (since the profession had not been created, yet), then what were the framers of the Constitution protecting? (Hughes, 2011: 6).

The answer to Hughes' question is citizen journalists – individuals with different history and backgrounds who commonly practiced journalism on the side, having no proper journalistic experience or education. Hughes (2011: 6) claims that the early American press laid the foundation for all following citizen journalists in the United States of America. However, if citizen journalism is looked at through a lens of recent history, it is often claimed that the mentioned phenomenon fully developed when modern civil societies were formed. Igor Brlek (2009, Media.ba) provides a few key elements which contributed to the development of citizen journalism as we know it today: the increase of taxes, state regulations which intruded and intervened into private space, the establishment of saloons and cafes which provided space for discussions between intellectuals and the development of the press. (2009, Media.ba)

Consequently, citizen journalism is a phenomenon which was and is constantly present, but has changed and morphed throughout history.

Furthermore, the power of the Internet and the influence it had on the development of citizen journalism cannot be denied. In other words, without the Internet, citizen journalism would not exist as we know it today. The world's first website <http://info.cern.ch/> was launched in 1991 by Tim Berners-Lee, but it was not interactive. Over the following years,

the number of websites did increase, but the real “game changer” was the Web 2.0. platform, developed in 2004 (*Citizen Journalism: A primer on the definition, risks and benefits*, 2012). Authors Alexander and Levine (2008: 42) claim that, when differentiating Web 2.0. from the rest of the web, two features should be considered: microcontent and social software. The authors explain microcontent as an essential feature that allows users to create small chunks of information, which take up significantly less storage. Furthermore, their uploading to the web is simpler than ever and does not require any kind of web design expertise. The second feature is social software, or social media. Web 2.0. platforms are organized around people. Therefore, the authors claim that social media in combination with microcontent creates a “series of synergistic effects, including conversations that occur across multiple sites and with multiple conversations.” (Alexander, Levine, 2008: 42).

Author Lejla Turčilo (2017: 54) emphasized the importance of online media characteristics, without which the citizen journalism we know today would not exist. Those characteristics are: attenuation of domination of institutionalized news sources, the ability to collect and publish content through various channels and forms, interactivity and participation, the possibility of anybody publishing content, user linkages, and the possibility of creating a discussion (Turčilo, 2017: 54).

Because of the previously mentioned features and new digital technologies such as cameras and mobile phones, it became easier than ever to collect or create content and post it online. Nadine Jurrat (2011:9), an independent media researcher, poses three main events which shaped citizen journalism. The first one is the terrorist attack on New York City and the Pentagon on 11 September 2001. During the attack, the general public searched for eyewitness reports on the web for the first time. The second one was the 2004 Asian tsunami, where the term “citizen journalism” was used for the first time, while the third one were the 2005 London bombings when witnesses started sending their footage of the attack to the mainstream media (2011: 9).

3. Defining citizen journalism

There are many different definitions of citizen journalism. Some claim that citizen journalism is simply a dissemination of information, whereas others state it refers to any kind of collecting and/or reporting data via new and traditional media and platforms.

Jay Rosen (2008, Pressthink.org), a professor of journalism at New York University, describes citizen journalism as a phenomenon in which the audience employs the press tools they possess in order to inform one another (2009, Pressthink.org). In other words, citizens become contributors to the media, using many different forms of distributing information. The term which is commonly used while explaining citizen journalism is “citizen media”. According to Aparna Dwivedi (2013: 8), that term was coined by Clemencia Rodriguez, who defined it as “the transformative processes they bring about within participants and their communities”. Citizen media contributes to the variety of media outlets. As stated by Dwivedi (2013: 8), the occurrence of citizen-generated content is a response to mainstream traditional media, which oftentimes neglected public interests and had a biased portrayal of events and news.

Overall, two major points which can be seen in these definitions are the following: the public starts making content and that certain content is a response to the deficiencies of professional journalism. With this in mind, producing the type of content which functions outside the mainstream media requires a certain level of democracy.

