Ensuring accountability and transparency in networked journalism: a critical analysis of collaborations between whistleblowing platforms and investigative journalism

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Abstract: WikiLeaks has often been criticized for being an organisation seeking transparency without being transparent and accountable itself. One of the dominant issues in this debate is the question of the whistleblowing platforms' responsibilities in terms of giving an account of their activities, given the sensitive nature of the leaked and elaborated material. However, in the new media ecosystem, where news reporting, and investigative journalism, in particular, cross boundaries, and become increasingly networked, where professional journalists and other actors, such as whistleblowing platforms, closely collaborate, the importance of concepts like openness, responsiveness and transparency are vital. This chapter aims to shed light on how actors working for digital whistleblowing platforms are able to ensure openness, responsiveness and ethical standards with regard to their own activities, particularly as they work together with news media outlets. To analyse these issues, we draw on the conceptual model of online media accountability developed by Domingo and Heikkilä (2012). The chapter focuses on whether and how a networked and 'shared accountability' can be implemented given that in networked journalism truth is increasingly found through collaboration. The paper is based on a document analysis as well as interviews with managing editors from selected whistleblowing platforms about practices of media accountability.

Introduction

In October 2017, *Time* magazine included WikiLeaks in its own ranking of the 15 most influential websites of all time (Fitzpatrick et al. 2017). Undoubtedly, WikiLeaks has established itself as the most powerful whistleblowing platform ever launched over the Internet. A whistleblowing platform is a website designed and operated with the aim of attracting and soliciting leaks from whistleblowers over the Internet, relying on encryption software to shield and anonymize communications. WikiLeaks pioneered this approach with its own encrypted submission system and now that strategy has also been embodied by GlobaLeaks and SecureDrop, the most adopted whistleblowing submission software. Different organisations are now relying on this software to operate their platforms, including journalistic outlets of different kinds. Ten years after the launch of WikiLeaks, platforms of this kind are a common strategy in the current networked information ecosystem and they play a crucial role in making investigative journalism more secure in times of pervasive surveillance. Whistleblowing platforms can also be considered as a clear example signalling the expansion of the boundaries of journalism (Carlson and Lewis 2015) and of its hybridization with other cultures and ethics, those of hacking in this case (Di Salvo 2016). From 2016 on WikiLeaks

has been the target of extensive criticism in the wake of the diffusion of thousands of emails coming from the Democratic National Committee (DNC) and John Podesta's hacks. Allegedly, the hack against the DNC servers was perpetrated by Russian-controlled hackers and the diffusion of the stolen data was intended as an information warfare operation to influence the US public sphere in the context of the 2016 Presidential elections. Julian Assange denied any connection with the Russian intelligence and declared his source was not a state actor. In the contest of the DNC hack and leak, and consistently with its own policies, WikiLeaks decided to dump thousands of emails in different releases without filtering the content and without applying any substantial editorial choice or filtering on what to share. The organisation was harshly criticized for this decision and for its lack of scrutiny and transparency in explaining its own decisions (Renner, 2016, Tufecki 2016). The release of the hacked DNC and John Podesta's emails through WikiLeaks is one of the most powerful examples of what Gabriela Coleman (2016) has defined as public interest hack, "a computer infiltration for the purpose of leaking documents that will have political consequence". In this context, whistleblowing platforms are called to provide a crucial stronger accountability effort so that they are not weaponized by hackers or whistleblowers willing to expose information according to their own agendas, that may also be malignant, highly political and partisan. Otherwise, as journalist Joseph Cox puts it (2017), the potential risk for reporters is "to become a puppet" of the perpetrators of the releases and the leakers and be instrumentalized by them as megaphones over the Internet and the media agenda.

