Collaborative journalism: *Tejiendo Redes* fighting for the word and the informative agenda

Periodismo colaborativo: Tejiendo Redes en disputa por la palabra y la agenda informativa

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This paper explores the collaborative journalism developed by the *Alianza de Medios Tejiendo Redes*, a project that brings together journalists from 11 news portals in Mexico. From interviews with members of the Alliance and a quantitative approach to the texts produced in their different portals, it was found that not only protection and updating networks can be formed, but also to undertake joint projects that dispute the word to position an informative agenda based on respect for human rights.

KEYWORDS: Collaborative journalism, media alliance, networks, informative agenda.

Este trabajo explora el periodismo colaborativo que desarrolla la Alianza de Medios Tejiendo Redes, un proyecto que agrupa a periodistas de 11 portales informativos de México. A partir de entrevistas con miembros de la Alianza y un acercamiento cuantitativo a los textos producidos en sus diferentes portales, se constató que no solo se pueden formar redes de protección y de actualización, sino también emprender proyectos conjuntos que disputen la palabra para posicionar una agenda informativa basada en el respeto a los derechos humanos.

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Periodismo colaborativo, alianza de medios, redes, agenda informativa.*

INTRODUCTION

The economic crisis of the industrial model presently experienced by communication media has brought about the dismissal of information workers, closures of journalistic firms and a series of changes in communication technologies (Anderson, Bell & Shirky, 2013; Larrosa-Fuentes, 2014). Moreover, collective journalism projects appeared, whose central premise is to share information and work jointly; this way of practicing journalism is called *collaborative*.

This article explores collaborative journalism, boosted by the Internet, which, without leaving aside individual initiatives, looks for other professionals to undertake informative projects, from inception, development and dissemination over various surfaces of inscription (traditional media, web portals and social media). We analyze the collaborative journalism carried out by members of *Tejiendo Redes*. An alliance of media, conceived in the organization *Periodistas de a Pie*, which gathers 11 electronic media from various parts of Mexico, from Chiapas to Chihuahua. They may be thought of as local media, due to the news coverage they make within a limited area of the country, albeit their journalism articulates at regional scale, as it is part of national networks of communication media; this is, their connections, dynamics and information interchanges enable them to operate beyond territorial proximity.

In Europe and the United States, a number of media have shown progress in their network collaboration schemes; although in African, Asian and South American countries there are important cases of collaborative journalism, they have been scantly studied (Sambrook, 2018). In this sense, we consider that this type of journalism, based on the need to go beyond the usual limits and resources, will be increasingly common in Latin America due to the virtues of collaborative work in networks, supported on solidary backing and collective entrepreneurship. A clear instance is the 16 members of Global Investigative Journalism Network, from Latin American and Caribbean countries, and among them Mexican organizations as *Periodistas de a Pie* and *Quinto Elemento Lab*.

Methodological note

This work, exploratory and descriptive, is based on interviews, virtual ethnography and quantification techniques. In order to interpret relational data in sociograms we used the software Gephi. Members of *Alianza de Medios Tejiendo Redes* were interviewed; three of these were in-depth interviews (with Daniela Pastrana, Ángeles Mariscal and Isaín Mandujano) in order to understand the inception and development of the Alliance. We also carried out virtual ethnography over the first six months of 2019, while we downloaded texts published in the 11 portals. These texts totaled 3 926,[3] which were processed in language R, with a view to approaching the recurrent topics, carrying out a quantitative analysis of information interchange and distribution over the various portals of *Alianza de Medios*. The methodological scope is fundamental as it comes from the analysis of the totality of texts with material published by these media from January to June, 2019.

Network collaborative journalism

Journalism has implied, from its origins, collaboration. The verb *collaborate* (work with) has been associated with collective writing. Salvá (1846) defined collaboration as "working in union with other. In particular regarding literary works" (p. 259). Early in the XX century, the concept comprised not only literary and "ingenuity" works, according to the *Diccionario de la Lengua Castellana* (Real Academia Española [RAE], 1899, p. 238), but also "work with other people" (Toro y Gómez, 1901, p. 224) "in works of the spirit" (RAE, 1970, p. 319), and then, it evolved to a broader concept, as it is evinced in the dictionaries of the Royal Spanish Academy, which is "to contribute, give a donation; help others to reach an end" (RAE, 1989, p. 376). Being the verb "collaborate" linked to work in newsrooms, people working in magazines or newspapers are called collaborators; its use extended so

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[3]　This research received collaboration from a work team composed of Bernardo Arreola González, from the Universidad de Guadalajara and Laura Yareth Alvarado Vargas, from the Universidad Autónoma de Chiapas.

much that in 1984 the *Diccionario de la Lengua Española*, accepted a meaning for "collaborate" as "writing regularly in a newspaper, magazine, etcetera", and the writers as "collaborators" (RAE, 1984, p. 334).

