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

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Citation

Dodds Rojas, T. (2022, February 9). *Newsroom dissonance: how new digital technologies are changing professional roles in contemporary newsrooms*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3270873>

Version: Publisher's Version

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Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

IV. Chapter 4: New temporalities and the changing perceptions of time in news making³⁰

‘You have to choose’, María Luisa told me in a dry, matter-of-fact tone. This female television reporter had recently birthed a daughter and now explained, ‘Either you have a successful career in journalism, or you are a mother. You simply cannot do both’. I acknowledge that I was nonplussed by her openly expressed fatalism about her own future in this business. This sentence was followed by a long silence while, without knowing what to say, I attempted to think of examples of other women climbing the corporate ladder of the Chilean media industry. However, as I pondered the issue, I suddenly realised that she was right. Even here, in the press department of Canal 13, there were only two female editors in the entire newsroom: one worked for the weekend shift, and one was responsible for the late afternoon broadcast. These two female editorial figures contrasted significantly with the large number of young women who worked as reporters. ‘But why?’ I wondered aloud, to which she answered simply, ‘There just isn’t enough time’.

We sat in a Middle Eastern restaurant called Za’atar, a place directly across the street from the television station where journalists from Canal 13 often went to find something inexpensive and quick for lunch. More importantly, diners could have all the pita bread and olive oil they wanted, and every meal ended with a complimentary cup of tea or Turkish coffee. Additionally, and they would have never admitted this as a reason for dining there, I noted that many of the current soap opera actors and actresses frequented the same place; every time one of them entered the restaurant, the journalists with whom I was chatting sat a little straighter or laughed a little louder.

I had asked María Luisa for an interview previously, but twice, between apologies, she argued that she had no time to sit and have a relaxed, undisturbed, calm interview. Similar to many other journalists whom I interviewed during my fieldwork, María Luisa said she knew how annoying it could be to interview someone hurriedly, and therefore, many journalists recused themselves from granting me an interview, arguing that because they did not have sufficient free time, they would not be ‘good interviewees’. Finally, after much postponing, we agreed to have lunch together at Za’atar and have the interview there.

³⁰ A version of this chapter has been published as “Reporting with WhatsApp: Mobile Chat Applications’ Impact on Journalistic Practices” (2019).

Without intending to do so, our conversation focussed primarily on time. She had returned from maternity leave less than a month earlier, and thus far, she had only worked on small pieces for the late afternoon programme. ‘If I want to do something *cool*, with more preparation and research, then I would have to work until 8:00 in the evening. But day-care closes at 7:00’, she said absentmindedly, hungrily studying the small wicker basket of pita. Even in her 9-to-5 shift, though, the situation still produced complications. ‘There are two ways they can assign you a topic to cover’, she began when I asked her to describe her typical working day. ‘Firstly, they can assign you a topic the day before, and that gives you the ability to manage your time and do research to know what you are going to talk about’, she said, without taking her eyes off her green shawarma, a mixture of beef and chicken served with lettuce, celery, and sweet-and-sour gherkins. There was another option, she continued, one journalists often have to face: ‘Or secondly, they can assign you something that is happening that very same day. And in those cases, you just have to run for it, you don’t have time for anything ... so you do research on your phone while you are on the way’. María Luisa argued that the need to rush to the scene on these occasions was not merely a result of the pressure to have an exclusive and surpass the other television stations ‘like the journalists who write for the web have to’. Rather, time was of the essence because ‘you have to get there while you still can record nice images,³¹ otherwise you do not have a story!’

It seemed that time governed every aspect of television reporters’ lives inside and outside work, from determining the agenda and defining which topics to cover to the type of personal and professional career they wanted to have. During my fieldwork, I repeatedly heard stories of journalists missing birthdays, funerals, and weddings because, in their words, ‘some things cannot wait’.

María Luisa recounted the following in an anecdotal manner: ‘I once had a weekend editor whose wife was giving birth in Concepción [a southern city 500 kilometres from Santiago] and the *jerk* was here. He said, “I just can’t drop my job”. I couldn’t understand him. And that same editor told off a sub-editor because he got sick to the stomach and couldn’t come to work. “Where is your commitment to the job?” he said’.

Thus far in this thesis, we have discussed new platforms and shifting infrastructures for journalism. In this chapter, I focus on how the introduction of new digital technologies has transformed the temporality of news making and the effects this transformation has had on

³¹ Here, she used the Spanish term “buenos monos”, which would translate into “good cartoons”.

news makers themselves. In this chapter, I attempt to answer my third research question: How does the introduction of new digital technologies transform the temporality of news making, and what effects does it have on news makers? Although time has perpetually been at the core of journalistic work, as María Luisa illustrated, the conclusions of this chapter suggest that new digital technologies have impacted the relationship between journalists and sources on both personal and professional levels. New perceptions of intimacy and trust, camaraderie and obtainability, and temporality have been observed among journalists who are utilising new digital technologies. These observations carry important professional and ethical implications for journalists navigating today's media ecology and reveal how technological and socio-professional aspects are tightly interwoven.

4.1. The temporal affordances of technology

According to Bødker and Sonnevend, 'journalism constitutes a series of interrelated practices for the social construction of time' (2018, p. 3). That is to say, it blends both the everyday common occurrences with those circumstances that are unusual and unexpected. Thereby, Bødker and Sonnevend argue, media has the power to create feelings of simultaneity among the audience, define narratives about past events, and set the frame to imagine the future. However, if traditional media – television, radio, and newspapers – have already had the power to shape our perceptions of the present, past, and future, then new digital technologies have taken this ability to another level. This process is usually studied in the literature through the concepts of multiplicity and polycentrality as well as interaction and participation (Fenton, 2009).

To test these changes and see how temporalities inside newsrooms may be shifting, Tenenboim-Weinblatt and Neiger (2018) have developed the concept of temporal affordances of the media, that is, 'the potential ways in which the time-related possibilities and constraints associated with the material conditions and technological aspects of news production are manifested in the temporal characteristics of news narratives' (p. 39). Tenenboim-Weinblatt and Neiger (2018) based their concept on Hutchby's (2001) research regarding affordances for the study of technologies, which purports technology to be a framing concept rather than a deterministic one and highlights the social and cultural forces that shape the usage of technological objects. They developed a series of lenses through which the temporal affordances of material technology enable or constrain journalism. According to these authors, these affordances are immediacy, liveness, preparation time, transience and fixation, and

extended retrievability. I have already discussed the preparation time as well as transience and fixation (or versionality) affordances in Chapter 3, although here, I review them briefly because they are useful for classifying my own results later on this chapter.

Immediacy refers to the ability to report on nearby, last-minute events. This ability is constrained not only by professional practices but also by the platforms utilised to report the news. Immediacy in a newspaper does not equal immediacy in an online media outlet (Saltzis, 2012). For a web-based journalist, the publication of a story depends primarily on how quickly they can type and edit, which is a principle that does not apply in other platforms. For María Luisa, the immediacy affordance was marked by her need to record pictures of events while they were still occurring, and therefore her relationship with immediacy was marked by her capacity to physically transport herself and her crew and arrive at a particular geographic location while an event or happening was still ongoing.

