

Project Based Teaching in the New Media Education

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1.1. Objectives

My aim with this article is to present some case studies from my new media educational practice on how to use the project based teaching method in order to show the applicability of the typically web 2.0 features to journalism and media education, as well as to show the nature of the new media products; to highlight the importance of a common content developing method. After a short introduction I will write about two case studies, primarily one from my Digital Culture course at Budapest College of Communication and Business for online journalism students, and then about an international project-week called Island Creative Quarantine in the Netherlands.

1.2. Massive changing in the background of new media education

As a lot of articles and books have summarized it the new media technologies and digitalization are changing journalism forever. (Herbert, 2000, McQuail, 2005, Rétfalvi, Gayer, 2010, Foust, 2005, Quinn, Filak, 2005.) Media and media education faces new challenges in the age of digitalization, the

digital revolution and the unstoppable expansion of different platforms of mobile communication tools, Ipads, tablet PC-s, smart phones, e-book readers and so on reshape the face of media continuously. These new phenomena culminate in the so called media convergence. As a result of digitalization combining media or media services is common in the age of information society. In theory and in the everyday editorial room practice there is a lot of different definitions of convergence, but all of them agree with the highlighted points: convergence is the revolutionary and evolutionary form of the new media environment, it causes big changes in the global and in the different countries' media landscape, media ownership, media systems, structure, information gathering method, storytelling or presentation method and in the journalism genres. The changes are based on the digital technological revolution but they are affecting all the social, economic and legal structural factors. (McQuail, 2005, Foust, 2005, Quinn, Filak, 2005.) "The shift to digital communication and other technological developments are breaking down barriers between traditional media industries and also between the broader media and communication sectors. The shift to digital formats and the ability to send all digital information over the same networks is removing the distinctions between them." (Herman, McChesney, 1997, p. 107) As Herbert (2000) summarized from the horizon of a working journalist: "Hypertext now enables journalists to write online stories that are multi-dimensional. The journalist can structure the story differently, and it allows readers to pick their own path through the story." or later theorist started to call this complex phenomena as convergent journalism and a give a definition: "Convergence is a revolutionary and evolutionary form of journalism that is emerging in many parts of the world." (Quinn, Filak, p. 3) But there are as many other definitions as many countries, cultures and media companies are, or as many theorists or journalists who define it from their individual perspective. According to Rich Gordon (2003) there are at least five forms of media convergence: The ownership convergence, the tactical convergence, the structural convergence, information-gathering convergence and the storytelling or presentation convergence.

As college professor of new media (online journalism, social media, online reporting) I have realized several forms of convergence (Gordon, 2003) during my years of teaching and researching in Hungary. First, the ownership convergence, the media centralization is significant in my country too, and several big (mostly foreign) media companies have both offline and online media in their portfolio. The 2010 Hungarian Media Law though rightly is in the crossfire of the Hungarian and international media, associations of journalists, and press freedom watchdogs, because of threatening the freedom of the press in Hungary, somehow is very trendy because they tend to make a step toward convergence's structural and information-gathering forms. Such elements are the centralization of the public media: news agencies, radios and televisions, but the next step in

centralization risks the freedom of media because the centralized public media is supervised by a presidium under the control of the government! And of course it is possible to find several examples in the online journals for storytelling and presentation convergence, they use info graphics, podcast and multimedia elements for telling the story online. Leading online journalism specializations is my main task at my college. I have created the syllabus of the specialization first, decided what kind of new courses we have to launch and I have directly met with these challenges. How can we train journalists for a convergent media environment. That is default that the lecturers and trainers have to update their knowledge continuously both theoretically, and practically and they have to learn the use of newer and newer softwares and applications to assist journalism and media year by year. Our task is to give the possibly most updated knowledge to our students. Teaching journalism and media in the always ongoing environment of new digital media requires a continuous learning and a renewing capacity from the professor of media. The active employers and the students of media education always meet the same challenges nowadays. One of these is the ongoing question of how to maintain knowledge and skills updated. Beside the challenges offered by technological innovations there are other associated changes to adapt as well: the fragmenting of audience, the social factors and legal and structural factors as well as cultural factors and hardware, service and content convergence, new type of copyright solutions etc. As we can see from the convergence definition of Herman and McChesney, quoted above, the changing of the technological environment, the new digital formats are removing the previous standards of analog media systems, removing distinctions between the different media platforms. This idea is from the late 90s, now we are at the end of the first decade of the 21st century but the Hungarian media professionals however, pretend that nothing has happened. (Retfalvi, Gayer, 2010) At 2010 the majority of journalists and editors in Hungary do not want to deal with the emerging problems and possibilities of digital media. It is also likely that some of them not just because they are so called old-fashioned journalists, but they are afraid of losing the legitimacy of their profession because of new technology. As Herbert (2000, p. 4) noticed “The question is whether people to turn to journalists or to someone else in 10 or 20 years, when they need a better information filter. Journalists, who have already lost so much authority and standing in the culture, are going to have to re-earn their right to both.” In Hungary by now there is a balanced blogosphere or as it is nowadays called the Fifth Estate around mainstream journalism. But the majority of media workers do not ignore it. Media education seems to reproduce this type of old-fashioned ‘analog’ journalist and media expert in the shape of the newly graduated communication professionals. Mark Deuze (2009) in his article about Global Journalism Education as well as Catherine Cassara, Peter Gross, Dean Kruckeberg, Allen W. Palmer, and Katerina Tsetsura (2009) in their article about the Newly Independent States of Eurasia, and Russia, have been confronted with