Journalism needs the collaborative and participative teamwork of the members of communication media. This collaboration, which took place in a newsroom where everyone contributed to the manufacture of an informative product, now links journalists from diverse media, often geographically distanced.[4]

Socialization over the Internet has potentiated this tendency of people to work as a team. In *The information age*, Castells (1997) noted the new forms of collectivization, based on microelectronics, which he called network society. At present there are collaborative economy, collaborative work, pro-collaborative commons, collaborative consumption; it is defined as "a model based on collaboration between people who, supported on digital platforms, develop common resources and share the ownership" (Gnutti, 2017, p. 87). Stearns (2012) has called this stage as "a new era in collaboration".

Networking between journalists, or networking coordinated by them, is called collaborative, cooperative or participatory journalism. Of it, Sanpedro (2014) underscores the "flow of rallied power" (p. 251); Stonbely (2017), the purpose of "complementing each organization's resources and maximizing the impact of the content produced" (p. 14); Calvo Gutiérrez (2013), the "instantaneous interaction" and the collective construction of knowledge; while Jenkins and Graves (2019) distinguish the participation of other actors such as academics, scientists and community members. With these contributions, we understand collaborative journalism as a formal or informal project in which journalists from a number of information media, and frequently from different geographic areas, unite efforts to gather public-interest information, process and disseminate it jointly, supported on

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[4]   The relationships that take place in Tejiendo Redes can do without the territory, because of these virtual regions become important, potentiate connections, networks and the community.

communication technologies and on citizens interested and/or involved in the issues of the informative agenda.

Even if collaborative journalism is supported on the Internet and, as we have expressed, it is a fundamental detonator, there are other causes for its strengthening such as the threats experienced by journalists and the need to group in order to face aggressions; the ever increasing volume of information to process; the high costs of covering the occurrences and distributing the information; the creation of new media, especially digital natives, which make the permanent reinvention of informative work necessary; and the economic crisis in the newspapers, with the reduction of staff in newsrooms.

In this work, we propose that collaborative journalism is a driver of change and a "field-repairing" agent (Graves & Konieczna, 2015) for the errors and excesses of the conventional media, as it sets agendas that prioritize human rights to cover urban and rural "insurrect landscapes" (Reguillo, 2017), commonly rendered invisible, by means of pollination strategies (De Certeau, 2000; Reguillo, 2017) to fight for the word, on the basis of common good ethics (Monterde Mateo, Rodríguez & Peña-López, 2013).

PERIODISTAS DE A PIE NETWORK: CREATING ALLIANCES

In the XXI century with the rude awakening professional communicators experienced, networks and groups of state, regional and national journalists such as the *Red de Periodistas de Juárez*, *Red Libre Periodismo*, *Colectivo Voz Alterna* and *Fotorreporteros M*, among others, started to appear. In addition to strengthen solidarity and self-defense bonds between their members, these groups started to teach refresher courses to better perform the profession (De León, 2014, 2015, 2018).

In this new dynamic, journalists committed to expressing social problems from other perspectives and narratives created, on May 20th, 2007, the *Red de Periodistas de a Pie* (RPP). As a first step, they intended to professionalize their members by means of training courses: "Our goal was to train to do better journalism. That is the origin of the network: train ourselves" (Daniela Pastrana, responsible for the Network's investigation area, personal communication, June 5th, 2019).

These courses, which at the beginning were only taught in Mexico City, were later taken to several states of the country, with instructors such as Javier Darío Restrepo, María Teresa Ronderos, Mónica González and Juan Villoro.