The second concept is that of liveness or the capacity to cover events as they are occurring. Here radio and television can fairly and efficiently compete with online news because they have synchronous means of communication. Additionally, liveness is one of the most important reasons to explain Bødker and Sonnevend's feelings of simultaneity among the audience. Generations of people are marked by where they were when Apollo 11 landed on the moon, when the first plane hit the North Tower in Lower Manhattan, or when they saw the images of La Moneda on fire after the military seized power in the coup. The collective witnessing of the unfolding present events creates a shared sentiment of belonging.

Immediacy and liveness refer to the way the audience consumes the news or the ways journalists present stories, but Tenenboim-Weinblatt and Neiger also address the internal, behind-the-doors, temporal processes of news making. Thus, the preparation-time affordance is no more than the capacity journalists have to properly prepare, report, and develop a story or newsworthy piece. There is indeed nothing new about journalists fighting against an upcoming deadline. However, some would argue that new digital technologies are increasing the pressure on media workers by impacting both the volume and frequency of news production (Boczkowski, 2010).

Versionality of media can be divided into two contrasting affordances: transience and fixation. The printed word forever remains fixed on the paper. The ink cannot be taken back from the sheets of paper. Accordingly, history is full of emblematic and sometimes regrettable newspaper covers that 'serve as vehicles of collective memory' (Tenenboim-Weinblatt & Neiger, 2018, p. 43). Web-based journalism, however, can be transformed, adapted, and updated ad nauseam. The platform itself is tainted with its ephemerality (Deuze, 2008).

Remembering what I presented in Chapter 3, it is important to notice that the distinction between transient and fixed platforms is already creating professional barriers and a difference in how some journalists see themselves and their own colleagues (Usher, 2014).

Finally, the last time affordance relates to extended retrievability, which ‘enables journalists to easily access large amounts of data and texts from different points in time and use them in the construction of current news narratives’ (Tenenboim-Weinblatt & Neiger, 2018, p. 44). This characteristic, which I posit directly opposes the idea of immediacy, has created the need to diversify the professional profiles of media workers inside a newsroom by hiring more graphic designers and data visualisation experts.

The study of time, temporalities, and rhythms inside the newsrooms can be approached from several perspectives; however, in this chapter, I argue that new technologies have forced news makers to accelerate the news-making process independently of the platform for which they work. Focussing on the usage of mobile instant messaging (MIM) applications, I argue that Tenenboim-Weinblatt and Neiger’s temporal affordances, although observable during my fieldwork, are also omitting the professional and personal consequences of new technologies that have mired journalists and media workers into a hasty new process for making the news.

4.2. The shifting temporalities of journalism

Studying time inside a sociotechnical organisation such as the media is a complex endeavour. Therefore, I should begin by defining the concept of time or the temporality of work and how I understand them throughout this chapter. Munn (1992) posits that the concept of temporality elucidates the notion of time as a symbolic process that produces and reproduces continually in our everyday practices. She leans on this concept to argue that individuals are ‘*in a sociocultural time of multiple dimensions (sequencing, timing, past-present-future relations, etc.)*’ (1992). Following Durkheim, she notes the relevance of the study of motion rhythms in which time is understood as a continuous process of unfolding activities. Moreover, Hodges argues that ‘human temporality, or temporalities if one considers its multiple dimensions, a symbolic process, is thus grounded in everyday social practices, and is the product of these practices’ (2008, p. 406). The frenetic movement that the digital age demands from journalists is also covered in Nikki Usher’s (2014) *Making News at The New York Times*. Usher observed how journalists inside *The Times* constantly negotiate the challenges of creating online and print content ‘according to emergent online journalism values: immediacy, interactivity, and participation’ (p. 4). She describes the online rhythms of news production, that is to say, the

urgency to update and refresh the media website in a non-stop loop. Much like Sisyphus, during my ethnographic fieldwork I observed that digital technologies have taken news production to a state of never-ending rolling.

These temporalities and rhythms have been widely discussed in the journalistic field, particularly regarding the relation between journalism and memory. Souza Leal, Antunes, and Vaz (2013) argue that ‘by considering journalism as a narrative aimed at presenting a piecemeal knowledge on the world’s current state of affairs [...], the relation with the essential elements of the representation and experience of time – the notions of past, present and future – is immediately observed’ (p. 108). These authors, for example, propose that when newspapers report deaths, they are talking not only about something that already happened but also something that could happen to the reader in the present or describe ‘possible dying’ in the future.

Temporality is central in the study of newsrooms since, as Tuchman claims, ‘news media carefully impose a structure upon time and space to enable themselves to accomplish the work of any one day and to plan across day[s]’ (p. 41); additionally, the social ordering of time and space ‘stands at the heart of organized human activity’ (p. 39). In this context, news is a perishable commodity, where ‘yesterday’s events are washed over by today’s headlines, as the media pursue new news in the race to break a fresh story’ (Newton, 1999, p. 578).

All of these definitions indicate that there are different types of temporalities or different approaches to time in the newsroom. Indeed, the study of time inside newsrooms may also refer to that of the interaction between journalists and their audiences. According to Gallo (2004), the emergence of weblog journalism implied, among other things, the creation of a real-time virtual feedback loop that destroyed the old frontiers that separated journalists and their audience. In journalism, historically, responses to a story could not happen until several days after its publication. However, journalists today live in a feedback rush where their audience comments, shares, or expresses different feelings about their articles instantly (Thorsen & Jackson, 2018), and this situation conditions the way news is covered.

Perhaps the ideal example I have witnessed regarding this feedback rush happened in the middle of the newsroom at *La Tercera*, where two large blue screens hung on the wall. The screens portrayed data supplied by Chartbeat, a technology company that provides analytics about the behaviour of readers and audiences to publishers. Specifically, these screens displayed the number of concurrent readers presently visiting any page of the site. According to the Chartbeat website, concurrent visitors are measured as ‘the total number of people on your site at any given moment, as measured by the number of simultaneous open browsing

sessions to your site’. This meant that immediately after publishing articles on the website, journalists could have spun their chairs around and looked at the screens to see how many people, if any, were reading their pieces at that moment in real time. Much like we watch live horse races, web journalists at *La Tercera* joked about their articles moving up or down in the concurrent list and gloated unapologetically when their work remained in the top three for an extended period of time. Unlike television ratings, which measure the current topic on screen, Chartbeat created a strange sense of competition between the journalists because it revealed people’s preferences or ratings across all the content available on the website. It was a direct message about how the audience valued and rewarded the topics on which journalists had been working.

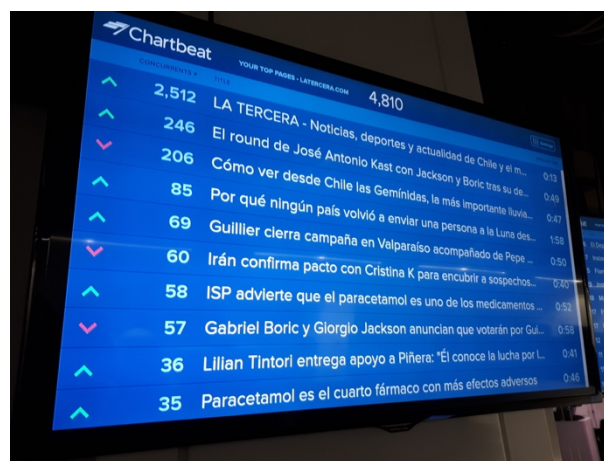


Figure 16. Screens portraying the Chartbeat data of *La Tercera*'s website. Photo: Tomás Dodds during fieldwork.

