Disrupting the News

Ethan Zuckerman (@ethanz) 10.1.2014
Turkish media culture - many of the main networks owned by business conglomerates with complex relationships to the government - stories of Turkish TV stations getting phone calls from Erdogan and shutting off programs as they were running
surprisingly, largest jailer worldwide of journalists

44 pro-Kurdish journalists stand accused of backing an illegal Kurdish group, the Union of Kurdistan Communities (KCK). The defendants were arrested as terrorists
livestreaming became common during occupy, have seen it as a regular feature in protests. Friends at YouTube, where many are hosted, tell me that it’s routine for streams to have 100k simultaneous viewers...
part of what's interesting in Turkey is emergence of organized, semi-professional collectives
140 journos - up to 20 people, Engin Onder as the visible figure - twitter, soundcloud
140journos Is Uncensoring Turkey's News

By John Beck
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Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan really doesn’t like social media. He described it as “the worst menace to society” after introducing a Turkish TV audience to it. Islington
capable of reporting without anyone knowing - story of reporting from a trial open to the public but closed to the media

trying to professionalize - decided to report on Gezi, but not protest. building networks through Twitter so they can verify stories as they come through
when revolutions aren’t disruptive enough

much as I love the revolutionary model, limited in impact
many of these disruptions are being adopted within MSM
understanding how MSM has adopted these revolutions helps us understand the evolution of the space
140 journos built around a model that believes that if you reveal the secret, those in power are forced to change - inspired by a journalist who visited the site where 35 villagers were killed in an airstrike on the turkey/iraq border in Roboski - journalist was brave enough to report it and it became part of the national dialog
thing is, they're probably wrong. Erdogan won three general elections - unprecedented in Turkish history - won the presidency a month ago with 12% margin of victory. Ask Turks who watch the media closely, but not activist, digital media, and they have no idea who 140journos are.
Erdogan has term Twitter "the worst menace to society" - makes him sound silly but we can understand this strategically, trying to marginalize this news from this channel what Erdogan condemns is, sometimes, true - hard to verify, more opinion than reporting in part because of Erdogan's comments, marginal, not ready to be a replacement for quality reporting as we know it
we all make media
someone else is closer to the scene
information surplus, not scarcity
really hard to verify - photo on the left widely used to illustrate stories about Syria - not an orphan sleeping between parents' graves, but an art project from Saudi
- 140 journos may be pros, but Free Syrian Army isn't
verifying the waves of information that come in during a crisis is a near-impossible task, complicated by a need to be first
- commodification of news means speed is now a top newsroom priority - nypost
- deb roy's hopes for algorithms that can verify
- my fears that this is really hard to do - can't rely on an iterated history when there's breaking news, observers
strong blend of opinion and reporting
- gets blamed on the internet, probably should be blamed on cable news - financially efficiency of talking heads
- tendency to demand that we want news to report, viewers to decide - not really what we want - want
losing the agenda setting function
- turkish TV was able to ignore Gezi, US TV can't ignore twitter on Ferguson - dependency on social media for deciding what to cover
bell, ca - robert rizzo - preventative function of journalism
weak coverage of bell, ca by LA times -
fear of showing up on the front page of the newspaper preventing crimes
possible that digital media is going to have this same function - ray rice and TMZ
losing control of the narrative
- more producers of the news
- news driven by social media agendas

losing the audience
- collapsing audience for evening news, newspapers
- move onto digital news, yes, but vastly more outlets, driven by social, browsing instead of brand loyalty

losing the cross-subsidy
- entertainment content - if you liked the crossword, pay for the iraq bureau
doesn’t make any sense - nearly unlimited in where we can go for content,
suddenly means that news is a very bad business... or, perhaps, that news that reaches the general public is a very bad business
losing control of the narrative - gaining a broader set of voices in the dialog
golden age of writing, particularly writing rooted in personal experience
When everyone is sharing content, Storyful finds the stories worth telling.
danger of lionizing the old days "didn't see a lot of black people on tv" - possibility of inserting ourselves into media
losing the audience - combination of near-monopoly on local ad markets and ingrained habits led to a ton of crappy content
seeing a different kind of crappy content - me, too content - makes sense from an advertising point of view, but a really poor way to do public service
encouragement to focus on what news orgs can do well – context, in-depth work
our experiments in this area: FOLD, fixing the livestream
hope for content that makes it possible for citizens to make a difference – getting beyond
cross subsidy
double bottom line
losing the cross-subsidy: not enough disruption
still using the model we used in broadcast tv - not a great model but the one we could figure out
moved it online a did two things that have broken it further
made it measurable, and figured out that while transactional advertising works well, display advertising usually works dismally
might need to figure out how to pay for news we need
pretty easy individually - you want great content, you can pay for it, golden age
actually, we want great content accessible to a lot of people so they can discuss it, argue about it, deliberate - that's hard, and that's why we've not
moved beyond advertising yet
gets really interesting when you disrupt this, IMHO
pay to make the news

pay for the community
THIS AMERICAN LIFE.


Ira Glass
pay for social good: philanthropy
real public media - need strong metrics to make sure you’re serving an audience
pay as you go

VRM/istenlog

pay as you go - micropay, monitored usage subscription
disruption as making markets more efficient works

does disruption work in meeting civic needs?