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The crisis of photojournalism: rethinking the profession in a participatory media ecosystem

Abstract

The economic crisis and the appearance of "citizen photojournalism" are the main challenges the professional practice of photojournalism has faced in recent years. The American Society of News Editors states that photojournalists (and visual journalists) are the professionals most affected by the cuts in the media ecosystem. The digital revolution has converted citizens into potential creators of images of newsworthy events and the media invite audiences to participate by sending in their photographs for publication. Photojournalists no longer have exclusive control of news images. Are they in danger of extinction? Has participatory journalism devalued the job of photojournalist? Are graphic reporters opposed to audience participation? This research tries to discover how Spanish photojournalists are reacting in this participatory media context. To attain this goal, twelve in-depth interviews were held with recognized Spanish photojournalists who develop their activity at the local, regional, national and international levels, featuring, for example, graphic reporters Manu Brabo (Pulitzer Prize, 2013) and Daniel Pozo (National Photojournalism Prize, 2012). All of them argue that quality is expensive and that few citizens can compete with the technical knowledge and work tools of a professional photojournalist. One main conclusion can be drawn from an analysis of their replies: photojournalists do not feel threatened by citizen participation in the media. In fact, they show great generosity by considering that the images contributed by audiences should be economically remunerated. In contrast, they regard media managers as the real enemies.

Keywords
Active audiences, crisis, ethics, mobile devices, participatory journalism, photojournalist, UGC

1. Introduction

In the United States, 45% of adult Internet users are online image creators. This means that they upload original photos or videos they themselves have created (Duggan, 2013). In the case of Spain, the IV

Annual Study of Social Networks elaborated by Elogia e IAB Spain Research shows that 43% of users between 18 and 55 years use social networks to publish content (photos, videos, news, music, etc.). The media fully understand the consequences of this audience hyperactivity. On 7 July 2005, the day of the terrorist attacks in London, the BBC received a thousand photographs taken by citizens, which forced it to create a unit for the specific purpose of supervising the content that they sent in. Three journalists checked the authenticity and legality of the emails and other text messages, images and videos they received in order to decide whether publication was appropriate (Wardle & Williams, 2010).

These figures have been achieved thanks to the development of mobile technology. According to the Association for Mass Media Research (AIMC–*Asociación para la Investigación de los Medios de Comunicación*), at the end of 2013 85.5% of Spanish Internet users were connected to the net using their cellphone, a percentage that surpassed those using a laptop (77.7%) or a desktop computer (73.3%). The indicators of the Ministry of Industry, Energy and Tourism show that since 2006 mobile telephony in Spain has exceeded the number of inhabitants, and in May 2014 its penetration stood at 108%, with over fifty million lines.

Internet and mobile devices have put an end to the passive society and brought about the birth of an active audience, which decides at every moment what it wants to consume and how to consume it (Chaffee & Metzger, 2001; Dimmick, Feaster & Hoplamazian, 2011). Spaces like Witness Blog show that we are facing a public that enjoys a previously unknown power.

People's cellphones are omnipresent, and this technology has also changed the public's reaction to dramatic situations: "People used to stand there in shock, but now they take a picture" (Lacey, 2011). The existence of millions of mobile devices with easy-to-use, built-in cameras has created "pocket journalism" (Twist, 2005), and transformed the audience into potential collaborators of the media, who capture and share events in any corner of the world in textual or graphic form in real time (Allan, 2014a; Glaser, 2007). However, this social advance coincides with other data that are not so positive for the journalism sector.

The economic crisis, the drastic reduction in the diffusion of the traditional media, the loss of advertisers and credibility, and the spread of convergence have brought about the closure of hundreds of media and reduced the size of newsrooms.

All these facts point to a shift in the practices and cultural skills of photojournalists, and this new working context deserves to be analyzed.

2. Is professional photography necessary?

The annual report of "The American Society of News Editors" (2013) states that photojournalists, together with other visual journalists, are the professionals most affected by the cuts in the media ecosystem. Their profile was traditionally linked to authorship and exclusive control of the news image (Domènech & López, 2013), but facing today's culture of participation new routines and relations with the public have been taking shape, causing a redefinition of the profession of photojournalist (Allan & Patrick, 2013).

Graphic reporters are no longer the sole providers of visual content in the media (Buehner, 2013). This is because witnesses to events are no longer merely sources and have become producers and distributers of content (Mortensen, 2011: 8), with the result that "professional photojournalists may be called into question" (Yaschur, 2012: 162). The irruption of these new actors and the pressure of the financial problems that the journalism industry has been experiencing for nearly a decade, have meant that the solutions undertaken on several occasions by the media have directly affected the figure of the photojournalist (Allan, 2013).

