

# **MEDIA SOLIDARITIES**

***EMOTIONS, POWER AND JUSTICE  
IN THE DIGITAL AGE***

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## PRODUCING MEDIA SOLIDARITIES

In May 2016, *Migrant Tales*, a blog about migration and multiculturalism, published a story on mistreatment of asylum seekers in a reception centre in Kolari, a small town close to the Arctic circle, North of Finland. The Kolari reception centre was referred to as a ‘living hell’ in a story that covered the experiences of several asylum seekers who had arrived in Finland with thousands of others across Europe in 2015. The blog published amateur videos and pictures from inside the centre where the asylum seekers held placards asking for human rights and help from the public (see Figure 2.1).



**Figure 2.1** Image taken by an asylum seeker inside the reception centre, published in *Migrant Tales*.

According to the story the director treated the asylum seekers with disrespect and charged them for used clothes and utilities. The director was accused of racist attitudes towards asylum seekers and later the blog revealed his sympathies, expressed on his Facebook page, with the anti-immigrant movement. In a few days the national newspaper *Helsingin Sanomat* followed the story and published a one-page report on the accusations of ill-treatment by the director of the centre. In less than two weeks the director was fired.

The case is one of the success stories of *Migrant Tales* – an independent blog made by a small number of voluntary writers. The founder and editor of *Migrant Tales*, Enrique Tessieri, works full time elsewhere and writes and edits the blog whenever he has time. The editorial team consists of eight volunteers, most of them with immigrant backgrounds. Some of the contributors write under pseudonyms to protect their identity in case of hostile attacks. During the so-called European refugee crisis in 2015 the writers of *Migrant Tales* (MT) were particularly busy in covering a series of ill-treatments in reception centres across the country as well as inconsistencies concerning asylum procedures. It is possible that many of these news items would have reached the mainstream media eventually, even without MT; however, the blog was able to cover these cases in the first place because the writers have first-hand connections with migrants and refugees, and the trust of the migrant community due to their outspoken humanitarian mission to ‘Speak out for the Other’ stated under the title of the blog. According to the editor, an immigrant himself, people contact him directly with tips and information. Throughout the years he has developed a network that now operates as a resource that the mainstream media lack. Indeed, the increasingly competitive and commercialized media environment gears mainstream media further away from the world of activist and radical media, in ways that, paradoxically, make them necessary.

MT is not a product of a professional news organization. It is produced in the era when, according to some commentators, ‘everyone’ can be a journalist (Hartley, 2008). The blog operates on a voluntary basis, on an open code wordpress-platform without any external funding. It might even be characterized as a hobby. Yet, it is interconnected with professional media by feeding them stories on issues connected with migration. Despite the lack of permanent funding or support, the writers of the blog conduct investigative journalism on topics that can take weeks or even months of their personal time. The editor of *Migrant Tales* takes pride in the economic independence of the blog. In his view, the fact that it doesn’t accept any sponsors provides freedom from outside pressure. However, it is perhaps not quite true that the blog does not bring in any material value to its contributors. The editor gains fame and prestige every time a new story is out and cited by mainstream media. This prestige can help him to establish new networks, connections and job offers. Other writers of the blog get valuable work experience that they can use in applying for jobs in journalism. Voluntary work pays off as it leads to other jobs or rewards. It is not the same thing as a salary but there are indirect benefits to be gained. In this sense MT is an example of a new media economy that makes use of voluntary work in different ways. It is also an example of the shift in media landscape where blogs and social media sites have acquired central space in public debates and challenged the role of mainstream media in society.

However, MT, as a non-profit, voluntary publication without stable funding, is also vulnerable. In case of unexpected events, accident or sickness, the whole blog could disappear for months. Moreover, the writers lack any legal coverage or insurance that usually shields professional journalists in case of dispute. What mainly drives the production is enthusiasm and commitment to the cause. This combination of commitment, vulnerability and potential appears to epitomize the culture of publishing in digital times.

This chapter discusses the conditions of media production, both mainstream media and cases such as MT, that seek to enhance solidarity and social justice by bringing out cases that are otherwise disregarded by the public. My aim is to explore how the conditions of production in the current digital media environment bear relevance to the possibilities for creating contents that enhance solidarity or make use of solidarity contents of different kinds. How might different media production systems enable or constrain media representations, narratives and engagements that serve social solidarity, equality and justice? How has digitalization affected media productions? Has it opened up a new, more equal space of production as envisioned in the early days of digitalization? The chapter points out that while we can see that media production has become, partly due to digitalization, increasingly commercialized and competitive, new opportunities for production and spaces of cooperation between amateurs and professionals have also emerged. The case studies of this chapter focus on those opportunities in areas of activist media, advocacy media and data-driven entrepreneurial journalism. The chapter argues that while we can see a proliferation of productions that engage with solidarity, they are shaped by either commercial logics or a complex set of uncertainties that limit their potential. Before going into more detail in the case studies, I take a look at the main developments in media environment that are seen to shape productions. These are media concentration, commercialization and digitalization.

## CONCENTRATION AND COMMERCIALIZATION

The political economy view on media points out how particular economic arrangements in media affect production – and possibilities to produce contents that enhance solidarity and serve society at large. Studies on media systems have paid attention to ownership, regulation, policy, technology and concentration as elements that shape the diversity of the field (Freedman, 2014; Hesmondhalgh, 2018; Lotz, 2018; Picard and Zotto, 2015; Saha, 2018). Diversity, in terms of ownership and variety of media forms, is seen as a key element for creating possibilities to produce alternative and critical views to society and enhancing plurality of voices in public debates from different groups of society as well as providing plurality of topics and different aesthetic expressions (see Hesmondhalgh, 2013a: 365–370).

The problems that limit diversity are connected to media concentration that may restrict opportunities to voice alternative views and accounts of injustice. While it is difficult to get an exhaustive overview of media concentration, several studies point

out the increase in media concentration, for example with strategies of convergence (Bagdikian, 2004; Noam, 2009; see Hesmondhalgh, 2013a: 204–208). The European Media Pluralism Monitor also shows risk in market plurality, pointing to concentration of ownership in many European countries.<sup>1</sup> Political economy scholars argue that media concentration has led to a decline of minority media and diversity of voices in the news media (Blevins and Martinez, 2010; Pickard, 2016; Saha, 2018: 117–118).

However, these tendencies are not straightforward. Hesmondhalgh (2013a: 209) reminds us that there has been a continuous proliferation of small or independent companies that is easily ignored with emphasis on convergence and concentration.

