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New Media, New Deontology

Ethical constraints of online journalism

Novos Media, *Nova Deontologia –*
Constrangimentos éticos do jornalismo digital

Abstract

As New Media bring new challenges – as well as new risks – to the function and identity of journalism, there is a growing pressure to adopt – and also to adapt – self-regulatory mechanisms, such as deontological codes, in order to better determine the ethical boundaries of online journalism.

This paper emphasizes key principles of New Media (such as hypermedia, hyperlinks, interactivity, glocality, customization, and instantaneity) that, together, pose legal, corporate, professional, and individual ethical constraints. Such limitations suggest a new deontology is needed for journalists to establish specific guidelines to direct their online practice.

Finally, this article suggests that the first step towards a generalized ethical reassessment of online journalism could be accomplished by means of supranational deontological codes of journalism.

Keywords: Online journalism; ethics; deontology; new media.

Resumo

Há medida que os Novos *Media* trazem novos desafios – bem como novos riscos – para a função e identidade do jornalismo, há uma crescente pressão para adotar – e adaptar – mecanismos de auto-regulação, como por exemplo, códigos deontológicos, a fim de melhor fixar os limites éticos do jornalismo digital.

Este artigo destaca os princípios dos Novos *Media* (como hipermédia, hiperlinks, interatividade, glocalidade, personalização e instantaneidade) que, tomados em conjunto, colocam constrangimentos éticos de ordem jurídica, corporativa, profissional e individual. Estas limitações sugerem que uma nova deontologia é necessária para que os jornalistas possuam diretrizes específicas que direcionem a sua prática online.

Sugere-se que o primeiro, passo crucial, para esta revisão ética generalizada sobre o jornalismo digital pode ser feito através de códigos deontológicos supra-nacionais.

Palavras-Chave: Jornalismo digital; ética; deontologia; novos *media*;

Introduction

Journalism adopts, in its practice, ethical standards that help professional to respect truth, transparency and exemption. At the same time, those ethical standards help them to attain the trust of the public and gain the confidence of citizens, institutions and communities.

We trust journalism because there is a fiduciary contract (Rodrigo-Alsina, 2009) sustained by ethical procedures, routines and methods of news-gathering that are bounded by the public interest. Citizens trust that behind each story there is a space of liberty mas also a space of respect by those involved. Journalism is not a fictional narrative or a random reality- based entertainment, but a reliable, responsible and accountable report of the public world. By searching, gathering, editing, selecting (including hierarchy) and diffuse the news, journalism is a professional activity but also a civic one (Fidalgo, 2013) that reflects a commitment to avoid being a hollow narrative. It is because it is an informed and ethical-bounded activity that journalism may contribute to the social construction of the world giving a responsible interpretation and symbolically mediation of the word. To be true, there is no journalism without ethics (cf. Alsina & da Silva, 2018: 727) because it relies on ethics to be a dependable organization of the social world respecting the right to information and its liberty, truth as an absolute duty, or the respect by the human person (Cornu, 2015).

With the rising of modern media and special with New Media, a kind of *journalismorphosis* happened. In a time of news abundancy and an intensification of the informative flux, journalists primarily changed from gatekeepers to gatewatchers (Singer, 2009). In the context of cyberspace and hypertexts (and, in some cases, an excess of information) journalism is facing a mutation in its professional routines where journalists have no more the primacy of event selection and have few control on the dissemination and uses of their news. By other hand, there is also other forms of selecting and publishing of information – like citizen journalism, for instance – that in some respects compete with the traditional role of journalism. These forms exist in close association with Web 2.0, and Social Media owing them the easy targeting and interaction with mass audiences.