The Chicago Sun-Times was responsible for one of the most alarming cases, eliminating its entire photography department in May 2013. A total of twenty-eight photojournalists were replaced by news writers with iPhones as part of its firm commitment to professional convergence. In a statement the newspaper said that: "*The Chicago Sun-Times* continues to evolve with our digitally savvy customers, and as a result, we have had to restructure the way we manage multimedia, including photography, across the network" (Channick, 2013).

CNN, the *Times Herald-Record*, *The Atlanta Journal Constitution* (García, 2012; Anderson, 2013), and *Sports Illustrated* magazine provide other examples of massive layoffs of photojournalists in recent years.

In Spain, according to the *Annual Report of the Journalistic Profession 2014*, almost 12000 jobs have disappeared in the journalism sector since the economic crisis started in 2008, and 364 media companies have closed. In 2014 alone, 2412 journalists lost their jobs, 20% of the total affected. Moreover, job insecurity has increased with salary reductions and worse working hours and conditions.

Although neither specific research nor quantitative data about the photojournalism case are available, press associations and specialized blogs have regularly reported how dozens of photojournalists have been laid off in Spanish magazines and newspapers like *El País*, *La Vanguardia*, *Sur*, *La Opinion de Murcia*, *La Voz de Asturias*, *Tiempo*, *Interviú*, etc. *Diario de Alcalá*, for example, fired its last hired photographer in September 2014 and has since used pictures sent in by non-professional citizens to illustrate news. The documentary *"Reinventant el Fotoperiodisme"* (2012), by Roger Lleixá, offers a qualitative approach to the current situation, focusing on the main problems faced by Catalonian photojournalists.

These cuts do not signify less interest by the medium in photography. Quite simply, in some media commitment to current issues is given priority over commitment to the worker, and even to the objectivity that was traditionally a professional identity mark of the emitter (Mortensen, 2011: 10). Instead images are favored that are taken at the scene of the event by an ephemeral source, from whom a professional ethic or social responsibility are not required, because his or her photography contributes authenticity and transparency; moreover content exclusivity also arouses greater interest in the audience, especially when violent images are shown explicitly. This ethic divides the media, and was recently demonstrated in July 2014 when some of the media reproduced images of corpses from Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 that were circulating on the networks, while other media respected the victims.

The impact of an image is so high that there are studies claiming that posts with photos are 50% more likely to obtain a "Like" from the user reading it (Lavrusik & Cameron, 2011). Paradoxically, these practices show that although photojournalists are being laid off, the medium's degree of dependence on the image is greater than ever.

In fact, in spite of the shake-ups in graphics departments, theoreticians consider that photojournalists are indispensable in the news context. Dan Gillmor, author of *We the Media*, argues that photojournalists must struggle with the new media to safeguard their profession (Gillmor, 2004). Hart Van Denberg, a mass media consultant, also argues that they play an important role in the press because they are needed for "crusading work, the work that takes time and dedication" (Glaser, 2007). In the opinion of Mark Hamilton, a journalism professor, graphic reporters form part of journalism's future: "maybe if the citizens are willing to shoot the easy stuff, our photogs can be freed up to do the difficult, essential storytelling" (Glaser, 2007).

The important question, as pointed out by Nathalie Applewhite, general director of the Pulitzer Center, is to have "a photojournalist with an artistic vision that transcends superficial coverage" (Keller, 2011). And Ramón Lobo, a war correspondent, adds that professionals should be concerned with "getting to the scene of events, talking to the protagonists, cross-checking, understanding and providing context. They are reporters, and

they don't work with a remote control" (Ballesteros, 2011). These characteristics, together with professionalism, "[ensure] the existence of the photojournalist well into the future" (Bersak, 2006: 54).

Fred Ritchin, author of *Bending the Frame: Photojournalism, Documentary and the Citizen* (2013), believes that photojournalism is currently "a hybrid enterprise of amateurs and professionals, along with surveillance cameras, Google Street Views, and other sources" (Lybarger, 2013). Allan (2014b: 146) adds that "a collaboration necessarily demands mutual respect through open dialogue", with the aim of innovating and experimenting with new models of information.

Another of the key questions is what distinguishes a citizen from a professional photojournalist. James Wallace, chief editor of the *Toronto Sun*, holds that "the difference between professional and citizen photojournalism is motivation and experience" (Lacey, 2011). The working future of graphic reporters is ensured by their tackling sensitive and dangerous issues in greater depth and with greater dedication; whereas citizens merely use their cellphone camera to confirm that "they have been there" (Andén-Papadopoulos, 2013a), and put on record that they were an active part of some event of great importance. "For professionals, it is their job" (Lacey, 2011). Buehner (2014) concludes that moral values are what differentiate the photojournalist in the employment field.