Networked journalism and the role of whistleblowing platforms

The notion of 'networked journalism' has been debated for ten years now (see van der Haak et al. 2012) and has shaped some of the most important trajectories in journalism's evolution. Originally theorized to express the relationship between professional journalists and their amateur citizen counterparts, as well as the potential involvement of the public in the reporting process in the wake of the raising of the once-called '2.0' digital tools, the concept of networked journalism still maintains its relevance in assessing change and innovation within and at the borders of journalism. The importance of the notion of network is given by the fact that it continuously expanded and brought new spheres, actors, professional roles and cultures into journalism, creating a new networked news ecosystem (Bowman and Willis 2003) - which is why the boundaries of journalism are now at the core of this debate. Because of this constant process of evolution, hybridization and re-mixing, some have proposed analysing and studying journalism as "a profession in a permanent process of becoming" (Deuze and Witschge 2017,

p. 177). One of the crucial elements of the networked phase of journalism that make it in a permanent process of becoming is its own "permeability" (Beckett 2008, p. 48). If this was initially to be understood in economic terms as the reason for the fall of some of the barriers for launching a journalistic venture, it is also a vector for explaining what has happened to the boundaries of journalism and its own definition in the digital age. New actors, some of whom do not have a classically-intended affiliation with journalism, have entered the sphere of journalism, inevitably influencing its practices, routines, professional norms and culture. Hackers and hacktivists, among others, are playing an increasingly important part in shaping contemporary journalism and have been more and more interested in "work traditionally ascribed to journalists, expanding what it means to be involved in the production of news and, in the process, gaining influence over how traditional news stories and genres are constructed and circulated" (Russell 2016, p. 7). The result is a form of hybridization that journalistic cases such as the 'Panama Papers,' the Offshore Leaks series and data journalism in general have strongly relied on. Encryption, the importance of which was substantially neglected by journalists until the Snowden revelations in 2013, for instance, has given investigative reporters safer access to source material and reliable storage techniques, while other forms of hacking practices, like data analysis, coding and scraping, fuelled investigations during the different reporting phases. Russell (2016, p. 15-18) insists that the collaboration of journalists with hackers and hacktivists brought new "hacktivist sensibilities" into the journalism realm that contributed to the evolution of the traditional journalism culture, up to the point where it is possible to consider these forms of reporting as a "trading zone" (Lewis and Usher, 2014) where the crossing of professional boundaries occurs not only more often but is also increasingly accepted.

The phenomenon of boundary crossing, as well as the growing forms of hybrid journalism resulting from different professions working together, can be systematically analysed with the help of the concept of boundary work, developed by Thomas Gieryn (1983) in the field of the sociology of science. The theory implies that boundaries emerge as different fields try to claim legitimacy over a specific area of expertise. In other words, the concept of boundary work allows the tensions between different "jurisdictional claims" (Abbott 1988) or spheres of influence to be witnessed. Depending on an increasing or decreasing realm of influence, these boundaries can change over time. Gieryn describes three different categories: a field can invade another one, which is then described as an "expansion", because the dominating field claims the authority held by other professions (1983, p. 791f.). Second, "monopolization" or "expulsion" is used to describe the situation, where rivals are excluded "from within by

defining them as outsiders with labels such as 'pseudo', 'deviant' or 'amateur'" (ibid.). In the third category, members of a profession try to avoid boundaries shifting or becoming porous by "protecting the autonomy" of the field against unwelcome intruders (ibid.).

The notion of boundary work has only recently been applied to journalism but has been shown to be a fruitful addition to the theoretical toolbox. Carlson (2015, 2016) and Lewis (2012) particularly have adapted Gieryn's categories to journalism, showing the fundamental struggle between either the expansion of the profession's boundaries (by including e.g. hackers, programmers or data scientists in the case of data journalism) or the protection of the autonomy, by keeping out unwanted non-professional actors, such as whistleblowing platforms (Carlson and Lewis 2015). However, journalism has always had issues when it comes to the demarcation of its professional boundaries. In many countries journalism is not even a protected profession with hard criteria by which to differentiate between members of the profession and those outside the discipline (Waisbord 2013).

Taking all this together, it becomes clear why journalism, particularly nowadays, faces many challenges in putting up clear boundaries as they become increasingly permeable. In recent years we have been able to witness a growing number of formal and informal efforts to collaborate between professional journalists working in established newsrooms and members of other fields. For instance, in the case of the collaboration between *The Guardian* and Wikileaks during the publication of the Afghan war logs in July 2010 and the US embassy cables in December 2010. Since then, many more collaborations have taken place, particularly in the area of investigative journalism (Wahl-Jorgensen 2014). These efforts can be described as attempts at "boundary crossing" (Beckett and Mansell 2008) - where different participants, practices and professional norms, as well as cultures, concur.

