Newsroom dissonance: how new digital technologies are changing professional roles in contemporary newsrooms

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III. Chapter 3: Reshaping media infrastructures

In July 2017 – five months before I began my fieldwork at *La Tercera* – the newspaper executives moved their offices and all their journalists to Apoquindo Avenue, one of the main thoroughfares in the municipality of Las Condes. For the reader who may be unaware of the socioeconomic segregation that exists within Santiago, Las Condes is the second-richest municipality in the entire country; furthermore, because of the high-rise, glassy buildings that have been climbing the skyline of Apoquindo Avenue since the 1990s, locals have acquired the pretentious habit of referring to this neighbourhood as 'Sanhattan', a portmanteau of the words *Santiago* and the New York City borough of *Manhattan*. Tomic, Trumper, and Hidalgo explain this phenomenon particularly well:

> As neoliberalism has proceeded apace, the production of Chilean urban space has increasingly mimicked that of North American business districts […], a phenomenon which is, arguably, no more apparent than in the example of 'Sanhattan', a small group of post-modern high-rises in the financial district in a posh area of eastern Santiago whose high glass towers are powerful symbols of progress shining precariously under the grey smog of thousands of cars on the old clogged streets that surround the area. (2006, p. 516)

While the luxurious architecture of Apoquindo Avenue cannot yet be compared with the futuristic or even neoclassical skyscrapers that dominate New York's horizon, the Manhattanisation of the principal financial centre of the capital had already offered me clues as to what – and who – I should expect to find before arriving on my first day of fieldwork at this newspaper. Indeed, unlike the bohemian, pedestrian-friendly, and colourful neighbourhood of Bellavista where Canal 13 was located, Apoquindo Avenue welcomed me with the roaring sounds of car engines speeding to the east and west throughout the clotted avenue as well as the hissing of buses collecting commuters at a nearby bus stop.

As I parked my now-out-of-place bicycle outside the newspaper entrance over Apoquindo Avenue, I looked up to see a row of sizeable, undifferentiated glass buildings gleaming in the height of the December summer. To my right, well-dressed, besuited customers were entering and exiting a Juan Valdez coffee shop as they huffed and puffed cigarettes between sips. Juan Valdez is unceasingly overpriced but apparently preferred over a nouveau-riche, bourgeois

Starbucks. To my left, chatty *palestrati* gathered outside a two-floor gymnasium, looking more at their reflections on the glass walls than at each other.

I entered the building's lobby through the double glass doors under the silver numbers 4660 hanging from the transom. I waited for the security guards behind the reception desk to confirm my identity so I could access the electronic turnstiles that lead to the elevators, and I caught a glimpse of the building's directory sign. According to the black plaque placed in the middle of the lobby, there were 17 floors in this building, 10 of which were occupied by Copesa, the parent company of *La Tercera*, and its newspapers. The editorial floors, where I would conduct my fieldwork for the next three months, were located from the 13th to the 15th floors. The presidency and general management of the company were located on the 16th floor, which was virtually the top floor since the 17th housed only a cafeteria with a 360-degree view of Santiago. Smaller newspapers and other administrative offices were spread between the seventh and the 12th floors. Two banks, a health insurance company, some private firms, and even a prosecutor's office occupied the rest of the storeys.

On the last day of the move-in period to Apoquindo Avenue, Sergio Rodríguez, then-deputy chief editor of *La Tercera*, wrote a brief online article explaining why the company had made the decision to change locations.[25] In the article, Rodríguez reflected on Copesa's history from the company inauguration in 1950, when it was located in a warehouse in downtown Santiago, to their building at 1962 Vicuña Mackenna Avenue where the editorial offices of the newspaper and the printing presses shared a space for decades. Now however, although Copesa would still mainly work on their daily newspaper, Rodriguez argued, *La Tercera* needed to move to Apoquindo Avenue to 'promote the development of a multiplatform project, which prioritizes the digital dimension of LaTercera.com and other possibilities such as the daily transmission of audio-visual content from the new newsroom'. Both literally and figuratively, Copesa left the printing presses behind and moved toward a new business model. Not only was new infrastructure needed for this purpose but apparently an entirely new, fancier neighbourhood was also necessary.

[25] The article still can be access online at: https://www.latercera.com/noticia/nueva-casa-nuevos-desafios/

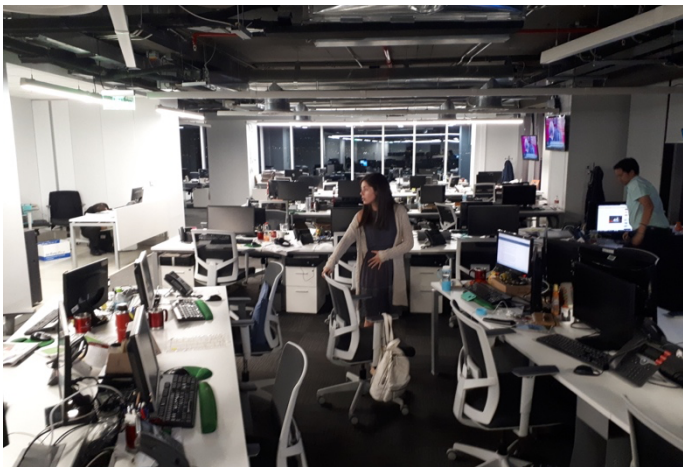

Figure 10. Night shift in the new newsroom of La Tercera. *Photo: Tomás Dodds during fieldwork.*

There were no printing presses on the 15th floor when I arrived. Rather, I encountered a spacious, light-filled room. Rows and islands of white desks crowded the entire floor. Coffee thermoses, bottles of water, and pencil holders flourished next to, behind, and in front of every computer screen and keyboard without any sense of order or control.