3. Defining citizen photojournalism

Defining this new phenomenon gives rise to controversy and it is hard to reach agreement on the term to employ, with some preferring to call them "amateur photojournalists", or "accidental photojournalists" (Allan, 2014b: 134). From a generic perspective, the citizen photojournalist is "the joint offspring of today's participatory practices and the tradition for bearing witness" (Mortensen, 2011: 5). Allan introduces the concept of "citizen witnessing" in his book *Citizen Witnessing. Revisioning Journalism in Times of Crisis* (2013); he refers to this "as one possible way to recast claims made regarding photojournalism's capacity to thrive or perish with ever-greater public involvement in newsmaking" (2014a: 1; 2014b; Allan & Thorsen, 2009). Andén-Papadopoulos widens the concept to *citizen camera-witness*: "the ritualized employment of the mobile camera as a personal witnessing device to provide a public record of embodied actions of political dissent for the purpose of persuasion" (2013b: 756).

3.1. *Being in the right place at the right time*

The contribution of visual content by the audience is not something exclusive to Web 2.0 or the new millennium. Two historical antecedents to this phenomenon can be found in the XX century: the record of the assassination of president John F. Kennedy in 1963, made by Abraham Zapruder; and the images of the near fatal beating received by Rodney King at the hands of four police officers from Los Angeles in 1991, captured by George Holiday (Miller, 2014; Irby 2014: 80).

The terrorist attacks of 9/11 in the United States marked a turning point in the evolution of citizen photojournalism. This change was also furthered by the terrorist actions in London (2005), Boston (2013), the UK riots (2011), the protests in Myanmar (2007), the elections in Iran (2009), the Arab Spring (2011-2012) or the slaughter in Syria (2013). These were all tragic events as well (Andén-Papadopoulos, 2013), in which the values in creating the photograph were not professional (Gillmor, 2006). But the really notable thing about these contributions was the authenticity of those images, proceeding from anonymous citizens who found themselves facing a newsworthy event with their mobile devices. This is "a new army of citizen reporters" ready for a paradigm change in photojournalism (Allan &

Patrick, 2013: 175), who achieve a high impact on an audience characterized by the inclusion of dramatic and violent content in its media diet (Mortensen, 2011: 5).

The citizen photojournalist is necessary and indispensable for disseminating content, especially in those countries where news coverage is opaque, which suffer from oppression and censure (García, 2012), and which cannot be reached by independent journalists in order to reflect their internal tensions. The images provided by these emitters, although they do not reach professionally acceptable standards (Allan, 2013; Andén-Papadopoulos, 2013), serve as a testimony to the atrocities and tyranny experienced on a daily basis (Gillmor, 2011). Their exclusive character normally makes them into outstanding news in the mass media, as happened with the capture and execution of Saddam Hussein, or the atrocities committed in Abu Ghraib prison. It is impossible for the news media to have photojournalists in every corner of the planet. The more eyes capture what is happening, the more complete the truth that is reflected in the media (García, 2012).

In spite of the benefit these practices bring to the spread of global knowledge, the problems faced by citizen photojournalists are the same as those professionals must cope with (Lacey, 2011). The photojournalist from the *Chicago Tribune,* Alex García (2012), notes six basic problems: "quality" in technique, "digital manipulation" of the image, "integrity" of the photography, "breadth" in the subject to be photographed, "storytelling" and "reliability".

3.2. *Non-professional images star on front pages*

The news relevance of some of these images means that they are the only audience contribution that currently attains a status similar to that of professionally produced content in a mass medium (Pantti & Bakker, 2009: 485). Such images can be the most prominent feature on a front page or the most commented content of the day in several parts of the planet. The image of the US Airways flight in the Hudson River in 2009, published on Twitter by Janis Krums, a citizen aboard a ferry, symbolizes the immediacy of citizen photojournalism. Moreover, lived experience revalues a product created by someone who until recently was only a witness. This widening and reformulation of production routines is the result of a convergence culture (Jenkins, 2006). It reflects the empowerment of the citizen and redefines the medium itself, which becomes a "pro-am" product, where professional practices and skills are combined with other amateur ones. Natural disasters, accidents, the weather, personal situations or conflict zones account for a large part of citizen content. In 2009 Pantti and Bakker had already defined three big groups for categorizing these images: misfortunes (disasters, accidents and crime), memories (personal lives, experiences and memories) and sunsets (weather and nature photography, storms, clouds).

3.3. *The risks of free content*

Society has forcefully irrupted into media production processes, but it is clear that the active participation of citizens in gathering news stories is largely due to this content being free and the ease with which it is shared over social networks. In this context, the photojournalist additionally faces a change in market rules (Zalcman, 2007), where news immediacy, provided by individuals in the street, prevails in many mass media.

