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**Conceptualizing metropolitan journalism:
New approaches, new communicative practices, new perspectives?**



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KRAMP: CONCEPTUALIZING METROPOLITAN JOURNALISM

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Conceptualizing metropolitan journalism: New approaches, new communicative practices, new perspectives?¹

*“The result of new blood in metropolitan journalism will be watched with the deepest interest”
(Fourth Estate, 10 October 1895: 1)*

1 Introduction

Journalism is on the verge of many things: its institutional pillars struggle heftily with the economic challenges that arise from changing media habits and the unpredictability of what gains and loses popularity among audiences. Audiences become even more fragmented day by day. They can select from countless digital media services and contents globally at their convenience, only restrained by their own capabilities in terms of literacy and resources.² This continuously pushes forward competition between legacy news organizations and ever-new actors that enter the global information ecosphere. In a rapidly urbanizing world where cities grow and reach new levels of complexity (cf. Kouritt/Nijkamp/Scholten 2015), journalism has a lot to accomplish while being confronted with transformational challenges. It was Simmel who accentuated the complex and consequential interdependencies of social interaction in a metropolis with serious consequences for (public) communication:

“The relationships and affairs of the typical metropolitan usually are so varied and complex that without the strictest punctuality in promises and services the whole structure would break down into an inextricable chaos. Above all, this necessity is brought about by the aggregation of so many people with such differentiated interests, who must integrate their relations and activities into a highly complex organism. If all clocks and watches in Berlin would suddenly go wrong in different ways, even if only by one hour, all economic life and communication of the city would be disrupted for a long time.” (Simmel 2000 [1903]: 50)

Against this background of profound change, journalists try to find ways to sustain their societal function. Journalism as a practice is confronted with seemingly endless possibilities of using emerging media technologies, tools and services to produce the news and present information in new ways and forms. This is especially true in the mediatized metropolis where urban dynamics of a dense and culturally diverse population are facilitated by a fully or at least better developed ICT infrastructure, compared to rural areas. In the city, technological evolution has conquered time and space, as Gottdiener and Hutchison (2011: 388) write in their book on “*new urban sociology*”. Their scholarly

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² For a discussion of the economical and social dimensions of access to and appropriation of digital information and communication technologies (*‘digital divide’*) cf. Proenza 2015.

interest is less concerned with the overcoming of the spatial dimensions of the city by media technology but with the merger of the two worlds: How does social life change in a city where information and communication infrastructure enable the emergence of new communicative practices, especially those that were formerly place-bound?

In this perspective, journalists are confronted with constantly altered preconditions of media usage and transformation of their working contexts: while coping with these structural challenges, they try to adjust by pushing boundaries of mediation, weighing alternative forms of audience engagement and finding additional roles for themselves while trying to maintain their functional stability (cf. Weischenberg/Malik/Scholl 2011). This stability is increasingly challenged as the mediatized city offers many alternative sources and social practices for the dissemination of news and information beside the traditional distribution model of mass communication. The connected risk of economic marginalisation and existential intimidation of journalism as the prime agent in the construction of a critical public sphere is a well-covered issue in journalism research. What have been overlooked widely are the specific characteristics of journalism in big cities and its exemplary function for the overall news industry. This chapter argues that this is especially true for metropolitan areas where, since the dawn of the modern age, media have played a crucial role in accompanying and shaping urban development and a certain type of journalism has been moulded.

It is the metropolis, cities that meet general characteristics of large agglomeration, economic growth and both cultural and political domination, that “*most vividly reveal the politics of a changing mediated world*”, as Georgiou (2013: 2) puts it. She argues that “*the relation of media and the city has become synergetic but ordinary, so much so that it is rarely spoken about, even in media and communications studies*” (Georgiou 2013: 5). She is not talking of news media necessarily, but rather of technologically based communication media in a broader sense. In her view, the more apparent the interdependence between media technologies, media practices and media contents on the one side and the urban environment on the other side become, this interdependence should be taken for granted. One might add: neither should the central role of journalism within the urban media environment, which essentially means all technologically based communication media and their affordances that are theoretically accessible in the metropolitan area at a specific moment (cf. Jensen/Helles 2015).

Georgiou makes a point here by highlighting the interwovenness of metropolitan life with media practices and affordances that have become somewhat natural. The implications of that are profound, especially for journalism: it is not solely about the economic challenges for everyone involved in the news industry that come with simply more complementary or substitutive media affordances and transforming media practices. It is also about normative considerations that grow out of this close connection between social change and media change: primarily, how journalism should (or should not) adjust against the backdrop of its central function in a democracy. It is more and more difficult for legacy news organizations to fulfil the profession’s role as a social stabilizer: their quantitative and qualitative outreach is on the decrease due to the co-existence of personal, social and mass media that has already led to a relentless competition for the attention, favour and time of audiences in a highly diversified information ecosphere where journalism is no longer the only news source. Following Thomson (2011: 11), the path seems already

paved: not only newspapers as commodities *have to* change in order to survive, but also does journalism as their prime ingredient. Surely, journalism changes not only as a profession but as a cultural practice by the doings of its actors, also by emerging actors who - professional or with a layman's perspective - participate in the very same process of change. News organizations have to reconfigure their institutional workflows in many aspects in order to *react* to external changes of market, audiences and technologies and beyond that to be even able to take an *active* and *creative* role to shape transformation, to be "*ahead of the curve*" (Mele/Whibey 2013), not merely "*playing defensive*" (Nasalskaya/Zabrovskaya 2015). The transformation of journalism directly relates to the transformation of social and cultural practices where digital media technologies have gained importance for various communicative functions due to their increasingly comfortable appropriability. Lewis and Westlund (2015) note a certain dissolution and more difficult detectability of professional roles, boundaries and processes in (digital) news work because of this. In the mediatised urban ecosphere, professional actors of various kinds, (technological) actants (like algorithms or other forms of automation), and audiences are involved in similar (if not the same) media activities that are concerned with accessing or observing, selecting or filtering, processing and editing as well as the distribution and public interpretation of information.

In the following, a conceptual framework for a *distinctive* metropolitan journalism is proposed in order to discuss what the transformation of journalism in metropolitan media environments can tell us about the overall changing communicative relation between journalists and audiences. However, also the communicative relations between established news organizations and emergent agents of public communication, i.e. citizens, part time or full time journalists and news entrepreneurs with unconventional concepts, are of interest here. The focus will be on the function of journalism in areas of high agglomeration as a signifier of change and best practice for journalism in general. Thereby, the focus will be, first, on *defining concepts for new journalistic formats for a metropolitan audience*, second, on *institutional impulses by new market entries*, and, third, on *new concepts of audience engagement* in a metropolitan setting. Following this outline, the chapter will discuss examples that indicate how metropolitan journalism transforms by action and reaction or, to rephrase, by creativity and compulsion.

2 Researching 'metropolitan journalism'

2.1 Current state of research

Metropolitan journalism is a rather unspecified concept. As Sjøvaag (2015: 18) pointed out, geographical or spatial dimensions are a blind spot in the conceptualization efforts within journalism research, stating a "*lack of attention in the research as to the distinction and relationship between local, metropolitan and regional news content*". It should be emphasized at this point that metropolitan journalism is regarded, here, as an integrative cross-media and cross-institutional concept that comprises local, national and global perspectives in reporting no matter what the organizational contexts are. Whether it is newspapers or magazines, television or radio broadcasters, news websites, blogs or freelance journalists who use various online platforms and channels for their reporting: what connects them all is their metropolitan setting. Thereby, each of them constantly create and shape the metropolitan news ecosphere.