Besides the technical, social, cultural, economic and professional dimensions, New Media bring new challenges to journalism Ethics since the relationship between bloggers, social media users and online publishers of news and information is today symbiotic (Friend&Singer, 2007: 133) even if it may also be conflicting and contradictory. No doubt there is multiple layers in journalism (Ward, 2009) but the inclusion of new actors in online journalism may raise particular concerns to what the specific characteristics, purposes and social identity journalism should have today. Because if, with New Media, it is true that almost anyone can be a publisher, this does not necessarily mean that everyone is doing journalism (Friend&Singer, 2007: xxiii). In a digital world, the distinction between journalism and other forms of publication rests fundamentally in ethics, rather than in professional categories or technical skills (Fidalgo, 2013: 24; Ess, 2009).

More, given the vast amount of data and information in Internet determining the trustworthiness of online news can be a daunting – maybe a utopic – task even though the media's attributes of Internet facilitate the job of social surveillance and self-policing.

By other hand, from an etymologically point of view, online journalism may be something totally diverse from traditional journalism since the speed, urgency and rhythm of doing online journalism incite superficiality, and hampers fact validation or confirmation. Many "so-called" online news articles are condensed on the title or the lead without developing the subject (sometimes committing clamorous mistakes and putting in risk the basic assumption of journalism: to enlighten and inform public opinion (Bentham, 1821).

There also concepts very closely associated with New Media, such as *Post-Truth* (Harsin, 2018) or *Fake News* (Levinson, 2017), that contribute to a social distrust in online journalism. Popularly, fake news refers to viral posts based on fictitious accounts that are made to look like news reports. They are based on potential or alternative facts, not on actual facts. Allcott and Gentzkow (2017: 213), for example, define them as "news articles that are intentionally and verifiably false, and could mislead readers". And the very notion of Post-Truth that emerged along the rise of New Media is riddled with conceptual shortcomings (Carlson, 2018: 1789) uncovering the idea an absolute truth is not a realistic goal of journalism to achieve.

New Media, thus, bring new challenges – as well as new risks – to the function and identity of journalism. If we accept that ethics is the regulation of human activity based on systematized moral principles, it is, then, inseparable from journalistic practice as a form of social construction of the world (Correia, 2012). Therefore, an appraise and reflection of the ethical boundaries of online journalism is a much-needed effort and it will be addresses here.

In this paper we identify relevant questions and dilemmas online journalism is facing today while answering the need to an ethical evaluation by emphasizing the need to reevaluate self-regulatory, (supra-national) deontological codes of journalism.

The Ethical Constraints on Online Journalism

Online journalism is not just the transposition of print content into the World Wide Web. It is, above all, a re-adaptation of traditional media discourse into new language and discursive practices. For example, the inverted pyramid gives place to the tumbled pyramid in which "journalists are able to provide new and immediate reading horizons by creating links between texts or other multimedia components which can be organized into layers of information" (Canavilhas, S/D). This is similar to the news diamond model authored by Paul Bradshaw (2008) that describes a new way to conceptualize the journalist writing of news in online environments.

From the mediamorphosis (Fidler, 1997) emerged a set of principles of New Media that influence and shape contemporary online journalism such as hypermedia (combining text, image, sound and multimodal semiotics), hyperlinks (directing the development of information in parallel sites or pages according to a singular path chosen by the user), interactivity (where internet users are not just

readers as commentators and producers/influencers of information), glocality (in which local information acquires a wide, global spread), customization (the possibility of online news reader only consume those news that corresponds to a previously set of preferences and thematic definition) and instantaneity (New Media make possible to publish the news the moment it is produced).

It can also be added two other principles. First, hypermobility (Santaella, 2007) designating a portability and electronic mobility analogous to physical mobility in cities. Hypermobility consubstantiates the intersections and overlaps of news in online environments. Second, transmediality (Gambarato&Tárcia, 2017; Prado, 2010) in which a news story is unfolded in several, updated, reiterations in other media (such as television or radio, and vice-versa)

These features are not attributes but they are at the very core of online journalism today, decisively shaping its discourse as well as testing its ethical boundaries. For instance, it was due to interactivity, glocality, transmediality and instantaneity that, back

in 2012, CNN suspended the journalist Roland Martin for "offensive and regrettable" remarks on his personal Tweeter after having made jokes about gay community during Superbowl. CNN wrote that "Language that demeans is inconsistent with the values and culture of our organization and is not tolerated. We have been giving careful consideration to this matter, and Roland will not be appearing on our air for the time being". A personal commentary on a well-known social media made CNN to reject the collaboration with Roland Martin because it was understood that such comment, and its homophobic content, would be publicly extended into CNN. A personal tweet was seen as representing a world-wide institution, capable to risk the credibility of the news television channel and their professionals alike. This example brings into full light the serious imbrications between the personal and the professional dimension of the journalist as New Media's interactivity, glocality, transmediality and instantaneity tends to erode old ethical frontiers.