In addition to concentration, commercialization has shaped media industries as a long-term process, through deregulation and privatization of ownership (Hesmondhalgh, 2013a: 128). Commercial media is not bad by default; however, commercialization has led to cultures of production that limit many possibilities to create critical and alternative contents. When driven by commercial goals, productions aim at cost-efficiency and apply practices of standardization and rationalization, identified as a form of professionalization since the 1950s (Hesmondhalgh, 2013a: 67; Saha, 2018: 128). Due to unpredictability of the markets, rationalization is used to manage the budgets and make production as predictable as possible (Ryan, 1992:146). These elements gear towards production with low-risks – not necessarily towards production of alternative visions. Studies in minority and multicultural media show that media industries are often conservative in their approach and therefore tend to lean on mainstream topics and perspectives. This leads to the tendency to avoid critical issues and voices of different minorities. As pointed out by Anamik Saha (2018: 132–135) creative managers in highly competitive cultural industries are often cautious and this risk-averse approach feeds conservatism: in his work on race in cultural industries, Saha shows for example that these ‘processes ensure that race is made in consistent, reductive and homogeneous manner’ (2018: 128) and that black and brown cultural producers are seen as risky investments (Molina-Guzmán, 2016; Saha, 2018: 123–128). Mainstream media that are reliant on advertising, are also cautious not to scare away advertisers and therefore avoid provocative or too radical choices. Besides conservative cautiousness, production culture (Banks et al. 2015) may emphasize traditional, mainstream approaches and tendency to avoid critical approaches through ‘industry lore’. This refers to the common sense of production culture, the managements’ ideas, cultural values, expectations and understandings. It refers to understanding that has developed within the business throughout the years, which is difficult to undo. This common sense in production cultures – in terms of issues of gender, race, ethnicity as well as social structures and wellbeing, is not necessarily radical but leans on mainstream values . In this way, mainstream media are likely to prioritize ideas of ‘main social actors’, as argued by Bailey et al. (2007b 16). This means that in many social issues media lean on representatives of state, police, politicians and large corporations. According to Bailey et al. (2007b) the coverage in mainstream media of the anti-capitalist protest in Seattle

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<sup>1</sup><http://cmpf.eui.eu/media-pluralism-monitor/mpm-2016-results/>

2000 depicted protesters as misinformed people or individuals who took part in violent riot and destroyed private property. Since mainstream media often leans on official sources the outcome may demonize protesters and construct them in terms of threat to order and assumed peaceful everyday life. This can, in some cases, lead to emphasis on security and order over human rights.

Commercialized production involves practices that advance commodification of different areas of life, including emotions. In recent years many scholars have pointed out how media make use of intimacy, emotions and affect in different ways, through representations and visualizations of emotional activity and relationships (such as care, compassion, and mourning). For example, reality TV production includes a variety of shows that explore problems connected with intimacy, relationships, self-confidence, economic difficulties, help and care. I argue here that these processes of capitalizing emotions commodify representations of solidarity, as extension of the commercialized logics of media industries. They illustrate affective economy that is connected to larger processes of capital extending to private, intimate spaces, as discussed in Chapter 1 (Hochschild, 2003[1983], 2012; Illouz, 2007; Reber, 2012; Skeggs, 2010).

What comes out of this body of work, is the understanding that cultural industries, television production and journalism are made within a system that rationalizes creative work into routines – repetition of cultural forms – and extends it to emotions and affect (Ryan, 1992: 146). These routines and logics of production may end up creating contents that lean on existing power relations, hierarchies, social order and mainstream culture rather than actively questioning and critiquing these. This suggests that commercial media are less likely to produce content that engages with issues of solidarity or open voice for the marginalized, or when they do, these issues are driven by commercial interests rather than promoting justice and equality.

## **DIGITALIZATION AND VISIONS OF A VIBRANT PUBLIC SPHERE**

As already noted above media production is characterized by increased commercialization, concentration and standardization. In addition, digitalization has brought further changes to the media landscape. It has led to reorganization of media industries and their economic structures; an erosion of income has meant that both public service and professionalized commercial media (newspapers, broadcasting, book publishing) have fewer resources, and compete for an increasingly fragmented audience, in a more commercial environment.

In the field of journalism change caused by digitalization has been predominantly viewed as crisis. The advent of new technology, online publishing and convergence have changed the business drastically and media companies are struggling to create sustainable business models in the new media environment (Carson, 2015; Casero-Ripolles and Izquierdo-Castillo, 2015; Curran, 2010; Fenton, 2010; Reinardy, 2011). The journalism industry has faced downsizing to fewer and smaller companies with

new kinds of funding schemes, and journalists have had to learn do more with less (Anderson et al., 2012; Fenton, 2010; Nikunen, 2014a). This has created serious concern over the possibilities of journalism to fulfil its role and serve the public with insightful reports on social, political and economic issues. In news publishing this has meant that several traditional print newspapers were closed down, particularly in the USA, before transition to online news publishing. It has meant the decline in traditional media production in journalism, the increase in entrepreneurship and semi-professional media work, as well as the emergence of technology companies and their platforms as powerful actors in digital context.

While it is clear that the mainstream media, and journalism particularly, have been struggling to reinvent their business models in the digital era, this change has, at the same time, opened up small independent productions and, most importantly, space for citizen activism and grassroot participation particularly through social media (Bailey et al., 2007a; Fenton, 2016; Flew, 2009). Social media provide possibilities for people in a marginalized position to voice their views to a potentially global audience. Both individual citizens, activists and different organizations can create their own news channels through Facebook, Twitter or YouTube and by-pass mainstream media. The shift emphasizes individualized forms of communication where engagements with public issues are increasingly encountered through personal networks and communities. The blurred boundaries of public and private, amateur and professional production are often-cited outcomes of the shift.

Much of the literature on digital participation from the early 2000s describes these developments with enthusiasm and optimism, referring to ‘the renaissance’ of the public sphere (cf. Flew, 2009; Shirky, 2008). The idea of a new digital era combines technological innovation with ideas of democracy, equality and prosperity. Fred Turner (2006) captures carefully the emergence of cyber culture in Silicon Valley, with the combination of hippie counterculture and new media technology developers that conjoined the ideology of deregulation with notions of equality and democracy. In these optimistic voices the internet was presented as a domain where barriers of knowledge and access were torn down and more space was opened for participatory action, individual voices and structures of sharing. (Benkler, 2006; Bruns, 2008; Jenkins, 2006; Rheingold, 2002; Shirky, 2008).

After that initial enthusiasm, increasing amounts of critical voices have been raised that point out that instead of democratization, digitalization has increased the power of technology companies. The social media is largely controlled by the so-called internet oligopoly GAFAM: Google, Apple, Facebook, Amazon and Microsoft, and their power is infiltrated in the everyday uses of social media in forms of surveillance and ownership of user-data. How this is done, is explored by José van Dijck (2013) in her book *Culture of Connectivity* that shows how different technological elements connected with interaction on social media, such as the like button on Facebook, are created to gather user information and attract advertisers in order to serve the economic goals of the media companies. Tarleton Gillespie (2010, 2015) argues that platforms do not only facilitate and host, they ‘intervene’, ‘pick and choose’ and in this way shape the public culture that emerges through digital media. In other words, through algorithms, digital platforms shape, organize and mediate public debates and

participation (see also Sandvik, 2015). One of the problems is that people are rarely aware of all the organizing and selection that takes place within these platforms. The mechanisms of governing and policing the contents are not explicit. Jodi Dean approaches this as a question of capitalism. She argues that our ideas, affects, hopes and feelings expressed on social media are not our property. They are the property of technology companies that make use of solidarity action and collective politics (such as humanitarian campaigns, disasters news, images of wars and suffering, activist campaigns to support etc.). Dean (2003, 2009) refers to this as ‘communicative capitalism’. In short it means that technology companies are able to make profit from the ideal of participation. This is also part of the ‘affective economy that extends to digital participation, making use of it’ (Chapter 1). Some argue that the only way out in this view is to create a system outside the commercial internet, as proposed by Gehl (2015). The alternative social media is created by activists with an infrastructure of anti-advertisement, devoid of surveillance practices and built on software that can be controlled by the users, not the developers. Examples of this alternative social media are Diaspora, GNU social, and rstat.us (see Chapter 6). However, the fact that alternative social media lacks critical mass, reduces its capability to host political debates that would make a difference.