This relationship of RPP with reporters from other states conveyed a change in the agenda. Violence had increased against journalists in the north of the country (González de Bustamante & Relly, 2016); kidnapping, assassinating and threatening journalists became constant. The training courses, useful in a context of normal democracy and peace, mutated into self-care and self-protection courses, and the network, in such environment of insecurity, turned into an "emergency center" for journalists who felt aggrieved (Daniela Pastrana, personal communication, June 5th, 2019). Then, the defense of freedom of expression, protection the journalist and to solve their murders were prioritized. The members of the network participated in demonstrations, university and legislative forums, and produced reports and denounced before various international agencies engaged in protection to professional communicators: "But that was going nowhere, we spent too much time in the forums when what we wanted was to go reporting" (Daniela Pastrana, personal communication, June 5th, 2019). "We lived a severe exhaustion process. We restructured and decided that our main task was to contribute to freedom of expression, but from what we wanted to do, which was doing journalism" (Ángeles Mariscal, founder of *Chiapas Paralelo*, personal communication, May 27th, 2019).

From these new concerns, shared between the network's members, they decided –in what may be seen as a third stage– to restate the objectives and return to their origins: train themselves. However, labor conditions have changed; unlike 2007, when most of the members of RPP had a formal job post (some of them worked for *Reforma*, *El Universal* or *La Jornada*), in 2015, when they put forward the new agenda, most of them was a *freelancer*, "an elegant way to say we were unemployed"5 (Daniela Pastrana, personal communication, July 5th, 2019).

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5   The interviewee refers to the first members or founding members of the *Red de Periodistas de a Pie*, mostly women.

In the face of precariousness and labor instability, the members of the network found it necessary to create a web portal, as most of them had neither a job nor space to publish their stories. There is an experience in Colombia, the portal of *Consejo de Redacción*,[6] which started in 2006 with 32 associated journalists and, 14 years later, it comprises 120 communicators. The task was complex as they had to create and find funds for the new medium. Political scientist and journalist María Teresa Ronderos aided and helped them over the institutional development of the new RPP. From that moment on, they attended courses on strategic planning and marketing, because in Mexico, as in Portugal and other parts of the world, communication curricula do not consider entrepreneurship courses (Dos Santos & Ahmad, 2019). In order to find funding, they sent applications to various foundations: Kellog, Knight and Open Society, from which they received five thousand dollars for one year. The challenge of accomplishing a dual articulation thus arose: being at once journalists and media entrepreneurs.

In this dynamic, *Red de Periodistas de a Pie* stated the possibility of coordinating various projects created by its members in various states of the country and encourage the foundation of web portals in the places that publications did not reach. Early in 2018, *Alianza de Medios Tejiendo Redes* was created by journalists from *Lado B*, *Chiapas Paralelo*, *Página 3*, *Colectivo Voz Alterna*, *InnDaga*, *La Verdad*, *Raíchali*, *Zona Docs*, *Amapola*, *Trinchera* and *Pie de Página*. This implied joining efforts from communicators from Chiapas, Mexico City, Oaxaca, Veracruz, Puebla, Guerrero, Jalisco, Sinaloa and Chihuahua.

Even if the formal creation of the Alliance occurred in 2018, years before these journalists had taken refresher courses and participated in informative coverages such as *En el camino* (to cover migration) and *Resistencias* (issues related to the defense of the land by indigenous peoples). "This work's detonator was a course by *Periodistas de a Pie* in 2012, in which we were allowed to meet female communicators from other states and found out that they were living conditions similar to ours" (Ángeles Mariscal, personal communication, May 27th, 2019).

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6   See www.consejoderedacción.org

By then, out of the media that will comprise the Alliance later, there was only *Lado B*: "*Lado B* was a milestone because it was founded by a group of journalists that decided to leave a conventional medium. This initiative, so professional and sound, we deemed highly interesting and worth replicating" (Ángeles Mariscal, personal communication, May 27th, 2019).

The strategy, from this situation of precariousness, as they were displaced from conventional media where they worked, was to group so that together they had a heavier influence in the public sphere. "A thousand ways to do/undo the game of the other, this is to say, the space instituted by others, characterize the activity, subtle, tenacious, resistant, of groups which, because they don't have one of their own, must do with a network of strengths", De Certeau (2000, p. 22) states, a valid text to characterize the "strategy of the weak" of RPP, in a process that has been of resistance and creation, because resisting "not only is opposing, but creating, situation by situation, other social relationships" (Fernández-Savater, 2015).