Those people directly offering their photographs to the mass medium often do not receive any benefit (Gillmor, 2011). They generate immediate low-cost content for the company, and these free-of-charge images seriously harm professional photojournalists, who feel that their product is underrated.

Nonetheless, such contributions entail a series of risks. The *Global Citizen* website notes that with the arrival of "cell journalists", it is difficult to verify whether an image is authentic

and has not been manipulated. Lacey (2011) also points out that there is "the threat that citizens will purposefully break the ethics of manipulation and privacy due to personal bias". This uncertainty has favored the appearance of new companies focused on verifying citizen content, such as Storyful. In 2014, this citizen news agency went into partnership with Facebook to create FBNewswire, another news agency that verifies and shares content that individuals and organizations publish on Facebook.

Along the same lines, and in response to the regular collaboration of the media with their publics to obtain visual testimonies, specific platforms have also appeared like *Rawporter, Citio, Dreamstime, Demotix, Scoopshot, Citizenside, Newzulu* or *Newsmodo*, which distribute images to mainstream media (Buehner & Keshelashvili, 2013). The majority of these companies work as image banks; verifying content and serving as intermediaries with the media so that the author of the image receives some economic compensation.

While some media use their social spaces to propose subjects on which they would like their audiences to send in images, others defend a more passive and cautious position with the understanding that the use of photographs proceeding from social networks is a complex practice linked to author's rights. Thus, although the terms and conditions of networks like Twitter, Youtube and Facebook state that their acceptance involves permitting reproduction of their content in other publications, even the images that citizens post of their wedding or university graduation on their personal accounts are the property of the photographer who took them, and not of the person in the photo. This was pointed out by the report of the Tow Center for Digital Journalism, "Amateur footage: a global study of user-generated content in TV and online news output" (2014). Therefore, in the opinion of the Associated Press agency, only the author of a selfie can cede the copyright of that product (Wardle, Dubberly & Brown 2014: 67), and Reuters never uses images from Facebook as it understands that they are personal and their publication might invade the user's privacy (p. 107).

This type of risks demands a strict prior moderation of images and an ethical and professional selection criterion, although the BBC itself has made use of images circulating on Twitter without gaining permission, considering that in exceptional situations there is a strong public interest and constraints of time (Ruokosuo, 2012).

4. Literature review

The study of citizen photojournalism has developed over the last five years. It has basically been approached from a critical perspective, due to the ethical dilemmas, the difficulty in verifying authorship, the subjective intentionality of the emitter and the limited rigor of the editorial procedure accompanying its informative use in the media. Following this line, the qualitative peculiarities of citizen photojournalism have been studied by Andén-Papadopoulos (2013a), who establishes four main characteristics of the aesthetics of crowdsourced footage (hypermobility, opacity, non-narrativity and raw audio) and distinguishes three main principles that serve to construct citizen footage's claim to reality and morality (subjectivity, affectivity and partisanship).

Interest in this new modality of trespassing in the profession of photojournalism has materialized in several monographs, like *Amateur Images and Global News* (Andén-Papadopoulos & Pantti, 2011), *Citizen Witnessing: Revisioning Journalism in Times of Crisis* (Allan, 2013) and, more recently, *The Citizen Journalist's Photography Handbook* (Miller, 2014).

Some studies have focused specifically on the relation found between photojournalists and citizen photojournalists. For example, studies by Buenher (2013, 2014) and Tara Mortensen (2013, 2014) analyze the professional practice of photojournalists through their professional values and skills in comparison with that of citizen photojournalists, using co-orientation theory. In 2012 an analysis was also made of the perceptions that 387

professional photojournalists and 392 citizen photojournalists from the United States held of their works by means of an experiment in which the photo credit was manipulated. The main conclusion obtained was that professional photojournalists feel so threatened that they "rate a photograph that is credited to a citizen journalist more poorly than an uncredited photograph" (Buehner and Keshelashvili, 2013: 152).

This line of study has also been developed by Andén-Papadopoulos and Pantti (2013), who conducted interviews with journalists from the mass media in Finland and Sweden with the aim of determining the thought of photojournalists facing the constant proliferation of citizen witnessing. Most striking in this study are the three types of discourse discovered: resistance, resignation and renewal.

Although there is a certain interest in the practice and consequences of citizen photojournalism, the legal framework has not aroused the curiosity of researchers, in spite of its being determinant in whether or not photojournalism develops. Thus, in Hungary, the country that saw the births of Joseph Pulitzer and Robert Capa, since 15 March 2014 a new civil code has forbidden images being taken if the people who appear in the image can be identified and their prior permission has not been obtained. In 2015 the Law of Citizen Security, colloquially known as the "Gagging Law", is due to come into effect in Spain: designed along similar lines to the Hungarian law, without consulting the professionals, it will forbid the unauthorized use of images of the authorities or the police, or recordings of installations that are protected or that might jeopardize an investigation. The direct consequences of these restrictive measures are clear: photographs that are more artificial and greater institutional control over the news emitted.