The interplay of local, national and global approaches to news in metropolitan areas, which are admittedly still dominated by legacy publishers, does not come without tensions. Local journalism has been regarded as not so prestigious, capable and exemplary as national and global (political) reporting and commentary, which are not infrequently seen as the true core of quality journalism in both academic focus and professional self-perception. Yet, existing scholarship has been mostly concerned with tensions between the civic importance of local journalism and its quality in contrast to the national press and its uncertain economic future (cf. Franklin/Murphy 1998; Levy/Nielsen 2011; Nielsen, 2015; Schudson 2011). There are only few studies investigating differences between metropolitan and rural journalism cultures (cf. Hanusch 2015; contributions in Hutchison/O'Donnell 2011). Surprisingly, too, little scholarship explores how economic, technological and cultural changes have impacted the patterns of action of metropolitan news making and how it resonates with other areas of news production (cf. for the United States: Anderson 2013 and Ryfe 2013; for the UK: Coleman/Thumim/Moss 2016). However, what can be understood by metropolitan journalism remains unclear because the existing works lack a conceptual perspective. In other words: they do not grapple with the metropolitan in journalism in a way that would go beyond a (taken for granted) descriptive account and clearly delineate the metropolis from a small or mid-sized city in terms of its distinctive characteristics. Even one of the most influential (i.e. most cited) studies on metropolitan journalism - Anderson's *"The Rebuilding of News"* (2013) - does not offer an explicit definition of what is meant by metropolitan journalism in the first place.

Not much help comes from the field of urban sociology, either. Here, it is even unclear what can be understood by a metropolis, except that it is a large city of importance that emerges over generations (cf. Duncan et al. 1960; Singh 1996). Following Wirth (1969: 148), a metropolis is basically defined as a *"large, dense, and permanent settlement of socially heterogeneous individuals"*. Taking the example of Germany, the federal administration has adopted this general idea of metropolises, characterizing them as *"spaces of high agglomeration with more than half a million inhabitants which develop dynamically with respect to economic criteria like economic value added, economic power and income and are particularly prominent and incorporated internationally"* (BBR 2005: 177, translated by author). Furthermore, metropolises in Germany are regarded as *'important'* in terms of attracting global corporations, political decision-making on a national and international scale, providing gateways to information and transportation infrastructure, and thriving as cultural and scientific centres, including media production (cf. BBR 2011: 208). Looking at further European countries, it is even more difficult to agree on a clear definition of the metropolis, also because of the strategic development of metropolitan areas that include suburban regions of varying size, growth and economic potential (cf. Tomàs 2015).

To conceptualize journalism in a metropolitan context, these characteristics do not suffice as they cannot grasp social and cultural dynamics and mentalities that make the metropolis - and *'its'* journalism - distinguishable. Wirth (1969: 160) stressed a sociological perspective on the city that, in his view, features *"a set of practices, of common habits, sentiments and traditions which have grown up through several generations of life and are characteristic of a typical cultural unit"*. Insofar, understanding a metropolis might start with its mere size, but must continue with its

sociological dimensions: Läßle (2007: 505, FN11) pointed out for Germany that a process of metropolization had been pushed forward by political institutions in order to strengthen economic potentials of urban agglomeration sustainably. This endeavour led, together with the societal meta processes of globalization and digitization, to a lasting appeal of the metropolis concept as a space for “*new urban dynamics*”, taking advantage of the “*fluidity of goods and information*”, the “*advantages of scale effects*” that are connected to agglomeration economies (Läßle 2007: 235). A first step might be, hence, to define the size of the metropolis, but this should be followed by an analysis of how it is constructed and moulded by urban dynamics, which essentially means (changing) communicative practices. Amin and Thrift (2002) have posed this quite paradigmatically:

“The city is everywhere and in everything. If the urbanized world now is a chain of metropolitan areas connected by places/corridors of communication (airports and airways, stations and railways, parking lots and motorways, teleports and information highways) then what is not the urban? Is it the town, the village, the countryside? Maybe, but only to a limited degree. The footprints from the city are all over these places, in the form of city commuters, tourists, teleworking, the media, and the urbanization of lifestyles. The traditional divide between the city and the countryside has been perforated.” (Amin/Thrift 2002: 1)

So, the urban spirit - the perception of what urbanity means and expresses - is disseminated and boosted by media communications. The metropolis can be conceived as a very strong reference point: signifying are no longer space-related clichéd representations like the “*shadow of the skyscraper*” (Zorbaugh 1976: 1) (although skylines do have at least a touristic value), but rather the unique cultural identifier of communicative (inter)action in the metropolitan setting.

In this context, urban sociology neglects journalism widely in favour of overall media communications, used by citizens to engage with each other and the institutional realm at large. In his study on how cities become ‘*smarter*’ through (the use of) media technologies, Townsend (2013: 320) argues that especially digital media have opened up an unprecedented horizon for participation, networking, transparency and civic action towards “*a more just, social and sustainable future*” (for everyone’s own city that is), emphasizing that it is not about contestation but about communitization, bringing the citizens together to build their community collaboratively. It is obvious that Townsend is not interested very much in legacy news media. However, he focuses on the mediatized empowerment of new actors on the public urban stage. Shirky (2008) boiled this down to the catchphrase “*here comes everybody*”, highlighting the grassroots as starting point for individual and collective agency. Townsend shows that this process starts to matter in the modern metropolis and complements the traditional news media public, thereby redefining the urban information ecosphere of the formerly (mass) ‘*media city*’ (cf. McQuire 2008) into the ‘*mediatized city*’ (which signals a more profound social and cultural transformation). This is where Townsend’s discussion unfolds the underlying issues as he is not concerned with explicit forms of news production and distribution, neither with traditional vessels (e.g. newspapers, news broadcast) nor unconventional forms (e.g. alternative local news websites, social media reporting), but very much with fundamental consequences of ICT transformation, namely the open source movement, political communication, and digital divide.

2.2 *Journalism in a metropolis*

Where does that leave journalism as a profession, as a cultural practice and as a commodity? As cities continue to grow, it is worthwhile considering media - especially those technologically based communication media that are used by citizens to consume and share *journalism* and *information* that are relevant to them - as a core functional characteristic of a metropolis. If newspapers as a prime journalistic medium and product have been traditionally the “*beating heart of society*” (Calcutt/Hammond 2011: 63), journalism has been definitely the pulse of the metropolis in the twentieth and also the beginning of the twenty-first century. Taking into account recent developments, seemingly substituting emergent media services that do not offer journalism but communication capabilities and occupy the attention and time of media users who use them to create their own networks of information, there has also been a remarkable growth of reporting both in quantity and diversity in many large cities. Notwithstanding falls in newspaper circulation, there have been and still are numerous start-up initiatives by (partially laid-off) freelance journalists, young professionals or lateral entrants that increased, especially in large cities, the overall range of reporting (cf. Beckett 2015).