Out of sight, three small meeting rooms loomed in the corner. Some of the newspaper reporters regularly utilised these rooms to hold private phone calls. This was where I conducted the majority of the interviews with journalists and media workers, such as the graphic designer or the Internet editor who preferred to talk to me while avoiding any unwanted listeners. A narrow hallway led to larger meeting rooms toward the back of the floor where editors-in-chief gathered every day around noon to debate the space, frame, and position of the stories that the newspapers would carry the next day. A set of stairs descended to the 14th floor, where a television studio was being built and where the newspapers' graphic designers had their workstations.

The open floor plan was interrupted only by an elevated circular platform in the middle of the room. From here, editors-in-chief of different sections observed their entire realm and coordinated tasks and commands by enunciating loudly across the wall-less room.

However, I found the most interesting feature by far in this newsroom to be what hovered immediately above the circular platform: a hole in the centre of the roof created a circular gallery surrounded entirely by glass. Those on the 16th floor – the president and general managers according to the black plaque I saw in the lobby – could monitor the editorial room without journalists ever being aware that they were being watched.

Figure 11. Gallery view to the 16th floor. Photo: Tomás Dodds during fieldwork.

Paradoxically, the web editor, while guiding my tour around the newsroom and introducing me to several reporters during my first day, caught me looking fixedly at the gallery upstairs and, leaning over, whispered, 'Very Foucauldian, right?' Indeed, this new newsroom where the development of a multiplatform journalistic project would come to life paralleled the design of a prison made three centuries earlier by Jeremy Bentham. An archetype of disciplinary organisation, this newsroom was a panopticon.

Previous studies have revealed that reporters are more likely to change their practices if doing so enables them to avoid conflict with media executives (Altschull, 1996). Yet, not much has been written about the role that the physical infrastructure, such as a panopticon layout, has in that process.

Drawing on ethnomethodologies to study the operation of managerial power inside newsrooms, Bunce argues that 'the sense of being monitored may encourage journalists to comply with managerial priorities, without needing to be asked' (2019, p. 894). For Nealon (2008), the subtlety and softness of the mere idea of being spied on without knowing when it may happen or by whom makes it ever-more persuasive than direct censorship or physical repression.

Moreover, to the disciplinary power of the physical panopticon wedged against the ceiling in *La Tercera*'s newsroom, some authors argue that it is necessary to add the obscure potential that digital surveillance may have over contemporary journalists (Tsui & Lee, 2019). Ultimately, I argue that examining the infrastructure of the newsroom reveals the impact of both the phenomenal and electronic surveillance over journalists' work.

In the next sections of this chapter, I demonstrate how the infrastructure of media is constructed and negotiated, how it determines the message (the news), and how this infrastructure changed with the introduction of new technologies inside newsrooms. However, as Lampland and Leigh

Star argue, appropriate infrastructure is 'by definition invisible, part of the background for the other kinds of work' (2009, p. 17). The actors cannot completely oversee or cover it. Thus, in this chapter, I present how the introduction of new technologies within the newsroom is changing both the physical technology and the social relationships around the news production, even if those structures are arguably invisible to the journalists themselves.

3.1. Laying out the newsroom

According to Thomas McMullan, the basic setup of Bentham's panopticon is as follows: 'There is a central tower surrounded by cells. In the central tower is the watchman. […] The tower shines bright light so that the watchman is able to see everyone in the cells' (2015). If we extrapolate this idea to a non-prison context, then by being in the middle, the argument says, the watchman is able not only to observe every one of the occupants in the building but also to control and steer them into what is possible and to what is valuable. Thus, the question arises, if people had to build their own panopticon, then to whom would they provide the keys to the watchman's tower in the middle of the room? Who should be responsible to either lead the charge or preclude error? Canal 13 and *La Tercera* chose radically different paths and experienced different degrees of success when they restructured and modernised the infrastructure of their newsrooms to allocate both digital technologies and the professionals who work with them. In this section, I present the consequences of the decisions that were recently made regarding the layout of the new newsrooms.

Teletrece opted for a newsroom layout model that was not only easy for me to illustrate, as I have attempted to do in Figure 12, but that also made sense to an external observer, and most importantly, to the journalists who work inside.

The structure of the newsroom of Teletrece was based on three main zones of work. In the first zone, Tables B, C, and F were occupied exclusively by digital reporters who wrote for the website. Two editors sat at the heads of the table and coordinated their teams from there. Table E was occupied by two workers who controlled T13 Móvil and either repeated the open television signal of the station, which came from the intake desk (G), or streamed the content that digital journalists created by utilising the camera already mounted in the newsroom (M).

