

English abstracts

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Practices of transparency in utilizing data and algorithms in journalism

The concept of transparency has become central to communication and media research, as well as to the ethical evaluation of political and communicative practices. Transparency has been proposed as a means to maintain and increase trust in journalistic work and in its products in the context of interactive media and communication. As knowledge production and decision-making are increasingly based on data and data processing, transparency has also become a key concept in algorithmic decision-making. In this article, we explore the role of transparency in the discussion of data and algorithms as well as of journalism, and suggest possible practices of transparency in data and algorithm-based journalism. In digital journalism, data is utilized both in manual and automated processes of production as a source of information and in the distribution and targeting of content to audiences. How could journalism make transparent its use of data, data choices, and the needs and values that affect them?

Key words: transparency, journalism, data, algorithms, automation, trust, decision making, responsibility

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Balancing between danger and responsibility:

The values of public service media under the pressure from social media platforms

Social media platforms have significantly shaped various media processes and practices. The activities of platform companies are guided by different values and goals than those of media organizations, which causes a conflict between the actors. Especially public service media companies, whose cornerstone are the values of public service, have to renegotiate their practices and values when operating on social media. In this article, based on the analysis of qualitative interview data we examine the relationship of the Finnish public service media company Yleisradio to social media platforms. We study how this relationship is described and justified in Yleisradio and what kind of value discourse it is related to. Based on our analysis, Yle's platform relationship is manifested as an act of balancing. Yle's operations on social media platforms are based not only on ensuring its own legitimacy but also on ethics and a strong public service ethos. With regards to values, the values of universality, independence and serving the public and society at large stand out. The balancing and negotiating nature of the platform relationship is emphasized both in the discourse and the work practices described by the interviewees. The platforms not only unilaterally change the processes in the media industry, but in part also, through their existence, guide value-based discussion and reflection.

Key words: social media, platformization, public service media, public broadcasting, value discourse

Maarit Jaakkola and Tiina Räisä

Book Reviews in the Platform Economy: User-generated Reviews on Instagram

In the era of social media, cultural products are no longer reviewed in public by professional critics of traditional media, but even ordinary people are involved in the public evaluation of art work on different digital platforms. In this article we examine literature reviews as part of platformized cultural production, through the case of user-generated literary reviews in the visual mobile app Instagram. A literary discussion community has been established on Instagram, globally known as Bookstagram, which even shows local and regional variants such as the Finnish Kirjagram. We ask how user reviewers perform the functional roles characteristic of the genre of review that have been identified in the activities of the traditional reviewers. Based on different positionings, we outline a distinction between the concepts of cultural intermediation and cultural intramediatio, which, as we argue, essentially describe the difference between institutional and user-generated, non-institutional literary review and, at the same time, the special character of the platformized literary review.

Key words: cultural platform economy, literature review, user-generated content, cultural intermediaries

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Weaves of vulnerability

Digital subject and vulnerability in research literature on data-driven societies

The article explores what kinds of meanings have been attached to the concept of vulnerability in research on data-driven societies and digital subjects. The article builds on a literature review that mapped existing literature on vulnerability in the context of datafication from 2015 to 2020. Literature was searched from relevant databases and digital libraries of social sciences and thematic aspects of vulnerability were arranged from the contemporary literature: 1) vulnerabilities caused by dataveillance, 2) data as knowing and participation, 3) categorization and regulation of visibility of digital subjects and 4) vulnerability's relationship to autonomy and ontology. Based on the research literature, data gathering practices and digital environments engender vulnerability that manifests in the formation of subjects, visibility, categorization, participation, relationships between subjects and in the ontological nature of digital existence. The article argues that the concept of vulnerability could be utilized as a theoretical tool to research the possibilities and constraints caused by datafication. If vulnerability is associated with lived experience in data-mediated relations, it could be approached both as a structure of feeling and an ethical resource.

Key words: vulnerability, datafication, data studies, digital subject, data-mediated relationship

Heikki Hellman

Press chains and the "new normal" of the newspaper industry

Press concentration in Finland and its measurement, 2009–2019

During the last two decades, newspaper publishing has been found to continue its consolidation and the industry has become increasingly concentrated in the hands of a few newspaper chains. However, in research, media policy and public debate, perceptions of the degree of press concentration vary depending on the context, observer and applied approach. The article draws on the research tradition of the concentration of ownership and analyzes the concentration of the press at the national level in Finland in 2009–2019. Empirically, the article utilizes data collected by MediaAuditFinland and the Finnish Media Federation, as well as indicators commonly used in research on industry concentration. Press concentration has traditionally been studied on the basis of circulation, but as fewer and fewer papers continue checking their circulation figures, the data has become unreliable. To solve the problem, the article, firstly, estimates the circulation of newspapers as far as data are missing and, secondly, raises the net sales of newspapers to serve as a key proxy of market shares alongside circulation. As the estimated circulations and documented net sales have not been widely used in the past to describe the state of the Finnish press, the study also develops the methodology for the study of concentration.

Key words: Newspaper industry, concentration, press chains, measurement, circulation, net sales

Teemu Oivo

Messengers of Kremlin's word?

Finnish online media at the gates of international news flows

While their backgrounds and resources are fundamentally different from one another, Western domestic and Russian information outlets can find common ground through their goal to fight against what they perceive as unjust Western media hegemony. For Western democracies this little studied cooperation is worrisome as it can potentially contribute to dissemination of harmful information even through national language barriers. In the current article, I examine how Russia's strategic narratives get forwarded in international information networks and how they are modified in the process of curation. I apply content analysis to online contents of Russia's international news agencies RT (Russia Today) and Sputnik that were curated by six Finnish counter media websites in 2018 and early 2019. The qualitative and quantitative use of these contents varied notably between the counter media sites. They edited the original content of RT and Sputnik particularly by adding emphasis on perspectives of ethnic tensions related to stories about internal tensions between Western states, whereas short reports on international armed conflicts were edited least.

Key words: international media, curation, civic journalism, counter media, Russia