I was possibly the person in the newsroom who was least interested in achieving the higher positions, but I must admit experiencing a rush of excitement whenever one of my articles reached the top three positions and lingered there for hours. Then, a little ashamed of my own feelings, I realised that I was experiencing something similar to when an Instagram picture earns many likes, or when a Facebook post receives numerous reactions: the feeling of instant gratification.

Science historian and author James Gleick argues that in this digital context of multiplatform production and consumption, humans have ‘chosen speed, and we thrive on it – more than we generally admit. Our ability to work fast and play fast gives us power. It thrills us. If we have learned the name of just one hormone, it is adrenaline’ (2000). That thrill runs rampant in modern digital newsrooms, in which surpassing the competition with ‘scoops’ and ‘exclusives’ is often culturally associated with feelings of professional prestige and achievement (Saltzis,

2012) and ‘working fast’ and ‘being a quick thinker’ are also considered relevant skills (Thomsen, 2018).

However, scholars have been investigating how new digital technologies have transformed that thrill into an overwhelming pressure for immediacy (Domingo, 2008). One of the consequences of this crushing anxiety to publish faster than anybody else is what Davies (2009) calls ‘churnalism’. Because journalists no longer have time to be in the field, report, talk with sources, or read documents, Davies argues, the only remaining option is simply reutilising pre-packaged material from press releases or news agencies. During my fieldwork, I saw this happening repeatedly with the digital journalists, especially with news regarding international or economic themes. I believe this occurred because writing for those particular areas required a special set of skills and knowledge that the journalist often lacked. For Davies, ‘churnalism’ describes ‘journalists who are no longer out gathering news but who are reduced instead to passive processors of whatever material comes their way’ (2009, p. 59), falling into an almost-bureaucratic process of copying and pasting information they received from an email or a WhatsApp message. Therefore, as MacGregor (1997) posits, it would be correct to imagine that with new technologies, not only the news output has undergone a radical change but also the news intake – the way journalists relate to their sources and gather information as well as how that informs the articles they ultimately write. MacGregor states that by the end of the 1990s, the new speeds he was observing in the media meant that journalists were less interested in discovering what happened than in publishing quickly. In other words, MacGregor argues, it seems to be a characteristic of modern digital journalism to emphasise speed and quantity over thoughtful, quality news.

Web journalists are writing so quickly that they do not have time to stop, report, and reflect on their own work, but how is this expressed in the everyday news making inside the newsroom? Moreover, what consequences does this phenomenon have for the news that we consume daily? The answers to these questions came to me when I was trying to measure how freedom of speech and censorship worked inside the newsrooms in which I conducted my fieldwork. As I stated in Chapter 1, during the first weeks of my participant observation, I determined to explore the limits of the topics about which I could write, including equal marriage, abortion, and other controversial issues, until I discovered that *dictatorship* was a forbidden word. During this process, however, as I reviewed previously published articles in *La Tercera* and *Teletrece* about the LGBT community, I noticed that the same organisation was frequently singly quoted as a source. This happened independently of the particular topic of the news, whether it was equal marriage, violence against LGBT people, HIV/AIDS campaigns, suicide

prevention, work discrimination, transsexualism and identity, and so on. This caught my attention not because the organisation in question was performing poorly as a source, but because Chile has an ecology of LGBT NGOs that were absent in the debate. I explored why this could be happening, especially because of the importance, both theoretical and practical, of understanding how community-based organisations and NGOs' political and communication strategies spread an egalitarian message. First, this knowledge illuminated how societies such as that in Chile, may be changing, if at all. Studying the relationship between people who are LGBT and mass media indicates the level of openness or closure with which an issue is being discussed on a day-to-day basis in a society. Second, these observations can also enable other political LGBT organisations in different countries to evaluate their political communication strategies toward mass media and achieve a better sense of how to address the press. My conclusions in this section should not be considered a decisive model for the correct usage of political communication, but rather as food for thought in the discussion about time and news making. In this section, I refer to the organisation that appeared most often before my fieldwork as Organisation 1, and then I introduce a second organisation for comparison, which I simply call Organisation 2.

I started this exercise by asking my content editor to allow me to cover every news item about any LGBT-related issue for a period of time. I needed to control and establish the agenda on this topic to observe the flow of information.

Soon enough, I received the first email about a story regarding the Gender Identity Law and a Supreme Court ruling in favour of transsexual people. I contacted Organisation 1's press officer for a comment about the ruling, who responded within 10 minutes of my original request with a well-formed quote, ready to be copied and pasted into my article.

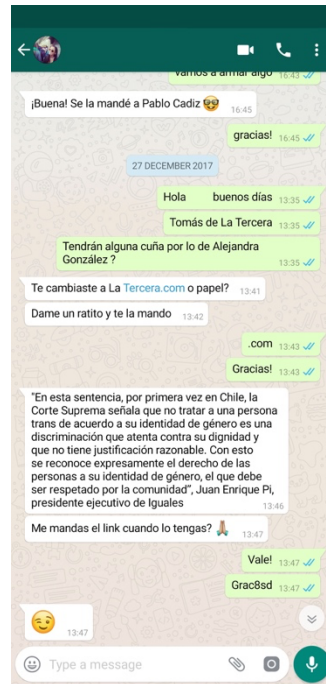


Figure 17. Organisation 1 responding to my request for comment. Photo: Screenshot by Tomás Dodds during fieldwork.

Concurrently, I contacted a second organisation, one whose main objective was the protection of transsexual people. If this article was about transsexual people, then the transsexual organisation should lead the piece, I thought. However, the people from Organisation 2 did not respond immediately. Rather, some minutes later, their press officer sent me a number of WhatsApp contacts of people I should contact. I responded that if she could not provide a quote for my article soon, then I would proceed and publish the piece without them. I had already delayed publishing the article for them at that point and knew that at any moment, other media outlets could be uploading their own pieces. When the press officer from Organisation 2 responded, however, she did so by attaching a three-minute audio file in which the president of the NGO mumbled his response in a sometimes-inaudible voice.

Over the next months, I continued my attempts to include different NGOs and therefore different voices in the pieces I wrote about LGBT news. Every time, sometimes even before I knew of an occurrence, the press officer of Organisation 1 sent me a friendly, generic text message, asking how I was and attaching a well-formed quote from someone within her organisation. However, the relationship with Organisation 2 seemed to worsen. Because I had approached them in a friendly, cordial way, they seemed to think that they had leverage over me and started sending me messages such as the one in Figure 18:

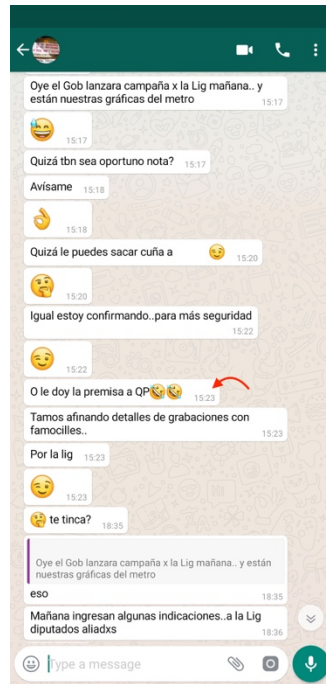


Figure 18. Organisation 2 trying to pitch a story to me. Photo: Screenshot by Tomás Dodds during fieldwork.