Increased and systematic forms of trolling through institutions such as Cambridge Analytica on Facebook, revealed in 2018, distribution of fake news, rumours, hate speech and propaganda made possible through platforms’ vague policies on commercial platforms of social media, further point out the problematic context of social media. Social media platforms seem even to benefit from racist debate and therefore be far away from a ‘renaissance’ of the public sphere (Ekman, 2015; Farkas et al., 2017; Matamoros-Fernández, 2017; cf. Nagle, 2017).

Media systems can be seen as being in the middle of a chaotic transition period induced by the rise of digital media and, as a result, different forms of older and newer media operate simultaneously in a concurrent process of integration and fragmentation (Chadwick, 2013). Chadwick is interested in the ways in which these changes shape political debates, with new kind of networks, non-elite and non-professional media actors and relations. However, the political economy approach reminds us that media do not just evolve naturally.<sup>2</sup> There are economic and political interests behind media development and they have consequences, for example the fact that much of the social media are governed by commercial media companies, and that the freedom of the digital environment is built on the inequality of the global ‘ground level’ that makes the digital media production possible (Qiu, 2016; Reading, 2014; Maxwell and Miller, 2012; Nakamura, 2011; Neilson and Rossiter, 2008; Ross, 2008).

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<sup>2</sup>The concept of hybridity evokes the lure of ‘liminality’, that tends to fuel optimistic or romantic ideas of the way power relations are challenged in the new media environment. As noted above, the traditional or ‘old’ media have become powerful players on the digital environment and focusing on hybridity does not necessarily identify their power over other actors, such as bloggers or small amateur productions. Hybridity, as a concept, may also provide too flat an understanding of the power relations within a system (noted also in other areas of research that apply hybridity, such as transnational and diaspora media, Kraidy, 2002).

The interdependence of various media forms and increased individualization of media have also caused new uncertainty and vulnerability that require emotional labour in media work (Hochschild, 2003[1983]; 2013). Emotional labour refers to ritualized display or suppression of emotions, a management of emotions to maintain the hoped-for atmosphere at the workplace or relations to audiences or customers. Increase in emotional labour is seen to produce risk of alienation and stress – elements that seem to be increasing in a context of uncertainty and change. The context of digital media appears to increase emotional labour in media work as it often blurs the public and private spheres but also due to the contestedness of contemporary media debates – as the case of activist media in this chapter points out.

As we can see, there are many different forces that shape conditions of media production. Changes connected to deregulation, concentration, commercialization and digitalization all create challenges to productions. How do these circumstances and developments affect productions that deal particularly with issues of solidarity, humanitarianism and social justice? This chapter points to contradictory developments. We see the growing power of technology companies and increased commercialization of media. On the other hand there are new opportunities for small media, alternative and activist productions. I argue that new forms of interconnectedness between amateur and professional media emerge in areas of solidarity and social justice. Instead of celebrating these, I point out that the interconnectedness produces different, and sometimes overlapping implications: it can lead to further commercialization with affective economy, that makes use of ‘doing good’ for commercial purposes; it can lead to growing precariousness and increased emotional labour; and it can enlarge the space for voicing experiences of injustice. In other words media power operate in complex and contradictory ways (Freedman, 2014). Next I move on to explore what this means in the context of activist media, investigative journalism and advocacy media. I pay particular attention to the spaces of cooperation, for example between news media and activism, and the significance of such spaces in enhancing a sense of solidarity.

## ACTIVIST MEDIA: MIGRANT TALES

One of the clear outcomes of digitalization and the internet has been the proliferation of alternative and activist media. Downing (2001) describes alternative media as a small-scale media that proposes alternative vision to mainstream, dominant politics and perspectives. I consider activist media, such as *Migrant Tales* (MT), as part of the larger concept of alternative media that includes a variety of media productions. What unites them is their small size, independence from state and markets, horizontal participatory organization, as well as motives for solidarity, equality and justice – although we can see that not all media that claims to be alternative, assume these values (Bailey et al., 2007b; Downing, 2001; Pajnik and Downing, 2008).

Alternative and activist media often rely on volunteer labour and unreliable, infrequent funding structures such as donations. As such, alternative media production

tends to remain small scale and scattered (Flew, 2009). Based on volunteer work, MT is no exception. It was first founded as a personal blog by Enrique Tessieri in 2007<sup>3</sup>. Now it has eight associate editors and it publishes news and essays on migration politics mainly in English, but sometimes also in Swedish, Finnish and Arabic. The multilingual publishing reflects the transnational networks and backgrounds of the editors. These networks are used to create news stories from different locations, such as Iran and Afghanistan. The blog has no actual 'office' and its writers work from different locations and often discuss the issues over the phone or email, reflecting the networked structure of media publishing.

One of the reasons why MT has been able to cover a series of exclusive stories on the conditions of asylum seekers and deportations is related to the networks and close connections with the asylum seekers and immigrants. Since many of the citizen journalists of MT are immigrants themselves, they have been able to build trust with the community of asylum seekers and immigrants. Their practices of publishing stories, images and videos have gained enough credibility so that people contact them. As an example of trust the editor mentions how he received, at four o'clock at night, a message through Facebook from Afghanistan, from a recently deported asylum seeker with a highly controversial case, who was willing to tell his story to MT. The fact that MT was also willing to listen to him and to publish the story, differentiates it from the mainstream media that often seek to remain more 'neutral' in cases concerning immigration and asylum seekers and tend to lean on 'main social actors' and authorities, as discussed earlier (Bailey et al., 2007b). Mainstream media may have only weak links to marginalized groups whereas alternative and activist media are in active interaction with such groups. Indeed, activist, alternative or radical media are often closely connected to their audiences and part of larger social movements (Atton, 2002; Downing, 2001; Duncombe, 1997; Jeppesen, 2016).<sup>4</sup> Production practices echo the values of those social movements, manifested often in open, non-hierarchical and transparent media organization (Atton, 2007; Rodriguez et al., 2014). MT is connected to a movement that has been growing in resistance to deportations in Europe (the so-called Right to Live movement)<sup>5</sup> as well as being a member of the European Network Against Racism and United of Intercultural Action, a European network to support migrants and refugees. Connections and memberships in these groups form a certain basis for community of an audience with a shared world view and experience of being an immigrant, that, according to the editor, is lacking from the mainstream media.