Based on this, Šejn Husejnefendić (2016: 308) classifies the function of citizen journalism into two categories:

- 1) citizen journalism can be equal to professional journalism in countries with a high level of democracy (for instance, in Germany, Canada, Austria and South Korea)
- 2) citizen journalism can be a supplement to mainstream media, but sometimes even acts as a replacement of traditional media in the less democratic countries (for example, certain African or Asian countries). (Husejnefendić, 2016: 308)

Igor Brlek (2009, Media.ba) points to certain factors which are the foundation of citizen journalism. Citizen journalism will be present in our society if the middle class is well developed, if they have technological capacities available, if the audience is not satisfied with the traditional media, and if they have a desire to be heard and listened (Brlek, 2009,

Media.ba). According to Stuart Allan (2013: 9), citizen journalism can be described as a type of first-person reportage in which individuals adopt or mimic the role of a professional journalist in order to participate in the news-making, often during a period of crisis, tragedies and disasters. (2013: 9). Generally, “regular” citizens will not think about journalism in times of crisis. However, some individuals might decide to engage in some form of the previously mentioned first-person reportage. They will commonly use their mobile phones to capture a photo of the event, create a video, write a tweet or a caption describing their surrounding and experiences in order to inform and connect with other people.

Allan (2013: 1) calls this instance “accidental journalism“. One of the most known examples to illustrate this term is Sohaib Athar's live-tweeting. Athar lived with his family in Abbottabad, Pakistan and in May 2011 he heard a helicopter flying over his house. That was not a common occurrence – consequently, he decided to share that with his Twitter followers. Athar wrote the following: “Helicopter hovering above Abbottabad at 1 AM (is a rare event)“. (Mullen, Saifi, 2016). Later, he tweeted a series of information; he stated that more than one non-Pakistani helicopters were involved, that one of them is being shot down and he provided his followers with a Facebook link to a map that pinpointed the exact area (Allan, 2013: 2).

After all of his tweets, it was later found out that Athar live-tweeted a secret mission by the Special Forces of the U.S.A. in which they have successfully executed Osama Bin Laden (2013: 3). This occurrence is now remembered as “Twitter's CNN moment“, and Stuart Allan (2013: 10) furthermore solidifies that the intrinsic value of “being there“ has been prized since the earliest days of crisis and citizen journalism.

4. Blogging and microblogging

With the invention of the Internet, citizen journalism became universally accessible. Sharing and publishing information has become easier and faster than ever, especially with the development of blogs and social media. That being said, some authors claim that blogging is journalism, whereas other experts disagree. However, during the 21st century, blogs have become one of the more notable platform for sharing information, opinions, feelings and other various content.

Dimitry Yagodin (2014: 45) explained the difference between alternative media, in this case the blogs, and mainstream mass media: blogs and social media are full of untraditional ways of creativity and expressions of subjectivity. As one of the key characteristics of blogging culture Yagodin (2014: 46) mentioned the capability of transcending national borders, and provided an example of “offshore bloggers”, which he connected to authoritarian countries and societies. Due to the regulations of an authoritarian system and the inability to practice their freedom of speech, “Offshore bloggers” live outside their homeland but continue to act in its virtual public sphere.

In this digital world, it has become a common practice of traditional media to use online sources of information, such as blogs and posts on social media. There is an abundance of examples showing this practice. There are videos filmed by citizen journalists or eyewitnesses incorporated in reports on the news or an article dealing with reactions on social media about major events. Yagodin (2014: 85) calls those instances “blogization”, a term he developed to describe the relationship between mainstream media and the journalism of blogs.

With the development of social media, a few applications became prominent worldwide. One of them is Twitter, which allows the user to microblog. In other words, users can write up to 280 characters and post it online. Axel Bruns and Tim Highfield (2012: 11) stated that, because of the character limit, tweets must necessarily have fragments of journalistic activity – tweets contain a summarized version of information, they often have links to further materials, with other users commenting and evaluating the posted content. Based on that, it could be concluded that the users are creating content together, providing the context of an event, and are participating in the news making. However, Bruns and Highfield did not classify those users as journalists. The authors (2012: 12) stated that those users have a hybrid role as a “produser”, a mixture of words “user” and “producer”. According to them, Twitter participants are neither producers of news coverage or just random users.

Posts on Twitter often include hashtags, which are commonly used during breaking news and help the public to discover news faster. Bruns and Highfield (2012: 13) stated that the primary function of Twitter is its mechanism to discover news, rather than fully replacing platforms for news coverage. The authors (2012: 14) have also described the process of discovering the news and providing context: Twitter users come across early rumors about an event, often via Twitter itself, some search for further information; some include an appropriate hashtag for the event, which leads to more people finding about the event and searching for even more information.