The partial disentanglement of journalism from legacy news organizations has been reflected quite extensively in journalism research (e.g. Atton/Hamilton 2008; Couldry/Curran 2003; Harcup 2005; Meadows 2013). However, a solidified concept of metropolitan journalism is required to comprehend properly the related transformations in an urban media environment. In her study on the interrelation of media and the city, Georgiou (2013) discusses four interfaces between media and the city: consumption, identity, community and action. All of these are characterized by tensions and have implications for the role of journalism in the urban information ecosphere:

Consumption: The metropolis is an urban space where commercialization of everything becomes particularly apparent: nearly every aspect of the city is transformed into a consumable entity, not only for touristic purposes, but as an economic imperative. Ubiquitous advertising is a vivid example, next to retail, most noteworthy malls, development sites or ostentatious institutional self-representation. Yet, journalism is a part of this commodified environment, and media are instruments and commodities at the same time. Media technologies, their desirability (*‘gadgets’*) and appropriation in everyday life is one of the most important driving forces of present urban transformation. However, they do not exclusively promote consumption, but also media practices that create alternative perspectives, e.g. individual efforts in media production or consumption-critical approaches as a form of political participation (cf. Kannengießer 2016).

Identity: Primarily in the city, differing identity representations that object to mainstream political morale tend to become explicit in public space. This can take various forms, for instance sub-cultural critique, resistance even, but most take advantage of media. Georgiou mentions music or graffiti art. Those identity-relevant counter drafts use the symbolic and material repertoire of the media and bear witness to a creative effort that is, as Georgiou (2013: 149) states, “*sometimes the only kind of representation that certain groups are allowed to have within (neo)liberal western democracy.*” Journalism amplifies this by providing information and commenting on current metro affairs, and by stimulating discussions on public issues it contributes towards an understanding between individual life plans, social realities, and cultural contexts.

Community: The term ‘*community*’ has a relational meaning. It can refer, for instance, to a geographical space or to a notion of building relationships. In both cases, ‘*community*’ stresses a notion of connectivity, collaboration, and participation (cf. Bartz 2016). Media play an important role for all kinds of communications within a community, including direct communication, news dissemination, self-representations and so forth. A strong body of research has been conducted focussing on community journalism, analysing influences and interactions between so-called citizen journalists (laymen who engage as independent reporters) and professional newsrooms who pursue a close link to the citizens of the community they serve (e.g. Abernathy 2014; Altschull 1996; Lauterer 2006; Reader/Hatcher 2012). The concept of ‘*community journalism*’ reflects the impetus of news workers to engage with their respective community, to encourage a sense of place, to encourage citizens to be an active part of the community and providing the required information for this (cf. Carpenter/Nah 2015). Tensions can occur with fluctuations in a community, especially through the continued (national and international) migration into metropolitan areas which directly affects journalists’ integration attempts, trying to include citizens with diverse cultural backgrounds, different expectations and senses of belonging with respect to the community.

Action: By action, Georgiou understands organized political action by ordinary citizens and civic stakeholders. Social action with a vision for political change can be described as a natural side effect of metropolitan life: high population density, urban development, education, infrastructure and so many other public issues in a big city and its exurbs, is regularly discussed critically by collectivities like citizens’ groups or larger social movements. Communication media play a crucial role for civic action, both for coordinating collective agency and as everyday media practice, because they help to spread the word and to engage even wider urban publics. In short, action refers basically to the empowerment of the citizen to engage with the media, to take part or even induce collective endeavours in order to shape public debates - which preferably take the urban stage to set a mark. For journalism, this means a potential higher demand, but also more likely chances to provide options for participation, to “*join the conversation*” (cf. CNN’s famous tagline) in both directions: the one moderated from within the newsrooms, and the one taking place among new public agents.

To approach the conceptualization of metropolitan journalism, we have to bring to mind some characteristics that can be ascribed to metropolises against the backdrop of continued mediatization. Based i.a. on the historical concentration of mass media organizations in cities in order to be at the centres of political decision-making, media diversity in terms of the number of news media produced in a particular city including alternative media actors (individuals as well as organizations) is significantly high in areas of high agglomeration. However, media audiences living in a somewhat congested metropolis do not constitute a homogeneous mass but, on the contrary, they are rather highly fragmented in their alignments towards the available news outlets. Depending on the size and degree of media diversity in a metropolitan area, the news market there is also highly competitive; whereas monopolies prevail in many smaller cities and rural regions, posing the risk of “*news deserts*” if crisis hits (cf. Kennedy 2013: 147). With growing population, the ICT infrastructure in large cities is perpetually upgraded and expanded, offering fast and uninterrupted connection rates and an increasing number of diverse emerging services. These basic characteristics mould the socio-cultural, political

and economic contexts that are the determining factors for journalism practice and the institutional dynamics framing it.

Due to the mostly seamless connectivity, commuting in metropolitan areas by public transport does not entail adjourning media usage, but can even intensify it with a dense ICT-equipped bus, subway, tram or train network, giving commuters the freedom to engage with media (cf. Bjørner 2015). Ubiquitous access to online services and the resulting omnipresence of connectivity has also led on to a more dynamic relation between the local and the global, connecting individuals, collectivities, organizations and cultures worldwide that nevertheless still rely very much on their local living conditions (cf. Smith 2002). This translates into, for instance, most vivid social media interactions within and between metropolitan regions (cf. Takhtejev/Gruzd/Wellman 2012) and has consequences for metropolitan journalism at the intersection between spatial parameters and communicative boundlessness. For example, local reporting in the metropolis has the possibility to scale the concept of community, from globally oriented urban cultures, to the city and the district as administrative units, to the neighbourhood and even smaller parts of the metropolitan community which might be labelled as “*hyperlocality*” (cf. Metzgar/Kurpius/Rowley 2011).

It is not solely a cliché that metropolises are perceived (notably also by their own inhabitants) as cosmopolitan by nature: this can refer to the cultural diversity and overall international orientation at eye level with other large cities around the world (cf. Georgiou 2013: 3-4). They benchmark themselves more likely against international metropolises, “*creative knowledge cities*” in particular (cf. Van Geenhuizen/Nijkamp 2012), because of their globalised business relations, political ambitions, and interlinked cultural production. Demographic trends and continuing migration of the younger population into metropolitan areas further corroborate some kind of guiding role of metropolises in terms of political, economic or cultural orientation. This is also reflected by a (political, economic, cultural) orientation towards innovation in large cities that are anyhow confronted with growth development and therefore a soaring demand for urban planning. For journalism practice in a metropolis, these are relevant preconditions that can naturally create a dilemma: they put journalists and news organizations in the difficult position of needing to put effective change management strategies in place to be able to keep up with the pace of innovation and at the same time remain true to their societal functions, providing thorough and critical reporting in times of rapid and profound (media and cultural) change.

2.3 Journalism for a metropolis

Metropolises need a particular form of journalism that is responsive to the specifics of its contexts, orientations and, most importantly, its ambivalences: Where digital information and communications technologies open up manifold options for individuals and collectivities and tend to support processes of social splintering (cf. Graham/Marvin 2001), journalism has at least three frames of relevance, that is specific orientations that have a guiding and determining role for journalism practice in a large city (and beyond): the democratic and socio-political function of journalism as an autonomous agent of a critical public sphere; the integrative function of journalism as a public forum for a deliberative discourse; and an economic stability of the organizational structures to ensure

journalism's viability.