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<sup>3</sup><http://www.migranttales.net/>

<sup>4</sup>Alternative and radical media are often used interchangeably, however alternative media appears more as an umbrella concept including non-professional media of various political movements and also subcultural dimensions of media production (such as DIY cultures and zines), while radical media involves more explicit political goals connected to social and political movements (Atton, 2002; Downing, 1984, 2001; Duncombe, 1997; Fenton, 2016; Hebdige, 1979). Advocacy media (or journalism) may refer to both of these but more commonly to NGO-led media productions (Fisher, 2016; Powers, 2016, 2017).

<sup>5</sup>These groups host websites such as Migrileaks with information on deportations, legal cases, procedures and personal stories on deportations.

Sometimes this means that they have access to stories that no one else can tell, or that no one else can even identify. This is an example of the perspectives that are brought to public debate from outside the mainstream and the privileged, in ways discussed by Mohanty (see Chapter 1). Such a view can open up understanding of social justice more profoundly as it draws from the experience of the most vulnerable. As discussed earlier, commercial mainstream media are driven by cultures of rationalization that are unlikely to foster highly critical or radical views. This is illustrated in the ways in which issues concerning the rights of minorities, asylum seekers and paperless are often brought to the public outside the mainstream media, through activist and alternative media, as in the case of MT.

However, there is a risk of over-romanticizing media in the margins, as pointed out by Saha (2018: 93). While in many cases an activist position provides important and exceptional insight to experiences of marginalization, it may also paradoxically produce the illusion of unproblematic, critical and clear understanding of power relations and social injustice. As Gada Mahrouse's (2014) research points out, the assumed activist position can also blind media producers and writers from reflexivity towards their own work. Sense of being right by experience can lead to careless reporting, poor fact checking and to an inability to listen to other perspectives (see Chapter 5). In the case of MT, the range of writings vary from highly personal affective columns to detailed investigative stories. The plurality of voices means that some are more experienced and aware of their knowledge production practices than others. This is typical of amateur publishing with multiple writers with different backgrounds. Therefore activist media need to develop practices of reflexivity, while drawing from the experience, dialogue and cooperation with others. The problem however, that arises in the current digital media environment, is that these practices also cause new uncertainties and emotional labour, as we shall see in the next section.

## PROMOTION AND CIRCULATION

MT is an example of activist or alternative production where there is no expectation for (direct) monetary gain. Financial independence provides important integrity for the publication; however, at the same time the label of free, non-profit publication frames it as marginal and non-professional (Bailey et al., 2007b: 20). An example of cooperation illustrates the complexity of independence: MT revealed that in 2016 two men from Iraq, who were denied asylum in Finland and deported back, had been killed after returning to Iraq. After this, the national newspaper investigated the 'rumour that circulates on social media' (*Helsingin Sanomat*, 15.11.2016) about the deaths of deported asylum seekers. The national newspaper confirmed that at least one of them had been killed. The events began a series of news stories, demonstrations and public debate on the criteria of deportations (Ojala et al., 2018). MT was an important agent in providing the original news, however, without verification of the national news media, their stories were considered 'rumours'. This illustrates the power relations

between professional media and amateur publication that can lead to disregard of important news on serious human rights violations.

To have these news reach a larger public in the current digital environment requires not only cooperating (and being used) by mainstream media, but also distributing news through the commercial social media, via personal social media networks, often leaning on followers who can through Facebook, Twitter or other major platforms share the news to the wider public and beyond the immediate circle of followers. This is where the writers, journalists and artists have become marketers, often having to use their personal profiles for promoting their work (Hearn, 2012).

As argued by Marwick and boyd (2011) social media technologies appear to collapse multiple contexts and audiences, in ways that complicate possibilities to manage separate profiles or create the self through the recognition by particular restricted audience (cf. Goffman, 1959). These intertwining spheres of personal and professional become challenging in the digital environment particularly with volunteer work that has a political dimension. The fact that MT is not professional mainstream media seems to complicate and add tensions in the everyday lives of the writers who clearly try to create boundaries between their public and private lives as well as between their private family and activist-journalist lives. This is an area that requires management of feelings in ways that Arlie Hochschild (2003[1983]/, 2012) refers to as emotional labour (see also Duffy, 2017; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011). In the case of MT emotional labour is caused not only by self-promotion and serving their readers, but by the deeply contested space of digital media in the context of migration issues. In this sense it is not about authenticity to self as in Hochschild's work, but rather about enduring and protecting self by managing emotions when attacked and criticized.

Due to the increased hostility against asylum seekers and immigrants and the rise of anti-immigrant and populist movements in Europe and in Finland, some of the members in the editorial team have chosen to remain anonymous. The editor has received threats and hostile feedback and he is aware that 'many people hate what I write'. Yet he feels that as an editor he needs to be identified by his name and take responsibility for the contents. The political nature of the publication, with strong criticism towards the government and culture of racialization, becomes an inseparable part of the identity, embodied in various encounters on or off line, when 'the moral worlds' of work, home and activism blur (Couldry, 2013). This affects particularly the actual work life where the writers may have to explain their stance and views published on MT. Particularly when the publication receives national attention, the pressures and responses from other spheres of life can be onerous. Tessieri describes the situation: 'It is not nice. I always try to say to people that, I wish that what I write would not be true but unfortunately it is true.' The possibility of voicing criticism and exposing corruption and racism are core motivations of the writers, but it can be emotionally challenging when surrounded by a social world where many disagree with these values – causing a particular sense of discomfort in everyday life. To manage these contradictions the writers would prefer clear boundaries between personal, activist and work life; however, the digital media encourages and furthers individualized practices of sharing of information. Thus practices such as continuous

self-branding and distribution of one's work through individualized structures of social media are at odds with the desire to remain 'in the background' – a desire born out of concern over increased hostility and personal threats.

Activist media are always produced in particular historical contexts that shape their potential and practices. In this case, MT is published in an era that Mark Andrejevic (2013) describes as a post-deferential polarized political climate, with suspicion against mainstream media and distribution of 'alternative truths and fake news'. This context causes various vulnerabilities.

First of all, the citizen journalists are left without the cover of professional media in case of attacks, threats, mistakes and errors. While professional journalists are required to do increasing amounts of self-promotion and marketing through social media, activist media do this even more. They work through their selves in an environment where public and private spheres collide and this collision causes various difficulties in managing their everyday lives and relationships. The emotional labour that is required in the contested space of digital media, does not merely mean difficult relationships or management of emotion. It also requires capability to endure deep hostility and threats as well as leading to decisions to hide identity and write anonymously.

Second, activist media struggle for legitimacy and recognition, particularly after proliferation of various propaganda through social media. The area of alternative, radical and activist media has become more contested and difficult to define (Pajnik and Downing, 2008). The expansion of activist media includes not only progressive social movements but also right-wing populism and anti-democratic movements. While activist media such as MT, aim at complementing the news with voices of the marginalized and experiences of injustice, the alt-right groups and anti-immigrant movements produce their own versions of news often with the goal of targeting particular groups of people (immigrants, refugees, women) and by purposefully using fabricated and false news for these political ends (Back, 2002; Farkas et al., 2017; Horsti and Nikunen, 2013; Nagle, 2017; Nikunen, 2015b; Orrù, 2015; Padovani, 2016).