All in all, those actions could be considered as citizen journalism, whereas other do not agree. Having said that, the importance of blogs, social media and citizen journalists cannot be ignored: they have become one of the most prominent news sources for traditional media.

5. The role of citizen journalism

In this day and age, media are mostly privately owned. Because of that, the media profits from advertising. That can possibly result in changing editorial policies and making poor decisions in order to keep their advertisers. There have been many instances in which some publications or TV stations could not report a story on some major issue because they had a contract with advertisers, which forbid them to publish the relevant information.

Based on this example, it could be said that one of the roles of citizen journalism is not only to inform people, but broaden the content published by traditional media. In other words, citizen journalism covers topics that are sometimes overlooked by the mainstream media. Dr. Saqib Riaz (2011: 109) stated that the big media organizations lost their monopoly over news because of the evolution of citizen journalism. With the Internet and social media, sharing information has never been easier, which also means that hiding information requested by the public is highly unlikely, if not impossible. Riaz (2011: 114) claims that citizens' involvement in the news process breaks down the media hegemony. That means that citizen journalism contributes to pluralism in the media. In addition, citizens do not have some hidden agenda, they just report what they witness and experience.

Citizen journalism contributes to the democratization of the society. As Riaz (2011: 114) said, "More voices in the public arena can add to a more lively democracy". This is especially important when it comes to censorship. It is common that in the countries with a political system where all relevant information are censored, citizen journalists become the advocates for democracy, and sometimes the only truthful news source. According to Riaz (2011: 115), citizen and other independent media not only inform people, but critically question various problems and make governmental actions more transparent.

All in all, citizen journalism has its positive characteristics and roles in the society, such as informing or educating the public, it contributes to a more lively democracy and makes any action and event more transparent.

6. The motives behind the production of citizen journalism content

People have all sorts of reasons for producing citizen journalism content. It could be the desire to share your opinions and thoughts, informing the public, expressing yourself, or something else.

In order to find out why people produce citizen journalism, Joseph Kokenge (2010: 5) conducted a qualitative analysis. He interviewed five citizen journalists who regularly published on a website called Mymissourian.com. The goal of those interviews was to analyze how citizen journalists were feeling before, during and after writing and publishing their stories, how did the community react to the published content, and what was the citizen journalist's relationship to either the community or professional media. The interviewed citizen journalists were John Hall, David VanDyke, Jack Wideman, Robin Nuttall and Charles Dudley Jr. Kokenge (2010:12) states in his research that Hall produced over one hundred photo essays and even more photos that depicted life in Missouri. Nuttall produced more than twenty pieces of citizen journalism and became a popular pet columnist (2010: 13). VanDyke produced four pieces of citizen journalism content, focusing on book reviews and personal essays. Wideman focused on content dealing with sports, and Dudley Jr. focused on activism (2010: 13).

The following reasons for writing and publishing content to the website were presented in this qualitative analysis: the interviewees wanted to share their ideas and thoughts with their community, get feedback from the community, try helping out the people. Finally, it made them more creative. Regarding the gains from publishing content, citizen journalists stated that they had gained personally and professionally (2010: 20).

Of course, this is just one study that examines why people produce citizen journalism content. Having said that, there are more motives than those mentioned in the research. Even though some people's reasons may overlap, every individual has their own goals, motives and attitudes regarding the production of citizen journalism related content. Many claim that one of the key motives for producing citizen journalism content is to inform and educate the public, which can especially be seen during a crisis. There have been numerous examples of citizen journalists or commentators informing the public about protests, natural disasters and terrorist attacks by sharing what they have experienced.

To summarize, there are many various motives behind the production of citizen journalism content, which are often hard to classify.

7. Criticism of citizen journalism

Citizen journalism is sometimes perceived as “amateurish” or as a “bad version” of the mainstream media and it definitely has its critics. It is commonly known that professional journalists have formal education and ethical responsibilities towards the public. Moreover, there is an abundance of regulations, laws, and codes, which help professional journalists navigate the “ethical field”. Based on that, many criticize citizen journalism and its lack of regulations and codes of ethics. However, a few codes of ethics have emerged for online or citizen journalists. According to Cyberjournalist.net’s Blogger’s Code of Ethics, responsibilities of citizen journalists are the following: to be honest and fair, accountable, and to minimize harm (Roberts, Steiner, 2012: 9). Many authors have proposed numerous solutions to the ongoing problem of ethics in citizen journalism. Martin Kuhn proposed a variety of practical and ethical guidelines, such as promoting interactivity, striving for factual truth, transparency and free expression (Roberts, Steiner, 2012: 9).