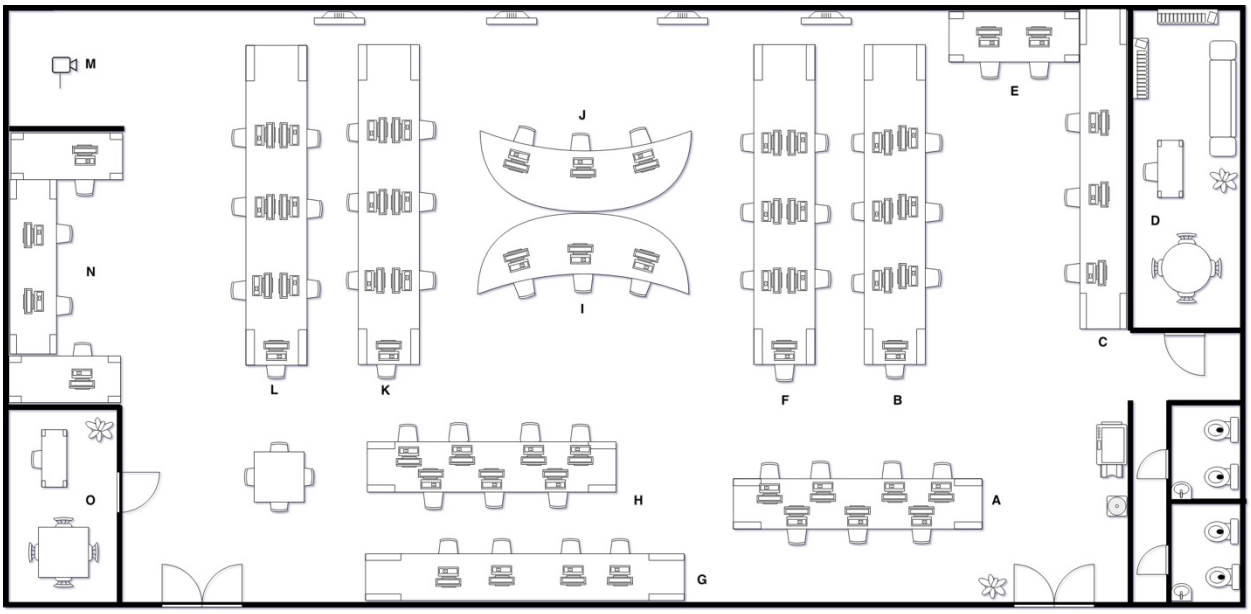

Figure 12. Floorplan of the Teletrece newsroom. Diagram: Made by Tomás Dodds.

In a second section on the other side of the newsroom, Tables L and K were exclusively occupied by television reporters, who also had one editor sitting at the head of each table. By sitting on that side of the room, they were closer not only to the news anchors, who utilised the space marked N, but also to the exit that led directly into the television studios.

Table A, however, was an outlier since it hosted only investigative journalists who did not necessarily share much or often with the other media workers in the room. The reason behind this was that independent of the platform for which these journalists worked, the temporality of investigative reporters was radically different than anybody else in the organisation because they may produce only one piece in the entire week or month.

The third section of this newsroom was composed of two half-moon tables (J and I on the diagram). Here was the answer to the question regarding who Teletrece placed in the middle. Located in the heart of the newsroom, these tables were utilised for coordinating and planning; however, they also worked as a bridge between television and the web. At Tables H and I, I often found Pepe telling jokes, as it was the producers' table. The producers were the nerve centre of the newsroom, the administrative professionals who oversaw the budget available to cover a story and decided which tools journalists needed to correctly cover a story.

'Imagine the entire structure that requires an urgent trip to report a catastrophe. That's what the producers are for, to buy the tickets, get dollars [or other currencies], and those things that simply can't wait until tomorrow. We grant support and coordinate different journalistic teams', Pepe explained during his interview. It seemed logical that these professionals, those whose

role was to make things happen for journalists and reporters, were the ones sitting in the middle of the newsroom, where they were easily accessible when needed or only one scream away.

Yet, Canal 13 endowed the responsibility to sit in the middle of the newsroom to a second team of journalists. The second half-moon table (J) was where the social networks editor sat with two specialised journalists, or 'social media redactors', as their editor called them during our interview. One of the main tasks of these social media redactors was to constantly scan other platforms and alert others if a breaking-news story was occurring. By sitting in the middle of the room, one of these redactors could stand and shout an alert so that producers, television reporters, and web journalists were equally capable of heeding the warning. Concurrently, by being in the centre, they could be easily approached by journalists from the other four tables to discuss how their articles or audiovisual segments could be shared on different platforms.

According to the T13.cl general editor, the layout of this newsroom was the result of a process that began as early as 2015. The failed attempts to launch a website that could compete equally with media outlets that had years of experience led Canal 13's general management to reformulate not only the journalists writing for the web but also the entire infrastructure of the newsroom. According to the general editor, the transformation improved the way information flowed within its walls and the relationships the journalists could establish with professionals from different platforms.

'One of the biggest transformations was to integrate writing as a platform, that is to say, to bring the entire web team and put it here in the middle of the newsrooms to create a social networks team and to start growing and growing, in order to be competitive', said the website's general editor during our interview. 'In that process too, only within a few months, the idea of T13 Móvil emerged almost naturally, and we had the space for it. The bottom line was to make the digital project more potent, […] and the whole idea of synergy between the web and television and radio was at the very centre', he concluded. The results of this experiment were almost immediately observable. According to the general editor, within a year, the site started growing exponentially and 'went from non-existing to rivalling the first place in the digital media competition'.

Since the main editorial focus of the site was supposed to be political in nature, after one-and-a-half years, they realised that they had space now to further enhance the political profile of T13. This was achieved by creating a special team of journalists who investigated and published their own topics on the website (Table F), whereas previously, journalists had only focussed on breaking news (Table B). They soon realised that the previous infrastructure did not have sufficient capacity for the creation of all the new professional roles, and so new

managerial positions started to emerge with the sole focus of improving the work of web journalists. In a short period of time, Canal 13 created new digital roles for the website only, such as a content editor, political editor, general editor, business editor (a section that was cancelled before I arrived to the newsroom), and most importantly, director of T13.cl.

'In a short period of time, we started competing perfectly with other media outlets in terms of breaking news, trending topics, viral themes, [and] topics that gave us traffic. But we were also generating our own topics with the political reporters and the investigative journalists. It has worked well', the general editor assured me, unable to contain a smile.