Whistleblowing platforms and their reliance on encryption software originally coded by hackers is one of the most interesting areas of boundary crossing between journalism and hacking. Whistleblowing platforms are indeed the product of the collaboration of skills coming from the two fields: (1) the hacking sphere provides the technical know-how in handling encryption and coding, while (2) journalists use these affordances to work securely with whistleblowers and launch potential leaks-based investigations. Thus, whistleblowing software such as the Italian GlobaLeaks and the US SecureDrop, both open-source, are actants of media innovation in this context and clear markers of boundary work (Westlund and Lewis 2014). They are participating in the hybridization of networked journalism at two different levels: practical and cultural. At the first level they are the expression of the introduction of hacking practices to the journalism toolbox and, at the second level, they bring new cultural elements

for the culture of journalism to the table, as they are both an "architectural frame-work and a cultural context" (Lewis and Usher 2013). These forms of boundary reporting, which are usually also conducted with a strong "adversarial" journalistic attitude (Zelizer and Allan 2010, p. 2) towards accountability for powerful individuals or organisations, also pose new challenges when it comes to journalistic responsibility and how that has to be shared between players of very different backgrounds and professional roles.

Digital media accountability and responsiveness

The concept of media accountability gained strong momentum around five years ago, in the aftermath of both the Leveson Inquiry (Reardon et al. 2018) and the institution of the EU High-Level Group on Media Freedom and Pluralism set up by EU commissioner, Neelie Kroes, in 2011, but it is still a relatively new concept. It should be noted that the history of media accountability is important, in order to understand its implications, particularly in terms of the media's wider responsibility towards society. Being more socially responsible became an issue for the first time at the beginning of the 20th century, when news organisations in both Europe and the United States became bigger and thus more influential. Newspapers, particularly in the Anglo-American world, became increasingly detached from political parties by emphasizing professionalism and education, and also by developing central ethical norms, such as objectivity (Schudson 1978). These circumstances allowed the media - and journalism in particular - to develop its identity as the defender of democracy with "a moral claim to autonomy and non-interference by government" (Christians et al. 2009).

In his 1926 book 'Newspaper Ethics', William Gibson developed a theoretical framework grounded on the social responsibility of the press - a concept that was subsequently used by the Hutchins Commission in 1936 to delineate the term 'public interest'. After the publication of the Commission's report in 1947, the specific responsibility of the press is referred to regularly, e.g. in the seminal book 'The Four Theories of the Press' (Siebert et al. 1956) and monographs specifically on the responsibility concept (Blanchard 1977). However, the discussion about the wider implications of the press, in terms of its obligations towards society, was always centred on responsibility, not on accountability. This is also reflected by the report of the Hutchins Commission cited above: one of the members of the Commission, the Librarian of the Congress, Archibald MacLeish, suggested the report be entitled 'A Free and Accountable Press,' but the term 'accountable' was later replaced with 'responsible' Marzolf (1991), in her historic analysis of press criticism in the U.S., offers an explanation of the change:

"Accountability implied some mechanism to enforce standards; responsibility was self-imposed" (Marzolf 1991, p. 166).

Marzolf's explanation shows both the similarity and the difference between the two concepts. Although both concepts imply an obligation for the quality of the media's contents and performances towards their stakeholders and, specifically, to their publics (de Haan and Bardoel 2011, McQuail 1997, 2003, 2010, Plaisance 2000, Pritchard 2000, Eberwein and Porlezza 2016), they differ in terms of their enforcement. Hodges (2004, p. 173) explains the difference in an often-quoted paragraph: "The issue of responsibility is: To what social needs should we expect journalists to respond ably? The issue of accountability is: How might society call on journalists to explain and justify the ways they perform the responsibilities given them? Responsibility has to do with defining proper conduct, accountability with compelling it". Accountability, therefore, goes beyond the narrow focus on responsibility and concentrates on how this responsibility can actually be implemented (see Fengler et al. 2013).