The Knight Citizen News Network also suggested a list of principles:

The Knight Citizen News Network provides a list of principles—accuracy, thoroughness, fairness, transparency, and independence—that offers a glimpse of what sorts of ideas might deserve the attention of citizen journalists and organizations seeking their input. (Roberts, Steiner, 2012c: 10).

One of the most prominent citizen journalism websites was Korean OhMyNews, founded by Oh Yeon Ho, a political activist and journalist (Joyce, 2007: 6). Some claim that it was the most successful citizen journalism website and contributed its’ success to using elements of professional media – in order to be published, citizen journalists had to submit an article which was then reviewed and edited by the staff (Joyce, 2007: 7). But maybe one of the more interesting components of that website was its code of ethics. Naturally, it is of great importance for citizen journalists to know all the rules of publication of their articles. For this reason, all contributors had to sign a contract which regulated publishing on the website (Brautović, 2011: 118). According to the contract, all of the articles will be edited by the editors, information in the articles will be exchanged with other editors, publishing the same content in other media should be reported, all of the sources must be transparent, the authors can be held legally responsible and accept consequences of plagiarism. Finally, the authors must disclose if they work as PR experts or in marketing. Furthermore, civic journalists

cannot endanger the privacy of the people they are writing about, or use their position for personal gain (Brautović, 2011: 118).

Although there have been many attempts to try to regulate citizen journalism by proposing ethical guidelines and principles, there has been a lot of misreporting by citizen journalists. For instance, during hurricane Sandy in the United States of America, mainstream media found it difficult to gather information. Because of that, they relied on citizen journalists and their videos and photos. But, because the information was not properly verified, citizen journalists generated misinformation and numerous rumours (Mahoney, 2012).

Reporting rumours as facts has been an ongoing problem of citizen journalism and it can be explained in the following way:

This challenge is largely due to the prevalent fact-checking logic in citizen reporting. Namely, the ‘publish, then filter’ fact-checking logic in citizen reporting contrasts starkly with the fact-checking conventions found in professional journalism (Bal, Baruh, 2015: 215).

To summarize, all rules mentioned above are, after all, just guidelines which citizen journalists will or will not follow. Based on that, every citizen journalist has a responsibility only to themselves to report truthfully and objectively.

Pew Research Center conducted a research comparing traditional media and citizen media in 2009. Based on the examined published information and news, their findings were the following: it appeared that, in traditional media, less than ten percent of opinion related content existed, whereas approximately fifteen percent of opinion related content existed in citizen news (*Special reports summary essay*, 2009).

Based on this, a higher percentage of opinion-related content exists in citizen media, as opposed to traditional media. Citizen journalism has its critics, and this data may be the reason why. Stuart Allan (2013: 13) called this occurrence “possible truths”.

In highlighting the centrality of witnessing, however, it is vital not to overlook the degree of scepticism journalists routinely put into effect when processing truth claims. Experience tells them individuals on the scene, despite their best intentions, may be offering a less than accurate recollection of what they have seen or heard. Under duress, memories can be faulty, lines of vision obscured, the significance of events misinterpreted. (2013: 13).

Many authors claim that citizen journalism is not objective and is lacking in quality. To verify this personally, author Tom Grubisich (2005, *Grassroots journalism*) toured ten citizen journalism websites that have been created since 2003. He analysed iBrattleboro, Bluffton Today, Greensboro101, Backfence, YourHub, The Northwest Voice, WestportNow, GoSkokie, MyMissourian and Muncie Free Press. His conclusion was that many of the websites lacked not only in quality, but also in content (2005, *Grassroots journalism*).

Vincent Maher (2010, *Citizen journalism is dead*) stated that there are three main differences between citizen journalists and professional ones. He called it “The three deadly E’s for citizen journalism” – Ethics, Economics and Epistemology. Based on that, Maher (2010, *Citizen journalism is dead*) claims that professional journalism is better than citizen journalism. Regarding the Ethics, Maher states that the “Old media” has an institutional code of ethics, whereas citizen journalists have an uncoordinated individual self-interest and fear of litigation. Furthermore, professional journalists have formalized training either via tertiary education, or internally within the media organization, whereas citizen journalists are amateurs. Professional journalists have formal accountability, but citizen journalists have superficial accountability on an individual level. Professional journalists have editing standards; citizen journalists are subjective when it comes to selection (2010, *Citizen journalism is dead*). “Old media” and citizen journalists have different ways of making profit. Citizen journalists commonly profit from contextual advertising within their own website by using tools such as Google AdSense. Maher (2010, *Citizen journalism is dead*) claims that this way of earning is another problem of citizen journalism: “the blogger realises that certain content sells better ads than other and reaches the point where a decision has to be made about what to write about. It’s a bottom-up form of economic influence that exerts much more pressure much more directly on the individual.” (2010, *Citizen journalism is dead*).