The alt-right, neo-nazi and anti-immigrant groups may voice their views in the name of solidarity – referring to racially bound national solidarity (discussed in Chapter 1). They may justify their publications with a similar sense of 'giving back to community' as the MT, although the goals of what such a community would look like are very different. This is one of the great challenges of the current media environment: it includes a range of voices and views with different ideologies, ethics and truth values. Instead of a flourishing public sphere, we seem to see more of polarization, contestation, intensified disputes and hate speech across the digital space that affects the everyday life of activists and media workers (Ekman, 2015; Hatakka, 2017; Nagle, 2017; Pöyhtäri et al., 2013). This increases the emotional labour required to manage activist media in a highly contested area.

Alternative and activist media provide an important site of alternative visions and voices, which mainstream media ignore or cannot identify. In many cases they can provide views from experience that help to understand the consequences of failed,

unjust policies. However, commercial social media and professional mainstream media surround, define and shape the way voluntary activist media is experienced and expressed, and how the important news of injustice and human rights become visible to the wider public. The digital freedom to express and publish has meant fewer rules and regulations, more individual voices and responses. This means that the spaces of freedom are also spaces of increased contestation, hostility and anger, that have to be confronted individually, often personally, thus increasing emotional labour. It is also important to understand that views from experience do not automatically lead to just reporting: that requires increased reflexivity on effects of power that emerge through activist media, particularly in the contested space of digital media.

## RISE OF ADVOCACY MEDIA

While activist, alternative and radical media flourish in a digital media environment, they appear to be still small, scattered and vulnerable in various ways. The situation looks very different for NGO-led advocacy media that have grown substantially in the past decade (Powers, 2016; Wright, 2016). As pointed out by Chouliaraki (2013: 6), the field of humanitarian communication (media produced by Red Cross, UNHCR, Amnesty International, Plan etc.) has expanded at the same time as productions have become cheaper and more available to people working outside established media, as freelancers or entrepreneurs. Compared to the scarce resources and ‘hand-to-mouth’ existence of activist media discussed earlier, NGO-led advocacy journalism appears to enjoy fairly stable funding and gain most of the mainstream media attention (Powers, 2016; Thrall et al., 2014).

Research by Matthew Powers (2016, 2017) shows that humanitarian, human rights and environmental organizations are hiring investigative journalists, photographers, videographers and news writers inasmuch that their capacities ‘now rival those of major news organizations’ (Powers, 2016: 402). They now publish weekly more than double the amount of press releases and news commentaries than they did in the late 1980s. The values of advocacy and mainstream journalism are seen to differ: news media are characterized by values of accuracy, factuality, and balance while advocacy media are openly committed to social change (Janowitz, 1975). Powers’ study revealed however, that NGOs’ reporting is guided by values very similar to news journalism: evidence based accuracy, pluralism, advocacy, and timeliness. At a glance it seems that the only differentiating value is advocacy: a commitment to activist values and social change that is driven by the research and evidence provided by the NGO.

Advocacy journalism operates according to the openly voiced values of NGOs (such as support of human rights and equality), that are widely shared and supported in Western societies. Based on this Phil Vine (2017), a former investigative journalist in New Zealand and current journalist of Greenpeace, argues that in times of clickbait-journalism, ‘advocacy journalism with strict ethical guidelines produced from within an organization with a known agenda, may serve the public interest more ably than a fragmented mainstream journalism compromised by less obvious biases’ (Vine, 2017: 43).

What does this mean? First of all the rise of advocacy journalism speaks of the shift in the priorities of the NGOs: media visibility is considered vital for the organizations. With their own platforms they can by-pass mainstream media and produce their own contents to strengthen their brand. However, advocacy journalism is rarely critical towards the NGOs they work for, which can cause problems of transparency, in cases of mistakes, negligence or corruption (Scott et al., 2017).

The increasingly blurring lines of advocacy and news journalism influence practices of journalism but they also gear practices of advocacy media towards professionalization and this professionalization brings with it elements of commercialization and rationalization, discussed earlier (Hesmondhalgh, 2013a: 232; Ryan, 1992; Saha, 2018). In the early days of social media, human rights groups and activists assumed that visibility and exposure of human rights violations and suffering would get the attention of established media and lead to political pressure. However, the proliferation of images and videos depicting violence and suffering on social media, increasing rapidly, revealed how NGOs and activists need strategies to stand out from the mass: visibility seemed to turn into invisibility and indifference. Sandra Ristovska (2016) has studied the New York based WITNESS organization that educates NGOs and activists to produce videos in digital environment. Based on her work with WITNESS she maintains that activist videos have become professionalized both in terms of address (personal testimonies with political focus) and ethics (consent and safety). Ethical aspects have become increasingly important, since videos published in digital environment can 'travel in unanticipated ways' (Ristovska, 2016) and be used for different purposes.

Evidently commercial and social media logics shape the production of news by NGOs and activists. This means that they are not immune from processes of marketization. To be noticed requires distinct, clear and affective news: research on media production among activists and NGOs points out the increased media and market logics in production with emphasis on personalization, eventness and playful affectivity, advanced by digital environment and clicktivism (Chouliaraki, 2013). While Powers emphasizes the professionalization of advocacy journalism, Cottle and Nolan (2007), having studied communication strategies inside several humanitarian NGOs (Red Cross, Save the Children, Oxfam, World Vision, CARE and Médecins sans Frontières), argue bluntly that NGOs 'seek to brand themselves in the media; they purposefully use celebrities and produce regionalized and personalized media packages to court media attention' (Cottle and Nolan, 2007: 862; see also Wright, 2016). This speaks of the commercialized logics that shape advocacy media and the rationalization of media production and circulation: formatting, packaging and marketing (Ryan, 1992: 146).

Even if Nolan and Cottle give a harsh critique of the strategies of humanitarian organizations, they see potential in cooperation between NGOs and media professionals. Close collaboration between filmmakers, journalists and NGOs is something that Cottle and Nolan (2007: 867) refer to as beneficial embedding. An example of beneficial embedding would be a situation where journalists and film crews are 'embedded' with aid organizations in the early stage of emergencies as they arrive in the area. In embedding, Cottle and Nolan see the potential for the journalists to gain deeper

understanding of the problems on the ground as well as the opportunity to counter the dominant commercial media logic that afflicts so much of crisis reporting (Madianou, 2015; Ong, 2014). Beneficent embedding emerges in situations where NGOs feel that the journalists and media professionals are open to their perspectives and able to create alternative stories and approaches (Wright, 2016).

## EMBEDDED PRODUCTIONS

While Cottle and Nolan, at the time (2007), considered embedding rare, it appears that forms of cooperation that resonate with beneficent embedding are much more common, not only in news journalism but in film and television productions a decade later (Nikunen, 2016a; 2016b; Ong, 2015; Ponzanesi, 2016; Rovisco, 2013; Wright, 2016). Embedding is connected to new economic structures of cooperation that arise partly from the increased entrepreneurship and competition in media and humanitarian fields (Barnett and Snyder, 2008; Chouliaraki, 2013; Orgad and Seu, 2014). Of course cooperation between media and NGOs has a long history; however, in a digital environment this cooperation has new dimensions in terms of how it benefits both parties and how funding can be extracted from this cooperation. Focus on the funding structures of media companies and productions reveals areas where humanitarian organizations, activists and ordinary people finance media productions and enhance something that might be termed humanitarian media. The production of documentaries and films focused on social and humanitarian issues has increased substantially during the past decade, finding their niche in specific NGO-sponsored human rights film festivals such as Human Rights Watch Film festival, UNHCR Refugee Film festival, One World, Document 11 and Movies that Matter festivals (Houle, 2011).<sup>6</sup>

Many of these films operate as new forms of open, collaborative productions that make use of online crowd sourcing and crowdfunding or are funded by humanitarian organizations. As such, they embody the new production models and the significance of the funding model for the ways in which humanitarianism is negotiated in the process (Weight, 2013; Aston et al., 2017).