From the methodological point of view, research in citizen photojournalism has basically been approached from a qualitative perspective by means of the case study. The murder of the young Iranian Neda Agha Soltan on a demonstration in 2009 (Mortensen, 2011), Gaddafi's bloody death in 2011, the bombing of the Boston marathon in 2013 (Allan, 2014c), or the killing of a British soldier in Woolwich (Allan, 2014c), are some of the examples that have been described and analyzed in detail. The platforms have been of secondary interest, although there are studies on the role played by Flickr in crisis situations (Liu *et al.*, 2009), the incorporation of collaborative news clips in the *New York Times*' blog, The Lede, to inform about the Syria conflict (Wall & El Zahed, 2014), and interviews conducted with iReporters who covered the Iranian elections and protests of 2009 (Palmer, 2013). The profile of the emitter has also been researched, for example when the images have been produced and distributed by soldiers (Mortenssen, 2009; Struk, 2011); similarly, there has been interest in determining audience reaction facing this type of pseudo-professional content, applying the focus group technique (Andén-Papadopoulos, 2013a). The use of applications like Instagram or Hipstamatic to manipulate and/or improve the reality captured in images has also been an object of study (Alper, 2013).

In spite of these heterogeneous approaches at the international level, in the Spanish context research literature focusing on the role of photojournalists and/or citizen photojournalists is non-existent. The digital photography has aroused greater interest, in relation to the concepts of credibility and authorship (Caminos, Marín & Armentia, 2008; Domènech, 2013), as well as its adaptation to digital media (Caminos, Marín & Armentia, 2006; Villa, 2008).

5. Objectives and methods

The main objective of this research consists in analyzing how audience participation in the mass media is affecting the professional activity of the Spanish photojournalist in the current digital context. To achieve this goal we examine the inside view of the situation from the professional perspective.

The economic crisis, combined with the democratization of digital technology, has increased the participation of anonymous citizens in the media, where their amateur images are accepted, published and even requested. Is the profession of photojournalist being jeopardized in this context? Has participatory journalism devalued the profession of photojournalism? Are graphic reporters opposed to audience participation in the media? Is the value of the image being popularized or undervalued?

To resolve these questions this research applies a methodology with a qualitative character, based on twelve semi-structured, in-depth interviews with Spanish photojournalists who have developed their activity at the local, regional, national and international levels, in order to provide the research with a global view of the phenomenon. The sample covers varied profiles. Some of them have developed a prestigious career and have received important prizes, like the freelance Manu Brabo, Pulitzer Prize in 2013, and Daniel Pozo, National Prize in Photojournalism in 2012.

Other photojournalists are not active anymore. Some have retired, such as Manuel Barriopedro (well known for their pictures of the attempted coup d'état in Spain on 23 February 1981); others have become disillusioned with the current situation of photojournalism, like Sergio Camacho, who is developing personal projects at the present time.

Some members of the sample have moved towards audiovisual contents: Sergio Caro records reports for TV channels like Cuatro and CNN+, and David Airob has founded his own website, The W Side.

Furthermore, in this research we can find photojournalists developing part of their work in the academy, such as Fernando González and Daniel Caballo; in addition, there are the graphic reporters Víctor Lerena, Marcelo del Pozo, López Perujo and Cristina Quicler, who publish their photos in news agencies (Reuters, AFP, AP or EFE) and national and international media.

Pantti and Bakker (2009) were pioneers in analyzing citizen photojournalism from the perspective of the Dutch professional in order to detect the established selection criteria, identify the types of content utilized and reflect the perception of amateur photography held by journalists. One of the main differences with the present study is that their twenty interviews were directed to editors-in-chief, editors and journalists from four television stations and eight newspapers.

Below are the names and positions of the participants in the present study. The positions correspond to the time when the interview was conducted:

- David Airob. Photojournalist with the regional newspaper *La Vanguardia*. Founder of the weblog: thewside.com.
- Manuel Barriopedro. Retired photojournalist, formerly with the EFE news agency. World Press Photo 1981.
- Manuel Brabo. Freelance photojournalist in Cairo. Pulitzer Prize in 2013.
- Daniel Caballo. Graphic editor of the international section at the EFE news agency. PhD in Journalism.
- Sergio Camacho. Photojournalist with The Associated Press in Andalusia from 2008 until 2012. Head of photography at the local newspaper *Málaga Hoy* until 2013.
- Sergio Caro. Photojournalist and freelance cameraperson. Ortega y Gasset Prize 2006.
- Marcelo Del Pozo. Coordinator of the Reuters news agency in Andalusia since 2003. Andalusia Journalism Prize in 2007.
- Fernando González. Head of photography at the local newspaper *Sur*. PhD in Journalism.