COLLABORATE: DEMAND OF CREATING AND GIVING

Alianza de Medios Tejiendo Redes was not a casual product. As of 2013, the members of RPP started to develop a series of collaborative works. The first, as we indicated, was *En el Camino, migración más allá de las vías* [On the road, migration beyond the rail tracks], proposed by Alma Guillermoprieto, who in 2010 headed a collaborative journalism project with the portal *72 migrantes*[7] to tell the story of the 58 men and 14 migrant women, from Central America, whose bodies were found in San Fernando, Tamaulipas. Funded by the Open Society Foundation, in *En el Camino* more than 50 people participated: reporters, photographers, designers and writers coordinated by RPP. The proposal was to narrate, investigate and explain migration in all of its dimensions and "beyond the railroad tracks". In the history of Mexican journalism, this is the project that has gathered the most communicators for the longest: it started in 2013 and seven years later the various collaborators still

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7   www.72migrantes.com

cover the topic. In addition to publish texts in *Pie de Página*, with the microsite *En el Camino*, *Periodistas de a Pie* collective decided to deliver a product to support migrants: a printed paper they called *En el Camino* –published since August, 2013– which includes the location of shelters or places where they may receive assistance, as well as practical tips on the route toward the United States.

The following collaborative project of RPP was *Resistencias*, funded by the Ford Foundation, in which more than 40 reporters, graphic designers, photographers and editors, as well as civil-society allies, local dissemination media and community radio stations participated. For the 2018 federal elections, *Periodistas de a Pie* gathered several collaborators to report and created the microsite *Elecciones 2018*[8] and joined *Verificado*.

In parallel with these long-term works, members of *Periodistas de a Pie* have developed other joint projects, disseminated over portal *Pie de Página* such as *Especiales*, among which we find *8M*, *Banquete minero* [Mining banquet], *Buscadores* [Searchers], *Caravana por la paz, la vida y la Justicia 2016* [Caravan for peace, life and Justice], *Después de los 43* [After the 43], *El color de la pobreza* [The color of poverty], *El lobby tabacalero* [The tobacco lobby], *Empresas españolas sangran a México* [Spanish enterprises bleed Mexico], Éxodos [Exoduses], *Fox y el millonario negocio de ser president* [Fox and the millionaire business of being president], *Gases invisibles* [Invisible gases], *Juego sucio* [Foul play], *Los sin tierra mexicanos* [The Mexicans with no land], *México, la última jugada* [Mexico, Last Play], *Mujeres ante la Guerra* [Women in the face of War], *Soy el número 16* [I am number 16], *Testigos de la Guerra* [Witnesses of War], and *Veracruz, las huellas que la PGJDF no quiere buscar* [Veracruz, the footprints PGJDF[9] does not want to search for].

In these cases, the collaboration level has surpassed the interchange of informative contents with defined duration and has approached the integrated level, which is, according to Stonbely (2017) and Shirky

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(in Parra & Edo, 2017) the level with the most participation because the journalists share infrastructure, training, financial resources, they mutually review their works and take the role of coordination if it is required, regardless if they are in central, southern or northern Mexico.

Although *Trinchera* (January 8th, 2011), from Guerrero, is the medium with the most seniority in *Tejiendo Redes*, the creation of *Lado B*, in Puebla, on July 11th, 2011, was the detonator for web portals in *Periodistas de a Pie*, for it was the first digital native medium with financial viability as it received donations and commercial advertising. Then, *Chiapas Paralelo*, *Pie de Página*, *Raíchali*, *ZonaDocs*, *Página 3*, *Voz Alterna*, *La Verdad*, *Amapola* and *InnDaga* appeared; the last an investigation unit (see Table 1). These portals' purpose, according to their founders (RPP, 2019), is to "disassemble the official narrative" (*Amapola*), "distance from local powers" (*Lado B*), "cover social movements" (*Trinchera*), "give indigenous people a voice" (*Chiapas Paralelo*), "monitor power" (*La Verdad*), "cover agrarian conflicts and struggles over water" (*Raíchali*), "turn around the everyday coverage" (*ZonaDocs*), disclose what the "government does not want to reveal" (*Página 3*), from "a human rights and social agenda perspective" (*Pie de Página*).