The concept has also gained weight due to the increased number of practices and instruments that are now available thanks to the Internet. Besides, implementing accountability instruments online is no longer a cost-intensive action. The Internet not only facilitates the implementation of accountability practices and instruments, it eases the media user's participation. As the media are increasingly dependent on the contributions of users, leakers or whistleblowers – for instance, when it comes to massive data dumps, as in the case of the 'Panama' or 'Paradise Papers,' or while using participatory research methods, such as crowdsourcing – the concept of responsiveness becomes equally relevant. This means that the media not only ought to take into account the public's concerns and criticisms, but that they are expected to react to it and show engagement – what Brants and de Haan (2010) call civic responsiveness: "taking the public into account by listening and connecting with the public and putting their agenda first." Even if they might be understood as related concepts, responsiveness and accountability focus on different expectations, as de Haan and Bardoel (2012, p. 18) explain: "The former relates to acknowledgement of public concern by engaging, participating and showing involvement, while the latter means being held accountable by the public for one's performance" (2012, p. 18).

Responsiveness is relevant to whistleblowing platforms, as they often act as "moral entrepreneurs" (Brants 2013, p. 25), siding not only with whistleblowers, but also with the general public, in an anti-establishment, anti-government and activist orientation, supporting victims of persecution and surveillance, often through a critical discourse with respect to governments and surveillance agencies. Being responsive to criticism and open to feedback

can also be seen as a specific trait of whistleblowing platforms, in order to differentiate themselves from other actors, such as government agencies that apply secrecy as their primary norm.

The two concepts developed so far – accountability and responsiveness – are related by the fact that they can be understood as processes (McQuail 2010). On the grounds of the technological evolutions, as well as the theoretical reflections laid out above, Domingo and Heikkilä (2012) developed a model that understands online media accountability by following the different phases of news production. The two authors looked at the different practices that happen before, during and after production (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Digital Media Accountability Model (based on Domingo and Heikkilä 2012)

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In this model, Domingo and Heikkilä split the concept of accountability not only according to the journalistic production cycle, but also into practices to improve transparency and those to ameliorate responsiveness: the first phase looks at 'actor transparency', where actors reveal who owns the organisation and what kind of principles and norms (e.g. mission statements or ethic codes) they abide to. Second, the model focuses on 'production transparency,' where actors offer an insight into how the news production is actually done. The third aspect, 'responsiveness,' looks at how news organisations deal with user feedback and criticism, and whether they are open and able to establish a dialogue with their stakeholders, "rendering this interaction meaningful to the public" (Heikkilä et al. 2012, p. 55). The model can also be applied to whistleblowing platforms, even if some of the production practices differ from those of news organisations. Nevertheless, the tripartition of the accountability concept along the production phase is useful in order to establish an overall evaluation of the transparency and responsiveness of whistleblowing platforms, particularly in the light of the growing calls for more transparency and accountability.

Methodology

This chapter is based on a two-step methodology and four selected case studies. We specifically focused on whistleblowing platforms' strategies and practices of production transparency as we wanted to analyse how they ensured accountability in networked journalism that crosses the boundaries between professional newsrooms and whistleblowing platforms. For the

purpose of this study, which is explorative in its nature, we decided to focus on four platforms operated by different organisations - a watchdog initiative, a major legacy newspaper, an independent investigative reporting group and a free speech NGO - all operating in the broader field of journalism. The aim of this selection was to obtain a sample of different typologies of whistleblowing platforms, in order to cover different expressions of the same principle. However, this is not an all-inclusive study and consequently does not cover all the potential types of whistleblowing platforms. In addition, we included platforms from different cultural backgrounds and political contexts in order to analyse whether there are any specific differences, not in terms of their everyday practice, but with regard to the accountability of their platforms.