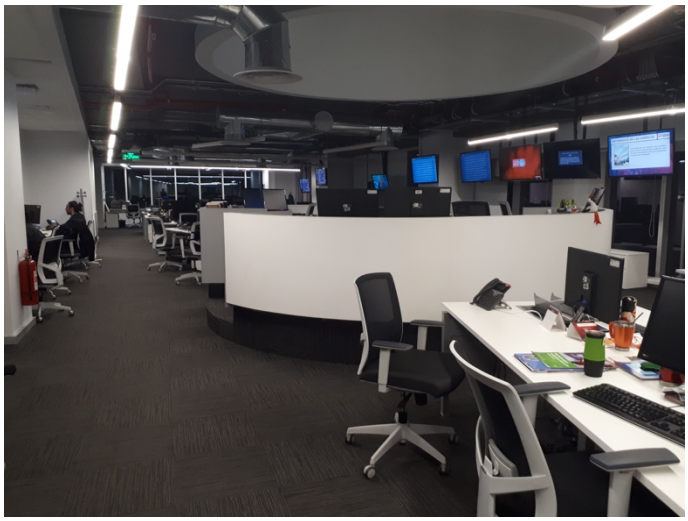

Figure 13. Newsroom of La Tercera. *Photo: Tomás Dodds during fieldwork.*

The situation at *La Tercera* was radically different. I experienced the layout of the newsroom to be sufficiently inconsistent so that creating a diagram of the room simply did not make sense. Newspaper general editors sat on the platform placed in the middle of the newsroom, which was not surrounded by newspaper journalists but by a mixture of social network reporters, technicians, web editors, designers, computer engineers, and other digital journalists. These digital journalists were not even the breaking-news reporters I interviewed for this research; they worked on other pop culture platforms owned by Copesa, such as *Mouse*, *Culto*, and *Biut*. These editors were certainly important, but only for the newspaper reporters, who were seated at opposite extremes of the newsroom. *La Tercera* decided to locate newspapers editors under the watchman's towers, which made sense in any context other than a media organisation that was attempting to enact a digital project. Instead of working as a bridge, this tower in the middle of the room worked as a dam, hindering the communication between newspaper reporters sitting at each side of the platform as well as the digital journalists spread around it.

I asked a digital journalist about the reasons behind the seemingly disorganised layout at *La Tercera*. 'When we worked in the old building, the one at Vicuña Mackenna, it was like [the layout in Canal 13]', she said. The digital journalist remembered working at a long table with editors and social media reporters on each side. 'When we arrived [to Apoquindo Avenue], the editors just sat in the same tables with whomever they felt closer to. They put us, the breaking-news journalists, really far away, when we should be the ones closer together to each other. I never really understood it'. According to this journalist, the Internet editor and sub-editor simply decided to sit 'with their best friends'. I asked the same question of the Internet editor during my last day at *La Tercera*. What follows is a translation and transcription of that conversation. I am reproducing this interview at length because it is important to identify the logic, or lack thereof, with which this decision was made:

> Tomás: One of the things that caught my attention is the way [the digital reporters] are seated. Basically, everyone against the wall, [which is] a position that makes dialogue between journalists very difficult. They are also seated very far away from you. Was that a random decision? How did you decide to sit them there?
> Internet editor: It is not random,[26] and it is random at the same time … It is not random because there is a design here. It was thought like this, with the circle in the middle … It was thought like this. Who thought it this way? Here we enter the random part of it because I do not know who thought about it or what was the objective behind [this layout]. They designed it like this because, as far as I understand, there are newsrooms that look like this and they … It was a good idea, there is the concept of the panopticon, and the idea of having information in the middle of the newsroom. […] Someone thought it this way. Who thought it like this? Who knows? In practice, it ends up being somewhat random because it is a decision over which, deep down, we have no opinion … or we had no opinion at the time … and that is what I mean by random.
> Tomás: OK ... But now I am thinking of a situation that I have seen repeatedly here, where two journalists upload articles about the same issue at the same time on the web. And that has to do with a lot of things, but one of the most important reasons to explain this is that journalists do not know what their colleagues are writing

[26] The word that the Internet editor used during our interview in Spanish was "casual," which can also be translated as casual, by chance, or accidental.

about. Have you ever talked with whoever is in charge of the layout of the newsroom, and explain[ed] that it would be more beneficial to have web journalist[s] sitting together at the same table?

Internet editor: This has not happened yet because we moved recently.[27] Until now, there has been no relocation. It sounds very reasonable, but you would still have someone sitting against the wall. […] What I do know is that those positions were always thought for people working on the web.

Tomás: Do you know why?

Internet editor: […] That table was always thought for those on the web.

Tomás: It's very strange, because they told me that in the old building, they were all sitting at a table together.

Internet editor: Very long table, face-to-face …

Tomás: And then the communication was much more fluid …

Internet editor: Sure, sure. But actually, there is a very strange topic there and that's why I'm telling you [that] it's not random and it's random. It's not random because someone thought about it, but the person who thought about it never really communicated their ideas. This is not planned by the [journalistic] team. Surely who thought about this is the architect, and surely it must have looked beautiful [on a blueprint]. As far as I know, no one from the editorial team ever thought about this.

Casual or not, the layout of the newsroom at *La Tercera* was indicative of the way the institution understood and thought about their digital reporters. By not contesting an architectural decision that placed digital journalists at a disadvantage, newsroom executives were hindering the gathering, producing, and reporting of news and information. Perhaps more significantly, the materiality of the new newsroom was dividing the immaterial network that journalists relied on to produce the news. Under the watch of those on the 17th floor, journalists' social relations and professional knowledge was becoming dissonant from the physical infrastructure in which they were asked to work.

[27] The move to the new offices happened six months ago, at the time of this interview.

3.2. The physical infrastructure

The concept of infrastructure is often utilised in cultural anthropology to describe that area 'in which the social and the technical are indivisibly combined' (Vojinovic & Abbott, 2012, p. 164). I understand the infrastructural dimension of media newsrooms as the techniques, the sociotechnical systems, and the material culture that allows the dissemination of information and communication in a multiplatform set of possibilities. This may include formats such as written or audiovisual communication as well as digitally based information.

Larkin offers a similar definition of infrastructure when he argues that it is 'both the technical and cultural systems that create institutionalized structures whereby goods of all sorts circulate, connecting and binding people into collectivities' (2008, pp. 5–6). According to Larkin, studies on infrastructure, such as the one I present in these pages, attempt to better understand how underlying material structures are working on a day-to-day basis. Indeed, in this chapter I attempt to explain how, in a context in which new technologies are rapidly introduced in the newsrooms, the interaction of material and social elements conditions different structural layers of the media organisations in which I have conducted my research, that is, how material infrastructures are transforming the immaterial ones. In other words, during my fieldwork, I observed the materiality, the objects, and the tools with which journalists worked as well as how those apparatuses framed the way media workers related to each other.