In a text chain inconsequentially littered with emojis, Organisation 2's press officer attempted to pitch a topic for me to cover. However, in the middle of the conversation, marked by the red arrow in Figure 18, she threatened to 'give the scoop' to another media outlet if I did not move faster. In her words, she would 'give the scoop to XX'. She closed that sentence with two emojis who are shedding tears from laughing.

In this digital context, the pressure to publish has been described as overwhelming; therefore, how should journalists approach similar situations? Was I becoming part of the 'churnalism' Davies lamented, or was I merely responding to the demands of the platforms for which I was writing? Perhaps if I had been writing for the paper, then I could have waited longer for a quote or transcribed the audio files myself, but I began to understand why some NGOs seemed to enjoy a better media presence than others. Those organisations that could enable reporters to save time, such as Organisation 1, were essentially rewarded by being included in the agenda more often than organisations without a clear message, regardless of the organisation's relation to the topic in question.

During my interview with Canal 13's content editor, I asked him about this issue: How do you choose one NGO over other to utilise as a source? 'I think there are many things in play', he responded. However, when he enumerated his list, the first factor he mentioned was 'a good media management plan'.

For Lewis and Cushion, 'if immediacy has become the new life-blood of 24-hour news culture, breaking news is its apotheosis' (2009, p. 304). News, after all, they argue, has long concerned

newness, and nothing could be newer than breaking news. As revealed in Chapter 2, if newsrooms such as *La Tercera* consider their digital journalists exclusively for breaking news, then there is no wonder that they produce stories that are closer to ‘churnalism’ than anything else. By all means, I should have been able to maintain a cool head and not succumb to the pressure, but I urgently felt the need to publish before my competitors, even if that meant omitting sources who, for many reasons, were unable to follow the rhythm of the news cycle. These new rhythms of work have led to allegations about a decline in journalistic standards (Lewis et al., 2005). Indeed, immediacy proved useful at the expense of NGOs, which, whether for social, economic, or political reasons, have yet to achieve a level of professionalism that allows them to establish a ‘good media management plan’. My salary, career, and permanence in the newsroom did not depend on the quantity of articles produced per hour, but even I was unable to wait to include a diversity of voices; consequently, it would be unavailing to demand better from journalists in newsrooms such as *La Tercera*.

Despite what many consider a grim scenario for the future of diversity of voices in the media, I found some hopeful responses in some of my interviews. Additionally, during my fieldwork, I encountered an optimistic approach to the new rhythms of production. I was interviewing the T13.cl content editor when I questioned him about time as a limited resource:

Tomás: Does it ever happen that if you have to choose between several topics to cover, you may leave an important topic aside in order to cover something that you know would generate a lot of clicks and bring traffic to the website?

Content editor: It may happen. But ... not in big, big stories. If there is a story that is really good, you have to do it. At least that is the way I see it. Even if you have to stay until late to finish the article ... It may not be read by so many people, but you have to do it anyway.

Tomás: Because if someone says, ‘Hey, why didn’t you cover this?’ [a common criticism in the media], you can say, ‘Yes, I did. Look’.

Content editor: Yes. And because ... deep down ... as I see it, you can decide to do things for the clicks, but you cannot stop doing things for the clicks.

Perhaps immediacy, interactivity, and participation are new values in the digital age, as Usher argues; however, as the quote above indicates, these concepts have not yet completely overtaken other journalistic values, such as accuracy, impartiality, or even humanity. Despite the thrill of it all, despite the clocks running out and the rushes of excitement for the concurrent visitors in any specific moment, time may not be the only decisive variable in news making.

4.3. Slow down, slow journalism!

Near the end of the 1980s, European communities, as a reaction against fast-food conglomerates that had started to replace their local, ancient culinary culture, began to organise and promote what they called the ‘slow food’ movement, which promoted local food and ingredients as well as traditional cooking. More importantly, it was a call to create a meaningful relationship between the product and the consumer.

Drawing from this experience, British writer and newspaper editor Susan Greenberg wondered whether something similar could be said about the current state of the journalistic industry in the United Kingdom. In an article published in the *Prospect*, Greenberg first utilised the concept of ‘slow journalism’, questioning whether there really was a market in the UK for ‘essays, reportage and other non-fiction writing that takes its time to find things out, notices stories that others miss, and communicates it all to the highest standards’ (2007). This valid question originates in the fact that, unlike U.S. editorial markets, non-fiction, journalistic literature in the United Kingdom has experienced difficulty earning its popularity among readers. Although some British newspapers may be becoming more magazine-like, she argues, they have yet to translate this interest into economic support for high-standard research, which is not only costly but also time-consuming.

Departing from Greenberg’s original argument, others have started to loosely apply the term to everyday journalism. For example, Le Masurier has argued that this hyper-acceleration and over-production in which ‘quality has suffered, ethics are compromised and user attention has eroded’ (2016, p. 405) has caused newer forms of journalism practice to emerge as a consciously ethical practice to respond to what she calls the exponential decay of certain journalistic values. Le Masurier mainly focusses her work on what is now being called ‘slow journalism’. According to her previous publications, ‘this journalism does not require a checklist of key characteristics to qualify as Slow. The term, like the Slow movement itself, is more a critical orientation to the effects of speed on the practice of journalism’ (Masurier, 2015, p. 143). The slow movement, as defined by Carl Honoré, one of the heads behind this crusade, is ‘calm, careful, receptive, still, intuitive, unhurried, patient, reflective, quality-over-quantity. It is about making real and meaningful connections – with people, culture, work, *food*, everything’ (2009, pp. 14–15). It is a reaction to the speed of living and information consumption that some attribute to the way certain Western societies have approached the usage of new digital technologies. As Castells argues, the Information Age has rendered the

audience to a state of pure informed bewilderment (2010). As a solution to this phenomenon, journalist Susan Moeller proposes the following:

Slow Journalism is about valuing content over speed. Slow Journalism is about identifying core issues and finding a way to give audiences information of lasting substance – it's not about posting the latest news clip on a 24/7 deadline to 'feed the beast'. Slow Journalism is about news you can use ... to make you a more informed citizen. Slow Journalism is activist journalism; it's journalism that tries to enlighten, and perhaps even empower its audience, often by asking that audience to become collaborators. (Moeller, 2010)

Based on the data collected during my fieldwork, I can only agree with the diagnosis that members of the slow journalism movement are making here. Quality has indeed suffered, and as I present through the case study toward the end of this chapter, journalists perceive that certain ethical aspects of their work are increasingly compromised every day. Is the solution in a movement that was based on the idea of decelerating to make a meaningful connection with a fight or to oppose the construction of a McDonald's restaurant in the northwest Italian region of Piedmont? I do not know. The journalists I interviewed during my fieldwork – the reporters that this movement argue have forgotten the value of 'content over speed' – have actually not forgotten it at all. They have been forced to publish stories about *Grey's Anatomy* or to 'feed the beast', as Moeller states, precisely because that is the only way they can afford to publish the 'news you can use'. Journalists are well aware of the shortcomings that the fast pace of their work has over their final products:

'Maybe on TV things are easier to explain because you just need images, a quote, and you also have some other resources. But in the web, you need to break quick, and breaking quick and not making a mistake is hard', a digital reporter at Teletrece told me. If ever there was a day when she felt that pressure, then it was the day of our interview. The T13.cl content editor was off for the day, and she had been temporarily promoted to replace him. We were, however, able to sit together around our lunch window and discuss, among other things, the need to 'feed the beast'.