Furthermore, Pew Research Centre (*Special reports summary essay*, 2009) discovered that forty-two percent of professional journalist websites engage in social interaction through polls and surveys, whereas only nine percent of citizen journalist sites engage in that type of interaction. As far as the usage of three or more referenced sources is concerned, seventy-three percent of professional journalists use three or more sources. Twenty-seven percent of citizen journalists use three or more sources. Within websites, citizen journalists use multimedia content more than traditional media (*Special reports summary essay*, 2009).

8. Citizen involvement in emergency reporting

In recent history, during any catastrophic, non-accessible, or major event, the media include footage or reportages of witnesses or citizen journalists. Haluk Mert Bal and Lemi Baruh conducted a research dealing with citizen involvement in emergency reporting. The method they have used was content analysis. They have gathered a list of citizen reporters who have used their blogs or citizen journalism platforms or portals to report about the Haiti earthquake, Gezi Park protests, Xynthia storm-that happened in Europe, and Boston bombings (2015: 216). Then the researchers randomly selected four citizen journalists for each incident. This method resulted in eighty-eight articles or 878 paragraphs to be analysed. Their content analysis concentrated on the balance between commentary and information, the use of visuals, information sources that were used, targets of criticism and who voiced the criticism, the extent to which episodic or thematic frames were used and, finally, the reporting of emotions (Bal, Baruh, 2015: 217). Concerning the balance between commentary and facts, the research has shown that citizen journalists have provided straight news about the events. It was shown that 34 per-cent of citizen journalists produced commentary, whereas 66 per-cent of them produced straight news regarding the incidents. The only inconsistency was the reporting on the Gezi Park protest, in which commentaries were more common (Bal, Baruh, 2015: 217).

Regarding the type of used news sources, citizen journalists used mostly government agencies, non-government organizations and other citizens and experts (Bal, Baruh, 2015: 218). The second most used news source were the journalists themselves, who have witnessed the crises first-hand. According to the research, citizen journalists wrote about their own experiences in 30 per-cent of the paragraphs that were analysed (Bal, Baruh, 2015: 218). It should be noted that one of the news sources were other citizens or bystanders. This research shows that citizen journalism is important during crises - it allows the public to understand the situation better and experience the situation as if they were there themselves. Also, it gives a platform to other citizens who are often disregarded by the mainstream or traditional media.

9. Citizen journalism and the risks of crisis reporting

Due to the omnipresence of technology in the modern world, citizen journalists can publish crucial information faster than ever. They can provide necessary information in the time of political crisis, censorship, natural disasters, or any similar events.

For instance, with the start of the Syrian uprising in 2011, the Syrian government took some serious actions against the media, freedom of the press and freedom of free speech. Syrian media are controlled by security offices. Because of that, the media have been turned into a propaganda machine (Omari, 2017, The Independent).

According to the World press freedom index from 2018, Syria is one of the deadliest countries for journalists – it is ranked 177th out of 180 countries. It is so deadly, that many professional and citizen journalists were killed. According to the website “Reporters without borders” (2018), up to this point in 2018, ten citizen journalists were killed, and six of those murders happened in Syria. “Reporters without borders” also stated that there are one hundred and forty-three citizen journalists imprisoned at this time. Many stated that the Syrian president, Bashar al-Assad proclaimed “war with the press“. His attitude regarding the press and journalism was well known because of his interviews and comments published in SANA, the official State news agency. It was discovered that during the period from March 30 2011 to March 31 2016, the Syrian president mentioned the word “media“ around eighty times and connected it with the word “war“ ten times (Omari, 2017, The Independent). In addition, he used certain phrases which would paint a negative picture of the media. Some of those phrases were: media attack, media fabrications, media battlefield, hostile media, the bloody media machine, money coming from outside just for the media, the moans and groans of the Arab media (Omari, 2017, The Independent). Because of the complex political situation happening not only in the Syrian media, but in the whole state, professional journalists did not have a lot of options. They were faced with two choices: leave the country to try to build a better life somewhere else or keep working for the “propaganda machine“ in order to survive. Consequently, the majority of professional journalists did in fact flee to the “liberated“ areas in Syria. (Omari, 2017, The Independent). Because of that, an abundance of Syrians started using their mobile phones to record and capture their surroundings. This is just one of many examples where reporting the news became a certain sort of resistance to the current political regime. Author Omari described the current political situation which forced Syrians to organize into groups, whose activities included coordinating demonstrations, providing relief