Other authors have utilised the concept of media infrastructure to describe the physical development in media technology and the impact this has in the global culture (Volkmer, 2003) or how the media landscape has developed during recent decades to allow a broader discussion about policies that, among other things, could provide media infrastructures that guarantee access to a more diverse group of voices (Lindlof & Shatzer, 1998; Peters, 2010).

Accordingly, the infrastructure of the media newsrooms refers not only to its material, tangible aspects but also to the social relations that these physical and organisational structures are producing in the everyday routines within the newsroom's floors. Hence, the main objective of this chapter is to explore how newsmakers are adapting the infrastructure of the newsrooms to new digital technologies and how the existing infrastructure limits this adaptation process.

To answer this question, however, the concept of technology must be defined as well. Technology is, in itself, a key concept in this research. Under the umbrella of Foucauldian philosophy, technology is, above all, social organisation (Gerrie, 2003). Foucault employs the term *technology* to study the different ways in which power relations operate. As Behrent notes, 'Foucault primarily typically employs the term – as well as the related […] one of "technique"

– to refer not to tools, machines, or the application of science to industrial production, but rather to methods and procedures for governing human beings' (Behrent, 2013, p. 55). In this chapter, I build on Foucault's idea that the technological developments inside the newsroom are the result of, and concurrently are shaped by, the professional and social relationships of media workers.

As we have seen in the previous chapters of this thesis in the narrative about the crisis that journalists are facing, 'when journalism encounters new technologies, new media, and newcomers, the disruptions are narrated as threats to journalistic standards and the ability of journalism to convey the news' (Butler Breese, 2016, p. 31). That is to say, when journalists and other media workers perceive that the infrastructures to which they are accustomed are shifting – changes that are often presented under the slogan of 'technological innovation' – a discourse based on the weakening of journalistic standards is conveyed, as if technology is purely an imposition that jeopardises canons and values inside the newsrooms. In other words, 'technological innovations are seen as dangerous and threatening to news quality and the standards of journalism' (Butler Breese, 2016, p. 36). The menacing perception involving technological transformations may also be affecting the way in which journalists relate to each other and to non-journalist professionals who have started to arrive in the newsrooms over the years.

Therefore, when we discuss technology and infrastructures inside newsrooms, we necessarily approach a question about how the transformations in these spheres are affecting the culture and values of the professionals working within that organisation. As Pfaffenberger argues, the question we should be concerned with is how culture influences technological innovation and how technological innovation influences culture. 'It is not mere technology, but technology in concert with the social coordination of labour, that constitutes a human population's adaptation to its environment' (Pfaffenberger, 1992, p. 497).

Pfaffenberger also considers two different but complementary definitions for technology. First, he argues that the concept of technique should be utilised in reference to 'the system of material resources, tools, operational sequences and skills, verbal and nonverbal knowledge, and specific modes of work coordination that come into play in the fabrication of material artifacts' (1992, p. 497). Second, Pfaffenberger claims that social science researchers should employ the concept of a sociotechnical system to better describe 'distinctive technological activity that stems from the linkage of *techniques* and material culture to the social coordination of labour' (1992, p. 497) that ultimately produces the power relations between workers and the goods that the audience consumes.

Pfaffenberger's approach has been adapted to journalism studies by authors including Konow-Lund, who urges media anthropologists to identify when 'routines are planned and structured, or when they arise as a result of social activity' (2019, p. 104). Her ethnographic fieldwork in media companies and newsrooms in the United Kingdom has allowed Konow-Lund to highlight that despite some well-defined skills as well as verbal and nonverbal knowledge, the rapid transformation (and adaptations) in the materialities of the newsroom has been expressed in, for example, the inclusion of a variety of interprofessional actors in the production of newsworthy goods. Thus, one of the optimal ways to observe how new technologies are changing the nature of the physical infrastructure and the culture within the newsroom is to undertake a thorough review of the role and practices of professional cameramen at Canal 13.

3.4. The virtual infrastructure

So far in this chapter, I have attempted to illuminate the physical infrastructure that shaped the newsrooms in which I conducted my fieldwork. Some authors argue that the infrastructure of media and the technology that surrounds it also refers to the 'telephone networks and cell towers, broadcasting and cable television systems, satellite networks, […] and the software that make up the largest network of networks; the Internet' (Lentz, 2011, p. 324), and accordingly, this last 'network of networks' is where I want to focus now, especially on the software that digital journalists utilise to upload their articles to the web.

While some of the information flows on the surface of the newsrooms – more often than not as shouts and screams from one corner to the other – silent bits of digital information are travelling without pause through the media organisation's intra-network. Sometimes, this information resurfaces as a half-finished edit clip that a television reporter sent to the graphic editor so they could add the music and the infographics necessary to air the segment. Other times, it can be the entire design and layout of tomorrow's newspaper, ready to be proofread one last time by the style editor who is patiently brushing away all the misspelled words and out-of-place punctuation, perpetually eyeing that 11:00 deadline. However, in this section, I want to focus on the writing software that journalists and reporters both inside of Teletrece and *La Tercera* utilise and how those programs are influencing the news-making process as well as news makers' routines and behaviour.