Contemporary online journalism discloses serious limitations to the

definition of ethical standards and we will indicate some of those who pose more consequences to journalism ethics. It is these hodiern conditions and constraints that make urgent to formulate an adequate and revised deontology, one that can successfully articulate and enforce the ethical standards to the profession of journalism and, at the same time, can guarantee that the fiduciary contract between journalists and citizen remains intact.

These are not exhaustive limitations yet they seem to be the most pressing ones: legal framing, corporate constraints, professional routines and subjectivity.

Legal Framing: a virtuous and a vicious constraint

The first ethical limitation we highlight is law. Law is a necessary field of journalism and one that makes possible reporting the world. But it is also one that restrings its scope of action. For one hand, the legal framing incites the journalist to do the social good while legitimizing journalistic activity. Take, for instance, the liberty of press. Law is a virtuous constraint (Cornu, 2015,

112) enabling the regulation of the profession and giving it a rightful ground for action that order the interaction between journalism and the remain social institutions.

Nonetheless, the legal framing is also a vicious constraint when we think that sometimes the journalist's abidance to superior ethical rules force them to surpass or exceed the law. A classic example is the protection of journalistic sources. There are times when doing journalism according to the public interest oblige journalist not to disclose its sources.

In online journalism, there are new conditions that enhance this tension between ethics and the law. One of the most cited virtues of Internet is the free access to multiple contents and its potential to knowledge. Everything seems to be there. This raises a series of difficulties to online journalism.

Since it is so easy to retrieve data and information from an Internet search, online journalism faces the possibility of plagiarism and the infringement of copyright laws. By gathering information and use them in online news, the distinction between

the author rights and plagiarism is not always easy to respect. For example, there are new ethical questions to be answered: is the use of a pre-existent *Youtube* video something akin to an ethical journalism that is characterized by the autonomous creation of informative content? Is the use of blog contents in online news something that is aligned with what citizens expect from journalism?

Or, should online journalism create photographic albums of victims, or make public audiovisual files that where secretly recorded (in a hidden camera) without the consent of those who appear in them?

These are just a few ethical apprehensions concerning the legal framing that online journalism come to question today. They can be summoned I one query: how may the rigid legal framings deal with the fluid nature of Internet and how the law protects or assault journalism in online environments?

These are undoubtedly important questions deontological codes need to address. The second set of queries have to do with corporate limitations.

Corporate Constraints: between the compromise to inform and the compromise to respect editorial norms

The fact journalism involves the information market and journalists exercise their public and civic duties integrated in corporate businesses also raises important questions. Because journalists are imbued in corporations some deontological duties (as objectivity or facts checking) can be, potentially, at risk if they go against corporate guidelines. This is the second ethical limitation in today's professional practice.

A simple example: if an exclusively online newspaper does not have enough cars to cover an event or to interview social actors, how can the online journalist verify facts and listen to all the parts involved? Well, she may make a phone call or arrange a videoconference with them. But the deontological question remains: is it acceptable to check facts, opinions and events thought exclusively mediatized, non-presential, no-testimonial ways?

This is related to cover an event through indirect means. When an

online journalist writes (or adapts) an article based on the print article of his fellow colleague, is this conform to journalism ethical standards? Because, just like traditional journalism, citizens expect online journalism to cross check, select facts and report them in first hand. When an online journalist can only write small articles from the arrangement of other (press) articles, is this is good, ethical journalism?