The four case studies are *PubLeaks*[1], *IrpiLeaks*[2], *MagyarLeaks*[3] and *Die Zeit*'s *Briefkasten*[4], four whistleblowing platforms with different editorial strategies and backgrounds. With the exception of *Die Zeit*'s *Briefkasten*, all operate with the open source software *GlobaLeaks*, which allows and ensures anonymous whistleblowing activities. *PubLeaks* is a Dutch platform launched by NGO Free Press Unlimited. The platform, consistent with the 'multistakeholder' approach to online whistleblowing, relies on more than 40 Dutch media partners that serve as leak recipients for the whistleblowers approaching the platform. *PubLeak*s itself only offers the technological infrastructure and has no role in how leaks are published. *IrpiLeaks* is an Italian platform, and, thus, a case from a media system with a strong political parallelism, connected with the Investigative Reporting Project Italy (IRPI), a collective of freelance investigative reporters. *IrpiLeaks* uses its own platform to attract whistleblowers and start investigations that are usually published on cooperating media partners' news outlets. *MagyarLeaks* is Hungarian *Átlátszó*'s platform and is used by the watchdog and journalistic organisation to solicit whistleblowers for potential investigative leads that end in content published on its website. We selected the Hungarian case also because of the difficult political context that might exert an impact on transparency. *Briefkasten* is *Die Zeit*'s tool to deal with online whistleblowing: the German daily has coded in-house its own whistleblowing platform and only its own investigative team has access to the leaks it attracts. Leaked material is used by *Die Zeit*'s newsroom to conduct investigations.

As a starting point, we carried out a document analysis (Prior 2003) that focused only on accessible materials on the Web which included information about mission statements, guidelines or statutes, all available on the platforms' websites or on those of the hosting organisations. These texts allow an initial understanding of how the platforms describe their own activities and rationale. However, not all the platforms include the information on their

websites. *Briefkasten*, for instance, offers a very brief description of their activities on its own page, while a more thorough article can be found on *Die Zeit*'s *Data Blog*[5]. Not all of the platforms are equally exhaustive when it comes to their activities. While *PubLeaks* limits the description to mostly administrative and legal notes, *Átlátszó*'s publishes annual reports, where they describe how many submissions the whistleblowing platform received in the last year. Besides the description of their activities, most texts also focus on the importance of anonymity, giving very detailed instructions on how to anonymously upload leaked documents. The platforms' definitions of their role within (and responsibility towards) society and how to guarantee anonymity is important in order to understand whether there are any current issues with regard to boundary work: are there any "jurisdictional claims" (Abbott 1988) when it comes to the expansion of the journalistic field?

Subsequently, we got in touch with specific actors in leading roles from the different whistleblowing platforms' teams. We carried out three problem-centred interviews (Witzel 2000) that were conducted over Skype (Hanna 2012) and that lasted from 45 to 60 minutes. At the specific request of the interviewee, the fourth interview could only take place via online chatting. The data gathering phase was conducted between January and December 2015[6]. The goal of the interviews was to retrace the ideas of the different actors with regard to networked journalism as well as their personal understanding of the practices of accountability and responsiveness. The combination of a document analysis and problem-centred interviews has already been applied and verified in other circumstances, for instance, with regard to self-regulation and the investigation of professional journalistic norms (Porlezza and Splendore 2016). The empirical data used in this chapter was also used in another forthcoming paper by the authors where, instead, a stronger focus on interactivity and actor transparency was applied.

Results

Our results show different attitudes and approaches when it comes to the definition of what digital whistleblowing platforms are meant to be and how they should operate in the networked journalism ecosystem. In particular, it is possible to divide them into two typologies consisting of platforms operating with full autonomy and platforms that rely on media partners. The first group includes those organisations that fulfil the whole journalistic process from news gathering to publication under their domain, while organisations included in the second group use the platforms to obtain information from whistleblowers only and let media partners publish stories on their outlets. This results in a significant difference when it comes to accountability and transparency. In the case of partnerships, it is possible to talk about a 'shared

accountability', since the journalistic process is shared by two different groups and organisations. However, it is also possible to observe two different attitudes when it comes to the contribution to journalism that whistleblowing platforms can provide. Some organisations see themselves as fully publishing outlets using whistleblowing platforms as an additional resource (*MagyarLeaks*, *Die Zeit*'s *Briefkasten*), while others tend to have a more service-oriented attitude, where platforms serve as additional tools for journalists willing to work with whistleblowers (*IrpiLeaks*, *PubLeaks*).