First, its (in most European countries constitutional) *democratic and socio-political function* is supposed to provide citizens with current information about their urban environment, covering the government and politics, business, the arts and other areas of civic life in order to contribute towards a critical public and enable citizens to form an opinion and make up their minds. Second, journalism ideally offers a *public cultural forum* which represents a wide range of citizens' voices and viewpoints. For the most part of modern history, journalism in a metropolitan setting could rely on a relatively stable media environment: morning and evening newspapers, weeklies, bulletins, radio and even television did not change much in terms of how news was produced and disseminated in areas of high agglomeration. Whether or not the ideal of the integration of citizen's direct concerns were met depended on the structurally privileged and autonomous status of news organizations as sole agents of the public sphere. Journalism has acted as a distinct social domain producing meaning for a mass audience. Therefore, the communicative distance between newsrooms and citizens has been relatively high. This has changed as much as journalism has had to become more responsive and needed to engage citizens in order to stay relevant as a provider of news - especially in the metropolis where alternative information sources and increasingly egalitarian public debate give news organizations a hard time. Third, journalism has to *function economically* as this is its main funding structure. Nevertheless, transformations in the media environment have already raised questions about who produces metropolitan news - with many new actors like independent blogs or citizens reporting through social media - and what this implies for the already dwindling profitability and limited capacities of legacy news organizations to perform their civic functions. Hence, even if journalism might be more relevant and polymorphic than ever, it still needs to assess its financial viability in all its forms in order to ensure its performance and quality standards.

Keeping in mind journalism's frames of relevance and the main characteristics of metropolises, most importantly the elevated role of the metropolis in regional (with respect to its metropolitan area), national (due to its concentration of political and economic power) and international perception (based mainly on touristic, cultural and economic cross-linking), large cities constitute a distinctive set of implications that distinguish metropolitan journalism from other editorial focuses and contexts (see table 1).

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Table 1: Implications of metropolitan perspectives for journalism's frames of relevance

Perspectives	<i>Frame 1: Democratic and socio-political function</i>	<i>Frame 2: Offering a public cultural forum</i>	<i>Frame 3: Economic viability</i>
Political	Linking local political action and administration issues with broader (regional, national, global) perspectives	Promoting political participation by initiating critical public debates, inviting citizens to express their opinions	Sustaining journalism's independence and non-partisanship in times of structural crises
Economic	Discussing implications of economic domination with respect to urban development and beyond, including commercialisation in everyday city life	Moderating a discourse on the economic development of the metropolitan area, engaging citizens with a broad variety of corporate and administrative actors of relevance	Exploring economic perspectives of journalism practice on a competitive news market (entrepreneurial journalism, attraction of venture capitalists)
Cultural	Taking into account the many cultural manifestations and orientations in a metropolitan living environment and developing creative forms for news to expand its reach by meeting the preferences of urban communications among diverse, fragmented audiences	Moderating citizens' views and perceptions in the light of diverse cultural/ethnic backgrounds, promoting intercultural communication	Maintaining cultural connectivity by monitoring the transformation of urban culture and sub-cultures and serving the distinctive needs of urban publics
Technological	Making use of the transforming urban media environment and new media practices to 'improve' journalism practice	Supporting participation in various forms with emergent media technologies	Pioneering in technological adaptation and development concerning journalism practice and dissemination

Thus, the following can be attested to journalism in most metropolises that undergo the outlined transformational processes:

- Metropolitan journalism can be understood as a distinct communicative figuration of journalism and not merely as a form of local journalism. Drawing on Hepp (2015: 31), communicative figurations are defined as "*patterned processes of (transmedial) communicative interweaving*" (cf. also Couldry/Hepp 2016). A figurational approach allows to rethink the interdependence between journalism practice, its institutional conditions and actor constellations (which include different journalistic actors and audiences), in relation to the urban media environment and social dynamics of a metropolis (cf. Kramp 2015; Loosen 2015). Large cities are often home to the headquarters of news organizations that have a wider regional, national or international editorial focus. However, in metropolises, there are many more actors involved in the production of news. With a highly diverse, but dense figuration of individual as well as institutional (political, corporate, charitable) actors participating in the production of news against the backdrop of the metropolitan media environment, various forms of editorial orientations coexist (e.g. local, regional, national, international or special interest), deeply intertwined with the social dynamics of the metropolis. This is true whether the city itself is the subject of news or whether it is just the living and working environment of the journalists producing the news. Furthermore, metropolitan presence offers news organizations proximity to power and to highly diverse audiences. Here, interactions, dynamics and the rules of engagement that derive from urban culture(s) can be observed in their very polarization: between audiences and journalists, and between professional communicators themselves. Metropolitan journalism, understood in this

way, has a particular potential of engaging manifold audiences that themselves have transformed into traceable, but also sovereign and active media users with considerable creative potential (cf. Anderson 2011).

- A metropolis commonly attracts not only attention from tourists, but also from investors and media from abroad that reinforce its exceptional position, pushing innovation forward. However, there is a big qualitative difference between, on the one side, the multi-faceted use of innovative information and communication technologies in metropolises, whether it is to control urban infrastructures, manage public administration and urban planning, guide tourists, organize politics and the accumulation of data, and, on the other side, the involvement of news organizations in technological innovations to enrich reporting, to engage the public or to generate new income streams. The interwoven urban media activities increase both the pressure to innovate in order to keep up with the development in other large cities nationally and internationally, but also the likelihood of signal effects that arise from the innovation drive in the respective national media - and news - industry.
- Urban publics - especially those in areas of high agglomeration - have been altered significantly by mobile computing, social media and digital traces, blurring the private and the public and resulting in various new kinds of digital communicative practices and collective action (cf. Mathew 2015: 44). What seems to be a promise of optimized connectivity leading towards the participation that matters for a '*better*' city and a '*greater good*' finds its counterdraft in metropolitan surveillance, comprehensive data mining, and controllability of mediatized human interaction (cf. Edwards 2016). Journalism is at the intersection of these promises and threats; on the one hand, paving the way to a critical understanding of pioneering innovation and its social, economic and political implications that originate from and yield consequences in the metropolis and, on the other hand, promoting technological change for its own sake, even embracing it (cf. Witschge 2012: 105-107). Hence, it can be considered a key element of metropolitan journalism to be conflicted in terms of profound transformation processes of mediatization that metropolises have to deal with in particular.
- A metropolis mostly has usually more than one (local) newspaper and broadcaster that ensure media diversity and competition on a contested news market. Additionally, it might encompass national and special interest media that, in addition to the general interest media, provide more specific news for the diverse information demands of a population that is highly heterogeneous in terms of their cultural, educational and social backgrounds. The entirety of news media, turning the city into a production centre for widely recognized media affordances, also contributes to the elevated orientation function of the metropolis.