There is also another crucial aspect relating to corporate constraints: the selective cover of events based on editorial norms.

When an online newspaper integrates a media corporation it is more probable to cite news investigation and articles from the same media conglomerate. In some cases, it may even cut out other institutional sources of information. This is understandable because access to the news and reports is easier if they belong to the same institution since they share resources. Yet, it may be less understandable that corporate property has such an influence on the editorial scope of the online newspaper and that editorial guidelines have such

a big weight on the reporting of the world.

By other hand, economical constraints can make online journalist be directed in his work by the number of clicks (*click-baiting*) his articles can gain, instead of the social importance they could have.

The price online journalism pays to try to be profitable may be an audience dictatorship (Cornu, 2015: 113) in which the search for the ultimate scoop (and its financial implications) may displace journalism from the public interest to the interest of the fleeting online audiences.

In fact, this was already noted by Steensen (2009: 702) who suggests that "online feature journalists practise a more audience-driven and source-detached kind of journalism than their print counterparts".

Professional Routines: Journalist's relative isolation

Professional routines of online journalism may also result in severe ethical constraints. This is the third ethical limitation in contemporary digital practice of journalists. Online

journalism is now facing two strong, concomitant forces: first, online journalist become more and more isolated in their role among so many other ones involved in the news production and reception. Second, a growing fragmentation of his task does not enable journalists to have a complete control of their work. Hence, before an online article reaches the public, it passes through designers, audiovisual editors and computer giving journalists the sensation there are not the fundamental authors of online news.

Also, the tendency for polyvalence may lead online journalists to sacrifice essential aspects of his work such as investigations, verification, thinking and reflection (Cornu, 2015: 113). As they have to satisfy the exigencies of urgency and constant obsolescence of the online news environment, they may become more of mechanism wheels pivoting the mass production of contents mainly devoted to catch attention.

At the same time, New Media accentuates the risk of transforming online journalism in simple *desk journalism*. Relying in the Internet and Social Media platforms, basing their work in print news or tending to write news

every hour, online journalists tend to be incarcerated in the office. No longer being on the ground, stopping of banging doors and cultivating news sources, online journalism is getting stuck behind desks. As newsrooms have limited resources desk journalism is also compliant into data journalism, the combination of "the traditional 'nose for news' and ability to tell a compelling story, with the sheer scale and range of digital information now available" (Gray, Bounegru, Chambers, 2017).

So, from an ethical point of view based on professional routines, what can we expect from online journalism when is becomes more and more a desk job? This is another question that need to be urgently answered.

Subjectivity- the restrictive manifestation of personal opinion

The fourth ethical limitation we highlight as to do with the fact journalists being social actors and moral subjects (Cornu, 2015: 114).

They have subjectivity and, besides being information professionals, they are citizens too with their own preoccupations, expectations and political

The revision of supra-national journalism standards will lead to a major updating online journalism's deontology

preferences. So, their stories cannot be total abstracted from their personal values, their culture, convictions or hopes. The symbolic construction operated by journalism cannot be detached from the personal views journalists have as individuals and citizens.

This has special ethical consequences in the case of online journalism.

In a recent survey to 300 Portuguese journalists, 81% assumed that they combined a professional as well as personal use of Social Media. From this, 86% had only one social media's account or profile. Further on, 95% of these journalists specify their profession and the media they work for (Mateus, 2015: 55). This means it is not easy to make the distinction between what is posted as citizen and what is posted as a professional journalist.

Besides, their duties to neutrality and impartiality are in check because "Liking" in the Facebook's profile of a political candidate can sound as a public and professional recommendation. How can this journalist, be in ethical condition to cover the political campaign of this candidate?

Also, the same survey revealed that 91% of journalists have professional

sources in their Facebook's friends or other Social Media followers, and even that 64% of them are Facebook friends with members of the Government (Mateus, 2015: 55). What's more, 43% admit to post opinions and personal comments about politics or economics in their social media profile (Mateus, 2015: 57).