An analysis of the 3 926 texts published by the Alliance in the first half of 2019 using R, a programming language with a statistical approach, showed that the words most mentioned by the journalists are in, the first place: women, government, rights, security, people, violence, communities, justice, indigenous and health; and secondly: development, territory, land, defense, resources, gender, population, history, organization and inhabitants (see Figure 1).

These terms used by the journalists in the Alliance have to do with their journalistic agenda. Sassen (2015) refers that there are underground conditions that "it is necessary to bring to light" to "make dead land visible" (p. 249) such as the toxic development modes of predatory policies, new mining exploitations, the multiplication of unemployed people, and the systemic ejection "of people, economies and vital spaces", among many other problems produced by globalization. These topics have been taken and adapted by the Alliance to be covered. To accomplish this, they collaborate in everyday informative work; they

TABLE 1

ALIANZA DE MEDIOS TEJIENDO REDES

Medium	Web site	Facebook	Twitter	Global ranking	National ranking	Start date
Amapola Periodismo	https://amapolaperiodismo.com	3 623	1 552	2 240 021		17/02/19
Chiapas Paralelo	https://www.chiapasparalelo.com	129 000	17 600	318 400	5 567	19/06/13
InnDaga	https://www.inndaga.org					22/12/17
Lado B	https://ladobe.com.mx	19 327	13 400	388 029	11 453	07/07/11
La Verdad de Juárez	https://laverdadjuarez.com	7 545	1 812	1 254 528	23 435	28/03/18
Página 3	https://pagina3.mx	8 674		744 585	18 721	12/10/12
Pie de Página	https://piedepagina.mx	19 221	17 400	748 441	22 996	12/07/15
Raichali	https://raichali.com	3 215	1 224	7 581 129		20/04/17
Trinchera	http://www.trinchera-politicaycultura.com			4 469 960		08/01/11
Voz Alterna	https://vozalterna.com	11 744	487	5 601 853		17/09/18
ZonaDocs	https://www.zonadocs.mx	7 792	2 373	2 033 137		01/08/17

Source: The authors with data from Facebook, Twitter, Alexa and Who.is, on August 16th, 2019.

FIGURE 1

MOST USED WORDS IN THE TEXTS PUBLISHED BY THE
MEDIA ALLIANCE ON THE FIRST SEMESTER OF 2019

Source: The authors.[10]

organize and attend courses on narrative techniques; they produce an agenda that prioritizes human rights, team coverage and the creation of media to disseminate their contents.

Tejiendo Redes is in the arena to fight for the construction of the country's media agenda and, as a collective, it has an action to "repair the field" (Graves & Konieczna, 2015) as it offers alternative topics to make the underground events of deep Mexico visible, show a variety of approaches, supervise the investigations as a team and combat individualistic "dissemination"; in this sense, it is an agent of change for journalism. This agenda is noticed in the words: "rights", "justice", "government", "indigenous", "people", "violence", which do not come from chance, but from the conviction of bringing those zones and topics seldom covered by the traditional media to light.

POLLINATION STRATEGIES

The media allied to *Tejiendo Redes* assume that professional journalism must be collaborative; by means of the *Red de Periodistas de a Pie*,
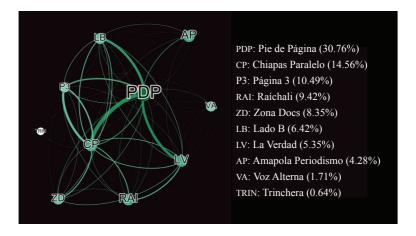
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10   Rights, Justice, Women, Government, Violence, Peoples, Health, Defense, Segurity.

computer servers, experiences and training are shared, as well feedback is given on the various topics of the day and the possible collaborations over a group chat on Telegram. Likewise, they have managed to mobilize reporters from one medium to another of the Alliance with a scholarship for displaced journalists, funded by RPP. They do not limit personal initiatives because, in the end, the reporters are the ones that produce the chronicles, news items, interviews, reports and articles, however, for their long-term works, for which the most resources, time and displacement are needed, the joint support of journalists is essential. For example, the first migrant caravan that left from Honduras, early in October, 2018, was covered over its first advances in Mexico by the staff of *Chiapas Paralelo*, *Página 3* and *Trinchera*; then by *Lado B*, *Pie de Página* and *Zona Docs* in the center of the country and, finally, by *La Verdad* and *Raíchali* in the north: "for 47 days, with 28 people: journalists, editors and designers covered that event. Such a feat, no media would have accomplished, because it would have been very expensive" (Daniela Pastrana, personal communication, June 5th, 2019). This collective endeavor allows resisting what philosopher Miguel Benasayag calls "dispersion", dispersal individualism, in which "there is neither truth nor lie anymore" (Fernández-Savater, 2015).