Cottle and Nolan make a distinction between beneficial embedding that challenges media logics and traditional (military) embedding (in journalism) that embraces these logics. Ideally media productions, such as human rights films and humanitarian documentaries funded by NGOs would fall in the 'beneficent' category by narrating realities in ways that help audiences to grasp the complex root causes of conflicts and suffering, with respect to the victims. Yet, there is no guarantee of such beneficent combination. The humanitarian co-productions on television for example suggest that embedding in this context seems to embrace rather than challenge marketization and media logics (Driessens et al., 2012; Nikunen, 2016a; Orgad and Nikunen, 2016; Ouellette and Hay, 2008; 2016b; Wright, 2016).

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<sup>6</sup>Human rights Film network lists dozens of human rights oriented film festivals: [www.humanrightsfilmnetwork.org](http://www.humanrightsfilmnetwork.org)

Embracing marketization and media logic (Altheide and Snow, 1979; van Dijck and Poell, 2013) is often manifested in personalization, celebrity appeal, suspense and conflicts in narrative as well as convergent strategies of multiple platforms to gear donations. An example of such cooperation is *Arman and the children of Cameroon* (2014, Finland), a television programme, sponsored by the children's charity organization Plan and produced by the host, Arman Alizad's, own production company (Armanin maailma/Arman's World). The documentary seeks to increase awareness of the plight of children living in poverty in the developing world, and to promote child sponsorship and donations through Plan. In the programme, Arman travels to eastern Cameroon to meet the child he sponsored, Assanga, who belongs to the vulnerable Baka tribe. Arman's quest is to find his god-child and, at the same time, inform audiences of the vulnerability of the Baka people and encourage donations for Plan. The programme was aired as a must-see event that was promoted through multi-platform advertising through television, radio, and the internet. The real-time viewing of the show was particularly relevant for Plan, which ran direct donation bids during each commercial break of the show. As the host, Arman's role was extended into the commercials, and he also made a special appearance in a live episode of a comedy show the following evening. The television's channel (Nelonen) and Plan applied convergent media strategies to create an event that would carry on beyond the programme. The programme used Arman's celebrity power to attract audiences, and Arman gained new social value to his celebrity status. According to Plan, this strategy was highly successful and increased their visibility and donations (Laiho, 2014) and eventually resulted in another cooperation between Arman and Plan in Bolivia, *Arman and Amaraya Children* (2015, Finland). Other examples of such embedding include reality television shows produced in cooperation with NGOs and humanitarian organizations such as the Australian *Go Back to Where You Came From* with UNHCR (discussed in Chapter 4).

Kate Wright (2016) argues that these cooperations between media professionals and NGOs require careful consideration and negotiation of values since the goals of the partners may be different and result in conflicts. Wright (2016) explores the value justifications of cooperation between international non-governmental organizations and news media and shows that the cooperation is often felt to be contradictory to professional ethics of both NGOs and journalists. Often the role of the NGO is downplayed or hidden to maintain journalistic credibility or sense of creative autonomy (Nikunen, 2016a; Wright, 2016). NGOs accept this as means that serve the ends, although branding – and the visibility it requires – has become increasingly central in the strategies of NGOs (Chouliaraki, 2013; Johansson, 2014).

The contradictions between the ethics of humanitarian work and commercial media logics, emerge central in these cases: the possibility to gain attention and donations often results in simplistic representations that may emphasize the inequalities they seek to erode. As argued above, often activists and NGOs adapt to media logics rather than the other way around. In many cases, despite sceptical expectations, the commercial logics and technologized participation seem to work well as a means for fundraising. The question of whether audiences capture the root causes of

injustice and global inequalities may in these cases remain as a secondary goal (Nikunen, 2016b). From the perspective of established NGOs these collaborations bring visibility but suffer from problems of commercialization where complex social issues are personified and often simplified to better serve the media logic.

If the previous case of activist media highlighted the contradictions of the blurring lines of personal, activist and work lives, and the pressures of the increasingly contested public sphere, the growing field of NGO-led media and cooperations speaks of the contradictions between commercial imperatives of media and the ethical values of humanitarian work. When sometimes humanitarian values override commercial values, often they are intertwined in complex ways. Humanitarian issues, care and help have been integrated in film and television productions to enhance new ‘community’ values for the production. For example Jamie Oliver’s programme *Fifteen*, broadcast by the BBC in 2002, sought to integrate young people with social problems (drugs, crime) into job markets by training them to cook and develop other skills in food service markets. The series format has been sold to several other countries as part of Jamie Oliver’s brand and the restaurant Fifteen still operates according to its original idea. While Knudsen and Nielsen (2013) consider the programme as an example of ethical economy with empowering force, it can also be seen, more critically, as media production that makes value through humanitarian and social work and at the same time commodifies the care work and the objects of care (Nikunen, 2016b; Skeggs 2010). Knudsen and Nielsen admit that we need to ask whether these socially responsible initiatives actually are responsible or whether they just offer new forms of voyeuristic consumption. Scholars such as Chouliaraki, Orgad, Ong and Franks are highly critical of the mediatization of humanitarianism towards such cultures of celebrity and entertainment that tend to reinforce inequalities rather than abolish them. Perhaps more than ‘ethical’ these examples illustrate the contradictions of humanitarian and media logics and the commercialization of doing good. I consider this an area where we can see affective economy at work: marketing care and help and making use of feelings of doing good for commercial purposes. In this way media harnesses affect and emotions in different ways into the production, as part of ethical entertainment. Laurie Ouellette and James Hay (2008: 36, 55) connect the emergence of ‘charity TV’ with liberal governance that draws on a promise of empowerment through self-help and fosters citizenship through the practices of volunteerism and philanthropy, echoing deep contradictions of neoliberalism: the promise of freedom to help and the growing inequalities related to the privatized freedom of choice (discussed in Chapter 4).

A compelling example of such community value through film and television production is provided in Vicki Mayer’s (2017) research on American television series *Tremé* located in New Orleans. It shows how the rhetoric of helping ordinary people, communities and local musicians were central in the promotional strategies of the production of *Tremé* that sponsored various charity events and social causes during its production. *Tremé* also recruited more local residents than the average film productions, with better pay, and provided more reciprocal relationship to the community during the production. However, Mayer argues that, on the whole, the film and television production in New

Orleans, that was envisioned to bring economic growth and new jobs to the area, in reality, through tax credits and privatized practices, has not helped the local economy and in fact, through appropriation of the urban space, it has reproduced social inequalities.