New Media, thus, exacerbates ethical problems of journalism by making public and easier to put into jeopardy the obligation of impartiality. More specifically, New Media brings to the fore this problem by making problematic the relationship with news sources and political officials.

In this section we highlighted four different domains that represent ethical limits to online journalism.

This paper suggest that in order to answer these ethical problems, journalism must look into its deontology as these self-regulatory texts are mainly practical responses to ethical challenges. So, online journalism ethics can only be respected if its practical guidance and application improves.

That's why we need to ponder on deontology.

In Search of a Specific Deontological Code to Online Journalism

In the New Media environment journalism is of even greater importance. While technologies facilitate journalist's tasks, at the same time, they also erode traditional ethical boundaries.

However, journalism is not something we can prescind on because he is the guarantor of credible, rigorous and contextualized information. Hyperinformation and its abundance only calls for the renew of the critical role of journalism in today's democratic societies. Filtering information and certifying contents is the great challenge to contemporary journalism and one that is even more required by New Media. In fact, the more information there is, the more the necessity of the intermediary role of journalists (Wolton, 1999). The more virtually endless supply of information is flowing through, the greater the need for journalistic judgement. Equal access to New Media does not stand for equal use of information. So, we still trust journalism to impose a kind of symbolic order to the ever-evolving world and this is truer

in the mutations introduced by New Media in journalistic practice.

The most effective way of imposing a set of ethical assumption on the everyday practice of journalists is through the self-regulatory codes of deontology.

Deontology brings the fundamental ethical concerns to journalism without fall into the rigidity of the law or state regulation, or the absolute fluid subjectivity of each professional. It is a code sufficiently malleable to adapt to key mutations in Journalism (such as the online transformations) and, simultaneously, sufficiently solid to bind professional routines to ethics. Through deontological codes, journalism becomes more autonomous as well as more accountable and trustful.

The *one-million-dollar question* is to know if current codes of ethics in journalism remain valid for the Internet too. In other words, we must ponder if online journalism requires a re-appreciation of its deontology. While there is general consensus that New Media changed journalism, there no solid agreement on the impact such changes have on ethics.

Positions about this move around two main perspectives.

First, a possible explanation is that existing ethical guidelines and deontological codes are equally effective for the New Media. After all, Ethics is Ethics and no matter where to apply it those principles remain intact. This is to say, according to this perspective, that online ethical issues are similar to those of "traditional" journalism". Independently from being old or new Media, deontological guiding principles are still valid to online journalism (cf. Diaz-Campo&Segado-Boj, 2015: 736).

Second, and in contrast, there is this notion that even if the essence of journalism (searching, gathering, editing, selecting information) remains unchanged, it is also evident that New Media re-defined or re-shaped new ethical issues, as well as deepen old ethical issues- as we have demonstrated. "Internet shapes and redefines a number of moral and ethical issues confronting journalists when operating online or making use of online resources" (Deuze&Yeshua, 2001: 276). Some authors (Suárez Villegas, 2015; Demir, 2011) have argued that New Media calls, therefore, for a new practical Ethics, more exactly, to a

new Deontology. This is due to the consensual opinion that, as we have just seen, online journalists are now confronting with a different kind of issues traditional journalists face. "Old assumptions about journalistic roles and values can no longer be accepted uncritically nor old approaches to them continued indefinitely" (Hayes *et ali.*, 2007: 275).

Adding "online", "digital" or "New Media" to existing deontological codes would not suffice since these terms would only refer to the generic principles of "traditional" journalistic ethics. For instance, United Kingdom's *Editor's Code of Practice* mentions "digital communications" even if being vague: "Everyone is entitled to respect for his or her private and family life, home, health and correspondence, *including digital communications*".

But, what a journalist should behave in case of personal comments, photos and videos that are shared through social media? By publishing them in Social Media, individuals make their posts public but if they do so in restrict circles of social media (ex: Facebook's friends), is it licit the journalist access that information even if using a

friend's profile (or *possibly* creating a false one)? There are many practical questions that the mere inclusion of words such as "online" do not fully answer.