For platforms included in the second group, the launch of a platform is by itself a journalistic act, although it does not produce journalistic content on its own. In this case, the responsibility of the publication of journalistic stories is given to the news outlets serving as partners, which can be contacted on a case-by-case basis (*IrpiLeaks*) or because they are involved from the beginning, as happens for the 'multistakeholder' platforms, such as *PubLeaks*, which pioneered the approach. It must also be underlined that these 'tool' platforms, in addition to not producing journalistic content, also do not publish leaked information, contrary to what WikiLeaks did with its 2016 leaks, for instance. Any outcome of leaking through these platforms, regardless of the publication outlet or the applied editorial choices, will happen after journalistic fact-checking and after verification and contextualization of the data in classically intended editorial processes and strategies.

These two different approaches also define two different roles within the news ecosystem. Platforms that operate totally independently can be seen as more traditional publishers, although with a stronger innovative attitude confirmed by their adoption of encryption tools, among other factors. *MagyarLeaks*, for instance, is used internally by the staff of the Hungarian *Átlátszó* as an information gathering tool for their investigations and all the data obtained through the platform is used internally and verified as it would be if obtained in a more traditional way. *Die Zeit*'s *Briefkasten*, instead, is a platform operated by *Die Zeit*'s investigative unit and is used as a news gathering tool for content published by the newspaper. Both *MagyarLeaks* and *Die Zeit*'s *Briefkasten* are not autonomous publishing outlets, but they are integrated in their organisations' workflow and resources. Platforms that are only envisioned as tools, and that provide a service, an encrypted channel to reach out for journalists, also position themselves as 'bridges' by offering certain affordances that would not otherwise be available. *PubLeaks*, for instance, fills a gap in the cybersecurity capabilities of the Dutch media, including small and regional outlets, that may be less keen in investing resources in launching their own cybersecurity strategies. *IrpiLeak*s is operated by a collective of Italian investigative reporters who do not operate a standalone news outlet, but rather approach media

partners on a freelance basis when they have an interesting story to offer. Thus, their whistleblowing platform serves as a newsgathering tool, but it is not a publishing space *per se,* and its journalistic acts have to be completed with the help of media partners. Still, journalists who are members of the *IrpiLeaks* collective will also serve as authors of the stories, confirming once more the collaborative spirit of their platform.

When it comes to the changes and contributions provided, service-oriented platforms, such as *IrpiLeaks* and *PubLeaks*, appear more explicitly in line with the networked asset of the current media ecosystem, since their goal is to provide journalistic-technological infrastructures that journalists can use to ensure that more assets are available for investigative reporting. This means that platforms that do not create journalistic content are now to be considered as part of the ecosystem and that purely technological players contribute to the same ecosystem by creating news spaces for intercultural collaborations. Platforms that are included in more traditional editorial mechanisms, such as those used by *Die Zeit* and *Átlátszó,* certainly represent a clear sign of media innovation, but do not introduce new standards or players because they are bound to the established production routines of the main news outlets.

Discussion and conclusions

In an era of networked journalism, to identify and distinguish who is responsible for what is not always easy. Frequently, the production processes of investigative journalism involve different actors with different role conceptions and normative frameworks. In the case of collaborations between whistleblowing platforms and news media outlets, the results show that, in fact, there are differing understandings of one's own activities and functions. In turn these understandings have a direct impact on the performance and the possibilities of implementing online media accountability instruments. These conflicting self-conceptions are due to the diverse structures, for example, with regard to the organisational embedding and autonomy, but depend on the notion that the actors have of their place within the new networked news ecosystem. In terms of boundary-work, this means that this chapter's object of study allows us to observe the different jurisdictional claims between whistleblowing platforms and investigative journalism with regard to the establishment of their professional boundaries.

The results of the analysis show that some of the whistleblowing platforms see themselves as being completely autonomous, which can be seen in a specific service orientation. These whistleblowing platforms understand themselves as an additional tool offered to investigative journalists in terms of information delivery (obtained directly from anonymous

whistleblowers) and encryption. Both *IrpiLeaks* and *PubLeaks* function as 'bridges' by offering certain services to different stakeholders, for instance, news outlets that are unable or unwilling to implement or pay for issues such as cybersecurity. Or, in other cases, they accomplish this function when freelancers look out for potential publication partners. Other platforms are not autonomous in their organisational setting but are either part of established media outlets or have a clearly defined goal as publishers. This is the case for *MagyarLeak*s and *Die Zeit*'s *Briefkasten*, which define themselves as publishing outlets – even if they operate within the parent organisation, being thus dependent on their resources and production routines. This is why the latter represents more of a highly specialized unit within a traditional news organisation.