'Many, many times we fall into that thing of just writing an article without truly understanding what we are writing, and therefore the article itself is unreadable, and at the end of the day, the audience is not going to understand much because the article does not say much', she explained. As an example, she utilised a story she was covering that same day. In 2016 and 2017, Sociedad

Química y Minera de Chile (SQM), a Chilean chemical company, was being investigated for allegations of tax evasion, bribery, and improper payments to politicians. Over the course of two years, the investigation had become increasingly complicated. The names of compromised politicians, the owners of the company, lawyers, witnesses, and so on, had grown into a cloud of faces, facts, and rumours.

‘It happens with cases that are very puzzling or complicated, that you don’t know where to grab them from. So, of course you have to have that ability to understand a topic very well, or fairly well, to explain it, because basically, writing a breaking-news article is explaining a fact or event to someone who doesn’t know anything about it’, she concluded. She explained that, unlike the television department at Canal 13 in which one journalist was assigned to cover the entire case, in the digital area of Teletrece, journalists bounced back and forth between topics as soon as they arose, similar to a game of whack-a-mole.

Greenberg’s original point is not that all journalism should be slow, because the world continues to move quickly. Rather, as Agger (2004) states, slow journalism and rapid breaking-news reporting must dialectically co-exist: ‘slow food and slow life are important goals, but they must be situated within, and not before or beyond, modernity’ (2004, p. 149), he argues. Agger further proposes the term *slowmodernity* to describe this time in which we live, when information technologies are utilised to decelerate the rhythms of existence, rather than to accelerate them. However, the slow coexists with the fast in such a way that inserting slowness into modernity does not erase or remove rapid technologies, ‘including media culture and the Internet, that enable a literary democracy’ (2004, p. 149); rather, it prevents these same technologies from thwarting the democratic project of our societies, where the free, fast flow of information is key.

Instead of a simplistic approach that supposes that journalists have submitted to a routine of news production that does not include ‘information of lasting substance’, Agger approaches the study of speed by encouraging multiplatform newsrooms to achieve systematic coordination of its parts and platforms, which could produce an organic journalism in which slow and fast meet. However, for that to occur, media organisations must support both economically and technically the journalistic projects that today precisely aim in this direction. We already know it will not be an easy road: even newsrooms, such as Teletrece, in which the digital infrastructure had centre stage and the leading role in the newsroom, have editors from other platforms who still do not understand the role of digital journalists. As a Canal 13 digital reporter admitted during our interview,

Sometimes [television editors] ask you to react with logics with which the web does not work, because perhaps on TV you can tap something and just show it, right? On the web, even though it is also immediate, there are certain processes. You cannot just publish a picture, for example, you first have to copy it, paste it, upload the content, update it. ... There are a series of process[es] that are exclusively for the web, and when someone from another platform comes and asks you to do something on the web but with television times, sometimes that ends up looking like hyperventilation.

Is there a future for slow journalism? Is there an opportunity for this type of journalism in this Chilean media ecology that does not seem to want to stop? According to Drok and Hermans (2016), the audience will eventually decide whether slow journalism has a future, as they determine the pace and create the demand for the type of journalism they want to consume. On the one hand, they may prefer rapid journalism, which has mainly been associated with free, breaking-news stories that can be rapidly accessed utilising social media platforms or by directly visiting a web page. On the other hand, they may choose to consume slow journalism, which is often associated with paid content – those well-developed articles that hide behind a paywall in a magazine-like format. Therefore, I say, ‘Slow down’ to slow journalism, because until the economic structures inside media organisations change, we will continue to experience the changing nature of journalistic rhythms.

4.4. The changing nature of journalistic rhythms

WhatsApp is participating in the transformation of both the rhythm and structures of time in the newsroom. The hyper-speed ability of fibre-optic technology directly threatens to erase certain journalistic traditions that today do not work sufficiently quickly (Willnat & Weaver, 2018). WhatsApp groups, for example, are faster and more efficient than press conferences. The ability to ask follow-up questions, once considered a must for serious journalists, is disappearing in the quest to obtain information quickly and feed it to multiplatform systems that are waiting to be refreshed instantaneously.

By conducting participant observation, I watched journalists speed through articles to meet a deadline and also felt the pressure of time hanging over their shoulders. When the temporality is described as ‘we need to break with that story right now’, WhatsApp becomes a key ally.

Repeatedly, I witnessed how WhatsApp was the protagonist in many conversations between colleagues. Often, journalists would jump into the air, brandishing their phones and screaming about a quote, statistic, or picture they had received on the application. An abnormally noisy scraping of chairs against the floor would fill the newsroom as journalists and editors gathered to debate whether they were seeing another apocryphal story, as many circled around WhatsApp those days. Editors, ever the inveterate doubters, would grab their phones and contact their own sources for confirmation. All of this happened within minutes, as everybody knew that if they had received that piece of information, then more likely than not, another journalist elsewhere may have received it as well. The ability to gather information quickly was accompanied by the price of transforming the rhythms and structures of time within the newsroom, and WhatsApp was directly at the centre of those changes.

However, MIM is also a reminder of the toll of immediacy in journalists' personal lives. Because both interpersonal and mass communication are interchangeable concepts within this application, journalists are not off duty at any time. Hence, they find themselves trapped in the technology they celebrate. Above all, the temporality of journalism changes with the introduction of one instant message, which demonstrates the idea that a sociotechnical organisation depends on the technology on which it is based. This further illuminates how vulnerable journalists are confronted with the agency of the tools upon which they depend to report the news.

In the following sections, I review how the introduction of this MIM has impacted not only the temporality of news production but also other spheres of journalism, such as intimacy and obtainability.

Drawing on Ian Hodder's human-thing entanglement theory (2011, 2014), this chapter proposes pondering this issue beyond the mere relationship between user and new technology. For Hodder, the relationship between people and things can create specific practical entrapments that occur because 'we have come to depend on the positive benefits deriving from the greater flows of resources and information through the network' (2011, p. 164). In this case, Hodder's theory elucidates the asymmetrical and dependent relationship between journalists and WhatsApp, a social media platform that functions as a digital intermediary with an ever-growing number of performance characteristics. This approach does not deny the possible positive outcomes of this link but encourages wariness of the entrapments inherent in the individual-object relationship. As Hodder posits, 'humans get caught in a double bind, depending on things that depend on humans' (2014, p. 20), leading to a codependency between

the two in which neither can continue without the other, as is the case with WhatsApp. The longer and deeper the relationship, the more difficult it is to detach oneself from the other.

4.5. Case study: The intimacy, mutuality, and obtainability of WhatsApp

MIM applications are understood to be an essential component of everyday communication routines (Andueza López & Pérez Arozamena, 2014). Unlike SMS from two decades ago, applications such as WhatsApp allow their users not only to send and receive text but also to share real-time locations, images, voice recordings, documents, and videos (Church & de Oliveira, 2013). These communication modalities are available both as one-on-one interactions and more recently, within groups of up to 250 people. As a result of the latter, the notion that WhatsApp is “‘just a few friends connecting” [...] seems to have gone out the window’ (Armstrong, 2018). Indeed, with the massification of personal mobile phones and the low cost of mobile data prices, WhatsApp should be considered a social network that allows its users to access countless pieces of information quickly (Bouhnik & Deshen, 2014). Yet, the rapid increase in the consumption of data produces tenseless conceptions of action in which the temporality of some activities is reduced to an immediate and atemporal *now*.