In fact, it seems that the reference to "digital communication" in the *Editor's Code of Practice* is a simple addendum: "The press must not seek to obtain or publish material acquired by using hidden cameras or clandestine listening devices; or by intercepting private or mobile telephone calls, messages or emails; or by the unauthorized removal of documents or photographs; *or by accessing digitally-held information* without consent.

Hence, a possible solution to solve the problems arisen with digital information is to create a code that can specifically refer to online journalism. This perspective defends self-regulation codes, specifically deontological ones, can have the task of inducing public expectations of ethical standards, as well as defining ideal standards of (offline and online behavior).

Following this line of argument, deontological codes are key to adapt the old standards to the new technological, economic and empirical

conditions of online journalism. We are here arguing for the making of stronger normative ethics (in the sense of Cornu, 2015: 108) capable of guiding online journalists empirically through the everyday problems they encounter.

Particularly, self-regulation mechanisms, such as deontological codes, may take journalistic ethics to other level, providing detailed orientations to the new reality in specific domains such as making online content reliable; how to use data to produce and diffuse information; linking procedures; measures to prevent potentially harmful content; or how to make compatible journalism integrity and commercial pressures (Diaz--Campo&Segado-Boj, 2015: 736).

This defense of deontology as a way to help journalism dealing with ethical issues emerged with New Media does not come only from academia but also directly from professional journalists.

For instance, 98% of Portuguese journalists believe that, in a time of informational abundancy, a strong ethics is the main guarantee citizens have and best promise to the future

of the profession (Mateus, 2015: 63). And, most importantly, 62% of them are favorable to a revision of the deontological code in order to include specific guidelines to online journalism (Mateus, 2015: 101).

What is perhaps a great surprise is that from 99 self-regulation codes of around the world, 90 of them overlook the specific problems of doing journalism in New Media. This is to say, 91% of the world deontological codes of journalism lack references to online journalism (Diaz-Campo&Segado--Boj, 2015: 737) - and the particular challenges of we have identified in this paper (legal framing, corporate constraints, professional routines and subjectivity).

In fact, only Canada's and Luxembourg's deontological codes include explicit mentions to journalism in Digital Media. For example, the Canadian deontological code states: "The need for speed should never compromise accuracy, credibility or fairness. Online content should be reported as carefully as print content, and when possible, subjected to full editing".

It also emphasizes the accuracy of information and implicitly discourages

re-posting or the sharing of non-confirmed information. In fact, one can interpret that journalism should not be a matter of "copy-pasting" facts. At the same time, we can also understand in that quotation that New Media's sense of speed, urgency and instantaneity should not be a reason to not be careful and accurate with the facts.

The same Canadian code declares "We encourage the use of social networks as it is one way to make connections, which is part of our core work as journalists. However, we keep in mind that any information gathered through online means must be confirmed, verified and properly sourced." while summing up some advantages of social networking. It is a recognition of social networks' importance in journalism and it almost legitimizes this tool in the process of gathering information. Yet, it also warns: "However, journalists should not use subterfuge to gain access to information intended to be private". Even if there is, in special cases, the possibility of it: "journalist may go undercover when it is in the public interest".

Pursuing the defense of privacy in digital environments, and specially

by children, the Canadian code affirms: "we take special care when using any material posted to social media by minors, as they may not understand the public nature of their postings".

There are more examples of deontological codes that refer specifically to the New Media's condition of journalism.

For example, Luxembourg's code urges journalists to confirm that the websites they are creating a link or sharing, do not contain illicit material. In case of illicit materials, it is clearly stated journalists should refrain from linking.

On its turn, Norwegian deontological code advises professional journalists to clearly mark links to other sites and at the same time it places a great amount of responsibility on editors by making them obliged to delete inappropriate and indecorous comments: "Should the editorial staff choose not to pre-edit digital chatting, this has to be announced in a clear manner for those accessing the pages. The editorial staff has a particular responsibility, instantly to remove inserts that are not in compliance with the Ethical Code".