this problem within European media education. Hungary as a central European, post-communist country has also produced these symptoms. But the time calls, and not just the technological possibilities but the audience needs are changing rapidly. The media education institutes has to look for possibilities of advancing media education within this new media system. We have to find the way to continuously restructuring our curricula in the rhythm of the changing of media. I found during my years of teaching, that the best possibility of media education is the project based teaching.

1.3. The rising of media convergence rewrite media education

As I have mentioned the rapid changes in media necessarily rewrite the media education. The communication revolution started with the conversion from analog to digital. From the view of media education this not only means, that we have to change the analogue studios to digital studios, the analog teaching environment to a digital one, but it means that we necessarily have to change our way of thinking about teaching and learning. As the old media system involved passive audience and the one-way process of flow of information, the old educational system involved the passive student. But in the information age the new media system involves active and participative audience, in a multiple way of flow of information, the new possibilities in the educational system involve active and participative students. Project based learning, sharing knowledge with students in a collaborative way becomes an interactive content development activity in the age of information society. Students are not just consumers but partners for developing the content of the new media lessons. Sometimes the results of the students' projects involve changes in the curricula.

1.3.1. Changing in journalism education

In the field of journalism adaption to new media circumstances means to develop cross media newsrooms offering possibilities to cover events, writing news and reporting in multiple media platforms. "Journalism is a dynamic field undergoing tremendous change. Methods of news-gathering are changing. News distribution is changing. News audiences are changing. News rooms are changing. Even the definition of news is changing." (Brooks, Kennedy, Moen, Ranly, 2001. V.) In the field of journalism education, adaption means to teach students for all skills in keeping what they will encounter in the cross media newsrooms with more emphasis on technology and writing for

multiple media, dealing with web 2.0 tools, social media and the demand of interactivity. In the new media environment the member of the audience is a user, who wants to participate in the news flow, wants to find the way into the provided text, wants to tell his version of the story, wants to see his comments to the story etc. "Interactivity: involves more than merely providing several choices to the user – although choice is one aspect of interactivity. The ability to provide a real user controlled experience distinguishes online media from other news media; much more could be done in the future to allow users to get what they want from journalism online and to engage more deeply with the story." (McAdams, 2005, p. 19) Specifying this from the view point of media convergence "... convergence is what takes place in the newsroom as staff worked to produce multiple platforms to reach a mass audience with interactive content, often on a 24/7 timescale." (Quinn, Filak, 2005. p. 4) The aim of multimedia or cross media education is to extract the new type of journalist, the so called back-pack journalist. In the multimedia newsroom the same reporter is able to produce content for print, broadcast online and has his own blog for publishing his personal subjective opinions related to the produced news content from behind the curtain.

To meet these expectations my college has already changed the curricula of journalism specialization. Previously we taught journalism students separately. We separated the students: one group learnt to become a print journalist, one to become a radio journalist, one to become a television journalist and one group to become an online journalist. Bearing in mind the need of the cross media news rooms of the future, the main aims were to teach the students to be familiar with all media formats and with the skills to report the news with every possible multimedia tools. To teach them how to write news for multiple platforms, how to shoot and edit still photographs, audios and videos to tell the story with, and how to put interactive choices into the news. "The digital age means that journalism is taking on a new style of writing and editing. ... Hypertext now enables journalists to write online stories that are multi-dimensional. The journalist can structure the story differently, and it allows readers to pick their own path through the story. Every story published online can be read in many ways, and entirely as the reader wishes." (Herbert, 2000, p. 2) So the first part of the program is about dealing with the expectations of multiple digital media platform, but at the end of the program students get the possibility to immerse in a special part of media.