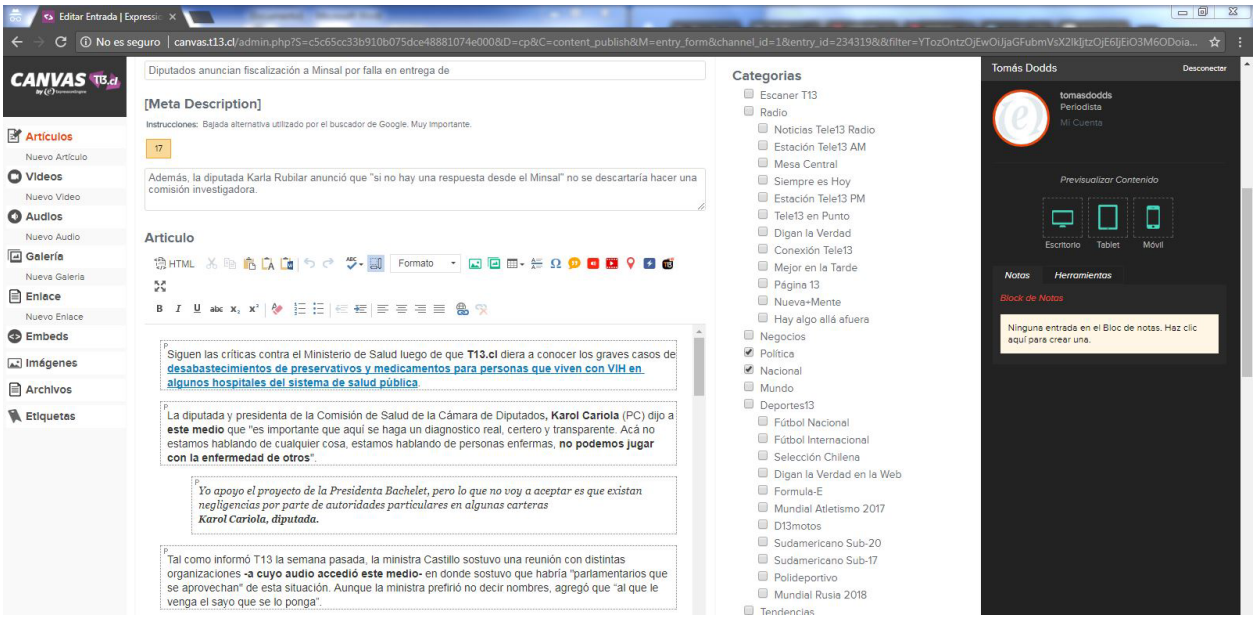

Figure 14. Screenshot of the Canvas software while I was writing an article for T13. Photo: Tomás Dodds during fieldwork.

At first glance, Canvas seems to be a simple, user-friendly software, not much different than any other content management system but as intuitive as any basic word processor. As Figure 14 displays,[28] the software allows the user to insert hyperlinks into the articles, track the number of words, and separate paragraphs to highlight those that are exclusively or mainly quotes. A column on the left has options that permit the writer to attach videos, documents, image galleries, or social media posts directly into the article, as I have done with the article portrayed in Figure 14. A column to the right displays all the categories of classification within the website. As the example illustrates, the article that I was writing that day needed to appear in both 'Politics', because it included politicians as sources, and 'National', because the main topic of the article was a public health issue. As was customary, once I finished writing the article, I saved a draft version into the system, exited the page, and informed my content editor that it was there so he could review it before publishing it online. However, Canvas' most important feature, in my opinion, was not its simplicity or minimalistic interface. Rather, it was the fact that Canvas was a snitch.

Pablo Cádiz was working as the T13 website's content editor while I was conducting my fieldwork. The content editor established the agenda for the day, assigned story topics to each journalist, and finally edited and arranged them on the website according to relevance. Cádiz was not the main website editor, who mainly supervised special topics to cover, such as

[28] To see the final version, this article can be access today using the following link: https://www.t13.cl/noticia/politica/nacional/diputados-no-descartan-comision-investigadora-ministra-salud-desabastecimiento

elections or sports tournaments. Rather, Cádiz oversaw the everyday content that was uploaded to the website, and if anything, this role made him a relevant character for my research.

As soon as we sat to talk, I felt eager to ask him about his view regarding the relationship between technology and censorship. Hence, one of the things we discussed during our interview was the common practice of editing someone else's articles on the web. This interview occurred weeks before the incident at *La Tercera* when I utilised the word *dictatorship* in the headline, which was removed without my knowledge (described in Chapter 1), but I was already attempting the learn whether the changeability of the web could be utilised to change articles without the original author's permission in topics relating to human rights or the dictatorship, and thus promoting and encouraging indirect censorship. However, his answer was a simple, 'I am trying to remember, but … no'. He squinted into the sun, as if the rays of light could dissipate the fogginess of his recollections. 'Is it common that someone change the articles you write without your consent?' I asked, switching to a more general question and concurrently trying to prod him to regain his memories. This time, there was no doubt in his voice. He looked at me and opening his eyes, said, 'Oh, yes. But that happens a lot in the web. […] I mean, is not weird that an editor goes into your article and change[s] stuff, but here we let people know when we are changing something in someone else's article', he continued, discarding the idea of secrecy. According to Cádiz, it was common practice for an editor to utilise phrases such as, 'Hey, can I go in to fix something?' or a more authoritative, 'I am going to change something in your article'. However, why would editors inform journalists when they could simply change the parts they do not like without anybody knowing, as eventually happened to me at *La Tercera*? The answer Cádiz offered next explained this issue better and concurrently was perhaps one of the ideal indicators of the utility that participant observation can have as a research technique:

> It could be because of a sense professional respect … [Here, he paused and looked at me.] But it can also be for a technical reason. We have here … *you* have used Canvas here, *you* know that when you have an article open on your computer, Canvas lets you know when someone else is opening it, and the last one to save their changes overwrites whoever saved before. To a large extent, we have that habit of before opening an article, letting the author know, so nobody else has it

> open on their computers by coincidence. Perhaps, that technical, material factor[29] determines a journalistic practice. Both things play a role.