Metropolitan journalism itself undergoes a transformational process, pushing the boundaries of how news is produced and mediated, welcoming new actors with professional backgrounds in software engineering, media design or event development. At the same time, innovation should not just be assessed on its own merits, but mainly according to whether it bends, or even undermines, or rather supports the journalistic commitment to critical reporting to the benefit of keeping up with audiences' preferences and demands, or develops concepts that sustainably strengthen institutional structures.

3 The metropolis as a trendsetter for journalism innovation on the examples of Berlin, Hamburg and Munich

Metropolitan journalism has always been in constant flux due to influences of market competition or social, cultural, political and technological changes that unfold in metropolitan areas on a regular basis. The recent “wave” of mediatization, typified by widely effective digitization processes (cf. Hepp 2013: 54), gave rise to another profound transformation of metropolitan journalism. In the following, by using a figurational approach, this transformation will be analysed on the example of current developments on news markets in the three biggest German cities Berlin, Hamburg and Munich. The aim is to identify characteristic patterns of metropolitan journalism that help to substantiate its concept: First, we look at how the metropolises became centres of exploring and determining new perspectives for journalism practice (including distribution); second, how new communicative forms and styles have been developed and adopted; third, how ‘*hyperlocality*’ became a definitive pattern of mediating news in the metropolis; and, fourth, how metropolitan audiences are engaged by and with journalism.

3.1 *Building centres of pioneering change*

As the study of journalism today has to go far beyond the scope of newspaper publishing to comprehend all the dynamics and transformational processes that alter the profession, its business, its roles, output and institutional frameworks, a conceptualization of metropolitan journalism should not ignore the various efforts of news organizations to invest in innovative ideas that add to journalism and news mediation in a wider sense. For example, two of the biggest news publishers in Germany, Axel Springer in Berlin and Hubert Burda Media in Munich, have already reinvented themselves not only as multiplatform corporations but as highly diversified conglomerates that made digital ventures top priority beyond their actual core business of producing news in the traditional sense. These (and other) news publishers pursue business strategies that include as diverse information and communications services as possible. Another example, the leading German news agency *dpa* (Berlin/Hamburg), founded - together with the municipal government of Hamburg - a funding initiative for digital media start-ups called next media accelerator (www.nma.vc), which actively seeks new ideas for the production and mediation of news and related business potentials.

These endeavours are accentuated by metropolitan conferences that have been founded or changed their focus with digitization becoming prevalent. Every May, Berlin transforms into the European capital of ‘*netizens*’: Since 2007, the re:publica conference addresses many facets of digital society. It has grown into one of the biggest gatherings for discussions on the transformation of media and society (www.re-publica.de). In its first year, the conference was perceived by some established media actors as a self-referential closed shop without any connection to the general public (cf. Schoeb 2007). Just a few years later, it has become an example for institutionalized dynamics of pioneer communities, bringing together activists, hackers, makers, entrepreneurs and NGOs with scholars, journalists and social media and marketing experts (cf. Wunsch 2013, 2014). As the German capital evolved into an internationally respected attraction for digital pioneers and innovation culture with a growing number of project labs, barcamps, hackathons and other events surrounding media-related digitization, it is a vivid example of a changing urban media environment that is not a unique example any more.

This has widened the scope of journalism innovation and its reflexion in professional self-understanding. Alongside the re:publica in Berlin, other conferences were launched that bring together journalists with publishing strategists, content managers and digital entrepreneurs with quite diverse backgrounds to discuss issues, pitch ideas and build collaborations. Many European cities have launched funding programmes and development plans for the digital media industry, including news operations. Hamburg, for instance, evoked an initiative (Next.Media.Hamburg) for digital start ups in the media sector to promote and supplement the creative industries with support structures that comprise guidance, premises, graduate consulting, vocational learning, and financing. The annual Hanseatic Scoopcamp conference, co-financed by the city initiative and the *dpa* news agency, strives to push forward dialogue and join forces in order to innovate journalism (www.scoopcamp.de). The Reporter-Forum, also in Hamburg and hosted by Germany's leading news magazine *Der Spiegel*, picks up on the implications of professional adjustments due to media, social and cultural change by a strong focus on journalism practice (www.reporter-forum.de). And, to give a third of many examples, the Vocer Innovation Day, organized by the non-profit German Association of Media and Journalism Criticism (VfMJ) in Hamburg, bridges academic research on journalism innovation and the experiences of pioneers from media practice to reflect on the opportunities and risks attached to ongoing processes of change (www.vocer.org/vocer-innovation-day). Munich is another stronghold of addressing the economic and practical challenges of media change for journalism in form of conference events like the established Munich Media Days (www.medientage.de) or the relatively young Digital Media Camp, organized by the Media Lab Bavaria (www.medialab-bayern.de/digital-media-camp). Altogether, this is an indicator that metropolises serve as centres of the media industry to influence debates on and the race for media innovation and resulting implications for the news business, journalism practice and the constant re-assessment of digital public sphere(s) in terms of news production, news consumption and vocational training.

By this, especially in the three metropolises Berlin, Hamburg and Munich, conferences, hackathons or other gatherings that institutionalize collaboration on challenges of digital media transformation make a significant contribution towards generating *structural patterns* of professional communicative exchange and interdisciplinary development in the production of news, bringing together expertise from other parts of the media industry. In this way, metropolitan publishers develop interests in exogenous concepts like 'incubators', 'accelerators', 'beta culture', 'venture capital' or 'pivot'. And they can gain an open mind about seeking inspiration from gaming (e.g. newsgames), coding and software development (e.g. direct messaging, social networking, chat-bots), wearables and other technological hardware (e.g. Virtual Reality electronics, drones), interactive design (e.g. responsiveness, Webgraphics) or new organizational models (e.g. collaboration, co-working-spaces). For Germany, this fundamental orientation of news organizations towards the interactive digital media industry and start-up culture in metropolitan areas is regarded as one of the most profound strategic adjustments in publishing history (Del Din et al. 2014).

3.2 Competing for markets, creating new communicative forms and styles

The example of Berlin also illustrates very well the long-lasting struggle of news media to dominate metropolitan press markets. In Berlin, the implications of media change have

been particularly prominent with all major news publishers on the spot. Berlin - as the country's largest city - might not be the '*newspaper capital*' of Germany in terms of sold copies compared to the size of city population (this title belongs traditionally to Munich with nearly 30 newspaper buyers per 100 inhabitants). However, in no other German metropolis are more newspapers sold in total (ca. 600,000 on a daily basis) and nowhere else in Germany is there a higher diversity of newspapers, but also news media in general. Over decades, long before Berlin regained its status as the political capital of Germany, the city was the scene of a continuous trial of strength between newspapers of record, tabloids, city magazines, radio and TV broadcasters and special interest media. The city has never been easy to conquer for legacy media institutions. When the government and parliament moved to Berlin in September 1999, this was accompanied by hopes for a new period of prosperity on the Berlin newspaper market. Publishing houses started new projects and initiatives and lured a variety of renowned journalists into the metropolis in order to dominate parts of the capital's contested news market. In her dissertation, Mützel (2002) structured the process of competition to become '*the*' capital German city newspaper into four trajectories:

In phase I, "*Explaining Berlin*" (starting 1995/96), the publishers Gruner+Jahr and Axel Springer expanded their market shares with notable investments into their dailies *Berliner Zeitung* and *Die Welt*. The *Süddeutsche Zeitung* introduced a special weekly page for Berlin. In phase II, '*Celebrating Berlin*', just before the relocation of the government from Bonn to Berlin, a quest for interpretive power in the nascent capital commenced: The *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (FAZ) competed with the *Tagespiegel*, the *Berliner Zeitung* and the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (SZ) for the favour of the Berlin readers as well. For instance, the SZ started to print a page dedicated to Berlin on a daily instead of a weekly basis and increased their Berlin newsroom staff by 15 journalists. This was succeeded by phase III, '*(Re)discovering Berlin*' (starting around September 1999), when the FAZ started to print six to eight Berlin pages each day and increased their Berlin newsroom near Friedrichstraße by as many as 35 journalists. The "*Berlin Pages*" were a further step to gain interpretive influence in the new Berlin republic to offer a fresh, capital-worthy view on the cultural, economic and political melange with accompanying social challenges in a growing metropolis. The unfinished, improvised, chaotic atmosphere in the freshly elected capital was the blue print for a new feuilletonistic approach, in which political and cultural phenomena were interpreted under the impression of the zeitgeist that arose from the tensions between the general spirit of optimism and creative drive, on the one side, and the social realities and challenges on the other. The "*Berlin Pages*" merged local with national and global perspectives and were meant to offer "*a playful access to the world, feuilletonistic, young, conservative but also open to create new spaces of observation*" (Bauschke 2002, translated by author). Young societal and arts and leisure reporters started with big attitudes, vigorous writing, and fresh viewpoints. However, the new city beat in the national newspapers of record did not meet the expectations of the publishers who hoped to win over significant numbers of new metropolitan subscribers. In phase IV, '*Being in Berlin*', the investments were diminished by the crash of the '*new market*' at the beginning of the year 2000. FAZ and SZ cut their Berlin sections barely three years after their introduction in 2002 (cf. Hornig/Schulz 2002), but their style, their communicative approach to mediate what happens in the vibrant sphere of the metropolis, which oscillated somewhere between urban overstatement and a self-reflexive irony, prevailed in various outlets like the weekly *Frankfurter Allgemeine*

Sonntagszeitung, the arts and leisure magazine *Monopol*, or in the weekly magazine of the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* and the *ZEITmagazin*. The idea has also proven successful in terms of local reporting on the relation of metropolitan lifestyles and politics: The national weekly *Die Zeit* started local pages for Hamburg in early 2014, and the news magazine *Der Spiegel* launched a regional section for North Rhine-Westphalia in 2016. What started as a (partially failed) business strategy to boost circulation on a contested metropolitan market, transformed into the emergence and sedimentation of a unique journalism style and self-perception which intensively connected to socio-cultural and socio-political urban lifestyles.

Nearly twelve years after the vanishing of the “*Berlin Pages*”, the *Tagesspiegel* experimented successfully with a newsletter format entitled “*Checkpoint*”. On November 24, 2014, editor-in-chief Lorenz Maroldt started a daily letter that attracts growing numbers of users who receive the newsletter around 6:00 o’clock each morning (cf. Lüdtke 2015). In early 2016, 91,000 subscriptions were counted - at a daily print circulation of the *Tagesspiegel* of around 111,000 in the fourth quarter of 2015. Its personal perspective, the curative approach to include up-to-date news and quotes from many different urban sources (and not only exclusively from the own newsroom) as well as the witty jargon in which it is written makes the newsletter a model for a successful format to mediate metropolitan news to an audience who does not necessarily subscribe to a newspaper. Maroldt’s project received a number of awards³ that underlined its perception as a trendsetter for local news. Editorial newsletters offer an individual selection, a personal approach by the editor(s) in chief, a distinctive style, and the possibility to lower the communicative distance between the newsroom and the audience. They are thereby significantly different to marketing newsletters that focus on triggering interest for publishing products, whether newspapers, broadcasts or news websites. The editorial newsletter has evolved into a unique journalistic form of expression.

The “*Checkpoint*” newsletter was not the first editorial newsletter as such,⁴ but it set the tone for (urban) local news and triggered many similar initiatives. In the following year, the idea travelled as a conceptual role model to other German cities: *Die Zeit* started its Hamburg newsletter “*Elbvertiefung*” (which means the dredging of the river Elbe so it stays navigable for container vessels). The FAZ started a newsletter entitled “*Hauptwache*” for the Rhine-Main metro region named after the famous historic guardhouse in Frankfurt’s city centre. Beside some nationally focused newsletters by *Bild*, *Focus* and *Spiegel*, over 20 regional newspapers developed plans to set up newsletters for regular personal ‘*morning briefings*’ by their editors-in-chief about the local state of news (cf. BDZV 2015).⁵ This is underlined by a growing popularity of newsletters as a form of

³ The “*Checkpoint*” newsletter received the ‘Grimme Online Award’ (2015) in the category “Information”, the ‘Local Journalism Award’ (2015) of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation in the category “Innovation” and the independent ‘Golden Blogger Award’ (2016) sponsored by a consortium of high-profiled bloggers in Germany.

⁴ For instance, the national economic daily *Handelsblatt* started a newsletter by its editor-in-chief in April 2011 that according to the publishing group reached over 450,000 recipients in June 2015 (VHB 2015).

⁵ Others followed suit after the success of the “*Checkpoint*” newsletter. For instance, among others, the *Lausitzer Rundschau* in Cottbus, the *Ruhrnachrichten* in Dortmund and the *Stuttgarter Nachrichten* started in December 2014, the *Rheinische Post* in Düsseldorf and the *Neue Osnabrücker Zeitung* started even earlier in March and April 2014.

mediating the news in other parts of the world, for instance, in the United States (cf. Carr 2014).

Both examples have been discussed here because they show how metropolitan journalism creates or shapes *patterns of mediating the news* effectively with a strong outreach to other news outlets. This should not be understood as a linear transfer of innovative formats and styles from the centre to the peripheries, but as an adaptation process that builds on the model character of the respective paragon. By this, the mediation pattern gains currency in a wider context of journalism practice as a distinct tonality or form of expression.

3.3 *Hyperlocality in the urban context*

Another communicative form that was repurposed for the mediation of news is the weblog. Blogs started as an almost exclusively private form of expressing personal views and providing insights on the social life world of its author (analogue to the function of a - public - diary). They soon became public media themselves and created a whole new referencing system, the ‘blogosphere’, generating interest and relevance for alternative approaches towards public issues (cf. Roodhouse 2009; Weichert/Zabel 2009). Large cities in Germany have experienced a steep increase of so-called ‘hyperlocal’ news blogs, which were founded with the attempt to compensate - and correct - the failures of established local news organizations. Metzgar and colleagues (2011: 774) define hyperlocal media operations as “*geographically-based, community-oriented, original-news-reporting organizations indigenous to the web and intended to fill perceived gaps in coverage of an issue or region and to promote civic engagement.*” Interdependent hyperlocal German news blogs like *Prenzlauer Berg Nachrichten*, named after a popular district in Berlin, or *neukoellner.net*, a blog from a typical Berlin ‘Kiez’ (neighbourhood) with an ethnically mixed population, have been awarded for their reporting on local issues concerning their respective city district.