1.3.2. Changing in teaching digital culture

Digital culture is the 'virtually natural' environment for today's journalist. The new journalist generation live in this culture, use the elements and services of it, but sometimes not really in a

cognitive way. Bruce Sterling (1986, p. 5) writes in the Preface of the first cyberpunk anthology, the *Mirrorshades*: “The cyberpunks are perhaps the first SF generation to grow up not only within the literary tradition of science fiction but in a truly science-fictional world. For them, the techniques of classical "hard SF" extrapolation, technological literacy - are not just literary tools but an aid to daily life. They are a means of understanding, and highly valued.” Our students has the same experience about the world around them, but sometimes we have to help them to find “a means of understanding, and highly valued.” For teaching digital culture is not enough to give a presentation about what the main differences are between the analogue and the digital information, what kind of definitions culture has, what the theory is behind digital age, what the aspects are of the postmodern turn in culture, how many different cultural projects work online, what cyberpunk and avant-pop multimedia is. Students have to be involved into the learning process as content providers too. The key word of this educational method is the edutainment: to teach students while they are having fun. The easiest way to make them participate is to give them topics related to digital culture, to make their own presentations. But how to show them the experience of the common content providing, which is very typical in the culture of the information age? My answer is the My/Our- story project mini workshop, which is an interactive storytelling experience. I myself originally learnt this interactive storytelling workshop method from Patricia Huion (Katholieke Hogeschool Limburg, Belgium) in the International week of TAMK University 2008, Tampere while I were participating in her project seminar. I could experience the impact of the seminar. After some development I successfully integrated it into my teaching methods.

The participants of the My/Our story workshop develop from the fragments of My-stories the common Our-story in a collaborative way. The building blocks, the I-sentences are being given by chance. Otherwise the story evolves through the conscious collaboration of the participants. The process has several stages. After collecting and editing I-sentences, the behind-lying mythology and the background theory are being built in as viewpoints, the story is dramatically and emotionally charged, the rhythm of the presentation is determined by the participants, and lastly the accomplished story is presented by them in the last session. The audience of the live-performance are the other participants, the audience of the readymade projects are the audience of new media via online video uploader places, like Youtube. The digital new media environment makes the realtime documentation of the process possible and publication of the readymade stories through the Internet.

Building a narrative requires teamwork. The process of the common story building recalls on one hand the collectivism of the ancient creative process, while on the other hand it anticipates the

community content-providing characteristic of the web 2.0. Interactivity gains preponderance in the storytelling, recalling on one hand the communicative environment of the secondary literacy fed by the primary orality, on the other hand the interactive tradition of the avant-garde theater. In the Theatre of Cruelty the stage and the auditorium merge, (Artaud, 1958.) as in the digital culture where the author/creator and the user become indistinguishable. The goal of the My/Our story final show is to transform the passive audience into active participants, other aims of the workshop are the following: to help understand how the interactive storytelling process works, as well as the nature of the new media products; to highlight the importance of a common content providing method; to develop respect for diversity in the classroom; to help meet the challenges and difficulties of differences between the members of the project-team in an intercultural communication situation, to help understand the nature of digital culture in an interactive and entertaining way.

1.3.4. Adventures of a group of backpack journalists in an international cultural art project Island Creative Quarantine

The second case study is a longer (10-day-long) international project supported by the Erasmus LLP Intensive Program. The title of the program was **Island Creative Quarantine** dedicated to the keywords of Play and Sustainability contained nine different art, culture and journalism workshops. Four Universities were involved from Finland, Latvia, the Netherlands and Hungary. The Hanze University of Applied Sciences (Groningen, the Netherlands), department Academy of Pop Culture initiated and led the common project Island Creative Quarantine. The other participant institutes are the Liepaja University, department Art Research Lab, the Tampere University of Applied Sciences, department School of Art & Media, and the Budapest College of Communication and Business, Media Institute. From the 4th to 15th of November we organized Island CQ. The whole program was located on Ameland, one of the main Dutch islands, which has been part of the Unesco World Heritage since 2009. There were 7 art projects and two journalism projects, a Tv-broadcasting and mine. My project was a multimedia journalism workshop called Covering Island CQ. The aim of the workshop was: to adopt the typically web2 features to journalist's tools; to cover the Creative Quarantine event with free online applications via social media; to try and play with several free online applications to discover them as new tools for journalism dedicated to play and sustainability. I had created the program of the project according to the words of Jane Stevens (2002), one of the first backpack journalists "In a few years, backpack journalists will not only be the rule, they'll rule". Backpack or convergent journalism means that the same reporter is able to produce content for print, broadcast

and online and has his own blog for publishing his personal subjective opinions related to the produced news content behind the curtain. The key is multimedia content and fastness. The workshop only used digital data: photo, text, video, audio, and free online tools: Application, freewares and socialmedia sites. The results of the workshop can be seen on Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, Photo Tumblr and the final presentation as an interactive map on Covering IslandCQ Prezi.