## ENTREPRENEURIAL SOLIDARITY

During the so-called crisis of journalism, many laid-off journalists moved to work on NGO-led media. However, a range of journalists have also left to create their own data driven investigative news media online, to fulfil what *The New York Times* described in 2011 as ‘the ideal social form of our time’. The NYT referred to the entrepreneur as our ‘culture hero’ and the self of today as entrepreneurial self (Deresiewicz, 2011). The positive value of entrepreneurial freedom, as pointed out by David Harvey (1989) exemplifies the neoliberal logic of our times. Indeed, entrepreneurship appears to be the new model for young journalists and media professionals: small start-up companies and cooperatives that make use of new technologies and data-gathering methods (Ferrier, 2013; Schaich and Klein, 2013; Sparre and Faergemann, 2016). While we may cynically comment on the enthusiasm around entrepreneurship, it is worth noting that in this field some of the most interesting, investigative news media with public interest are being produced. As argued by Hesmondhalgh (2013a: 120, 128), focus on media concentration and big companies, ignores the proliferation of small, independent media, such as data driven journalism, that can bring some diversity to the media landscape.

Digital publications such as ProPublica in the US, Blank Spot and Journalism++ in Sweden, Direkt36 in Hungary and LongPlay in Finland, specialize in investigations on a wide range of topics from environmental issues to corruption in politics. Some of these have started out as personal projects of one journalist (Blank Spot, ProPublica), some are joint endeavours of a group of journalists seeking to create something new (LongPlay, Journalism++). Direkt36 in Hungary was created by journalists who resigned from popular website Origo after political pressure from its publisher Magyar Telecom. Direkt36 offered the possibility to create more independent journalism funded by a small number of foundations and crowdfunding. New investigative collectives have also emerged, such as Bellingcat that brings together researchers, coders, and data journalists to investigate current events and organize workshops to teach tools for open source investigations.

Most of the above-mentioned publications have received awards for their investigative reports and high-quality journalism. In many ways, they epitomize the hope of journalism in the digital era with expertise in data driven methods and commitment to public interest. However, one of the key challenges of media entrepreneurs who focus on investigative journalism or social issues, just as for alternative media, is how to make these projects last and where to find sustainable funding. Start-ups are vulnerable and most of them fail within the first four years in operation (Marion, 2016; Marmer et al., 2011: 4). They also require acceptance of long hours and modest income even after years in business. The work cultures in new media companies and start-ups emphasize flexibility, openness and cooperation, but, as revealed by

Andrew Ross these characteristics often mean long hours, blurring boundaries of work and leisure – features that also advance gender inequality (Banks & Milestone, 2011; Duffy, 2017; Gill, 2002; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011; McRobbie, 2015; Ross, 2008). At the same time the increased flexibility and entrepreneurship have put more emphasis on the emotional aspects of work that entail the experiences of passion and vocation, but also uncertainty, anxiety, increased competition and new time economy (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011; Gill and Pratt, 2008). As discussed in the case of activist media, networked structures of digital media create spaces that require management of the blurring lines of public and private as well as forced sociability and self-promotion to make and maintain contacts to secure future employment (Tandoc and Vos, 2015).

## DONOR POWER AND CROWDFUNDING

The digital investigative journalism (that survives) is often funded by one or two wealthy foundations that are committed to long-term support. For example ProPublica, award-winning non-profit media focusing on social and political issues, is supported by The Sandler Foundation and individual donations. It also uses advertising and is even currently exploring the possibility of selling data. Direkt36 has received funding from the Open Society Foundation and the Rockefeller Brothers Fund as well as from private donations. LongPlay is funded by subscriptions, donations and grants (Google), whereas Blank Spot started with crowdfunding.

While these are encouraging examples of journalism that provide insight on social problems and cases of injustice, they are economically vulnerable and often small-scale in the media economy landscape. The lore of innovative, pioneering work in digital journalism, may also hide the fact that being independent, does not mean that these small companies are immune to the power of large corporations and to the commercial and centralizing tendencies on the media landscape (Hesmondhalgh, 2013a: 211). Terry Flew (2009) points out that many small media that have started out as alternative or independent have later, under the pressure to survive, become reliant on aggregating media content, been accused of exploiting the intellectual property and labour of other content producers, or have started to accept advertising and selling data.

An ideal solution for these publications is a philanthropist or a funder who is not interested in the profit but eager to support the journalistic endeavour. However, there are problems with donor power. Donors may use their power to channel journalism towards their own values and encourage publishing that would appeal to audiences that is attractive to advertisers (Wilkins and Enghel, 2013). Often the influence is indirect and produced in negotiation of ‘common ground where the values of journalists and donors meet’ (Wright, 2016). Powerful donors fund not only small-scale investigative journalism but also several international media companies such as AllAfrica.com, The Guardian, Al Jazeera, IRIN, for example. Martin Scott, Mel Bunce and Kate Wright’s (2017) study on IRIN, previously the UN-funded digital news agency, showed how change from UN to private donor, the Jynwel Foundation (owned by

Malaysian Jho Low) shaped the practices of journalism. Donor power manifested itself not explicitly but indirectly through allocation of resources. In the case of IRIN, the focus changed from news quality to quantity and short pieces, with increased promotion and distribution of their news material through social media platforms. Despite the new possibility to address more critically humanitarian aid work under independent funding, journalists were encouraged to adopt a more constructive (and cautious) than critical frame in their reporting.

To avoid the power of one donor, crowdfunding appears to democratize funding and it is used to support many of the above-mentioned journalistic endeavours. Crowdfunding then entails a promise of expanding the traditional production cultures by providing possibilities to produce topics, themes and voices that otherwise would be left unproduced (Hunter, 2016; Scott, 2015; Wang, 2016). Just as the example of Direkt36 shows, sometimes combinations of foundations and crowdfunding can provide more freedom than traditional media publishing (Aitamurto, 2011; Bennett et al., 2015, Carvajal et al., 2012; Drew, 2010).

As technologies develop, crowdfunding has become easier and a more common way to support different kinds of media productions. Media crowdfunding through services such as Kickstarter or Indiegogo<sup>7</sup> often draw on particular fan cultures and support niche and cultish production of video games and movies (Bennett et al., 2015; Hills, 2015; Scott, 2015).<sup>8</sup>

However, in societies with limited freedom of speech, crowdfunding can be decisive in enabling productions that tackle issues of social justice. Documentaries on migration and sexual marginalization (*My Child*, Turkey, 2013) are examples of crowdfunded productions, often in national cultures that do not accept or recognize these topics as socially relevant or treated under censorship (Kocer, 2015). In these contexts, crowdfunding can be crucial for the productions to reach the public.