- Víctor Lerena. Photojournalist with the EFE agency and the national newspaper *ABC*. President of the National Association of Press and Television Photojournalists (ANIGP-TV – *Asociación Nacional de Informadores Gráficos de Prensa y Televisión*).
- López Perujo. Photojournalist collaborating with The Associated Press agency in eastern Andalusia.
- Daniel Pozo. Staff photographer with The Associated Press. National Photojournalism Prize 2012 in the Current Affairs category.
- Cristina Quicler. Photojournalist collaborating with The Associated Press in western Andalusia.
- Three selection criteria were employed in choosing the sample:
- Spanish photojournalists who have developed their activity in the country and/or abroad.
- Photojournalists of recognized standing due to their professional experience, prizes received or because they have held some position of responsibility.
- Professionals of the news image who have belonged to newspapers or news agencies and worked at different levels within the profession.

We used varied sources to design the sample, such as search engines, Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, blogs, news agencies and associations. A total of thirty emails were sent to photographers, only seventeen of which were answered. However, due to work limitations of the informants, the final sample was made up of twelve participants, with a professional experience in the field of photojournalism ranging between nine and fifty years.

The in-depth interview is the most suitable research tool for this study because, as Taylor and Bodgan (1992) point out, its aim is to provide a broad picture of a range of scenarios, situations or people. Moreover, it is employed to study a relatively large number of people who are familiar with a subject or event in a relatively short period of time.

The meetings were held in October 2013, and took place in different forms: in some cases the interview was developed personally, in others it was held over the telephone and in others by Skype. All were recorded in digital format and lasted for approximately one hour each. The space chosen for conducting each of the interviews was silent and free of possible interruptions, although this depended on the situation of each of the interviewees. The majority of the face-to-face interviews were carried out in the workplace of the professional.

6. Results

6.1. *The survival of the photojournalist*

The photojournalists interviewed are aware that the fall in the circulation of newspapers, limited advertising investment and the fact that citizens don't read have gravely wounded photojournalism. This new panorama of instability has disorientated them, and their problems have been aggravated by professional trespassing. The interviewees consider that many photojournalists are not well-trained, are autodidacts and do not reinvent themselves, which together with a lack of regulation has facilitated the entrance of new pseudo-professional profiles. The multimedia journalist has also signified a high cost for photojournalism. For David Airob, a photojournalist with *La Vanguardia*, trespassing arises "from the moment when the media ask the news writer to take photographs as well".

Fernando González, graphic editor with *Diario Sur*, says that he has not experienced a crisis like the present one in his 28 years of professional experience. Lay-offs, pay cuts, reduction in the number of working days and Employment Regulation Files (ERE –

Expediente de Regulación de Empleo) occurring in media newsrooms in practice affect over half of the interviewees. In the case of the Efe agency, many photojournalists have had to move onto part-time contracts, where they earn half as much, and the whole staff has had its salaries reduced between 8 and 10.5% in order to make the company viable.

At the same time, all the answers coincide in stating that a large quantity of excellent Spanish photojournalists have been forced to go and work in countries in conflict areas to be able to survive in the profession, acquire recognition and win prestige that would guarantee them a minimum of stability in some medium. Moreover, the majority holds that they are more highly valued and better paid abroad: "In Spain, the photographer has always been journalism's poor sibling", as Marcelo del Pozo notes.

In this context, López Perujo, a photojournalist with AFP, considers that the agencies have benefited from the crisis, because there has been a reduction in the number of photographers on their staffs and those remaining travel less. But the media continue to need images: "In day-to-day work you realize that there are fewer colleagues covering the news stories; sometimes I'm the only photojournalist who attends an event". This reality bears little resemblance to the golden age of photojournalism. Daniel Caballo, graphic editor at the Efe agency, recalls how a few years ago as many as four photographers and an editor from his agency attended the final of the King's Cup.

With respect to what the future of the profession will be like over the next five years, three possible tendencies can be detected: some express their uncertainty about the path that photojournalism will follow; others consider that it will be found at the same point it has occupied until now; and, finally, there is the optimistic current which considers that there will be a resurgence of a new, independent, quality photojournalism. "Everything must get better, because it can't get any worse", in the opinion of Daniel Caballo. Nonetheless, all of them say that in spite of the crisis it is currently experiencing, the profession will survive if the struggle is waged with passion, hope, effort and the will to continue learning. And its existence is also guaranteed because in society stories will always be found in society that need transmitting, whether through photographs or multimedia reportages. As Daniel Pozo notes, "work that is well done has no frontiers, while what is badly done has no future".