MIM applications penetrate deep into the way we communicate with each other in what Malka, Ariel, and Avidar (2015) call a ‘unique combination of mass and interpersonal communication channels’ (p. 329). The intrusion in people’s lives has been sufficiently dire to prompt significant research regarding the link between the usage of this application and new types of addictions and disorders (Faye et al., 2016; Rajini et al., 2018; van den Eijnden et al., 2016). However, instead of working as a deterrent, the significant effect that WhatsApp has had seems to uniquely attract journalists. Those working in the media willingly agree to participate in these virtual relationships with sources. Indeed, WhatsApp has spread ubiquitously throughout countries and newsrooms. Some authors have produced meaningful research on the usage of this MIM by journalists in nondemocratic contexts. Previous research has revealed that WhatsApp has become a substantial tool for journalists and their sources in locations where state agents accessing off-the-record conversations could result in reporters facing indefinite incarceration or even disappearance (I. Craig, 2017). Similarly, Frère (2017) reports that ‘Twitter, Facebook and WhatsApp have become the main conveyors of information and the location for debate’ (p. 6) in what she calls the impossibility of journalism in Burundi, a country in which the situation for journalists continues to deteriorate and new sanctions against media organisations are enacted regularly.

WhatsApp may be perceived as safe because, since 2014, the application has utilised end-to-end encryption (E2EE) technology, which allows for ‘data between communication parties to be secure, free from eavesdropping, and hard to crack’ (Endeley, 2017, p. 96). WhatsApp users are also allowed to check whether their messages have been received properly and read by the addressee (blue check marks appear next to the information once it has been sent and read). In addition to the improvements in E2EE technology, tracking delivery information allows senders to ensure that messages are received correctly and privately without fearing that the communication may have been intercepted. It should also be noted, nonetheless, that this sentiment is not shared by all journalists (see Waters, 2018).

4.6. Intimacy and mutuality

Soon after my arrival in the first newsroom, the content editor to whom I reported started sending me contacts over WhatsApp. People whom I had not met or even heard of were finding a place between friends and family in my phone. For every article I wrote, colleagues or editors sent me three or four additional contacts to utilise as sources. It seemed to be a tradition to assist neophytes in their endeavours to compile their own political, specialist, and academic sources, as wasting time locating a source for an article may exasperate senior colleagues who must quickly dispatch articles for the web. The instruction was often the same: ‘Send them a WhatsApp message first; if they don’t reply soon enough, well ... *then* call them’. Consequently, I did as instructed. Shortly thereafter, responses began to arrive. However, to my surprise, these replies contained a considerable number of smiley faces, thumbs-up, and praying hands (which people actually utilise to mean ‘please’ and ‘thank you’), although they conveyed the urgency of the topic on which we were working or the source’s satisfaction with the article published. Weeks later, upon my request over WhatsApp for an interview, a presidential campaign manager simply responded with a short ‘I’m driving’, while a congresswoman simply replied, ‘Sure. But can we talk later? I am in the chamber right now’. Two things caught my attention from these interactions. First, I had access to people quickly. Both had answered my texts within seconds. Congressional sessions and road safety rules were no excuse to miss the chance for an interview. Second, my overly formal texts seemed out of place confronted with these light responses that had been decorated with emojis. Politicians and academics responded as if they were texting a close friend. A tacit level of intimacy and urgency was inherent in every chat, as opposed to the fatigued voices that answered my phone calls or the emails signed with the perennial ‘regards’. The behavioural codes, or even the

idioms, that rule mobile chat platforms such as WhatsApp seemed to dictate the frame under which sources and journalists *must* interact. How does this form of communication mediate the way journalists interact with their sources? How does this affect the news-making process as a whole?

As Kjeldskov et al. (2004) argue, ‘people have always used artefacts to mediate their intimate relationships’ (p. 105). Either through material objects, cultural symbols, or non-verbal signals, people find ways to express ideas or feelings. However, each medium – or channel of communication – produces a different level of intimacy between its participants. Specifically, research on computer-mediated communication (CMC) indicates that people are more likely to engage in high-intimacy self-disclosures via text-based CMC interactions than in face-to-face communication (Gibbs et al., 2006; Jiang et al., 2011; Tidwell & Walther, 2002). According to Walther’s (1996) hyperpersonal model, the reason behind this effect is that ‘at the level of the sender, CMC partners may select and express communication behaviors that are more stereotypically desirable in achieving their social goals and transmit messages free of the “noise” that otherwise comes with unintended appearance or behavior features’ (pp. 28-29). This noise, or the unpredictability of the impulses surrounding interpersonal communication, is limited by the asynchrony of the posted messages and the constrained number of cues that CMC communication, especially in MIM, offers to its participants (see Boczkowski, Matassi, & Mitchelstein, 2018). The latter partially explains the usage of emojis in the exchanges between sources and journalists. That is, parties utilise compensatory mechanisms to bypass the limitations of the platform (Kaye et al., 2017).

It follows that a higher level of intimacy – or maybe a new kind of relationship – should be expected when journalists begin to interact with their sources not only through face-to-face communication but also through text-based mobile chat applications. In their study regarding journalistic trust-building with their sources over mobile applications, Belair-Gagnon, Agur, and Frisch (2018) conclude that because of the complexity of online communication, mobile sourcing depends significantly on social factors, such as the way in which both journalists and their sources understand the norms, codes, and practices on a specific chat application. Indeed, according to a television political reporter, the presence of journalists in their WhatsApp contacts list may present challenges for the sources themselves:

Sometimes [the politicians] believe you are their friend, or they feel that they have an edge to pressure you or collect favours. They do not understand that this is journalism and that even if you are building trust with them, it’s a journalist-source

relationship, not a friendship. The format of the app blurs some professional boundaries.

Political reporters, as opposed to breaking-news reporters, need to navigate WhatsApp conversations more carefully. According to the journalists I interviewed, it was not uncommon to build a close relationship with a source that included having long conversations in which news topics remained untouched: ‘You have to chat with them, so you joke, they talk about their lives and kids, they ask you how you are doing outside work, and sometimes they really like you’, a political reporter told me during our interview. In that sense, WhatsApp may be another way to maintain and secure pre-existing relationships with sources. This may contradict the idea of a new type of relationship between political journalists and sources. Based on the information gathered during my fieldwork, political reporters have traditionally engaged with politicians beyond the professional topics of the day to gain their trust and hopefully obtain exclusive information for a story. In this type of relationship, the principle of mutuality – the ‘you scratch my back; I’ll scratch yours’ concept – was better achieved when trust was built in a face-to-face relationship. Indeed, Reich (2008) reports that some journalists prefer oral communication over textual in relation to human informants.

However, the case for web-based breaking-news journalists was different. Having little time to leave the newsroom during work hours, these journalists often engaged in long-form conversations with sources they had not met or even talked to over the phone. According to a breaking-news journalist: ‘Contacting them over WhatsApp is the fastest way to obtain quotes. It is very useful to us’. Yet, she admitted that the line between on- and off-the-record information became blurry after extended chat conversations.

You have to ask: ‘Senator, can I use this message as a quote?’ ‘Yeah, go ahead’ [they respond]. But still, a new line between what is off and what is not off is drawn. Get it? The relationship with the source is ... different.