Participants in this workshop had two parallel tasks to do. They covered the events of IslandCQ via online social media in a continuous tweet-flow. They only used free online tools for preparing and publishing the news, reports, audio-slideshows, photogalleries, interactive maps about the events. Students discovered the other participants of the IslandCQ and the habitants of Ameland as information sources, audience to inform and partners for sharing the information. Together, they built a local community, becoming partners in the content providing process. The second task of my group was to find 5 strong local stories on Ameland places or Ameland people and link them in a presentation. This was the final product of the workshop, an interactive map with 5 local multimedia stories both in English and Dutch. The role of the coach in this case, was to inspire the students as a chief editor in the editorial room. We played a real journal which published across social media. I asked them to make rules of the editorial room and then to keep that rules. For example deadlines, board meetings, journalism genres, effective use of multimedia to communicate the story. They decided the minimum and the maximum numbers of news tweets per day too. I showed them how to use the apps and programs when it was needed, but some of the students could use them better than me. The problem based learning method was used as the educational base of the workshop. We used for a Problem posting part a free online app to visualize our tasks: it was the Wordle. This part was followed by a short theoretical introduction by the lecturer (power point presentation). The problem for solving with the workshop is: how to cover an event with social media tools. I inspired them to discover the new tools as journalism tools. Try it and use it. Develop new tools for telling the story from them. I let them help each other. I let the students mostly work themselves (just in case they needed my help, I was available anytime). They used their competencies to solve the problem of covering the event with tools which related to the Play and Sustainability, the two keyword of the Island Creative Quaranten. The workshop focused on news and other genres of journalism as a service to be sustained rather than a product to be sold, as Jeff Jarvis (2010, p. 8) suggests in his article in IPI Report. „Communities won't need news organizations to gather and share information; using technology, they are starting to do that on their own at a marginal cost of zero. Journalists and publishers then must ask how they can add value to that process, how they can become platforms (Googlelike) for conversation and sharing, for asking questions and getting answers, for pooling knowledge and holding debate, for adding reporting, for building new ecosystems of news. The

journalists may offer technology and training as well as reporting.” The students from my group involved the participants from other projects into the news gathering process, into the newswriting process, asked them to make feedbacks, comments on the content, and showed them, how to put the stories on the webpage and spread them via social media sites. In the exhibition period the five local Ameland stories were available in the exhibition place via a big Mac touch screen (like an Ipad or Ipod surface, just bigger). Users could push the screen and direct the content, start the videos and stop them on demand. The show was as interactive as it could be under the digital circumstances of the early XXI. century.

1.4. Showing the way toward the bright future of journalism?

Since the running of the first online Bulletin Board Systems, before the rise of world wide web in the early 90s, networking online has been a very flexible, global information and experience exchange possibility for researchers. Internet is a metamedium because there are a lot of scientific discussions on the surface of the medium about the medium, the Internet itself. BBS allowed users to connect into the system, upload and download software and data, reading news and bulletins, and exchanging messages with other users. It was the beginning of social networking, information sharing and collaborating online. Advances in technology have increased the options. We have been using Facebook, Youtube, Linked-In and Twitter and rapidly changing others for this function recently. We can stay connected with our present and former students via social media networking systems. And it seems to provide limitless possibilities of continuous renewing. In the possible future of journalism there are not only problems like the decline of the values of journalism, fragmented audiences, decimated balance sheets, and the barbarian hordes of amateurs and so on, but possibilities and values too. “Along the way, journalists and their new partners will need to wrestle with their often conflicting views of such values as verification, transparency, accountability and fairness. Collaboration will be key with a whole range of partners, not just the blogosphere. News organizations are also developing new alliances with NGOs, universities and even competitors.” (Mitchell, 2010, p. 6)

In this article I showed the examples of my realized projects for journalism students in collaboration with other lecturers, present and former students via community content development method which is very significant in the web 2.0 media environment. The exponential growth of media convergence, the shift from analogue to digital does not stop soon and it will have more impact on

media education too. Keeping the rhythm with the fast changes is impossible to be separated from social media, and also impossible alone.

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