Apart from the various projects we have previously mentioned, *Tejiendo Redes* makes news items with available local coverage; the journalists from each medium decide whether to include these texts in their portals. The percentage of local items in the 3 926 analyzed texts is 80.03%. The media with the most contributions are *Página 3* with 40.22% of the total and *Chiapas Paralelo* with 26.34%. Furthermore, out of the 3 926 items of news processed for the analysis, it was found that 19.05% comes from media other than the portal where these items were published, either because pieces from other members of the network are shared (11.9%) or items from allied media are disseminated (7.15%). The text with the most rotation among the media of *Tejiendo Redes* were from *Pie de Página*, *Chiapas Paralelo* and *Página 3*, as displayed in the following sociogram (Figure 2).

The presence of the media of *Tejiendo Redes* is important in the regions where they are the only forum for alternative information; the "other version" as stated by the motto of *Chiapas Paralelo*. These

FIGURE 2

SOCIOGRAM IN GEPHI FROM TEXT PUBLISHED IN MEDIA OF
TEJIENDO REDES FROM JANUARY TO JUNE 2019

PDP: Pie de Página (30.76%)
CP: Chiapas Paralelo (14.56%)
P3: Página 3 (10.49%)
RAI: Raíchali (9.42%)
ZD: Zona Docs (8.35%)
LB: Lado B (6.42%)
LV: La Verdad (5.35%)
AP: Amapola Periodismo (4.28%)
VA: Voz Alterna (1.71%)
TRIN: Trinchera (0.64%)

Source: The authors.

informative processes over the network may be seen as "pollination vectors", following Reguillo (2017, p. 86), as they are agents that convey "ideas, emotions, words, images and desires", and which pollinate "surfaces of inscription" (social media, blogs, portals). In this pollination process *Chiapas Paralelo*, followed by *Lado B*, *Página 3* and *Pie de Página* have a heavier Internet traffic and have more followers on Facebook and Twitter (see Table 1).

FUNDING SOURCES

The pollinizing endeavor of the fight for the word requires, in addition to human, material and economic resources. Since in Mexico official publicity has been discretionally allotted to the media that support the municipal, state or federal governments' policies, it is difficult for the Alliance to access this sort of advertising agreements. Out of the portals of the Alliance, it was noticed that only *Página 3* and *Chiapas Paralelo*, over the analyzed period, featured official publicity; the

former, from the Ministry of Health of Oaxaca, the latter, from the municipal presidency of Tuxtla Gutierrez. However, this publicity is marginal and occasional.

There is no agreement in the Alliance regarding to reject or accept official publicity. This depends on each portal, because the basic premise is that each context is different. There is consensus about receiving official publicity, if it does not interfere with the editorial direction of the medium, it can be accepted. This sort of incomes is, as previously stated, scantly significant because the governors are unwilling to pay for publicity without conditions or to media with an editorial direction in conflict with their interests.

Another way to obtain resources is commercial publicity, but only *Lado B* features this sort of advertisement, especially of schools and universities in Puebla; it also receives support from its readers through a section called "Fondea". All the portals keep agreements for programmatic publicity with Google Accent, an income that allows them to pay the webmaster. For funding, they receive support from foundations in the United States, Canada or Europe. To produce a series of five reports of "Mining banquet", they received the Mike O'Connor Scholarship for Mexican Journalists from the International Center for Journalists (ICfJ) and resources from the Initiative for Investigative Journalism in the Americas, in alliance with Connectas; for "Invisible gases", funds were obtained from the Heinrich Böll Foundation; for "Women in the face of war", from the Canada Fund for Local Initiatives; for "Resistances", from the Ford Foundation; and, to develop "The dirty game of Florentino in Mexico", which was collaboratively worked with *Taula*, *Proceso* and *eldiario.es*, the funds came from the European Union, Barcelona's Town Council and Catalonia's Generalitat. Additionally, each portal is funded by the Open Society Foundation for three years (2018-2020) with a total sum of one hundred thousand dollars; over such period the media are supposed to position themselves and generate resources of their own. In the case of scholarships to carry out specific assignments, the media design the proposals and look for funders.