Crowdfunding is part of the *sharing economy* that ties together practices of online sociability with economy. Nicholas A. John, the author of *The Age of Sharing*, shows how the ideas of sharing that are connected to utopian writing about the internet – collaboration, cooperation, communication and community – are now extended to property businesses such as Airbnb and Uber, Ebay, Craigslist and Couchsurfing (John, 2017: 47; Martin, 2016). After the initial enthusiasm connected with prospects of democracy and empowerment, the sharing economy has come to be used for any company or business, and therefore it is not likely to drive transition to sustainability in the ways originally envisioned (Martin, 2016). Moreover, controversial cases of taxation, unfair competition, harmful effects on communities in the case of Airbnb, and aggressive, questionable business policies of Uber show that deregulation does

<sup>7</sup>There are of course other kinds of crowdfunding sites, such as Hatreon, that seeks to fund alt-right productions.

<sup>8</sup>Examples of international film production such as *Veronica Mars*, speak of the power of fan economy, although it is often forgotten, that the share of crowdfunding in these productions is usually low and most of the funding is covered through traditional sponsored funding (the budget of *Iron Sky*, a showpiece of a crowdfunded feature film, was 7.5 million Euros, of which less than 10 per cent came through crowdfunding).

not automatically add to wellbeing and why the ‘sharing economy’ shouldn’t be confused with promotion of equality and fairness.

The promise of crowdfunding is based on trust that individual people are willing to support good causes, diversity in media and cultural productions. However, while crowdsourcing appears to be a way to fund marginal projects, media productions with social causes and humanitarian projects, it may at the same time push funding structures towards more voluntary, privatized funding and make it even harder to bring marginal social issues to mainstream media and popular contexts. Just as we can’t categorically assume that small, independent companies are immune to tendencies of commercialization, we can’t assume that a grassroots, horizontal funding structure automatically provides a fairer economy. Indeed, as argued before, the privatized, networked structures of the media economy may actually contribute towards further uncertainties and inequalities.

## SUMMARY

The digital media environment has opened up possibilities for media productions that promote various forms of solidarity action and draw attention to cases of injustice. This chapter presents examples of growing amounts of activist media, NGO-led productions and investigative, independent journalism. They point to new ways in which media productions engage with issues of solidarity and justice. More than ever before, the voices from people and groups neglected in public debates can be voiced through their own media. New funding structures open paths to productions that would otherwise have difficulty being funded. While many of the examples discussed in this chapter speak of the genuine desire and vocation to enhance democracy, equality and justice through different media productions, they also show how these productions are limited and shaped by the commercial media logics and individualized structure of digital media. The chapter points out the different challenges these media forms face.

Activist media provides an important and exceptional insight into experiences of marginalization, and in the digital media environment such media are easier to establish than before. While there is the sense of autonomy and freedom in activist media, they are vulnerable and in complex ways dependent on commercial media and commercialized social media. In addition they operate in the increasingly contested space of digital media with the rise of alt-right groups and undemocratic alternative media that complicate the possibilities of activist media to operate. While the digital media environment provides space for action that gathers together many different individuals, it creates vulnerabilities through the contradictions brought by the networked structures and contested nature of the public space.

The chapter also showed how advocacy journalism has increased, and while it provides opportunities to produce news concerning human rights and inequalities, there are limitations to these productions. They are shaped by commercialization of both the humanitarian field and, the media and, while striving towards professionalism, adopt forms of rationalization and mainstreaming that water down their critical stance.

New cooperations between mainstream media and humanitarian organizations have also emerged in the field of film and television industries; however, contradictions between the ethics of humanitarian work and commercial media logics, emerge and often the latter dominates over the former.

Independent, investigative journalism provides a hopeful vision of digital journalism; however in the same way as many small and alternative media, they struggle for long-term funding or are dominated by a few powerful funders. In addition, entrepreneurial freedom is contrasted by increased emotional labour, in a competitive work environment with uncertainty, and insecurity that affect the sustainability of production.

Who are the ones that benefit from solidarity productions? Ideally they should improve the lives of the marginalized and undo injustice, provide agency and a sense of solidarity across societies. Often such productions of solidarity, however, end up polishing the brand of a media company or NGO. Challenges across the field seem to remain the same: how to produce sustainable content with long-term relevance that focuses on social processes and root causes rather than sensational, celebrity driven short-term attention – or how to become visible in the digitalized media environment without losing sight of the mission while trying.

To sum up, the developments are not straightforward or without contradictions: the field of advocacy media seems to be growing, however, with deeper marketization and affective economy that commodifies ‘doing good’. In the field of activist and small media, growing precariousness and increased emotional labour are caused by a complex combination of uncertainty, vulnerability and dependence on commercial social media. The greatest contradiction of the new media environment from the perspective of solidarity is how productions that promote ideas of solidarity and social justice are proliferating at the same time as the structures of the media environment itself seem to erode many of the possibilities of creating such solidarity. These problems are connected with a lack of sustainability and the power of markets. This reflects larger changes in societies and the crumbling of the structures of the welfare society with patterns of marketization.

Within these contradictions, there are hopeful cases of cooperation: Activist media and entrepreneurial journalism, for example, lean on cooperation between people who support each other and work together, even across distances, and even in vulnerable positions. At times, these productions can enlarge the space for voicing experiences of injustice, speaking from experience. These spaces are important in providing possibilities to imagine alternatives – and imagining alternatives is crucial for producing better futures. In the chapters that follow, I explore these different challenges and contradictions of media solidarities. Changes in the media environment, from mass media to social media, have affected the ways in which imaginations of better future take place. While this chapter has focused on media productions, the next chapter deals with media imagination and hospitality. It discusses the importance (and challenge) of imagination for solidarity in context of immigration and refugee lives.

## Public service media

Public service media (PSM) with public funding still appear to be one of the most promising areas of media production that serve the public interest and provides critical views of social issues, since they are independent from the pressures of commercialization. However, as argued earlier, already since the 1980s, PSM have increasingly been shaped by marketization (economic value, competition and cost-efficiency). Just like many other publicly funded operations (railways, roads, healthcare, development aid), public service media are also increasingly under pressure to serve the contrary demands of public service and commercial logic (Debrett, 2009; Hokka, 2017; Martin and Lowe, 2013). Due to increased competition in the digital environment, public service media are under attack as commercial media across Europe and Australia accuse PSM of unreasonable advantage in the media markets (Freedman, 2008, 2014; Simpson et al., 2016; Lowe and Martin, 2013). In response to constant criticism, the public service media have adopted more market-driven production structures: the share of in-house productions has decreased and productions are out-sourced to small independent production companies. This is justified by cost-efficiency as well as with a production culture that supports independent companies and media entrepreneurs. While the funding structure of public service media in theory enables long-term productions and planning, in practice public service media is facing problems of downsizing, and relies increasingly on independent entrepreneurs and an environment that is dominated by commercial technology companies (Facebook, YouTube, Google). Research on minority policies in PSM also shows that PSM across Europe have adopted commercialized diversity policies to cater for a more mainstream audience (Leurdijk, 2006; Horsti et al., 2014). The concern about this policy is that it waters down representations of difference towards being more entertaining rather than critical (Malik, 2008). However, there are also great examples of PSM productions that are produced with unconventional production processes with multilingual narratives that recognize difference (Hulten and Horsti, 2011; Nikunen, 2011). The value of PSM is in providing programming that commercial media simply cannot or will not produce. The limitations of PSM are connected to a decrease or vulnerability in funding that have led to reforms that follow commercial logics and, currently, the pressures to adapt to social media logics.