

PHILLIPS, A. *Journalism in Context. Practice and Theory for the Digital Age.*

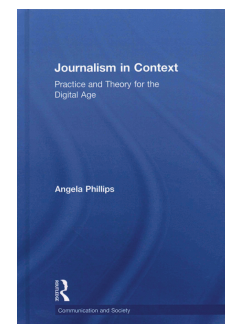
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## New relations, spaces and ways of carrying out journalism

Theory, the result of decades of research by journalism faculties, must not be seen as a corset or reproach but as a tool that helps professionals see and think about how to improve their work. As more and more journalists with years of experience go to universities to teach their profession and as more and more students who've been trained in faculties occupy positions on publications, the defensive barriers between professionals and academics of journalism will begin to crumble.

This is the initial premise of *Journalism in Context*, a book by Angela Phillips, journalist and lecturer for the last twenty years at the Media and Communications department of Goldsmiths in London. Author of *Good Writing for Journalists* (2007) and numerous articles in prestigious science journals on issues such as sources and verification, transparency and professional ethics, as well as journalistic quality in the new digital ecosystem, Phillips stresses the need to redefine the role of professional journalists to adapt to today's 2.0 media environment, as well as the importance of this adaptation being carried out via academic training and the transfer of research.

At a time when, even within the profession, there are doubts regarding the need for such studies, Phillips adds her voice to other authors (Patterson 2013) who've even gone further and claim that, for the first time in their history, Journalism Faculties are called upon to play a crucial role in the definitive implementation of quality standards for the profession at a time of transition for the journalism industry, which to date had been more concerned about finding a healthy business model than safeguarding the quality of the product offered to its audiences. According to Patterson, knowledge-based journalism will be decisive for the profession's future and there's no better place to develop this than university, , noting that the professional skills required today are more difficult to acquire outside than within faculties.

In *Journalism in Context* Angela Phillips presents an

introduction to the theory and practice of journalism in today's context of structural and technological change affecting the industry. By reviewing the field theory of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1993), she analyses the key factors that determine not only how the structure of media organisations influences the processes of selecting, prioritising and treatment carried out by journalists of the subjects they present to their audiences but also the ways in which this structure interacts and participates in the production and distribution of informative content via different digital platforms.

To this end, Phillips divides her book into seven chapters: in the first she provides an updated definition of news (that which is presented to the audience as a combination of what we need to know, what is important, and what arouses our curiosity); in the second she focuses on the structures within which journalists operate and claims there's a need to create trustworthy channels to transmit news that represent all citizens (stating that the most powerful already have such channels as a consequence of the structure *per se*), and that these should become a "life force" of democratic society; in the third she deals with verification as the basis of the journalistic discipline (Kovach & Rosenstiel 2012; and Silverman 2015) and as a guarantee of credibility in the audience's eyes as opposed to rumour and the viral nature of Twitter, the click and SEO culture; in the fourth she covers how the digitalisation of publications has brought about the belief that new multi-tasking, cross-media profiles are required for journalists (García Avilés & Carvajal 2008); in the fifth she looks at interaction as the essence of the new relationship that needs to be established by the media with "emancipating audiences" and at hybrid or collaborative journalism as a valid formula to focus on a type of user that can generate content but can in no way replace the work of a professional journalist trained for the profession and who must receive a salary; in the sixth she explores the potential keys to the journalism business model of the future, online and mobile, which must continue to evolve through greater technological innovation and a search for alternative or complementary sources of income such as

microsites and subscriptions (although open sites will continue to exist, audiences will gradually realise that good journalism is something they have to pay for); and, lastly, in the seventh chapter she stresses that ethics must occupy a central role in the education and training of future journalists and claims there's a need to construct a new space where journalists are able to do their work without editorial or commercial pressure.

As stated by Kelly McBride and Tom Rosenstiel (2013), "the news has never belonged to journalists. It has always belonged to the public". The digital era has returned us to the Greek *agora*, a new space where the conversation that has always inspired the news is totally in the public domain, open to anyone who wants to take part, and has become what we call *prosumer*. In this new *agora*, journalism now faces the challenge of endorsing its professionalism by fulfilling the timeless ethical principles in order to serve the community it belongs to, become credible in the eyes of citizens and continue to be essential.

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