Technically, both journalists and sources should assume that every exchange of information or communication is on the record unless the opposite is clearly stated beforehand (Elliott & Culver, 1992). However, as I noticed during my interviews, the opposite occurred in WhatsApp: Everything was off the record unless otherwise noted. The usage of emojis in the texts, the informal tone of the responses, and the sense of exclusiveness that chatting with a source seemed to have over journalists confronted them with a myriad of subjective judgements

every day. Publishing something from a WhatsApp chat without source permission could cause the end of the journalist-source relationship, although no ethical rules were broken. Conversely, what would be broken was the tacit intimacy that chat participants assumed over the platform.

4.7. Obtainability

The channels through which information is shared matters, as they proscribe who can consume it. Even social media precludes those without a stable Internet connection to access the information stores within its sites. Traditionally, journalism offered only two options for a source to share information rapidly with a considerable number of journalists: a press release could be written and then emailed, faxed, or delivered to the newsroom (Shoemaker, 1989; Walters & Walters, 1992), or a source could call a press conference to which journalists would travel and step on each other to have their questions answered (Clayman, 1993). However, according to the journalists I interviewed, both systems presented immediate problems for attendees and sources alike. First, unless a reporter was expecting to receive a piece of information, press releases were often lost in a mountain of other emails waiting to be opened. In this case, the communication manager sending the press release would have to call each newsroom, asking whether they received the information and whether they had any questions about its content. Second, travelling outside the city where the newsroom was located required both time and resources for the media. If the story was not sufficiently important, then sending a crew far away could not be justified. Consequently, many stories, although important, would not receive any coverage. This further highlighted the gap between traditional and more resourceful media as well as between newer and often poorer media organisations.

It was difficult to measure the impact that WhatsApp has had in the dynamic information ecosystem in which data flowed between sources and journalists, but it remained clear that many stories were covered because they landed safely in a journalist's phone. According to a web editor, the popularisation of information via WhatsApp had several perks but also presented some challenges:

The same information quickly reaches different media, some [of] which may have resources ... from media with super-high budgets, such as *La Tercera* or *El Mercurio*, which have 10 journalists covering politics, to media where a single person is the medium. So, I think that is very good. But of course, the risk is that

many times because of the laziness, you could miss important information. For example, I remember that, I think it was Alejandro Guillier's chat (a presidential candidate's WhatsApp group for journalists), there was a journalist whining, 'Hey, but they're not going to send us quotes [from the candidate]?' When you start to see it that way, there is a problem. [WhatsApp] is an aid; it facilitates the solution to the problem, but it is not the only way to do journalism.

Many things can be extrapolated from this anecdote. First, MIM is erasing economic and material limitations between newsrooms. That is not to say that economic and material conditions no longer matter, since it is more likely for a source to trust a well-known, popular, established medium. However, if small journalistic projects reach a WhatsApp group, then the likelihood for them to obtain relevant information increases considerably.³² Moreover, these pieces of information do not limit themselves to text. Because MIM supports audiovisual material as well, journalists can now create an array of content and take full advantage of the web as a platform. Similarly, entire interviews can be conducted over WhatsApp, which reduces the technological requirements for small newsrooms to gather new information. More than once, a source with whom I was texting told me to send questions over WhatsApp and later replied with voice messages and pictures, which felt as if I had on-demand sources. Utilising a smartphone and a decent Wi-Fi connection, I collected text and audiovisual material to create a well-informed multimedia article for the web in less than an hour.

Journalists in the two newsrooms in which I conducted participant observation seemed to fully capitalise on the WhatsApp groups. These were usually created and regulated by the communications manager of institutions or politicians. Thus, journalists could navigate between the Congress group, the presidential palace (*La Moneda*) group, and the Senate group. I conducted my fieldwork during the 2017 presidential campaign, and each of the candidates had their own WhatsApp group of journalists, where press releases, activity information, pictures, and even the candidate's voice recordings were shared with 200 journalists simultaneously. As expected, NGOs and political parties also had their own groups, although I heard many conversations in which journalists complained about the irrelevant information

³² Getting a spot in one of the WhatsApp group was not necessarily an easy endeavor. As in many other spheres of social life, acquaintanceship played a crucial role in this task. Journalists usually knew each other from physical encounters during press conferences and created a professional and social web that would later translate into the ability to help each other access physical and non-physical—such as WhatsApp groups—places.

shared. A phenomenon occurring within these groups was that community managers were not the only ones sharing information. Journalists warned others, although they were from different media organisations, when something important was happening or about to happen. A serious level of camaraderie permeated the entire conversation. If a journalist missed a quote, then another would post it in the group. ‘Everyone is going to have it anyway’, a journalist shrugged when I asked him about this issue. This camaraderie, however, was not inherent in the application. Rather, it was forged between journalists who spent hours waiting together when a news conference or briefing was postponed. Some studied at the same university, some worked together, and some met in the eternal vigils of news reporting. Previous studies have demonstrated that journalists converse and develop fellowship over other social networks, such as Twitter (Molyneux, 2015; Mourão, 2015). However, although the journalists interviewed herein would not call another media organisation to ask for information they missed or openly tweet for assistance, asking for the same information in a WhatsApp group did not seem to be inappropriate behaviour.

The statement of ‘everyone is going to have it anyway’ further reflects the changes of temporality within the newsroom. During the ‘paper days’, as Chilean journalists referred to the time before the eruption of the web, when a news organisation obtained an exclusive or a scoop on a story, other media would not be able to replicate that information until the next day. Now, however, the meaning of a scoop in journalism is measured in the seconds required for the next media outlet to replicate that story on their website.³³

The content editor’s quote described the dependency that some journalists felt toward WhatsApp. He later added,

Sometimes an excess of information is shared. For example, in these same groups like the Congress one, someone asks for a number and people fight to give you the number. Get it? So, it’s fun. But there are also times where people complain because these are numbers that you may have struggled to get, that the source gave to you [after gaining their trust] and then someone goes and shares it in a group with 250 people.

³³ The same does not happen with “exclusives”, where other media outlets, at least the ethical ones, would be required to quote the news organization that reported the information first and sometimes even create a hyperlink in their articles that takes the reader to the original piece.

The criticism inside the newsroom was often directed toward younger and more inexperienced journalists. Media workers regularly complained that newer generations did not know how difficult it had been in the old days to obtain a source's phone number. Journalists' contacts and agendas were considered a treasure, as these contained the most valuable raw material for journalists: their sources. Now, in a media environment that privileges and rewards immediacy, collaboration in all its forms may be the only way to survive the transformations in the temporalities of media ecology.

WhatsApp is also beneficial for multiplatform media. The television station where I conducted my fieldwork also hosted a website for news articles as well as a radio station, which translated into three separate teams of journalists working on information they could utilise in their respective platforms. However, WhatsApp built bridges between the groups. A web editor affirmed this observation:

I have a WhatsApp group with the TV political reporters, where they will warn you: 'I already have the quote of such person', [or] 'I am in the president's press conference, and she said this', or they even send you the audio immediately. [...] I am also in a group with the radio journalists, and in that chat, the people of the radio will tell you what's coming [on their broadcast].

I saw the same behaviour multiple times. Figure 19 is a screenshot in which a newspaper journalist from the web journalists' WhatsApp group sent information from the field and asked for someone to write a quick web article.³⁴³⁵

³⁴ Translation: "Guys (informal). 5341 schools are now non-for profit, which equals 96.1% of the total enrolment. 160 are being set up right now (1.9% of the total enrolment). 186 have not initiated the paper work (2% of the total enrolment).—If they initiate the paperwork between today, tomorrow and the day after, they still have a chance to receive the subsidies. Minister Delpiano (quote): 'If today, tomorrow or the day after the 186 [schools] that have not yet started the paperwork do it, they could receive the subsidies in time, if not, they will not'. It's the Inclusion Law. Could you upload the article to the web, please?"