The Netherlands deontological code is very clear in this respect because it has an entire section devoted to dealing with online commentaries named "responses on websites". And it stresses that if a response to an article on the website contains a serious accusation or defamatory expression towards one or more known persons, the editorial office, on request of those involved, must investigate whether there are actual grounds for the accusation or allegation and, if it is not the case, to remove the response.

The last remark on deontological codes that specify online journalism is about the Canadian Code and how it plainly asserts that cyberactivism and civic engagement via Social Media compromise journalist's obligation to impartiality. "As fair and impartial observers, we must be free to comment on the activities of any publicly elected body or special interest group. But we cannot do this without an apparent conflict of interest if we are active members of an organization we are covering, and that includes membership through social media". So, to "Like" a political candidate or to subscribe an online, public petition may be serious obstacles to covering an issue with fairness and independence.

The Canadian, Dutch or Norwegian deontological codes of journalism give us a few examples how ethical standards are already starting to being adapted to the practical need of online journalists and they should provide a great starting point to make deontology a set of ethical rules easier to understand and, above all, easier to apply in everyday professional routines by online journalism.

In fact, we suggest that journalists will probably be less confused by what they should or should not do. Without omissions or ambiguities, online journalist's work will be much easier to handle, and the public will also easily know better what to expect journalism on online environments.

Conclusion

This paper brings light to the legal, corporate, professional and individual ethical constraints in online journalism while highlighting the particular need to update deontological codes to face the challenges of doing journalism in digital media environments.

It calls for the professional and academic need of adapting the existing deontological codes to contemporary online practice of journalism presenting a concise analysis of the existing deontological codes given that a large majority of them are not particularly sensible to the ethical challenges of online journalism.

Numbers don't lie. Although ethical concerns about doing journalism online have been growing in the last decades, there is a general lack of interest in making deontological codes fully adequate to New Media.

Since only 9% of world's deontological codes make an explicit effort to regulate journalist's practices in Digital Media, it seems fair – as statistics point out – to say that there is a wide-ranging neglect in defining new ethical boundaries to online journalism. More, there is also a lack of consistency and uniformity in defining those boundaries since deontological codes that mention digital media – such as United Kingdom, Canada, Luxembourg or Canada's self-regulatory texts – give distinct emphasis to certain aspects (social networking, or social responsibility and accountability for links, for instance).

There are only a few core themes or common references in all those codes. Also, there is no universal standard from which different countries can extrapolate their deontology. So, each country's deontology stresses only those aspects that are considered more relevant to their professional, cultural, technological and political realities. There are no perceived trends that give us a solid, coherent and comprehensible view of deontology in online journalism.

What the 9 deontological codes have in common is the assumption that online journalism is subject to the same ethical principles as "traditional" journalism. Given the legal, corporate, professional and individual ethical constraints identified earlier in this paper, based on the will of most journalists to build a specific deontology to online journalism and given, still, the lack of homogeneity in the existing deontological codes that mention digital media, there is much waiting to be done.

One first step could be revisiting supra-national ethical codes. We agree with Diaz-Campo and Segado-Boj (2015: 741), when they suggest updating those universal codes. In fact, some of them have more than 30 years

of existence. We are referring here to UNESCO's *Principle of Professional Ethics in Journalism* (dating from 1983), the *International Federation of Journalists' Code* (approved in 1986) and the *European Code of Journalism Deontology* (agreed in 1993). These major, internationally acclaimed, and wide-accepted deontological codes could be the steady platform from which to derive all the national deontological codes about exercising journalism in a New Media context. The revision of these supra-national journalism standards will hopefully take the necessary step to lead to a major updating on online journalism's deontology throughout the world. But the great advantage would be that national deontological codes would have a firm reference point, a beacon in the sea of possibilities, that would enlighten and bring safe all the deontological initiatives.

This seems not just to be a long-anticipated move but also a very necessary one in order to preserve the crystal-clear landscape that tells, beyond doubt, what journalists are expected to do, how they should do it and what they, for the sake of public trust, cannot do.

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