In Germany there are several hundred independent blogs that fit this description. Mostly produced by freelance journalists or collectivities of citizens who practice journalism as a kind of hobby with dedication, these blogs are mainly financed by advertising, sponsoring or crowdfunding. The German *kiezblogs* (‘neighbourhood blogs’) directory (www.kiezblogs.de) lists around 150 hyperlocal blogs in Berlin alone, in Hamburg 50, in Munich 20 and in smaller metropolitan areas between 5 and 10. News blogs that are not part of the (growing) portfolio of established news organization expand the local news environment by participating in news production as new kinds of actors. Depending on the organizational model of their endeavour, they are journalists, entrepreneurs or fundraisers at the same time. Financial issues were dominant in the years after the first wave of blogs, founded under the impression of the newspaper crisis that became manifest in the year 2009 when the German Association of newspapers announced the most difficult year in the history of the news business in Germany because of the continuous decline of circulation figures and advertising revenues which was followed by several rounds of layoffs and a continued market concentration. In the year 2014, hyperlocal blogs themselves experienced some prominent backlash in the form of closures of beacon projects like *Altona.info* from Hamburg or *Heddesheimblog* from Baden-Wuerttemberg in 2014. However, the overall tendency towards higher diversity in local news production by

freelance journalists who offer their own product without being dependent on hierarchies and decision-making processes of legacy newsrooms is still strong: In January 2016, the German Association for Information Technology, Telecommunications and New Media (Bitkom 2016) published results of a representative survey showing that nearly one third of all internet users in Germany read local blogs. These are not exclusively alternative non-profits or emerging start ups, as publishing houses have gradually regained lost ground by strengthening their hyperlocal reporting.

In the metropolitan environment, the willingness of news organizations like the *Tagesspiegel* in Berlin or the *Hamburger Abendblatt* in Hamburg to experiment with blog formats underline the relevance of the hyperlocal perspective that has been expedited by concerned public actors as independent news media. Harnischmacher (2015) argues that this change in actor constellations of metropolitan journalism (with respect to hyperlocal reporting from the districts) and local journalism (with respect to small cities and rural regions) has overall strengthened journalism, but did not threaten its viability. On the contrary: the initiatives on the part of few attracted interest by local audiences and has pushed traditional news organizations in a direction that had previously been neglected. In the case of *Prenzlauer Berg Nachrichten* it even proved fruitful in convincing a critical number of users to make a financial commitment to avert closure by creating a subscription base that was sufficient enough to ensure the upholding of the editorial work which had been under pressure due to the lack of advertising revenues (cf. Zappner 2015). This support by paying users might be regarded as a value in itself or in the competition of old and new media, but it rather implies the demand for news in the immediate living environment. In another metropolitan area, the Main-Rhine region, this perception might have attracted the investors who fund the start-up *Merkurist*, a hyperlocal news portal for the city of Mainz with plans to serve Wiesbaden and Frankfurt/Main as well. The project received venture capital to get onto the tracks and develop a revenue model based on advertising (cf. Baurmann 2015).

After all, hyperlocality as an editorial focus is yet to become established as a *definitive pattern of news production in metropolitan journalism* with some independent projects vanishing because of lack of finances. This, however, should not be misunderstood as an overall downward trend (cf. Lowrey/Woo 2010: 43) because the focus has been adopted already in everyday news production. Whether hyperlocal media operations are able to fill the perceived hole in local news coverage (cf. Williams/Harte/Turner 2015) not only substantially, but also sustainably, remains an open question. While small independent projects struggle with their financial backing and the development of promising entrepreneurial strategies, legacy media are starting to cooperate with some of them (cf. Langer 2012).

3.4 Engaging the metropolitan audience

If the metropolitan media environment can be described as the nucleus of transformation in journalism (see above), young media users are the main drivers of change. The average audiences of traditional news products (e.g. newspapers, television and radio broadcasts) grow older each year, younger cohorts do not automatically turn towards these offerings when they reach a certain age (cf. Engel/Breunig 2015; Newman/Levy/Nielsen 2015: 9-11). Media usage has become increasingly disperse and fluctuating (cf. Schröder 2015),

mak it necessary for news organizations to enter new markets, platforms and channels in order to prevent a loss of significance and their economic basis. In the news sector, different approaches are pursued: A lasting trend - the so-called 'unbundling' of news distribution - aims at reaching the mobile, constantly migrating young media users through a wide range of third-party online platforms and apps like social networks (e.g. Facebook's 'Instant Articles'), search engines (e.g. Google's 'Accelerated Mobile Pages'), messaging services (e.g. Whatsapp or Snapchat) or online newsstands (e.g. Blendle or Readly) where you can buy single articles or purchase a flat rate to read as much as you can in the billing period.

Another recent trend is the emergence of news products that directly address the young target group. In Germany, a considerable number of metropolitan newsrooms launched customized websites for adolescents and young adults somewhere between 12 and 35. This cohort is in the focus of many industries, e.g. consumer marketing and human resource management, and is depicted rather differently by generational labels like "*Generation Y*" (Bolton et al. 2013), "*Generation Z*" (Carrington et al. 2016), "*Millennials*" (Poindexter 2012) or "*transformational natives*" (Schuldt/Ehret 2015: 9-13).

Apart from these attempts to characterize highly heterogeneous audiences or consumers in a specific age range for product development, representing "*nearly half the audience for entertainment in developed markets and more than a third of the audience for publishing and online services*" (Colombani/Sanderson 2015: 1), some common denominators can be identified in their relationship to urban culture: First, young Germans continue to migrate into metropolises, looking for education and job opportunities in thriving urban environments. Second, families no longer migrate out of the cities like they did before in favour of the quieter living environment of the hinterland, but instead remain in well developed neighbourhoods of the metropolis with direct access to the urban infrastructures (cf. Sander 2014: 229-230). And third, due to the concentration of overall media production in metropolitan centres, these cities again function as appealing frames of reference.

70 percent of the newspaper publishers in Germany have plans to launch target-group specific digital news products in 2016 or later in order to strengthen their journalistic brand among a widely unapproachable young audience and not necessarily to generate revenues (Schickler/BDZV 2016: 14). The Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism at the University of Oxford proclaimed that 2016 would become "*The Year of Audience Engagement*" (Newman 2016: 33). This impression has been picked up by around ten publishing houses in Germany that launched new website or apps in 2015 with a strong emphasis on engaging young audiences. And with the new German market entries of international innovation leaders like *Buzzfeed*, *Vice* and *Huffington Post*, which have been especially popular with younger users, the pressure rose continuously. The first of the bunch of new websites was launched in July 2015 with *Ze.tt* in Berlin (which is pronounced like the first letter of its parent brand *Die Zeit*), targeting high-school graduates and junior employees. *Bento* followed quickly thereafter in Hamburg, a news website named after a Japanese term for takeaway food, operated by *Der Spiegel*, addressing the "*Generation hashtag*" between 18 and 30 years (Spiegel Group 2015). The *Handelsblatt*, Germany's best circulating financial paper, started *Orange* with the comparably youngest editorial team among the new platforms, based in the metropolises Düsseldorf and Paris. Axel Springer launched *byou* (pronounced 'be-you'), which wants to attract teenagers

between the ages of 14 and 18, as a part of the online activities of its tabloid *Bild* in Berlin. It is highly likely that Burda Media's *BNow!*, an app by its people magazine *Bunte* for young smartphone users (slogan: “cheeky, colourful, emotional”) which is also produced in Berlin, will not be the last approach in the German news industry to engage the presumably lost young reader- and viewership.

