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Weaving knowledge *together*: The micropolitics of ‘encounters’ in community journalism

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Community journalism has been hailed as one of several solutions to journalism’s deepening crisis, motivating scholarly interest in how community-focused journalists produce knowledge in their networks (Callison & Young, 2019; Fenton et al., 2010; Wenzel, 2019). Many of these non-mainstream communities of journalistic practice have noble, pioneering visions of the role of journalism in advancing democracy and human rights (Deuze & Witschge, 2020; Schapals, Maares & Hanusch, 2019). This is evident in their public manifesto activist discourses: journalists on the periphery often embrace an “knowledge-based advocacy” role and engage in grassroots activism, seeking to transform journalism from the ground up (Anderson, 2023).

This paper will present the findings of a research project that critically examined the epistemic praxis of four community-focused outlets in Asia and Europe – *New Naratif* (Malaysia), *The Current* (Pakistan), *DoR* (Romania), and *Bureau Local* (UK) – through a new materialist theoretical lens (Fox & Alldred, 2017). Drawing on metajournalistic discourse analysis of the outlets’ manifestos, interviews with 30 journalists, and multimodal discourse analysis of seven stories, the study examined how each community-centred outlet positions itself in relation to its audience/community, how it produces knowledge vis-à-vis the community and wider world, how it navigates various editorial, financial, political, and sociocultural influences, and how these negotiations find a material expression in its epistemic praxis.

The cross-case analysis suggests that community journalism outlets favour a relational approach to knowledge production, in which they prioritise mutual listening and learning – *together* with their communities. Acknowledging the restrictive influences on their practice, community-centred journalists stress the agentic capacities generated in the ‘encounters’ between actors, actants, and forces in the process of knowledge production. Power (and resistance) lies in the *micropolitics* of these ‘encounters’ (Fox & Alldred, 2017), rather than in a top-down (and bottom-up, respectively) relationship between journalism, communities, and external forces.

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