The organisational setting influences not only the normative framework of the different actors, but also the ability to establish accountability and transparency instruments. Those platforms that are part of a larger news media outlet tend to apply the norms and practices of the parent company's newsroom, particularly as they see themselves as publishing outlets performing journalistic activities. In the case of the autonomous organisations, such as *IrpiLeaks* and *PubLeaks*, the situation is quite different as their collaborators' role conceptions differ from those of journalists. This situation demonstrates the complex condition of networked journalism, especially in terms of ethical frameworks, as different actors with different backgrounds and cultures are collaborating in order to assure a smooth journalistic production process. In these circumstances, the notion of 'shared accountability' becomes relevant, as different actors have to coordinate and harmonize their responsibilities with regard to accountability and transparency.

Shared accountability means that the involved parties have to negotiate how the responsibilities of each step of the networked production process are divided between the collaborating institutions and how each participant can be held to account for its activities. This does not mean that the involved parties have to have a common ethical framework, but it entails a common 'understanding' of each and everyone's normative assumptions - even if they differ - on which to build a collaboration. This also includes the discussion of different accountability instruments before, during and after the production process, as demonstrated in Domingo and Heikkilä's (2012) model, and the application to all the partners involved. Both whistleblowing platforms and news media organisations have to decide, for instance, who will respond to questions from their respective stakeholders about how the leaked information was obtained or how the journalistic investigation was specifically carried out.

In terms of boundary-work, while the collaborations between autonomous whistleblowing platforms and news organisations represent examples of boundary crossing, the discussions between these actors are specific examples of "trading zones" (Lewis and Usher 2014), where normative assumptions as well as cultural references are negotiated in order to avoid any reputational or legal harm to the involved institutions. This could be observed during the negotiations between Julian Assange and *The Guardian* with regard to the Afghanistan and Iraq war logs, the embassy cables and the personal files from Guantanamo prisoners (Lundberg 2011, p. 5f). However, where these negotiations fail, the collaboration might well be doomed - as was once more the case between WikiLeaks and *The Guardian* (Katz 2011): "The froideur between Assange and the Guardian is disappointing because, in so many ways, the collaboration over the leaked war logs and embassy cables was a model of what traditional media and the new breed of digital subversive can achieve together. Assange brought a trove of raw data and a considerable degree of savviness about how to work with vast, complex databases – and, not insignificantly, the ability to publish outside the reach of any individual jurisdiction. The Guardian and other media partners brought the old-fashioned journalistic skills and deep expertise required to figure out what mattered – and the resources (some 40 Guardian reporters worked on the cables alone) and commitment to deal with highly sensitive material responsibly."

As roles and identities among professional journalists are shifting, so are the organisational structures of news production (Chadwick 2013). In turn, these changes entail a shift in the boundaries of the profession, enabling the development of hybrid forms of (investigative) journalism, where truth is found through collaboration (Ward and Wasserman 2010, p. 282). The fact that some news outlets have decided to include whistleblowing platforms in their organisational structure confirms the trend towards the expansion of the journalistic field by including professions such as hackers, programmers or data and cybersecurity experts which were, until a couple of years ago, outside journalism. That this is also happening at an increasing rate within mainstream global news outlets such as *The Washington Post*, *The Guardian* and *The New York Times* – all of them have adopted whistleblowing platforms (Berret 2016) – is another indicator of the expansion of the journalistic field as well as the growing hybridization of journalism.

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[1] Available at: https://www.publeaks.nl

[2] Available at: https://irpi.eu/leaks

[3] Available at: https://atlatszo.hu/magyarleaks/

[4] Available at: http://www.zeit.de/briefkasten/index.html

[5] See http://blog.zeit.de/open-data/2012/07/30/daten/

[6] The interviews were conducted in parallel to Philip Di Salvo's data gathering for his PhD dissertation. Interviews with the platforms included in this chapter were extended on purpose to include questions relevant to this study.