These new portals come along as snappy and snotty, easily digestible media affordances for an age cohort that is assumed to need orientation and companionship while coming of age, but do not have enough time or interest to engage in conventional news sources. German news publishers have had serious problems getting to the heartbeat of social media interactions for years, illustrated by the most shared news articles in social networks among which only a few originate from legacy news media (cf. social media news-charts at www.10000flies.de, March 2016). With their strategically developed portals for young audiences, news organizations have taken a big step to adjust their communicative orientation: Whereas German newspaper newsrooms are characterized by a rather high communicative distance to their readership, similar to the United States (cf. Ekdale et al. 2015; Kramp 2015: 42-43), this changes decisively in their attitude towards young users. Audience engagement through approachability, levity and dialogue between journalists in the newsroom and the users outside is approved as being not only a relevant, but a crucial requirement to attract audiences for news who otherwise would not be reached. Whether the dialogue begins, for instance, in a ‘timeline’ on Facebook, under a Twitter hashtag, with direct messages via Whatsapp or with an inviting contribution on the respective news website is not a critical factor, but rather the way how engaging the dialogue is moderated by the journalists. For example, at *Spiegel's bento*, at the end of the working day, young journalists report on what they experienced during the day in a personal video message. Because the video messages are distributed via the messaging service Snapchat and are therefore self-destructing, they are regarded as a very natural, authentic and playful format to engage with the users, says Martin Giesler, head of the social media unit at *bento*:

“This is a playground for us: We try to experiment a lot on Snapchat. Every morning we send out 3-4 news items that we deem important. And in the evening, each one of the journalists in the newsroom is allowed to record a snap and tell everybody where they have been, how it was in a museum or at the university in Vienna. By this, we want to get on eye level with our users. We also think about telling stories exclusively via Snapchat, but this is more complicated obviously ... This is very appealing to us because you can just give it a try: Tomorrow it's gone. You can simply talk freely about what's up in your mind.” (cited in ZAPP 2016, translated by author)

Here, the metropolis and its urban representation of youth culture not only serves as a scenery in front of which news is produced, but it also and even more importantly serves as a major supplier of topics and occasions to start the conversation with the users. This is also reflected by another innovative form of audience engagement that is practiced by journalists predominantly in urban environments with a lively cultural scene: ‘Live journalism’ on a stage in a theatre setting appears as a counter draft to the broad online initiative to engage audiences directly with news (cf. Jackmann 2016; Sullivan 2015). Whereas online media enable publishers to engage audiences through their communication devices at home or on the move, ‘live journalism’ that takes the stage or is performed in the streets brings forth new perspectives for engaging the local community in their tangible lifeworlds.

Several projects in the United States have explored the potentials and dynamics this form of news presentation offers, ranging from guided tours, interviews, re-enactments or readings, to theatre plays on true stories. It can also take the form of a travelling show event like the ones offered by the journalists of the US *Pop-Up Magazine* who perform preferably in metropolitan centres to make journalism tangible - opening a direct view into reporting practices and newsroom workflows on the example of a news story (cf. Sillesen 2015). This is not solely limited to metropolitan areas. However, also in Germany, this is where this ‘de-mediatized’⁶ form of audience engagement is being mainly initiated. In Munich, the journalist collective *Affe im Kopf* [Ape in the head] produces and performs theatre plays on the basis of fully investigated news stories with the journalists as actors. In Berlin, an initiative titled “*Urban Journalism*” (www.urbanjournalism.de) tries to do completely without media and rather stress the performative aspects of journalism in public space, engaging citizens face-to-face in their urban environment. The Berlin initiative is intended to be a network in development, bringing together ideas how journalism in a metropolis can be brought together with a seemingly unmediated experience of the urban social world.

Both the number of different online approaches to engage the attention of young media users and the - rather sporadic - face-to-face encounters on stage represent two distinct takes in the recent urge to engage audiences, to interact with them and to lower the communicative distance to users that are otherwise difficult to reach. They reveal that metropolitan journalism creates or shapes *patterns of interaction with audiences and engagement* that might be of basic or wider relevance, but are closely linked to metropolitan contexts.

4 Conclusion

The United Nations are convinced that continuing migration into metropolitan areas will push urbanization forward so forcibly, that in the year 2050 circa 66 per cent of the world population is expected to live in cities (compared to 54 per cent in the year 2014) (cf. United Nations 2014: 7-8). This will lead to more metropolises and so-called megacities - the largest of the largest - on all continents. This will not only challenge administrations and infrastructures, but also journalism. Picking up and altering a question that was posed by Hutchison and O’Donnell (Hutchison/O’Donnell 2011: 2), this chapter discussed the factors, mechanisms and dynamics of a metropolitan domination in journalism transformation not by looking at circulation or viewing figures, but rather at distinct journalistic approaches that arise in a metropolitan context.

The proposed conceptualization of metropolitan journalism draws on socio-geographical specifics and related political, economic and cultural frames of relevance in which journalism is practiced in a metropolitan area. This makes it possible to study journalism in a metropolitan setting as a distinct form of journalism practice that - under specific conditions - functions as a precursor in the overall transformation of the journalistic profession and its approaches to reach audiences. The examples presented here suggest that metropolitan journalism is characterized by specific patterns that derive from the aforementioned metropolitan contexts. By adopting a figurational perspective, the

⁶ ‘De-mediatization’ is used here as a notion of communicative practice where media play a less dominant role or are not a precondition.

interwoven dynamics of communicative practices, actor constellations, institutional transformation and changing preferences of media use become recognizable. By analysing certain actor constellations that engage with certain communicative forms within certain frames of relevance in a metropolitan media environment, the figurational heuristic offers valuable insights on the transformational dynamics of journalism in a metropolis that impact and involve both individual journalists and news organizations in attracting volatile audiences.

The figurational approach helped to identify four exemplary patterns of journalism transformation in German metropolises, underlining the dominant role of metropolitan journalism in transforming journalism practice at large: the exchange with the flourishing interactive digital media industry creates structural patterns of idea flows and collaboration across sectors. The competitive metropolitan news markets generate new journalistic styles and formats that develop into patterns of communicating the news innovatively. Alternative news media with their focus on neighbourhoods and urban districts have laid the groundwork for a rediscovery of local community reporting in the form of news production with a ‘*hyperlocal*’ pattern. And not least, metropolitan journalism turns out to be a literal playground for testing new forms of audience engagement to increase approachability, promote dialogue, and lower the communicative distance between newsrooms and audiences. The identified patterns lead to the assumption that journalism in metropolises is at the forefront of change, pushing the limits of journalism practice, journalism organization, and the news business. As argued in the foregoing, the metropolitan context can be deemed to be a determining factor in this process. However, the manifold and polyphonic approaches, the wide dissemination of patterns and reverberations from elsewhere indicate: a metropolis might mould journalism, but it does not ‘*own*’ it.

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