Including this trivial feature of informing the author when someone else was accessing their article means that Canvas had actually created a practice that made silent, indirect censorship almost uncommon, at least on Teletrece's website. This feature did not exist at *La Tercera*, which, through the last day of my field work, was utilising WordPress. Even before arriving at *La Tercera,* I had heard several criticisms of the software utilised on the newspaper's website. A reporter from Canal 13 who formerly worked at *La Tercera* was actually in the newspaper offices when WordPress was first implemented as the main system to upload the news. In the following quote, I have attempted to minimise the number of vulgar words she utilised in her description of that process: 'We needed to launch a new website. It was way overdue, and it came with a restyling of the software we used to upload the news, like our Canvas here … It was the step from Canela [cinnamon in English], which was a worthless piece of shit, to WordPress, which actually also worked lousy. We had like a two-year delay with this project, and they [management] forced us to launch it anyway; it did not matter that the software was not ready', she finished, clicking her tongue to emphasise her disapproval of the events that had unfolded during her time in the newspaper. I found similar criticisms when I arrived at *La Tercera*. Digital reporters often complained not only about the lack of user friendliness, the frequent error messages, and the steep learning curve that accompanied WordPress but also about the actual Web layout that they had to utilise to upload the news.

As Figure 15 reveals, during my time at *La Tercera,* a new version of the WordPress software they utilised to upload the news and the Web layout was launched, and the content editor spent an hour teaching his digital reporters how to utilise it. Was this new virtual infrastructure enough to ease frustrations and to calm people?

[29] It is not a coincidence that Pablo used this concept during his answer. In my interviews, I noticed that journalists mimicked the concepts I was using in some of the questions and integrated them into their answers. Even if concepts such as temporality or materiality were not part of their everyday lingo, reporters found a way to include them in their responses.

Figure 15. LaTercera.com*'s content editor demonstrating how to update WordPress. Photo: Tomás Dodds during fieldwork.*

It was not. According to the LaTercera.com content editor, the deficit they experienced with the virtual infrastructures were a symptom of a more nuanced problem that was not limited to these particular tools. Rodrigo Retamal, who was the content editor of the website at the time, needed to quell the unrest between digital journalists. As he told me, 'I think the entire newspaper needed an urgent digital training'. Since we met, Retamal had been fairly open about what he called a radically unsustainable narrative about the importance of the digital area for the management of the newspaper. 'If we [as an organisation] are going to put the focus on the digital, well first, we all need to speak the same language. But today, when people from the paper come to propose something to be published on the web, they do not know the name of the parts of the website or the things you can or cannot do with WordPress. If they would learn, maybe we could understand each other', he argued.

During our interview, the content editor remembered several occasions when newspaper reporters came to his desk and asked him to 'put something on one of those boxes in the webpage', without actually knowing what those boxes were called or what they were utilised for.

However, his problems were not limited to journalists from other platforms: 'Our own advertising department sometimes sells space for ads without knowing the real dimensions of the available area they have. It has happened that they put online advertising that corrupts the rest of the website and disfigures the whole site. But digital journalism is by essence visual! It cannot look bad', he said, sounding increasingly exasperated as he continued. 'I think there [are] a lot of people here who have no idea what the difference between a URL and a link is, for example. What we are missing here is a digital literacy training', he claimed.

La Tercera, unlike Canal 13, did not provide extra courses or special training to their employees. As many journalists at Teletrece told me during my fieldwork, they had training in digital literacy, website creation, and HTML5 software. At *La Tercera*, conversely, as Retamal stated, 'I think not even all the digital journalists are 100% sure about how the website works'. Toward the end of our interview, a more frustrated Retamal than the one who started the interview claimed that 'even in this newsroom, there are a lot of people who think that digital journalism is just copying the newspaper onto a website'. It seemed clear to me now that journalists at *La Tercera*, unlike those at Teletrece, were rejecting not only their roles as digital journalists in contraposition with their paper counterparts but also the virtual infrastructure which they were meant to appropriate and thrive upon. That is to say, journalists were refusing not only the idea of what they were supposed to do but also the tools with which they had to work.

3.5. From material to immaterial infrastructures

One can only describe the cameraman room in Teletrece as a man cave or a boy's club. A sanctuary of *macho*, male homosociality. During my first visit, I knocked and entered a shadowy, murky location on the first floor of the building, whose curtains were drawn and walls were covered in faded posters of blonde, long-haired women in tastelessly small bikinis. All the comfortable leather sofas in the room faced an HD plasma television that occupied the majority of the wall that had not yet been covered with the same type of photographs and calendars. The greenish light of the football match loudly playing on the TV was the only source of light illuminating the room. 'Is Carlos here?' I asked a couple of drowsy faces that had risen halfway when the door opened.

Carlos was a cameraman who had been working at Canal 13 for 42 years. He was one of those professionals who still argued that being a camera operator was a trade, a craft that one learned working in the field while concurrently taking courses that the television station itself offered to their workers. This was not a profession that required a university degree, he insisted. Although his original plan in his youth was to be a football player, he met people from Canal 13 who regularly ate lunch at his brother's restaurant, and his plans changed when he received a job offer to earn extra money. 'When I started working here, we recorded with 16-millimetre film [a popular gauge of film in the 1980s and 1990s]; after that we moved to 3:4 videos, Betacam, High 8, and so on', he started explaining when we found a table outside the cameraman room.

The journalists and reporters I had interviewed thus far during my fieldwork commonly highlighted the important role of cameramen in the production of news. As I was told by a television reporter early in my fieldwork, 'Cameramen have taught me a lot because they have a huge trajectory. The ones we have [at Canal 13] have been working here for years, and because of that, they know how to do things. They know which images to include, which images should not be there, what matters for the story, and what does not matter at all, and so on'. As she noted, the relevance of cameramen inside the media ecosystem was partially due to the fact that, at least in this newsroom, cameramen remained longer in their jobs than the television reporters with whom they went afield.