Cristina Quicler (AFP) believes that there is a tendency towards work that is more independent and autonomous, and that there is a real fear about the possible disappearance of the profession: "Every day we are thinking about a plan B in case the moment arrives".

Self-criticism is also present in their statements, as they note that another cause of the current crisis arises from the fact that photojournalists have never worried about coming together to form associations or trade unions or to struggle jointly for their interests, which is why there is no regularization of the profession.

6.2. *Citizen photojournalism and the profession of photojournalist*

The interviewees hold that the profession of photojournalist is a vocational one, and that special sensitivity and humanity is needed to deal with delicate issues. The following characteristics are also needed to be a good professional: having academic training, being responsible, feeling concern, curiosity, being observant, anticipating situations and being well-informed about the issue to be covered. Thus, all of these skills and attitudes are needed to carry out professional, quality work. These are elements that citizens do not usually possess in the interviewees' opinion. This prevents their content from competing with professional creations, as they do not guarantee verified and rigorous information. Besides, which citizen is worried about the angle, composition and lighting of a shot before taking it?

In short, they do not consider that citizen photojournalism has devalued the profession, instead it is the mass media themselves that are responsible for the current situation faced

by photojournalists, through taking profitable advantage of free content provided by citizens. "Now is the time of cheap photography... The danger to the profession comes from the mass media themselves, not from people... if a medium respects the photojournalist, it doesn't matter if someone who's not a professional publishes a photograph", concludes Marcelo del Pozo, from Reuters.

Another question is that this type of practices forces newsrooms to be permanently on the alert: "Internet is all very well, but it is a minefield... Sometimes they send in photographs because there has been snowy weather, for example, and when you look at the metadata, it turns out that they're images from two years ago", David Airob points out.

6.3. *Audience Participation in the Media*

No opposition to citizen participation in the journalism industry can be noted in their statements. Furthermore, some of them propose that the work of citizens should be remunerated in the same was as photojournalists. At Efe, for example, citizens who send in images by email do not usually ask for payment, but according to Daniel Cabello, "if the event is newsworthy and they ask to be paid something, they are usually offered the same amount as a collaborator".

In general, the presence of citizen content is much greater in the digital medium than in the printed one. This is in spite of the fact that, as Fernando González points out, what citizens are looking for is simply the notoriety of seeing their photograph published in the medium with their name –preferably in the printed medium, even though less and less newspapers are being sold. At *Diario Sur*, such citizen images only appear on the front page a couple of times a year, while conversely they are used intensively at the digital level. In this latter dynamic the influence of the *Objetivo Málaga* blog can be felt, which involves photography marathons, gatherings and exhibitions, and has brought success and profitability to the company.

The professionals understand that these citizens who generate content should be considered solely as a source of complementary information. However, they add that nowadays it is a positive thing for journalists to have a citizen correspondent on every street corner, because they are sometimes the first on the scene of a newsworthy event. As Sergio Camacho observes, never before has a newspaper had so many correspondents in the world for free. But, as they all state, that does not mean that the media should take advantage of this fact to run their business on a daily basis, and not send a photojournalist because someone will certainly send in the photograph the editor needs.

Their position facing the use of mobile devices in the practice of the profession is clear: they underscore that a device like an iPhone cannot replace the professional photographic camera, and that it is simply one more useful tool in urgent situations. The professionals understand that anyone can publish content if they have this type of tools, but that does not mean that anyone can be a photojournalist.

The interviewees are divided over what to call these active audiences who produce visual content. Half of the participants agree on calling them citizen journalists, even though it is a one-off moment when they obtain the photograph of interest; conversely, the other half say that they should not be considered as such because they do not have the training and basic values for exercising the profession. "If you haven't trained to be a photographer and you don't make a living from it, then you simply aren't one. Photography will be a hobby, but not a job", observes Daniel Pozo.

6.4. *The devaluation of the news image*

Photojournalists find themselves immersed in a process of transformation that they understand as necessary, but they do not accept that the quality of the image should become

a secondary element. "Nowadays, we probably have the best photojournalists, but we also have the worst media. It is a time of great photojournalists with style, discourse and enthusiasm, but against this we have media that do not defend quality, but figures and the economic balance sheet instead... There has been a great drop in quality in Spain... Nowadays you pick up a newspaper and nothing draws your attention; there are a lot images, but none of them tell you anything. Finally, you find better information and better pieces in a blog than in a newspaper", says Sergio Camacho.