³⁵ The article was later published on the web under the title "Ley de Inclusión: 186 establecimientos aún no inician proceso para ser sin fines de lucro" using the Minister's quotes: <http://www2.latercera.com/noticia/ley-inclusion-1-375-227-alumnos-estudian-gratis/>

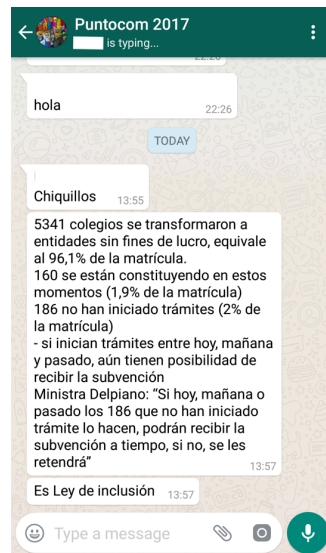


Figure 19. WhatsApp Group screenshot from 4 April 2018. Photo: Tomás Dodds during fieldwork.

As Westlund (2013) states, ‘Mobile devices have enhanced the possibilities for journalists to work and report from the field. They can be used for news reporting for mobile news platforms but also for the entire cross-media portfolio’ (p. 16). Moreover, as Figure 19 confirms, WhatsApp has accelerated this process. However, as mentioned previously, WhatsApp groups can only host up to 250 participants. This upper limit translates into an inclusion-exclusion process whereby group administrators must choose who remains and who is eliminated. I was eliminated from the internal groups as soon as I finished my fieldwork in each newsroom. In external groups, such as the Congress or La Moneda groups, the administrators were constantly monitoring the comments of the journalists from every media outlet. If someone committed serious ethical faults or often sent spam messages, then it was likely that the group administrator would delete them and add someone else.

The double blue check marks in a WhatsApp message can save the day with the same ease that may ruin the night for a journalist. For a breaking-news journalist, some sources ‘send messages at unusual, ridiculous times. I do not know if it is an assistant, if they are the congressmen themselves ... Sometimes 11 at night. I am not lying, 11 at night, 2 in the morning, a message. I do not even read them’, a digital reporter told me. However, the journalists with whom I worked were aware that not reading the messages could have serious consequences. Those working in media tended to try to ensure an exclusive relationship with a source: ‘If they have something to say, you want to be the one they tell it to’, a web journalist admitted. Missing a text could mean that the source turns to the competition.

4.8. Privacy, intimacy, and informality

This chapter has drawn on theoretical approaches that understand media as sociotechnical organisations, that is, institutions based upon the relationship between nonhuman and human systems. The idea that humans not only depend on other humans but they also create interdependencies with material things is particularly relevant to address in this study. For contemporary journalists, WhatsApp offers the potential for faster access to greater amounts of information, but the tool is also changing the way some journalists engage in news making and with their sources. Special attention should be focussed on generational differences in these matters. Technologies such as MIM may be de-skilling older journalists and preventing newer generations from learning face-to-face tactics for gathering information.

The transformations of the temporality within newsrooms have been studied and special attention has been bestowed on how WhatsApp is changing work rhythms. Because both journalists and sources seemed to be more willing to engage frequently via WhatsApp than through any other communication platform, the time and money required to collect information has decreased considerably by utilising this application.

However, some negative elements are also noted in this case study. The ideas of privacy and intimacy are often conditioned by the informality that reigns over WhatsApp. In this context, journalists are confronted regularly with information that vacillates between being off and on the record. The virtual relationships in which journalists entangle themselves must be addressed to prevent ethical lapses and lead to practices that most closely relate to the deontology of the profession.

The most worrying trend seems to be the inescapability that journalists experience with this technology. MIM generally and WhatsApp specifically have modified the state of affairs to the point that journalists depend heavily on these applications to perform their jobs and face real consequences, both personal and professionally, if they detach themselves from it.

The findings of this case study are restricted to WhatsApp. Further research should and must investigate the impact of platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, Snapchat, or other MIM services on journalists' temporalities and routines.

Notwithstanding its limitations, this study suggests that journalism in Chile is turning toward a scenario in which virtual relationships are privileged over face-to-face interactions. Moreover, the entanglement of humans and technologies, especially in journalism, should be pondered from a critical perspective. We should wonder who is reaping the benefits from the heavy reliance that journalists and media workers are placing on technological innovations. The asymmetry in the balance of cost and benefits should warn us because, again, the longer

and deeper the relationship between humans and technologies, the more difficult it is to detach from one another.

This chapter has examined how the introduction of new digital technologies is currently transforming the temporalities of news making and the effects this is having on news makers. Based on the interviews and data collected during my fieldwork, my results indicate that new digital technologies are not only accelerating the news-making process but thereby are also eroding professional-ethical values and standards of news production as well as personal, intimate aspects of the lives of media workers.

More importantly, the new temporalities of news production have caused radical transformations in the news-making process. To categorise these changes, we can simply observe the shifts in the temporal affordances of material technology.

The results regarding the preparation time affordance are dissimilar depending on the platform for which each journalist currently works. While newspapers reporters did not seem to feel a significant change in this aspect, several digital journalists admitted feeling the pressure to publish news articles although they did not completely understand the content they had written. New digital platforms are marked by the versionality and versability of the content they hold. Because stories can now be changed endlessly, news articles do not even need to be finished before they are posted online. Rather, posting an incomplete news article has become a traditional practice because beating the competition in the race to capture audience attention is now a common occurrence in media production.

Finally, new digital technologies have also impacted the extended retrievability affordance in news making. Digital technologies, expressed particularly in WhatsApp groups, allow reporters to interact with a greater number of media professionals who seem now more likely than ever before to contribute helpful information, thus creating a new kind of kinship over other social networks that are utilised by contemporary journalists.

However, some trends in the literature argue that journalists have simply forgotten the importance or the relevance of their jobs, although the data collected during my fieldwork indicates that this is not the case. Although digital journalists were working faster every day, they were aware of the consequences of new rhythms and temporalities on the quality of the work they produced. However, they felt that this was an inescapable situation, as even the tools and phone applications, such as MIM, they utilised were transforming journalistic values and professional ideals.

That is to say, journalists may choose today which phone model or telephone company they utilise, but regardless of that choice, applications such as WhatsApp must be included because

the structure of how news is reported is no longer the journalist's choice, and the audience's new consumption routines dictate which tools should be utilised. Journalism has perpetually been in a state of transition, as journalists gravitate toward technological and digital innovations that allow them to work more quickly and efficiently. Journalists turned to certain MIM services because they seemed to be ideal tools to engage quickly and privately with their sources, although they did not anticipate the chain of consequences that followed.

As with many applications before, applications such as WhatsApp may one day cease to exist, and it remains to be seen how younger generations of journalists will conduct their reporting when, as I have seen in this research, they have been trained in a 'WhatsApp them first' context, where *WhatsApp* is a verb rather than a mere noun.

We cannot yet tell the long-term consequences of this acceleration on journalism and the news-making process. However, by affecting the temporality, that is, the rhythms and practices of news production, new digital technologies have already contributed to reshaping several aspects of newsgathering: intimacy and trust as well as camaraderie and obtainability are concepts with new meaning in today's media ecology.