> Look, for years the cameramen have been the ones who have taught [television] journalists how to do their job[s], because reporters often come here knowing a lot of theory from the university, but when they go out on the field, things are different. A lot of them are afraid of, for example, basic things like live broadcasting', Carlos explained, again with some contempt in his voice toward formal education.

For this seasoned media worker, cameramen were responsible to calm journalists, place them in front of the camera, and guide them in important things they may miss when they are in the field. Carlos even remembered occasions when knowing how to move on the streets could save the lives of team members:

> We were filming in the neighbourhood of La Legua [characterised by poverty, drug trafficking, and police repression]. There, you *must* know when you have to flee the scene. At times, it is really unsafe, and you cannot stay there after the police have gone. We were covering a drug raid, and a young reporter wanted to do interviews once the police had left. I told her it was impossible, but she insisted. I had to stand my ground and explained to her that she actually has to start interviewing people while the police are there, otherwise [the neighbours] will literally mug you or worse. I know it because it has happened. […] Or for example, [at] the Centro de Justicia [Santiago Justice Centre], the 'delinquents' mall', we called it. There, we had been spat on, kicked, and we even have had to throw some punches ourselves. Everything happens in there. … You have to know how to move with the camera on your shoulder and how to move the journalists.

This quote aptly illustrates Pfaffenberger's concept of technique (skills) as well as of verbal and nonverbal knowledge, concurrently describing some of the specific modes of work coordination in cameramen's routines, which may soon be history.

Technological innovation influences the culture inside the newsrooms in many ways, some of which may be innocuous. For example, during our interview, Carlos remembered that with the arrival of HD television and 16:9 screen ratios, it became excessively difficult for the cameramen to exclude from the shot the noses of journalists when they held the microphone during interviews, which, according to the television station, only resulted in ugly shots. Therefore, television reporters began utilising lavalier microphones attached to them and to the interviewees. This change allowed journalists to move more freely during interviews, hold notes and other materials in their now-free hands, and engage differently with their interviewees, who concurrently felt less constrained by not having a microphone pointing at their faces.

However, some innovations may not only transform the culture inside media organisations but also directly erase part of it:

'Today, a lot of journalists are working with DSLR cameras, with GoPro, with little cameras or handycams [handheld cameras], with those that can record videos with 360 degrees', Carlos said in a mournful and crestfallen tone. As reporter and historian Christopher B. Daly argues, 'Many journalists today carry around a multimedia production studio in their backpacks and can create audio and video materials that used to require a truckload of gear and a team of unionized specialists' (2018). However, technological innovations have continued to extend further, and a new trend has begun to anchor itself among web and television journalists: mobile journalism.

Mobile journalists (or MoJos) 'are journalists who use mobile devices (extensively) in their news reporting' (Westlund, 2013, p. 16). Thus, mobile phones are being employed by journalists on the field to take photographs, record audio or interviews, blog, or even stream live video. It was not strange during my fieldwork to see journalists carrying a tripod but no camera, as they simply utilised their smartphones to record themselves.

Critics of this new trend argue that this MoJo phenomenon, which is indeed economically convenient for newsrooms, is causing a wave of 'deprofessionalisation' among journalists. As Blankenship states, 'in professional work settings, the more widespread, less "exclusive", and less specialized knowledge is among members of a workforce, the less professional that workforce becomes' (2016, p. 1057). Thus, the problem with having one worker performing

tasks that recently were performed by different professionals, Blankenship suggests, is that journalists have less specialised expert knowledge.

According to Carlos, the sociotechnical system that will eventually result from television reporters dispensing with cameramen, their knowledge, their skills, and discernment can only have grievous consequences for the next generations of journalists and for the content they produce for the audience consumption. 'Always two eyes see more than one', said Carlos. 'People say we are a necessary evil. Look, the journalist is the one who is responsible for their piece. We all know that. He or she decides what the cameramen should record. […] But sometimes, because you want to best the competition and have different pictures, you just risk it and go inside the rally or the protest, you just jump into it, and you look back, and see that the journalists have stayed behind, taking notes'. Recording with a phone may be cheaper, faster, and generally easier than utilising a professional cameraman, but how many reporters will actually jump, as experienced cameramen often do, into the middle of a protest when all hell breaks loose, Carlos asked me, the tone in his voice indicating that the answer was rather obvious to him.

Why, then, are media organisations opting to promote a more individualistic, skill-less type of reporting? How does a cheaper, and concurrently more precarious, infrastructure justify itself in this technological age of digital consumption and multiplatform competition?

3.6. Shifting infrastructures

The main objective of this chapter is to elucidate how material infrastructures are impacting the immaterial networks of news production. New digital technologies have influenced the infrastructural dimension of the two newsrooms in which I conducted my fieldwork, not only the materialities with which journalists work but also the techniques and professional culture within these organisations.

In particular, the shifts in the infrastructure are threatening to erase certain professional roles that, until recently, were considered elementary for the development of news making. As my interview with one of the cameramen at Canal 13 illustrated, some journalists and newsrooms are keen to replace camera operators with easier, quicker tools, such as mobile phones, even if that translates into sacrificing professional knowledge and field experience.

La Tercera moved to a new building, and their public statements claimed that the organisation was bestowing more importance to its digital platforms; however, the physical layout and

infrastructural dimensions at *La Tercera* did not seem to be in tune with the vision they claimed to have for their digital workers.

Indeed, the results presented in this chapter indicate that one of the newsrooms in which I conducted fieldwork adapted their physical and digital infrastructure better than the other. The consequences of this adaptation process were starkly felt by the media workers in each newsroom in which I conducted my fieldwork.

Journalists at Canal 13 not only adapted their physical infrastructure to new digital technologies, which was expressed in the physicality of the newsroom layout, but also updated the virtual tools they utilised to better satisfy the needs of the tasks they were expected to perform. However, as my interviewees indicated during our conversations, digital reporters at *La Tercera* constantly resented the lack of purposefulness in the structures with which they had to work.