and boycotting – this is how citizen media groups were created. Omari (2017, The Independent) stated that they do not have professional offices. However, most of the media groups relied on some of the basic principles of journalism and established regional coverage.

Another example of a country where citizen journalism is dangerous is North Korea. North Korea takes the last spot on the 2018 World press freedom index (Mortensen, 2014, The Independent). Ishimaru Jiro is an international journalist who works for ASIAPRESS and is the network's only outside contact. He regularly meets, in secret, with North Korean undercover citizen journalists in order to exchange information. Jiro has been to the North Korean border over one hundred times in the last twenty years, and his work was published in “The Economist“, “The New York Times“, “BBC“ and other vital news outlets (Mortensen, 2014, The Independent).

Those two examples show the true value and importance of citizen journalism. Stuart Allan (2013: 58) has also described this need to share information, no matter how hard sometimes that can be:

The journalist’s belief in the intrinsic value of witnessing – ‘to describe the life I see’ – represents a guiding tenet of investigative practice, one which is recurrently upheld in normative terms, not least in editorial guidelines, stylebooks, training manuals, textbooks and the like. (2013: 58).

10. The impact of citizen journalism

Traditional media have changed over the past years because of the development of citizen journalism. Citizen journalists do not answer to nobody but themselves, in most cases. Consequently, they cannot be controlled by traditional media who had to adjust to new structure of journalism.

According to Yagotin (2014: 44), journalism has been oscillating between two extremes: values of objectivity and highly subjective and almost literary forms. In other words, professional journalism strives to report objectively, whereas more commentary is present in citizen journalism.

Because of citizen journalism and blogging, Yagotin (2014: 25) claims that we are witnessing the overlapping of citizen media and the traditional ones. It is a common occurrence to spot a quoted information from blogs or social media, see interviews of bloggers as new celebrities, or paying them as freelance contributors to mainstream media. Yagotin (2014:86) states that instances of professional co-optation of amateur bloggers can be found, as well as journalists regularly blogging outside of their media organizations. In recent years, journalistic hierarchies are changing, which Yagotin (2014: 86) furthermore explains: those changes are happening as a consequence of journalistic roles becoming more diversified and nuanced. Also, the author states that blogging affects institutional limitations, occupational hierarchies and ideological foundation of journalism as a profession.

Bruns and Highfield (2012: 21) claim that the relationship between citizen and professional journalists is changing, which can be seen in an “us vs. them” attitudes. The mentioned attitude is the result of clear structural boundaries between news organizations and collaborative spaces and websites on citizen journalism. The authors (2012: 22) concluded that a new type of journalism has emerged as a consequence of the constant changes in the journalistic field – and that is shared journalism, one which does not belong to news organizations or news audiences alone.

11. Final conclusion

Citizen journalism has been a polarizing topic since its beginnings. Experts, journalists, authors, bloggers still cannot agree on whether citizen journalism is necessary to the society or not.

Some claim that citizen journalism is essential when it comes to informing and educating the public, broadening the content of traditional media, improving democracy, contributing to the variety and pluralism of the media outlets.. Many citizen journalists risk their lives in order to inform the public and stand up for truth – citizen journalism can be a tool when resisting undemocratic and dangerous political regimes.

On the other hand, citizen journalism has its major drawbacks. It lacks a code of ethics, it is subjective, and because of that, some experts and the public often perceive it as “a poor version” of mainstream media. Citizen journalism gave a voice to the people with an internet connection. Vulnerable and marginalized groups in the society who do not have the resources or conditions to use the Internet are left out of this conversation, which is a major obstacle regarding the future development of citizen journalism.

Citizen journalism impacted the traditional media greatly, but it is not here to replace it. It should be here to compliment it.

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