Since they depend mainly on funders, and very little on commercial, official or programmatic advertising or support from the readers, the

media of *Tejiendo Redes* experience economic fragility. The future regarding finances is uncertain, and the challenge posed is huge, even if supporting a digital newspaper is less expensive than a printed one, resources are needed to cover the events and pay for the portals' designers and webmasters, in this process of fighting for the word and the media agenda.

CONCLUSIONS

The journalistic experience of *Alianza de Medios Tejiendo Redes* contributes to think of journalistic activities as collaborative work that goes beyond a paper's newsroom to connect with those other media. This collaborative process started out of the need to refresh in journalism techniques, later for self-protection in the face of the wave of violence experienced by journalists, and then to create their own media in various states of the country in order to disseminate their own messages.

In a country in which official publicity is allotted to media that support governmental policies, the portals of *Alianza de Medios* are left aside. This situation has forced journalists to try and look for other sort of incomes such as programmatic publicity, sales of banners and funding from international foundations.

Not only do the members of *Tejiendo Redes* share multimedia contents with other portals of the network, they also partake of the joint or parallel coverage of events with other journalists of the Alliance to produce their own materials or a single final product. They consider, as the journalists who created Project Facet (a platform that fosters collective work under the motto: "the future of journalism is collaborative"), that the current circumstances demand collaborative journalism.

This process of journalistic collaboration, novel in Mexico, experiences difficulties, teaches lessons and exhibits advantages. Difficulties start from the organization since adding a number of newsrooms to have only one virtual newsroom produces complications and differences. Cooperation is not smooth; there are usually discrepancies from the feeling that some people work more than others,

because deadlines are not met or because there are various approaches. This is why discussions are frequent and alternatives are proposed. Even with these challenges, the experience in collaborative journalism of *Tejiendo Redes* allows verifying that it is possible to gather several people, not only to group for protection and training, but also to work in joint projects.

Breaking the tendency of individualist journalism, "of dispersion", in the Latin American region is a difficult task, because we live in the tradition of underscoring personal efforts; however, the present conditions invite and compel to join efforts and resources to have various perspectives of the events; which does not mean to drop individual initiatives. Sharing experiences, resources and projects does not nullify the individuals. In journalisms there is always space for personal expression and the development of a personal style.

Collaboration is a dynamic process and, in this line, the journalists of *Alianza de Medios* have moved from the sort of collaboration of only sharing information to reach an integrated level, as they take up common editorial lines, share resources, codes of ethics and joint informative pollination strategies.

If collaborative journalism decided only to gather communication professionals to work certain topics, it would be irrelevant. The most important is that in this concurrence of wills there is a stake to "cure" journalism from its agenda and practice errors, as it addresses topics that are in the heart of deep Mexico and that configure this new endeavor, an innovative discourse, in this complex context of the fight for the word. This journalism should be seen as a confrontation with conventional journalism. There is indeed a fissure, but not a total and confrontational detachment, it is rather a complementary correction for vitiated practices of conventional journalism.

This work allows us to evidence that, by means of the synergy of a number of journalists, it is possible to position vital topics for a community or region at a national level which, due to their distance from the center of the country, are ignored. This way, *Tejiendo Redes* enriches the voices in a country dominated by official versions and centralized media. A story published in *Raíchali*, from Chihuahua, about Tarahumara people, is featured in portals of Veracruz, Guerrero,

Mexico City or Chiapas. The impact is larger than that achieved by means of individual efforts. There is, despite it is not the specific purpose, constant refreshing in the practice of journalism because those with the most dexterities, abilities and knowledge set these resources into motion for the collective, with which the coverage of the events as well as dissemination are enhanced in a flow of know-hows available to the collective.

As a final note, we have to point out that this new era of collaboration would not be possible without the current communication technologies, these devices that allow activating different initiatives and bring them together in a larger project that has to do with the most basic human rights, with the way of using and living their space and community, and which sometimes comes into conflict with the interests of extractive firms and the government. These technologies dynamize journalists' joint work, as an emergent form of association that contests the traditional culture of dispersive individualism and stake on common-good culture, in a journey of collective and corrective accompaniment, which regulates itself by means of shared codes of ethics with a media agenda founded on human rights.

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