Manu Brabo supports this view, and thinks that there is a visual crisis in Spain: "...what the head of photography basically does is plan what each person will do... there isn't anyone who plans the aesthetics or the narrative of the image that is published in the press. Therefore, in the end the results are mediocre". Along the same lines, Daniel Pozo notes: "increasingly, the media tend to value immediacy, while technique, creativity or thoroughness are relegated to the background".

Quality is expensive, and few citizens can compete with the technical knowledge and work tools of a professional photojournalist. For example, in Daniel Pozo's backpack there are two Nikon camera bodies (D3 and D4); several sets of lenses (20mm, 35mm, 50 mm, 85mm, 70-200mm, 300mm, 400mm, 500mm, 600mm); a WT-5 transmitter and a laptop with Photoshop and Photomechanic applications.

Although everyone considers quality to be necessary, only half see in it a possible solution to the current crisis; the other half think that the audience is not prepared to pay for such content because it is living in the age of gratuity.

For the interviewees, there are basically five practices that are currently devaluing photojournalism: manipulation in editing the image; lack of ethical values in professionals in establishing their moral limits; daily visual saturation to which the public is subjected; lack of respect for the right to honor and image of the people photographed; and the ideological position of the news media.

Ethics is one of the most complex questions to tackle, since within the profession there is no common code of practices for the photojournalist that would help fix or establish the ethical limits of the news image. Some media or agencies have their own stylebooks, but in many cases these are out of date and usually make no mention of images proceeding from citizens. For that reason it is basically the intuitive ethical responsibility of each photojournalist – professional self-control – that sets the patterns. In this respect, there is agreement in the answers that one should always photograph what one is seeing and never manipulate it. López Perujo explains that at AFP, for example, only reframing, color corrections and small modifications in levels and area retouching are allowed. At Efe, according to Daniel Caballo, it is forbidden to use clone stamping or a healing brush, even to eliminate dirty marks on the image, produced by raindrops on the lens for example.

At the same time, the interviewees are aware that there has been a democratization of photography resulting from the spread of Internet, which serves them as a display window at the national and international levels for showing and offering their work directly and independently. But only a small sector of professionals uses social networks in a professional way.

7. Conclusions

There are no previous empirical studies that analyze today's photojournalist. This is the first article analyzing the current employment situation of photojournalists in Spain in the age of active audiences. The aim of this research is to reflect the perception that photojournalists hold of amateur photography, and detect the current risks faced by the profession.

According to our study, photojournalists have an adaptive mentality. Photographers understand and accept that they no longer have a monopoly of the image in the mass media.

From this perspective, democratization of the medium has become a reality that is well received inside the profession, since one main conclusion can be drawn from the analysis of the graphic reporters' answers: photojournalists do not feel that their profession is threatened by citizen participation in the mass media. In fact, they show great generosity in considering that the images contributed by audiences should receive economic remuneration. Furthermore, photographers highlight the importance of the snapshots taken by anonymous citizens, which allow the news to be known globally right when it happens, because those citizens are on the scene and armed with a smartphone. This is not a competitive scenario, because professional photojournalists provide quality content on a regular basis.

Paradoxically, the crisis has increased the dependence between media companies and their audiences; they are closer than ever because active audiences demand journalism that is proximate and participatory. This should not be confused with replacing professional mediation, but instead involves the need for creating a discourse that includes collaborative interaction with society (Díaz Nosty, 2013).

The study also reveals that photojournalists have a view of the profession's future that is more optimistic than pessimistic. Photojournalists have high hopes in digital media; they consider that new media and new narratives strengthen the profession. In this respect, the role of the professional will find continuity because new platforms are being generated for the presentation, production and distribution of photographic work on Internet (Allan & Patrick, 2013).

This framework of optimism towards the relationship with audiences and the future of their profession contrasts with the view they hold of photojournalism in Spain today, and many point out that it is facing a pathetic situation. Photography is being devalued as a result of the saturation of photograms that are daily invading social networks, and even more serious is the limited support they detect in the media, which place economic results before the quality of the news product. The challenge faced by the journalism industry could be to construct platforms where photojournalists become "metaphotographers" (Lybarger, 2013), who filter the visual content that circulates on the networks, ensuring quality and respect for professional work. These platforms would be innovative spaces where there is room for a cooperative link between professionals and the audience with the aim of offering a quality, public, visual service to society.

Finally, the present research has a series of limitations that it is necessary to underscore in order to evaluate its results appropriately. The study was centered exclusively on carrying out in–depth interviews with twelve Spanish photojournalists, thus its results cannot be extrapolated to an international context. This research has an exploratory character and is intended as a starting point for introducing analysis of the routines of professional photographers onto the agenda of the academy.

In future researches it will be also interesting to deal with the technical quality of citizen images, which is being ignored due to the velocity demanded by the new social media in the constant publication of news stories.

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